Family First
Woman Raising Grandchildren Finds Christmas Spirit Alive and Well at Edmond Parish and Catholic Charities

By Connie Blaney
Catholic Charities

She was sinking into despair. Feeling alone with her life spiraling out of control, “Maria” desperately needed her prayers answered. Who could she turn to? Who would understand?

A single grandmother raising three children hadn’t been easy. Her $600 paycheck every two weeks barely covered her rent and utilities. As bills continued to pile up, she faced her biggest nightmare — the fear of being homeless. Was there any way out of her dilemma?

“My grandchildren were depending on me. It is the only thing that kept me going,” Maria said. Sleep deprived from worry, her situation became so grave that she confided in a co-worker about her troubles. Her co-worker, who knew about Catholic Charities, encouraged her to call for an appointment. Maria took the first step by calling Nancy Martinez, case manager in the Family Hope program.

What occurred in the next few weeks brought hope to a woman who had almost given up. Maria qualified for the Zachary House, which is transitional housing provided by St. John the Baptist Church in Edmond. Maria’s case manager, Nancy Martinez, worked with the staff and volunteers at the church to assist Maria in getting settled in to her new home with her grandchildren.

“Everyone has been so good to us — both the staff and volunteers at St. John’s and Catholic Charities,” Maria said. “They are like extended family helping us in so many ways — from Christmas gifts to school supplies, clothes and financial help. Catholic Charities case manager has assisted me with budgeting, getting out of debt, setting goals and planning for the future,” she added.

Nancy Martinez commended the progress Maria has made.

“As her stress level has lessened, she can be more focused on helping her grandchildren with simple things like homework, after-school activities and their personal needs,” Martinez said.

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Mount Leader Recognized for ‘Servant Leader’ Qualities
The Good News

... Christmas 2008

My dear Brothers and Sisters:

It is my hope and my prayer that each of you will have a most blessed Christmas. May the love of God which is expressed in the Christmas message bring you peace and joy. May we begin to realize anew that God's plan for us is so beautiful and fulfilling that we must never allow anything to interfere.

God created us in His own Image and Likeness. He made us out of love. He created us in such a way that we can receive His love and love Him in return. If we do so, we will live with Him forever. This is the plan of God. This is the meaning of Christmas — to be with God — or as the Scripture says: “Emmanuel, God is with us!”

Truly, God is with us. Jesus is the Eternal Son of God. Jesus is the One promised to us. In that most disastrous moment of human history, when human beings sinned and rejected God’s plan, He did not reject us. Rather, He looked at us and He said: “I will send My Son and He will save you.”

Jesus is the Son of God. In the fullness of time, He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Blessed Mother. He was born in the stable at Bethlehem. He came to save us by His own life, death and resurrection. It is His birth, His coming to be with us, that we celebrate on Christmas.

It is this reality of Christmas, that God is with us, that I want to share with you as I extend greetings for a truly blessed Christmas. I want to assure you that, even though the current economic crisis weighs heavily upon you, nothing can ever outweigh the Good News of Jesus.

There is a deeper reality to our existence than finances, or power, or possessions. It is the reality of who we are. We are God’s people. We have been created in His Image and Likeness. He made us for a reason. He has a plan for us. He wants us to be with Him forever enjoying an abundance of life and a fulfillment of love. Thus we have Emmanuel, God is with us. This is the Good News. This is our Christmas blessing. Jesus lives with us now to help us prepare to live with Him forever!

Seminary Burses

A donation of $200 was made to the Father Joseph Beltran Seminary Burse in memory of Jerry Cebulski.

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

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

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

A donation of $25 was made to the Father Stanley Rother Seminary Burse in memory of Clementine Reding.

A donation of $100 was made to the Father Gerald Ucker Seminary Burse by W. Henry Looby and Steven M. Kotlarz.

Father Joseph Beltran
Seminary Burse
$81,568.00

Father Stephen Bird
Seminary Burse
$10,000.00

Father Denis Blackledge
Seminary Burse
$8,337.00

Father Wade Darnall
Seminary Burse
$10,545.00

Father Larry Gatlin
Seminary Burse
$10,000.00

Father Bernard J. Havlik
Seminary Burse
$26,710.00

Father James A. Kastner
Seminary Burse
$10,220.00

Bishop Stephen A. Leven
Seminary Burse
$59,628.00

Father John A. Petuskey
Seminary Burse
$11,850.00

Father Clement E. Pribil
Seminary Burse
$5,351.00

Father Stanley Rother
Seminary Burse
$181,357.00

Archbishop Charles Salatka
Seminary Burse
$185,945.00

Father John Scheller
Seminary Burse
$10,000.00

Father Gerald Ucker
Seminary Burse
$8,670.00

Totals as of 11/30/2008

$10,220.00
$81,568.00
$10,000.00
$8,337.00
$10,545.00
$10,000.00
$26,710.00
$10,220.00
$59,628.00
$11,850.00
$5,351.00
$181,357.00
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SAWNNEE — Members of the St. Gregory’s University community helped to make Christmas brighter for several foster children through Project Snowflake, a program organized by the Department of Human Services. More than 60 new gifts were donated for area children by faculty, staff and students from a wish list supplied by DHS.

Diane Willis, who organized the event for SGU, said she was overwhelmed by the giving spirit of the SGU family.

“Not only did SGU provide gifts for children on the list, but also bought extra gifts for children who enter the foster care system in December,” said Willis, who is the university’s campus minister. “I was grateful our students were so willing to take on this extra responsibility. It’s difficult to plan Christmas gifts for children when they are in and out of foster homes.”

Debbie Walker, a foster care specialist for the Pottawatomie County DHS, said that in the past, an individual organized Project Snowflake for DHS.

After this person passed away, child welfare workers continued the tradition, along with donations from the community.

“I’m overwhelmed with the outpouring of generosity from the St. Gregory’s community,” Walker said. “We in the child welfare office were especially pleased with the gifts from the college students, many who had so little money themselves.”

For more information about Project Snowflake, please contact Willis at 878-5168 or Walker at 214-4112.

St. Gregory’s University is Oklahoma’s oldest institution for higher learning and the state’s only Catholic university. SGU serves more than 800 students in two colleges — the College of Arts and Sciences and the College for Working Adults.

Family Support

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“We are very grateful for the staff and volunteers at St. John’s who have been so supportive in helping Maria and our other clients. Without this transitional housing, these families might be homeless,” she added.

St. John the Baptist Church owns three homes in the Zachary House program, said Shellie Greiner, St. John’s parishioner and volunteer. “Our partnership with Catholic Charities allows us to help three families who are working hard to be independent,” Greiner said. Each family is assigned a mentor who helps the families with running errands, taking children to school functions, providing school supplies and school clothes, coordinating needed household items and helping with other family needs. A committee of about 15 parishioners sponsors periodic “house showers,” asking the church to donate furniture, household items, food, gift cards, money and other purchases. “When a family moves out, they can take their household goods with them. When a new family moves in, the church showers make it possible for the new family to have new and almost new items,” Greiner said.

Greiner encouraged other parishes to sponsor a house for a family in their community. “God asks us to take care of others. This is so rewarding to help a family who is almost homeless get back on their feet. As mentors, it is especially meaningful to be extended family members who show love and support. It is so easy to do when several parishioners will work together,” she said.

For information about Catholic Charities Family Support program, contact Catholic Charities at (405) 523-3000.

*Editor’s Note: For this story the name “Maria” was used in place of the client’s real name.
Father Alan Loth Dies at Age 68 on Dec. 3 in Oklahoma City

Rev. Alan Joseph Loth, (68), pastor of the Saint Teresa of Avila Roman Catholic Church in Harrah, died Dec. 3, 2008, in Oklahoma City. Father Loth was born April 2, 1940, in Omaha, Neb., and was ordained on Aug. 17, 1968, at Saint Pius the Tenth Church, Tulsa, by the Most Rev. Victor J. Reed. Father Loth attended Catholic secondary schools and Creighton University in Omaha. He attended Conception Seminary College in Missouri where he received a bachelor’s degree. He also attended Saint Thomas Seminary, Denver, and Saint John Seminary, Little Rock, before his ordination. Father Loth received a master of arts degree from Oklahoma City University.

During his many years of service to church, Father Loth served the following parishes: Corpus Christi Church, Oklahoma City (associate 1968-1971); Saint Barbara Church, Lawton (associate 1971-1975); Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Sterling, and missions in Elgin and Apache (pastor 1975-1982); Saint Peter Church, Woodward, and missions in Buffalo, Mooreland, Shattuck and Beaver (pastor 1982-1985); Saint Eugene Church, Weatherford, and missions in Hinton and Thomas (pastor 1985-1987); Holy Trinity Church, Okarche (pastor 1987-1989); Saint Francis Xavier Church, Enid, and missions in Pond Creek (pastor 1989-1992); Saint Catherine of Sienna, Pauls Valley, and mission in Lindsay (1992-1993); Saint Joseph Church, Bison, and mission in Fairview (1993-2000); and Saint Teresa of Avila, Harrah (pastor 2000 to present). Father Loth served as an advocate for the Archdiocesan Tribunal (1973-1975), as a Defender of the Bond, Archdiocesan Tribunal (1993 to present) and as a Regional Vicar. He also had served as coordinator of Catholic Chaplains for the Lexington Assessment and Reception Center and as Catholic chaplain for the Crabtree Correctional Facility, Helena.

Father Loth is pre-deceased by his mother, Josephine Mostek Loth, and father, Peter G. Loth.

He is survived by his sister, Jacqueline Loth of Omaha, and his brother, Peter J. Loth and wife, Sharon of Omaha; his niece, Julie Loth Pedersen, and nephews, Kenny and Danny Loth.

Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help on Dec 10. Funeral arrangements were under direction of Smith and Kernke, 14624 N. May, Oklahoma City.

In lieu of flowers, Father Loth has requested that gifts and donations be made to Catholic Charities of Oklahoma City, 1501 N. Classen Blvd., Oklahoma City 73106, or the Saint Teresa Avila Church Building Fund, Harrah, Okla. 73045.

Annual MLK Celebration to be held at Corpus Christi Church in OKC

The fourth annual celebration to honor the work of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. will be held on Monday, Jan. 19 at Corpus Christi Church in Oklahoma City. It will begin with a multicultural celebration at 11 a.m. followed by a noon Mass celebrated by Father David Lafferty. A parade at 2 p.m. will culminate the event. Catholics and non-Catholics are invited to attend.

The event, which is organized each year by Corpus Christi Parish and Catholic Charities, celebrates King’s work and invites all Catholics to join in solidarity with those who are in need, working for ways to improve their lives, said Becky VanPool, director of Catholic Charities Parish Outreach and Program Development.

Catholic Charities will display at Corpus Christi entries submitted by the students who participated in the Youth Multi-Media Arts Contest. The entries reflect understanding of the root causes of poverty and empowering people to lead efforts to address poverty in their communities. Entries include painting, poetry, essays, photography and other art media.

“Dr. King challenged society to ‘lift the load of poverty,’ and Catholics throughout the Archdiocese are invited to pray and work for all those who are poor and oppressed,” VanPool said. “By improving their lives, we improve our own lives as well.”

VanPool said, “Many of the schools and government offices are closed on Martin Luther King Day to pay him respect. Rev. Lafferty and his staff at Corpus Christi will host the celebration as a tribute from the Catholic community. Mass will feature an interpretive dance by Corpus Christi youth. After Mass, youth groups, schools, parishioners and others are invited to join in the King Holiday Parade.”

The parade promoting the theme “Voting our Values and Valuing our Votes” will follow the Mass. Participants are encouraged to wear their parish shirts and bring banners to carry. Groups may gather at Corpus Christi Church, 1005 N.E. 15th Street. For more information, contact Becky VanPool at 523-3009.

Globalization Requires Common Ethics

VATICAN CITY, (Zenit.org) — Globalization can build peace, but it must be founded on global solidarity and a common code of ethics, says Benedict XVI.

The Holy Father affirmed this in his message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace, marked each Jan. 1. He proposed his reflection on the topic of “Fighting Poverty to Build Peace,” focusing on poverty as a cause and effect of conflicts.

In particular, he stated that “fighting poverty requires attentive consideration of the complex phenomenon of globalization.” It requires reference to economic and sociological research, as well as reflection on spiritual and moral implications.

The pope said that this reflection should urge us, “in our dealings with the poor, to set out from the clear recognition that we all share in a single divine plan: We are called to form one family in which all — individuals, peoples and nations — model their behavior according to the principles of fraternity and responsibility.”

He explained that poverty includes non-material forms, such as “marginalization, as well as affective, moral and spiritual poverty.”

Benedict XVI discussed various issues within the context of poverty, including its relation to demographic change, the effect of pandemic diseases, the specific needs of impoverished children, and the current food crisis.

He gave specific attention to the relationship between disarmament and development, expressing concern at the “current level of world military expenditure” and resources “diverted from development projects for people.”

Benedict XVI proposed that the fight against poverty “requires cooperation both on the economic level and on the legal level,” so as to allow the international community, and especially poorer countries, to identify and implement strategies to deal with problems such as competition in global markets and the issues related to investment and development.

“Investing in the formation of people and developing a specific and well-integrated culture of enterprise would seem at present to be the right approach in the medium and long term,” he said.

Citing Pope John Paul II, the German pontiff said there is a need to “abandon a mentality in which the poor — as individuals and as peoples — are considered a burden, as irksome intruders trying to consume what others have produced.”
Art Contest to Feature Oklahoma’s Catholic Students

A Youth Multi-Media Art Contest is being sponsored for Catholic youth in grades 7 through 12. Entries will be on exhibit at Corpus Christi Catholic Church in conjunction with the Dr. Martin Luther King Mass at noon on Monday, Jan. 19, said Becky VanPool, Diocesan Director for the Catholic Campaign for Human Development.

The Multi-Media Art categories include audio-visual, literature and visual arts, which include painting, drawing, prints, photography and sculpture. Prizes will be given for each category for seventh- through ninth-graders and 10th- through 12th-graders. The contest is in conjunction with the Catholic Campaign For Human Development (CCHD) and winners will be entered into a national competition.

“The contest theme is “Empowered People Can Uproot Poverty In Their Communities.” This contest is an opportunity to honor Martin Luther King’s quest against poverty and for Catholic youth to creatively express their understanding of poverty issues in America,” VanPool said. Contest deadline is Jan. 15.

The goal of the contest is to help young students understand how low-income persons themselves can effectively lead efforts to address the causes of poverty in their communities. But before the student can come to such a realization, they need to understand the difference between “charity” and “justice.” While charity provides direct social services that help individuals meet their immediate needs, justice involves working for systemic social change in communities.

The ideal entry will:

* Exhibit an understanding of the root causes of poverty, not just the symptoms.
* Portray the poor as empowered persons capable of leading efforts for change in themselves as well as their community; this is contrary to the typical portrayal of the poor as victims.
* Illustrate that acting with empowered poor persons who are working for long-term change is a response to faith and the values of Catholic social teaching.
* Show a clear understanding of CCHD’s work and mission.
* Reflect both the thoughtfulness and the creative skills of the student.

This contest corresponds directly with the mission of the CCHD. The CCHD invests in community-based solutions — that know no racial or religious boundaries. They support self-sufficiency and self-determination as the best strategies for change. They support projects that break the cycle of poverty for good.

The CCHD philosophy emphasizes empowerment and participation for those in poverty.

By helping the poor to participate in the decisions and actions that affect their lives and communities, CCHD empowers them to move beyond poverty.

Information can be obtained through Catholic schoolteachers, youth directors and parish Religious Education teachers. Contact Becky VanPool at 523-3003, or www.catholiccharitiesok.org or www.usccb.org/cchd/contestmaterials.shtml for rules.

For more information on the CCHD, please visit their Web site at http://www.usccb.org/cchd/poverty-usa/index.htm.

Parish Offers Open Door for Catholics

EDMOND — Catholics who are separated from the Church, for any reason, are being asked to “Come Home!” The Evangelization Board at St. John the Baptist Parish is once again offering the “Catholics Coming Home” program. There will be a series of informal sessions facilitated by lay people, including former non-practicing Catholics, on three Tuesday evenings, Jan. 20 and 27 and Feb. 3, in the Commons from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. The church is located at 9th and Boulevard in Edmond. Child care will be provided.

If you are currently not practicing your Catholic Faith, you are invited to these listening sessions for an opportunity to voice concerns and ask questions about the Catholic Church. The Catholics Coming Home ministry attempts to reach out to inactive Catholics in a loving, Christ-like manner. Every effort is made to be non-threatening and non-judgmental. The facilitators do not attempt to solve problems, nor do they have all the answers. They will merely listen and provide guidance to appropriate resources.

For more information, contact Jami Fenner at 229-3152.

Okarche School Hosts Successful Auction

OKARCHE — Holy Trinity Catholic School Parents Association hosted another successful auction. As patrons gathered at the annual Holy Trinity School Auction on Nov. 8, the presence and commitment in supporting the mission of the school once again became overwhelmingly apparent.

“It is very gratifying that the local community supports the school,” said Principal Mary Jane Wittrock. “We appreciate everyone who donated items and services, participated as bidders, and who worked to make the event happen. Thank you for your support!”

The Holy Trinity School Auction Committee would like to thank all donors, patrons, parents, students and friends who supported the auction. Your dedication and hard work are evident and greatly appreciated!
Christmas celebrates the marvels of the birth of the Son of God from the virgin womb of Mary. At Christmas pageants, at Mass and in beloved Christmas carols, we will hear the story told again and again this year: “The angel Gabriel was sent from God ... to a virgin ... and the virgin’s name was Mary. ... And the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.” (Lk 1:26-31).

Perhaps our familiarity with the story has numbed us to the breathtaking, astounding, incredible mystery that is Christmas. In this column and the next, I’d like to turn to the mystical insights of a certain saint in the hopes of waking us up a bit to the mind-blowing reality we celebrate (or should celebrate) at Christmas.

St. Louis de Montfort, in accord with the whole mystic tradition, often speaks in very sensuous ways about the Christian mystery. He uses spousal categories and terminology, drawn largely from the Song of Songs (one of the favorite biblical books of the mystics), to illuminate divine truths. He sees the Annunciation, for example, as a divine wedding proposal.

But before we get into some of de Montfort’s imagery, let me preface it with something John Paul II — himself a sincere devotee of de Montfort — once said. The pope admitted that this saint’s writing “can be a bit disconcerting, given its rather florid ... style, but the essential theological truths which it contains are undeniable.” (“Gift and Mystery,” Page 29). Bearing that in mind, let’s now turn to de Montfort and allow him to awaken us to some “essential theological truths” about the great “spousal mystery” of Christmas.

As de Montfort put it, God sent his angel to Mary “in order to win her heart.” And on account of the “hidden delights” of his divine proposal, “she gave her consent.” He describes this glorious moment — when God proposed and Mary said “yes” — as “joy for the angels,” as “a sweet melody,” as the “Canticle of the New Testament, a delight for Mary, and glory for the Most Blessed Trinity.” This divine song is “a pure kiss of love” given to Mary, “a crimson rose, a precious pearl.” (“True Devotion,” 252-253).

Then, groping for images to describe the invisible, immortal and eternal seed of God given to Mary (see 1 Pt 1:23), de Montfort writes of “dew falling from heaven” to make her fruitful. In this astounding moment, God poured a “chalice of ambrosia” into the virginal womb of his mystic-bride and, receiving this “divine nectar,” she conceived God’s own Son (see “True Devotion,” 253).

Whoa! Such imagery would have been enough to give my wonderful, but rather prudish grandmother cardiac arrest. For anyone experiencing palpitations, de Montfort reminds us plainly: “These are comparisons made by the saints” (253) — saints who, undoubtedly, were immersed in the holy and sensual imagery of the Song of Songs.

The Song of Songs teaches us — as does the spousal imagery throughout all of Scripture — that God wants to “marry” us. Furthermore, through this mystical marriage, the divine bridegroom wants to fill us, “impregnate” us with divine life. In the Virgin Mary, this becomes a living reality. And this, as the Catechism of the Catholic Church says, is why “Mary goes before us all in the holiness that is the Church’s mystery as ‘the bride without spot or wrinkle.’” (CCC 773).

With great reverence and a kind of “holy daring,” St. Louis de Montfort unabashedly presents the spiritual mystery revealed to us through the Virgin Mary’s feminine body. If we don’t share his comfort — indeed, many find themselves decidedly uncomfortable in the face of such a treatment of the Virgin Mary — we would do well to examine the source of such discomfort. It is much easier to eschew the body (our own body, Jesus’s body, Mary’s body) than it is to face the disorders in our hearts that cause us to eschew the body.

Christmas is a celebration of the Word made flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary. May that “great mystery” cast out all the lies we have believed about our own bodies. Amen.

Christopher West is a fellow of the Theology of the Body Institute in West Chester, Pa., and lectures worldwide on the subject. His books and other information are available at www.christopherwest.com.

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**Irish Yearbook Staff Earns Top Honors**

Bishop McGuinness Catholic High School yearbook staff recently earned an All-Oklahoman Award at the 2008 Oklahoma Scholastic Media Fall Conference at the University of Oklahoma, making it one of the top 13 high school yearbooks in the state. The Chi Rho had 11 Irish students earn individual awards including Jordan Fritch, 3rd place, Caption Writing; Callie Gordon and Emily Engel, 1st place, Student Life Story; Jordan Fritch, 2nd place, Sports Story; Karla Thompson, 2nd place, Endpapers; Amy Davis, 2nd place, Sports Spread; Amy Davis, 2nd place, Cover/First Impression; William Ruffin, 2nd place, Academic Photo.

Honorable mention went to Karla Thompson and Amy Davis, Theme Development/Copy; Jordan Fritch and Chelsea Cooper, Academic Spread; Amy Davis and Karla Thompson, Theme Development/Design; and Amy Davis, Packaging/Structure.

More than 500 students and teachers from 38 schools around the state entered yearbooks in the annual competition. Oklahoma Scholastic Media holds a Media Monday on the OU campus each fall and spring.

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**First Vietnamese-American Elected to U.S. Congress**

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Zenit.org). — The first Vietnamese-American member of the U.S. Congress is winning praise for more than just his political views; the Knights of Columbus have pointed him out as a “newsworthy dad.”

Anh Joseph Cao was recently elected to the House of Representatives for Louisiana. A young escapee from Vietnam and a former seminarian, the congressman affirms that today, his family is the center of his life.

“I could not live without my wife and two daughters,” the 41-year-old Republican told the Fathers for Good Web site. “To watch [my daughters] grow into beautiful girls has been the joy of my life.”

With a personal history that has led him from escaping his homeland in 1975, to years studying to be a Jesuit priest, and then working as an attorney in New Orleans, Cao said that his Catholic faith has been a force of stability.

“My faith has been the center of my life all these years,” he said. “I go to church almost every day to discern what God is calling me to do with my life.”
Secret to Happiness and Wealth Revealed
Finance, Globalization and Morality

By Edward Pentin

ROME, (Zenit.org). — It is better to give than to receive, but it's not easy to be generous with your wealth when there's a recession eating away at your wallet, or perhaps stealing your job. Yet charitable giving and philanthropy are vital to a prosperous society, and should be encouraged in good times and in bad.

The reasons for this were outlined at an inspiring Rome conference co-hosted by the U.S. Embassy to the Holy See and the Acton Institute. Titled “Philanthropy and Human Rights: Creating Space for Caritas in Civil Society,” the Dec. 4 seminar tried to show how important it is for philanthropy and human rights to flourish in society, creating room for “caritas,” or individual acts of charity, so that everyone can prosper.

The most spirited defense of charitable giving came from Professor Arthur C. Brooks, the recently elected president of the American Enterprise Institute. The author of many books on philanthropy, Brooks explained how, until a few years ago, he never believed in the philanthropic philosophy of John D. Rockefeller, the 20th-century American multi-millionaire (Rockefeller was sure that by giving his wealth away, he became richer, and believed that God would take away his money if he stopped giving).

“The reason I didn't believe it is because I'm an economist,” he joked. “As an economist, I learned you had to have money before you can give it away. It's not that you give it and then you get it — it has to be the reverse.”

In fact, he was so sure he was right that four years ago he set out to prove Rockefeller wrong by conducting a comprehensive survey of 30,000 households across the United States. But the data he acquired simply backed up Rockefeller’s philosophy, one shared by many other entrepreneurs: that those who gave to charity ended up richer.

It took a psychologist friend of his to tell him why this was so, reminding him that the secret was happiness. His friend had found that when people gave, they became happier, and when they were happier they became richer.

Brooks was subsequently converted, and the discovery changed his life. Moreover, now he realizes that people have as much need to give as they have to receive, he believes those institutions that act as a conduit between the giver and the receiver, such as the Church, must be helped and encouraged.

Father Robert Sirico, president of the Acton Institute, pointed out that such encouragement and assistance can only be achieved in the context of economic liberty. But with such freedom comes responsibility to serve God and neighbor at all times. “The system that encourages the enterpreneurial vocation,” he stressed, “should also encourage an entire network of voluntary associations.”

The United States, of course, leads the way in individual charitable giving, which partly explains why the country is so prosperous. Several of the speakers pointed out that American citizens gave around $300 billion to charity last year, more than the entire income of Sweden, Denmark or Norway. Mary Ann Glendon, the U.S. ambassador to the Holy See, said such generosity has been made possible thanks to public and private efforts, not least President George Bush’s initiative to encourage faith-based institutions.

Ambassador Glendon wanted to co-host the conference to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. She recalled how the United States and other countries successfully lobbied the Declaration framers to consider a space for “caritas” in civil society so as not to dampen private initiative or to give too much power to the state. The Soviet Union had wanted to make the state the primary guarantor of all social and economic rights.

Cardinal Paul Josef Cordes, president of the Pontifical Council Cor Unum, referred to Benedict XVI's encyclical “Deus Caritas Est” in his message to the conference, delivered in his absence by Cor Unum's secretary, Monsignor Karel Kasteel. The pope stressed that “caritas” is always needed, even in the most just society, but that what is required, above all, is holiness. “It is not charity that makes us saints,” Cardinal Cordes reminded the conference participants, “but holiness that makes us truly charitable.”

In his speech, Professor Brooks made clear he was not advocating that individuals give just to be prosperous.

But in today's financial world, the “quid pro quo” mentality dominates, and often it stems from a utilitarian approach in which profit and reward are the sole incentives. It's a philosophy which Blessed Antonio Rosmini fought against in the 19th century and which he would probably say was most to blame for today's economic woes.

That's according to Professor Carlos Hoevel, who was the guest speaker at another Acton Institute conference held in Rome last Friday on the topical subject of “Finances, Globalization and Morality — A Challenge for the 21st Century.”

A professor of history and philosophy of economics at the Pontifical Catholic University of Argentina, Hoevel gave a fascinating insight into how profoundly relevant Rosmini's writings are to the current economic crisis.

The Italian priest and philosopher, Hoevel pointed out, gave the market economy an ethical, anthropological and Christian basis in his writings. He was one of the first Catholic thinkers to embrace the market economy and strongly believed that it couldn't function without an ethical and moral foundation. “In an immoral or culturally poor environment, market competition is deformed and loses many of its beneficial effects,” Hoevel said, drawing on Rosmini's writings. A utilitarian philosophy that places profit as an end in itself results in an “endless and vain race of unhappy people to reach happiness through inadequate means.”

But Hoevel, who collected the Novak Award at the conference for outstanding research into Rosmini, stressed that the philosopher avoided extremes and can best be described as a moderate liberal in the economic sense. He wasn't in favor of a totally unfettered free market, but neither was he supportive of those who, like today, are reacting to the current crisis by demanding nationalizations and quasi-collectivist policies.

So what would be Rosmini's solution to the current crisis? Hoevel said that, according to the philosopher's vision, what we most need now is not so much “the endless injection of billions of dollars and euros” into the economy and heavy government interference, but “the urgent recovery of moral balance and moral content.”

Rosmini argued for more juridical institutions based on natural law “to help and guide the moral recovery” and help foster fair and just competition. He did not believe the markets were self-regulating, but that some intervention was necessary in order to repair their failures and help them work in a normal way, being “extremely careful” not to damage their spontaneity.

Similar to calls today for a “globalization ethic,” Rosmini also advocated a “global rule of law” in order to combat international monopolies, and he supported gradual free immigration but with protection of national and regional cultures.

“Rosmini is a secret treasure,” said Hoevel, “that many Italians and many others in other countries don't know about.” Hopefully today's world leaders will discover this sensible and prophetic thinker who, although he lived over 150 years ago, would probably remark today: “We've seen this all before.”

Edward Pentin is a freelance writer living in Rome. He can be reached at epentin@zenit.org.
Mount Celebrates 10th Annual Auction/Dinner

OKLAHOMA CITY — Mount St. Mary Catholic High School held its annual fundraising dinner and auction Nov. 15 downtown at the Petroleum Club.

The event, “Magic at The Mount,” was the school’s 10th annual auction and was attended by 345 family and friends. Chris Stiles, Director of Advancement, credits this year’s record attendance to the loyalty of the Mount St. Mary community.

“Over the years, the school has built many relationships with people who continue to give support through this annual event,” Stiles said. “We had a spectacular evening that was lead by a dedicated team, who put in tireless effort to make this a world-class event.”

Revenues from this year’s auction go toward the resurfacing and restructuring of the student parking lot and to upgrading the security cameras and lighting around campus. The revenues from this year’s auction totaled $102,142.

The evening was highlighted by a fabulous dinner along with the components of both a silent and live auction. Highlighted auction items included a SmartCar; three travel packages to vacation spots in Glacier National Park, Mont., Naples, Fla., and The Outer Banks in North Carolina; dinner for six with Uwe von Schamann; a professional fishing guide and tackle package; a long-haired, male Chihuahua; autographed sports memorabilia; and exclusive handcrafted items by members of The Mount family. Live entertainment was provided by “The Mystery Dates.”

“Our annual auction has always been a great way for us to raise money to support viable projects of the school. More importantly, it was a fun event that celebrated our mission-vision while strengthening relationships with the people who are so important to the past, the present and the future of Mount St. Mary Catholic High School,” said Talita DeNegri, principal.

Rocket Teams Support Fight Against Cancer on Basketball Court With Involvement in Coaches Against Cancer

Mount St. Mary High School girls and boys basketball programs participated in the Coaches vs. Cancer Campaign during their games against the Lexington Bulldogs. Coaches vs. Cancer is a collaboration between the American Cancer Society and the National Association of Basketball Coaches that empowers basketball coaches to help make a difference in the fight against cancer.

Lenny Hatchett, boys head coach, said the effort has special meaning to him.

“This is something that I have wanted to do since losing my mom to cancer a few years ago,” Hatchett said. “I was proud of the way our kids caught on to the campaign. They were inspired to become involved by selling memory cards and shirts to help promote this worthwhile event. In addition, I am appreciative of the many cards and letters that were received from our school family. We have so many in our community whose lives have been impacted by cancer and Friday night’s event reminded all of us that we have a chance to make a difference in this fight.”

The $635 raised that evening was donated to the American Cancer Society. These funds will help the American Cancer Society with cancer research, provide up-to-date cancer information and education, advocate for public health policies that benefit the community, and provide services that improve the quality of life for patients and their families.

For more information on how you can make a difference, call toll-free anytime, 1-800-ACS-2345, or visit www.cancer.org.
Marlow Deacon Recognized by Parish

Deacon Jimmy Conway of Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Marlow celebrated his 10th anniversary of becoming a deacon on Nov. 16. After celebrating Mass, the parish was treated to a biscuit and gravy breakfast provided by the Knights of Columbus Council 5168 in his honor, and was provided an honor guard from KC Assembly 1808. Pictured are, from left, Dave Carney, Bill Havron, Deacon Jimmy Conway, Marius Deasy, Richard Muller and Mike Vallee.

Epiphany Women’s Club Raises Money for Catholic Charities Adopt a Family

It has become a tradition for the Epiphany Women’s Club at Epiphany Catholic Church to participate in Catholic Charities Adopt a Family Christmas program. “This year, the women are working hard to raise as much money as possible to help the program,” said Chris Rolling, president of the club. “There are so many families that need help this Christmas season,” she said.

This year, a committee of five women collected more than $7,000 worth of donated items and services for baskets that were raffled at the church dinner on Dec. 15. With the generous donations, about 30 baskets or more were put together with such items as restaurant certificates, overnight hotel stays, autographed basketballs, books, services and much more.

All the proceeds will go directly to help the more than 300 families that have been adopted for Christmas this year by Catholic Charities.

“In the first weekend, parishioners’ contributions in purchasing raffle tickets enabled us to purchase all the gifts for the families Epiphany specifically adopted for Christmas,” said Rolling. “The rest of the money will be donated to help other families in the Christmas program.”

The committee that worked on the project included Melva Carney, Beth Ortiz, Gloria Schryver, Cristina Smith, Carol Wiebelt and Chris Rolling.
Sinners, Saints Had Major Roles in Christmas Story

God writes straight with crooked lines. We know that expression, though we rarely apply it to sacred history or to the birth of Jesus. We should. The Christmas story is written with some pretty crooked lines.

The renowned biblical scholar, Raymond Brown, writes up a particularly insightful piece on the origins of Jesus as described in Matthew’s gospel, where Matthew, in a text we like to ignore, traces the lineage of Jesus from Abraham to Mary. What Matthew reveals in his list of people begetting other people is, as Brown highlights, quite a checkered story. Jesus’ family tree contains as many sinners as saints and his origins take their roots too in the crooked lines written by liars, betrayers, adulterers and murderers. Jesus was pure, but his origins were not.

Matthew begins his story of the origins of Jesus with Abraham, who fathers Isaac and then sends his other son, Ishmael, and his mother packing, off into the desert, to be rid of them. Not quite what you would expect from the great patriarch. How can that be fair and how can that be justified? Then Jacob steals his older brother’s blessing from Isaac (just as Israel itself earlier had seized the land of Canaan from a people who had a prior claim). Next, among all the sons of Jacob, Joseph is clearly the most worthy, but he is not the one who gets chosen. Judah, who had sold Joseph into slavery out of jealousy and then impregnated his own daughter-in-law, taking her to be a prostitute, is the one who gets chosen. Is it fair to ask the question, why Judah?

Then Matthew lists the names of 14 kings who are part of the genetic origins of Jesus. Of those 14, only two, Hezekiah and Josiah, were considered faithful to God as judged by the Book of Kings. The rest, in Brown’s words, were “adulterers, murderers, incompetents and power-seekers.” And then there is David, the great king, from whose lineage the gospels proudly proclaim that Jesus descends. Admittedly, David was a great man, humanly and spiritually; he united the community, built the temple and wrote the psalms, but he was also an adulterer who covered sin by murder.

Finally there is the question of which women are named as significant in Jesus’ lineage. Instead of naming Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel, Matthew names instead, Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba, before finally naming Mary as Jesus’ mother. A curious selection: Tamar was a Canaanite woman, because she had been left childless by two of Judah’s sons, disguised herself as a prostitute and seduced Judah himself. Rahab was a real prostitute, though her kindness protected Israel’s spies during the conquest of the promised land. Ruth, like Tamar, was a foreigner, and Bathsheba, as we know, was the woman David seduced before he had her husband killed. The scandal of their affair and the death of their illegitimate child didn’t prevent her from scheming to ensure that one of her children became heir to the throne. Each of these women had marital issues that contained elements of irregularity or scandal and yet each was able to be an instrument in God’s birth on this planet. Clearly Matthew highlights their names to set the stage for Mary, whose pregnancy is also irregular, since Jesus had no human father.

The last part of the genealogy contains mostly names of unknown persons, no-names. That too is important since, if unknown persons contributed so significantly to Jesus’ origins, then we too are not too insignificant, unimportant or anonymous to contribute to the continuation of that story.

God writes straight with crooked lines. Nowhere is this more evident than in the birth of Jesus. There is an important challenge in this. To quote Raymond Brown: If the beginning of the story involved as many sinners as saints, so has the sequence. ... The God who wrote the beginning with crooked lines also writes the sequence with crooked lines, and some of those lines are our own lives and witness. A God who did not hesitate to use the scheming as well as the noble, the impure as well as the pure, men to whom the world hearkened and women upon whom the world frowned — this God continues to work with the same mélange.

Perhaps the real challenge in all of this comes to those of us who would want to accept only an idealized portrait of Jesus’ birth, one that has only straight lines, no impurities, no dark colors. But despite our struggle to digest this, it is important that we do so because what is highlighted by the Gospels in the birth of Jesus throws light on all subsequent Christian history and on our own lives. Grace is pure, but we who meditate it often aren’t. Still, God’s love and God’s plan aren’t derailed by our infidelities, sins and scheming. God’s designs for grace still somehow work and this, Raymond Brown points out, is not a lesson in discouragement, but in encouragement.

Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser is president of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio. He can be contacted through his Web site, www.ronrolheiser.com.

Expansion of Catholic Church Across U.S. Explored in Book


★★★★★

This book is an examination of the history of Catholicism’s expansion from the East Coast of the United States beyond the Appalachia Mountains into Kentucky, Ohio, western Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Illinois, Indiana, up to around St. Louis. The book focuses mostly on Kentucky which was to become the site of a new diocesan see at Bardstown, Ky. John Dichtl’s presentation begins around 1785 after the end of the American Revolution and the Catholics in the United States were beginning to set up the formal structured Catholic Church with a hierarchy. Father John Carroll became the head of the Catholic Church in the United States. He was in charge of a large area that encompassed the new 13 states of the United States and the territory west of them. He did not have many priests and religious to help him with his great task. The pope decided to make John Carroll America’s first bishop and designated Baltimore, Md., to be the first see or seat of this very large diocese.

As Dichtl shows the Catholic clergy feared that Catholics could lose their faith since they were surrounded by Protestants who were able and quicker to set up churches and provide ministers. In the early days, anti-Catholicism was not as rampant as it would later become when more Catholic immigrants entered the country. Catholic clergy tried to convert non-Catholics or at least impress them to have a positive attitude toward Catholics.

Dichtl has researched this book using sources from clerical points of view. The lay point of view is there, but it is not emphasized as much. The Catholic Church is structured in a hierarchical way so this history is based on that structure. There are no illustrations or maps. Maps might have helped a bit to show where the author was talking about. The dust jacket has an image of Father Fenwick giving a blessing in Ohio.

This is a very well-written presentation of the history of the Catholic Church as it expanded into the West. It is a great addition to American Catholic Church history and is highly recommended to those interested in this period of American Catholic history. John R. Dichtl is the executive director of the National Council on Public History.

Brother Benet Exton is a Benedictine Monk at St. Gregory’s Abbey in Shawnee.
Germany and Italy Defend Human Embryos, but Not U.S.A.

Nearly 500,000 human embryos are currently stored in liquid nitrogen tanks in fertility clinics in the United States, a number comparable to the population of a mid-sized city like Cleveland or Tucson. By contrast, only a handful of human embryos have been frozen and held in storage tanks in the entire country of Germany.

The reason for this striking difference lies in the fact that Germany enacted an Embryo Protection Law during the 1990s which included provisions outlawing the freezing of human embryos. Italy has similar legislation in force. Both countries closely regulate in-vitro fertilization treatments, and allow the production of no more than three embryos at a time, all of which must be implanted into their mother. Both countries forbid the production of extra embryos, experimentation on embryos, embryo cloning and genetic testing of embryos.

The United States has largely failed to establish any reasonable legal or ethical framework to regulate its own multibillion-dollar infertility industry, and the result has been aptly described as a kind of “Wild West of the industry, and the result has been aptly described as a kind of “Wild West of embryonic stem-cell science.”

Over the years, the American public has seen stories of heroic efforts by Catholic groups to protect human embryos from a fate of “property,” “laboratory fodder,” or “trash.”

The Nuns of the Misericordine Order, a dedicated group of women religious who are still in their embryonic stages.

By Father Tad Pacholczyk, Ph.D.

When Sisters Act: Nuns Fight for Woman Sentenced to Starvation

By Tom Grenchik

In mid-November, the news from Italy looked bleak for a 37-year-old woman named Eluana Englaro. News reports stated that Eluana’s elderly father had been fighting in court for 17 years to let her starve to death. And on Nov. 13, Italy’s highest court awarded him that false “right.” It seemed the case was closed.

Eluana’s father had conquered the court system, but would he conquer a dedicated group of women religious? The Nuns of the Misericordine Order have been lovingly caring for her daughter for the past 14 years, and when the court caved in, they stepped up. In their appeal to continue to care for Eluana, they stated: “If there is someone who considers her dead, let them leave her to continue with us, who feel she is alive, let us have the freedom to love and give ourselves to one who is weak. Our hope, and that of many like us, is that the death by hunger and thirst of Eluana, and others in her condition, will not be carried out.”

The courage and tenacity of these women religious was inspiring. Bishops and cardinals, lay persons and organizations, doctors and politicians began to speak out. This has created a local “culture of life” that is making it quite challenging for Eluana’s father to find another facility willing to starve his daughter to death, the same long and tortured death that Terri Schiavo endured four years ago in our country.

A car accident 16 years ago left Eluana in what some call a “vegetative state.” Eluana is not terminally ill. Like each of us, she is a person of immeasurable worth and dignity. All Eluana needs physically is basic care, including the food and water that each of us takes for granted every day. And there is no doubt that the heroic Sisters who now stand by her side are giving her the most loving care possible.

Patients, or their proxies empowered to speak for them, have a moral right to reject extraordinary treatments that are too burdensome for the patient. But no one has a right to deprive them of basic care. Time and again, the Church has reminded us that providing warmth, hygiene, food, water and basic comfort are normally required forms of care, not exotic medical treatments. We can reject medical treatments as too burdensome, but we must never reject life itself because we see a human life as burdensome.

Let us pray hard for Eluana and the many others like her. May our world see her as the gift that her “Sisters” so clearly recognize, and not as a burden. Pray too, for the successful campaign by the Nuns of the Misericordine Order, and all those whom they have inspired. We must halt society’s descent into a culture where death is seen as the solution to medical, social and economic problems. Lives hang in the balance.

Tom Grenchik is executive director of the Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities, USCCB.
Buenas Noticias...

Muy queridos Hermanos y Hermanas en Cristo:

Tengo la esperanza y estoy rezando mucho para que cada uno de ustedes tenga la más santísima Navidad. Que el amor de Dios, el cual está expresado en el mensaje de la Navidad, les traiga paz y alegría. Que nos demos cuenta, de nuevo, que el plan de Dios para cada uno de nosotros es tan bonito y enriquecedor que nunca debemos permitir que nada interfiera con éste.

Dios nos creó a su Imagen y Semejanza. Dios nos ha dado y nos creó con amor. Dios nos ha creado de manera que podamos recibir su amor y podamos darle a Dios ese amor en reciprocidad.

Haciendo ésto, podremos vivir junto a Dios eternamente. Éste es el significado de la Navidad, es estar con Dios tal como las Santas Escrituras lo dicen; “La virgen concebirá y dará a luz un hijo y le pondrán por nombre Emmanuel que significa: Dios-con-nosotros”.

Verdaderamente, Dios está con nosotros. Jesús es el Hijo Eterno de Dios. Cristo es el unigénito prometido a nosotros. Cuando los seres humanos pecaron y cometieron el acto más desastroso de la historia, rechazaron el plan de Dios. No obstante, Dios nunca nos rechazó. Más bien, se dirigió a nosotros y dijo: “Dios no envió al Hijo al mundo para condenar al mundo, sino para que se salve el mundo gracias a Él”.


Es cierto que en esta Navidad Dios está con nosotros, también es innegable que quiero compartir y extenderles mi más cordial saludo para que tengan una Bendita Navidad. Les aseguro que pese a la actual crisis económica que pesa en cada uno de nosotros, nada le quita el verdadero peso y valor a la Buena Nueva de Jesús. Existe una realidad de nuestra existencia, que va más allá de las finanzas, el poder o las posesiones materiales. Esa realidad de nuestra existencia se basa en quienes somos. Somos el pueblo de Dios. Hemos sido creados a Imagen y Semejanza de Dios. Dios nos creó por una razón. Él tiene un plan para nosotros. Dios quiere que estemos con Él para siempre disfrutando de la vida y de su completo amor. Así entonces, tenemos a Emmanuel, Dios está con nosotros y eso es la Buena Nueva. ¡En esta Bendita Navidad, Jesús vive con nosotros ahora para que nos preparemos a vivir con Él para siempre!.

Alegremente suyo en Cristo,

Muy Reverendo Eusebius J. Beltrán
Arzobispo de Oklahoma City

...Navidad del año 2008

Separación Iglesia-Estado, signo de progreso de la humanidad

ROMA, (ZENIT.org)— “La Iglesia no sólo reconoce y respeta la distinción y autonomía del Estado respecto de ella, sino que se alegra con ellos. En este sentido, la "contribución de las autoridades italianas para que la Santa Sede pueda desarrollar libremente su misión universal y por tanto mantener relaciones diplomáticas con tantos países del mundo". Benedicto XVI recordó en aquella ocasión, de que "en la ciudad de Roma conviven pacíficamente y colaboran de forma fructífera el Estado Italiano y la Sede Apostólica". Destacó la importancia de estas buenas relaciones y del papel jugado en ellas por la Embajada italiana ante la Santa Sede, de que el Papa Pío IV, trabajó en la diplomacia de la Santa Sede. Tras una profunda conversión, el santo llegó a ser Arzobispo de Milán, a cuya población se dedicó Milán, a cuya población se dedicó su fe y obra hasta su muerte en 1605.

El Papa agradeció, en este sentido, la "conferencia de las autoridades italianas para que la Santa Sede pueda desarrollar libremente su misión universal y por tanto mantener relaciones diplomáticas con tantos países del mundo".

Benedicto XVI recordó su afirmación en aquella ocasión, de que "en la ciudad de Roma conviven pacíficamente y colaboran de forma fructífera el Estado Italiano y la Sede Apostólica". Destacó la importancia de estas buenas relaciones y del papel jugado en ellas por la Embajada italiana ante la Santa Sede, de que el Papa Pío IV, trabajó en la diplomacia de la Santa Sede. Tras una profunda conversión, el santo llegó a ser Arzobispo de Milán, a cuya población se dedicó su fe y obra hasta su muerte en 1605.

"Dios no envió al Hijo al mundo para condenar al mundo, sino para que se salve el mundo gracias a Él”.

Reclamando el valor que tienen las buenas relaciones y del papel jugado en ellas por la Embajada italiana ante la Santa Sede, unas relaciones "diplomáticas, sociales y religiosas que se ponen de manifiesto" ante la próxima celebración del aniversario de los Pactos que las consagraron en 1929.

Esta "fructífera relación" entre Italia y la Santa Sede, subrayó el Papa, supone "un entendimiento muy importante y significativo en la actual situación mundial, en que la verdadera reconciliación y las tensiones internas de los pueblos hacen cada vez más necesaria la colaboración entre aquellos que comparten los mismos ideales de justicia, solidaridad y paz".

Reafirmó el Papa Benedicto XVI durante su visita a la Embajada Italiana ante la Santa Sede.

Para el Papa, esta separación y autonomía supone para la Iglesia "una condición fundamental para su propia libertad y el cumplimiento de sus mismos ideales de justicia, solidaridad y paz".

La visita del Papa a la embajada italiana ante la Santa Sede fue una oportunidad para enviar su felicitación de Navidad a las autoridades italianas, así como a todos los países del mundo.

...Navidad del año 2008

Separación Iglesia-Estado, signo de progreso de la humanidad
Miles de feligreses rindieron tributo y devoción a lo largo de nuestra Arquidiócesis. La Fiesta de la Virgen de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe

Por Mauro Yanez
Sooner Catholic

OKLAHOMA CITY — “Viva la Virgen de Guadalupe, Patrona de México y Emperatriz de las Américas”, fue la expresión más emocionante que retumbó el pasado 12 de diciembre en los corazones de miles de feligreses en las diferentes parroquias del territorio de la Arquidiócesis de Oklahoma City.

La Virgen Morena, madre de Dios está con nosotros para apoyarnos y aconsejarnos que sigamos el Evangelio con respeto y apoyemos a nuestra Iglesia Católica en estos momentos tan difíciles que vive el mundo entero. La Virgen de Guadalupe nos enseña el camino para mostrar, dar amor y compasión a nuestro prójimo. Ella lo hace por encomienda de Dios Todopoderoso.

La Virgen María bajo el título de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, se apareció en México para darnos su auxilio y protección eterna y se convierte en la Emperatriz de las Américas para que todos los Católicos del Continente Americano y del mundo recordemos su mensaje de amor.

Nuestra Iglesia proclama la Buena Nueva que nos abriga de esperanza para un mejor mañana. En esta Navidad, debemos buscar el refugio en Cristo.

La intercesión de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe ilumina el sendero correcto de nuestras vidas. Muchas cosas están solamente bajo los designios del Señor. Pero nuestra manera de proceder con los demás está en cada uno de nosotros, por lo tanto, llegó la hora de hacer la paz y reivindicar la justicia social que proclama nuestra Iglesia Católica.

¡Feliz Navidad y Próspero Año Nuevo 2009”. ¡El niño Jesús viene a tocar nuestros corazones!

Piadosos de la Virgen en la parroquia del Sagrado Corazón.

Las mañanitas en los Santos Ángeles (Fotos por Mauro Yanez/Sooner Catholic)

Por Mauro Yanez
Sooner Catholic

Padre Menasco reverente de la Virgen

Matachines una herencia cultural.

Novenas destacaron en San Eugenio.
Jobs Box

Secretary Sought

Financial secretary needed at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Oklahoma City. Duties include knowledge of computers, Excel, Microsoft Word and Internet. Oversees the school tuition program. Fluency in Spanish a plus. Full benefits in a pleasant working environment. Experience preferred. Please send resume to P.O. Box 60569, Oklahoma City, Okla. 73146.

Bookkeeper

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

Art and Music Teacher

Villa Teresa Moore School is seeking an experienced art and music teacher to serve in our preschool program. Certification is requested but not required. Hours not teaching art and music will be spent as a teacher assistant in the classroom, helping on the playground and/or helping the front office. Call 691-7737 for an appointment, Beverly Sanchez, director.

Nurses Sought

Mercy Health Center Nursing Opportunities:
Mercy Convent Nurse (FT/Eves) — Must be active RN or LPN licensed in Oklahoma. Experience in caring for geriatric patients preferred. Mercy Convent CNA (PT/Eves) — Must have CNA, nursing assistant experience preferred. Interested candidates apply online: www.mercycareers.net.

Openings for Help with Adults with Developmental Disabilities

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

Clinic Needs Coordinator

Job opening for health clinic coordinator, part time in Edmond. Oversees operation and management of free health clinic. Coordinates schedules and supervises volunteer personnel and patient appointments. Responsible for the maintenance and storage of confidential medical records. Must have office management experience, proficient computer skills, excellent written and verbal communication skills. Experience working in a medical clinic and fluency in Spanish is preferred. For more information, visit goodsamaritanofedmond.com. Submit résumé to GSHC@cox.net.

Letter

Pro-Life Means All Life

Recently we have read articles from the U.S. Bishops relating to our forming “Consciences for Faithful Citizenship.” A good document, but we wonder if a great many Catholics understand what this document is really about. Its coverage is very extensive, part of which pertains to abortion and the sanctity of all human life.

Many Catholics claim to be pro-life but still support the death penalty. We are all God’s children and He has said, what you do to the least of my children you do to me. Pro-life is from conception to natural death. Perhaps our parish priests should spend more time explaining what pro-life really means. Both abortion and the death penalty are planned, premeditated acts of taking a human life by force. It is murder and that is against the law.

Pray that our younger, newer legislators will change this awful way of life, this culture of death we have in Oklahoma and do away with abortion and the death penalty. Violence creates violence and helps make our community a dangerous place to live. With no death penalty, we help break the chain of hate and revenge and give the culture of life a chance to grow in Oklahoma.

Let life prevail always.

Jim and Ann Fowler
Saint Charles Parish
Oklahoma City

Sanctity of Life Mass Set for January 21

The Sanctity of Life Mass will be held at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 21, at Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. The Mass will be celebrated by Archbishop Beltran. The faithful are invited to join in the praying for the value of life in remembrance of the Supreme Court case of Roe vs. Wade, which legalized abortion.

Programs to discuss the Catholic social teaching about the dignity of human life will follow. For teens, the discussion will be facilitated by Rev. Bill Novak and for adults by Rev. Ray Ackerman.

For more information, contact Becky VanPool at Catholic Charities, 523-3003.
**Calendar**

**December**

**21 Fourth Sunday of Advent**

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

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

21 **The Community of the SECULAR ORDER OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY OF Mt. Carmel and St. TEREZA OF JESUS** - Oklahoma Community and Province of St. Therese meets at St. Joseph Carmelite Monastery in Piedmont from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, call Janet Mildfelt at (405) 848-6275 or Deacon Jim Breazile at (405) 377-9478.

22 **Weekly Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament** at Christ the King Catholic Church, located one block north of Wilshire at 8005 Dorset Drive, every Monday beginning at 7 a.m. and concluding with Benediction at 7 p.m. For more information, contact Linda at 496-0033.

25 **Christmas — Holy Day of Obligation**

27 **Mass in Tagalog**. St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church in Del City will celebrate Mass in Tagalog (Filipino) at 7 p.m. each Saturday. A potluck dinner will occasionally follow Mass. All are welcome.

**January**

1 **Mary, Mother of God — Solemnity — Holy Day of Obligation**

1 **Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament** at Epiphany Parish in the chapel every Thursday, 8:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. and daily (M,T,W,F) from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m. All are welcome. Epiphany is located at 7336 W. Britton Road, Oklahoma City.

2 **Sacred Heart Mass** will be held at Immaculate Conception, 3901 S.W. 29th Street, Oklahoma City, and will resume at the Catholic Pastoral Center in February.

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

7 **All-Day Adoration**, every Wednesday at St. Eugene Church, 2400 W. Hefner Road. Mass at 6:30 a.m., Exposition of Eucharist at 7 a.m., Confessions from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. Anointing of Sick at 3 p.m. Adoration all day and devotions conclude with multi-lingual evening prayer and benediction at 7:30 p.m. Contacts: Barbara Cuccio at 755-9163. O en Espanol – Gloria Pantazis at 751-7115.

9 **Bingo** at St. Joseph’s Church in Norman. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. with the serving of a light dinner. First session of games begins at 7; second session at 8:30. Concessions serve popcorn, candy, coffee, soft drinks. Drawings for door prizes.

15 **Catholic Charities Parish Liaison Forum**. This information session is on Legislative Advocacy hosted by St. James the Greater at 7 p.m. These forums are to give liaisons the opportunity to learn about the services provided by Catholic Charities. RSVP by Jan. 9 at (405) 523-3009.

18 **Annual Chicken Noodle Dinner** offered by the Catholic Daughters of Holy Trinity Church in Okarche from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the parish hall. Adults are $6, children 6-12 are $4 and 3 and under are free. Two handmade quilts will also be given away.

19 **Fourth Annual Martin Luther King Jr.** celebration will be held at Corpus Christi Church in Oklahoma City. Begins with a multicultural celebration at 11 a.m. followed by a noon Mass celebrated by Pastor Father David Lafferty. A parade at 2 p.m. will culminate the event. Catholics and non-Catholics are invited to attend.

For an up-to-date calendar, go to catharchdioceoseokc.org

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**Pontiff Praises Ecumenical Progress Made Between Catholics, Orthodox**

VATICAN CITY, (Zenit.org).— There have been significant steps forward in dialogue with the Orthodox regarding the relationship between papal primacy and the synodality of the Church, says Benedict XVI.

The pope recalled these advances when he addressed Friday the plenary assembly of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. The council reflected last week on the “Reception and Future of Ecumenical Dialogue.”

In his address, the Holy Father mentioned progress, both at the level of theological dialogue and at the level of ecclesial fraternity, with the Orthodox churches and the ancient churches of the east.

In this regard, he particularly pointed to the joint Catholic-Orthodox statement from the end of 1997 on “Ecclesial Communion, Conciliarity and Authority.” That advance, known as the “Ravenna Document” “certainly opens a positive perspective of reflection on the relationship that exists between primacy and synodality in the Church, a discussion of crucial importance in relations with our Orthodox brothers, and which will be the object of deepening and discussion in upcoming meetings,” the pontiff said.

Benedict XVI recalled that Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew I made explicit reference to this issue when he addressed the synod of bishops in Rome in October.

In addition to this positive dialogue, the Holy Father noted, “A sincere spirit of friendship between Catholics and Orthodox has been growing over these years.”

This is shown, he said, in the “many contacts established between leaders of the Roman Curia and bishops of the Catholic Church with leaders from the various Orthodox churches, as well as visits to Rome and particular Catholic churches by leading figures from the Orthodox.”

Referring to the pontifical council’s analysis of the Harvest Project, which deals with the first four international bilateral dialogues in which the Church has participated since Vatican II, the pope looked at advances with four Protestant confessions: Lutherans, Methodists, Anglicans and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

Regarding progress in these dialogues, the Holy Father considered that “we find ourselves on the road, in an intermediate situation, in which it seems very useful and opportune to make an objective analysis of the results obtained.”

The bishop of Rome encouraged both reflection on the progress made, and “the discovery of new paths […] seeking together to overcome the divergences that unfortunately still remain in the relationships between the disciples of Christ.”

Faced with challenges that ecumenical dialogue is facing with the establishment of more new communities and groups, and with certain unprecedented tendencies and tension, the Holy Father continued emphasizing the importance of dialogue.

“Charity,” he said, “will help Christians to cultivate this ‘thirst’ for full communion in the truth, and docilely following the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, we can hope to arrive soon to the desired unity, on the day that the Lord wants.”
Talita DeNegri’s devotion to Christian values and admiration for her students as principal of Mount St. Mary High School earned her the Person of the Year award for 2008 from Oklahoma City’s Notre Dame Club.

“Her servant leadership skills and her commitment to Catholic education made her the ideal choice for this prestigious honor,” said Mike Milligan, former president of the Notre Dame Club of Oklahoma City.

The Person of the Year award is in partnership with the University of Notre Dame.

“Each year we recognize a person in the community who epitomizes the ideals of the University of Notre Dame,” Milligan said. “The concentrated areas that are very pertinent to this award include academic excellence, religious leadership and community service.”

DeNegri said she was honored to receive the award.

“Receiving this award is really a reflection of the great things that are happening at Mount St. Mary High School,” she said. “The award demonstrates Mercy values of excellence in academic achievement and service that support the morals of Notre Dame.”

DeNegri also won Oklahoma Teacher of the Year in 2001 for her excellence in teaching at Northeast Academy in Oklahoma City. DeNegri also taught at Mount St. Mary in the mid-’90s and at Southeast High School in Oklahoma City.

DeNegri taught advanced placement English courses to sophomores and juniors. She implemented a “no excuses” approach in life to her students.

DeNegri used her own life experiences to encourage her students to develop a strong strength of mind and a good work ethic. She encouraged positive determination and hard work to equal success in the classroom.

DeNegri joins a long line of distinguished Oklahomans who have received the Notre Dame Person of the Year award. “I felt like I was in holy company,” DeNegri said, a smile on her face.

According to “The Mount” magazine, Archbishop Eusebius Beltran received the award in 2007. Former governor Frank Keating won in 2000. The director of Catholic Charities, Tim O’Connor, won in 1993. Father Stanley Rother won in 1982 and Dr. James Halligan, former Oklahoma State University president, was also a recipient.

DeNegri’s father, Pete Cordova, was named Person of the Year in the 1990s.

“My dad won the award upon his retirement from a 38-year career at Mount St. Mary High School,” DeNegri said.

DeNegri became principal of Mount St. Mary in 2004 and has made tremendous advances in the school’s scholastic standing.

“We’ve gone from three AP classes to 12 in four years,” DeNegri said. “I am very proud of the teachers for doing that.”

As principal, DeNegri placed a merit performance PACE salary for the teachers. People typically do not hear of such a school implementing such benefits for the teachers, she said.

DeNegri said there had been a lot of work enhancing the religious curriculum at the school. She focused on working toward retreats and service projects for every class. DeNegri also implemented a morality program for the junior class, and the campus ministry team is spearheading the program.

DeNegri is proud to know every student by name. She said high school students want that particular identity.

“At the Mount, students feel that they matter and have an importance, whether you are quarterback of the football team, lead actor

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