A little more than halfway through the season of Lent, Christ still calls us to take up our cross and follow Him.

By J.E. Helm
For the Sooner Catholic

A few weeks after Gaudete Sunday, when the focus was on joy, the somberness of Lent really begins to set in with celebrations of Laetare Sunday and the beginning of Holy Week, dedicated to the Passion of the Lord. The practice of ashes is a reminder of mortality and the reality that we are subject to death. But we do not grumble or cower in fear of the Lenten journey. The Stations of the Cross speak of the sacrifice of Jesus and his eventual resurrection. Laetare Sunday is a reminder that we have already been through four of six Sundays during Lent.

For many in the Catholic community, the Stations are a yearly reminder of the suffering of Christ. When he said “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” it spoke to the heart of the Lenten journey: The stations offer those who pray them a glimpse into the sufferings of Christ. Hail Marys and Our Angels are said after each station. Each站 has its own devotions, ranging from special prayers to the Stations of the Cross to offerings of Mass for the faithful. The Stations of the Cross are often offered in most parishes, bookstores and online sites feature stations for peace, scriptural readings and prayers.

As of yet to renew our spiritual life this Lenten season, many opportunities still exist in every parish. The Stations of the Cross are still being offered, Mass will still be said and confessions will still be heard. It’s not yet too late to have a meaningful Lent.

At Saint Francis, the eighth grade class of Roman Catholic School will enact “Shadow Stations” at 10 a.m. on Good Friday, April 16. Stations of the Cross, often on Good Friday evenings; parish bulletins and websites contain precise times and locations.

At Saint Monica’s in Edmond, church secretary Stacy Sample reports that the Hispanic Secretariat is having a “simple supper” or “Lenten cena” with stations. In Spanish, the stations can be found at variosparishes.com. The practice of altusaving is illustrated in a window at the Shrine of St. Anne de Beaupre in Quebec City. (CNS photo/Crosiers)

Chrism Mass manifests universality of the Church

By The Sooner Catholic Staff

The archdiocesan Office of Worship and Spiritual Life specially selects representatives from around the archdiocese to present each oil to the bishop. The archbishop receives the oils, prays over them and blesses them. All over the world, at every hour for 24 hours, bishops in other dioceses are doing the same. Subsequently, the various parishes around the world will receive these oils. For the next 365 days, bishops, priests and deacons will use these oils as they administer the sacraments to the faithful throughout the universal church.

Why oil? “To be ‘anointed of the Lord’ indicates receiving a special vocation from the Lord and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to fulfill that vocation,” according to a 2003 column from the then-dean of the Notre Dame Graduate School of Christendom College. As Saint Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 1:21, “God is the one who firmly establishes us along with you in Christ; it is He who anointed us and has sealed us, thereby depositing the first payment, the Spirit, in our hearts.”

Also at the Chrism Mass, the priests of the archdiocese gather to renew their commitment to priestly service; the Cathedral altar is surrounded by priests concelebrating the Mass with the archbishop. During his homily, the archbishop often preaches to the theme of “priestly anointing, urging the priests to be faithful in fulfilling their office and inviting them to renew publicly their priestly promises,” according to the website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.
**A commitment to life-affirming care and religious liberty**

While Oklahoma City-based Hobby Lobby has been in the news of late, another local entity has now entered the fray to contest the mandate that requires nearly all employers to provide employees with health insurance that covers contraceptives, abortion-inducing drugs, sterilization and related counseling.

The Central Region Council of Catholic Women (CRCW), an affiliate of the National Council of Catholic Women (NCCW), hosted its annual Women of Achievement Luncheon March 22 at St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church in Oklahoma City. The event honored 17 women for their commitment to their local parish and greater community. For a full review of the event, as well as photos and biographies of the winners, visit www.soonercatholic.com.

**Admissions**

On page 10 of the March 20 Catholic Advoeca-
y, there is an incorrect listing of the Board of Directors with their contact info. It is being fixed for the May or June issue.

Archbishop Coakley’s Calendar

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

April 6 – Confirmation, 10 a.m., Cathedral Basilica of St. Mary
April 6 – Scout Awards Mass, 4 p.m., St. Francis De Sales Chapel, Catholic Pastoral Center
April 6 – Department of Youth, 6 p.m., Catholic Pastoral Center
April 6 – Finance Council Meeting, 2 p.m., Catholic Pastoral Center
April 7 – 80th Anniversary, 10 a.m., Mother Cabrini
April 11 – Retreat for Catholic Pastoral Center and Catholic Charities Staff, Our Lady of Guadalupe Youth Garden
April 13 – Palm Sunday Mass, 10 a.m., Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help
April 15 – Priests’ Afternoon of Prayer at Our Lady’s Cathedral
April 15 – Chiraz Mass, 6 p.m. – Our Lady’s Cathedral
April 17 – Holy Thursday – Mass of Our Lord’s Supper, 7 p.m., Our Lady’s Cathedral
April 18 – Holy Thursday – Good Friday Mass, 7 p.m., Our Lady’s Cathedral
April 19 – Easter Vigil, 8:30 p.m., Our Lady’s Cathedral

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**Exclusively on the website**

**By Sooner Catholic Staff**

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**Pope and Barack Obama discuss religious freedom, life issues, immigration**

By Francis X. Rocca Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — In their first ever meeting, President Barack Obama and Pope Francis discussed the pope’s opposition to the use of these drugs and services on retreat in its suit that the HHS mandate violates the religious liberty of its members. As More, pray for us!

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**Bless me, Father: Pope leads by example, goes to confession**

By Carol Ginott Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Leading a penitential liturgy in St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican March 28, Pope Francis surprised his liturgical advisor by going to confession during the service. It was the first time that Francis has confessed before the public, highlighting the importance of his religious faith.

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**A plague of life-affirming care and religious liberty**

As More, pray for us!

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**A commitment to life-affirming care and religious liberty**

By Sooner Catholic Staff

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The Bible is our primary guide for understanding the Christian faith. It is a collection of sacred writings that record the history of God’s people and the teachings of Jesus Christ. The Bible is divided into two main parts: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament contains the stories of the Hebrews, while the New Testament contains the teachings of Jesus and the early Christians.

What the Bible has to say about freedom

The concept of freedom is central to the Christian faith. The Bible teaches that humans are created in the image of God and are therefore free to make choices about their lives. Freedom is not just the absence of constraint, but the ability to choose and act according to one’s own will.

The Bible teaches that freedom is a gift from God, not something that can be earned. This is evident in the story of Adam and Eve, who were created in the image of God and given the freedom to choose whether to obey God’s commandments or not. When they chose to disobey, they lost the freedom they had been given and were expelled from the Garden of Eden.

The Bible also teaches that freedom is not just a matter of personal choice. It is a social and political issue. The Bible calls on Christians to work for justice and to promote the common good. This is evident in the stories of the prophets, who called on the people of Israel to live according to God’s will and to care for the poor and the marginalized.

For Lent the fortieth day of Lent is observed. It is a time of fasting, prayer, and almsgiving. The purpose of Lent is to prepare the faithful for Holy Week and Easter. During this time, Christians reflect on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, and on their own need for repentance and forgiveness.

Lent offers a unique opportunity to reflect on the themes of freedom and justice. The practices of Lent—fasting, prayer, and almsgiving—can help us to cultivate a deeper understanding of these themes and to apply them to our lives.

In conclusion, the Bible is a profound source of wisdom and guidance for Christians today. Its teachings about freedom are as relevant today as they were in the time of its creation. By living according to the principles of the Bible, we can strive to be more effective in the delivery of the content of our faith to others.
Meet Our Seminarians

This is the 2nd part (of a 26-part series) to introduce seminarians of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City to the people they will one day serve as priests.

Martin Pacek

1. What is your name? Martin Pacek
2. What seminary do you attend? Conception Seminary College in Conception, Mo.
3. In God’s will, what year will you be ordained? 2023
4. How old were you when you first thought that God might be calling you to the priesthood? 17; it was the spring semester of my junior year at high school when I went to an “Encounter with God’s Call” weekend here at Conception.
5. What is your favorite subject in the seminary? Philosophy and logic.
6. What is the most important thing you have learned in the seminary so far? Self-awareness, it is necessary to realize what effect your actions have on others so as to choose the path of good interaction with them. If you don’t realize how you affect other people, then do you know what parts of yourself need to grow?
7. What do you look forward to most about becoming a priest? Helping others along the path of life and the journey of faith through the sacraments.
8. Who is your favorite saint? Saint John Nepomuk in spirit.
9. Name one thing that every Catholic needs to know and live each and every day if you were the only one He ever created. That we are each uniquely made and surpass anything created by man.
10. Describe your relationship with Christ. My relationship with Christ is constantly growing and changing. Often, I can find it hard to define if I’m not focusing on God, but He is always waiting for me, extension of his love.
11. Why choose a life of sacrificial love in any vocation rather than a life of self-gratification? In a life of self-gratification you are only satisfied when you have the most and the best, but no matter what you have, there will always be someone who either has something better, whether through quality or quantity, or someone who has something that is closer to what you have. You will never be satisfied and will hate everyone because you think they are worse off than you are. This is the true love of Christ.
12. Why do you want to be a priest? To receive the sacred mysteries as a priest and to give them to others. This is the love of Christ.
13. How is your faith in Christ growing? I am reading more about the Eucharist, the early Church practices and writings of the First Church Fathers. In fact, it is our faith that the Eucharist is the source and summit of the truth of Catholicism. It is the only sacrament that can be celebrated in the presence of the Eucharist, and it is the only sacrament that can be celebrated in the presence of the Eucharist. God’s Call” weekend here at Conception.

April is “Child Abuse Prevention Month”

The Archdiocesan Safe Environment committee has declared this day in the Catholic Parish Centers to be a reminder of the obligation of all adults to keep children safe. Sister Catherine also notes that April is designated as “Child Abuse Prevention Day” at the Capitol. This year’s theme is “Raising Awareness to End Sexual Abuse.” On April 12, St. Francis of Assisi Church in Oklahoma City will celebrate “It’s Your Turn … Be a Superhero for Children.” On April 8, various agencies devoted to child abuse prevention will be lit up in blue. The Safe Environment Office has also invited all clergy, parish/school faculties and administra- tion, youth directors and direct- ors of religious education to hear an outstanding speaker. If you have questions, please contact the Safe Environment Coordinator Sister Catherine or Mary Fallin and a slide-show presentation will be made on “Events and Meetings” (at the event). The Safe Environment Office also encourages our parishes to do something as simple as in- stall a sign or a sign of the faithful for the victims of child abuse.

For more information, Sister Catherine says, “it’s time to jump in the effort.”

Bishops at Catholic Advocacy Day: Evangelization leads to human flourishing

By Tisha Korbe

Christian evangelization and the advancement of human flourishing are profoundly connected because Christ not only reconnects individual persons, but also restores social relationships, two bishops of Oklahoma said recently.

Speaking at Catholic Advocacy Day at the Oklahoma State Capitol March 25, Archbishop Paul Coakley of Oklahoma City and Bishop Edward Slattery of Tulsa said that Jesus, by His incarnation and abiding Eucharistic presence, sanctifies those who believe in Him and construe them to participate in His presence into the worlds of business, commerce and the arts. “We believe that the Holy Spirit is present in the life of the Church through her relationships, during to be present to those of our institutions,” Archbishop Coakley said.

Bishop Slattery spoke of Jesus’ ability to unite the two unequal halves into which many people nonsequentially divide their lives — the religious and secular, the personal and professional. “That Jesus has reconciled the whole world to the Father and that Christ is Himself a present and effective reality in every segment of the world forces us to acknowledge the sanctity of all life,” he said.

Christian discipleship begins with a personal encounter with Christ, and from that profound personal experience flows charity toward one’s neighbors as a disciple of Jesus Christ. “Our work on behalf of a more just ordering of society is nothing more than a contribution to the peripheral to the faith,” Slattery noted.

In Matthew 18:15, Jesus says, “Whenever you receive a little child like this in my name receive me.” Tragically, many in the United States today do not heed His words. More than 3 million cases of child abuse and neglect are reported in our nation annually. Of the 1,640 children who each year from child abuse, must be understood, he added.

In an effort to reduce and eliminate child abuse, both religious and civic groups throughout the world are working to reduce the number of child abuse cases and for those who have experienced abuse.

“Blue Sunday” day of prayer. On April 27 a child abuse prevention conference was held at the Oklahoma State Capitol. The event was hosted by the Office of the Archbishop of Oklahoma City.

April 27 has been designated as the 15th annual national “Blue Sunday” day of prayer. On this day, all churches, regardless of denomination, are asked to pray for the victims of child abuse and those who care for these children. To unite with those of projects in changing the hearts and minds of others, the Sooner Catholic invites our readers to join the efforts of the Archdiocesan Safe Environment committee to bring blue ribbons to the front of the faith.
Challenge Girls' Club creates display of 3,315 crosses as part of “Choose Life” project

Outside Saint John the Baptist Catholic Church in Edmond, thousands of white crosses dot the corner of Boulevard and 9th Street, accompanied by a sign that says “Choose Life.” The Edmond Challenge Girls’ Club – with members from Saint John’s, Saint Monica’s and Saint Mary’s Catholic – created this display in support of “40 Days for Life.” They made 3,315 crosses and planted them in the ground because this is the number of abortions performed in the United States each day.

As part of the “Choose Life” project, the Edmond Challenge girls learned about the stages of life in the womb from conception until birth. The also visited the Holy Innocents’ Chapel in Warr Acres, Okla., and prayed “The Seven Sorrows of Mary” during adoration at the chapel.

The members of Edmond Challenge said they are so thankful Saint John’s pastor Father Ray Ackerman gave them permission to undertake this project. This project had several stages and a lot of support from Challenge families, friends and the church community, including Confirmation classes, Saint Elizabeth families, and Saint John parishioners. They also had a very generous donation of the two large signs for the display.

Ann Elaina Noll, a high school sophomore and Edmond Challenge team leader, said, “The largest impact the project had on me was seeing the huge number of 3,315 crosses. All of the crosses represent each cross that is given to a child of God. Jesus says ‘Take up your cross and follow me.’ But this mission is impossible to fulfill when their lives are taken from them. Even if this whole process only saved one life, it would all be worth it because it is a life made in the image and likeness of God.” The crosses were planted right before the start of Lent and will stay up for the 40 days of Lent. The members of the Edmond Challenge Club said they hope those crosses will raise awareness of the abortion issue by giving a visual reminder to those passing by of the lives taken each day by abortion.

Challenge is a Catholic club for girls to help them grow in virtue, friendship and their Catholic faith. It’s designed to help girls learn about themselves by doing apostolic works and creating a positive impact on family, friends and the world. The mission of Challenge is to evangelize and transform the world by forming today’s young girls to become very holy leaders so that Christian culture will prevail in the hearts of everyone they meet. Challenge team members consist of 5th-through-8th-grade girls and their team leaders are high school girls. Challenge was founded in 2000 and is currently operating in more than 150 parishes and schools in the U.S. and Canada with more than 3,500 members, 200 volunteers and 500 teen leaders. There are four Challenge Clubs in Oklahoma: Edmond, Oklahoma City, Lawton and Tulsa.

A live auction was part of the evening’s activities and a big fundraiser as well.

Birth Choice hosts “Life of the Party”

A flow of the crosses have been claimed and decorated.

The numbers of the Edmond Girls’ Challenge Club visited the Holy Innocents Chapel in Warr Acres as a part of “Choose Life.”

Sister Barbara Joseph Foley, CST, up for 2014 Lumen Christi Award

Based on her outreach to the homeless through “Sister BJ’s Pantry,” Sister Barbara Joseph Foley, CST, is among some 38 nominees for the 2014 Lumen Christi Award, sponsored by Catholic Extension.

“Sister Barbara Joseph is clearly a woman of great vision,” said Bishop Edward Weisenburger of Salina. “Since its opening, she has systematically increased the scope of the pantry to include a garden, a book lending program, a clothing room and an emergency vehicle.”

The eventual winner of the Lumen Christi Award will receive a grant of $25,000, and the diocese of the winner will receive a matching grant, as well, to be used to support “Sister BJ’s Pantry.”

To support Sister Barbara Joseph’s nomination – and to help her win – LIKE the Catholic Extension page on Facebook, click on the post about the Lumen Christi Award and then VOTE for Sister Barbara Joseph.
“Noah” reduces biblical story to nothing more than a cinematic spectacle and the eating of meat. The “evils” that befell God rather than a grieving God (Genesis 6:5) level, the movie suggests that God is a vengeful to earth to help the human race, depicted as God’s creation. In “Noah,” however, this element is obvious that mankind is the pinnacle of human governance. What I applaud the er with a background in sales, development, and the students.”

**CFO to host 13th annual golf tournament to benefit Catholic schools**

**By Sarah Skerbe**

For the Steurer Catholic

A warm April day was feverish in an ongoing series of events relating to the Catholic faith impact the way Catholic school students. Their faith is nourished and weaned in the public schools.

In her first year as owner of The Steurer Catholic Businesswoman Cindy Hoehner spent many months to turn our faith during that time,” Hoehner says.

Our family is no longer able to host these tournaments, please contact us at tips@archokc.org and Hamilton at (405) 842-6638. The proceeds of the Golf Classic. The Catholic school students who are as-
Un Compromiso con Cuido de Vida y Afirmando la Libertad Religiosa

Mientras que Hochi Lohay, con sede en la ciudad de Oklahoma, ha tenido su día de alto tráfico, otro lugar en el mundo donde se ha acordado la reducción de legalidad sobre el aborto es el Vaticano. Un grupo de personas, bajo el liderazgo de un cardenal colombiano, ha firmado un documento que establece los principios de la libertad religiosa y la libertad de conciencia. La propuesta busca establecer la libertad religiosa como una garantía fundamental para todos los ciudadanos, independientemente de su religión o convicción personal.

En virtud de las consideraciones anteriores, se creó el Consejo para Promover la Nueva Evangelización. El objetivo del consejo es difundir la fe y el amor de Dios, para que puedan experimentar la misericordia y el amor eterno de Dios, dijo el papa. Dios, "en lugar de regañarnos, realiza una gran celebración", dijo nuestro padre realiza una gran celebración.

En el acto litúrgico penitencial celebrado por el papa, se señalaba el confesionario, que es un lugar donde se practica la confesión, una tradición cristiana que se remonta a la antigüedad. La confesión es un momento de reflexión y arrepentimiento, un acto de humildad y humildad, que es fundamental para el crecimiento espiritual y personal.

El acto litúrgico penitencial es una forma de demostrar el compromiso de por vida con la práctica de la fe. El papa recordó que la fe no es un mero acto de devoción, sino un camino de vida, un compromiso que se debe seguir a lo largo de la existencia. La fe es una luz que nos guía en la oscuridad, un refugio en la tempestad, un consuelo en la tristeza y una esperanza en la derrota.

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Oklahoma Vocations Festival inspires young people

**By Sarah Cooper**
*For the Sooner Catholic*

High school senior Jocelyn Hartley’s mom convinced her to attend the Oklahoma Vocations Festival to broaden her horizons and learn something new about the vocation to which God might be calling her. After arriving at the festival, she was surprised to see the different ministries of each of the orders.

“I wanted to see more of the options religious life has to offer,” said Hartley. “Learning about the different charisms and apostolates of the orders was really interesting. I liked hearing about how you can become holy in your own specific way.”

Many of the approximately 40 high school and college students who gathered at the Catholic Pastoral Center in Oklahoma City March 28 to March 29 for the first Oklahoma Vocations Festival echoed the same sentiment. Most were not yet ready to commit to a religious vocation; however, all were fascinated by the different ways God could use their lives.

“You can see the work of the Holy Spirit in the face of the young people wanting to give their lives to Christ,” said Sister Joesmaria Pence of the Dominican Sisters of Saint Cecilia. “God in His magnificence has given us many different gifts and it is good to see all the different orders young people can choose from at an event like this.”

LaVerta Straham, a student at the University of Oklahoma, organized the event with the help of the campus ministry team at Saint Thomas More parish, in Norman, Okla. Straham recently returned from a “nun run,” a women’s discernment trip to religious orders, and wanted to bring a piece of that experience back to help Oklahoma youth discern their own vocation. Fourteen religious orders were represented at this year’s festival, including the Nashville Dominicans, Jesuits and Daughters of Saint Paul, as well as diocesan priests.

“This event was a really great opportunity for Catholic students to come together and meet many different religious orders in one place,” said Straham. “The priests and sisters were all so gracious and so excited to see young people interested in religious vocations.”

In a retreat-like setting, the vocations festival included inspirational talks by priests and sisters, small group discussions and adoration. A representative from each order explained their apostolate and shared some history of their community. Participants had ample free time to spend in prayer and conversation with the orders and learn more about their distinctly different lives.

“The men and women called to the religious life are the light of the world, and it was truly a blessing to be around them,” said University of Oklahoma student Alex Hilton. “I am not sure yet what my vocation is, but this vocations festival has given me some direction about what discernment path to take in the future.”

The weekend closed with Mass celebrated by Archbishop Paul Coakley, who was encouraged by the participation of young people in this event and hopes this will become a more frequent occurrence. During the homily, Archbishop Coakley challenged the participants in their discernment.

“God wants to become the Lord of our life. He wants us to cast aside our doubts and trust Him,” said Archbishop Coakley. “Only then can we deepen and grow in our faith. Only then can we enter a path of discipleship and vocation.”

Sarah Cooper is a freelance writer for the Sooner Catholic.