God Isn’t Too Busy for Us

Pontiff says God Is Always There In Our Busy Lives

VATICAN CITY, Nov. 30, 2008 (Zenit.org). — We may not take time for God, but he takes time for us, says Benedict XVI.

The pope spoke about God’s availability for his creatures today before he prayed the midday Angelus with crowds gathered in St. Peter’s Square. On the first day of the new liturgical year, the Holy Father reflected on the gift of time.

“We all say, ‘I don’t have time’ because the rhythm of daily life has become too frenetic for everyone,” he reflected. “The Church has ‘good news’ to announce about this too: God gives us his time. We always have little time. Especially in regard to the Lord, we do not know how to find him, or, sometimes, we do not want to find him. And yet God has time for us!

“This is the first thing that the beginning of a liturgical year makes us rediscover with an ever new wonder. Yes: God gives us his time, because he has entered into history, with his Word and his works of salvation, to open it to eternity, to make it into a covenant history.”

The Holy Father said that in this perspective, time itself is already “a basic sign of God’s love.”

“It is a gift that man can, like everything else, appreciate or, on the contrary, squander; he can grasp its meaning, or neglect it with obtuse superficiality,” he noted.

Benedict XVI reflected that Advent “celebrates God’s coming in its two moments: First it invites continued on page 7
United States Department of Corrections
El Reno Federal Penitentiary
December 8, 2008

My dear Brothers in Christ:

I am very pleased to be here to celebrate this beautiful Feast of the Immaculate Conception with you. This is one of the major feasts which the Catholic Church celebrates each year. The Bible clearly presents Mary as the Mother of Jesus. Jesus is the Eternal Son of God. He is truly God as well as man. We do not fully understand this mystery of the Incarnation (i.e. God taking on our human nature as His own). However, we firmly accept this because Jesus revealed it to us and we believe in Jesus and all that He has taught.

The Blessed Virgin Mary, as Mother of Jesus, is the most important person in all of God's creation. It is true that all of us have been created in the Image and Likeness of God and therefore all of us are sacred. However, the Blessed Virgin Mary is the only human being preserved from all sin. This is what we mean when we call her the Immaculate Conception. Mary was preserved from sin by God. It was God's plan to invite Mary to become the mother of His Son, Jesus. For this reason, God created her free of the original sin which we all inherit.

The plan of God for Mary unfolds when the Archangel Gabriel appears to her. Gabriel informs Mary that she is specially chosen to be the mother of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. In the Gospel account, the Archangel identifies Mary as “full of grace.” This means she is free of all sin. God had preserved her from sin because of this special role He planned for her.

To describe the revealed fact that Mary was preserved from all sin, we call her the Immaculate Conception. It is a title she herself used when she appeared to Saint Bernadette at Lourdes. It was under this title that Mary was proclaimed the patroness of the United States.

Our special devotion to the Blessed Mother stems from what God has done and how Mary freely and totally responded to God's call and His grace. Thus Mary becomes an example for us even though we have not been preserved from original sin. She is an example for us because her response to God was so complete and with total love that she actually remained free of sin her entire life. Mary shows us how to live properly. She is always calling us to repentance from sin. She leads us to her Son, Jesus.

Today, Dec. 8, we celebrate this feast day of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Then, on Friday of this week, Dec. 12, we will again celebrate a feast day in honor of the Blessed Mother. This is called the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Our Lady of Guadalupe is the title given to the Blessed Mother when she appeared to Saint Juan Diego at Tepeyac in Mexico City.

The Blessed Virgin Mary, as Mother of Jesus, is the most important person in all of God's creation.

There, once again she presented herself as our mother. She promised to help alleviate our miseries and she asked that a chapel be built there. The original chapel was later replaced by a very large shrine. There the Eucharist (Mass) has been celebrated countless times. There, for 477 years, Our Lady of Guadalupe continues to bring people to Jesus. She continues to be our mother, calling us to repent of our sins and to follow Jesus.

Dear brothers, do you ever stop and realize how good God is to each of us? When He created you – and you – and you – and me, He had a plan for each of us just as He had a plan for the Blessed Virgin Mary. He made us so that we might come to know Him, to love Him and to serve Him on this earth so that someday we could share His life in heaven forever. Yes, God created us out of love and enabled us to receive His love and to love Him in return.

Many times people will go away on retreat to contemplate these truths. They retreat from their everyday work to pray and become more aware of God's goodness and love. Some people even join religious communities and dedicate their entire lives to God.

While it is true that you are not here voluntarily, the fact is you are here for a definite period of time. Wouldn't it be wise that you make this a special time, a time of prayer and retreat? Do you realize you are not alone? God is here with you. God is everywhere. And Mary, the Mother of Jesus, who is God, is also here. Mary, the Immaculate Conception, Our Lady of Guadalupe, and truly our mother is calling you tonight to repent of your sins and to follow Jesus more closely. Here you can actually come to know, love, and serve God right now, right here. Then, someday you can share the life of peace and rest and true freedom in heaven forever.

Most Reverend Eusebius J. Beltran
Archbishop of Oklahoma City
Oklahoma Catholic women are invited to spend a day of reflection, healing and renewal at the Oklahoma Catholic Women’s Conference in January. The conference will be held on Saturday, Jan. 24 at the Clarion Conference Center at I-40 and Meridian in Oklahoma City.

Four sessions featuring both local and out-of-state speakers have been scheduled, and vendors have contracted to set up booths selling books, clothing and religious items. Participants will also be able to participate in Adoration and Reconciliation.

Through Jan. 9, the registration fee is $40, and $30 for students. A box lunch and drink may be purchased for $10. After Jan. 9, the registration fee is $50. Registrations can be submitted on the conference Web site using PayPal, or by mailing in a registration form available on the Web site or in parish offices. Special room rates of $69 are available at the Clarion by calling 1-800-784-7830. Reservations should be made by Dec. 24.

The conference will begin with check-in at 8 a.m., and conclude with Mass at 5:30 p.m. celebrated by Archbishop Eusebius Beltran.

For registration and more information, visit the conference Web site at www.OCWConference.com.

Speakers are:

Johnnette S. Benkovic is founder and president of Living His Life Abundantly® International Inc., a Catholic evangelization apostolate with outreaches in television, radio, print and Internet communications. She is also founder of Women of Grace®, a Catholic apostolate for Christian women that features a number of outreaches including conferences, curricula, study groups and more.

After years of being a non-practicing Catholic, Johnnette experienced a deep conversion back to her Catholic faith in 1981 and discerned a call to share the gospel message through the media. She has been a consistent presence in Catholic radio since 1987 and in Catholic television since 1988.

Johnnette is executive producer of The Abundant Life (seen internationally on EWTN), a television program that discusses contemporary issues from a Catholic perspective. She is also host of Women of Grace Live, a one-hour call-in radio talk show that airs live five times a week. She is heard nationally on AM/FM stations and internationally via short wave, and satellite radio.

Sheila Liaugminas is an Emmy Award-winning journalist with extensive experience in both secular and religious journalism. Her writing covers a variety of topics, with her particular interest being matters of the Church, faith, culture, politics and the media.

Liaugminas began her journalist career working for Dayton Journal Herald newspaper in Ohio, and then for the Dayton CBS affiliate. In Chicago, she reported for Time magazine for more than 20 years, having reported on a number of Time cover stories. As well, she contributed to the Chicago Tribune and Crain’s Chicago Business.

At Chicago’s NBC-owned station (WMAQ-TV), she served as co-host of the Emmy Award-winning program YOU, and guest-hosted a morning talk show.

She has been active in the religious media, with contributions to National Catholic Register, Crisis Magazine, Adoremus Bulletin and Voices, the magazine published by Women for Faith in Family.

Father Shane Tharp was born in Edmond. After exploring many religious traditions during high school, he entered the Catholic Church at the age of 18. Before entering the seminary for the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, he attended the University of Oklahoma for two years. He completed his undergraduate work at Conception Seminary College, Conception, Mo., in 1995, graduating with a degree in philosophy. From Conception, Father Tharp went on to study at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Wynnewood, Pa., just outside of Philadelphia. In 2000, he was awarded a master of arts, a master of divinity and a bachelor of sacred theology in the field of systematic theology. In the same year he was ordained a priest for the Archdiocese.

Father Tharp currently serves as pastor of St. Wenceslaus in Prague and St. Michael in Meeker, and is the rector of the National Shrine of the Infant Jesus of Prague. He assists with various pro-life apostolates, including Rachel’s Vineyard.

More than 900 women attended the conference held in January 2008.
Catholic Charities Delivers Lawton New Housing Community

By Connie Blaney
Catholic Charities

LAWTON — On a cold, windy morning in November, Archbishop Beltran, in front of a shivering crowd of supporters, praised the work of Catholic Charities and its partners for the completion of Villanova Apartments, a 64-unit affordable housing complex near Lawton’s downtown.

“As we stand here in the cold weather during this dedication ceremony, we are grateful to God for allowing us this opportunity to provide a safe and warm place for people to live who might otherwise be homeless,” Archbishop Beltran said. The archbishop officially dedicated and blessed Villanova Apartments and thanked everyone for joining in the celebration.

Following the blessing and dedication at the site, a recognition program continued at the Parish Hall at Lawton’s Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church. During the program, Catholic Charities, in partnership with Mercy Housing Inc., recognized all the partner agencies, businesses and organizations who helped with the rebuilding of Villanova, formerly known as Columbia Square Apartments.

In his opening remarks, Tim O’Connor, executive director, extended a warm welcome to those in attendance. “We appreciate everyone who has come today to celebrate this happy occasion with us, as well as so many others who have supported our efforts. Our residents and the Lawton community are now seeing the concrete results of four years of diligent planning and collaboration. Without our many partners, the new Villanova Apartments would not have become a reality,” O’Connor said.

Representatives of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City welcomed Lawton Mayor Pro Tem Janis Drewry, project partners, members of the news media and state officials, who joined in the dedication ceremony.

Catholic Charities board of directors president Annette Jacobi said the board is grateful for the collaborative effort of all its partners. “This venture represents a strong commitment to the city of Lawton and we are appreciative of the private and public support this effort has generated,” she said.

Originally called Columbia Square Apartments, the complex was constructed in the 1970s on land provided by Blessed Sacrament Parish. The aging property has been totally restored to provide safe and affordable housing to 64 families in Lawton. The complex was renamed Villanova Apartments in honor of the patronage of St. Thomas of Villanova, patron of the poor. These apartments are located at N.W. 3rd and Columbia and are adjacent to the Urban Renewal Area near downtown Lawton.

Catholic Charities is the sponsor of the project, and the development and construction has been overseen by board members Tim O’Connor, executive director of Catholic Charities, attorney Chuck Wade of Lawton, and David Johnson, business manager for the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. Attorney Doug Eason has been retained as legal counsel.

Financing for the project has been provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Oklahoma Housing Finance Agency, Enterprise Community Investment, Prudential Huntoon-Paige Associates, Federal Home Loan Bank of Topeka, City of Lawton, Catholic Charities and Bank of Oklahoma. Mercy Housing Inc. is the project developer, the architect is Ron Reid and Associates of Kansas City and the Buland Group of Omaha is the general contractor. Gorman Management Company of Bartlesville has managed the property since 2002.

The renovation of Villanova Apartments has been receiving national recognition for its environmentally friendly use of “green” sustainable design approach. The “green” design initiative emphasizes energy efficient apartments coupled with environmentally safe buildings and grounds, according to Chris Nervig, Mercy Housing Inc. senior project developer. Visitors from across the country interested in the “Green Build” have toured the complex in the past year.

“Our goal from the beginning has been to provide quality housing that gives our residents a sense of belonging in an environment that is clean, safe, healthy and energy-efficient. Our ‘green’ approach stems from our respect for God’s earth. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God’s creations,” Tim O’Connor said.

The Lawton Office of Catholic Charities supports Villanova Apartments by providing a resident services coordinator who assists the residents with various needs ranging from counseling and job training to coordinating services with other agencies in the community, including Great Plains Improvement Foundation and the Lawton Housing Authority, Andrea Farmer, director of the Lawton office, said.

An office at the apartments will provide room for various agencies to provide assistance to the residents. A “resident board” as well as a “community advisory board” are being developed to create a greater sense of ownership and community support for Villanova Apartments.
Catholic Charities Strives to Reach Appeal Goal By Year End

Catholic Charities Annual Appeal is currently at 75 percent of its Appeal goal of $2.4 million.

“We expect that more will be asked of Catholic Charities during this year due to the economic distress disrupting the lives of those we serve,” said Tim O’Connor, executive director. “It is our goal to be good stewards of the funds received each year through the generosity of our donors,” O’Connor said. “We are proud of the confidence placed in us by our parishioners across the archdiocese as well as by the national rating service Charity Navigator.”

It is not too late to make a donation to Catholic Charities Annual Appeal. For those considering making an end-of-year gift, they may contact Catholic Charities at 523-3000, or access a pledge card on the Web site at www.catholiccharitiesok.org. Many parishes still have pledge envelopes available, or a check can be addressed to Catholic Charities and dropped in the offertory during Mass on any weekend or during the week.

“We appreciate everyone who has made a sacrificial gift to this year’s appeal. In sharing our gifts, we bring hope to all those we serve,” O’Connor said.

Catholic Charities Recognized for Fiscal Management Once Again

Charity Navigator has recognized Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City with its second consecutive four-star rating for sound fiscal management.

Charity Navigator is a national organization that evaluates the financial health of more than 5,300 organizations in the United States. Its purpose is to provide donors financial information that will help them make good donor choices.

According to Ken Berger, Charity Navigator president and chief executive officer, a four-star rating is exceptional, and the highest possible score, indicating that Catholic Charities executes its mission in a fiscally responsible way and outperforms most other charities in America.

Berger added that only 18 percent of the organizations rated by Charity Navigator have received two consecutive four-star ratings. Specific information about Catholic Charities may be found on the Charity Navigator Web site at www.charitynavigator.org.

Catholic Charities is a faith-based, non-profit organization serving children, families and individuals of all faiths in central and western Oklahoma. Direct services include social services for families; maternity counseling and adoption; affordable housing for families and elderly persons; legal immigration assistance; refugee resettlement; training and support for local parish ministries; disaster relief; and advocacy.

Michael Milligan, Catholic Charities finance committee chairman, reported that private voluntary support currently accounts for 65 percent of the agency’s annual income and 92 percent of its operating expenses are for program costs.

Milligan said, “The work of Catholic Charities has become a significant part of the social service network in Oklahoma. Our volunteer members are deeply committed to being good stewards of our financial resources which are needed to serve the poor in Oklahoma. We are proud of this national recognition and committed to our almost 100-year legacy of service to families and children in Oklahoma.”

Catholic Charities is accredited by the national Council on Accreditation and is a partner agency of United Way of Central Oklahoma and United Way of Lawton. More information about Catholic Charities is available at www.catholiccharities-ok.org.
Oklahoma Catholics Have Opportunity to Help Religious Retired

In 2007, this appeal, which is conducted by the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in Washington, D.C., distributed $23 million in basic grants that benefited 482 of the nation’s Catholic religious institutes of women and men.

Since the first national annual appeal took place in Catholic parishes in 1988, NRRO has raised more than $550 million. The Retirement Fund for Religious collection has been the most successful appeal in U.S. Catholic Church history. Donations have enabled NRRO to seed and stabilize retirement funds at religious institutes, leverage local fundraising and assist capital campaigns. Grant awards have assisted investment and supported collaboration among religious institutes and helped ensure quality of life and adequate health care for thousands of women and men religious formerly at risk.

During the past two decades, however, the gap between assets available for retirement and the cost of living/health care for elderly women and men religious has widened from $2 billion to $9 billion and is expected to grow.

In 2023, the combined Social Security benefits of all retired religious is projected to be $184 million a year, but cost of care will total more than $1.6 billion annually.

More than 37,000 Catholic religious are now past age 70. More than 4,900 women and men require skilled nursing care. While costs for care in a skilled nursing facility in the U.S. average more than $55,200 annually, religious institutes have kept their average cost of skilled nursing care to $51,361. The average Social Security benefit for religious women and men is approximately one-third that paid to the average U.S. beneficiary.

“The statistics we provide reflect very real human need,” says NRRO Executive Director Janice Bader, a Sister of the Most Precious Blood of O’Fallon, Mo. “NRRO is in the midst of intense planning for its next 10 years of service. This planning will design expanded partnerships and initiatives with religious institutes for addressing the ongoing challenges of elder care, thus enabling religious institutes to remain viable in their ministries which are so important to the church.”

Ninety-five percent of donations are awarded to religious institutes through basic grants.

View our annual report at www.retiredreligious.org.

Christmas Gift Sponsors Sought

Catholic Charities is sponsoring its annual Adopt-A-Family Christmas Program.

The program matches anonymous sponsors with families in need throughout the greater Oklahoma City area. Each sponsor receives a Christmas wish list for the “adopted” family, including each family member’s first name, age and clothing size. Sponsors wrap the gifts individually, labeling each gift with the appropriate family member’s name and family code number, and package them together in one container labeled with the family’s code number and the number of containers per family. Sponsors then drop off the gifts on Monday, Dec. 15, at a central location where the families in need pick them up two days later.

Families in need are referred to the program from parish-based St. Vincent de Paul groups. Last year 1,784 individuals received gifts.

Cash donations also are accepted for the purchase of gift cards for families in need. Cash donations may be made in honor of a friend or relative. Cash donors who make gifts in someone else’s honor will receive greeting cards they may present to their honorees acknowledging the gifts.

“It’s a good way to give a gift to a friend who has everything and a gift to a family who doesn’t,” said Allison Craig, Adopt-a-Family Christmas coordinator. Individuals or groups interested in sponsoring families, or anyone who would like to volunteer to assist with the gift drop-off and pickup process, may call the Catholic Charities Family Support Services at (405) 526-2328.
Better Poetry Needed to Defeat World’s Invisible Enemy

There’s an old axiom that says that the country with the best poets eventually triumphs. The strength of a people, in the end, lies not in its military power, but in its faith, moral fiber, imagination, and in the vision of its poets, artists, philosophers and priests.

Never has this been more true, and harder to believe, than today in our struggle with terrorism and the merciless violence it has unleashed all over the planet. To make peace with terrorism, as we are painfully learning, will require more than guns and military might. It is going to require new imagination, new poetry, and a moral stretch to which we are unaccustomed. This is a different kind of enemy, one that seems to grow the accustomed. This is a different kind of new imagination, new poetry, and a military might. It is going to require more than guns and bombs. To win, which ultimately means to win over, will require poetry, imagination and a vision drawn from genuine religion.

Kingsolver, in searching for some vision, draws upon the Greek story of Jason and the Argonauts. Jason finds himself facing a particular kind of dragon which, when it is slain and its corpse falls to the ground, becomes even more deadly because each of its teeth germinate and instantly produce a new enemy, fully armed. So each time he kills an enemy, the enemy multiplies. He sees the impossibility of his situation, every time he kills something, he has more to fight. Eventually a woman who loves him, Medea, tells him a secret: Hatred only dies when it is turned upon itself. Jason takes her advice, gives up his sword, and instead finds a way to throw a rock cryptically so that it triggers an internal riot within which his enemies fight each other. Later Medea also shows him a way to slip an elixir of contentment into the mouth of sleeping dragons so that they remain peaceful.

Hatred only dies when it is turned upon itself. We are right in trying to contain it, but eventually it can only be defeated from within. In the interim, we need better poetry.

2009 Sooner Catholic Printing Schedule

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ACCW Offers Scholarship Opportunity

The Oklahoma City Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women funds a $500 scholarship to high school seniors of its affiliated organizations. To qualify, a student must possess and maintain a 2.5 grade point average or better and/or pass a college entry exam, show record of community and parish volunteer service and show financial need. To obtain a scholarship application, please contact Dixie Stake, 401 Will Rogers Drive, Kingfisher, Okla. 73750, or e-mail ostake@pldi.net.

Deadline for receipt of completed application is April 15, 2009.

God Isn’t Too Busy

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us to awaken the expectation of Christ’s glorious return; then, nearing Christmas, it calls us to welcome the Word made man for our salvation.”

“But,” he said, “the Lord comes constantly into our lives. How opportune, then, is Jesus’ call, which is more powerfully proposed than ever this Sunday: ‘Be vigilant!’ It is addressed to the disciples, but also to ‘everyone,’ because everyone, at the hour that God alone knows, will be called to give an account of his own life. This entails a proper detachment from worldly goods, a sincere repentance for one’s errors, an active charity toward one’s neighbor and above all a humble and confident placing of oneself into God’s hands, our tender and merciful Father.”

“The Virgin Mary is the icon of Advent,” the pope concluded. “Let us call upon her to help us to become an extension of humanity for the Lord who comes.”
Director Finds Great Joy in Saint Eugene’s Children’s Choir

By Ammanda McCabe
The Sooner Catholic

OKLAHOMA CITY — Cindy St. Peter came into the Catholic Church in 2008, but she has always lived around music. "I was raised in a family of musicians," she said. "All of my siblings are accomplished singers and instrumentalists, and when we sang at Christmas together it was like a choir."

St. Peter has been a music director for many years, and a composer for more than 30 years. "I have written many youth musicals and am now composing a Mass setting for St. Eugene’s," she said.

St. Peter serves as music and choir director for St. Eugene’s School. Her calling to join the Church first came at age 19, when she was in a serious car wreck and woke from a coma to find a priest sitting by her hospital bed. "I looked at him and said, 'I want to become a Catholic,'" she said. "Obviously it took years for that part of the journey to be complete. But finally I am doing the work that God has commissioned me to do for the Church, and it is being blessed."

It seemed natural to bring her love of music and of children (she is the mother of seven, three of them adopted) with her to the Church. "The Faith Builders Choir was one of the ministries I established from the get-go when I became director of music at St. Eugene’s," she said. The choir started with 22 members and has grown to 37, with 17 soloists. The children are all from grades 1 through 5.

"Much of the music the choir does is the same music I use for other adult choirs," St. Peter said. "They just performed 'Fill Us With Your Love,' an amazingly difficult piece in two parts. Another interesting thing about the choir is when they sing at a Mass, the parts are individually cantored by the choir members — and not just the older ones. Last performance I had a first-grader, third-grader and fifth-grader cantoring the Mass parts and the psalm. And anyone who knows the Mass for John Carroll knows that it's difficult even for adult cantors."

The Faith Builders Choir will be singing Dec. 11 at a school Mass to be celebrated by Archbishop Beltran. They will also be singing on Christmas Eve from 4 p.m. to 4:30 before Mass, and then will be doing the music for the entire Mass as well, along with three violinists from the choir. In the spring, there will be a concert in April. St. Peter said that in January she will begin training the children to read music as well as more individual cantor training.

"I am very proud of these children, and am amazed at the support that the parents and parishioners give to this choir, as well as the priests and deacons," she said. "Being a part of this Church community has been a powerful blessing in my life, as well as my family's. I look forward to many more years of service in this parish!"

Christmas Tree Tradition Helps Support Bishop John Carroll School

We all have unique traditions that help define the Christmas season. At Bishop John Carroll School and the Cathedral Parish, the opening of the Christmas tree lot is a sign that the season is here. The trees arrived Nov. 23 and the men’s association gathered to organize the lot.

This tradition dates to 1960, when a group of men led by Hugh Maguire, Rollie Mueller, Bob Sine and Dan Venard pulled together to try to match some of the contributions by the women’s organizations in the parish. Dr. Maguire defined this group as initially a “ragtag outfit” compared to the altar society, but they organized an event that lives on today almost 50 years later.

All four were John Carroll dads, a pattern that still describes the tree lot committee. That first year they purchased $900 worth of trees with personal contributions. For many years until the early 1990s the trees were purchased through Paul Hampton, a man Dr. Maguire described “as devout a Baptist as we were Catholic.”

The core group remained involved through the 1980s and since then the lot has been organized by a group of dads including John Wilkinson, Phil Maguire and Dan Heinen, and more recently, Richard Cudjo and Mark Stranczek.

“I enjoy seeing the same faces year after year, though we always like having new customers,” said Bentley Edmonds, a 16-year veteran. “For me it’s just part of Christmas, and my daughters like working as much as I do.”

The Bishop John Carroll tree lot opened Nov. 30. Weekend hours are 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Weeknight hours are 5:30 to 8 p.m. Please stop by for a cup of hot chocolate, a Christmas tree and holiday cheer!
Priest Shares Talents, Life Story With Students

GUTHRIE — “I learned three things yesterday when we built a hydroelectric generator with Father Ken,” wrote Chris Noll, a seventh-grade student at St. Mary’s School. “The first thing I learned was that sometimes there is more than meets the eye with priests.”

Initially, when Julie Hagen (longtime parishioner of St. John’s in Stillwater and teacher at St. Mary’s) invited Father Ken Harder to meet with her science class, it was because she knew he had a background in engineering.

“I thought it would be great to let the students see that priests were people who had real-life experiences and had other interests and sometimes other lives before entering the priesthood,” said Hagen. After explaining energy transformations to both the sixth and seventh grades, Father Hagen interacted with the seventh-grade class during their lab time in which they made a replica of a hydroelectric generator. The next day, Hagen invited her classes to write a three-point paragraph explaining the three things they learned in class yesterday. Here are some of their quotes: “Father Ken is a Father or a priest and he was an engineer.” - Becca Osgood. “All of our world problems are connected somehow.” - Madeline Winkeler. “Father Ken is a lawyer also.” - Jill Hagen. “Radiant energy comes from the sun.” - Kenzy Osgood. “A hurricane is a big motor.” - Tarez Easley. “A two-stroke motor makes more power than a four stroke, a Dodge has more power than a Ford and 18-wheelers need tork.” - Dylan Osgood. “Father Ken liked Dodges better than Fords.” - Magan Krug. “Diesel motors are more powerful than gas motors.” - Freddie Boross. “Father Ken has a motorcycle.” - Tiler Judd. “The piston doesn’t hit anything even though it seems like it does.” - Khalil Factory.

Father Ken Harder was born in 1965 in Hawaii. He spent his childhood in Joplin, Mo., and attended Tulane University where he earned a BS in mechanical engineering. He earned his master’s at Purdue in mechanical engineering. He was accepted to Purdue, Stanford and the University of Texas, but chose Purdue because of being near to family. After his graduation, he went to work for Cummins Engine doing research and design on diesel engines.

“I had everything finished,” said Father Harder. “I had a master’s degree, was dating a young lady from church, had a great job, but there was a general sense of uneasiness … not unhappiness … and at first I thought maybe I was getting cold feet about getting married, but like looking through a fuzzy lens, it gradually became clearer and into a stronger focus. There was an awareness or thought which was outside myself … BE A PRIEST. Not like a voice or a command but an invitation. I said NO and I rejected it, perhaps for six months, then it kept coming back stronger and stronger and clearer. I felt like I was standing in a doorway in which I wanted to be in one room but was being called into another, and I was standing on the threshold.”

He describes the call to a vocation like a call from God to the prophets, in many of their lives, they were doing just fine by themselves, but were often called to something much different than what they saw themselves to be doing, and many times they did not want to go. “This calling was not part of my plan … BE A PRIEST was something outside myself … almost like a temptation, in which it is a suggestion coming from without, an invitation to give yourself to something else. I became aware of the presence of God saying that I could have a place where I could be happy and fulfill my sense of purpose through serving him.

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Poll Shows Support for Immigration Reform Among Catholics

WASHINGTON — A recent Zogby poll of Catholics nationwide showed overwhelming support for reform of our nation’s immigration laws, with Catholics supporting a path to citizenship for the estimated 12 million undocumented persons in the country.

The poll, conducted Oct. 17-20, included a sample of 1,000 people who self-identified as Roman Catholics and was commissioned by Migration and Refugee Services of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). It had a margin of error of +/- 3.2 percentage points.

About 69 percent of Catholics polled supported a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, provided they register with the government; 62 percent supported the concept if they were required to learn English. The U.S. Catholic Bishops have long endorsed a path to citizenship for undocumented persons that would include requirements to register with the government and to learn English.

“These results show that, like other Americans, Catholics want a solution to the challenge of illegal immigration and support undocumented immigrants becoming full members of our communities and nation,” said Johnny Young, executive director of Migration and Refugee Services of the USCCB. “It is clear that those opposed to a legalization of the undocumented are a minority,” he added.

In other findings, 64 percent of Catholics opposed the construction of a wall along the U.S. border with Mexico, while three out of four Catholics agree that the church has a moral obligation to help provide for the humanitarian needs of immigrants, regardless of their legal status.

Todd Scribner, education coordinator for MRS/USCCB, stated that the poll results demonstrated that the efforts of the U.S. bishops to educate Catholics on the realities of immigration are bearing fruit.

“Catholics are generally in agreement with their bishops that there needs to be a comprehensive and humane solution to our immigration problems,” Scribner said. “The strong educational efforts of the bishops, through the Justice for Immigrants Campaign and their own teachings, have helped generate support in the Catholic community for comprehensive reform.”

The U.S. bishops launched an educational initiative in 2005, titled the Justice for Immigrants Campaign, to educate Catholics on the need for comprehensive immigration reform.

National Migration Week to be Celebrated January 4-10

WASHINGTON — The Catholic Church in the United States will celebrate National Migration Week Jan. 4-10, 2009.

This year’s theme, Renewing Hope, Seeking Justice, “reminds us of our obligation to bring hope to the hopeless and to seek justice for those who are easily exploited,” said Bishop John C. Wester of Salt Lake City, chair of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Committee on Migration, in a letter sent to every parish and Catholic school across the country.

“For many migrant communities, injustice and hardship are too commonplace an experience. Given the often marginal and vulnerable status of migrants, it is important that communities everywhere treat migrants justly and provide a welcoming presence to all people on the move,” said Bishop Wester.

This year national migration week sheds light on the religious, political and cultural aspects of migration in all its forms. The bishops hope the resources the USCCB has made available will help Catholics become familiar with the many issues surrounding migration.

“As the face of local churches continues to change, information of this kind is becoming more and more important. Individuals, families, schools and parishes need opportunities like National Migration Week to learn the realities about newcomers entering their communities,” said Todd Scribner, education coordinator for the Migration and Refugee Services of the USCCB.

Last April, Pope Benedict XVI encouraged the bishops of the United States to continue to act in this regard.

“I want to encourage you and your communities to continue to welcome the immigrants who join your ranks today, to share their joys and hopes, to support them in their sorrows and trials, and to help them flourish in their new home,” said the pope.

The materials include several bulletin inserts that address issues related to human trafficking, immigration, refugees and Catholic social teaching on migration; information on how to acquire the revise edition of Unity in Diversity: A Scriptural Rosary, to guide spiritual reflection on migration; and a foldout poster. Several of these resources are available also in Spanish.

More information, including how to order materials, can be found at http://www.usccb.org/mrs-nmw.shtml.

Art Contest Opens

A Youth Multi-Media Art Contest is being sponsored for Catholic youth, grades 7-12. An exhibit of entries will be shown at Corpus Christi Church in conjunction with the Dr. Martin Luther King Mass on Jan. 19.

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- to ninth-graders and 10th- to 12th-graders. The contest theme is “Empowered People Can Uproot Poverty In Their Communities.” Deadline is Jan. 15.

“This contest is in conjunction with the Catholic Campaign For Human Development and winners will be entered into a national competition,” says Becky VanPool, Diocesan Director for the CCHD program. She added, “This is an opportunity for Catholic youth to creatively express their understanding of poverty issues in America.” Information can be obtained through Catholic school teachers, youth directors and parish Religious Education teachers. Contact VanPool at 523-3003, www.catholiccharitiesok.org or www.usccb.org/cchd/contest-materials.shtml for rules.

Prayer Service Set at St. Phillip Neri

MIDWEST CITY — St. Phillip Neri Parish is sponsoring an ecumenical prayer service in the spirit of the Taize community of France. The service will be held every Tuesday evening beginning Dec. 2 to Christmas, at 7 p.m. in the St. Phillip Neri chapel.

“The Taize Prayer Service is a wonderful way to usher in the Christmas season. All faiths are welcome to this peaceful prayer service of unity and community,” said St. Phillip Neri Church Cantor Barnard Jones.

St. Phillip Neri Parish is located at 1107 Felix Place in Midwest City. For more information, call (405) 737-4476.

Encounter Weekend Set

Make 2009 the year you put your marriage at the top of your priority list. Spend a weekend together and renew this most sacred sacrament. The Next Marriage Encounter Weekend in Oklahoma City is Jan. 30 to Feb. 1.

For more information, contact Dan or Jean Forgue at (405) 760-0390 (Jean’s cell) or (405) 760-0349 (Dan’s cell) or e-mail partspeople@att.net.
Immigrant Thanks

Mr. Yanez, thank you for your thoughtful and insightful article. I am a first/second generation American from my family who came here, leaving behind a doomed life of poverty.

From my own experience come these two events:

1) I once lived in a rundown 1896 house in Chicago. In the basement of this house were eight compartments constructed to house illegal Irish immigrants. This house hid many such families, and whose descendants now live throughout the United States. Who knows among us who arrived here legally or illegally?

2) Switzerland has three official languages: French, German and Italian. The Swiss not only speak these, but now the schoolchildren are also taught English. Rather than think this makes them inferior, the Swiss are considered highly cultured from this diversity of languages and cultures.

Patricia Black, Tuttle

A Different Thought

In the article “Our Essential Obligations in Fighting Abortion,” it is apparent the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) does not understand that it has played an important role in empowering abortion rights, same-sex marriage, and other “evils” they oppose. The admission of guilt comes in the sentence: “We have advocated for universal health coverage, generous family leave policies ... unborn children and their mothers.” In essence, they support the abdication of the role of the faithful in charity to the government, desiring to make charity a forced obligation rather than leaving it up to the practice of one’s faith.

By supporting the false premise of Socialism as “social justice,” they have accepted the sinister side of Socialism, that is, religion as the “opiate of the masses” as attributed to Lenin, the founder of the Soviet Union. Who, more than Socialists (including Communists and Fascists) have done more to undermine the existence of God and the practice of faith? One only has to look to the abdication of charity to the now Socialist-dominated governments in the democracies in Western Europe to see a withered and worn Catholic Church losing both members and influence on society. In some of those nations, it may soon be law not to proclaim the gospel.

In the vestibule of St. Mary’s in Ponca City, there is a map denoting the percentage of Catholics in each state’s population. After the recent election, there is nearly a one-to-one correspondence between the high percentage Catholic populations and the “blue” areas of the electoral map. The “blue” areas of the map are also the places where there is great energy to make abortion, same-sex marriage and other “evils” the USCCB opposes the law. However, this is also the area where there is great energy to abdicate charity to the government as they also advocate. It appears that Catholics, at the behest of their pastoral teachers, have become electorally, and thus morally confused.

Jesus has some advice to solve this dilemma. First, a house divided against itself cannot stand. Catholics cannot continue to empower the Teddy Kennedy-John Kerry-Nancy Pelosi-Joe Biden “social justice” pseudo-Catholic politician without accepting the “evil” baggage that they carry. Second, render unto God which is God’s, and unto Caesar which is Caesar’s. Charity needs to come from within us and not be extorted out of us.

Al Keller
St. Mary Parish
Ponca City

It’s Not Over!

The event of electing a new president is certainly completed. The work for peace and justice is just beginning anew. Now is the time for us to renew our efforts to work toward right relationship among us all, within church and society.

The bishops’ election year document, Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, still holds much food for our thought and action. Part III of the document, Goals for Political Life: Challenges for Citizens, Candidates and Public Officials, poses key questions for us to ask both of our elected leaders and of ourselves. How will we now, in the days and years ahead, protect the weakest in our midst? Turn from violence as a way of addressing our fundamental problems? Respect and support the institution of marriage and better support family life? Achieve comprehensive immigration reform? Overcome poverty? Provide health care for all? Eliminate racism? Pursue the common good and care for all creation? End war? Pursue peace, protect human rights and religious liberty, and advance economic justice and care for creation?

The Archdiocesan Commission for Justice and Human Development urges all Catholics to continue to study and reflect upon Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, and respond with action for justice. There are two DVDs that can be checked out from the Pastoral Ministry Office or from Catholic Charities. These videos, “A Matter of Conscience/Un Asunto de Consciencia” and “Go Make A Difference,” show how everyone can faithfully continue to participate in the political process. They help Catholics learn how they can form their consciences in order to shape their participation in public life. The videos can be helpful discussion starters, and easy entry into a deeper study of the full document.

The bishops remind us all, “In the Catholic Tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation ... rooted in our baptismal commitment to follow Jesus Christ and to bear Christian witness in all we do.” [13]. This responsibility is ours to fulfill throughout our lives. Now is the time for us to renew our efforts to bring about peace and justice for all.

Archdiocesan Commission for Justice and Human Development

Across Oklahoma

Prenatal Help Sought
EDMOND — Are you a physician assistant or nurse practitioner who would like to join Dr. Mary Martin in giving free prenatal exams to the uninsured pregnant woman waiting for Medicaid approval? This clinic is at the Edmond Birth Choice office and time commitment is two to three hours a month. Contact Pat Edwards, RN, at 330-2111.

Advent Mission Set
PRAGUE — National Shrine of the Infant Jesus of Prague and St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church invites you to our Advent Parish Mission to be held Dec. 14-17 at 7 p.m.

Topics are as follows: Sunday - What the Catholic Church Believes (The Creed); Monday - What the Catholic Church Celebrates (Sacraments); Tuesday - What the Catholic Church Lives (Commandments, Natural Family Planning and its impact on marriage and family life, Theology of the Body according to the mind of John Paul II-overview); Wednesday - What the Catholic Church Prays (the Our Father, prayer, spiritual life). Wednesday night will also be Penance Rite.

Advent Celebration Set
YUKON — Advent Lessons and Carols on Dec. 18 at St. John Nepomuk Parish at 6:30 p.m. at the church. All are invited to come and join in the prayer and praise as we joyfully anticipate the birth of Christ. For more information, contact the parish office at (405) 354-2743.
Buenas Noticias...

...Celebraciones Marianas nos guían a Jesús

Muy Reverendo Eusebius Beltrán, Arzobispo Metropolitano de la Arquidiócesis de Oklahoma City.

La Santísima Virgen María, Madre de Dios, ocupa el lugar más importante de toda la Creación de Dios.

El plan de Dios para María se revela cuando el Arcángel Gabriel se le aparece a ella. Gabriel le informa a María que ella fue escogida especialmente para ser la Madre de Jesucristo, nuestro Señor y Salvador.

En el Evangelio se narra que el ángel Gabriel fue enviado por Dios y le dice a la Santísima Virgen María, que será la Madre de Dios, que está contigo. Esto significa que está libre de todo pecado. Dios lo preservó de todo pecado por el papel especial que Dios planeó para ella.

Para describir el hecho revelado en el cual María fue preservada de todo pecado, estamos llamándola Inmaculada Concepción. María se le apareció a Santa Bernadette en Lourdes como la Inmaculada Concepción. La Virgen María bajo el título de Inmaculada Concepción fue proclamada la Patrona de los Estados Unidos.

La devoción especial a nuestra Santísima Madre proviene de lo que Dios hizo y como María libre y totalmente respondió a la llamada de Dios y a Su gracia.

Por lo que María se convierte en un ejemplo para todos nosotros, aún sin haber sido preservados del pecado original. María es un ejemplo para todos nosotros porque su respuesta a Dios fue tan fiel y llena de amor que ella continuó libre de todo pecado durante toda su vida. María nos enseñó cómo vivir apropiadamente. Ella siempre nos está llamando a que nos arrepintamos de nuestros pecados. Ella nos guía hacia su Hijo, Jesús.

Hoy, ocho de diciembre, celebramos la fiesta de la Inmaculada Concepción de la Santísima Virgen María. Luego, el viernes de esta semana, doce de diciembre, de nuevo celebraremos un día festivo en honor de nuestra Santísima Madre. Ese día es la fiesta de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe.

Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe es el título dado a nuestra Santísima Madre cuando se le apareció a San Juan Diego en el monte de Tepeyac en Ciudad de México. Allí, una vez más se apareció la Virgen María como nuestra madre. Ella prometió aliviar nuestras miserias y pidió que un templo fuese construido allí. El templo original fue luego reemplazado por una gran Basílica. Allí, la Eucaristía ha sido celebrada y se sigue celebrando en innumerables ocasiones. Su imagen, ha estado allí por cuatrocientos setenta y siete años. Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe está acercando a las personas a Jesús. Ella continúa siendo nuestra madre. Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe nos hace un llamado para que nos arrepintamos de nuestros pecados y sigamos a Jesús.

Queridos hermanos, les pregunto: ¿Alguna vez se han detenido a pensar y analizar qué bueno a sido Dios con cada uno de nosotros? Cuando Dios nos creó, lo hizo con un plan para cada uno de nosotros. Así mismo Dios lo hizo con la Santísima Virgen María. Él nos creó para que todos nosotros lo conociéramos, lo amáramos y le sirviéramos en la tierra y de esta manera alcanzcemos la vida eterna en el cielo junto a Él. Dios nos creó con amor y nos dio la habilidad de recibir Su amor y poder amarlo recíprocamente.

Muchas veces las personas hacen retiros para contemplar estas verdades. Se alejan de su trabajo diario para rezar y estar más alertas de las bondades y el amor de Dios. Algunas personas hasta forman parte de comunidades religiosas y dedican su vida entera a Dios.

Aunque es verdad que ustedes no están aquí voluntariamente o porque quieren, de hecho, están aquí por un tiempo determinado.

Sin embargo, les pregunto; ¿No sería sensato que hicieran de este tiempo, un momento especial, un periodo de oración y retiro? ¿Se han dado cuenta que no están solos? Dios está aquí con ustedes. Dios está en todas partes. Asimismo, María, la Madre de Cristo, quien es Dios, está presente aquí también.

María, la Inmaculada Concepción, Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, y nuestra verdadera Madre está llamándonos en esta noche para que nos arrepintamos de nuestros pecados y sigamos de una forma más cercana a Cristo.

Aquí, ustedes ahora pueden conocer, amar y servir a Dios y de esta manera algún día ustedes podrán compartir la vida en paz y descansar con la verdadera libertad en el cielo y para siempre.

Benedicto XVI pide oraciones por la expansión de la cultura de la vida en diciembre

VATICANO (ZENIT.org)— Benedicto XVI pide en este diciembre oraciones para que la cultura de la vida pueda expandirse gracias a la obra de la Iglesia. Lo propone en las intenciones del Apostolado de la Oración, iniciativa que siguen unos 50 millones de personas de los cinco continentes, para este mes que comienza.

La intención general del mes de diciembre dice así: “Para que frente a la creciente expansión de la cultura de la violencia y de la muerte, la Iglesia, por medio de sus actividades apostólicas y misioneras, promueva con valentía la cultura de la vida”.

La intención misionera se inspira en la Navidad ya cercana: “Para que los cristianos, especialmente en los países de misión, por medio de gestos concretos de fraternidad, muestren que el Niño nacido en la gruta de Belén es la luminosa esperanza del mundo”.

Departmento de Correcciones de los Estados Unidos
Penitenciaria Federal El Reno
8 de diciembre, 2008

Mis queridos Hermanos en Cristo:

Estoy muy complacido de estar aquí con ustedes para celebrar la hermosa fiesta de la Inmaculada Concepción. Esta ocasión es una de las grandes celebraciones que la Iglesia Católica festeja cada año.

La Biblia claramente presenta a la Santísima Virgen María como Madre de Dios. Jesucristo, es el eterno Hijo de Dios y el verdadero Dios, al mismo tiempo, verdadero Hombre. Nosotros no entendemos completamente el misterio de la Encarnación (el hecho de que el Hijo de Dios haya asumido una naturaleza humana para llevar a cabo por ella nuestra salvación). Sin embargo, aceptamos firmemente esto, porque Jesús nos lo ha revelado y creemos firmemente en todo lo que Cristo nos ha enseñado.

La Santísima Virgen María, Madre de Dios, ocupa el lugar más importante de toda la Creación de Dios. Es verdad que todos hemos sido creados a Imagen y Semejanza de Dios y por lo tanto todos estamos llamados a ser santos. Sin embargo, la Santísima Virgen María es el único ser humano libre de todo pecado. Por ende, cuando queremos decir que ella está preservada del pecado, lo decimos desde su Inmaculada Concepción.

La Virgen María fue preservada inmune de toda mancha de la culpa original en el primer instante de su concepción por singular gracia y privilegio de Dios.

Dios preservó a María libre de todo pecado y, aún más, libre del pecado original, en atención a que iba a ser la madre de Jesús.
Celebrado Congreso Guadalupano en la Arquidiócesis

By Mauro Yanez
The Sooner Catholic

OKLAHOMA CITY — El pasado 22 de noviembre se efectuó una asamblea de carácter religioso para congregar a decenas de católicos de origen hispano.

Los católicos practicantes que se presentaron en este evento vinieron de casi todas las parroquias de la Arquidiócesis y fueron recibidos por el Arzobispo Eusebius Beltrán junto a los coordinadores de este encuentro.

El evento se efectuó en español y tuvo como invitado al Padre Alejandro Marca Mansilla, quien vino desde la Arquidiócesis de Chicago para este programa y nos dijo; “He venido al Congreso Guadalupano en esta Arquidiócesis, iluminando algunos de los diversos puntos desde la Palabra de Dios y desde la realidad de este acontecimiento de la Virgen de Guadalupe para que valoremos la importancia de implorarle a la Virgen María para que interceda y nos conceda que cese el odio, la intolerancia, los prejuicios y las injusticias que existen en contra de los inmigrantes en los actuales momentos en Oklahoma.

El Congreso Guadalupano fue una actividad que marcó un precedente de reflexión sobre los católicos practicantes de la Arquidiócesis y para aquellos que son católicos y se desean incorporarse en profesar su fe de acuerdo al Evangelio y nuestro Catecismo.

El Congreso Guadalupano ha permitido que podamos anticipar y prepararnos para la venida del Adviento y por supuesto para ese glorioso día 12 de diciembre, en el que veneramos la aparición de la Emperatriz de las Américas.

El Congreso Guadalupano ha dejado un sabor de unidad para que valoremos la importancia de implorarle a la Virgen María para que interceda y nos conceda que cese el odio, la intolerancia, los prejuicios y las injusticias que existen en contra de los inmigrantes en los actuales momentos en Oklahoma.

El mensaje de la Virgen María mediante su aparición como Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe nos debe tener presente que Cristo vino a traernos alegría y nuestra salvación por nuestros pecados.

La Virgen Morena es y será siempre un símbolo que nos liberó y nos libera para que nos identifiquemos como verdaderos hispanos de buena voluntad creyentes en Cristo.

Finalmente, el Arzobispo Beltrán culminó el Congreso Guadalupano con la celebración de la Sagrada Eucaristía y en su homilía mencionó; “La Santísima Virgen María bajo el título de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe completa su desempeño como la Madre de Cristo y nuestra madre también. Trayendo al mundo a Jesús, ella nos dejó a Cristo para estar con nosotros”.

Jobs Box

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.

Director of Homeless Services
Catholic Charities is seeking a Director of Homeless Services. The position is responsible for the supervision of all programs serving the homeless sponsored by Catholic Charities including the day shelter. Duties include development of social service programs with other service partners in the OKC metro area, monitoring and reporting on program implementation, facility management and development of relationships with other faith community partners. Master’s degree in social work, human services or related field plus three years related experience including experience supervising professional staff and volunteers. Must possess excellent communication skills, Microsoft Office software proficiency and database management skills. Submit a current resume with cover letter and salary history to Human Resources, 1501 N. Classen Blvd, Oklahoma City 73106, or to nlaregent@catholiccharitiesok.org

Third-Grade Teacher
Bishop John Carroll Catholic School in Oklahoma City has an immediate opening for a third-grade teacher to join an exceptional school community. Applicants must be certified in the state of Oklahoma. Please call the school office at (405) 525-0956 for an application or send resume to Connie Diotte, BJCS, 1100 N. W. 32nd St., Oklahoma City 73118.

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 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 assistance experience preferred. Interested candidates apply online: www.mercycareers.net.

Healthcare Openings
The Center of Family Love in Okarche has immediate openings for the following: LPNs - Full-time shifts available (7 a.m. to 3 p.m.). DCTs - Certified is great, if not we will train. Shifts available are 7 a.m. to 3 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.

Early Childhood Teacher
Christ the King Catholic School is seeking a certified early childhood teacher to serve in our new preschool program to open in fall 2009. Commit now and be in on the ground floor in planning for this new adventure. Call for an appointment 843-3909, Karen Carter, principal.

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

Dean of Enrollment Management
St. Gregory’s University in Shawnee invites applicants for the position of Dean of Enrollment Management. Position responsible for the development, implementation, maintenance, analysis and general supervision of all programs related to the recruiting and retaining of undergraduate students. Involves developing and implementing the university’s strategic enrollment and marketing plan and recruiting goals for the College of Arts and Sciences. This position manages the budget for the office and supervises the admissions counselors and office support staff. In addition, this position will coordinate and support the contracted recruitment companies. Applicants must possess an understanding of and willingness to support the St. Gregory’s University Catholic and Benedictine mission. Master’s degree is required. Experience as an admissions counselor and a minimum of two years experience in the director’s or assistant position is preferred. Electronic résumés are preferred, and should include a letter of application describing experience, qualifications, vision and record of achieving/exceeding enrollment goals at one’s recent institution. Shingi Goto, Executive Vice President, St. Gregory’s University, 1900 W. MacArthur, Shawnee, Okla. 74804, sgoto@stgregorys.edu, (405) 878-5435.

Insurance Openings Knights of Columbus
General Agent
The Knights of Columbus have a full-time management opportunity in which you will recruit, select, train and supervise field agents for our organization. This independent contractor position offers excellent earning potential. Benefits include a non-contributory pension plan, 401(k) plan, contributory life and health insurance and a contributory disability plan. An office allowance is available for the first two years. Candidates should have successful life sales experience, with management experience preferred. For additional information, contact Joe Martinez, FICF, LUTCF, Vice President, Agencies, 1 Columbus Plaza, New Haven, CT 06510, office: (203) 752-4262, fax: (203) 752-4102, e-mail: jmartinez@kofc.org.

Field Agent
The Knights of Columbus is looking for a field agent. Want to be in charge of your own destiny in your own exclusive territory, while making a difference in the lives of our members and their families? This is a full-time independent contractor position that provides the opportunity to represent our organization, conducting needs assessments and presenting our benefits to members. Benefits to you include a non-contributory pension plan, 401(k) plan, contributory life and health insurance and a contributory disability plan. Candidates should have a desire to be paid what they’re worth. A background in sales is a plus, although not an absolute requirement. For additional information, contact Joe Martinez, FICF, LUTCF, Vice President, Agencies, 1 Columbus Plaza, New Haven, CT 06510, office: (203) 752-4262, fax: (203) 752-4102, e-mail: jmartinez@kofc.org.

For up-to-date job listings, go online to catharchdioceseok.org and click on Job Listings
Calendar

DECEMBER
7 Second Sunday of Advent
7 Advent Penance Rite at St. Mary Church in Ponca City, 5 p.m.
8 Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary - Holy Day of Obligation.

8 Weekly Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament at Christ the King Catholic Church, located one block north of Wilshire, halfway between Penn and May 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.

9 Mount St. Mary Home basketball game vs. Heritage Hall, varsity, 6:30 and 8 p.m.

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

10 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 Curcio, 755-9163, O en Espanol, Gloria Pantazis, 751-7115.

11 Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament at Epiphany Parish, 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 73132.

13 A Christmas Carol. Christ the King Catholic Church, 8005 Dorset Drive in Oklahoma City, presents an Oklahoma Shakespeare in the Park production of Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol in the Parish Atrium at 8 p.m. Tickets cost $5 and will be available at the door.

13 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.

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

14 Third Sunday of Advent
15 Drop-off date for Catholic Charities Adopt-A-Family Christmas Program.

15 Advent Penance Rite at St. John the Baptist, 6:30 p.m.

16 Advent Lessons and Carols at St. John Neumann Parish, Yukon, at 6:30 p.m. in the church. All are invited. For more information, contact Robert in the parish office at (405) 354-2743.

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

18 Advent Lessons and Carols at St. John Nepomuk Parish, Yukon, at 6:30 p.m. in the church. All are invited. For more information, contact Robert in the parish office at (405) 354-2743.

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 in Prague is located at St. Wenceslaus Church, 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. Teresa of Jesus - Oklahoma Community and Province of St. Therese, meets at St. Joseph Carmelite Monastery in Piedmont from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, call Janet Mildfelt at (405) 848-6275 or Deacon Jim Breazile at (405) 377-9478.

25 Christmas - Holy Day of Obligation

Pope Provides Quotes for Thought to Celebrate Year of Saint Paul

By Brother Benet Exton


Pope Benedict XVI proclaimed that from June 28, 2008, to June 29, 2009, to be the Jubilee Year of St. Paul commemorating his 2,000th birthday. This has been a low-key celebration, it would rank below the pope in the hierarchy. This particular book on St. Paul has a preface by Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, who is the Vatican’s Secretary of State, which is the person that ranks below the pope in the hierarchy. The introduction is by Father Edmund Caruana, O.Carm. This book is an English translation of the Libreria Editrice Vaticana’s edition. There are eight parts with an index at the end of the book.

The quotes from the pope are short, usually only a few sentences. There are 159 numbered quotes in this small book. The pope covers the apostolic vocation of St. Paul, St. Paul’s encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus, St. Paul and the Holy Spirit, the Christian experience as St. Paul saw it, the Church of God, the Sacraments, and prayer. The pope quotes many times from the letters of St. Paul. The quotes are followed by a citation as to where the quote came from and when.

General readers and the sophisticated person will enjoy this book. These quotes can be used for retreats or as starting points for meditation or reflection. One could look up the Scripture that the pope is discussing and expand upon what he is writing about. At the end of each chapter is space provided for note-taking. This small book is highly recommended to those looking for a low-key way to observe the Jubilee of St. Paul or who just wants to read quotes from Pope Benedict on St. Paul.

Brother Benet Exton is a Benedictine monk at St. Gregory’s Abbey in Shawnee. Among other duties, he serves as the librarian there and he writes book reviews regularly for several Catholic publications, including the Sooner Catholic.
Darrell Barton first came in contact with the Discalced Carmelite Nuns Carmel of Saint Joseph in 1978 as a photojournalist working for the NBC affiliate in Oklahoma City. Barton and a reporter were allowed to chronicle a day in the life of the Sisters inside their monastery near Piedmont.

Barton is not Catholic, but his wife, Marylyn, is devoted to her Catholic faith, and the story of the Catholic nuns who live apart from the world intrigued him and the fellow NBC reporter. Barton recalls it was a remarkable day and caught him completely off guard. He would learn that the Sisters inside were not there because they feared or hated the world, they were there because they have dedicated their lives to praying for the world. It was a story of incredible and unconditional love.

A month later, Barton would again come in contact with the Carmelites. Barton's wife gave birth to their son, Jackson, a month after the story aired on local television. The child was premature by more than two months and doctors gave the couple little hope that their son would survive.

Without Barton's knowledge, Bill Reavis, the reporter he had accompanied on the story about the Carmelite Sisters, contacted the nuns and described the situation to them. Sister Stephen, the nun who answered the phone, told the reporter she would gather the Sisters and they would pray for the child. Less than two hours later, doctors reported the infant had made dramatic improvement and they now believed he would survive.

On Dec. 20, now 30-year-old Jackson Barton is scheduled to be married.

Truly, an amazing story.

But this would not be the only time Barton’s life would be touched by the Carmelite Sisters. In 1992, after Barton had worked on many more incredible stories, including the 1981 murder of Father Stanley Rother, a story that resulted in him striking up a friendship with Father David Monahan, his life would again come in contact with the Sisters.

On a foggy February night, Barton received word that his then 19-year-old daughter, Carrie, had been involved in a terrible accident. A driver had crossed the center line and struck her vehicle head on. She was trapped inside, still alive, but just barely.

At the hospital, Barton and his wife were again told one of their children had very little chance of surviving. Their daughter was on life support, she had suffered a serious brain injury. Upon hearing this, Barton found a phone and called Father Monahan. He asked his friend for the phone number for the Carmelite Sisters in Piedmont. Barton remembers a sleepy voice answered the phone. He explained what his family was facing. The Sister said she would wake the Sisters and they would pray.

Barton said when he hung up the phone, he looked at his watch. It was midnight. An hour later, the doctor returned to the waiting room with news he could not explain. Their daughter was doing much better. He now believed she would survive.

Today, Carrie is a doctor and lives with her husband in Mexico.

Barton is a member of the Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame. He has covered hundreds of stories throughout the world including wars in Bosnia, Iraq and Afghanistan. He was a regular contributor to “Sixty Minutes” and “48 Hours” before retiring in 2003.

He now does only jobs that interest him. One of those “jobs” was asking to again go inside the world of the Discalced Carmelite Nuns Carmel of Saint Joseph, only this time, with a still camera.

“A World Apart - A Life of Prayer” is a photo book created by Barton in honor of the Carmelite Sisters. His first photo was snapped before dawn with the last coming around 11 p.m. The book captures a day in the life of the Sisters and for Barton, it’s simply a way to say thank you.

To order the book, contact Darrell or Marylyn Barton at (405) 340-8529 or by e-mail at darrell-barton@sbcglobal.net.

The book costs $35 plus sales tax and postage, and Barton said all profits will go to the Sisters.