When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, “Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.” (Luke 1:41-45)

We know the story. The Archangel Gabriel had announced to the Virgin Mary God’s invitation to become the mother of the Messiah. As further evidence that nothing is impossible for God, Mary’s elderly cousin, Elizabeth, thought to be barren, was also expecting a child, John the Baptist.

Both Elizabeth’s pregnancy and Mary’s — despite their unusual circumstances — are cause for rejoicing. By the power of the Holy Spirit, the unborn child Jesus announces his presence to John, his unborn cousin. John leaps for joy, proclaiming to his mother, in effect: “Behold! The Lamb of God!” Elizabeth, too, is then filled with the Holy Spirit, and recognizes Mary as the blessed tabernacle of our Lord and Savior. Through the evangelical witness and sacrificial love of Mary, Jesus and John, the work of our salvation has begun.

The Old and New Testaments are filled with such passages extolling children as a gift and blessing. It is disheartening, then, to see how far our culture has diverged from this view.

To be sure, most parents love their children generously and even unconditionally. But today the inherent, priceless value of every child — as a unique individual created and loved by God — is no longer universally accepted. Before birth at least, a child’s... continued on page 3

Modern Culture Needs to Pray That Mary’s Voice Will Again Be Heard in the Heart and Womb

Respect Life Sunday Oct. 7

When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, “Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.” (Luke 1:41-45)

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The Good News

...A Prayerful Beginning

We are here for the formal canonical opening of the Cause for the Beatification and Canonization of Reverend Stanley F. Rother. This is the very first time in history that a canonization process has been initiated here in Oklahoma.

Canonization Opening Session
Holy Trinity Church
Okarche, Oklahoma
October 5, 2007

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

It is with great joy that I welcome all of you to Holy Trinity Church here in Okarche. We gather together to celebrate the Eucharist on a singular and historic occasion. We are here for the formal canonical opening of the Cause for the Beatification and Canonization of Reverend Stanley F. Rother. This is the very first time in history that a canonization process has been initiated here in Oklahoma. It is my hope and my prayer that Almighty God will bring to a happy conclusion this good work which He has begun in us!

As Catholic people we believe that human beings are created by God in His own Image and Likeness. God made us to receive His love and to love Him in return. Basically God made us to know, love and serve Him now so that someday we could rejoice in His Presence in heaven forever. To be in heaven with God means to be a saint. The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines a saint as “one who is holy, who leads a life in union with God through the grace of Christ and receives the reward of eternal life in heaven.” Therefore, everyone in heaven is actually a saint. However, the only way we can be certain that a particular person is in heaven is by a Divine Revelation or by a solemn proclamation of the Church. Remember, the Church teaches in the Name of Jesus and on His authority.

This proclamation of the Church comes only after a very thorough study of the person’s life and much prayer for God’s guidance and direction. Again, let us turn to the Catechism of the Catholic Church which defines canonization as “the solemn declaration by the Pope that a deceased member of the faithful may be proposed as a model and intercessor to the Christian faithful and venerated as a saint on the basis of the fact that the person lived a life of heroic virtue or remained faithful to God through martyrdom.”

As we all know, Father Rother, a priest of our Archdiocese, was born and raised here in Okarche. As a young man he heard the call of the Lord. He responded willingly but encountered difficulties with his Lord. He responded willingly but after five years of priestly ministry here in Oklahoma, he was sent as a missionary to Micatokla, our parish in Santiago Atitlan in Guatemala. On July 28, 1981, he was ruthlessly beaten and shot to death in the Santiago Atitlan rectangle. We are here in Oklahoma, as well as the people of Santiago Atitlan, were convinced that this good and faithful missionary priest was a martyr. He gave up his life for the faith. He believed in Jesus. He responded to God’s call to be a priest. He celebrated the sacraments, thereby bringing God’s grace, love and forgiveness to countless people. He preached and shared the Good News of Jesus with others. He suffered and died at the hands of those who hated this Good News. We considered him a martyr then and began to hope and pray that he would soon be recognized and canonized a saint.

Since Father Rother died in Santiago Atitlan, the local Diocese of Solola-Chimaltenango was the competent Tribunal to conduct his cause. However, after 25 years of inquiring and waiting, we concluded that the Church of the Diocese of Solola-Chimaltenango did not have the means, the resources and the personnel to successfully complete the Cause of Beatification and Canonization. During this past year, therefore, I have requested and received the agreement and permission of the bishop of Solola-Chimaltenango to seek a transfer of jurisdiction. The Guatemala Conference of Bishops concurred in that agreement. The Congregation for the Cause of Saints then authorized this transfer granting jurisdiction to the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. The Congregation also approved the Postulator I selected to represent us in Rome. Dr. Andrea Ambrosi is a trained Canonist who will personally represent our cause before the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. He will give direction and guidance to our committee. Dr. Ambrosi lives and serves in Rome. He is assisted by Corylie Suarez, an American who works with him in Rome.

This formal canonical opening session of the Cause for the Beatification and Canonization of Father Stanley Rother is a reality today but it is only the beginning. The entire process will transpire over many, many years.

The Sacred Congregation for the Cause of Saints will review all the evidence we gather in our archdiocesan effort to establish factually and clearly that Father Rother was indeed a man of heroic virtue. Once the Congregation is satisfied that they have done so, they will present His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI, with a decree for his approval. If the Holy Father signs the decree of the Congregation, Father Rother will then be known by the title Venerable. If an authentic miracle can be attributed to his intercession and is so recognized by the Holy See, he will be called Blessed. If a second miracle occurs and is approved, he will be canonized a saint. In the event that it can be clearly proven that Father Rother was indeed a martyr (in the strict sense), the miracles are not required for his canonization. In any event you can see that the entire process requires much work and a great deal of time and prayer.

Most of us will not see this to its successful completion. The Church is slow in these matters because it is thorough and we are dealing here with the spiritual realm which is timeless. However, if we did not take the initiative to proceed now, the cause might never go forward. What is most important is that we all pray for the canonization of Father Rother and at the same time, live the fullness of our Catholic faith as we should, then we, too, will someday be saints of God.

In accordance with requirements of the Church Law, I have established a Tribunal of 14 people to conduct this investigation. All the members of this special Tribunal are present here tonight for this opening session for the Cause of Beatification and Canonization of Father Stanley Rother. In just a few moments they will make a solemn oath before you and before Almighty God. Therefore, I now ask each of them to come forward as I call them forth.

Visit us online through the Archdiocesan Web Page at www.catholicsooner.org.
Respect Life

worth seems to depend on his parents' attitude toward him. A Planned Parenthood ad illustrates this point well: "Babies are loud, smelly and expensive, unless you want one." Unborn children are routinely de-humanized by the abortion industry. The author of a widely-used textbook on abortion techniques describes pregnancy as a "parasitic illness." A well-known columnist writes: "A goldfish resembles a human being more than an embryo does." Such attitudes have crept into people's behavior. Many of us seem to spend much of our adult lives trying to avoid the inconvenience of having children, and we don't like surprises in the children we do have.

Despite their many risks and harmful side effects, hormonal contraceptives exceed $24 billion in annual sales worldwide.

The abortion industry claims that half the children conceived in the United States are "unwanted," and half the "unwanted" children are aborted — over 1.3 million annually. The most common reason given for aborting a child is that a child could interfere with one's education or career. We are often told how costly it is to raise a child. The scarcity of large families among wealthy and middle-income couples suggests that many who could afford more children value other things more than bringing a new life into the world.

Conversely, some couples who have difficulty conceiving will pay tens of thousands of dollars to have a fertility clinic create a son or daughter for them. How many parents realize that for every IVF-created child who survives to birth, many others die in the process? And if that custom-made embryo is found in the lab to have a "defect," the clinic will readily recommend scraping the "faulty" child and ordering up another.

Tragically, many scientists and politicians now think of living human embryos created in fertility clinics but no longer desired by their biological parents — as raw material which can be destroyed for stem cell research. Is it any wonder that some scientists now want to create human embryos in the lab, by fertilization or cloning, solely to kill them for their stem cells? Or that such misguided efforts continue despite the existence of morally acceptable alternatives, such as stem cells from umbilical cords and other "adult" sources that are already helping patients with 72 conditions and diseases?

In all these ways we are being urged to stop seeing human life as God sees it. From the moment of our conception, God does not see us superficially as a microscopic, uniformed cell. In every child, born or unborn, God sees the individual he created to love, and be loved by, for all eternity.

At the other end of life, as well, the bonds of love between generations are being stretched thin. Some doctors and ethicists claim that patients with dementia or in a so-called "persistent vegetative state" are no longer really persons, and that families should deny them even the most basic forms of nourishment and care. And yet, however weak and vulnerable such patients may appear, they have the awesome power to inspire heroic, sacrificial love from their family members and caregivers — a power that can lead to the sanctification of those who care for them.

It matters not to God whether we are now, or ever, conscious of our existence or capable of "higher thought." The value of a human life does not depend on exercising one's intellect; it comes from God's fatherly love for each human, created in his image. His love is present long before our brain waves can be measured at six weeks' gestation, and long after our brains no longer function so well. His love is present long before our heart begins to beat at 22 days after conception, and long after our heart begins to fail. His love is present at every step and misstep of our lives.

And to some of us who are humble and lowly, God grants the privilege to be his instrument in bringing forth holiness from others. God loves, and wants us to love, the grandfather lying unconscious in a hospital bed, the child with severe physical and mental impairments, the frightened teenage mother and the unplanned embryo nesting in her womb. Each of these vulnerable persons is given to us so we may learn to love as God loves — generously, sacrificially, unconditionally.

May we never tire of proclaiming the dignity and worth of every human life. May we never tire of serving the vulnerable and their caregivers with generous hearts. And may we never cease to pray for the day when all people, and all societies, will defend the life of every human from conception to natural death.

Respect Life

Father James Ross’ Ministry of Love Ends Sept. 25

Rev. James Henry Ross died Sept. 25, 2007, in Oklahoma City. Father Ross was born Feb. 9, 1922, in Chickasha. All of those touched by his life will remember his ready smile and devotion to God. Father Ross was ordained a Roman Catholic priest on Dec. 21, 1946, at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Oklahoma City. He offered his first solemn Mass at Holy Name Church, Chickasha, on Dec. 27, 1946.

Father Ross attended grade school and high school at St. Joseph Academy, Chickasha. He completed his freshman year of college at Oklahoma A&M (now Oklahoma State University), Stillwater, in 1940, and then transferred to St. Benedict’s College, Atchison, Kan., graduating cum laude with a bachelor’s degree in philosophy in April 1943. In 1943, Father Ross entered Kendrick Seminary in St. Louis, Mo., and completed an accelerated four-year program in December 1946.

Following his ordination, Father Ross served the parish of St. Peter Church, Woodward, and its missions until he was assigned to the Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help where he also taught classes at John Carroll grade school and high school from 1947-1950. In 1950, Catholic High School (now Bishop McGuinness Catholic High School) was opened where Father Ross taught religion classes and was the first athletic director. During his teaching service, he also assisted at Christ the King Church, Oklahoma City. Father Ross always had a warm greeting for his many students and always called them by name.

During 1953, Father Ross served Sts. Peter and Paul Parish, Cushing, and St. Mary Parish, Drumright. Both parishes are now in the Diocese of Tulsa. Father Ross also served St. Patrick Church, Walters, and St. Thomas Aquinas Chapel, Waurika (1953-1955), and St. John Nepomuk Church, Yukon (1955-1958). In 1958, Father Ross was called to help establish the new parish of St. Eugene, Oklahoma City, where he served as pastor until 1967. Father Ross was pastor of St. Barbara Church, Lawton (now Holy Family Church) from 1967-1975 and Sts. Peter and Paul, Kingfisher from 1975 until his retirement in June 1997.

Father Ross also served as Diocesan Moderator of the National Council of Catholic Women for many years (1955-1973).

Father Ross was one of four sons and three daughters of Henry Clay and Marie Angela Decker Ross, both of whom pre-deceased him. A brother, Joseph Roy, and his wife, Mary, and a sister, Mary Mary Ann Doak and her husband, John Doak, and brother-in-law, Elmer Volzer, also pre-deceased Father Ross.


A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated at the Chapel at the Catholic Pastoral Center on Friday, Sept. 29, 2007 at 11 a.m. with internment at Rose Hill Cemetery (formerly known as the Catholic Cemetery), 10th Street and Alabama Avenue, Chickasha.

Funeral arrangements were under the direction of Smith and Kernke Funeral Home, 14624 N. May, Oklahoma City.

In lieu of flowers, the family and friends of Father Ross request that gifts and donations be made to the Catholic Foundation of Oklahoma Inc. for the benefit of Sts. Peter and Paul School, Kingfisher, or St. Katharine Drexel Retirement Center, El Reno.
Pro-Life: Caring for Aging Loved Ones

By Monica and Bill Dodds

If you’re a family caregiver, we thank you for what you do. It may never have occurred to you that caregiving is pro-life. Your compassion, dedication and hard work are testaments to the value of human life.

There is a spiritual component to the vocation of caregiving but there are also the nitty-gritty details. We’ve learned that while every situation is unique, there are common, basic issues for both the caregiver and the care-receiver.

From a Caregiver’s Point of View: A Better Understanding of What You’re Going Through

The stress of caregiving can unleash a torrent of unexpected emotions and bring challenges that often have no clear solutions.

- Look for a support group or good friend where you can “dump” some of that anger.
- Forgive yourself. Go back and apologize.
- You can start over again.
- It helps to realize that no matter what you do — no matter how much or how little — you are likely to feel guilty.
- Remember that you’re not perfect.
- Know that you can set limits. Don’t wait for a crisis to arise before getting supplemental help.

Exhaustion is more than just being tired. It’s being tired for weeks, being tired for months. Don’t deny the problem. Admit that being exhausted isn’t good for you personally or for you as a caregiver. An exhausted caregiver can’t be a good caregiver.

Give yourself a tiny break. A minute or two. Go into the bathroom, shut the door and wash your face with cool water. Taking a day off may seem impossible, but you can take a one-minute break. Get help. Ask family members to assist. Look into respite care. Even a few hours once a week can help a lot. Consider joining a caregivers support group. Many caregivers find it extremely beneficial. In some cases, care for your parent is offered while you attend the group.

“Respite care” means a break for someone who is taking care of an ill person, a rest for the primary caregiver for the well-being of another. A primary caregiver needs to take breaks or soon will burn out.

Remember that the break is for you. Don’t fill the time running errands for the person in your care.

To find someone to help you with respite care, check with the local Catholic social service agency, ask at the parish or contact a local program. Ask for help from family members, fellow parishioners, friends, neighbors, the community, and social service professionals. Many people would like to help but don’t know what you need. Let them know specifically what they can do.

From a Care-Receiver’s Point of View: A Better Understanding of What Your Loved One is Experiencing

Your loved one values his or her independence and many decisions you and he or she make revolve around this key concept. Encourage and allow independence. Don’t take over tasks or make decisions your loved one can still handle.

Quite often, what your loved one is feeling is a tremendous sense of loss — in so many areas. As a caregiver, you are helping your loved one cope with a succession of losses.

Usually the biggest loss of all is the death of a spouse. Grief involves a host of feelings. It’s commonly accepted there’s a “cycle of grief.”

Realize that as your loved one ages (or health deteriorates), he or she becomes unable to perform the everyday tasks that person used to love and may feel a part of his or her identity is being lost.

A role reversal (an adult child assuming some of the duties of an aging parent) or an assumption of new roles (taking over responsibilities formerly handled by one’s spouse) is rarely an easy transition.

Go slowly. Be gentle. Don’t suddenly charge in and take control. Start with small things. If at all possible, let your loved one still play a part.

Your loved one is experiencing losses and understanding standbly feels frightened. You’ve lost something too. As he or she grows older or sicker and loses more abilities, you’re losing the person who once comforted you.

Care-receivers are often concerned about “being a burden.” Your loved one might bring up the subject when you’re feeling angry, upset or frustrated.

Admit that what you’re doing is hard. Look for outside support. Realize that your loved one may need to be reassured more than once.

See if there’s some small part of a big task that your loved one can do to feel like he or she is helping. It’s at least a little bit.

Let your parent or spouse know that providing care is something you want to do. Yes, there are hectic moments, but you see taking care of him or her as a privilege.

Spirituality: A Better Understanding of Your Vocation

God has chosen you to play a central role in providing that care. Just as from the cross Jesus asked St. John — the patron saint of caregivers — to take care of his Blessed Mother, God asks you to help take care of someone else. He deeply loves:

- What you’re doing is a prayer, and the path you and your loved one are taking is a pilgrimage.
- It is the Father asking you to help his son or daughter along these final stages of that journey.
- It is the Son who has told us whatever we do for those in need we do for him.
- And it is the Spirit who is with you right now. It is the Spirit who will never leave you.

God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, will richly bless you and your loved one in this life, and in the life to come.

Monica and Bill Dodds are the founders of the Friends of St. John the Caregiver: www.fjc.org.

Monica is the author of “A Catholic Guide to Caring for Your Aging Parent” (Loyola Press) from which this material was taken.

The Person with the Mental Illness: Bearing God’s Image

By Reverend Richard Gill, LC

Pope John Paul II has written: “Whoever suffers from mental illness ‘always’ bears God’s image and likeness in themselves, as does every human being. In addition, they ‘always’ have the inalienable right not only to be considered as an image of God and therefore a person, but also to be treated as such.”

In recent decades, the world has grown much more effective in mobilizing against major health threats such as AIDS, heart disease, cancer and the diseases whose statistics frighten us with their devastating impact on humanity. It is relatively easy to raise awareness of such threats and marshal human and financial resources to combat them. In the area of mental health, however, the situation is quite different.

It has been estimated that worldwide, as many as 500 million people are affected by some sort of mental illness. It is also said that the United States has the highest rate of mental illness of all the advanced nations: one in four adult Americans suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year. Yet there is relatively little public awareness of the scope of the problem. And tragically, the stereotypes and stigma which are so often attached to mental illness help to create a culture where those who are affected are falsely seen as helpless victims or objects of charity.

Without addressing in any great detail the range of medical causes and treatments of mental illness or milder forms of mental or emotional problems, it would be helpful to reflect on the impact of a culture of violence and a culture of materialism. Causes of mental illness vary widely, from inherited chemical imbalances responsible for the development of such illnesses as depression, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia, to brain disease, to causes that are more immediately under our control. These man-made causes include, in many areas of the world, the spread of terrorism, the very purpose of which is to inflict widespread mental and emotional suffering. War, with its related atrocities and crimes, can bring out the worst aspects of our nature.

Additional challenges to mental health arise from the general state of culture, the weakening of moral standards, and trends within the culture that work against the true goods of the human person. For many, especially the vulnerable, phenomena such as hedonism and materialism, all too common in advanced societies, can foster exaggerated hopes of pleasure and reward and distorted notions of what constitutes success. Unrealizable hopes leave in their wake people who are severely discouraged. Our increasingly technocratic and production-oriented culture tends to neglect the goods of the spirit, the things that make life more properly “human.” Human values are defined more in terms of a “culture of having” rather than a “culture of being.”

In a society that judges a person on the value of what he produces, the mentally ill person is easily seen merely as a burden on society. As Christians, then, we are called unceasingly to affirm their dignity as human beings made in the image and likeness of God and to recognize their value to the community: “It is everyone’s duty to make an active response; our actions must show that mental illness does not create insurmountable obstacles . . . Indeed it should inspire a particularly attentive attitude.”

continued on page 5
Reproductive Technology Turns Humans Into Commodities

By Helen Alvare, Esq.

At the beginning of the 21st century, it is impossible to avoid news reports on the subject of the “changing American family” — high rates of cohabitation, out-of-wedlock parenting, same-sex marriage. One lesser-noted phenomenon, changing people’s experience of family from the inside out, is the increasing use of assisted reproductive technologies (“ARTs”). In the United States alone, there are thousands of fertility clinics, sperm banks, egg brokers and surrogate mothers annually producing about 10,000 children.

Many people, including many Catholics, are unaware of the Church’s moral responses to these practices. Perhaps not surprisingly, many find it difficult to imagine that our faith would have moral objections to married couples “making babies” by any means. Yet the Church does firmly object. Church documents such as Donum Vitae and Evangelium Vitae explain the arguments against substituting a technological act for married love as the source of procreation. The ART industry tends to “commodify” children, and ART processes may also involve freezing, destroying or donating (for experiments) embryos “left over” from clients.

Another Catholic perspective on ARTs concerns their effects upon the family and by extension, society. Parts of this teaching will appeal immediately to our common sense. Other parts require one to accept with good will that God’s ways are not our ways, that there is holy mystery in God’s choosing to bring human life into being in one manner and not another.

Catholic social teaching calls the family the “first natural community,” society’s first cell. As such, the family ought to be the prototype of a good society. At a very basic level, Catholic teaching holds that good social life requires every person to regard every other person as a gift from God — as a unique individual with his or her own talents and responsibilities, a person to be treated in accord with the dignity given by God Himself.

Catholics recognize that human beings are destined to live socially. We are meant not only to live in community, but to find in service to others the very meaning of our life, just as Jesus’ life was characterized and crowned by his complete service to others.

Families are to form human beings for this manner of social living. They do this in part when they form children by an act of the most profound and intimate love between the parents. Children so conceived are, from their very beginning, the gifts and fruits of this love. Children so conceived may be desired but cannot be “demanded.”

The ART industry is helping to blot out the notion that people ought to be accepted simply for who they are; rather, via ARTs, children’s traits may increasingly be selected. More commonly, each year in the United States, thousands of paid donors possessing particular genetic, racial, or ethnic characteristics are used to provide embryos for ART procedures. But they also accomplish this socially Anyone — any individual or couple, single or married, young or old, heterosexual or homosexual — can buy sperm or eggs or even a custom-made embryo in the United States. The ART industry, in other words, is regularly and deliberately placing children in situations known to cause problems for them and for society.

A second aspect of Catholic Social Teaching on the family is also directly contradicted by the practice of ARTs: that the family based on marriage is the sanctuary of life, the place where life can best be welcomed and protected. Some embryos produced through ARTs are directly killed if they are "wrong sex," or have the "wrong genes" following pre-implantation genetic diagnosis, or simply don’t seem to be growing as vigorously as their siblings in the Petri dish. Some embryos die while frozen, or upon being thawed. Some are aborted during the fetal stage if “too many” children begin to grow in their mother’s womb. Some unused embryos are simply discarded once parents have reached their desired family or have given up trying to have a child.

Furthermore, we increasingly know that even those embryos who “make it” are subjected to serious risks. Very little testing was undertaken regarding the safety of IVF and related practices before these were offered commercially. Scientific literature over the last several years has begun to document the high rates of disabilities suffered from multiple gestation births from ARTs; over 38 percent of all ART births are of multiples. This figure does not account for the many additional ART pregnancies that began as multiple but were “reduced” before birth. Even “singleton” ART children seem to have higher rates of some rare genetic disorders than are found among natural births.

Many people have difficulty understanding how an industry seemingly dedicated to providing children could run afoul of Catholic social teaching about the well-being of families. Human beings naturally desire children. A married couple may easily come to think of procreation as a “right.” Thousands of fertility services will do everything scientifically possible to produce children for them. But a closer look at the practices and values of the ART industry shows how deeply it contradicts the real goods of the family and of society.

The flawed values and practices in ARTs are less widely known and understood than they should be — especially among couples lured by the promise that the industry can give them “a child of their own.” Spiritual strength and reverence for the mystery of God’s plan for creation will need to sustain us at times when our merely human reason and strength are not enough to resist this temptation.

Helen Alvare is an associate professor of law at The Catholic University of America’s Columbus School of Law in Washington, D.C.

Full versions of these articles and more can be found at usccb.org/prolife/programs/rlp/rlp0708.shtml

Bearing God’s Image — continued from page 4

In what ways do mentally ill persons faithfully reflect the image of God? In an address to health-care workers in February 2006, Cardinal Javier Lozano Barragán, president of the Pontifical Council for Health Care Workers, observed that “the mentally ill person resembles our Lord on the cross; and since the cross is the only way to resurrection, the mentally ill person is worthy and reaches such a level of excellence because of the magnitude of his love and the suffering he endures.”

The dedication of so many individuals at work in the field of mental health points us to the dignity of people with mental illness. Often they work amid many difficulties, and it can be challenging to recognize the human dignity of the persons they serve. Caregivers for people with mental illness need a formation of the heart, because they are dealing with human beings who need to be treated at every moment in accord with their God-given dignity. Mental health workers with a deeply Christian understanding of the redemptive value of suffering will go beyond mere human sympathy to authentic solidarity in suffering, a bond between persons rooted in love.

In short, mental health-care workers must have a formation that gives them an authentically Christian understanding of the person, made in the image and likeness of God and redeemed by Jesus Christ. A formation that gives them a proper understanding of the person’s nature and destiny will lead them to care for the person as a brother or sister, and to seek, as much as possible to restore the person’s interior freedom and the capacity to orient his life toward the truth of his existence.

Catholic teaching also has an obligation to foster a serene, balanced way of life in stable families, a workplace promoting true human goods and authentic growth of individuals, a solid consensus on clear moral standards by which we will live together, and real objectivity about behaviors which are detrimental to the health of the culture.

And finally, the Church community itself has a great opportunity to recognize and accept the dignity of persons with disabilities as a witness to the uniqueness of each member. The parish community must create that counter-cultural environment, in which all people can claim an equal place and contribute through presence and action.

What we can do:

■ Understand and show others that the rehabilitation of mentally ill persons is a duty of all society, with special preference for those in greatest need.

■ Welcome all persons with disabilities into the parish and embrace parish-based programs.

■ Promote social and physical environments that enhance human relations and create for mentally ill persons a sense of belonging to a community.

■ Foster the healthy development of children, including their mental functioning.

■ Fight against mentalities of moral relativism, consumerism, sexual license and instant gratification.

■ Share the Word of God with persons with mental illness, as their mental and physical condition allows it.

Rev. Richard Gill, L.C., was the founding president of Sooner Catholic and is the president of the Institute for the Psychological Sciences in Arlington, Va. Since 2005 he is director of Our Lady of Mt. Kisco Family and Retreat Center.
The Lord’s Harvest

Woman Saw Need and With Leap of Faith
Opened Ministry Dedicated to Helping Others

By Ray Dyer
The Sooner Catholic

EL RENO — Nikki Pruitt was
helping to make sandwiches so
hungry people who rang the rectory
doorbell at Sacred Heart Catholic
Church could have something to eat.
One day a woman with some small
children came to the door in need of
more than sandwiches. Seeing their
need, Pruitt sent the woman to the
local food pantry, figuring the family
would be well taken care of there.
The woman came back awhile later
with very little, as Pruitt recalls,
barely enough to feed her family
more than a single meal. It was then
she decided more had to be done.
This happened about a dozen
years ago and Pruitt has been doing
more ever since. She is founder,
president and Mrs. Do-Everything
for The Lord’s Harvest, a not-for-
profit organization made up of
volunteers who each week help
feed less fortunate individuals and
families in El Reno.
Pruitt had been wrestling with
leaving her full-time job for quite
some time. She wanted to end her
daily commute to Pauls Valley where
she worked as a counselor in a state
corrections facility. She wanted to be
closer to her husband, Marion, and
their five children. She wanted to
accepting them for who they are.”

“We don’t preach to our people,” Pruitt said. “They hear
that all the time, ‘God wants you to do this, God wants
you to do that’. Instead we try to let them see God’s love
through our actions. They see people be more like Jesus,
accepting them for who they are.”

The Lord’s Harvest.

Today, more than a dozen
volunteers gather each week at the
Lord’s Harvest in downtown El Reno
to fill boxes with food and household
items. They then fan out across
town, delivering to 150 families
scattered throughout El Reno. The
deliveries are divided into nine
routes so each volunteer delivers to
about 17 homes. Pruitt, a member of
Sacred Heart Church, said the food
deliveries are only part of the
mission of The Lord’s Harvest.

“Our drivers are special because
not only do they deliver food each
week, they also take time to talk and
get to know the people they are
bringing food to,” she said. “We don’t
preach to our people,” Pruitt said.
“They hear that all the time, ‘God
wants you to do this, God wants you
to do that’. Instead we try to let
them see God’s love through our
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closer to her husband, Marion, and
their five children. She wanted to
help people in need and she wanted
them to experience God’s love
through her. Out of all of this came
was able to get some much-needed
muscle from inmates at a state work
release center in Union City. Each
week the inmates help load and
unload the 7,000 to 10,000 pounds of
food delivered on the truck.
Longtime volunteer Frank Whinery
coordinated inventory for more than
25 years at the Federal Correctional
Institution in El Reno. He now
oversees inventory for The Lord’s
Harvest and fills out all the paper-
work that goes along with operating
a not-for-profit entity. Whinery, 77
and also a member at Sacred Heart,
pulls out a clipboard piled high with
forms and reports the Regional Food
Bank and other providers require
from their non-profit distributors.
For the past seven years, Jerry
Hahn, a member of St. Joseph Parish
in Union City which provides strong
support to the program, has driven
the food truck to the Regional Food
Bank where it is loaded and then to
The Lord’s Harvest office where it is
unloaded. Soon he’ll be driving a
mile or so further as the program is
moving to a new location in west El
Reno. A former Nazarene church
building on historic Route 66 was
donated to The Lord’s Harvest.
Pruitt said it was a minor miracle
because the downtown building,
where the ministry has been housed
for the past several years, was
recently sold. The new owner plans
to restore the historic structure and
turn it into office space. He has
graciously allowed The Lord’s
Harvest to remain in the building
until the new home is ready. Pruitt
said a new roof will be needed at the
new location and some other updates
will be required as well. But already
the local business community has
offered assistance. Paul King, owner
of King Electric, told Pruitt his firm
would take care of any electrical
needs at the new location.

“That’s the way it has been,”
Pruitt said. “God takes care of every
detail. I used to worry about every-
thing, I was trying to be in control.
Then I realized after you bump your
head a few times, that’s God telling
you, ‘Let go.’ And when you do, you
find God is the greatest organizer.
All of this is happening because God
has touched people’s hearts which
means we have people helping
people. This is what The Lord’s
Harvest is all about.”

For more information about The
Lord’s Harvest, contact Nikki Pruitt
at (405) 422-2001.
Annual Day at the Fair Enjoyed by Teens and Knights

By Rex Hogan
For the Soonor Catholic

OKLAHOMA CITY — There’s a class of students at St. Anthony’s Hospital that finds life somewhat more challenging than most youngsters.

The students are dually diagnosed as mentally challenged and also have mental illness. Behavior can be a problem in the classroom, teachers say. Oklahoma City Knights of Columbus Council 1038 members probably don’t know it, but they play a role in helping to improve the students’ classroom behavior.

For the past 61 years, Council 1038 has sponsored a program that brings mentally challenged students to the Oklahoma State Fair. The St. Anthony’s students are among these young people.

“This year we had six students go to the fair,” said Annette Marks, a therapeutic and recreational specialist with St. Anthony’s.

“The kids who go to the fair get to go based on behavior points. We’ve had up to 20 students go to the fair and they always have a great time,” she said.

“We had six go this year. This is my fourth year to go with them and it’s always a great time. Most of them have never been to the fair before,” she said.

Karen Tucker teaches a special needs class at Putnam City High School. She and her students went to the Oklahoma State Fair this year as guests of Council 1038.

“We’ve been doing that for a while. My students are considered low functioning, mentally handicapped students and most of them wouldn’t have the opportunity to go to the fair if it weren’t for the Knights,” she said.

Tucker said because of the expense involved with fair tickets and because St. Anthony’s special needs students require close supervision because of possible behavioral problems, many of their parents don’t take their children to events such as the state fair.

Ernie Chastain helped organize this year’s event for schoolchildren.

“One day we’ve been doing this. We’ve always had enough Knights to walk around with them and there’s just a lot of satisfaction seeing these kids. A lot of times the kids and teachers come up to us afterwards and thank us,” he said.

Photo/Rex Hogan

Members of Council 1038 with some of the kids at the Oklahoma State Fair.

Pope: Childhood Is Life’s Most Important Stage

VATICAN CITY (Zenit.org) — Benedict XVI says that childhood is the most important stage of life and the time to impress God’s law upon the soul.

The pope said this during his reflection on St. John Chrysostom at the general audience in St. Peter’s Square. The Holy Father continued with his series of catecheses on the Fathers of the Church.

St. John Chrysostom was born around the year 349 and died in 407, thus the pontiff noted that this year marks the 16th century of his death.

“Chrysostom is counted among the most prolific Fathers,” he said. “His is an exquisitely pastoral theology, in which there is constant concern for the coherence between the thought expressed by the word and lived existence.

“The two things, knowledge of the truth and rectitude of life, go together: Knowledge must become life. Every one of his discourses aimed at developing in the faithful the exercise of intelligence, of true reason, in order to understand and put into practice moral needs and precepts of the faith.”

Personal development

Benedict XVI highlighted Chrysostom’s teaching on the stages of life, explaining that the saint “tried to assist, through his writings, the integral development of the person, in the physical, intellectual and religious dimension. The various phases of growth are comparable to as many seas in an immense ocean.”

We must be aware how important it is that in this first phase of life, the major orientations that give the right perspective to existence truly enter into man.

The pope noted that the first stage of life is the most important.

“In this first stage, inclinations to vice and virtue begin to show,” the Holy Father said. “That is why God’s law must be impressed on the soul from the beginning ‘as on a table of wax.’ In fact, this is the most important age.

“We must be aware how important it is that in this first phase of life the major orientations that give the right perspective to existence truly enter into man. Chrysostom therefore recommends: ‘From a very young age, arm children with spiritual weapons.’”

Pope says children are like a bridge; the three become one

The Holy Father noted the second and third stages that St. John Chrysostom spoke of: adolescence and then engagement and marriage.

Of this latter stage, the bishop of Rome said that the saint “recalls the goals of marriage, enriching them — with an appeal to the virtue of temperance — with a rich tapestry of personalized relationships. Spouses who are well prepared block, in this way, the road to divorce: Everything is carried out joyfully and one can educate their children to virtue.

“When the first child is born, this is like a bridge; the three become one flesh, so that the child links the two parts, and the three make up one family, a little Church.”

Benedict XVI said teaching “is important today more than ever.”

“Let us pray,” he concluded, “that the Lord render us docile to the lessons of this great teacher of the faith.”
Kingfisher Couple Say They Turned to Prayer as Floodwaters Raged

By Eileen Dugan
The Sooner Catholic

KINGFISHER — It wasn’t storming when they left home that Sunday. The weather was beautiful. They had been to Mass Saturday evening, and that night it had rained 5 inches in Kingfisher. Now that the storm had passed, they were on their way to check on their farm.

As it turned out, the farm was OK. But Leroy and Bernice Krittenbrink were in for a surprise.

“Our daughter called us on our cell phone to tell us it was flooding. We told her we had just come through town on our way to the farm and had had no trouble,” said Bernice Krittenbrink.

“But as we made our way back to town, we could see that the street we had taken earlier was under water. We turned around and started back toward the farm.”

Suddenly, a wall of water hit them with tremendous force. The pickup they were in was washed off the highway. Strong floodwaters smashed their truck into a ditch, and they couldn’t get out. The water was deep, and the pickup was floating around in it.

“In the beginning, there was little water in the cab of the truck,” Bernice said. “We sat there and said, ‘This is not going to be good.’”

As the pickup was pulled along by the current with them inside, they hit a fence. They thought it would catch them, but it didn’t.

“Huge bales of hay bobbed by. We started to say some prayers out loud. In between, we talked to our daughter on the cell phone and called 911,” Bernice said.

“The call went through, and, after a considerable wait, a helicopter began circling overhead. Highway Patrolman Bill Reitz, a neighbor from Kingfisher, motioned from above to find out how many people were in the truck.

“On TV, people saw us waving out both windows. We were letting Bill know there were two of us inside, so he dropped two life jackets for us from the helicopter,” Bernice said.

Water was streaming into the truck now. Outside, the hood was being covered. Neither of the Krittenbrinks could swim.

Leroy yelled, “We have to get out of here quick!”

They strapped on the life jackets inside the pickup and pushed out through the truck’s windows. Bobbing in the swirling red water, they awaited rescue.

As they abandoned their truck, Bernice threw her purse over the pickup’s head rest. “In a side pocket, I kept a small decade rosary,” she said. “Two days later when my son-in-law returned to the truck, the purse was gone, but my rosary was sitting on the back seat.”

Originally, the helicopter was going to go back and get a sling to rescue the Krittenbrinks, but the pickup was sinking too fast. Instead, the helicopter returned with Fire Chief Randy Poindexter balancing on the helicopter skid. “No one who helped us had ever done anything like this before,” Bernice explained. “Randy tried to grab us from the skid.”

The Krittenbrinks had waited about an hour and 45 minutes to be rescued. They were soaked and they were cold. Moving was exhausting. When Bernice and Leroy were lifted by the helicopter into the air, they could not hold on. Their wet clothing weighed them down, and they had no strength left.

“When I fell back into the water, I just remember I didn’t touch bottom. The life jacket just popped me right up,” Bernice said. The same thing happened to Leroy when he couldn’t hold on.

The helicopter flew around again, first for Bernice and then for her husband. On the second try, each Krittenbrink was able to hold on with Poindexter’s help.

Their dramatic rescue has affected the Krittenbrinks. They had faith before, but their flood experience has reinforced their belief in the Lord’s help in times of need. “God was certainly looking out for us,” Bernice said. “We want to take this opportunity to tell people how God helped us and also to thank all of those who saw us on TV and were praying for us to get out of the situation.”

Leroy and Bernice Krittenbrink are parishioners of Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church in Kingfisher.

David and Jennifer Cunningham, at left, and Beth and Lenny Ortiz agree Marriage Encounter is good for a marriage. Photo/Sooner Catholic
Construction Adds to Growth of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton

By Steve Gust
For the Sooner Catholic

EDMOND — It’s almost hard to believe that 20 years ago there was no St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic School here.

In the 1980s, a group of parents got together and made plans for the school — as part of St. John’s Parish in Edmond. That dream has fully blossomed as Archbishop Beltran on Sept. 20 officially blessed the many rooms of a sparkling new $3.6 million two-story addition.

The first to be blessed was the John Paul II gymnasium, named in honor of the late Holy Father. There, the faculty, staff, well wishers and 480 students of the school were on hand for the blessing. Assisting were St. John’s pastor, Father John Metzinger, associate pastor, Father Dan Letourneau, and Deacon Roy Fyrysthe. Also present were Sister Barbara Joseph and St. Elizabeth’s principal, Angie Howard.

It came after celebration of Mass by Archbishop Beltran as he urged students to pray for the possible sainthood of martyred priest Father Stanley Rother and others who had given their lives for their faith.

From there, the archbishop was treated to a tour of St. Elizabeth’s classrooms as well as a new youth room.

At each room, Archbishop Beltran greeted students and teachers. At the new music room, he cheered on young talented musicians, who belted out a rousing rendition of the Notre Dame fight song.

The addition gives St. Elizabeth’s another 26,000 square feet of room for educating students from pre-kindergarten to eighth grade. There is also a fitness room, band room, science laboratory, teacher workroom, religious education offices and other classrooms.

During his remarks, Father Metzinger thanked the archbishop for his attendance and gave special thanks to Ken Kenworthy Jr., one of the men to co-chair the capital campaign for the building. Also helping in that effort were John Erbrick and Tom Casse.

“This is really wonderful and an up-to-date high-quality facility for St. Elizabeth’s,” Kenworthy said. Kenworthy was one of the parents back in 1983, who met to discuss the possibility of a new Catholic school.

“We were told to raise $50,000 for the initial effort,” he recalled. It took a couple of months to achieve that, he recalled. In 1989, Father John Petuskey was assigned to St. John’s as pastor. The effort to start the school received new vigor as the school opened in the early 1990s with a few grades. It added classes and grades every year until becoming the largest Catholic elementary school in the state.

In that time hundreds of young-sters have graduated from St. Elizabeth’s, with many moving on to Bishop McGuinness High School.

Kenworthy has had children attend St. Elizabeth’s and now has a grandchild in the pre-K program.

Howard, in her second year as principal, said the building has been open since the start of the school year in August.

Construction began during the 2005-2006 school year.

“It’s really nice to have everyone under one roof and not have the students having to walk across the parking lots so much,” she said.

OSU Student From Kingfisher Wins $500 Scholarship

KINGFISHER — Kathleen Jayne Gruntmeir, a 2007 Kingfisher High School graduate, was the recent recipient of a $500 Oklahoma City Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women’s scholarship.

A co-captain on Kingfisher’s high school varsity basketball team, Gruntmeir maintained a 4.0 GPA throughout high school, was ranked first in her class and graduated as valedictorian. She served on the Student Council and FPA and was a member of the National Honor Society for three years.

Church involvement is important to Gruntmeir. An active member of Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church, she has helped with children’s programs and baby-sitting, served Thanksgiving dinners, and assisted with Mardi Gras Ball fundraisers. She has been a member of her parish’s choir for two years and of its youth group for three.

She has also served Sts. Peter and Paul as a Sunday lector.

Gruntmeir also takes community service seriously. She is a Junior Lassiez in her local Lions Club and a Junior Rotarian. For several years she has helped with the Kingfisher Christmas light display in the city park, and last year she was asked to serve as a high school representative on a community improvement committee called the Kingfisher Strategic Planning Initiative. Serving as a Senate page for Oklahoma State Sen. Mike Johnson and on the Student Governing Board of the Kingfisher Regional Hospital are two more of Gruntmeir’s civic activities.

While still in high school, she took night classes at Redlands Community College, earning 12 hours of college credit. Currently, Gruntmeir is a freshman at Oklahoma State University, studying to be a pediatrician.

Support for Sister Sponsa

OKLAHOMA CITY — A brunch to raise money for Our Lady of Fatima Rehab Center in Liberia, Africa, will be held later this month. The center for handicapped children, outside the Liberian capitol city of Monrovia, was founded by Sister Sponsa Beltran, OSB. Confined to a wheelchair herself, Sister Sponsa continues to operate the center and school, relying totally on donations. The brunch will be hosted by Pearl Sullens and will be held from 10 a.m. to noon Oct. 23 at Catholic Charities, 1501 N. Classen Blvd. Please RSVP by Oct. 19 to Pearl at (405) 524-3641 or e-mail psullens1@cox.net. If you would like to make a donation, make your check to Sister Sponsa Beltran and mail it to Pearl Sullens, 1941 NW 17th, Oklahoma City, Okla. 73106.
Educator Says Schools ‘Must Roll Away the Stone’

By Ray Dyer  
The Sooner Catholic

OKLAHOMA CITY — With a razor sharp, rapid-fire delivery, Sister Clare Fitzgerald, of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, had teachers and principals from our archdiocesan Catholic schools rolling with laughter one moment while pondering the true meaning of Catholic education the next.

A native of Boston, Sister Clare has taught at all levels of Catholic education and is the founding director of the Catholic Leadership Program, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at Boston College. She has lectured and presented workshops about Catholic education across the United States and Canada, as well as in Puerto Rico, Guam, Great Britain and Scotland. Sister Clare, at the invitation of the archdiocesan Office of Education, was at the Catholic Pastoral Center on Sept. 21 to address the several hundred Catholic educators and administrators attending the annual Archdiocesan Teacher Institute.

The following day, Sister Clare presented at the annual Catechetical Congress dedicated to parish Religious Education leaders.

Sister Clare said "highly qualified" teachers are a must for Catholic schools, and competitive pay is mandatory. "Figure out how to do it," she said, referring to teacher pay. Even more important is the commitment to teaching the Catholic faith. "If Catholic schools are operating only as an option to public education, then shut them down," she said.

Sister Clare said Catholic education must prepare students to accept the responsibilities presented to them during their time on earth. She said throughout history, mankind has struggled with different issues and challenges unique to their time. Authentic Catholic education, she said, is best suited to help prepare the children of today to deal with the issues our world faces.

Sister Clare said the resurrection represents resistance, a resistance to death. Christ, she said, could have remained comfortable in the tomb, but instead he resisted death and the stone was rolled away.

She challenged Catholic educators to also "roll away the stone and come out of the tomb. We're too comfortable in the tomb," she said. A teacher, and especially a Catholic teacher, can change the world, she said.

Sister Clare stressed academics and challenged Catholic educators to prepare students for the global economy. Years ago, she said parents would tell their children to clean their plate because children in India are starving. Now parents should be telling their children to do their homework because the kids in India are doing their homework―"and they want your job," she said.

Sister Catherine Powers, CND, superintendent of Catholic education, said Sister Clare held the attention of her audience from beginning to end.

"In a humorous, yet profound way, Sister Clare held out to teachers on Friday and catechists on Saturday a challenging task," Sister Catherine said. "Her challenge — their important task of transmitting the faith to students who are so negatively influenced by the culture of today. I have been amazed that several days after Sister's presentation, teachers are calling me to say how much they received from her inspiring talks."
New Science Lab Unveiled at Saint James School

By Eliana Tedrow
For the Sooner Catholic

OKLAHOMA CITY — St. James Catholic School has invested more than $15,000 in a new science lab for their students, and according to Principal James Bleecker, “It’s not the beginning and it’s not the end.”

“The Einstein Project,” the name dedicated to the state-of-the-art science lab, was celebrated at the school on Sept. 13, with a ribbon-cutting ceremony hosted by the South Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce. More than 50 supporters were in attendance, including South OKC Chamber of Commerce representatives, alumni, faculty and parishioners of St. James.

“Our goal for the Einstein Project Science Lab is to move beyond textbook teaching and create an atmosphere of hands-on discovery … to accomplish this, we must enhance our science curriculum to include the right learning environment and equipment,” said Bleecker.

Earlier that day Archbishop Beltran toured the new center and said he was “thrilled” about the new science lab and this was “a wonderful opportunity for students to learn about everything that God created.”

“[St. James] has always had a history of providing good quality education,” Jerry Foshee told the crowd, “and that is something you should be proud of.” He then presented Principal Bleecker with a plaque from the South Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce.

Following the ribbon-cutting ceremony, Bleecker thanked those who funded this project by coming to the auction fundraiser: alumni, staff, parishioners, parents, friends and members of the South Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce, said Brenda Arambula. “Without their support, this would have just been a dream.”

Strengthening the science program is Barbie Sloan, an ACE (Alliance for Catholic Education) science teacher from Notre Dame University, placed on assignment at St. James.

Father Robert Wood, pastor of St. James, said Catholic education “is the best youth ministry a school can offer to its youth.”

Sister Catherine Powers, superintendent of Catholic Education, said Catholic school enrollment in the archdiocese is at an all-time high this year. The spike in Catholic School enrollment comes despite increasing tuition costs, “which tells me that people are looking for something more,” she said.

“The primary focus of our school is always to bring the faith to our children,” Bleecker said. “The second,” he said, “is to give them the best possible education we can. We did some research and decided we needed to have space to do science in and do it right … and we did it.”

Father Wood closed the ceremony by blessing the new science lab.

First Region-Wide Youth Rally Called Success and Beginning

By Eileen Dugan
The Sooner Catholic

OKARCHE — Searching through piles of books for hidden money, spelling out words with letters on the bottoms of their shoes, and putting on clothes while keeping a balloon in the air were just some of the fun games young people enjoyed while getting to know each other at the first-ever, Region 9, Back-to-School Youth Rally.

The rally was held Sept. 16 at Holy Trinity Church and attracted close to 150 youth from parishes within the region. The archdiocese is divided up into nine regions. The eight parishes that make up Region 9 are Saint Mary’s in Guthrie, Saint Margaret Mary’s in Union City, Saints Peter and Paul’s in Kingfisher, Saint Joseph’s in Crescent, Saint Rose of Lima in Watonga, Holy Trinity in Okarche, Saints Peter and Paul’s in Kingfisher, Saint Joseph’s in Union City, and Holy Trinity Church, the rally’s host parish, concelebrated the Mass.

“Father Hamilton was spiritual component was the Mass.”

Father Hamilton was principal celebrant. Father Phillip Louis, pastor of Holy Trinity Church, the rally’s host parish, concelebrated. Deacons Max Schwarz of Holy Trinity, Roy Ellison of Saint Mary’s and Lloyd Mena of Saint Joseph’s Parish assisted while youth from various region parishes served as lectors, altar servers and readers of petitions.

Much thanks goes to Deacon Ray Ellison and his wife, Susan, the DRE/youth directors from Saint Mary’s; DRE Sandy Murray and Youth Minister Johanna Adams, Saints Peter and Paul’s; DRE/Youth Director Bonnye Mueggenborg, Holy Trinity Parish; Sister Melissa Leets, OSB, DRE/youth coordinator at Immaculate Heart of Mary, helped by Dana Schweitzer and her husband, Rick; DRE Peggy Dooley and Youth Director Delby Brenne of Saint Joseph’s; and secretary Mary Nix, who often attended rally-planning meetings for Sacred Heart Parish.

“All of those involved did a great job!” Father Hamilton said. “The youth rally was a great success! I knew it would be good, but it exceeded my expectations. Everyone had a good time. The adults who were involved were inspired.

“This Back-to-School Rally was the first thing we have attempted as a region. We wanted to pull off something more complicated than a single parish could handle. Everyone really worked hard, and we pulled it off. We will consider making the Back-to-School Youth Rally an annual event.”
The Catholic Foundation

Wills

Bequests, made through your Will, are the most frequently-made Planned Gifts. A Will is not only a statement of your priorities, but an expression of your lasting commitment to our Catholic faith. Through your Will, you designate the final recipients of the many gifts you have been given by God in His generosity. Remembering a Catholic parish, school or other charitable organization through a Bequest, is your final Investment in the Future of Our Faith.

A well planned Will allows you to both make your wishes known and make a difference. Please Remember the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City in Your Estate Plans

For more information on Planned Giving contact:
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Please Remember the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City in Your Estate Plans
Letters

Participation is Multi-Form

I appreciate the balance and respect with which Father Feehily (“The Power of Participation,” Sept. 23, 2007) has communicated his thoughts on Pope Benedict’s recent motu proprio, Summorum Pontificum, and its accompanying document to the world’s bishops. However, I think a restrictive or narrow interpretation of the permission given by the pope is not totally accurate. Furthermore, I am concerned that certain motives may have been unfairly imputed to the celebration held in Kingfisher.

The motu proprio of Pope Benedict stated that along with the Roman Missal promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1970 (which is the ordinary form or expression of the Roman rite), “it is permissible to celebrate the Sacrifice of the Mass following the typical edition of the Roman Missal promulgated by Bl. John XXIII in 1962.” (Summorum Pontificum, Article 1). The pope goes on to list several articles or conditions for its use. It is true that Article 2 mentions the permission given to priests of the Latin rite to use the 1962 Missal in Masses “without the people” (sine populo). An awkward translation of “cum populo” has a specific liturgical meaning, so too does the term Mass “cum populo,” a meaning not limited to “private Masses” (sine populo). An awkward translation of “cum populo” into English as Masses “in the presence of the people” promotes, perhaps, the more restrictive interpretation offered in Father Feehily’s letter. In other words, that awkward translation of Masses “in the presence of the people” could be read as referring to those private Masses (Article 2) in which the people ask to be present (Article 4). But even the presentation of the provisional English translation of the motu proprio by the Committee on the Liturgy of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops indicates that the permission “allows for and promotes a wider usage of the liturgical books in force in 1962.” (cf. USCCB Web site).

The assertion that this new permission is narrow in nature, or ought not to be publicly promoted, simply doesn’t seem to hold.

There need be no division in the Church over this rather broad permission, as if the permission or those who use it are seeking to undo the liturgical reform which followed Vatican II. The Mass according to the 1962 Missal is not another rite, but a legitimate form of the one Roman rite. The motivation for the Solemn High Mass was not to “turn back the clock,” or a nostalgic return to the “good old days.” Let’s be accurate: One Mass on Sept. 14 in Kingfisher, hardly smacks of an out-break of nostalgia. Participation is a critical element of the Sacred Liturgy; certainly, the nearly 300 people who attended the Mass from Oklahoma City, Norman, Edmond, Okarche, Kingfisher, Ponca City, Clinton and Prague participated — in a way proper to the extraordinary form — in a grace-filled evening.

Father Stephen Hamilton
Sts. Peter and Paul
Kingfisher

Across Oklahoma

Annual Game Oct. 20
OKLAHOMA CITY — Bishop McGuinness will host the 24th annual alumni varsity baseball game on Oct. 20. All alumni varsity players are invited to return to their alma mater, dust off their mitts and break out the bats. Batting practice begins at 3 p.m. Game time is 4 p.m. Please meet at Joe Cook Field. Dinner will be served in the baseball building following the game. Please RSVP to Bryan Wade at 845-4245.

Retreat
PIEDMONT — ENCOUNTERING GOD, moderated by Sister Marie Ballmann, OSB. To be held from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Oct. 20. Do you believe that humanity is holy; that our lives are a sacred affair and that our God is a seeker? Yes, God is seeking you! Learn to translate what you know about God into an experience of God. Come to the library of Red Plains Monastery, southwest of Piedmont. Call 373-4739 to register. Fee: $35. Non-refundable $10 deposit. Bring a sack lunch.

Mercy Weekends Offered
The Sisters of Mercy will host Come and See weekends for single Catholic women ages 18-45. The weekends help provide women time to inquire, reflect, experience and discern the Mercy way of life. The weekend will consist of prayerful reflection and guidance for your journey, sharing on ways of listening and understanding God’s call in the Church today. The first weekend will be Oct. 26-28 in St. Louis, Mo. Registration deadline is Oct. 19 and cost is $45. The second Come and See weekend will be held March 7-9, 2008, in Oklahoma City. Registration is Feb. 22, and the cost is $45. For more information, contact Annette Seymour, RSM, in St. Louis at (314) 909-4661 or by e-mail at aseymour@mercystl.org, or Kathleen Tinnel, RSM, at (956) 285-4030 or by e-mail at ktinnel@mercystl.org.

Arts and Crafts Show Set
YUKON — The Altar Society of St. John Nepomuk Catholic Church will be hosting its annual fall arts and crafts show on Saturday, Oct. 20. The show will be from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the Parish Activity Center. For inquiries, call 831-8842.

English, Citizenship and GED classes
OKLAHOMA CITY — English classes start on Oct. 23. The classes are Tuesday and Thursday from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Cost for eight weeks is $40. A GED class in English is also available. For more information, contact Robert at 609-2889.

Clases de inglés y ciudadanía en El Centro de Oportunidades de Mount St. Mary High School — English classes start on Oct. 23. The classes are Tuesday and Thursday from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Cost for eight weeks is $40. A GED class in English is also available. For more information, contact Robert at 609-2889.

Fall Festival in El Reno
EL RENO — Sacred Heart Catholic Church will hold its fall festival Oct. 26-27. Oct. 26 is the adult party which includes a brisket dinner, horse racing, bingo, a wine-toss, arts and crafts booth and many other fun activities. Dinner tickets are $15. Wear your costumes and come for a frightfully good time. If you are unable to come for dinner, admission is free to the party.

On Oct. 27 we will have our family party. Join us for a costume contest, pumpkin-carving contest, face painting, haunted castle, fun games and an arts and crafts booth. We will be serving Indian tacos and admission to the party is free. A number of prizes will be up for grabs, including a riding mower, vacuum cleaner, savings bonds, gasoline vouchers and an OSU football autographed by Mike Gundy. Cash prizes will also be handed out. For more information, call Sacred Heart School at (405) 262-2284.

Fall Carnival
OKLAHOMA CITY — Villa Teresa School is hosting its fall carnival on Saturday, Oct. 27 from 4:30 to 8:30 p.m. It is open to the public. Villa Teresa School is located at 1216 Classen Drive. Costumes are encouraged but not required. There will be food and beverages, as well as many delicious treats available for purchase. Armbands will ensure rides on inflatable toys, and tickets will be used for games, food, the haunted house and bingo.

Crafts Fair Nov. 2
OKLAHOMA CITY — Saint Ann Retirement Center, 7501 W. Britton Road, is hosting an open house and crafts fair from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 2. There will be plenty of tables set up with incredible crafts for the fall/holiday seasons. The event will include live entertainment, refreshments and tours of the community. Door prizes will be given away hourly. For more information, call 721-0747.
Respect for Life Requires Respect for Truth

By Cardinal Justin Rigali

Since 1972 the Catholic bishops in the United States have set aside the first Sunday in October as Respect Life Sunday. On Oct. 7, Catholics will again pray for — and renew their resolve to bring about a culture of life and an end to the killing of innocent human beings, especially those who are vulnerable due to their age, size, health or dependency.

The theme of the 2007 Respect Life Program — The Infant in My Womb Leaped for Joy — calls to mind an extraordinary scene in Luke’s Gospel (1:39-56): Mary, newly pregnant with the Lord Jesus, is visiting her elderly cousin, Elizabeth, whose son, John, will soon be born. The moment Mary’s greeting reaches Elizabeth and John’s, the tiny prophet announces to her mother the Messiah’s arrival, as if his entire being were exclaiming: Behold! The Lamb of God! There was no confusion as to who and what were nestled under their mothers’ hearts. Yet 2,000 years later, many well-educated people do not know — or claim they do not know — the truth about human life from the moment of conception.

In April the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the federal ban on partial-birth abortion, in an opinion that explicitly recognizes the humanity of unborn children and the grief women experience after abortion. Yet the killing of unborn children at any stage of pregnancy remains legal, provided that the lethal act is performed while the child is mostly inside his or her mother’s body.

In June, President Bush vetoed a bill to fund stem cell research requiring the destruction of human embryos, and directed his administration to investigate alternative means of producing stem cells “by ethically responsible techniques.” Yet some supporters of embryonic stem cell research continue to dismiss concerns about destroying human embryos, because they are “no bigger than the period at the end of this sentence.”

We may still see all human life is respected and defended unless we address a deeper problem. As Pope Benedict XVI has said: “If truth does not exist for man, then neither can he ultimately distinguish between good and evil. And then the great and wonderful discoveries of science become double-edged: They can open up significant possibilities for good, for the benefit of mankind, but also, as we see only too clearly, they can pose a terrible threat, involving the destruction of the human race.” (Homily at Marianzell, Austria, Sept. 8, 2007).

In April after Pope Benedict’s homily, the New Jersey Supreme Court claimed to have no way of knowing the truth about “when human life begins.” Dismissing a law-suit against an abortion clinic which concealed the truth about abortion from women, the court claimed there is “clearly no consensus” on whether, as a matter of “biological fact,” the unborn child is a “human being.” The court cited “moral, theological [and ideological] disagreement to ignore biological fact. We need truth.”

Some ethicists suggest that patients who apparently lack conscious awareness — although otherwise healthy and not imminently dying — can be dehydrated and starved to death because their lives are not fully human but “vegetative.” This ignores the insight expressed in 2004 by Pope John Paul II and recently reaffirmed by the Holy See under Pope Benedict XVI, that “the intrinsic value and personal dignity of every human being do not change, no matter what the concrete circumstances of his or her life.” A man, even if seriously ill or disabled in the exercise of his highest functions, is always a man, and he will never become a ‘vegetable’ or an ‘animal’. We need truth.

On this Respect Life Sunday, we ask Catholic and all people of good will to witness to the truth about the incomparable dignity and right to life of every human being.

Faith Nurtured by Playful Spirit

“I could never do that,” my grandma said while admiring her neighbor’s newly installed cupboards. Her neighbor’s 4-year-old, Olivia, who had on so many lives. My sister and brother-in-law.

Cardinal George began his remarks with the words of Venerable Maria Kampus, (1880-1946) founder of the order: “My wish for you is a great love of God and that trust in Him which is born of Love.” Indeed, words for celebration and celebrate we did.

The Sisters of Saint Casimir have a rich history. I was amazed by the many who gave testimony to how their lives were touched by the Sisters. What I witnessed that weekend was a community of woman at peace with themselves. They know their mission and serve God through their varied ministries, be it health care, teaching or administrative work.

It hit home, the impact this community of religious women had on so many lives. My sister hadn’t thrown her life away. No, in fact she lived it to the fullest. Thank you, Mike and Rose for one of the finest weekends of my life!
Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light, a Book for All Who Seek Truth

Mother Teresa, the modern-day saint, once wrote that she never had a life without darkness. She lived among the poorest of the poor and experienced the night of the soul. Father Brian Kolodiejchuk, the postulator for her canonization, has written a book about her life and experiences, titled "Come Be My Light." The book is a collection of Mother Teresa's letters which have provoked controversy in the secular press because commentators have not understood what she was writing. Bishop Wenski addressed this issue in a recent statement, saying that the book is a pain to read but is necessary. He called for people to read the whole book and not jump to conclusions.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who was beatified by Pope John Paul II on October 19, 2003, is probably the one modern person that most people saw as having been a living saint. This book is a collection of Mother Teresa's letters which have provoked controversy in the secular press because commentators have not understood what she was writing. Bishop Wenski addressed this issue in a recent statement, saying that the book is a pain to read but is necessary. He called for people to read the whole book and not jump to conclusions.

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Comunidad Latinoamericana en Oklahoma

Buenas Noticias...

...Sesión de apertura de la Canonización del Padre Rother

Hoy se cumplen 50 años desde la muerte del Padre Kino, misionero de la Novena Provincia de la Congregación de los Hermanos de Guadalupe en Oklahoma.

Es un día entrañable para los católicos de Oklahoma, donde el Padre Kino estuvo activo durante su vida misionera. Su obra ha dejado una huella profunda en la cultura y la historia de esta comunidad.

El Padre Rother, a través de sus acciones y su ejemplo, ha dejado un legado que aún hoy se vive y se siente en Oklahoma. Su dedicación al servicio de la Iglesia y al bien común han inspirado a muchas personas a seguir sus pasos.

En esta ocasión, queremos recordar su labor y su contribución al desarrollo de la comunidad de Oklahoma. Su espíritu de sacrificio, caridad y amor al prójimo es un ejemplo que nos anima a seguir trabajando por el bien de todos.

Como católicos, recordamos siempre el ejemplo de nuestro santo y seguimos su camino hacia el cielo.

Buenas Noticias...
Respeto a la vida es un deber diario

La persona con enfermedad mental es portadora de la imagen de Dios

Por el Padre Richard Gill, L.C.

"Quienes sufren de alguna enfermedad mental "son" personas en ellos la imagen y semejanza de Dios, como todo ser humano. Además, siempre son personas con derecho de ser consideradas iguales, de Dios y por lo tanto, personas, y ser tratadas como tales".

En el mundo reciente, el mundo que ha avanzado y se ha vuelto más complicado, como el SIDA, los malos caros, la violencia, el aborto y otras enfermedades en las que estamos más atentos con su devastador impacto. Es relativamente fácil crear consciencia de tales amenazas y centrarse en resguardar a las personas y familias en las encrucijadas de la enfermedad mental. En el área de la salud mental, sin embargo, la situación es bastante diferente.

Incidenencias de los enfermecedores mentales

Se ha estimado que hay en el mundo cerca de 500 millones de personas que sufren de algún tipo de enfermedad mental. Esta cifra representa cerca de 8% de la población mundial.

Se afirma que las dos terceras partes de las de enfermedades mentales más elevadas entre los países avanzados uno de cada cuatro estadounidenses adultos sufre algún tipo de enfermedad mental diagnósticada.

Es evidente que la salud mental es relativamente poca consciencia pública acerca del alcance del problema. Y trágicamente, los estereotipos y el estigma, frecuentemente a raíz de las enfermedades mentales, ayudan a crear una cultura en que los afectados son, a menudo, vistos como víctimas, inmundos o sujetos de castigación.

La salud mental y nuestras culturas

Son profundamente en la variedad de culturas y tratamientos de las enfermedades mentales y de formas ligeras de problemas mentales o emocionales, sería útil promover un impacto de una cultura de violencia y una cultura de la salud.

Las causas varían ampliamente, desde disturbios genéticos hasta trastornos del desarrollo de la enfermedad mental como la depresión, el trastorno bipolar y la esquizofrenia, pasando por enfermedades del corazón y otras causas que se hallan más íntimamente bajo nuestro control.

Evitar causar gatillar por el hombre, como las que ocurren en muchos desórdenes de estrés post-traumático, incluyendo en muchas zonas del mundo la discriminación del terrorismo, el que propone específicamente reflejar el sufrimiento emocional y mental generalizado.

La guerra, con su secuela de trastornos y cuestiones, puede revelar los posibles aspectos de la humanidad. Síntomas adicionales para la salud mental del estado general de la cultura, la distribución general de las normas morales y las tendencias dentro de la cultura que militan contra el bienestar de la persona.

Para muchos, especialmente los vulnerables, encontrar un sentido del humanismo y el materialismo, muy comunes en sociedades avanzadas, pueden eliminar las tensiones emocionales del padre y las guardianes si aclaran disfunciones de lo que constituye el tratamiento.

Esperar innumerables, a su paso dejan a la mayoría de las personas que pueden ser identificadas como la cantidad de personas que se pueden ser tratados en todo momento de acuerdo con la dignidad que Dios les ha otorgado.

Los agentes de la salud mental con una profunda comprensión cristiana del valor vital de cada ser humano, han trazado a la vida y la centralidad de la persona. En este contexto, la relación de la persona con Dios está a medio camino de la vida y la centralidad de la persona. En este contexto, la relación de la persona con Dios está a medio camino del amor y la espiritualidad del ser humano, hasta la autoridad o santidad en el ser humano, un vínculo íntimo entre personas anidando en el amor.

En resumen, el personal de salud mental debe tener una formación que les dé una comprensión de la autenticidad cristiana de la persona, creando un espacio y semejanza de Dios y redimida por Jesucristo.

Una formación, que dé una comprensión apropiada de la naturaleza y donde la persona se convierte a la vida y la centralidad de la persona. En este contexto, la relación de la persona con Dios está a medio camino de la vida y la centralidad de la persona. En este contexto, la relación de la persona con Dios está a medio camino del amor y la espiritualidad del ser humano, hasta la autoridad o santidad en el ser humano, un vínculo íntimo entre personas anidando en el amor.

La sociedad tiene la obligación de promover una vida familiar y social, un lugar de trabajo que promueva el verdadero bienestar y el auténtrico crecimiento de los individuos, un sólido relacionado con las normas morales que siguen nuestra vida en común, así como el objetivo de unidos con respecto a las constantes que van en detrimento de la salud de la cultura.

Por lo tanto, el nuevo modelo educativo tiene una gran oportunidad y responsabilidad de reconocer y transmitir la unidad de cada miembro.

La comunidad parroquial tiene un gran potencial para recibir y mostrar la importancia del respeto a la vida.
**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 a transcript directly to the university: Shingi Goto, Executive Vice President, St. Gregory’s University, 1900 W. MacArthur, Shawnee, Okla. 74804.

**Campus Minister**
St. Gregory’s University in Shawnee is looking for a campus minister. Responsibilities: oversee 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 liturgy ministry. Maintain a pastoral presence among students, faculty and staff.

Qualifications: Master’s degree in Theology or Pastoral Ministry is 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. Practicing Catholic in good standing. Good communication and social skills are essential. Willingness to work as part of a collaborative ministry environment. Willingness to work some evenings and weekends. Instrumental music ability (especially guitar or keyboard) is desirable. Completion of Archdiocese of Oklahoma City Safe Environment training program and requirements.

**V.P. of Institutional Advancement**
St. Gregory’s University in Shawnee is looking for a vice president of Institutional Advancement. St. Gregory’s University was founded in 1875 by Benedictine monks. It was originally chartered as the Catholic University of Oklahoma in 1916, and is a private, Roman Catholic university founded in the Benedictine tradition. The university’s educational mission quickly expanded, and today St. Gregory’s serves as a source of faith for many states and foreign countries. We offer a number of majors across the spectrum including Natural Science, Social Science, Arts, Business and Theology. As a Catholic university, St. Gregory’s does not avoid the difficult questions of our day, but rather prepares its students to confront these questions creatively and objectively while striving for their destiny with faith and hope.

St. Gregory’s invites applications for the position of vice president of Institutional Advancement. The vice president reports directly to the president and is 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. The vice president 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. The successful candidate will possess the ability to embrace and communicate St. Gregory’s unique attributes and mission while leading a broad advancement program. A master’s degree is required. It is strongly preferred that this individual be a practicing Catholic with knowledge of Benedictine spirituality. Salary and benefits are commensurate with experience.

Electronic applications are preferred, and should include a cover letter and resume. Review of applications will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled. Nominations, expressions of interest 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, Okla. 74804, sngoto@stgregorys.edu or by phone, (405) 878-5435.

**Correction**
An incorrect date for Father David Monahan’s retirement was reported in the Sept. 23 issue of the Sooner Catholic. Father left the Sooner Catholic in 1994, but did not retire until 2002. After leaving the Sooner Catholic, he had two more parish assignments in Mangum/Hobart and Pauls Valley/Lindsay before retiring. The American Indians that Father Rother served in Guatemala were the Tsutuhil, descend- ants of the Mayans. Joan O’Neill was Father Monahan’s office manager.

**Upcoming Events**
The Conner Center is located at 3214 Lake Avenue. Bring a friend and your favorite dish to share.

**Youth Rally Oct. 28**
SHAWNEE — All high school youths from across the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City are invited to participate in the “Love for God — Catholic World Youth Day Rally” Oct. 28 at St. Benedict Church.

The rally, from 2:30 to 8:30 p.m., recognizes the pope’s call for Catholics the world over to on this day celebrate youth. The rally will be held in the Parish Center at 632 N. Kickapoo Ave., and will include pizza for dinner, music from the Tulsa-based band “Filiouse” (Latin for “And the Son”) and several inspiring speakers. There is no admission charge. RSVP by Oct. 20 to (405) 275-5399 Ext. 5.

**Save the Date**
OKLAHOMA CITY — St. Eugene Catholic Church invites you to attend a series of talks given by Dr. Scott Hahn on the subject of his books, “The Lamb’s Supper,” “Lord Have Mercy” and “First Comes Love: Finding Your Family in the Church and the Trinity.”

This event will be held Feb. 9 at Bishop McGuinness High School. Hahn is a professor of Theology and Scripture at Franciscan University of Steubenville.

For more information about this event, contact St. Eugene Catholic Church at (405) 751-7115 Ext. 120.

**LNP and Direct Care**
The Center of Family Love in Okarche is looking for LPNs week-ends and third shifts and Direct Care Technicians for both 7-3 and 3-11 and weekends. We pay competitive wages, provide training and have a paid time-off program. For more information, call John Leenagger at the Center of Family Love at (405) 263-4658 or fax your resume to (405) 263-4563.

**RN Consultant**
The Center of Family Love in Okarche is looking for an RN to act as a consultant for our three units. We pay competitive wages, provide training and have a paid time-off program. For more information, call John Leenagger at the Center of Family Love at (405) 263-4658 or fax your resume to (405) 263-4563.

**Sooner Catholic on Web**
You can now read the entire Sooner Catholic newspaper on the Internet. Just go to the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City Web site at www.catharchdioceseokc.org, and then click on Sooner Catholic. You’ll even find past issues of the Sooner Catholic. Just click on the button that says “Past Web Issues.”
University Parish Outreach Helps Students Live Faith

By Melissa Davis
St. Thomas More Parish

NORMAN — Beatriz Reyes, once a reluctant Catholic at best, well remembers the first time she set foot inside St. Thomas More at the University of Oklahoma.

“The priest was talking about how God always brings you back to him,” Reyes recalls of her experience a few years ago. “I felt every word. I cried through the entire Mass. I finally got the point.”

Reyes had been struggling through a tough freshmen year far away from home at the time. She has since been returning to St. Thomas More on a regular basis, hungry for Mass, ever since.

The St. Thomas More Catholic Student Center reaches out to thousands of OU Catholics just like Reyes all the time. The church seeks to shape young people, establishing faith as the centerpiece of their lives, during their formative college years.

To attract those students — who might otherwise lose themselves in the wilder side of college life — St. Thomas More hosts not only traditional church services but also unique special events. It sponsors Sunday suppers, weekend retreats and even major trips.

This January, for example, St. Thomas More will send students to the “March for Life” in Washington, D.C. — a big pro-life rally held on the anniversary of Roe vs. Wade — and a mission trip to Arteaga, Mexico.

Money raised by “Some Enchanted Evening,” a formal gala set for Oct. 12, will help pay for the activities. Those interested in attending the event or donating to the cause should call (405) 321-0990 for more information.

Annalou Porter, an OU junior who grew up in southern California, is a peer minister who will be leading St. Thomas More students at the upcoming “March for Life” in the nation’s capital. After watching her younger sister give birth at the tender age of 16, Porter feels that she can fully appreciate the sacrifices — and even bigger blessings — that each new life brings.

“I never thought that anything like this would ever happen to my family,” Porter admits. “I brought it all so close to home.”

For Porter’s devout Catholic family, abortion never even surfaced as a possibility. Instead, Porter’s sister — still a child herself — soon gave birth to a baby girl who is now treasured by many.

“She’s my goddaughter,” Porter says proudly. “And she came straight from heaven.”

Porter has learned to appreciate her own lot in life as well. After graduating from high school in sunny California, she followed her family to Oklahoma with a great sense of dread. To her surprise, she found peace by embracing her Catholic faith — suddenly challenged in a new Protestant environment — and discovered a welcome home at St. Thomas More.

“Church and prayer were the only things familiar to me,” Porter explains. “So I found my faith here.”

Reyes knows how Porter feels. She, too, discovered her faith in a state far away from home — and then felt that faith grow stronger in an entirely different country.

Reyes is among 30 members of St. Thomas More who journeyed last year on the church’s annual mission trip to Mexico. She felt so moved by the experience that she plans a return trip with the church group over Christmas break.

“After going to Mexico, I realized that you can’t just look out for your people in your city or your state or your country,” Reyes says. “You have to be willing to go outside of that. And you have to realize that every single thing you do, every single day, has some effect on someone.”

Reyes, a zoology major set to graduate this spring, hopes to help others with her health-related degree in the future. Meanwhile, she has learned some important lessons — far outside the classroom — thanks to St. Thomas More.

“I’ve always wanted to make a difference in the world,” Reyes says. “But in my head, I always thought I would have to go to college and then do that. I didn’t realize that I could make a difference along the way.”

OCTOBER
1-31 St. Paul the Apostle in Del City is having its annual Pumpkin Patch from Oct. 1-31. Hours are Monday-Saturday, 9:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., Sunday from noon to 7:30 p.m. We have story time by appointment. Call the church to schedule your group.

7 Birth Choice annual Walk for Life. This is Birth Choice’s biggest fundraiser of the year. Individuals, families and groups are invited to walk for life. For more information, call Jan O’Neill at 606-8426.

7 ANNUAL FIESTA at St. Catherine’s Church in Pauls Valley, noon until 3 p.m. Authentic Mexican food, entertainment for all, pony rides, Mexican bingo, moon bounce and much more.

7 OKTOBERFEST at St. Francis Catholic Church and Rosary School. The fun begins at 1 p.m. There will be fun activities for families and people of all ages, including games, prizes, rides and more! Join us for an afternoon of fun and fellowship! St. Francis and Rosary are located at 1910 NW 19th.

12 Mount Saint Mary Homecoming football game vs. Meeker, kickoff at 7:30 p.m.

12 Bishop McGuinness Homecoming football game vs. Anadarko, kickoff at 7:30 p.m.

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

14 Outdoor retreat for all youth at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Camp. This retreat is for youth groups, Boy and Girl Scouts, Camp Fire USA, ventures, leaders and parents. Cost is $20 per person.

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

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

20 The Oklahoma Centennial Dance, sponsored by the Knights of Columbus and Ladies Auxiliary, will be held in the St. James gym, 41st and South McKinley, from 7 to 11 p.m. (doors open at 6:45). Music for everyone, provided by Ronnie Kaye’s Dancenomial. Admission is $10 per person, finger food and two drink tickets provided. Call Mike Zink at (405) 314-4120 or e-mail Michael-the-fox@cox.net to reserve your tickets.

20 ENCOURAGING GOD, 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Sister Marie Ballmann, OSB, will be the presenter. Do you believe that humanity is holy, that our lives are a sacred affair and that our God is a Seeker? Come to the library at Red Plains Monastery, southwest of Piedmont. Call 373-4739 to register. Fee: $35, non-refundable $10 deposit. Bring a sack lunch.

20 praying with the right side of your brain, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Gerry Lantagne, background in art and prayer, will be the presenter. Is it hard for you to sit still and pray without your mind turning to thoughts of something else? This process involves a re-entry into the childlike world of coloring and improving. No artistic skill required. All materials provided. Come to the Red Art Barn at Red Plains Monastery. Call 373-4739 to register. Fee: $45, non-refundable $15 deposit. Bring a sack lunch.

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

21 St. Mary School in Ponca City, second annual golf tournament, 1 p.m. at the Ponca City Country Club. For more information or to register, call Bill at (580) 765-5399.


For an extended calendar, go to www.catharchdioceseok.org

For an extended calendar, go to www.catharchdioceseok.org
Catholics Make Pilgrimage

More than 50 Catholics from across the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City took part in a recent pilgrimage to the beautiful and historic Catholic religious sites of New Mexico. Father Stephen Bird, director of the Archdiocesan Office of Worship and Spiritual Life, led the pilgrimage. The Aug. 24-28 trip included daily Mass and took in many of the historic Spanish missions of Santa Fe, Taos and Albuquerque. The group also toured the Georgia O’Keeffe Museum and historic ruins that date to the 16th and 17th century.