Villa Teresa School to Close

OKLAHOMA CITY — In a letter addressed to “Villa Teresa School Families,” Sister Patricia Ann Miller, general superior of the Carmelite Sisters of Saint Therese of the Infant Jesus, said it was “with heavy hearts” that the Carmelite Sisters must close Villa Teresa School on July 31 of this year.

The letter was dated Friday, March 9.

“For 79 years the Carmelite Sisters of St. Therese have operated Villa Teresa Schools, both downtown and in Moore,” said Sister Patricia in the letter. She said the goal of the schools was to “provide a solid foundation for the spiritual, emotional and educational growth of the children entrusted to our care.”

The school in Moore was closed a year ago.

“In spite of tuition increases, rising costs, such as health insurance and salaries have continued to impact the school’s budget each year,” the letter stated. She went on to say the school buildings are “old and in need of major repairs as well as renovation.”

For the first 65 years of their existence, the Carmelite Sisters provided staff for the schools, serving in every capacity continued on Page 3

Walk for Life Organizers Pray for Big Turnout

OKLAHOMA CITY — Oklahoma Catholics who have organized a “March for Life OKC” event that will take place on March 26 say they have no idea what kind of turnout to expect. But they are praying it’s a good one.

“There are a lot of exciting things going on in the pro-life effort at this time,” said George Montee, one of the organizers of the march. He said that “hopefully” this will cause people to want to come out and show their support for the sanctity of life.

Montee mentioned the “personhood” legislation as well as ultrasound legislation being proposed by some Oklahoma lawmakers as some of the pro-life efforts that need support.

The event will begin with Mass at 9 a.m. celebrated by Archbishop Paul S. Coakley at Corpus Christi Catholic Church, 1005 N.E. 15th St. Pro-life supporters will then march from Corpus Christi to the state Capitol building where a rally is scheduled to begin at 11:30 a.m.

Guest speakers at the rally will be Archbishop Coakley and Rep. Rebecca Hamilton, D-Oklahoma City, Montee said. He said shuttle transportation will be provided for those who wish to park at either the state Capitol, south of Northeast 21st, or at the State Capitol Park, NE 23rd and Lincoln Blvd. The shuttle will take participants to the site of where the march will begin.

Signs can be carried in the march, but are not allowed inside the Capitol.

For more information, contact Neil Baltazor at (405) 454-3651 or George Montee at (405) 227-0923. Information is also available at www.facebook.com/MarchForLifeOKC.

A Warm Reception At Center of Family Love

Archbishop Coakley gets a warm greeting from Brian Senn, a resident at the Center of Family Love in Okarche. Archbishop Coakley, along with Father William Lewis, pastor at Holy Trinity Church in Okarche, toured the CFL campus. More coverage is found on Page 9. Sooner Catholic Photo/Ray Dyer
“Ad Limina Apostolorum”

Ad limina apostolorum, that is, “To the threshold of the Apostles.” This is the name of the ancient apostolic pilgrimage that I will be undertaking by the time this column appears in the Sooner Catholic. In a centuries-old practice that expresses the communion of every Catholic diocese with the pope and the See of St. Peter, bishops from around the world make an ad limina visit to Rome every five years. Together with the bishops of Oklahoma, Arkansas and Texas I will be making my ad limina from March 14-21.

The purpose of the ad limina visit is twofold. First and most importantly, it is a pilgrimage to pray at the tombs of Saint Peter and Saint Paul. It offers a grace-filled opportunity for bishops, as successors of the apostles, to re-focus on our mission and seek the intercession of these two great apostles of Rome. The second purpose is to present to the Holy Father a report on the condition of the Archdiocese since the last ad limina visit in 2004. This quinquennial report is a detailed account on virtually every aspect of the life and ministry of the Church in the Archdiocese. It has already been submitted to the Holy Father. Various sections will be distributed to the appropriate departments, or dicasteries, of the Roman Curia for review and discussion.

So what does a bishop do during the ad limina? The course of our days in Rome will include Masses at each of the four papal basilicas. We will begin, appropriately, with Mass at the tomb of St. Peter in the basilica that bears his name. I am grateful to have been invited to be principal celebrant of the Mass when we visit the Basilica of St. Peter Outside the Walls. Our itinerary will also include Masses at St. John Lateran, which is the Cathedral of the Diocese of Rome, and at St. Mary Major, the oldest Church in Christendom dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. One of the particular highlights that I look forward to is a very personal way will be the opportunity to pray and celebrate Mass at the tomb of Blessed John Paul II. Pope John Paul has been a tremendous influence in my life, as in the lives of so many Catholics. It was he who inspired me toward the priesthood and appointed me bishop late in 2004, shortly before his death.

In addition to these liturgical and spiritual exercises we will have an opportunity to meet with Pope Benedict XVI and discuss matters of concern to our local churches as well as those which impact the universal Church. Undoubtedly our conversations will touch on the upcoming Synod on the New Evangelization as well as the current threats to religious liberty in the United States. I will be happy to offer the Holy Father assurance of the prayers and support of the clergy, religious and faithful of the Archdiocese.

Much of the time will be taken up with meetings and visits to the various dicasteries of the Roman Curia. Among these I have made an appointment to meet with Cardinal Amato, the Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. It will be my purpose to demonstrate support and inquire about progress on the cause of canonization for the Servant of God, Father Stanley Rother.

Finally my pilgrimage to the Eternal City will conclude with a brief stay at the North College to visit and encourage our young men studying in Rome. I ask your prayers for me and my brother bishops during this pilgrimage “to the threshold of the apostles.” In turn, I will carry you and your intentions in my heart as I visit the shrines of the holy apostles, the glorious martyrs and all the saints.

OFFICIAL ASSIGNMENT

Effective April 13, 2012:

Novak, Reverend William L. — Vicar General for Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, and continuing as Pastor, St. John Nepomuk Church, Yukon

Archbishop Coakley’s Calendar

The following events are part of Archbishop Coakley’s official calendar:

- **March 13-March 23**: Ad Limina Visit with His Holiness Benedict XVI, Rome
- **March 24**: Confirmation, St. Joseph Church, Blackwell, 5:30 p.m.
- **March 25**: Confirmation, St. Mary Church, Medford, 9 a.m.
- **March 26**: March for Life OKC, Mass at Corpus Christi Church, 9 a.m.
- **March 27**: St. Ann Retirement Center Board, Catholic Pastoral Center, 8 a.m.
- **March 28**: Mass and classroom visits, Mount St. Mary High School, 10:30 a.m.
- **March 28**: Personnel Board, Catholic Pastoral Center, 1 p.m.
- **March 29**: Mass at Catholic Pastoral Center, 11:30 a.m.
- **March 30**: Mass and Presidential Inauguration Activities, St. Gregory’s Abbey and University, 9 a.m.
- **April 1**: Palm Sunday Mass, Our Lady’s Cathedral, 10 a.m.
Justice Day at Capitol March 20

OKLAHOMA CITY — “The work for justice requires that the mind and the heart of Catholics be educated and formed to know and practice the whole faith,” states the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in its “Faithful Citizenship” document.

In response to this mandate, the Commission for Justice and Human Development, which works in the Archdiocese to promote justice and peace, is sponsoring “Catholics Living Justice Day.” This is a legislative advocacy day for Catholics to be held on Tuesday, March 20.

Catholics are invited and encouraged to come to the Capitol to learn about advocating for the common good, to more deeply explore Catholic social mission and to learn how our faith speaks to pending legislation. Participants are also encouraged to invite their legislators to join them for breakfast, said Sister Diane Koorie, chair of the commission.

“In this election year, parishioners will learn more about the U.S. Bishops’ teachings regarding our role as faithful citizens.”

Breakfast will be provided for parishioners and their legislators at 8:15 a.m. The workshop will begin at 9:15 a.m. Reservations are required by calling (405) 523-3003 or emailing bvanpool@catholiccharitiesok.org.

The program will include a presentation by Father Bill Pruitt of St. James Church, about the role of the faith community in advocacy. The U.S. Bishops’ document regarding faithful citizenship will be shared. Richard Kline, Associate Director of Advocacy, Outreach and Legal Services for the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, will give tips on how to speak with legislators and report on the status of current legislation. Deacon Jim Smith of Christ the King Church will discuss the application of Catholic Social Teaching in advocating for the common good.

Additionally, at noon following the program, Kline will facilitate a discussion about religious freedom, conscience rights and the HHS Rule mandating insurance for sterilization, contraception and abortifacient drugs. “The call for justice and social action is a basic teaching of our Church,” states Koorie.

For more information, call Becky VanPool at (405) 523-3003.

Veterans, Families Invited to Attend Day Dedicated to Addressing Their Needs

MILITARY DAY OF AWARENESS — Veterans, military members and their families, community professionals and all involved in ministry are invited to a “Day of Awareness” at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Center on Saturday, April 14, from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. This day will build awareness of the concerns, needs and resources for service members and their families. Presentations will address behavioral, financial and spiritual concerns as well as available resources in our communities. The event is sponsored by Catholic Charities, Mercy Community Outreach, Archdiocesan Office of Family Life, Army OneSource, Mental Health Association of Central Oklahoma and Oklahoma National Guard. Please RSVP to the Office of Family Life at (405) 721-8944 by April 10.

School To Close

continued from Page 1

from “cleaners to principals.” During the past 15 years, the Carmelites continued to subsidize the schools, but that is no longer feasible.

“We are grateful for Sister Veronica’s dedication to Villa Teresa School. For the last 30 years, as a teacher and as a principal, she has been one of the school’s strongest advocates,” Sister Patricia said. “We are also grateful to Cassie Herd for her willingness to be the interim principal during this difficult period.”

Some 230 students, ages 2 1/2 through fourth grade, attend Villa Teresa School at 1216 Classen Drive. Those who have already enrolled for the fall will receive a refund.

Sister Catherine Powers, CND, Superintendent of Catholic Education, said while the school’s closing is sad, it will not be forgotten by the lives it has impacted.

“For 78 years Villa Teresa School has been a treasured institution for the Archdiocese and for the city of Oklahoma City,” Sister Catherine said. “The Carmelites Sisters and lay faculty have given many tireless and selfless years to the care and education of young children. It is indeed a sad time for all of us. However, the mark that the school has left on so many children and their families will live forever.”

Catholic Radio Five Days a Week

NM Interfaith Radio Five Days a Week

FM 94.1 Schedule: Monday – Friday: 1 p.m. to 7 a.m.

AM 890 Schedule: Monday – Friday: 1 p.m. until station signoff at dusk.

Go to www.okcatholicbroadcasting.com for the current schedule of programs
Pontiff’s Visit to Mexico, Cuba Expected to Focus on Justice

By Francis X. Rocca

VATICAN CITY — Pope Benedict’s trip to Mexico and Cuba March 23-28 will be a relatively brief one, consisting of a little more than two days in each country. Yet his visit is bound to highlight a wide range of prominent issues affecting an entire continent of crucial importance to the Catholic Church.

The Pope arrives in Leon, in central Mexico, late afternoon local time March 23. His first full day’s schedule will be light, no doubt reflecting concerns for the health of the Pope, who turns 85 April 16. Pope Benedict’s flight will have taken him across eight time zones, to a city 6,000 feet above sea level (compared to only 70 in Rome).

On the evening of March 24, the Pope will meet with Mexican President Felipe Calderon, who has served as head of state since December 2006. His administration has been marked by a violent struggle between the military and the country’s drug cartels, a topic that will presumably arise in discussions between the two men.

The next day, Pope Benedict will address bishops from Mexico and across Latin America at a vespers service in Leon’s Cathedral of Our Most Holy Mother of Light. Here he is likely to touch on some of the issues that he raised on his only other Latin American trip, in 2007, when he spoke to the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean in Aparecida, Brazil.

At that time, the Pope urged church leaders to struggle against poverty and oppression but to shun direct involvement in partisan politics — an echo of his long-standing critique of the liberation theology movement, which grew from Latin American roots. Pope Benedict also warned then against the danger of syncretism, or the blending of religions, by those who adopt elements of indigenous traditions in their Catholic devotions — a practice the Pope also denounced on his trip in November to the West African country of Benin.

The context and timing of this year’s speech will likely affect the content of Pope Benedict’s message to the Latin American bishops.

Mexico is historically a highly polarized country on religious questions. The country’s 1910 revolution was heavily anticlerical, and the 1917 constitution forbade religious education and even the public display of clerical garb. Such measures sparked the Cristero Rebellion in the late 1920s, when conflict between Catholic rebels and government forces left as many as 90,000 dead.

The country remains a mix of highly assertive secular and religious traditions, making it potentially fertile ground for the New Evangelization that Pope Benedict has made a priority of his pontificate, and which will be the theme of a Vatican synod of bishops this October.

Cuba, where the Pope visits March 26, is in a sense the mirror image of Mexico. It’s a country where the Catholic Church has enjoyed relatively tranquil dealings with the civil authorities. Diplomatic relations with the Holy See have never been interrupted, even by the institution of a communist government in the 1960s, but religious practice has traditionally been as feeble as anywhere in Latin America.

Church officials estimate that only about 2.5 percent of Cuba’s population of 11 million can be considered practicing Catholics today, a fraction of the proportion prior to the revolution, though it represents a significant rise since the visit of Pope John Paul in 1998.

The church in Cuba continues to operate under severe restrictions, unable to build new churches or legally operate schools. However, the role of Cardinal Jaime Ortega of Havana and other Cuban bishops in successfully negotiating for the release of more than 100 political prisoners in 2010 reflects the government’s growing respect for church authority.

Pope Benedict will no doubt raise issues of religious and political freedom with President Raul Castro when they meet March 27. The Pope is also expected to meet with Castro’s brother, former President Fidel Castro, although no such encounter yet appears on his official schedule.

The main reason for Pope Benedict’s trip is a pilgrimage to the shrine of the Our Lady of Charity of El Cobre, the country’s patron saint, in the southeastern city of Santiago. This year marks the 400th anniversary of the miraculous appearance of the statue venerated at the basilica there.
Foundation Develops Arts Endowment Fund

To help ensure a vibrant future for pastoral music and the fine arts in the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, the Catholic Foundation of Oklahoma has created the Pastoral Music and Fine Arts Endowment Fund. This permanent, income-producing legacy, administered by the Foundation, will make extraordinary opportunities in the visual, performing and literary arts possible by providing financial support for fine arts programming throughout the Archdiocese. Catholic Foundation President Tony Tyler said in making the announcement, "The purpose of the fund is to support artistic excellence, creativity and innovation which uplifts the human spirit for the benefit of individuals and parish communities within the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. The Pastoral Music and Fine Arts Endowment Fund hopes to extend its work through partnerships with parishes, local leaders, nonprofit agencies and the philanthropic sector."

In May 2011, the Catholic Foundation of Oklahoma committed $10,000 over a five-year period from the Director's Endowment Fund to establish the Pastoral Music and Fine Arts Endowment Fund. The Foundation will also seek individuals and organizations who would make gifts to the fund. When the Foundation determines that the fund is of sufficient size, annual programming grants from the earnings and gains of the fund would begin.

The Pastoral Music and Fine Arts Endowment Fund was established to promote and celebrate the performing and visual arts throughout the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. The Fund is intended to support educational, religious and charitable institutions for pastoral music and the fine arts in the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, the parish communities within the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. The Pastoral Music and Fine Arts Endowment Fund hopes to extend its work through partnerships with parishes, local leaders, nonprofit agencies and the philanthropic sector.

Scholarship Deadline Nears

The deadline for applications for Catholic Foundation Scholarships is Monday, April 2, 2012. All forms and required information must be submitted to the Catholic Foundation Office no later than that date in order to be considered. Scholarship recipients are determined based on financial need, academic achievement and service to church and community. The recipient must be a full-time student and a permanent resident of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. Scholarships are renewed for all recipients for four years of undergraduate study as long as the student maintains a 3.0 cumulative GPA.

Each year, the Foundation features students in their senior year of study who have received Catholic Foundation Scholarships as an update on their academic accomplishments and plans following graduation.

Sara Roberts
Parish: St Eugene Catholic Church, Weatherford.
Attending: Oklahoma State University

"It is hard to believe four years have gone by. My experience at OSU has been an incredible journey! Hard work, mixed with great times. I wouldn’t trade a single moment. My involvement on campus in several service-oriented and philanthropic organizations has greatly affected my character and taught me the importance of giving back. I am an art history major, and will not

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The Catholic Foundation

CORNERSTONE

The Philosophy of a Charitable Gift Annuity

Any attempt to establish a philosophy of Gift Annuity Agreements must emphasize the word "gift." These agreements constitute one method by which the Catholic Foundation solicits and receives contributions to carry out its purposes for the Catholic Church in the Archdiocese. A person who enters into a Gift Annuity Agreement with the Foundation makes a gift to it and receives fixed payments for life. If the person could afford to do so, he or she would probably donate as an outright gift the entire amount paid to the organization, but he or she needs to make some provision for income while alive.

The gift annuity rates recommended by the American Council on Gift Annuities (ACGA) have been computed to produce an average "residuum" or gift to the organization at the expiration of the agreement of approximately 50 percent of the amount originally donated under the agreement. The gift annuity rates are based on actuarial studies of mortality experience among annuitants and a conservative projection of the rate of income to be earned on invested reserve funds.

Gift Annuity Agreements have been utilized by the Catholic Foundation for many years. They are established use and are favorably regarded as a proper method of receiving contributions. Many leading educational, religious and charitable institutions have received significant gifts through Gift Annuity Agreements, thereby benefiting their work and at the same time returning to the donor practical benefits and spiritual satisfaction.

For more information about the flexibility of charitable gift annuities or other estate planning ideas, contact:

For more information on Planned Giving, contact:
The Catholic Foundation of Oklahoma, Inc.
P.O. Box 32180, Oklahoma City, OK 73123
(405)721-4115 • www.cfook.org • bsemtonzer@Archdioceseokc.org

Please Remember the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City in Your Estate Plans
Catholic Camp Hosts Annual Youth Encampment

OLOG — For 99 youth plus adults, a weekend last October was packed with fun, friendship, plenty of good food and new experiences in growing their faith at Our Lady of Guadalupe Camp.

This was the annual encampment sponsored by the Oklahoma City Archdiocesan Committee on Scouting and Camp Fire. Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and parish youth groups came from throughout the Archdiocese to share new experiences, develop new friendships, improve the grounds of Our Lady of Guadalupe Camp and enjoy a beautiful weekend of weather.

The theme was “CELEBRATE DIVERSITY.” All of the participants had multiple opportunities to express what the theme meant to them. First they were divided into groups and each group created their own banner displaying what diversity meant to them. As they met in discussions and prayer sessions, they experienced new meanings and added those to their banners.

One of the discussion sessions started with a Bible reading from 1 Corinthians. From that each participant received a puzzle piece to decorate to represent themselves. This was to demonstrate that we are all part of the puzzle. Additionally, participants made bracelets of various colors while the story of the colors was read.

Another session focused on creating “Leave No Trace Awareness” regarding our duties concerning our relationship to the natural environment. Pope Benedict XVI addressed this in his Encyclical letter “CARITAS IN VERITATE” (dated June 29, 2009). He states that nature is at our disposal not as “a heap of scattered refuse,” but as a gift of the Creator who has given it an inbuilt order, enabling man to draw from it the principles needed in order “to till it and keep it.” The discussion then progressed through the Seven Principles of Leave No Trace in the Outdoors.

A third session focused on the Luminous Mysteries of the most Holy Rosary. Many were less familiar with these, since they were introduced by Blessed Pope John Paul II in 2002. Each participant completing the session qualified for the Luminous Mysteries patch available from the National Catholic Committee on Scouting. The session concluded with each group being divided into sections. Each was given five assorted mysteries and were instructed to work together to gather the proper mysteries they needed and to put them in order of sequence, Joyful, Luminous, Sorrowful and Glorious. It was a fun learning experience.

The fourth session involved two major service areas to the camp. The first project centered on replacing some of the rosary beads (concrete circles) that had been broken or damaged, planting rose bushes, and clearing debris from this prayerful and meditation area. The other project involved placing larger and more secure wood branches along the walkway of the labyrinth that was created the previous year and also clearing debris from the area. Both projects were successful and appreciated by camp personnel.

The day was completed with Mass celebrated by Father Murphy, Archdiocesan Scout Committee chaplain.

Planning is under way for the 2012 Encampment. Be sure to put Oct. 12-14, 2012, on your calendar. We look forward to seeing you — Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Camp Fire, youth of the Archdiocese — at the 2012 Encampment! It will be fun for everyone!

Brunch to Honor Sister Sponsa

OKLAHOMA CITY — A brunch in honor of Sister Sponsa Beltran’s 87th birthday will be hosted by the Central Association of Catholic Women. The brunch will be held at 10 a.m. March 27 in the basement of the Catholic Charities offices at 1501 N. Classen Blvd.

Sister Sponsa will not be able to attend the brunch, but it is hoped that Kevin Rockensies will be here for the tribute. All proceeds from the brunch will be used to help with bedding needs at the school and rehabilitation center Sister Sponsa founded in Liberia, Africa.

If you are unable to attend the brunch but would like to contribute, please send your check to Teach Peace Foundation and mail to Pearl Sullens, 1941 NW 17th, Oklahoma City, Okla. 73106.
W

When I was first asked to write about my healing through Rachel's Vineyard, a post-abortion healing ministry, these words were all I could write! I froze. I initially got very choked up and started to cry again as my mind flooded with memories of a very difficult time in my life.

I carried a dirty little secret for 12 long years, one that led to quite a few bad choices as I tried to escape the pain and shame of having been involved in an abortion as a Catholic male. No, I was not a practicing Catholic at the time and that was my first mistake. Being in an unhealthy relationship with a Catholic woman who was an unsuccessful recovering addict, I kept choosing to compromise what I knew was right, for what I thought was peace in our home.

We did not live in Oklahoma. I came to know that my fiancée was not being faithful in our commitment to each other. Her sexual encounters led to her becoming pregnant. I was in my early 30s, recently discharged from the U.S. Armed Forces. I convinced myself that I couldn’t or wouldn’t raise another man’s child after her betrayal. I was so angry at her repeated infidelities that I asked her to have an abortion.

The day we arrived at the local Planned Parenthood Clinic, I knew something was wrong, but wasn’t open to what God was trying to tell me. Stop! Please do not do this.

We entered the building, she went in and I waited. It was during this time that I realized what a mistake I was making, but didn’t know how to stop it. I felt paralyzed between what was right and just, and what my anger had led me to do. I didn’t even know where she was in the building. She eventually came out crying, angry and very depressed. As we left the clinic, we were stopped by pro-life advocates. I refused to speak to them. It wasn’t until about 20 minutes later that we both started crying. I knew of the grave mistake we had made and wanted to run to the nearest Catholic church and beg God to forgive me. I chose to start drinking instead as a way to hide. Hide from me, from God, from my shame.

I chose to start drinking instead as a way to hide. Hide from me, from God, from my shame.

We were eventually married in a Catholic church, and during our preparation, our abortion decision led to several arguments over confessing this sin. Once again I promised in order to keep the peace, as I was letting my guilt get the best of me. We were blessed with a son, but six years later my wife returned to her pattern of drug use and infidelities, and now our son was suffering too. He even witnessed me striking my ex-wife in a terrible moment of anger. She left us and five years later we finally divorced. After anger management help, I ended up becoming a single parent to my little boy and didn’t have a clue as to what or how I was going to raise him.

At one point I got myself to a Catholic church seeking help, and it was at the continued insistence of the local priest that I returned to the Church. Through the sacrament of reconciliation and help from a Catholic pastoral counselor, I felt close to God. Oh, it wasn’t overnight and it wasn’t easy, it took time. Praying the Confiteor at Mass became my hardest task, as I would recite, “in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do…” I would usually choke out these words.

One day while I was waiting in the counseling office, I came across a brochure for Rachel's Vineyard. When my counselor entered her office, she could tell something was wrong as I was visibly shaking and holding the brochure. I asked if we could talk about this — it was still my dirty little secret. To my surprise she gave me a hug. I was very uncontrollably and broke down, telling her what a mess I had made of my life. I told her that while I could go to Mass, I couldn’t look at the altar of our Lord, I was still very ashamed. I told her how all I could do was pray to the Blessed Virgin Mother asking for her help.

By God’s providence, I was eventually able to go to a Rachel’s Vineyard retreat. I had met members of the Rachel’s Vineyard retreat staff previously when I helped out as a sacristan for the Mass that is part of the retreat. The retreat is a great blessing, a great healing. It comes from God through those that serve in this unique and caring setting. After years of learning about myself and more spiritual healing, I have remarried and have a family. My wife knows of this pain in my life; she prays with and for me. We pray for my former wife who has had many abortions. I have asked my former wife's forgiveness and pray that she may soon find peace with God too.

Please, if you know someone suffering from the pain of abortion, encourage them to make a Rachel's Vineyard retreat, be their support and attend with them. The Rachel’s Vineyard team in Oklahoma City will be there for whoever calls or emails to the confidential site.

Next Retreat June 1-3

The Next Rachel's Vineyard retreat is June 1-3, 2012. The retreat offers a profound opportunity, with a team of trained companions, therapists and clergy, to experience God’s love, forgiveness and compassion. Participation is strictly confidential. The retreat is sponsored by the Archdiocesan Office of Family Life. For more information, call (405) 623-3844 or email rachelsvineyardokc@gmail.com. The cost is $75 for meals, a private room and all retreat materials. Payment plans and financial assistance are available. For a description of the retreat and a complete list of other retreat dates and locations, call 1 877 HOPE 4 ME or visit the international website at www.rachelsvineyard.org.
Men’s Conference Attracts Hundreds to Norman

NORMAN — Archbishop Paul Coakley welcomed the more than 600 men attending the annual In the Father’s Footsteps Catholic Men’s Conference, telling them, “I know great fruit will come from this day.”

The 16th annual conference was held here March 3 at the Embassy Suites Hotel. It attracted men from throughout the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City as well as the Diocese of Tulsa. Dozens of other men traveled even further with Catholic men from Kansas and Texas also making their way to Norman for the day-long event.

Presented by the Oklahoma Fellowship of Catholic Men, the conference featured speakers including Matt Swaim, producer of The Son Rise Morning Show on EWTN Radio and the author of “The Eucharist and the Rosary” and “Prayer in the Digital Age.”

Also on tap was Father Nick Rice, who retired last year after 45 years as a pastor of two Louisville, Ky., parishes. For 35 years Father Rice produced, funded and presided over “Mass of the Air,” a televised Mass on the local ABC affiliate. His talk was titled “The Circles and the Center of our Lives.”

Mixed in between speakers was the Sacrament of Reconciliation as priests from throughout the Archdiocese made their way to Norman to hear confessions. Hundreds of conference attendees stood in line to take part in the Sacrament.

The conference concluded with Mass celebrated by Archbishop Coakley.

One scheduled speaker, Steven Givens, was unable to make the conference. Ray Haefele, one of the conference founders, said Givens has been battling a blood disease and a recent virus caused his doctors to recommend he not travel. Haefele asked conference participants to keep Givens in their prayers.

Dozens of vendors offered Catholic books, videos, clothing and art for sale in the corridors outside the main conference hall.

Michael Martini found the displays attractive, but he said the main reason he traveled from Wichita Falls, Texas, to the conference was to hear the speakers.

“They always bring in some wonderful speakers,” Martini said. He said he brought with him several men from his parish in Wichita Falls. The Texans joined with Catholic men from Elgin with 13 coming in their group.

“I missed the first two years,” Martini said. “But I’ve made the last 14 in a row.” He said he would encourage all Catholic men to take advantage of the Catholic Men’s Conference.

“It’s a wonderful way to spend a Saturday,” he said.
CFL Tour Greeted As Always With Warm Smiles, Hugs

OKARCHE — Archbishop Paul S. Coakley was greeted by residents of the Center of Family Love with hugs and smiles as he strolled through the impressive campus located on the west edge of this historic Oklahoma farming community.

The greeting given the Archbishop by the residents at CFL wasn’t really that special. Everyone who visits is treated the same way, with hugs and smiles. But the Archbishop seemed to very much enjoy the handshakes and hugs he received from the residents.

The Center of Family Love was created through the efforts of the Knights of Columbus. It opened in 1981 as a home for adults with developmental disabilities. The CFL continues to draw great support from Oklahoma’s Knights. This past year it opened a new housing area as part of a $10 million capital improvements program. More new housing will be erected in the coming years.

Rhonda Hardin, assistant administrator at CFL, led the tour that included the Archbishop, Executive Director Jim O’Brien, Assistant Executive Director David Blair, CFL board members Hank Ross and Bob Dolan, longtime benefactor Pat Loosen, and Harold Wittrock, one of the original founders and a volunteer who is there on what seems like a daily basis.

Archbishop Coakley smiled broadly as he was greeted warmly by residents of the CFL. He toured the three-ring binder operation and was given an up-close look at how the residents produce the binders that are used by the state of Oklahoma. He received a big hug from a resident who enjoys working in the CFL greenhouse.

Also joining in the tour was Father William Lewis, newly assigned pastor at Holy Trinity Church in Okarche. Archbishop Coakley spent part of the morning at the parish school and celebrated Mass for the students at Holy Trinity before arriving at the Center of Family Love.

“The Center of Family Love is a beautiful treasure in our midst,” said Archbishop Coakley. “It is a wonderful home for persons with special needs where the love of Christ is very tangible. I deeply appreciate the support that the Center receives from the Knights of Columbus, as well as its many other dedicated benefactors, staff and volunteers who support its mission of love and service.”

Following the tour of the Center of Family Love, the group enjoyed lunch at Eischen’s, known for its fried chicken and okra. Father Marvin Leven joined the group for lunch after returning from an appointment in Edmond.
Spelling Bee Champs Crowned in Annual Event

The winners of the third and fourth grade 2012 spelling bee: Three-way tie for 1st, Vivab Phan, St. John Nepomuk, Yukon, Ann Pham, St. James, OKC, and Sam Kolar, All Saints, Norman; 4th place, Andrew Celedon, St. Mary, Lawton; 5th place, Tristan Nguyen, Bishop John Carroll, OKC.

The winners of the first and second grade 2012 spelling bee: 1st place, Thomas Josey, St. John Nepomuk, Yukon; 2nd place, Joseph Hotze, All Saints, Norman; 3rd place, Taryn Ward, St. Mary, Guthrie; 5th place, Trevor Skinner, St. Philip Neri, Midwest City.

The winners of the fifth and sixth grade 2012 spelling bee: 1st, Brian Le, Rosary, OKC; 2nd, Haley Beller, St. Mary, Lawton; 3rd, Katie Van Horn, St. Mary, Lawton; 4th, Denzel Akuffo, All Saints, Norman; 5th place, Noel Lawver, St. Mary, Ponca City.

The winners of the seventh and eighth grade 2012 spelling bee: Two-way tie for 1st place, Erin Yen, Bishop John Carroll, OKC, and Charlie Kolar, All Saints, Norman; 3rd, David Ray, All Saints, Norman; 4th, Jackie Oh, St. Philip Neri, Midwest City; 5th, Aaron Stewart, St. Eugene, OKC.

Across Oklahoma

Bingo at St. James March 22
OKLAHOMA CITY — Bingo at St. James Catholic Church, 41st and South McKinley Avenue, will be held March 22. Food and beverages reasonably priced will be served at 5:45 p.m. Bingo begins at 6:30 p.m. All games including two blackouts are $10. Door prizes and special recognition for all players born in January, February and March.

A Magnavox 37-inch flat screen TV will be given away in October and all players get an entry into the drawing.

Screwtape Letters Set at Rose State
MIDWEST CITY — The Screwtape Letters is a smart, provocative and wickedly funny theatrical adaptation of the C.S. Lewis novel about spiritual warfare from a demon’s point of view. It was a hit in New York City where it played for 309 performances in 2010. The tour will play in over 50 major cities throughout the United States. It will be performed at Rose State College in Midwest City on March 24 with two performances, 4 p.m. and 8 p.m.

The play, set in an eerily stylish office in hell, follows the clever scheming of Satan’s chief psychiatrist, Screwtape, as he entices a human ‘patient’ toward damnation. The stakes are high as human souls are hell’s primary source of food.
Mandate Puts Religious Freedom in Crosshairs

On Jan 20, 2012, the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued a mandate placing first amendment rights and religious freedom in the crosshairs. The mandate, as a provision of ObamaCare, requires "preventive health services" to be covered by all health insurance issuers and all group health plans. Those insurance plans must provide (with no co-pay) the full range of Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved contraceptive methods for women. These include not only surgical sterilizations, but also potential abortion-causing agents such as Plan B (the morning-after pill), intrauterine devices (IUDs) and another form of "emergency contraception" known as Ella. This drug, which the FDA acknowledges may also work against the life of the embryo "by preventing attachment (implantation) to the uterus," can be taken up to five days after "unprotected" sex.

Essentially all employers would thus be forced — and therefore complicit in — financially subsidizing pharmaceutical abortions, contraception and sterilization procedures for their employees. All these procedures represent sinful and damaging human choices, as the Catholic Church has never ceased to point out. The mandate constitutes a direct intrusion into the religious works and governance of the Church and represents a federally-sponsored violation of her members’ consciences. The Church, as the largest provider of not-for-profit health care in the United States, operates roughly 600 hospitals and employs three quarters of a million people in addition to employing hundreds of thousands of others in her educational and social service ministries.

Cardinal Francis George of Chicago aptly described the authoritarian environment being created by the HHS mandate in one of his recent newspaper columns: "The bishops would love to have the separation between church and state we thought we enjoyed just a few months ago, when we were free to run Catholic institutions in conformity with the demands of the Catholic faith, when the government couldn’t tell us which of our ministries are Catholic and which not, when the law protected rather than crushed conscience. The state is making itself into a church.

In the words of another commentator, "As is more and more obvious, ObamaCare has nothing to do with controlling health care costs. It has everything to do with government control. It’s time to admit a mistake, repeal the law, and look at market-based ways to control health care costs."

Critics of every persuasion have condemned the HHS mandate as a particularly egregious violation both of religious freedom and the rights of conscience. "I side with those who feel this was an insult to freedom of religion and a slap in the face of faith-based institutions," Rabbi Eliot Pearlson of Temple Menorah in Miami Beach said.

Rabbi Dr. Michael Korman of Congregation Anshei Shalom in West Palm Beach concurred: "The entire contraception policy was poorly instituted. It appears to be in violation of our first amendment."

Jessica Devers in a Letter to the Editor of the Wall Street Journal perhaps put it most clearly when she wrote: "I am not Catholic. I am a social liberal and a supporter of Planned Parenthood. I’ve educated my children about birth control since they were young. Nevertheless, I am offended by the arrogance of our government ruling that the Catholic Church must provide a benefit that the church believes is immoral."

On Feb. 10, after stormy reaction even from President Obama’s staunchest Catholic supporters, he announced a so-called "accommodation," which — as the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops quickly explained — really changed nothing. When the government documents were made available, it became clear that there was no compromise at all but rather some slight procedural modifications that left the substance of the mandate entirely intact.

The day the "accommodation" was announced, in fact, the mandate was entered into the Federal Register with no changes, along with vague assurances of possible modifications at a future date (reminiscent of Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s famous line when campaigning for ObamaCare: “We have to pass the bill so that you can find out what is in it.”)

Philip Roner in the same issue of the Wall Street Journal sums it up this way: “The...promise in favor of the birth-control mandate is based on [its] being ‘essential to the health of women and families.’ I assume such items as food, housing, clothing and transportation are ‘essential to the health of women and families,’ as well. Therefore, I propose that the ObamaCare mandates be extended to cover food, shelter, clothing, autos, etc. In this scenario, everybody would be paying for everyone else’s essentials...”

The real issue, of course, has nothing to do with access to particular "reproductive issues" (like abortion or birth control), and everything to do with whether someone else can be forced by the strong arm of a federal mandate, in direct violation of their religious freedom, to pay for practices they recognize as morally reprehensible.

Rev. Tadeusz Pocholczyk, Ph.D., earned his doctorate in neuroscience from Yale and did post-doctoral work at Harvard. He is a priest of the diocese of Fall River, Mass., and serves as the Director of Education at The National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia. See www.ncbcenter.org.

Arts Endowment

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Archdiocese. This concept dates back to the Middle Ages when churches became the heart of the community’s culture. It was there that artists and musicians presented their master works and dramatists produced mystery and morality plays to teach and entertain. This vibrant tradition provided the inspiration for renewing this concept for celebrating the arts within the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City.

An endowment gift is one in which the original principal is never spent, although the growth and earnings from the principal are used to fund the expenses of a particular program or cause. Any endowment gift to the Pastoral Music and Fine Arts Endowment Fund at the Catholic Foundation of Oklahoma may be established by an individual, family or corporate entity to create a fund named in memory or in honor of an individual or organization. It may be designated for scholarships, guest artists, artistic development or program support. It may be allocated for general use (where the need is greatest) or specified for a particular program. The minimum contribution to establish a named endowment fund is $5,000. By establishing an endowment fund at the Catholic Foundation, a donor automatically becomes a member of the Catholic Foundation Legacy Circle in perpetuity.

You can establish an endowment fund by making an outright gift in the form of cash, stocks/appreciated securities, real property or personal property. If your employer is a matching gift company, the matching gift can be applied to the endowment fund. You can also establish an endowment fund through one of several planned giving instruments such as a will, trust or charitable remainder trust.
Tornado Victims Find Support from Catholic Parishes

By Catholic News Service

HENRYVILLE, Ind. — As one of the few buildings in town to come through intense storms March 2 nearly intact, St. Francis Xavier Church has become a natural staging area for relief efforts, community organizing and prayer.

Four days after a devastating tornado hit, volunteers and professionals used St. Xavier, the nearby Henryville Community Church and a community center as bases for people trying to put their lives back together.

The town of about 1,600 was one of several in the region to be largely destroyed by a wave of storms that created dozens of tornadoes across 11 states March 2 and 3.

At least 39 people were killed, including one in Clark County, where Henryville and nearby Marysville took direct hits. Deaths also were reported in Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama and Ohio. Substantial damage dotted those states as well as Georgia, North Carolina, Illinois, Mississippi, Virginia and South Carolina.

Tracy Guernsey, the staff nurse at Henryville’s public school complex, was among about 40 people still in the building when the tornado hit. She told Catholic News Service in a March 5 phone interview that if classes hadn’t been dismissed early in the face of the advancing storm, the death toll in Henryville would have been dramatic.

She said she and about 15 other people emerged from her office to find the whole second floor of the school had been ripped off. Inside, the papers on her desk were undisturbed.

The tornado hit at the normal dismissal time of 3 p.m., Guernsey said. “The bus drivers were the heroes here. If they hadn’t sent the buses out early, it would’ve been a different story.”

Also reeling were parishioners of St. Luke Catholic Church in Salyersville, Ky., which was destroyed by another tornado in the same weather front. The parishioner Helen Pennington was working in the church basement as the twister approached. Two carfuls of people passing through the church emerged from her office to find the whole second floor of the school had been ripped off. Inside, the papers on her desk were undisturbed.

The tabernacle was found with the Eucharist safely enclosed in the ciborium, even though the tabernacle was lying face down with its door open. Similarly, all the vessels of sacred oils were found upright and unbroken.

At Sunday Mass at St. Francis Xavier March 4, Father Steven Schafflein said the church was “spared to be a symbol of hope and also to walk the talk. We’re praying here. That’s our first work. But underneath is the food, the clothing that will help sustain the community in the months ahead.”

News video of the Mass showed the back pews of the small church filled with cases of food and other supplies. By the next day, the entire building was filled with donated materials, reported The Criterion, newspaper of the Indianapolis Archdiocese, which includes Henryville.

Aside from damage to the basement kitchen and some damage to the church’s roof, the church came through the tornado largely unscathed.

Just 24 hours after Tom Nolot and a crew of volunteers stopped preparing for a Friday night fish fry to take shelter from the approaching tornado, Nolot and his wife, Joyce, were back — frying up the fish to feed rescue workers and crews from the Indiana National Guard, the Clark County Sheriff’s Office and other rescue workers and volunteers.

Elsewhere in the Diocese of Lexington, Ky., Prince of Peace Church in hard-hit West Liberty lost the roofs of both the rectory and the church, reported Thomas F. Shaughnessy, diocesan communications director and editor of Crossroads, its newspaper.

Just a few days earlier, another wave of tornadoes left 13 people dead in Illinois, Missouri and Tennessee and a trail of wreckage that appeared to be the most substantial in Branson, Mo., and Harrisburg, Ill.

Relief efforts included a special collection taken up in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis during weekend Masses and coordination of emergency assistance through the region’s Society of St. Vincent de Paul and Catholic Charities agencies.

With Indianapolis farther from the tornado-affected region of Indiana than nearby Louisville, Ky., the Louisville-based Society of St. Vincent de Paul was seeking donations from area conferences and channeling it through Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in New Albany, Ind.

Contributing to this story were Sean Gallagher in Henryville, Gwen Hall in Prestonsburg, Ky., and Patricia Zapor in Washington. Copyright 2012 Catholic News Service/U.S.C.C.B.
Catholic Caritas Reaches Out to Syrian Refugees

By Doreen Abi Raad
Catholic News Service

BEIRUT — Church aid workers scrambled to find housing for hundreds of Syrian refugees who have fled to neighboring Lebanon because of ongoing violence between Syrian forces and armed rebels.

About 200 families — more than 1,000 people overall — made their way to the border town of Qaa in the Bekaa Valley in northern Lebanon March 5 and were struggling in the region’s near-freezing temperatures.

Father Simon Faddoul, president of Caritas Lebanon, told Catholic News Service March 6 that “Women and children and the elderly are coming out in the cold, with nothing but the clothes on their backs, to seek safety.”

“It’s very cold, and they have nothing,” he said.

The U.N. refugee agency said that as many as 2,000 Syrians crossed into Lebanon March 5-6 to escape the violence that has claimed hundreds of lives.

Father Faddoul said most of the refugees arrived on foot from areas near the besieged city of Homs.

“They are leaving the young men behind in Syria to guard their houses” from attack, Father Faddoul said.

“These are people fleeing from war, their homes under bombardment. Things are getting out of hand,” he added.

Before the latest surge, about 100 families had fled to Lebanon in recent weeks and were receiving assistance from Caritas, the priest said.

Faddoul estimated that about 40 of the newly arrived families were Christian, while the rest were Muslim.

“This has nothing to do with religion. Whenever there is suffering, we have to be there with them and to help them,” he said.

Caritas has deployed two social workers and about 15 volunteers in Qaa. They have distributed 300 blankets and personal hygiene kits.

Father Faddoul said the availability of adequate housing in the poverty-ravaged town of Qaa is limited. About 30-35 refugees are crammed into rooms that are about 126 square feet in size.

Caritas is collaborating with municipal officials to locate homes that three or four families could share.

Caritas Lebanon has had a regular presence in the Bekaa Valley, with coordinating programs in agriculture, farming and irrigation to address the region’s poverty in the region.

“Now we have so many concerns, how to find shelters, especially if the situation (in Syria) drags on,” Faddoul said.

“We hope the situation doesn’t deteriorate further,” he added.

Scholarship Deadline

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graduate until May 2013. Without scholarships like those the Catholic Foundation provides, I would not be able to be involved on campus near the extent of which I am currently. Also being able to maintain focus on academics simultaneously is a privilege, one I wouldn’t have if my financial burden were greater!

“The CFO scholarship encourages involvement in your local parishes, and allows students to focus on campus activities and involvement. I have been very blessed to receive this scholarship for the past four years, and would highly recommend it to anyone who is eligible. I currently am waiting to hear back from internship possibilities for the upcoming summer. Hopefully, based upon an internship I will be able to further determine my emphasis of study within art history. I currently plan to pursue a career in museum-related studies.”

Chinh Doan
Parish: St. Patrick Catholic Church, Oklahoma City. Attending: University of Oklahoma

“I have had an incredible experience at OU thanks to the many mentors and friends I have made along my college journey. Some of my fondest memories while I have been an OU student include two study abroad trips to Europe and Peru, several internships such as NBC’s Today Show and leadership positions like Gaylord College Ambassador and Oklahoma College Broadcasters vice president. My major has been Broadcast Journalism with minors in Spanish and International Studies.

“Without the financial help of the CFO Scholarship, I would have had to work more hours to pay for college, resulting in less time to focus on academics and opportunities to grow as a leader while sharpening necessary skills for my future profession. It means a lot to have an organization of my faith believing in me and encouraging me to pursue my academic goals. This scholarship has been a tremendous help for me, and I know it has potential to help many other Catholic students by allowing them to focus on academics and leadership-building opportunities, all while encouraging them to work hard toward their goals.”

Tyler Severin

“My CFO Lawrence Scholarship helped me tremendously in paying for my education. It has gone toward my tuition, and also the books that I have needed for class. It helped me to not have to pay as much out of my own pocket for my expenses. This scholarship also gave me an extra incentive to want to go to college and pursue my degree. I would definitely recommend this scholarship to other Catholic students. It is very helpful. It is something that some of the students might need to help them be able to go to the college that they want, and get the education that they deserve.”

“My experience at NWOSU has been great! I have really enjoyed my time there. I feel like I have received a very high quality education.

“One high point of my time at NWOSU is all of the relationships I have made. I have made many new friends and met many new people through the college. In fact, I am very thankful that I chose Northwestern because I met my fiancée there. My major is Health and Sports Science Education.

“My CFO Lawrence Scholarship helped me tremendously in paying for my education. It has gone toward my tuition, and also the books that I have needed for class. It helped me to not have to pay as much out of my own pocket for my expenses. This scholarship also gave me an extra incentive to want to go to college and pursue my degree. I would definitely recommend this scholarship to other Catholic students. It is very helpful. It is something that some of the students might need to help them be able to go to the college that they want, and get the education that they deserve.”
Knights Tackle Fundraiser to Help Buy Equipment for Eden Clinic

MIDWEST CITY — When John McCarthy received an unexpected call from a stranger, he could not have imagined how that conversation would set his life on a new course. The sixth-year Grand Knight of the Knights of Columbus (K of C) Council 4026 took away from the dialogue a new inspiration to help protect the unborn. It was a call to action he would use to inspire his Brother Knights.

The caller had been Linda Cozadd, executive director of The Eden Clinic based in Norman. The Eden Clinic is a faith-based reproductive health-care organization that does not perform or refer abortion in client consultations. Cozadd called McCarthy because she had been informed of the K of C Supreme Council’s Ultrasound Machine Initiative. The program matches funds raised to purchase ultrasound equipment and Cozadd needed a K of C Council willing to help.

“It really does make an incredible difference,” Cozadd said. “We know that the latest study shows that 90 percent of women who are going to choose abortion, change their minds after they see that ultrasound.”

McCarthy and Cozadd agreed to research separately how they could partner and a few days later, met to discuss their findings. Equipped with not much more than just the necessary program information and a few forms, they decided to launch a fundraising partnership.

“They were in bad need of equipment,” McCarthy said. “The $40,000 technology they needed was much more advanced than the old, unreliable, black-and-white machine they were using. Those machines are expensive and I knew it would be tough, but I also knew that our Knights would want to answer this challenge.”

The plan initially would be to complete the fundraising efforts for an ultrasound machine at the Norman location. Half of the funds for that machine had already been raised by The Eden Clinic. Later, after a successful expansion effort on the part of The Eden Clinic, the plan changed. The new plan involved providing an ultrasound machine for a new Eden Clinic in Midwest City. The new clinic would open in spring 2012.

Even though McCarthy and Cozadd had both been eager to enact the plan, by March of 2011 the Council’s fundraising efforts had barely made it past the planning stages. One complication was a similar fundraiser that had been initiated by The Eden Clinic, the plan changed. The new plan involved providing an ultrasound machine for a new Eden Clinic in Midwest City. The new clinic would open in spring 2012.

Eventually, an agreement reduced the cost from $40,000 to $32,000. The Supreme Council of the Knights of Columbus would provide the additional funds through the nationwide Ultrasound Machine Initiative that McCarthy and Cozadd had originally discussed. By the first week of February 2012, The Eden Clinic had a machine in-hand and was prepared to put it to use.

On Feb. 24, Archbishop Paul Coakley blessed the machine and dedicated it to the work of protecting the unborn.

Members of Council 4026 of Midwest City include parishioners from St. Philip Neri - Midwest City, St. Paul the Apostle - Del City, and St. Francis of Assisi - Tinker AFB.

The ultrasound blessing ceremony can be viewed on YouTube, search Knights4026 at www.youtube.com.

Grand Knight of Council 4026 John McCarthy presents a check to Eden Clinic Director Linda Cozadd.
Calendar

MARCH
18 Pilgrimage Sunday, Mass begins at 11 a.m., noon lunch, 1 p.m. Novena. National Shrine of the Infant Jesus of Prague is located at St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church at 304 Jim Thorpe Blvd. in Prague. Call (405) 567-3080 or email www.shrineofinftantjesus.com.

18 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 Little Flower Church, OKC, from 12 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. For more information, call Katherine Payne at (405) 210-4826 or Betty Sharp at (405) 408-4275.

18 The Secular Franciscan Order of St. Francis Fraternity meets at 1:15 p.m. at St. Anthony’s Hospital Chapel. For more information, call Jim Disbrow at 830-8688.

21 Penance Service, St. Mary Parish, Ardmore, 6:30 p.m.

21 Penance Service, Corpus Christi Parish, OKC, 6:30 p.m.

25 Penance Service, Epiphany Parish, OKC, 5 p.m.

25 Penance Service, Cathedral Parish, OKC - Vietnamese, 6:30 p.m.

26 “March for Life OKC.” The event will begin with Mass at 9 a.m. celebrated by Archbishop Paul S. Crouley at Corpus Christi Catholic Church, 1005 N.E. 15th St. Pro-life supporters will then march from Corpus Christi to the state Capitol building where a rally is scheduled to begin at 11:30 a.m. Shuttle transportation will be provided for those who wish to park at either the state Capitol, south of Northeast 21st, or at the State Capitol Park, NE 23rd and Lincoln Blvd. For more information, contact Neil Baltazar at (405) 454-3651, or www.facebook.com/MarchForLifeOKC.

26 Penance Service, St. James Parish, OKC, 7 p.m.

27 Penance Service, St. Francis of Assisi Parish, OKC, 7 p.m.

27 Penance Service, St. Joseph Parish, Hennessy, 7 p.m.

28 Saint Ann Retirement Center is hosting a Health Fair and Open House, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. in our Grand Theater. Healthy snacks will be served. Entertainment will be provided. Take a tour of Saint Ann’s to see our beautiful community. We will have continuous drawings for wonderful gifts donated by our vendors. For questions, call Richard Amend at (405) 721-0747.

28 Penance Service, St. Rose of Lima Parish, Perry, 6:30 p.m.

28 Penance Service, St. Peter Parish, Woodward, 6:30 p.m.

29 Penance Service, Sacred Heart Parish, OKC, 7 p.m.

29 Penance Service, St. Wenceslaus Parish, Prague, 7 p.m.

30 Living Stations of the Cross by St. Andrew Life Teen youth of St. Andrew the Apostle Church, 800 NW 5th, Moore. Presentations will be held at 5:30 p.m. on March 16 and March 30. The youth will be serving Lenten meals with proceeds supporting high school and middle school youth efforts. Reservations would be appreciated but are not mandatory. Meals are $8 per adult and $5 per child, 4 and under eat free. For reservations or more information, call 799-3334 between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 9 a.m. to noon on Friday.

APRIL
1 The Secular Franciscan Order of St. Claire Fraternity meets at 1:15 p.m. the first Sunday of the month at St. Thomas More Church in Norman in the library. All are welcome. If you would like to learn how Francis lived, plan to attend one of our meetings. For more information, call Alice at (405) 473-7680.

1 Penance Service, St. Andrew Parish, Moore, 5 p.m.

Jobs Box

Handyman
St. Gregory’s Abbey is looking for a handyman. Skills needed in carpentry, plumbing and electrical work. This position is for 40 hours per week. St. Gregory’s Abbey is located at 1900 W. MacArthur St., Shawnee. If interested, contact Maria L. Brydon, PHR, at (405) 878-5416.

Teacher Openings
Sacred Heart Catholic School in El Reno has two teaching positions open for the 2012-2013 school year. Applicants must hold a current Oklahoma Teaching Certificate. Applicants must also be committed to providing academic excellence in a Christian environment. Please send resumes to Principal Shannon Statton at 210 S. Evans, El Reno, Okla. 73036, or fax to (405) 262-3818.

Elementary School Principal
St. Mary Catholic School in Guthrie seeks a principal who will be a faith leader as well as academic leader of a small Catholic parish elementary school. St. Mary Catholic School is fully accredited by the Oklahoma Catholic School Accreditation Association, which is recognized by the state of Oklahoma. Candidates for principal must be a practicing Catholic willing to assume responsibility for the day-to-day administration of the school, as well as assist in developing long-range goals for the school. Excellent communications skills and enthusiasm for developing and maintaining a top grade academic and religious-oriented school are a must. Candidates must hold a master's degree in educational administration or related field and a minimum of five years educational experience. Position is available for the 2012-2013 school year. An application may be obtained from Office of the Superintendent, P.O. Box 32180, Oklahoma City, 73123, call (405) 721-4202, or e-mail mdubey@archokc.org.

Elementary School Principal
St. John Nepomuk Catholic School is a Pre-K - eighth-grade school located in Yukon. St. John Nepomuk is fully accredited by the Oklahoma Catholic School Accreditation Association, which is recognized by the state of Oklahoma. Candidates for principal must be a practicing Catholic willing to assume responsibility for the day-to-day administration of the school, as well as assist in developing long-range goals for the school. Excellent communications skills and enthusiasm for developing and maintaining a top grade academic and religious-oriented school are a must. Candidate must be a practicing Catholic and hold a master's degree in educational administration or related field and a minimum of five years educational experience. Position is available for the 2012-2013 school year. An application may be obtained from Office of the Superintendent, P.O. Box 32180, Oklahoma City 73123, call (405) 721-4202, or e-mail mdubey@archokc.org.

Behavioral Interventionists
Good Shepherd Catholic School at Mercy is in need of several behavioral interventionists — an individual who works one-on-one with children with disabilities to provide academic and behavioral support for children on the autistic spectrum. Position is part-time and hours are negotiable. The school is in session from Monday through Friday (8 a.m. to 4 p.m.) If you are a very patient person and experienced/interested in working with children with disabilities, please contact Dr. Donna Kearns, Principal, at (405) 752-2264.
OKLAHOMA CITY — Birth Choice of Oklahoma presented its Celebration of Life Award to Kathy Estlinbaum. The presentation was made at the annual Life of the Party fundraiser banquet held at the Oklahoma City Golf and Country Club.

Estlinbaum is the 12th recipient of the Celebration of Life Award. The award goes to a volunteer who has given “generously of their time, talent and treasure” to assist the Birth Choice mission.

Married for 26 years with three children and five grandchildren, Estlinbaum is described “as this wonderful woman” who “has lived her faith and total commitment to Birth Choice with a constancy not found in many. She has never hesitated to state her pro-life stance whether it be in the workplace or in family situations.”

Estlinbaum “began her lifetime career at Birth Choice” while she was still employed.

She and a colleague are credited with convincing Birth Choice leadership that the office needed to be open in the evening so it could be more accessible to working women.

Estlinbaum goes out of her way to help when mothers at Rose Home — the shelter for the homeless and pregnant — are ready to leave and need items to set up housekeeping again, she is the person to go to. Consignment stores and thrift stores know her personally.

She manages the Rose Home Christmas Party — collecting gifts for the residents and their children.

By Mia Hogan-Davis
For the Sooner Catholic

OKLAHOMA CITY — The question surrounding “pro-life” vs. “pro-choice” has been a controversy in my life as well as the lives of my fellow classmates at Mount St. Mary.

Last year I attended Oklahoma City Public Schools. Three of my classmates became pregnant. My thoughts about that were “how sad.” First of all, the babies would most likely be raised in poverty and probably would never know the idea of being in a real family.

Next year when I will vote I must ask myself if I will support pro-life or pro-choice positions.

At the Feb. 18 Life of the Party Birth Choice fundraiser dinner, the keynote speaker, Jerry Twombly, made several points that will help me make my decision.

“I’m now using the words ‘for life’ because whenever you use the words ‘pro-life,’ you kind of initiate the conversation for someone who may not feel like you do ... and all of a sudden this becomes a political issue,” he said.

“Twombly is right. The sanctity of life is a moral issue, not a political issue. Twombly quoted Psalms 139:13-14, “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.”

Prior to knowing anything about Birth Choice, my view of pro-life advocates was that they were able to point an accusing finger at abortion, however, they failed to give another option to mothers facing this difficult choice.

After hearing what Birth Choice and other pro-life organizations have to offer these women, I can see that is not always the case.

Birth Choice gives these women a chance to take a second look at the situation. The many services they provide help them to make the best decision for themselves and their babies.

There is something to be said for those who give their time and money toward something they believe to be right.

The annual Birth Choice of Oklahoma Life of the Party event provides an opportunity for those who adamantly believe in the sanctity of life to join together and raise money for their cause.

At The Mount we are taught to live our Mercy values. Birth Choice and its sponsors truly do show how to live these values.

Mia Hogan-Davis is a junior attending Mount St. Mary High School.