Sooner Catholic
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Emily’s List
Democrats Question Abortion Alliance

By Ray Dyer
Sooner Catholic

OKLAHOMA CITY — Oklahoma pro-life Democrats are questioning why the state Democratic Party partnered with an organization considered one of the most radical pro-abortion groups in the nation to host a training seminar for female political candidates.

On its Web site, Emily’s List bills itself as “the nation’s largest grassroots political network ... dedicated to building a progressive America by electing pro-choice Democratic women to federal, state and local office.”

A letter posted on the Web site of the Oklahoma Democratic Party invited pro-choice “Democratic women in Oklahoma” to participate in the June 8-9 training with representatives from Emily’s List. The training seminar was to be held at the Omniplex in Oklahoma City.

Rep. Richard Morrissette, D-Oklahoma City, and a Catholic, said he does not agree with his party’s decision to host this training seminar.

“The Democratic Party is in flux,” Morrissette said. “I’m a pro-life Catholic. I totally disagree with their stand (Emily’s List) and I will be nowhere near it (the seminar),” Morrissette added, “I do, however, respect their right to gather.”

Unabashed pro-life supporter Rep. Rebecca Hamilton, D-Oklahoma City, and also a Catholic, continued on page 3

New Parish Ministry

Archbishop Beltran cuts the ribbon officially opening Saint Katharine Drexel Retirement Center in El Reno. The retirement center is a ministry of Sacred Heart Parish, El Reno, and is sponsored by the archdiocese. Assisting the archbishop are parishioners Judy Flaherty and David Eaton and Sacred Heart pastor, Father Francis Nguyen. Stories and photos Pages 10-11. Sooner Catholic

Foster Parents Encourage Other Catholics to Experience the Joy

By Connie Blaney
Catholic Charities

She always planned to have a big family. Little did Ray Merchant know that years ago, young and divorced with two children, that it would ever become a reality. She recalls the day that her life changed forever.

“Needing a car, I met my future husband, Walter, at the car dealership. After hearing his sales pitch, I jokingly told him I would buy the little Volkswagen if he would take me to dinner. To my surprise, he took me up on it!” It didn’t take them long to realize they were meant for each other. The couple was married in December 1974.

Mr. and Mrs. Walter Merchant’s journey through life has been the road less traveled by most married couples. It began with a devout love for each other and an open mind about their future and their family.

Standing next to a wall full of family photos in their living room, Ray shares stories about her 11 children (eight who are adopted), 10 grandchildren and 160 foster children.

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Inside
Bring Word of God to Young Offenders

Heritage Room Makes Nice Summer Trip
**Profiting From Death**

**Planned Parenthood Exploits Minors**

The grisly, appalling and yet everyday activities of Planned Parenthood, the nation’s largest supplier of abortion and birth control, are well known. Not only did this “nonprofit” receive $272 million of American taxpayer money in 2005, a figure that doesn’t even include state and local funding of Planned Parenthood affiliates, but uses their clinics to kill innocent children in the womb, inflicting lasting emotional and sometimes physical harm on countless women. However, the organization is also earning a reputation for the shameless practice of covering up cases of statutory rape and child sexual abuse.

Just last month, several new cases came to light. Undercover UCLA journalism student Lila Rose posed as a pregnant minor and entered a Planned Parenthood clinic in Santa Monica, Calif., with her “23-year-old boyfriend.” She recorded the entire exchange with a clinic staffer who said she could lie about her birth year to avoid reporting a case of statutory rape. In Ohio, attorney Brian Hurley is representing two teens in separate lawsuits against a Planned Parenthood clinic in suburban Cincinnati. One teen was taken in for an abortion by her soccer coach, the alleged abuser; the other teen says she was a victim of incest, and that Planned Parenthood could have prevented another 18 months of sexual abuse if they had reported her father’s actions to police.

Failure to report possible cases of statutory rape allows Planned Parenthood clinics to make more money through sales of abortions and birth control, and to circumvent parental notification and consent laws, even at the cost of the innocence and safety of children at the mercy of sexual predators. It is no wonder that Planned Parenthood opposes parental involvement laws, as well as laws which release anonymous records of underage abortions. So, what’s really going on here? When you cut through all the doublespeak of their mission to “help women,” the actions of Planned Parenthood speak for themselves. The organization seems willing to make a profit at any cost, even from the desperation and emotional turmoil of minors facing crisis pregnancies.

It is far past time to heighten awareness of the nasty truth about Planned Parenthood, to increase attention to their deplorable “business” practices, and to promote investigations into these clinics. California and other states are leading the way in taking a fresh look at how statutory rape and child abuse laws might be improved and more readily enforced. In many states, statutory rape is not even defined as “child abuse,” and therefore, failure to report such cases carries lighter penalties.

Let us work and pray for increased efforts to bring more of those who prey on and sexually abuse children to justice, and that abortion profiteers would face fiercer consequences for protecting predators. Our nation should not be willing to tolerate the high cost of inflicting such pain and harm to children, both born and unborn.

*Mary Jaminet is Special Project Coordinator at the Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.*

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**Clarification on Pro-Life Vote**

The statement in the May 27 issue of the *Sooner Catholic* that Rep. Rebecca Hamilton, D-Oklahoma City, “was the only Catholic Democrat in the House of Representatives to support SB 139” requires clarification. While that statement is correct with regard to the question of who supported the pro-life bill brought to the House floor for consideration in the first place, it is not correct with regard to votes that actually occurred on the floor once the bill was, in fact, brought up for action.

Tony Lauinger, state chairman of Oklahomans For Life, said when the motion was made to suspend the rules (to allow consideration of the bill after the normal deadline), Catholic Democrat Rep. Scott Inman, D-Del City, voted for the pro-life motion. Rep. Inman also voted for the second pro-life suspension of the rules motion (to allow the insertion of the pro-life language into SB 139). Both of these motions prevailed by the bare minimum 68 votes that were required. Rep. Inman then voted pro-life on final passage.

Catholic Democrat Reps. Richard Morrissette and John Carey voted for final passage of SB 139, but neither supported the absolutely essential pro-life motions to suspend the rules to allow consideration of the pro-life bill in the first place, Lauinger said.

This unusual procedure was necessary in order to overcome the governor’s veto of the original pro-life bill, SB 714. Catholic Democrat Rep. Jeannie McDaniel opposed pro-life SB 139 throughout the process; also opposing the pro-life bill were Catholic Democrat Sens. Joe Sweeden and Andrew Rice. All Catholic Republicans supported the pro-life bill and supported all of the related motions — Rep. Rob Johnson and Rep. David Dank, and Sen. Mike Johnson.

*Sooner Catholic* editor Ray Dyer, wishes to apologize for any confusion the earlier article may have caused.
‘We Need to Fight Against This Law’

Anti-Immigration Bill Raises Ire at Gathering

By Ray Dyer
The Sooner Catholic

OKLAHOMA CITY — Stan McKay sat before about 125 people inside the Saint Charles Borromeo gymnasium and summed up his feelings about HB 1804. The legislation was signed into law on May 8 by Gov. Brad Henry. It is hailed by some as the most sweeping immigration reform measure in the nation. To McKay and the others inside the gym, it’s anything but reform.

“We don’t have the time or the luxury to point fingers or to blame people about this law,” McKay said. “But we need to fight against this law.”

Hosted by the League of Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the May 29 gathering at Saint Charles was designed to educate the public about HB 1804. The mostly Hispanic audience peppered the panel with questions. The panel included McKay, an immigration attorney, as well as Shirley Cox, an attorney, and Giovanni Perry, also an immigration attorney. All three are former workers with Catholic Charities. Others on the panel were Juanita Sykes, Ed Romo, Arthur Valdez and Ray Madrid.

Questions were answered in English and Spanish. Many of the questions dealt with what role law enforcement will play in the immigration reform law.

Shirley Cox, an attorney, told the audience they should never open the door to their home to immigration officials. She said a search warrant is necessary to enter a home, unless the residents willingly open the door. “Never open your front door,” Cox said. “Make them go and get a search warrant.”

One aspect of the law deals with the transportation of undocumented persons, or illegal aliens. McKay, Cox and Perry agreed the law is not intended to target churches or charitable organizations. They said the law is aimed at those who transport people for money, such as the “coyotes” who smuggle people into the United States for large sums of cash. Others targeted by the law are those who operate “sweat shops.”

“I have been a Democrat all my life. I love my party. But I can only say plainly that if the Democratic Party does not want to be known as the party of abortion, it needs to stop attacking its own members for being pro-life and stop promoting pro-choice candidate recruitment activities as part of its official party structure.”

List

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was outraged by her party’s alliance with Emily’s List. A few weeks earlier, Hamilton and Sen. Jay Paul Gumm, D-Durant, came within 50 votes of voting to reprimand Senator Gumm for being pro-life and stop promoting pro-choice candidate recruitment activities as part of its official party structure.

“To top it off, the state party put this pro-choice organization with a clear-cut statement that they want to elect more pro-choice people to office on their official Web site. They did this at the same time that the party was voting to reprimand Senator Gumm and me for acting on our pro-life beliefs. The message in all this seems pretty clear-cut to me.”

U.S. Rep. Dan Boren, Oklahoma’s only Democratic member of Congress, is well aware of Emily’s List. The organization pumped a reported $500,000 into his primary opponent’s unsuccessful run against him.

Cole Perryman, press secretary for Boren, said the congressman does not believe bringing Emily’s List to Oklahoma is healthy for the state Democratic Party. Perryman said Boren believes the Democratic Party must offer a “bigger tent” and should not align itself with groups that have a “narrow view” such as that promoted by Emily’s List. Boren’s main concern is that Emily’s List recruits only female candidates.

Tony Lauinger, state chairman of Oklahomans for Life Inc., predicts the alliance with Emily’s List will cause great harm to the Democratic Party in the state.

“It’s ironic that no less an authority than Democratic National Chairman Howard Dean urged the delegates to the Oklahoma Democratic Party Convention on May 19 to ‘reach out to evangelical Christians’ — and the response of the Oklahoma Democratic Party is to sponsor a candidate training seminar by a radical pro-abortion group,” Lauinger said. “The state party leadership appears intent on driving pro-life Democrats out of the party and making the Democratic Party the minority party in Oklahoma.”
The Children of Oklahoma

State Has 12,000 Children in Foster Care, DHS Seeks Loving, Caring Adults to Provide Home Life for Youngsters in Need

By Eileen Dugan
The Sooner Catholic

OKLAHOMA CITY — In Oklahoma more than 12,000 children are in foster care at any one time. Another 100 children are housed in shelters, waiting for foster parents. All these children have been removed from their homes because their families are in crisis and are unable to provide for their well-being. The Oklahoma Department of Human Services is seeking qualified and caring foster parents to give these unplanned children a good home.

Mark Carpenter and Rita Williams are foster care specialists who work in the Foster Care Division of DHS. They asked the Sooner Catholic to help publicize the need for good foster parents in Oklahoma.

"People should become foster parents because they can make a difference in the life of a child," Williams said. "Foster parents are ordinary people like us. They come from all walks of life. Some work; others are retired. Some have children of their own; others do not. But whoever they are, they take care of foster children just like regular parents would."

Foster parents feed their foster children, help them with their homework, play ball with them and take them to church just like ordinary parents. "The only difference is that foster parents are not allowed to discipline their foster children with physical force. Most children in foster care have been removed from their homes because of physical abuse, and we don't want to traumatize them any more than they already are," Carpenter said.

The Department of Human Services agrees that all children need discipline; it just asks that the punishments meted out to foster children be non-violent. Instead of slapping or beating these children, DHS suggests that foster parents correct foster children by taking away privileges, redirecting the child's attention or giving them a time out, Williams explained.

"Taking care of any child can be an expensive proposition, so the Department of Human Services makes sure that foster parents are not allowed to discipline their foster children by taking away privileges, redirecting the child's attention or giving them a time out, Williams explained."

Volunteer Foster Parents Needed

Oklahoma’s Foster Care Program to See Changes

OKLAHOMA CITY — The Oklahoma foster care system is currently in flux, in the process of changing into a new model to be known as "Bridge Foster Parents." In the past, the Department of Human Services (DHS) wanted foster parents to have little or no contact with the biological parents. The Bridge Program changes that. In the future, foster parents and the biological parents will be encouraged to have a relationship with one another.

"It is hoped that foster parents and biological parents will get to know each other and that the biological parents will benefit from this relationship and become more responsible citizens in groups on being foster parents and adoption."

In her talks about adoption or foster parenting, she is honest in sharing that the application process and paperwork takes time and patience. "You have to be willing to lay it all out on the table about your finances, family and life situation. However, the joys are so worth any inconvenience you may experience. There is a sense of peace and warmth in holding a baby in your arms and knowing you are helping this child get a good start in life," Ray said.

Catholic Charities is a licensed child-placing agency for the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, serving central and western Oklahoma. In addition to the Oklahoma City office, adoption services are offered at Catholic Charities regional offices in Lawton, Enid and Clinton.

For information about adoption, contact Sabra Ruminer at Catholic Charities Adoption Services, (405) 523-3012 or 1-800-375-8514. Bilingual staff is available upon request.

Volunteer Foster Parents Needed to Care for Infants

Catholic Charities adoption program is seeking volunteer foster parents to assist with newborn babies. "Fostering a newborn can be such a wonderful rewarding experience," said Sabra Ruminer, coordinator of Adoption Services. Foster parents may be asked to take care of an infant for only the first few weeks of the baby's life, or up to several months. The time period depends on the adoption process. "We need more foster parents. We hope anyone interested in knowing more about our foster care program for infants will please call us. I would love to talk more about foster parenting and adoption," Ruminer said. For more information, call Catholic Charities Adoption Services at (405) 523-3012.
Prisons and Prayers

Kairos Torch Ministry Helps Bring Incarcerated Young People Understanding Of the Merciful God Who Loves Them

By Ray Dyer
The Sooner Catholic

NORMAN — Imagine you are a young man or woman. You’ve grown up in a rough neighborhood and maybe an even rougher home. You’ve made mistakes. You find yourself in a state-run juvenile prison. Where do you turn? To God? Why, where has He been so far in your young life? You’ve made it this far on your own. What’s God going to do for you?

This attitude sounds fairly typical to the volunteers who work in the ministry known as Kairos Torch. It’s a Christian-based ministry that reaches out to young people who are incarcerated and to their families. These volunteers deal with some young people who have wrapped their hearts in a pretty tough shell. Considering what many have been through, who could blame them. But through the power of prayer and the Grace of an all merciful and loving God, often that shell can be peeled away and a new life is born.

“Before Torch, I didn’t care, now I like helping people,” said one incarcerated teen. “I was shy, but now I know that people care, they may not know us but they care. I pray every night since Torch. I will not come back here.”

There are dozens of comments just like that one. Young people who have never been introduced to the love of God. They’ve never been told they are created in the image and likeness of God. They’ve buried feelings and emotions under layers of anger. That’s why the volunteers who work in Kairos Torch and the other prison ministries associated with it, do what they do.

“It’s a real miracle to see people change,” said Thomas Koszoru. He’s one of several Catholics who take part in the Kairos Torch ministry. A member of Saint Thomas More Parish in Norman, Koszoru said the first night of the Torch retreat is especially powerful. That’s when an audio-visual presentation explains how human beings are created in the image and likeness of God. A photo of each Torch participant is flashed on the screen during the presentation and for many it’s the first time they can make a connection between their own lives and God.

“It’s powerful stuff,” Koszoru said.

Bill and Pat Urell, also of Saint Thomas More, have been involved in Kairos for some 20 years. They got involved while living in Connecticut. Bill said he thought he was going to a retreat about marriage, but wound up helping with music at Mass for prisoners in the county jail and one thing led to another. Originally started in Florida 25 years ago, Kairos has been in Oklahoma since 1994. Pat Urell said it was Archbishop Beltran who helped initiate the ministry here. Kairos, Greek for “God’s Special Time,” is a Christian ministry. While a number of Catholics are involved, there are many dedicated volunteers from Protestant churches as well. The ministry, according to Pat Urell, doesn’t promote one denomination over another. “There are no debates about theology,” said Phil Perkins, another parishioner from Saint Thomas More. He said the ministry focuses on “what we have in common, rather than what separates us.”

Some could possibly frown on this, but as Bill Urell said, the idea is “to bring God’s love into the institution.” Muslims, Jews and atheists are included in the retreats and Urell said he has seen miracles occur. “We had a white supremacist and a black Muslim hug after a retreat,” he said.

Claire Maehs has been involved in two Torch retreats. She helps direct the prayer room, where young people come to pray for other “candidates” entering Torch. They pray for special intentions and they also receive a prayer note from the volunteer team.

Another powerful part of each weekend retreat is the forgiveness list. This list is created by each participant and on it are the names of people they need to forgive and also the names of people they need to ask forgiveness from. The lists are collected and placed in the God box. It is then taken outside the institution and burned. No one ever sees the forgiveness lists, other than God.

Participants also make masks and decorate them with colors and symbols reflecting the false images they present. “The mask the guy wears on the yard is a lot different than who he really is,” said Koszoru. “They don’t want to be where they are, but they also don’t want the others to know they are weak.”

Several Catholic deacons are involved in the Kairos Torch ministry, Pat Urell said. In particular, she mentioned Deacon David Schrupp and Deacon Roy Forsythe.

Not lost on the Kairos Torch volunteers is the fact many of the participants they come in contact with have never been taught about God or to pray. “Most juvenile offenders weren’t taught or allowed to pray in a public school, they had to make their way to a state prison to find this freedom. “We can’t handle everything on our own,” said one Kairos Torch participant.

“God will continue to be in our lives.” More information, contact Bill and Pat Urell at (405) 447-1505. To contribute to Kairos Torch, the address is Torch, 3112 Oakbrook Drive, Del City, Okla. 73115.

What a Weekend Retreat Entails

By Pat Urell

As part of the follow-up to the Torch Retreat for youthful offenders, a number of team members go out to Central Oklahoma Juvenile Center in Tecumseh on the fourth Saturday of the month. It is a time to reconnect with teen-agers who have attended a Kairos Torch retreat and to provide continuing ministry.

The teens look forward to being there and seeing the adults who have come to visit them, who show God’s love to them without wanting anything in return. On May 26, about 15 girls came to their reunion. This is all who were left at COJC, who had attended the girls retreat last November. About 36 boys came to the reunion, those who had attended the three boys Torch retreats, held in April 2006, July 2006 and April 2007.

After being welcomed, the teens were seated at small tables in the staff canteen and given a brief lesson on choices. The leader, Hank, spoke about King David’s man, Shammah, in 2nd Samuel 23:11-12. He did not run when faced with overwhelming odds against the Philistines at Lehi. He chose to stand in a field of lentils and slew a great many of the enemy. Why didn’t he run like the other soldiers? He knew that God wanted him there and would protect him. Often, we are given choices to stand for what we believe is important or to run away. Knowing that God is real and loving us can make a huge difference.

After snacks, the teens were asked to give feedback about the retreat and the reunions, to tell what they liked and did not like. One boy said, “What’s not to like?” They agreed that they liked the food, skits, music and sharing with their table families.

The next step is for the adult team to find a mentor for each juvenile who has attended Torch. Mentors are people, who commit to stay in contact with their individual teen, for six months or until they leave the institution. Currently, mentors are meeting their teens during visitation on Saturday and Sunday afternoons, from 1 to 4 p.m. They spend about an hour visiting, talking about the lesson in the Mentoring Manual, eating and playing games, etc. Mentors do not have to see their teen every week, but may call and talk on the phone, or send cards and letters. Some juveniles have a lot of visits and support from their families and others have none. The mentor is a person to be a friend, a role model, someone who cares, but who does not replace the parent. They are God’s representative and may be a tremendous help to the teen in his or her spiritual walk. Mentor training is provided locally, but the most important aspect is the desire to reach out and pass on God’s love.

Please pray for the juveniles, that they may be able to work their programs, learn about God and themselves and be able to move on and grow up to be strong and healthy men and women. Maybe someday, they will be able to turn and reach out a hand to other young people who are lost and hurting.
Priests Will Return to India With Great Love in Hearts for Oklahoma

OKLAHOMA CITY — Father Maria J. Kumar and Father J. Balasamy Nagineni will be saying goodbye to the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City on June 19. The two priests from India will be returning to their native country. Both arrived in the United States in 2003 and said they have enjoyed every minute of their ministry in Oklahoma.

“We are very happy God gave us this opportunity,” said Father Balasamy. “We are very thankful to Archbishop Beltran and to our fellow Oklahoma priests and to the wonderful people of this archdiocese. They have made us feel very welcome.” They were especially grateful to Father Tony Taylor, who serves as vicar of ministries for the archdiocese.

After arriving here in August of 2003, Father Balasamy spent one year at Christ the King Parish in Oklahoma City before being named co-administrator at Saint Helen Parish in Ponca City before moving to Saint Ann Church in Elgin where he served as pastor.

When they return to India, the priests will serve in the state of Andhra Pradesh, a Christian area of India and home to about 70 million people. India has a population of about 1.5 billion people, Father Balasamy said. He and Father Kumar will minister in “traditional Catholic villages."

The priests said they will take with them many wonderful memories of their time spent in Oklahoma. They said the Catholic people of Elgin and Frederick have a very strong faith, “they care deeply for their church and are very wonderful to priests,” Father Balasamy said. The priests were also moved by the generosity of the American people. Father Balasamy said America is truly the world’s top superpower, but not only in military or economic might. “The Americans are always the first to come when there is a disaster. They are very generous people,” he said. “America is the best country in the world,” Father Balasamy said. “People here are not exploited like so many in other countries in the world. Both Father Kumar and I are very grateful that God allowed us this privilege."

Oklahoma Catholic Family Conference Features Mark Shea

OKLAHOMA CITY — The Oklahoma Catholic Family Conference is bringing in Mark Shea, a popular Catholic Answers speaker and writer to Bishop McGuinness High School on June 23. Registration will begin at 9:30 with Shea giving three talks during the day. Catholic vendors from across the state will also be on hand for your shopping needs.

Mark Shea is a double jump convert. Raised more or less as an agnostic pagan, he became a non-denominational Evangelical in 1979 and entered the Catholic Church in 1987. He is the author of “Making Senses Out of Scripture: Reading the Bible as the First Christians Did,” (Basilica), “By What Authority?: An Evangelical Discovers Catholic Tradition” (Our Sunday Visitor) and “This Is My Body: An Evangelical Discovers the Real Presence” (Christendom Press). An award-winning columnist, he has contributed many articles to This Rock as well as other Catholic magazines. He is senior content editor for www.CatholicExchange.com and co-authors (with Scott Hahn and Jeff Cavins) the Catholic Scripture Study available at that site. He lives in Washington state with his wife, Janet, and their four sons.

The cost for the day is $20 per person if registered before the Friday, June 15 deadline. Cost at the door will be $25. Lunch is included in the registration fee. Anyone interested in registering should contact Jeff Finnell at (405) 255-4343 or e-mail at OKCatholicFamily@sbcglobal.net. This event is sponsored by the Office of Family Life of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City and Saint Monica Catholic Church in Edmond.

The Oklahoma Catholic Family Conference is a group of Catholic families that are devoted to bringing in quality speakers that teach sound Catholic Doctrine, geared for the entire family.

The theme for this group is “Catholic Families Sowing Seeds for the Church.”

The Mark Shea presentation is the kickoff event for the group. This event will serve as a launching pad for next year’s event, which will be a two-day conference held at the Cox Center in downtown Oklahoma City on June 21 and 22, 2008. There will be several nationally known speakers, including Johnnette Benkovic from EWTN’s “Abundant Life” program at this conference.

“I can not tell you how much of a difference attending Catholic Conferences has made to my family,” said Jeff Finnell of Saint Monica. Jeff and his wife, Kathy were involved in the Wichita Catholic Family Conference for several years when they lived in Kansas.

“When we moved to Oklahoma, we wanted to bring the fantastic experience we had in Wichita to the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City,” he said. “Immersing your family into a completely Catholic weekend filled with good solid Catholic teaching, exposure to Catholic clergy and religious, and establishing contacts with other Catholic families from across the state is so invaluable. The Catholic Conferences that we attend are always the highlight of our year. We wouldn’t miss them.”

The Catholic Foundation

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The Federal Pension Protection Act of 2006 provides an opportunity for individuals age 70 1/2 and older to make a Charitable Distribution directly from their IRA account without incurring added income taxes on the withdrawal. This option is limited to a maximum gift of $100,000 and is only available in the 2006 and 2007 tax years.

While these gifts count toward the required IRA distribution, they are not considered as income if distributed directly to a public charity. If you are taking mandatory IRA distributions but do not need the income, consider a gift to your favorite Catholic institution directly from your IRA account.

For more information on Planned Giving contact:
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Excerpts from USCCB Statements

ABORTION AND SACRAMENTAL LIFE

A brief remark by Pope Benedict during his recent Latin American trip prompted a variety of public comments about abortion, reception of the Eucharist and excommunication. Some of these commentaries misinterpreted or confused certain aspects of Catholic teaching and Church law. These excerpts from documents of the U.S. bishops may be helpful in clarifying the issues.

Worthiness to Receive Holy Communion

The Church teaches that we must be properly disposed to receive the Eucharist worthily, making use of the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to the reception of the Eucharist if we have committed a serious sin (I Cor. 11: 27-29). The Catholic Bishops of the United States said:

“All must examine their consciences as to whether the denial of Holy Communion is so ready to bestow. For all of us fall short of God's goodness, and all are in need of that mercy He is so ready to bestow.”

Denial of Holy Communion

The pastoral teaching referred to above, addressed to all who approach the Eucharist, is distinct from the question regarding excommunication, a most serious canonical penalty whose consequences extend beyond the denial of the Eucharist. A Catholic who is excommunicated “is barred from celebrating or receiving the Sacraments,” though it is important to remember that even this penalty “is imposed as a remedy for serious sin, not as a punishment” (United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, 2006, p. 512). Excommunication is incurred automatically (latae sententiae) by those who willfully and deliberately act to cooperate in evil:

- Those who deliberately kill the child before it is completely delivered when he or she is killed. Yet even when the court struck down Texas’ abortion statute in Roe, it had left standing a provision of Texas law that prohibited killing a child in the process of being delivered.

The Supreme Court and Partial-Birth Abortion: Q & A

Since the 1973 case of Roe v. Wade, when the U.S. Supreme Court legalized abortion nationwide, the court has not allowed a legislature to prohibit any method of abortion. Many of the core principles of Roe were upheld in Planned Parenthood v. Casey (1992). Then these were interpreted to invalidate even Nebraska’s ban on the grisly partial-birth abortion method, and similar bans in about 30 other states, in Stenberg v. Carhart (“Carhart I”) 2000). Finally, in April 2007, the court upheld a differently worded federal ban on this procedure in Gonzales v. Carhart (“Carhart II”). What is the significance of Carhart? Does it signal a new direction for the court? This background provides some answers.

1. What is partial-birth abortion?

Partial-birth abortion (PBA) is the name Congress has used to describe a procedure that crosses the line from abortion to infanticide. The doctor delivers a substantial portion of the living child outside his mother’s body — the entire head in a head-first delivery or the trunk past the navel in a feet-first delivery — then kills the child by crushing his skull or removing his brain by suction.

2. Why would anyone use this procedure?

Some abortion doctors use PBA in the middle and last months of pregnancy, when dismembering a child becomes more difficult due to the child’s stronger bones and ligaments. After the mother undergoes two to three days of cervical dilation (increasing her risk of infection and subsequent preterm births), the doctor in minutes can partially deliver the body and then either killing him or her and completing delivery. In the more commonly used dismemberment method, the mother’s cervix is dilated manually only enough to remove the child’s severed body parts; dismemberment and removal takes the doctor longer to complete.

3. Does Roe v. Wade protect an abortion method as extreme as PBA?

In Carhart I, the Supreme Court treated PBA as just another method of abortion, largely ignoring the fact that the child is almost completely delivered when he or she is killed. Yet even when the court struck down Texas’ abortion statute in Roe, it had left standing a provision of Texas law that prohibited killing a child in the process of being delivered.

4. Why was a ban on this procedure needed?

Don’t most states already have laws against late-term abortions?

Such laws exist in most states but they generally have two deficiencies. First, they only attach “viability” — when the child if delivered could survive indefinitely outside the womb — and PBA is used to kill mostly-delivered children before this stage. Second, as required by Roe and Casey, even laws restricting abortion after viability allow abortion when it is deemed necessary to preserve the mother’s “health” — and “health” was defined in Roe’s companion case Doe v. Bolton to include “all factors” — emotional, familial, age, and so on — related to “well-being.” This “health” loophole allows abortions to be performed on request during all nine months of pregnancy, for virtually any reason.

5. What reasons did the court give in Carhart I for finding Nebraska’s ban on PBA unconstitutional?

First, Nebraska defined partial-birth abortion as a procedure in which the doctor delivers a “substantial portion of the fetus” into the vagina before committing an act which kills the fetus. The court ruled that this description was vague and could also refer to dismemberment abortions, so the law may ban almost all abortions after 18 to 20 weeks.

Second, presented with conflicting medical evidence on the marginal health benefit PBA was said to provide over the dismemberment method, the trial judge gave greater weight to the testimony of a PBA practitioner (Dr. Carhart) than to the testimony of experts in maternal-fetal medicine. On this basis the judge found the law unconstitutional because it lacked a “health” exception, and the Supreme Court agreed.

6. What did Congress do to ban partial-birth abortion?

Congress twice passed bills banning PBA, but they were vetoed by President Bill Clinton. Before the third such bill was passed by Congress, the Supreme Court issued its Carhart I decision. Congress then redrafted its bill to address the court’s specific continued on page 8.
Partial Birth

continued from page 7

objections to the Nebraska law. The Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act of 2003 was signed into law by President George W. Bush.

7. How does the federal law differ from Nebraska’s ban?

Congress wrote a very clear description of the banned procedure, to cover only the intentional delivery of a living fetus outside the mother beyond certain anatomical points, followed by the deliberate killing of the child (see answer above). Second, based on years of hearings and documentary evidence, Congress concluded that a health exception allowing PBA is never medically necessary. The federal ban recites these findings concerning the lack of health benefits and even additional health risks from PBA, compared to other methods.

8. What happened to the federal ban in Carhart I and Carhart II?

The day it was signed into law, Dr. Carhart, the Planned Parenthood Federation of America and the National Abortion Federation filed suits against the federal law in three federal district courts. Each trial judge enjoined the law from being enforced. Then, citing the court’s ruling on the Nebraska law in Carhart I, the trial judges and all but one appellate court judge found the federal ban unconstitutional. However, the Supreme Court reviewed two of these rulings and overturned them on April 18, 2007, finding the federal ban constitutionally valid. The majority opinion by Justice Anthony Kennedy was signed by five of the nine justices. The federal ban on PBA will now be enforceable nationwide for the first time.

9. Why did the court arrive at a different decision in Carhart I and Carhart II?

First, the statutes were written differently; with the federal ban describing the banned procedure with greater clarity and specificity. Second, the court was convinced that in a facial challenge, a lack of complete consensus in medical opinion would not foreclose Congress’ ability to legislate in this area. More generally, the court in Carhart II applied a different standard of review, making it easier for abortion regulations to be upheld. Carhart I applied this intermediate standard to uphold the PBA ban.

10. What are some examples of “abortion distortion”?

Some of the special rules that have made it very difficult to have pro-life laws upheld relate to: (a) the type of challenge allowed; “facial” versus “as-applied”; (b) the standard of review; (c) how the meaning of statutory language is determined; and (d) the treatment of abortion doctors as a privileged class. A final distortion is evident in (e) euphemisms and inaccurate descriptions of the unborn child and abortion.

(a) Facial vs. as-applied challenges: In an “as-applied” challenge, opponents seek to show that a law is unconstitutional because it was applied or will cause great harm “only as applied” to their specific circumstances. If the court agrees with them, it may create a narrow exception to block the law from being applied to them and others who are similarly situated, while allowing the law to remain valid in every other respect. In the abortion context, however, the court has typically allowed abortion doctors to bring “facial challenges,” arguing that abortion clients presenting certain specific circumstances — however rare and unlikely — will be harmed by the law, on this basis the court has invalidated entire statutes.

(b) The standard of review: Courts apply a deferential standard of review (usually “rational basis” review) in most areas of law and a very tough standard (“strict scrutiny”) where a law restricts a fundamental freedom (e.g., free speech) or treats people differently based on a characteristic that holds constitutional significance (e.g., sex, race). Courts meaningfully defer to Congress in the abortion context any more than they do in other contexts.

(c) How the court determines the meaning of statutory language: Normally, a court determines lawmakers’ intent by giving words their common meaning. Courts generally give lawmakers the benefit of the doubt: “Every reasonable construction must be resorted to, in order to save a statute from unconstitutionality.” In Carhart II, the court adopted the maxim that a statute is “fallen by the wayside when the court confronts a statute regulating abortion.” Instead, courts seemed to go out of their way to find an unconstitutional meaning to invalidate an abortion law. Carhart II repeats Casey’s promise to follow the customary rule of construction (which many say the Court ignored in Carhart I).

(d) Treating abortion doctors as a privileged class: The court signals that the bias in favor of abortion doctors, shown in many earlier cases, should end. “The law need not give abortion doctors unfettered choice in the course of their medical practice, nor should it elevate their status above other physicians in the medical community.” The court rejected a “zero tolerance policy,” in which legislators were forbidden to regulate abortion if an abortion doctor objected.

In the area of evidence, too, courts have sometimes treated abortion doctors as the ultimate authorities on health or safety, and on what constitutes informed consent. By contrast, opposing testimony by board-certified medical specialists in obstetrics and maternal-fetal medicine have often been given less weight. Justice Kennedy had objected to this bias in his dissent in Carhart I: “The standard of medical practice cannot depend on the individual views of Dr. Carhart and his supporters ... A ban which depends on the ‘appropriate medical judgment’ of Dr. Carhart is no ban at all.” In judging whether PBA provides a “health” benefit, Carhart II gave fairer treatment to the testimony of medical specialists on whom Congress relied, who contradicted Dr. Carhart. Noting that disagreements remained, the court said: “Medical uncertainty does not foreclose the exercise of legislative power in the abortion context any more than it does in other contexts.

(e) The pretense that abortion is something other than the killing of a human being: Beginning with Roe, the Supreme Court has often spoken less than candidly about what an abortion does. The court has often referred to the unborn human as only a “potential life,” and spoken vaguely about the choice to terminate a pregnancy instead of asking the choice to end a human life. When, as in Carhart I, the court was forced to describe the procedures by which children are brutally killed in the later stages of pregnancy, they resorted to Latinate words like calvarium for skull and disarticulation for tearing limb from limb. The Carhart II opinion does not mince words. The humanity of the “unborn child,” the fact that abortion means “killing” that child, and the prospect that a mother may feel regret, sorrow, emotional distress and anguish over this decision are openly discussed.

11. What does Carhart II say about the state’s interests in regulating and restricting abortion?

Carhart II recognizes legitimate interests of the state which may provide a valid basis for future legislation: (a) Unborn Life: Promoting “life from the inception of human life by ‘preserving and promoting fetal life’ from ‘the inception of pregnancy’” (b) Professional Ethics: “Protecting the integrity and ethics of the medical profession” and “regulating the medical profession in order to promote respect for life, including the life of the unborn”; (c) Women’s Interests: Providing a “reasonable framework for a woman to make a decision that has such profound and lasting meaning,” so she will not suffer “grief more anguished and sorrow more profound” upon learning too late what her abortion entailed.
Mount Presents Inaugural Cornerstone Awards

OKLAHOMA CITY — Mount St. Mary High School and its community of family, friends and alumni gathered May 19 at The Connor Center of Our Lady’s Cathedral to present the inaugural Cornerstones of The Mount award. This is the highest award of recognition presented to those who have been vital to the history and legacy in the 103-year history of Mount St. Mary High School.

The first award was presented by Bob Streets, current MSM board of trustees member and a 1970 graduate of MSM who extolled on the contributions made by the archdiocese and its predecessors to the continuance of Catholic education at The Mount. Accepting the award for the archdiocese was Archbishop Eusebius Beltran. The archbishop said Catholic education is the most important service that the church can provide its education is the most important service that the church can provide its.

Pete Córdova honored the Sisters of Mercy for their 103-year commitment of steadfast service instilling the caresisms and values of Mercy to students throughout The Mount’s history. Sister Jane Mary Hotstream, president of SOM Regional Leadership Team and former MSM principal, accepted the award on their behalf.

Sister Jane shared that what makes The Mount a special place is that the Sisters’ love and careisim placed a spirit in the hallways that is hard to define but hard to ignore. “You hear it in the echo of the halls, and you feel it in your heart, and that is the love of the Sisters of Mercy.”

Justin Byrne, current board of trustees chairman and 1993 graduate, presented the third award. He spoke of his experiences as a student and his relationship with his mentor, Pete Córdova. Pete served The Mount as a teacher, Key Club sponsor and administrator for nearly four decades, touching the lives of countless students. During his tenure, Pete’s charisma and passion for mentoring and serving his students at The Mount earned him an unwavering love and respect by all those who walked the halls of The Mount. Pete accepted his award and told stories which entertained and touched the hearts of those who were present.

Closing the ceremony was Principal Talita Córdova DeNegri, class of 1980, who thanked all of the Cornerstone recipients for their legacy to the rich history and vibrant future of Mount St. Mary High School. With their commitment to Catholic education and their mission to serve others, these “Cornerstones of The Mount” have ensured that generations of young people will carry on the spirit of The Mount.

Oklahoman Enjoys Serving U.S. as Vatican Ambassador

ROME, Italy — After the G8 Summit, President George Bush will pay a formal visit to Pope Benedict XVI. The preparation and anticipations makes for an exciting time for Oklahoman Francis Rooney, the U.S. ambassador to the Holy See.

Rooney will relax afterward in wicked hot Oklahoma August, when Italians take their month-long holiday. He prefers the hot and dry season in his home state.

“It’s a pretty exciting time,” Rooney said in an interview inside the embassy. His office view overlooks the Circo Massimo and is just a boulder’s roll from the Colosseo.

“The fact that the president is coming to meet the Holy Father says something. It shows how important the Holy See is to the United States. There’s a lot of work that comes into the visit.”

Rooney says the Catholic Church and the United States have similar core values. Though they may differ in some areas, the premise of human dignity, religious freedom and individual opportunity transcends the two entities.

“We have so many areas where our values and the values of the Holy See are so aligned,” he said. Rooney deals with those values on a daily basis. He was appointed ambassador in October 2005 by President George W. Bush. The two met when Rooney’s company, Manhattan Construction Co., built the Arlington, Texas, baseball stadium used by the Texas Rangers. Bush was managing partner of the baseball team.

“I’m thankful to be part of President Bush’s team but I wouldn’t want to do it for a lifetime. Don’t get me wrong, I love Italy but I miss Oklahoma and the U.S.”

“He’s been a real source of inspiration for me for some time,” Rooney said. He was a strong supporter and financial contributor to Bush’s campaigns.

He has high regard for Pope Benedict. He finds him to be a very kind and profound man.

With the Holy See, the embassy has been a pioneer in addressing human trafficking. It has worked with religious orders in helping train priests and nuns in recognizing signs of trafficking.

Rooney often receives visitors from Oklahoma and other states. University of Oklahoma President David Boren and Molly Shi Boren visited with a group of OU students this past summer. He hosts numerous visitors and attends many official receptions. He speaks some Italian but conducts business in English and Spanish.

He is encouraged that the U.S. Congress appears to be moving toward reforming the nation’s immigration policy. The church believes individuals have a right to the fruits of their labor and families should not be separated.

“President Bush has been very clear. We need to protect our borders and deal rationally with the workers who are already here, working and supporting our growing economy.”

An immigration reform that doesn’t address that reality won’t work, Rooney said. “We’d be really disadvantaged if we didn’t have them working here,” he said.

Rooney said he is honored to serve President Bush and his country but he knows he will return to his Oklahoma roots some day.

“I’m thankful to be part of President Bush’s team but I wouldn’t want to do it for a lifetime,” he said. “Don’t get me wrong. I love Italy but I miss Oklahoma and the U.S.”
Fruits of Labor
After Decade of Work and Planning, Saint Katharine Drexel Retirement Center Opened by El Reno Parish

By Ray Dyer
The Sooner Catholic

EL RENO — Archbishop Beltran joked with the 200 or so people gathered for the blessing and dedication of Saint Katharine Drexel Retirement Center that he wasn’t exactly sure when the effort to build the center began. “But I know it was sometime in the last century,” he said to laughter and applause.

The blessing and dedication on May 27 came after about 10 years of work on the part of Sacred Heart Church and the archdiocese. Saint Katharine Drexel is a ministry of Sacred Heart Parish and is sponsored by the archdiocese. It is the first collaboration on an independent/assisted living center in the archdiocese. Saint Ann Retirement Center in Oklahoma City was the first Catholic independent/assisted living center built in the archdiocese. Saint Ann, however, is not affiliated with a particular parish.

Archbishop Beltran said he was extremely pleased with the design and quality of Saint Katharine Drexel. The 49-unit center was a design/build project undertaken by The Benham Companies, LLC. Scheduled to open to residents on June 2, the retirement center is more than 50 percent pre-leased. Joyce Clark, president of Achieves Senior Living, the firm hired to develop and market Saint Katharine Drexel, said residents will find an eager staff ready to greet them. Jonna McElfresh, formerly the director of an assisted living center in Edmond, has been hired to oversee Saint Katharine to be built over the road. The building takes up close to

Archbishop Beltran had first suggested a retirement center be built near Sacred Heart when he visited the El Reno parish in the mid-1990s. Father Philip Donohoe, then pastor at Sacred Heart, and several parishioners agreed with the idea and began searching for ways to make it happen. Over the years, a number of properties across the street from Sacred Heart church and school were purchased and either moved or demolished. Father Francis Nguyen was named pastor in 2005 when Father Donohoe retired. He helped keep the project on track and said he was overjoyed at the finished product.

“This is the miracle of Sacred Heart Parish,” Father Nguyen said at the dedication ceremony.

The city of El Reno worked with the parish and agreed to close a portion of Evans Street, allowing Saint Katharine to be built over the road. The building takes up close to 40,000 square feet and covers almost two blocks. The playground for Sacred Heart School sits just to the west of Saint Katharine Drexel, creating an intergenerational atmosphere for both the school and retirement center.

Laura Tribble, an Edmond designer, was hired to help decorate Saint Katharine Drexel. Visitors at the blessing and dedication ceremony were pleased with the beautiful furnishings and art that created a cozy and home-like atmosphere. Framed art created by young students at Sacred Heart School decorates one area of the retirement center.

Plans call for the students and residents of Saint Katharine Drexel to interact often and daily. Mass will be celebrated in the Saint Katharine Drexel Chapel, bringing in parishioners of Sacred Heart.

At the blessing, Archbishop Beltran said Catholics are well aware of the importance of Catholic education. He praised the parish for reopening Sacred Heart School after it had closed for more than 25 years.

He said Catholics are also well aware of the vital contributions made by Catholic health care and said care for the elderly is another great and growing ministry the Church is accepting.

“I am so very pleased and overjoyed with this wonderful retirement center,” Archbishop Beltran said. Describing the sacrifices made by Saint Katharine Drexel, the wealthy Philadelphia socialite who gave away a fortune to help the less fortunate, the archbishop said God will surely bless all those “who worked so hard to help make this a reality” and “He will bless your parish for accepting this beautiful ministry.”

Saint Katharine Drexel Retirement Center is located at 301 W. Wade, El Reno 73036, (405) 262-2920, www.elrenosacredheart.com
Parishioner Creates Beautiful Works for New Chapel at Saint Katharine Drexel

EL RENO — David Koos has turned raw wood into beautiful furniture for many years. His work can be found in homes and businesses all around central Oklahoma. Clients expect quality and providing that quality means there is a certain amount of pressure. Koos accepts the pressure, he knows it goes with the territory. But even after more than two decades of creating beautiful furniture and cabinetry, even Koos wasn't ready for the kind of pressure he felt while building the altar, crucifix, tabernacle and furniture that will adorn the chapel at the new Saint Katharine Drexel Retirement Center.

"You know," Koos said after delivering the beautiful red oak pieces to the chapel, "I've done this for 28 years now, ever since I got out of high school, but I have to admit, this one made me nervous." Standing nearby, Jeff Koos, his brother, nodded in agreement. "I've never seen him get so nervous about a job."

Father Francis Nguyen’s face beamed as the Koos brothers, with help from Harold Lembke, their brother-in-law, set up the altar, crucifix and the other pieces inside the chapel. "I told him don’t disappoint me and he didn’t," Father Francis said. "It's very beautiful. I'm very happy."

Koos built every piece from red oak. He hand-chiseled the crucifix, the corpus is from Italy. His wife, Jeanne, said her husband really got nervous the night severe thunderstorms roared through the area. El Reno was hit by a tornado about two weeks before Koos was to deliver his creations to the retirement center.

"He ran out to his shop in the middle of the storm," Jeanne said. "He had to make sure everything was all right."
OKLAHOMA CITY — All parents, siblings and grandparents of children who have died are invited to attend the 30th National Conference of The Compassionate Friends (TCF). You do not need to be a member of the organization to participate. The conference will be held July 20-22 at the Cox Center.

The Compassionate Friends is an organization that helps family members deal with the death of a child. It helps families remember their children and learn about the many facets of grief. TCF is the world’s largest self-help bereavement support group with nearly 600 chapters throughout the U.S.

“The loss of a child is a devastating experience which happens to thousands of families every year,” said TCF executive director Patricia Loder. Loder is a twice-bereaved parent and a bereaved sibling.

“Our upcoming conference is designed to provide a way for bereaved family members to connect with others who are walking a similar path. This will be a nurturing atmosphere of acceptance, validation, understanding and hope,” she said.

Keynote speakers will include Elizabeth Edwards, bereaved parent and wife of presidential candidate, John Edwards; Bill Hancock, bereaved parent and administrator of the NCAA Bowl Championship Series; Simon Stephens, founder of The Compassionate Friends; Bud Welch, whose daughter was killed in the Oklahoma City Murrah Federal Building bombing; and Doug Manning, author and popular bereavement speaker.

Participants may choose from more than 100 bereavement workshops, including age-appropriate sibling programs for those 9 years old and older. Workshops will deal with a variety of topics related to the death of a child and the journey that follows.

Conference reservations if made before June 15 are $75 for adults and $30 for siblings (9-17) and college students. Reservations made after June 15 are $90 for adults, $45 for siblings and college students.

The eighth annual “Walk to Remember” will also come to Oklahoma City. On Sunday, July 22, conference-goers and others who wish to join them will walk along a two-mile course that will circle the memorial at the former Murrah Federal Building and begin and end at the Cox Center. Walkers will carry the names of children, who, although they have died, are not forgotten.

In conjunction with this conference, a Professional Outreach Day seminar will be held July 19 for nurses, physicians, social workers, counselors, emergency personnel, funeral directors, law enforcement officers, clergy, educators and all who care for individuals or are interested in providing support for bereaved families after the death of a child. Continuing Education Units will be available for many professions. The public is invited to register.

Registration for Professional Outreach Day (POD) is $100 before June 15, $115 thereafter. POD registration entitles attendees to admission to the full three-day conference as well as to Outreach Day.

For more information or to register for the TCF conference, the “Walk to Remember” or Professional Outreach Day, visit TCF’s Web site at www.compassionatefriends.org or call TCF’s national office toll-free at 1-877-969-0010.

TRAILS OF TEARS TO HEALING HEARTS

The Compassionate Friends
30th National Conference
July 20 -22, 2007 • Oklahoma City, OK

In 2007, she was a finalist in the Archdiocesan Catholic Educator of the Year Award. She was also a member of the Oklahoma State Department of Education Idea B Advisory Panel overseeing the special education programs in the state.

During the recent capital campaign project at Bishop McGuinness, a grateful parent donated funds to obtain the naming rights to the REACH classroom. It will forever be known as the Beverly Rogalsky REACH room in honor of Rogalsky.

Rogalsky and her husband, Richard, are members of Saint James Parish. After retiring, they plan to travel and spend time with their four daughters, sons-in-law and five grandchildren. In addition, Rogalsky will act as a consultant in special education, continuing to promote the ideas that she strongly believes in educating youth.
Letters

A Touching Photo

I was especially touched by the picture and accompanying article “The Touch: God Reaches Through Us” by Cher Casso. While so much is written about the sanctity of a baby’s life, and rightly so, it is refreshing to see something that gives testimony to the sanctity of the lives of the elderly.

Isolation is a common experience in caring for the elderly. People say they just aren’t comfortable and can’t come around. Yet, if a person can step out of their comfort zone for just a moment, they just might see more than the deterioration of the body. They may well be surprised to find humor and joy and be blessed to feel the living presence of another, to witness the inner strength of the faithful, to share in the joy of a person’s most precious memories, and the witness the inner strength of the faithful, to share in the joy of a person’s most precious memories, and the hope for a most exciting future. As Christians we are, after all, Resurrection people. How can we not accompany our brothers and sisters as they unite themselves to His and struggle to give birth to their new eternal life in Christ? How can we not want to share in their hope, their vision, their joyful anticipation of a future brighter than any we can imagine? If only for a moment...

I pray there are those who will choose to leave their comfort zones long enough to reach out to another by sending a card, or stopping by for a smile, a touch, a loving embrace, a kind encouraging word, a prayer, or simply to sit with another, hold their hand and offer the gift of listening. In my experience, such gifts are rare treasures, yet they have the power and grace to transform the moment, the day, the lives of the elderly to whom the gift is offered, their caregivers, and just as often (surprisingly perhaps) to the one providing the gift.

Helen Waddle
Oklahoma City

Fill Your Cup

I entered the Retreat in Daily Life program with the notion that I needed to fill my proverbial “cup of life.” The graces offered in the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius helped me to realize that the paradox of my cup of life was that it first needed to be fully emptied of all the clutter that life had poured into it so that God could begin to fill it with the abundant life of Christ that is the way, the truth, and the life.

This spiritual path of emptying and filling has allowed me to discover that the concept of “true self can indeed be encountered in the quiet silence of listening to my Creator. The great I AM has shown me in my prayer and contemplations who and what I AM to be as a member of the Body of Christ. My cup of life is filling, and inherent in that blessing, I am called to fill the world around me with the light of Christ and bear his passionate love into all I do at home, in the Catholic Church and in my community.

If you are searching for a method to improve your prayer life, or trying to discern your place in God’s divine plan, or simply searching for a way to come to know God in a more intimate way, then God is calling you to the Retreat in Daily Life. Come to the quiet of the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius and listen to what God has in store for you!

Jaimee Zorio
Oklahoma City

Across Oklahoma

Little Flower Festival Coming

OKLAHOMA CITY — Little Flower Church, 1125 S. Walker, will host its annual festival June 23-24. This will mark the 73rd anniversary of the festival. We will have many game booths, refreshments, homemade Mexican food, live music and a grand raffle. No admission is charged and everyone is invited.

Summer Course Offered

OKLAHOMA CITY — The Pastoral Ministry Program is offering a special one-week course this summer for anyone in catechetical ministry. Formation and Methodology for Catechists will be of interest and help to anyone in catechesis, whether with children, youth or adults. The course will provide both personal and spiritual development for those in catechetical ministry as well as practical ideas and teaching methods for a variety of age levels. The course will be offered June 18-23 at the Catholic Pastoral Center, taught by Peggy Dooley. We need a minimum of 10 students, as of May 24, there were four enrolled. Lodging and meals are available by arrangement with the Pastoral Center. Cost is $150 plus textbooks for three hours credit; $90 plus textbooks for audit; $75 plus textbooks for continuing education.

To register or for more information, call or e-mail Cecilia Grimes at cgrimes@catharchdioceseokc.org, (405) 721-4208 or (800) 721-5651 Ext. 191.

Contributions needed

The Refugee Resettlement Department at Catholic Charities is in need of furniture donations for several families. Items needed include bed frames and mattresses, dining room tables and chairs and dressers. Contact the Refugee Department at (405) 523-3002 to arrange for pickup of your donations.

Volunteers Needed

Catholic Charities is in need of volunteers to help pick up and deliver donated items in our agency vehicle. If you have a few hours every week to spare, call Debi Wagner at 523-3009 or e-mail dwagner@catholiccharities-ok.org.

A Sinner With A Devotion to the Sacred Heart

I have many holy images in my home. There’s a portrait of the Holy Family, Rembrandt’s Prodigal Son and my favorite, a portrait bearing the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

June is a month the Church dedicates to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Devotion to the Sacred Heart and the Feast of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus is celebrated on June 15. I recently ran across a quote from Pope Pius the XI in which he stated: “We were created by God, the Creator of the universe, in order that we might know Him and serve Him; our Author therefore has a perfect right to our service.” (MORTALIUM ANIMOS. ENCYCLICAL OF POPE PIUS XI ON RELIGIOUS UNITY Jan. 6, 1928)

What better way to love God’s Son, Jesus, and to know Him than through a devotion to His Sacred Heart, a devotion which one could say began at the foot of the Cross with His beloved disciple, John. Recall the scene as recorded in John 19:34-37.

But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness — his testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth — that you also may believe. For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled, “Not a bone of him shall be broken.”

And again another Scripture says, “They shall look on him whom they have pierced.”

That pierced heart of Jesus is the source of God’s mercy and compassion. It is what led our Savior to reach out to Thomas, to free him from his doubt after the Resurrection, “that he may believe.”

I try to go to Confession and attend Mass on the first Friday in honor of the Sacred Heart. I need all the help I can get in getting to heaven. I am a sinner, who depends on God’s Mercy.

EDITOR’S NOTE: Bill Zalot is a freelance writer who lives in Levittown, Pa. Although afflicted with spastic cerebral palsy, he writes extensively for Catholic publications. His columns will appear in The Sooner Catholic from time to time. Zalot can be reached at billzalot@comcast.net
Pope’s Answer Deeper Than Reporter’s Question

Dear Father Tharp,

My daughter and son-in-law are both Catholic. At 18 years old, they wanted to marry, but the priest would not marry them in their parish. They got married in a Methodist church. Other priests told them to go and join in “union” through the courthouse. They both practice the Catholic faith and thus want to make things right since the pope had already said, “the yes” at the beginning of his answer (which might have been a bit of rhetorical throat-clearing, much like someone saying “Well...” had been deleted, as had the references to Mexican bishops. Not altogether reassuringly, Father Lombardi went on to note that this was standard procedure, as the Vatican Secretariat of State “reviews and cleans up” the pope’s remarks “every time the pope speaks off the cuff.”

All of which tended to create, unnecessarily, an image of confusion, vacillation, and, as Vic Simpson put it, a “roll back” of a tough papal stance. In fact, however, there is considerable clarity beneath the surface confusion, and it’s worth noting precisely what’s clear.

First, it is the settled conviction of the following of the Church that facilitating abortion through a vote to legalize or fund the procedure puts that legislator outside the communion of the Church. The pope seems content to leave it to moral theologians to determine precisely how this form of cooperation with grave evil touches on legislators (as distinguished, say, from abortionists). But that a public official’s act in facilitating the “killing of an innocent human baby” is “incompatible with being in communion with the Church” is not in doubt. And if one’s communion with the body of Christ is broken, then one must not present oneself for Holy Communion—so that is to add a lie to the official offense against justice, the taking of an innocent human life.

Second, Benedict’s answer indicates that he will suppress the actions of those bishops who deem it a pastoral necessity to order that politicians in this position of estrangement from the Church not be given Holy Communion. Anyone who expects Pope Benedict to distance himself from the American bishops who have taken this stand is likely to be disappointed.

And third, the pope’s answer suggests that he is prepared to leave the pastoral judgment on these cases to the discretion of the local bishops, who are presumably better informed about the circumstances than he is, and by “circumstances,” I do not mean “balancing” serious (and, some would argue, canonically required) sanctions against wayward politicians with other prudential considerations, but the specific circumstances of Legislator X. All of which is to say that Pope Benedict seems unlikely to issue a universal edict on the subject.

This may well be good ecclesiology and prudent pastoral practice, but it is very difficult to communicate without appearing to vacillate. Thus, it would be helpful if the Holy See would, on some future occasion (and not six months from now) underscore that, a) deliberate legislative facilitation of abortion is a grave evil that puts one outside the communion of the Church and thus renders the reception of Holy Communion a dishonest act, and b) that, when local bishops choose to forbid obstruncte politicians from receiving Holy Communion for this reason, they will receive the full support of the Holy See.

George Weigel is a senior fellow of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C. Weigel’s column is distributed by the Denver Catholic Register, the official newspaper of the Archdiocese of Denver. Phone: (303) 715-3215.

George Weigel

Marriage More About Ability to Commit Than Age

Dear Father Tharp,

My daughter and son-in-law are both Catholic. At 18 years old, they wanted to marry, but the priest would not marry them in their parish. They got married in a Methodist church. Other priests told them to go and join in “union” through the courthouse. They both practice the Catholic faith and thus want to make things right since the pope had already said, “the yes” at the beginning of his answer (which might have been a bit of rhetorical throat-clearing, much like someone saying “Well...” had been deleted, as had the references to Mexican bishops. Not altogether reassuringly, Father Lombardi went on to note that this was standard procedure, as the Vatican Secretariat of State “reviews and cleans up” the pope’s remarks “every time the pope speaks off the cuff.”

All of which tended to create, unnecessarily, an image of confusion, vacillation, and, as Vic Simpson put it, a “roll back” of a tough papal stance. In fact, however, there is considerable clarity beneath the surface confusion, and it’s worth noting precisely what’s clear.

First, it is the settled conviction of the following of the Church that facilitating abortion through a vote to legalize or fund the procedure puts that legislator outside the communion of the Church. The pope seems content to leave it to moral theologians to determine precisely how this form of cooperation with grave evil touches on legislators (as distinguished, say, from abortionists). But that a public official’s act in facilitating the “killing of an innocent human baby” is “incompatible with being in communion with the Church” is not in doubt. And if one’s communion with the body of Christ is broken, then one must not present oneself for Holy Communion—so that is to add a lie to the official offense against justice, the taking of an innocent human life.

Second, Benedict’s answer indicates that he will suppress the actions of those bishops who deem it a pastoral necessity to order that politicians in this position of estrangement from the Church not be given Holy Communion. Anyone who expects Pope Benedict to distance himself from the American bishops who have taken this stand is likely to be disappointed.

And third, the pope’s answer suggests that he is prepared to leave the pastoral judgment on these cases to the discretion of the local bishops, who are presumably better informed about the circumstances than he is, and by “circumstances,” I do not mean “balancing” serious (and, some would argue, canonically required) sanctions against wayward politicians with other prudential considerations, but the specific circumstances of Legislator X. All of which is to say that Pope Benedict seems unlikely to issue a universal edict on the subject.

This may well be good ecclesiology and prudent pastoral practice, but it is very difficult to communicate without appearing to vacillate. Thus, it would be helpful if the Holy See would, on some future occasion (and not six months from now) underscore that, a) deliberate legislative facilitation of abortion is a grave evil that puts one outside the communion of the Church and thus renders the reception of Holy Communion a dishonest act, and b) that, when local bishops choose to forbid obstinate politicians from receiving Holy Communion for this reason, they will receive the full support of the Holy See.

George Weigel is a senior fellow of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C. Weigel’s column is distributed by the Denver Catholic Register, the official newspaper of the Archdiocese of Denver. Phone: (303) 715-3215.

George Weigel

Marriage More About Ability to Commit Than Age

Dear Father Tharp,

My daughter and son-in-law are both Catholic. At 18 years old, they wanted to marry, but the priest would not marry them in their parish. They got married in a Methodist church. Other priests told them to go and join in “union” through the courthouse. They both practice the Catholic faith and thus want to make things right since the pope had already said, “the yes” at the beginning of his answer (which might have been a bit of rhetorical throat-clearing, much like someone saying “Well...” had been deleted, as had the references to Mexican bishops. Not altogether reassuringly, Father Lombardi went on to note that this was standard procedure, as the Vatican Secretariat of State “reviews and cleans up” the pope’s remarks “every time the pope speaks off the cuff.”

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George Weigel
Social Sciences and the Vindication of Catholic Moral Teaching

Question: Dissenters From Humane Vitae Assured Us That Many Benefits Would Come From the Acceptance of Contraception. What do the Social Sciences Tell Us After 35 Years of Widespread Contraception? D.M.

Dear D.M.,

W. Bradford Wilcox wrote an article titled “Social Science and the Vindications of Catholic Moral Teaching.” He notes that some Catholic intellectuals, with substantial public platforms, have pronounced the most compassionate route for the Church is to accommodate her moral teachings to the experience and practice of the people. Law must give way to grace, rules must give way to experience, and the pope must give way to the people.

But there are real problems with this appeal for accommodation. The first problem is that this approach is based on bad social science. The shifts in sexual and familial behavior have been revealed in study after study as social catastrophes. The data has largely vindicated Catholic moral teaching on sex and marriage. The second problem is that moral laxity is most disastrous for the most vulnerable members of our society: the poor. The poor have paid the largest price for the cultural revolution that Andrew Greeley and Richard McBrien and others would like the Church to approve.

George Akerlof is a Nobel Prize-winning economist, and not a conservative. In two articles in leading economic journals, he provides data and advances arguments that vindicate Paul VI’s prophetic warning about the social consequences of contraception for morality and men. He asks why the U.S. witnessed such a dramatic increase of illegitimacy from 1965 to 1990 — from 24 percent to 64 percent among African-Americans, and from 3 percent to 18 percent among whites. What happened?

With the arrival of contraceptives, traditional women could no longer hold the threat of pregnancy over their male partners, either to avoid sex or to elicit a promise of marriage in the event that pregnancy resulted from intercourse. And “modern” women no longer worried about getting pregnant. The sexual revolution left traditional women who wanted to avoid premarital sex or contraception at a disadvantage because they could not compete with women who had no objection to premarital sex or abortion. They could no longer elicit a promise of marriage from boyfriends in the event they got pregnant.

Thus, more of the traditional women ended up having sex and having children out of wedlock, while more of the permissive women ended up having sex and contracting or aborting so as to avoid childbirth. This explains why the contraceptive revolution was associated with both an increase in abortion and illegitimacy.

In a second article, Akerlof argues that another result of the contraceptive revolution was the disappearance of marriage. Contraception and abortion allowed men to put off marriage. Thus, the fraction of young men who were married in the U.S. dropped precipitously. In the 25 years between 1968 and 1993, the percentage of men 25 to 34 who were married with children fell from 66 percent to 40 percent. These young men did not benefit from the domesticating influence of wives and children. Instead, they could continue to hang out with their young male friends, and were more vulnerable to the drinking, partying, tomcatting and worse that is associated with unsupervised groups of young men. Substance abuse and incarceration more than doubled from 1968 to 1998.

The bottom line is this: The research of Nobel Prize-winning George Akerlof suggest that the tragic consequences of the contraceptive revolution were sexual license, family dissolution, crime and poisoned relations between the sexes, and that the poor have paid the heaviest price for this revolution. The research suggests that the Church’s firm commitment to the moral law in the face of widespread and dramatic dissent from within and without is being vindicated in precincs that are not normally seen as sympathetic to Holy Mother Church. This research also suggests that the dissenting agenda by people like Father Andrew Greeley amounts to a false compassion. A sober look at our experience with contraception reveals that it is in fact contraception — not the magisterium — that is not in men, women and children’s best interest.

The entire article can be found in “The Church, Marriage and the Family,” edited by Kenneth Whitehead, St. Augustine Press, 2007, pp. 330-40, or go to www.touchstone-mag.com, click on ARCHIVES. Look on the left side bar and find MOST POPULAR ARTICLES. At the top of the list you will find this article, “The Facts of Life and Marriage.”

Cordially yours,
Father Matthew Habiger, OSB
mhabiger@kansasmonks.org

Dance of Life Created by God, So Hit the Floor

There’s something about warm weather that prompts people to wed. You’ll probably hear wedding bells ringing nearby — a relative, a friend, a neighbor — which means you’re warming up your iron and your dance legs.

And if you tuned into ABC’s “Dancing with the Stars,” you might be feeling a bit unprepared, keenly aware that you lack expert instruction, fake eyelashes, dazzling dresses, spray-on tanner and killer legs.

It’s a daunting endeavor, to hear the wedding bells, to feel a bit unprepared, keenly aware that you lack expert instruction, fake eyelashes, dazzling dresses, spray-on tanner and killer legs.

* The dancer. These are the annoying people who are blessed with that innate gift of rhythm. They embody music in a way that makes sense and looks good.

* The sweater. These people hit the dance floor and suddenly feel incredibly attractive. Every motion is dramatic — the arched eyes, the

sharp head turns, the pelvic thrusts.

* The clapper. Every beat is cause to clap, too. Couples tend to sway side to side: clap to the left, clap to the right, repeat. Soon they’re carried away and they can’t be stopped.

* The jumper. This group’s working on their vertical. Every beat is cause to bounce.

* The sweater. These people look like Steve Nash in the fourth quarter of a playoff game: flushed cheeks, matted hair, shirt drenched in sweat. But they’re having the time of their lives.

* The slow dancer. These people pop up when the music slows down. They had seconds on cake. They’re still feeling it. But they’ll waltz to “Wonderful Life.”

* The interpreter. These people love charades. If there’s a lyric that can be gestured, they’ll do it. This can get pretty advanced. For Tommy Tutone’s "867-5309," they punch the numbers in the air.

* The MTV star. These are the ones who memorize and recreate Beyonce’s hip-hop routine. But without the special effects and talent, it can look like hopscotch gone mad.

* The lyric lover. They know every word to every song played the entire night. Makes you wonder if they listen to the radio in their sleep. Also makes you feel seriously uncool for never having heard half the songs before.

* The chicken dancer. These folks love to flap their elbows. And when the tempo picks up, they scrunch their faces in concentration. They’re determined to keep up. They’re working out old wounds from being picked last for seventh-grade flag football.

Being a young adult feels like standing on the edge of the dance floor. Everyone else seems to know the steps and have momentum. It’s awkward easing in.

But you can’t really dance if you’re watching your feet. And you’ll never have fun if you don’t shake your self-consciousness. So dive in with a sense of humor and a smile. Feel the beat. Do your thing. And don’t look back.

That’s St. Paul’s advice in Colossians 3:23. “Whatever you do, in word or deed, do wholeheartedly.”

It’s Jesus’ first miracle at the Cana wedding, embracing and extending fellowship.

It’s Marty Haugen’s hope in his hymn Gather Us In. “Give us the courage to enter the song.”

And it’s my prayer for the next dance and the next day: that we find courage to enter the song. That, when handed hokey pokey, we shake it all about.

Christina Capecchi is a graduate student at Northwestern University. E-mail her at christinacap@gmail.com.
Comunidad Latinoamericana en Oklahoma

El Papa y el presidente de México hablan sobre emigración

VATICANO (ZENIT.org). — La emigración, la situación de las poblaciones indígenas, y la lucha contra la violencia y el narcotráfico se convirtieron en temas centrales de la audiencia que concedió Benedicto XVI al presidente de México, Felipe de Jesús Calderón Hinojosa.

Tras conversar en privado durante 22 minutos, y en español con el Papa, en su biblioteca privada, Calderón, que visitó por primera vez el Vaticano desde su llegada a la presidencia, el 1 de diciembre de 2006, se encontró con el cardenal Tarcisio Bertone, secretario de Estado, acompañado por el arzobispo Dominique Mamberti, secretario para las relaciones con los Estados.

El presidente de México renovó el obispo de Roma la invitación a visitar su país. En los encuentros del mandatario mexicano con el Papa y sus colaboradores, informaron, una nota publicada por la Oficina de Información de la Santa Sede, “se analizaron ante todo algunos aspectos de la vida” de México, “como la emigración, las poblaciones indígenas, la lucha contra la violencia y el narcotráfico, el ambiente”.

“Se habló además de la situación de la Iglesia católica, considerando sobre todo los significativos pasos, ya realizados o que hay que realizar en las relaciones con el Estado”, añade la nota vaticana.

En los encuentros, definidos por la Santa Sede como “cordiales”, tuvo lugar además “un intercambio de opiniones sobre temas relativos a la situación actual internacional”, prestando atención especial a la inminente Cumbre del G-8, en la que el presidente Calderón participará como invitado especial”.

El presidente llegó acompañado de su esposa, Margarita Zavala, y de sus tres hijos Marta, Luis Felipe y Juan Pablo.

En el momento del intercambio de dones, el presidente mexicano le regaló al Santo Padre dos candeleras de cera del artesano indígena de Michoacán y una fotografía de cuando Calderón asumió la presidencia, acompañado por su familia. El pontífice, por su parte, le regaló las medallas de su pontificado.

Exhortación de Santa Marta Eugenia de Jesús

La gran transmisión de valores evangélicos a los jóvenes

VATICANO (ZENIT.org). — “Que el ejemplo de Santa Marta Eugenia inspire a los hombres y a las mujeres de hoy a transmitir a los jóvenes los valores que les ayuden a convertirse en adultos fuertes y testigos alegres de la Resurrección”: es el deseo que ha expresado Benedicto XVI este domingo al inscribir en el catálogo de los santos a la religiosa francesa.

En realidad en el seno de una familia acomodada Marta Eugenia de Jesús (Anne-Eugénie Millereit de Brum [1817-1898]) no recibió formación religiosa, pero fue educada en el sentido del deber, de la responsabilidad y de la rectitud, según relatado antes del rito de canonización - el prelato de la Congregación vaticana para las Causas de los Santos, el cardenal José SaraivaMartins.

Cuando el desastre económico cayó sobre su familia, los padres se separaron y Ana Eugenia siguió a su madre a París, pero en poco tiempo esta murió. Tenía 16 años y fue confiada por su padre a una familia rica y modesta. En esta situación, apuntó el púlpito -la luz de la fe comenzó a abrirse camino en su vida de joven, que se convirtió radicalmente al Evangelio después de haber seguido la predicación del padre Lecordier.

Junto al padre Combatot, fundó la Congregación de las Hermanas de la Arzobispo de la Santa Virgen María con el objetivo de transformar la sociedad a través de la evangelización de las inteligencias y la armonización entre fe y cultura.

El Instituto se difundió rápidamente bajo la guía de la fundadora, pero fue la guerra, y en la que falló. La guerra herida en 1917, fundó en 1957. Durante su vida la nueva santa había percibido notablemente - recordó el Papa, tras canónizarla - la importancia de transmitir a las jóvenes generaciones una notable formación intelectual, moral y espiritual que hiciera de ellas adultos capaces de hacerse cargo de sus familias, sabiendo aportar su contribución a la Iglesia y a la sociedad.

“A lo largo de toda tu vida halló la fortaleza para su misión en una vida de oración, asociado a interrupciones de contemplación y acción”, subrayó Benedicto XVI.

Actualmente las religiosas de la Arzobispo están presentes en 34 países: 8 en Europa, 5 en Asia, 10 en América y 11 en África. Las religiosas, unas 1200, forman 170 comunidades a través del mundo.

Llama la Asunción de “Unión Juntos”, formada por Amigos de la Asunción o Comunidades o Fraternidades de la Asunción, es numerosa: reside a miles de Amigos y algunos centenares de laicos comprometidos según el Camino de Vida.

A ellos se dirigió especialmente el Papa, a finalizar la Eucaristía, cuando dirigió sus saludos en varios idiomas - entre ellos a los muchos peregrinos de lengua francesa – antes de rezar el Ángelus.

“Saludos cordialmente a los peregrinos de España y Latinoamérica, especialmente a los numerosos fieles de México y miembros del grupo "Asunción Juntos", que han participado en la canonización de la Madre María Eugenia de Jesús", dijo en español entre aplausos de los peregrinos.

“Que el ejemplo de la nueva Santa Fundadora de las Religiosas de la Asunción, os ayude a centrar vuestra vida espiritual en Cristo y en el misterio de la Encarnación, y os impulse a un decidido y valiente compromiso apostólico, transmitiendo los valores evangélicos a la cultura actual, particularmente a través de la educación de los más jóvenes”, exhortó. En el ofertorio, durante la solemne Eucaristía, participó Risa, la niña filipina curada de una malformación cerebral extremadamente incapacitadora por intercesión de la nueva santa, milagro que abrió las puertas a esta canonización.

Por el Norte de África

Evangélicaización con la buena presencia amorosa y orante

ROMA (ZENIT.org).—La Iglesia, mediante su presencia y su amor, testimonio en África del Norte el amor de Dios hacia todas las personas y todos los pueblos: por esta necesidad pide oración Benedicto XVI.

Se contiene así en la intención general - para el mes de junio - que el Santo Padre ha confiado a “Apostolado de la oración”, (AOP, http://www.adp.it/intenzioni/intenzionisp.html), al que se unen 50 mil personas de los cinco continentes.

Dar testimonio de la amorosa paternidad de Dios en la "mauro región del Norte de África" es una tarea bastante difícil en esa parte del planeta, reconoce el padre Vito del Prete, secretario general de la Pontificia Unión Missional del Clero - una de las Obras Misionales Pontificias -. Y es que allá tanto guerra, terrorismo, hambre, emigra...
La legislación 1804 es contradictoria a las enseñanzas cristianas

Aferma el Vicario General Edward J. Weisenburger

Nota del editor hispano: El siguiente texto es la traducción al español del petitorio que hizo el Vicario General Edward J. Weisenburger al gobernador para que vetara la propuesta de ley antinmigrante. A pesar de miles de llamados y rogatorias, el gobernador de Oklahoma, Brad Henry, firmó la propuesta y la convirtió en ley. La polémica legislación entrará en vigencia a partir del primero de noviembre del presente año.

"El siguiente es un estudio y una consideración sobre la propuesta de ley 1804, aunque no ayude mucho, sirve para alertar lo grave y lo contradictorio de esta legislación con respecto a las enseñanzas y prácticas cristianas.

El Evangelio de Jesús no simplemente nos invita a socorrer y asistir a los enfermos, a los encadenados, a los expulsados, a los refugiados y a los marginados. El Evangelio solicita y nos demanda que hagamos ésto en el nombre del Señor. Hemos sido llamados y urgidos para auxiliar a los más necesitados sin importar la raza, religión o estado migratorio, tal como es el caso que tenemos a mano. ¡Si la propuesta 1804 se convierte en ley, entonces, no será simplemente un delito menor para un inmigrante, para un niño o una persona voluntaria, el hecho de transportar a un refugiado a una mujer inmigrante. Aquel de nosotros que no la hubiera destinado a una víctima de violencia doméstica, será más bien un acto criminal severo! En esa propuesta de ley hay otras actividades que son criminalizadas de la misma manera. Pareciera que lo que presenta la propuesta 1804 como única alternativa para los inmigrantes, los religiosos y voluntarios, antes de prestar ayuda, es verificar el estado migratorio de las personas que se acercan a nosotros en estado urgente.

Padre Edward J. Weisenburger, del Seminario de Westin, en el que se especifica la necesidad de esta indagación, que se requiere es contradictoria a los valores de nuestro evangelio, más bien, es una desesperada e irreal expectación hacia las personas que no han recibido un debido trato en nuestras iglesias. El odio y el abandono de las demandas de Dios para con su pueblo. Pero para engañar y ser fías de su Dios, sin importar las consecuencias, ellos dijeron la verdad y caminaron en el sentido de su Dios. Yo estoy seguro de que la mayoría de los sacerdotes, los ministros ladrones, los voluntarios de la Iglesia Católica Apostólica Romana no se acobardarán por las amenazas de esta pesada legislación. Sí, está es así, entonces, seremos proféticos con la continuación de la vida del Evangelio de Jesús. Ayudaremos a los más necesitados, para lo tanto, seguiremos transportando a la mujer abusada a los refugiados sin importar su estado migratorio. Igualmente, continuaremos transportando a los hambrientos, incluyendo a los niños y recién nacidos, para alimentarlos y darles refugio. Y si somos forzados a hacerlo, entonces, seremos proféticos que aceptaremos las consecuencias de la persecución de nuestro gobierno por defender esta enseñanza cristiana.

Más allá de nuestras creencias religiosas, la propuesta 1804, lleva a muchas personas de diferentes pensamientos, religión y ética a ver esta legislación como un mal. La propuesta acepta numerosas alegaciones como verdad pero en realidad son mitos. Por ejemplo, esta propuesta alega que las personas indocumentadas reciben millones de dólares en beneficios provisionales del gobierno. Howard Hendrick, quien es director del Departamento de Servicios Humanos de Oklahoma, aseguró que eso es falso.

La legislación también indica que las personas indocumentadas están conectadas con el crimen. Un oficial del Departamento de Correcciones de Oklahoma declaró que menos del dos por ciento de la población carcelaria de Oklahoma que ha cometido crímenes violentos son indocumentados. También, la propuesta 1804 prevee que las personas indocumentadas no obtendrán licencias de conducir. La verdad es que actualmente ellos no tienen derecho, de acuerdo a Department of Security Público de Oklahoma ya se verifica el estatus migratorio antes de otorgar una licencia de conducir. Si existiera documentación forjada en manos de personas indocumentadas, esta no proviene de ninguna agencia del estado de Oklahoma. ¡Una razón más para decir que esta propuesta no soluciona el tráfico de documentos falsos!

Esta legislación lo que hace es colocar a las personas indocumentadas en una difícil situación de supervivencia y pone al gobierno local y sus policías en una dura circunstancia, porque no tienen los recursos y el tiempo para actuar como agentes federales de policía de inmigración.

Ultimamente, la propuesta 1804 como un elemento que ya están establecido en la Ley Federal. No hay necesidad de repetir una ley. Esta propuesta tiene un lenguaje inflamatorio y punitivo en contra de los inmigrantes. Las obligaciones como estas que realizan el gobierno han agotado todos los recursos de los que carece el desarrollo de esta propuesta. Nuestras agencias gubernamentales estarán sobrecargadas de trabajo. Esta legislación es una intimidación en contra de miles de personas de Fe quienes desean vivir su compromiso con el Evangelio. Esta legislación se subordinó a la equivocación y al temor.

A pesar de la popularidad o consecuencias, la única respuesta legítima y más importante del estado de Oklahoma es un firme veto.

Suministro respetuoso atinente, Padre Edward J. Weisenburger, Vicario General de la Arquidiócesis de Oklahoma City.

Explica el Papa Benedicto XVI

La no violencia, regla de vida del cristiano

VATICANO, (ZENIT.org). — Benedicto XVI propuso la "no violencia" como regla de vida para el cristiano, manifestación del triunfo del Espíritu.

Llegó a esta conclusión en la audiencia general que la presentó en Turín. Llamó a los católicos, los protestantes, los judíos, los musulmanes y a todos los demás, a la protección de la vida, a la no violencia, a la no agresión, a la no autodefensa, a la no imposición de la ley en el mundo.

En su discurso, el Papa, "explicó y defendió las enseñanzas y las costumbres de los cristianos: se refiere a los antiguos textos de los hechos de la vida del hombre, que fue el triunfo del Espíritu, que opone a la violencia de los perseguidores a la paz, la libertad y la paz de los mártires". Por más que sea refutada, su crueldad no tiene evidencia de nada: "es más, para nuestra comunidad constituye un invitación", escribió el autor africano.

"Después de cada uno de nuestros golpes de hacha, nos hacemos más numerosos: ¡la sangre de los cristianos es semilla eficaz!", añadió con una frase que pasaría a la historia. "Al final -constató el Papa-, veo el martirio y el sufrimiento y son más eficaces que la crueldad y la violencia de los regímenes totalitarios".

"El cristiano no puede olvidar ni subestimar sus propios enemigos", decía Tertuliano.

Con esta frase, el Obispo de Roma volvió a presentar la "consagración moral ineludible de la opción de fe que propone la 'no violencia' como regla de vida". "Y no es posible dejar de ver la dramática actualidad de esta enseñanza, a la luz del encendido debate sobre las religiones", añadió el pontífice.
Administrative Assistant Catholic Charities seeks a bilingual administrative assistant for a new position in the Family Support Services Office. Must possess computer proficiency, including word processing, database management and Excel, organizational skills and ability to multi-task, excellent typing skills, positive communication skills and the ability to professionally interact with staff, volunteers and the public. Send cover letter, resume and salary history to Human Resources, 1501 N. Classen Blvd., OKC 73106 or nlargent@catholiccharitiesok.org. EOE

Coordinator, Case Management Catholic Charities is seeking a licensed social worker with a clinical specialty to supervise the case management staff in our Family HOPE and Transitional Housing programs. Supervises direct services to clients. Works with all programs to develop respectful relationships with persons served while helping clients gain skills and confidence. Catholic Charities is an equal opportunity employer offering competitive benefits and a support work environment with opportunities to grow and develop professionally and personally. Send cover letter, resume and salary history to Human Resources, 1501 N. Classen Blvd., OKC 73106 or nlargent@catholiccharitiesok.org.

DRE/Youth Director St. Gregory the Great Parish in Enid is seeking an energetic director of Religious Education/youth director for approximately 25 hours a week. Enthusiasm for children a must. Send resume to St. Gregory Parish, 1924 W. Willow, Enid 73703.

Full-Time Maintenance Holy Trinity Church and School in Okarche has a full-time opening for a custodian/maintenance person. Pay and benefits competitive. Call Holy Trinity School at (405) 263-4422 or Deacon Schwarz at (405) 263-4760.

Part-Time Teachers St. John Nepomuk Catholic School in Yukon is accepting applications for a part-time vocal music teacher and a part-time middle school math teacher (qualified to teach pre-algebra and algebra) for the 2007-2008 school year. Must be certified by the state of Oklahoma. Send a resume and copy of teaching certificate to Diane Floyd at 600 Garth Brook Blvd., Yukon, OK 73099, or call (405) 354-2509 for more information.

Part-time Reading Specialist Sacred Heart OKC has an opening for a part-time reading specialist for the 2007-2008 school year. Applicant must be certified in reading and special education is preferred. Send resume to Joan Camacho, Sacred Heart, 2700 S. Hartlet, OKC 73109.

Elementary Teacher Openings St. Mary’s Catholic School, Guthrie, is accepting applications for employment for the 2007-2008 school year. Candidates must be certified by the state of Oklahoma and possess a degree in early childhood or elementary education. If interested, send resume and copy of teaching certificate to Sheila Whalen-Guthrie, 502 E. Warner, Guthrie 73044 or call (405) 282-2071 for more information.

Elementary Teacher Openings Holy Trinity Catholic School in Okarche is accepting applications for elementary and early childhood teachers for the 2007-08 school year. Submit resume and copy of teaching certificate to Mary Jane Wittrock, P.O. Box 485, Okarche 73762, fax (405) 263-9753 or e-mail mjwittrock@holytrinity-ok.org.

Elementary Teacher Openings Saint Mary’s School, Ponce City, is accepting applications for employment for the 2007-2008 school year. Openings include early childhood teacher, part-time pre-algebra/algebra teacher and part-time vocal music teacher. Early childhood certification or subject endorsements required. If interested, send resume and copy of teaching certificate to Shirley Zinn at 415 S. Seventh, Ponce City 74601 or call (580) 765-4387 for more information.

First-Grade Teacher Villa Teresa Catholic School is accepting applications for a first-grade teacher. Candidate must be certified by the state of Oklahoma and possess a degree in early childhood or elementary education. Also available is an opening for a teacher for 3-year-olds. An associate degree or CDA is required. Send resumes to Sister Veronica Higgins, 1216 Classen Drive, OKC 73103, or call for an interview, 232-4286.

Teacher Sought Sacred Heart Catholic School in El Reno is accepting applications for a combined fifth- and sixth-grade teacher. Oklahoma elementary certification. Strong math skills desired. Submit applications to Sacred Heart Catholic School, 210 S. Evans, El Reno, OK, 73036, fax (405) 262-2284, Attention Shannon Statton.

Pre-Kindergarten Teacher All Saints Catholic School in Norman is seeking a full-time pre-kindergarten teacher for the 2007-08 school year. Applicants must hold Oklahoma certification in early childhood education. Send resume and attention to Leslie Schmitt, Principal, at 4001 36th Avenue, N.W., Norman, Okla. 73072, or fax to (405) 447-7227.

High School Coaches/Teachers Mount St. Mary Catholic HS (Oklahoma City) is accepting applications for the following positions for the 2007-08 school year: assistant football coach, French teacher and social studies teacher (U.S. history, government/economics/world history). Experience in Pre-AP and AP preferred but not required. Send resume, letter of interest, copy of teaching certificate and references to Talita DeNegri, Mount St. Mary HS, 2801 S. Hartlet, OKC 73109, fax (405) 631-9209. For more information, call 405-631-8865 or e-mail tdenegri@mountstmary.org.

Cafeteria Manager Mount St. Mary High School is seeking a full-time cafeteria manager for the 2007-08 school year. Must be familiar with the DHS Commodity Distribution and U.S. Federal Food Program. For more information, contact Talita DeNegri at 631-8865.

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"If you have never been taught to be a parent, you do not know that it is important to meet with your son, Billy's teacher. You [the biological mother] go with the foster parent to meet the teacher. You have also never been taught what kinds of questions to ask the teacher about your child. You listen to how the foster parent questions the teacher about Billy, and you learn.

"Or perhaps you are a teenage mother who has had your baby removed from the home because you lack parenting and home skills. The foster parent could teach you skills to you, such as how to bathe your baby. The foster parents and the biological parents would work together as a team to help the child, with reunification of the family as the goal," Carpenter said.

Williams said if a conflict arises, DHS will step in immediately. “If there is a conflict between the biological family and the foster family, we work it out,” Carpenter said. "The Hispanic population in Oklahoma has doubled in the last 10 years." When a foster child reaches the age of 18, he or she is said to have “aged out” of foster care. In most states, this means that DHS is no longer responsible for the child and that they must leave foster care. This often means that former foster children are out on the streets: alone, penniless and homeless.

"Oklahoma is one of the few states that helps foster children who are forced to leave their foster homes. In Oklahoma, there is an Independent Living Program. When the foster child reaches 16 to 17 years of age, they are assigned an Independent Living Worker, who works with them to help them transition into a successful adult," Williams said. "If former foster children do not feel that they can function on their own yet, they can assign themselves back into DHS custody," she continued. "This means that the foster children have 'aged-out' but have recognized that they still need someone to help them. DHS helps them find a job or go to vo-tech or get grants to go to college. The child has a choice."
11 The Catholic Foundation Golf Classic at Twin Hills Golf and Country Club in Oklahoma City. To learn more about the Catholic Schools Endowment or participate in the golf classic, contact Tom Casso at the Catholic Foundation of Oklahoma Inc. at (405) 721-4115 or tcasso@ceatharchdioceseokc.org.

15-17 Healing the Child Within, Friday, 7 p.m. to Sunday, 1 p.m. Jeanette Bollman and Marie Ballmann, OSB. Here is a chance to come away to a safe place to begin healing the wounds of your childhood. Feel the healing touch of Jesus on this sacred journey with your inner child. Red Plains Monastery: Fee: $125 residential, $75 commuter. Full cost must be paid by June 10. Call 373-4739 to register.

16 Basket “Weaving” Relationships, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Barbara Duer, a basket weaver of 12 years, will lead this workshop utilizing basket weaving as a method to develop nurturing and healing relationships and experience the resulting inner peace. No weaving experience needed. Fee: $45, all materials are provided. Mail in check to reserve your place. Bring a sack lunch. Call 373-4739 to register. Come to the red art barn at Red Plains Monastery. Limit 15.

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

17 The Community of the Secular Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mt. Carmel and St. Teresa of Jesus - Oklahoma Community and Province of St. Therese meets at St. Joseph Carmelite Monastery in Piedmont from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, call Janet Mildfelt at (405) 848-6275 or Deacon Jim Breazile at (405) 377-9478.

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

23 Little Flower Festival, Little Flower Church, 1125 S. Walker, will host its annual festival. We will have many game booths, refreshments, homemade Mexican food (tamales, gorditas, fajitas, etc.), live music and a grand raffle. No admission is charged and everyone is invited.

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

25-29 Saint James the Greater Parish, OKC, is having vacation Bible School from 10 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. To register any child ages 4-10 years old, please call Christina Mendoza at 636-6840. Registration is $15 per child (includes T-shirt).

30 The Knights of Columbus will host the Catholic Family Golf Tournament at the Bruelh Memorial Golf Course in Purcell. $75 entry fee includes golf, one-half cart, range balls, lunch and beverages. First-, second- and third-place merchandise prizes and closest to the hole on all par 3’s prizes. So bring the family and come on down. This four-person scramble starting at 8 a.m is for everyone.

30 Living With Imperfections: Ours and Others, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Who demands perfection? Is it God? Or is it you? Learn how to live lovingly with who you are. Presenter: Sister Melissa Anna Letts, OSB, at Red Plains Monastery. Call 373-4739 to register. Bring a sack lunch. Fee: Mail in $35 to reserve your place.

28 Bingo at St. James Catholic Church, 4201 S. McKinley. Food and beverages, reasonably priced, will be served at 6 p.m. Bingo begins at 6:30 p.m. All games including two blackouts $10. Door prizes and special recognition for all players born in June. All bingo players get an entry for a 27-inch flat screen TV to be given away at the October bingo. So come on down and make it a party.

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Children of Oklahoma

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Foster parents are reimbursed for the expenses they incur in caring for children in the state’s care. Foster parents are reimbursed for their foster child’s daily living needs: for clothes, food, shampoo, conditioner, toothpaste, etc.

The average reimbursement is $300 to $450 a month, depending on the age of the child, the younger the child, the less the amount. The $300 to $450 figure can change based on the cost of living, Carpenter said.

The average length of stay for children in foster care is 20.7 months, but the length of time a foster parent agrees to care for a foster child varies. “It depends on the foster parents and their situation. We would agree to whatever the foster parents want, whatever they feel comfortable with,” Williams said. “We also have arrangements if there is an emergency in the family. If the foster family has an emergency, they can ask for ‘respite foster parents’ to take over for them a short time.”

“Respite foster parents are couples who take foster children for two to three days in an emergency situation. We always need respite foster parents as well as regular foster parents,” Carpenter said.

Foster parents can choose the age and gender of the child they would be willing to take into their home. The average age of a child in foster care is 8.1 years.

To help foster parents decide which waiting child they should choose, they receive a checklist of what they would or would not be willing to accept in a child. The checklist asks questions like “Will you accept a child who has temper tantrums?” “Will you accept a child who steals?” “A child with diabetes?” “A child with special needs?” “Will you accept siblings?” The foster parent’s answers to these questions help DHS select the unplaced foster child who will be best suited to that foster parent’s home.

The DHS workers said the shelter where the unplaced foster children find themselves is safe and clean and run by caring and responsible adults, but it is not a family environment, and a family environment is what DHS is seeking for each of these children. They want foster children to have as normal a setting as possible in which to grow and heal, and placement with a healthy, wholesome foster family is what will help these young people the most.

DHS is looking for two-parent households to be foster parents, but if you are single, they need single foster parents as well. “Single people can become foster parents. They need to be at least 21 years old, have a sufficient income, have a clean house and have sufficient bedrooms and beds for additional children,” Williams said.

“If you call, you will be assigned a foster care recruiter,” Williams said. “The recruiter will call you back and answer all your questions. Then, after this initial call, you will have to fill out a lengthy questionnaire, the DHS application. If, after that, you are still interested in becoming a foster parent, we will schedule a one-on-one with you and your family. We will go to your home.”

You will also need to provide certain documents to DHS, such things as reference checks, medical exam reports, etc. Your foster care specialist will let you know what is required, Williams said.

“If you pass the home visit, you will then go through 27 hours of training to prepare you to take care of a child who has been taken from a home where he or she has been neglected, subjected to a drug environment or physically or sexually abused,” Carpenter said.

“This is 21 hours of specialized training in how to care for traumatized children. DHS also has people on staff to help foster parents if the children in their care are having particular problems. Foster parents are never on their own. They each have a foster care manager assigned to them. This person helps them with any problems,” Williams said.

“Also, each foster child has a professional counselor or the child has home-based counseling, depending on the needs of the child,” Carpenter said.

Thinking of Becoming a Foster Parent?

To become a foster parent is a lengthy process. The time it takes gives prospective foster parents the opportunity to get their questions answered and to decide what they want to do.

To find out more about becoming a foster parent and a hero to a child, call Oklahoma Statewide Foster Care Recruitment at 1-800-376-9729 or Rita Williams at (405) 767-2657 or Mark Carpenter at (405) 767-2994.
OKLAHOMA CITY — If Oklahoma Catholics are looking for an interesting day trip over the lazy days of summer, they might consider a visit to the Heritage Room at the Catholic Pastoral Center.

The Heritage Room is open from Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Special group tours after hours can be arranged by calling the Pastoral Center at (405) 721-5651.

Jim Weinmann, Heritage Room director, said exhibits are changed every so often so even if someone has visited once they may want to return.

“The focus this past year has been on Bishop McGuinness,” Weinmann said. Other exhibits currently on display include the Sisters of Mercy, the late Father John Walch as well as the parishes of Saint Mary in Guthrie and Saint John in Edmond.

Weinmann said the Heritage Room is interested in acquiring more photos and memorabilia from individual Catholics and parishes throughout the archdiocese. He encouraged those with copies of original photos related to parishes and the Catholic faith to get in touch with him.

“We’re interested in the Catholic heritage of Oklahoma,” Weinmann said. He said that interest includes parishes and schools that have closed.

“We want to gather and preserve as much history as possible so it can be available for future generations.”

Residents from Saint Ann Retirement Center recently visited the Heritage Room at the Catholic Pastoral Center. The group consisted of, left to right, Margo Cowden, Gertrude Alcock, Faye Erickson, Connie Cronin, Richard Amend, spiritual director at Saint Ann, Sara Starnes, Cynthia Fuller and Rose Mary Wisk.

Some of the exhibits in the Heritage Room include, above, items from the Peruvian parish that is sister parish to Saint John the Baptist Catholic Church in Edmond. Above right, a photo of the Sisters of Mercy outside Mount Saint Mary High School and at right, vestments and altar pieces from Saint Mary Church in Guthrie.