Carmelite Sisters of Saint Therese Celebrate Ninety Years of Ministry in Oklahoma

By Eileen Dugan  
*The Sooner Catholic*

OKLAHOMA CITY — The first Carmelites were hermits who lived in caves on Mount Carmel, almost 2,000 years ago. They lived a contemplative life but would sometimes come down from their mountain caves to minister to the spiritual needs of the people in the valley below. During the Crusades when Christians were being massacred in the Holy Land, the Carmelites left Mount Carmel for Europe. Eventually, their order spread throughout the world. By the time they reached Oklahoma, Carmelite Sisters were anything but hermits. For close to 100 years, these faith-filled Sisters have been fully engaged in numerous ministries throughout Oklahoma. From educating children to assisting the homeless, the sick and broken-hearted, the Carmelite Sisters of Saint Therese have played an incredible role in helping to establish deep Catholic roots in this once rugged land.

Sister Immaculata is the librarian and archivist for the Carmelite Sisters of Saint Therese at Villa Teresa in Oklahoma City. She spoke recently with the Sooner Catholic about the history of her order on the occasion of its 90th anniversary in Oklahoma.

The Carmelite order was started by the spiritual followers of Elijah, the prophet, who lived on Mount Carmel in Biblical times in what is now Israel, Sister Immaculata said. A new Oklahoma branch of the Carmelites, at first known as The Companions of the Little Flower, began in the town of Bentley, on July 16, 1917. It was the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, and the Superior General of the Discalced Carmelites in Rome gave permission for three lay women catechists in Bentley to wear a habit similar to that of cloistered Carmelite nuns.

“The motto of the Carmelites of Saint Therese is a quote from Saint Therese, ‘I have come to Carmel to save souls and to pray for priests,’” Sister Immaculata continued. “The Carmelites of Saint Therese were founded to provide an education for children who were not provided with an education by the state.”

“Our founder was Father Edward Soler, O.C.D., a Spanish Discalced Carmelite. The Discalced Carmelites are known as ‘Barefoot Carmelites’ because they are poor and minister to the poor,” Sister said.

continued on page 11
My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

The Most Blessed Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is a great gift from God. It is a perfect act of thanksgiving. Jesus offers Himself to the Almighty Father in thanksgiving. He offers Himself to us in love. “Take My Flesh and eat It. Take My Blood and drink It and you shall have life everlasting.” Therefore, our coming together today to celebrate this Eucharist unites us with Jesus and enables us to give thanks to God in a most perfect way.

The Eucharistic gratitude we celebrate and share focuses on love and includes all our brothers and sisters. Remember always that Jesus Himself taught us that the love we have for God can never exclude the love we should have for our brothers and sisters. Love of God and love of neighbor go hand in hand. It is the love of God that gathers us here today as brothers and sisters. Thus how appropriate it is that we celebrate this Eucharist with faith, love, gratitude and joy.

In that spirit of joy, I congratulate you, the people of Little Flower Parish. I am very proud of you and grateful for what you have accomplished.

In the days and the weeks and the years ahead, you will frequently enter this beautiful Centro Guadalupano. Here you will enjoy the fellowship of families and friends. Here you and your children can study and learn more about our Catholic faith. Through these activities and classes, each of you can better appreciate the many gifts of life and faith that Jesus has for us. Therefore, we are especially grateful that your Centro Guadalupano has this beautiful altar and tabernacle so that you can celebrate many of your Sunday and holy day Masses here.

This is indeed a Sacred Place which we bless and dedicate today. But before I proceed, I wish once again to thank everyone here for the vibrancy of your faith. Thank you for your generosity and commitment to build this Centro Guadalupano. Also, I express a word of gratitude to the Carmelite Fathers and brothers who have faithfully and zealously served this parish for 86 years. And a very, very special thank you to Father Genaro de la Cruz, whose vision, dedication and hard work made the Centro Guadalupano a reality. Thanks to all and God bless you.

Therefore, our coming together today to celebrate and share focuses on love and includes all our brothers and sisters.

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Anadarko Hosts Bishop From India

By Carol J. Swindell
St. Patrick Church-Anadarko

ANADARKO — The bishop of the Diocese of Nellore, Most Reverend Moses D. Prakasam, was welcomed by Saint Patrick Catholic Church here on July 5. Bishop Prakasam was in Oklahoma to visit the priests of his diocese who are serving here. This diocese has generously offered 27 priests assigned to stations outside of the country, most of whom are in the United States.

Nellore is located in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh and is one of 12 dioceses in the state. The state is located on the southern coast of India.

A Nellore diocesan priest, Father Stanislaus Samenini, is currently serving in pastoral ministry at Saint Patrick in Anadarko, Our Lady of the Rosary in Binger and Saint Richard in Carnegie.

Bishop Prakasam was consecrated in 2002 for the Diocese of Cuddaph, a neighboring diocese. He was transferred to Nellore, and installed as the bishop of the diocese in January 2007.

Bishop Prakasam as primary Celebrant offered the evening Mass for the parish communities and their intentions. Concelebrants were Father Samenini, Father Rayanna Pudota of Sacred Heart Church in Oklahoma City and Father Prabhakar Kalivela, newly assigned pastor of Saint Helen Church in Fredrick. In his homily he outlined the work of his diocese in encouraging education through schools, free homes for lepers and for handicapped children which he called “faith in action.” He also expressed his “privilege to be in this great nation.”

The evening visit concluded with a potluck supper hosted by Saint Patrick Church.

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Hear It Now

Dr. Dave Wagie, the new president of Saint Gregory’s University, is featured in the latest Sooner Catholic podcast. Listeners will hear Dr. Wagie explain what drew him and his wife to SGU, as well as his plans for meeting alumni and recruiting new students to both the Shawnee campus as well as the school’s adult education program in Tulsa. Also in the podcast, Wagie discusses his long-range plans for Saint Greg’s in terms of educational programs as well as physical improvements he hopes to make to the campus. To hear the podcast, go to www.catharchdioceseokc.org, then click on Sooner Catholic and finally click on the podcast button.

Sooner Catholic on World Wide Web

You can now read the entire Sooner Catholic newspaper on the Internet. Just go to the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City Web site at www.catharchdioceseokc.org and then click on Sooner Catholic. It’s that easy.

You’ll even find past issues of the Sooner Catholic. Just click on the button that says “Past Web Issues” and entire issues starting with the April 15 Sooner Catholic will be at your fingertips. This will allow readers to look up articles that have been published in previous issues of the archdiocesan newspaper.

We hope you enjoy reading your archdiocesan newspaper on the Internet and find it a convenient way to keep up with what’s going on in your local Catholic community. You will still receive the Sooner Catholic through the mail twice a month, but now you will have another way to access the Sooner Catholic.
A Special Place in Heaven: Black Americans and School Choice

By Patrick B. McGuigan

Debates about school choice tend to bring out the best, and the worst, in politicians. An example of the worst would be the former chairman of the Colorado state House education committee, Rep. Mike Merrifield. In an e-mail he wrote, “There must be a special place in hell for these Privatizers, Charterizers and Voucherizers.” For emphasis, he added, “They deserve it!”

In Oklahoma, the public debate about school choice is usually civil, but opponents of charter schools and broader forms of choice are determined. This past legislative session, a proposal to allow more diverse charter school sponsorship was debated for hours, with black state Rep. Mike Shelton of Oklahoma City emerging as a leading foe.

On the other side stood Tulsa state Rep. Jabar Shumate, also a black Democrat. Shelton and Shumate had several exchanges on the merits, the former on the attack, the latter in respectful defense. Shelton opposed the bill through the end. But he also gave a gracious introduction to charter school students and patrons, many of them his constituents, seated in the state House gallery during the debate.

For his part, Shumate was quietly insistent on the merits of charter schools, saying they are “having a strong positive impact on the lives of students and families in the greater Tulsa community.” He told colleagues his constituents “tell me they want more and better options for their children’s education.”

Relatively quiet that day was state Rep. Anastasia Pittman, a black Oklahoma City Democrat whose own child attends an eastside charter school. She supported Shumate on a procedural vote early in the debate, but opposed final passage. Merits aside, the whole thing was interesting political theater.

In the end, a Senate version of the measure passed. One of the advocates in the upper chamber was Sen. Jody Eason McIntyre of Tulsa, also black and a Democrat. She said charters represent “a breath of fresh air in Oklahoma communities where parents desire a stronger education for their children.”

Gov. Brad Henry signed the bill. Republican House Speaker Lance Cargill predicted, “The greatest civil rights and social justice issue of the 21st century will be access to a quality education.”

The alliance of black Democrats McIntyre and Shumate with white Republicans like Cargill and House education committee chairman Ted Jones of Claremore is not unique, but nonetheless notable. It is illustrative of a trend in willingness among a younger generation of black politicians to risk the ire of a lethargic education establishment.

Black politicians, and all politicians, have less to fear from the issue than they did 30 years ago. Today, support for school choice is consistently high among blacks. In various polls, it ranges from 57 percent to more than three-fourths of those surveyed. It’s no wonder, as Americans of all races pay attention to the real-world results of choice.

In east Oklahoma City, charter advocate Tracy McDaniel runs the KIPP (Knowledge is Power Program) School, and is regularly praised for the equivalent of educational miracles in the lives of poor children. His performance with the poorest of the poor is one factor behind the surge for greater choice in Oklahoma. The KIPP concept is thriving across the nation, and many KIPP sites are charter schools.

KIPP isn’t the only Oklahoma City success story. In May, Western Village Academy, the state’s first charter school, was named one of the 53 National Charter Schools of the Year. There are now 4,000 tax-financed charter schools in America.

The political debate over the greatest civil rights victory of school choice is eroding. In 2004, Congress enacted the D.C. voucher plan with the support of then-Mayor Anthony Williams. Like most of his constituents, Williams is black, but had the critical support of congressional leaders in both parties, including California Sen. Diane Feinstein and Connecticut Sen. Joe Lieberman. Then came Ohio’s voucher program and lively debates in other states. Indeed, as Clint Bolick of the Goldwater Institute recently pointed out in The Wall Street Journal, “Twenty-one school choice programs have been enacted across the nation over the past three years.”

Charter schools have caught on in Washington, D.C. Annual enrollment has increased an average of 13 percent every year since 2001, reaching 19,733 students in 55 schools. The traditional system has dropped by 13,000 students, to a total of 55,355. Fight for Children, a nonprofit advocacy group, says if current trends continue, that by 2014 D.C. charter schools will have more students than regular public schools. Most of those students are, and will be, black.

While parental and student satisfaction at D.C. charter schools is soaring, student achievement is not. But defenders, including many of us with direct experience in inner-city classrooms, point out that it is the toughest cases, students the regular schools have failed utterly, who are moving into charters.

As for full-scale choice, evidence of positive impact is strong. On June 21, the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) at the U.S. Department of Education released its evaluation of the Washington’s Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP). It characterized the OSP as “a remarkable success story for low-income children and parents in the nation’s capital.”

Among other things, the IES study found, kids in the scholarship program get by with about half (and “in some cases significantly less than half”) of the money going to students in the D.C. public school system. The authors were restrained, saying that students in some subgroups advanced academically, and parental satisfaction is high.

That was a hint of what may come in the second and third years of the longitudinal study of the OSP. We’ll know more next spring, but evidence from other studies is compelling.

A Harvard University and Mathematica Policy Research study continued on page 19

Bishops Rabbis Call School Choice Justice Issue

By Delegates of The Rabbinical Council of America/Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

New York, New York October 25, 2006

Western civilization has long recognized the fundamental right of parents, as well as their sacred responsibility, to guide the upbringing and education of their children. Almost a century ago, the United States Supreme Court recognized that “parents, . . . direct the upbringing and education of [their] children.” The communities we represent accept this responsibility with the utmost seriousness. We have committed ourselves and our institutions to creating educational environments that strive to imbue in our children the highest moral values, a depth of knowledge and a proficiency in skills enabling them to support themselves and their families, and to benefit society at large.

Many Catholic and Jewish parents are committed to providing their children with this education, and struggling mightily to do so. Others, including those who may not be members of our faith communities, wish to send their children to schools where they can receive the best possible education, but cannot afford the cost. We join together to call upon our elected and appointed officials to implement policies which will empower all parents to choose schools for their children which they believe best serve each child’s own individual, educational needs.

The Supreme Court has recognized that government funds may flow to religious institutions as a result of the private and independent choices made by individuals upon the basis of their own beliefs. Thus, initiatives facilitating the flow of such funds and services can enhance the Constitution’s promotion of the free exercise of religion while remaining mindful of neither establishing nor endorsing religion.

Moreover, at this time in our nation’s history, “school choice” is an issue of justice. For too many years, the United States has been aware that serious inequalities trap low-income children in schools whose infrastructures are crumbling and whose environment is dysfunctional. “School choice” under its various forms ensures that the poor will be provided with the opportunity to direct the education of their children without regard to economic status. “School choice” policies also vest parents of all walks of life with the power to educate their children as they see fit.

Therefore, we, delegates of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Rabbinical Council of America/Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, are committed to working in partnership with each other, elected officials and all others who share our common commitment to securing greater educational opportunity for all our nation’s children.

E-mail us at prolife@usccb.org

Pro-Life Activities | 3211 4th Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20017-1194 | (202) 541-3000 © USCCB. All rights reserved.
Church Only Earthly Vessel Capable of Withstanding Satan’s Attack

It is something that I have shared with only a handful of people. I chose to remain silent, not because I was profoundly damaged, but because I had put it behind me. But it seems to me that there is something important to be gained by reflecting on a few horrible experiences in an otherwise idyllic childhood.

I couldn’t have been more than 5 years old. The abuse started in the basement of a parishioner’s house. The boy was young, too, but the difference in our ages made him seem more man than child. It was marginal abuse at first, but gained frequency and intensity over the course of a year (until we moved to another pastorate). I remember once, the young man held a pocketknife in the palm of his hand and commanded me to do something that sent shock waves through my childhood innocence. I don’t remember what happened after that. I think I ran upstairs to be with my parents.

I share this with you now because there are some who are stunned that anyone would convert to a church that has been shaken by sex scandal. Certainly, it would cause a person of faith to go anywhere but to the Catholic Church, right? But I can honestly say that scandal exists in every corner of the Christian world. The enemy targets children, and if he can use instruments of faith or places of worship to cause further damage, he will do it.

I know this from experience. The young man frequently chose the church for his abuse. He liked the privacy of empty Sunday school classrooms. We had easy access to the church building since the presanage (where we lived) was next door to the church (where my dad pastored), and the church was usually empty. Thankfully, the boy was not so advanced in age as to seek to completely destroy my innocence, but it was enough to implant within me lasting unpleasant memories linked to holy places and undeserved guilt.

It did not, however, make me run from God, but rather to run into His arms with all of my heart.

But for those who say wait a minute, there is a huge difference between being abused by a young adult (even if it is inside the walls of a church) and being abused by clergy. I say, yes, that is true.

That kind of abuse is not limited, however, to the Catholic Church. It happens in every church. My aunt was married to an independent, non-denominational minister. About 10 years ago, my cousin told me that her father had abused all three of his daughters while they were growing up. He lost his pastorate because of a similar accusation by a young parishioner. I’m telling you, it happens in many churches, but the extent of the damage is limited to that church body or denomination.

By Denise Bossert

Eradication of Poverty Requires Government, Faith Partnership

GENEVA (Zenit.org). — The Holy See says that the eradication of poverty is a priority, for the benefit of rich and poor countries alike.

Archbishop Silvano Tomasi said this recently at a session of the UN. Economic and Social Council in Geneva. In his July 4 address, the archbishop called for a re-examination of the reasons why developing countries are unable to rise above poverty, noting that the number of people living on less than $2 a day continues to rise.

“Poverty alleviation demands an integration between the mechanisms that produce wealth and the mechanisms for the distribution of its benefits at the international, regional and national levels,” he said. “In a context of globally increasing wealth and availability of goods, a more systematic and comprehensive analysis is needed to understand how existing methods of trade and mechanisms of production should be modified in order to lift people out of poverty.”

Archbishop Tomasi noted that foreign aid has not ended poverty in some countries and encouraged the directing of aid to community-based organizations, including those sponsored by religious groups.

“Perhaps it is necessary to direct aid to more targeted and less generic projects that can bring about tangible, measurable and empowering change in the daily life experience of individuals and families and in the social fabric of the community,” he affirmed. “Directing aid to the creation of jobs would fall within this approach.”

“Such effective aid requires multiple channels of distribution and should reach the basic infrastructure of communities that is assured not only by governments but also by community-based organizations and institutions, including those sponsored by faith groups, such as schools, hospitals and clinics, community centers, important to ongoing training and recreation programs.”

Archbishop Tomasi highlighted the special importance of education as a tool to fight poverty.

“An educated person can be fully aware of his/her worth and dignity and that of every human being and can act accordingly,” he said. “Consider the most important feature of the person: being relational with others. Educated people can establish among themselves social relations not based on force and abuse but on respect and friendship.”

The Holy See representative also noted the need for technological development in poor nations.

“In order to promote development at the macroeconomic level, it seems necessary to reinforce the productive capacity of the poorer countries by means of investment in technical formation; this allows for competition in today’s knowledge-based economy and gives support to enterprises that create new jobs and decent work.”

“In this regard, transnational corporations carry a particular responsibility to facilitate the transfer of technology, sponsor capacity building in management and enable local partners to provide more employment opportunities.”

“Foreign investors need to contribute to the overall development of the country in which they establish operations; this is particularly relevant for those engaged in the extraction industry and other short-term commercial enterprises.”

Archbishop Tomasi also noted the responsibility of governments to “assure conditions that are favorable to ethical investment, including a well-functioning juridical system, a stable system of taxation, protection of the right to property and an infrastructure that allows access by local producers to regional and global markets.”

The 66-year-old prelate affirmed that the eradication of poverty is the work not just of poor nations, but of the international community.

“Concrete persons are the motor of development. Eradication of poverty is a moral engagement. The various religions and cultures see its achievement as a most important task that frees people from much suffering and marginalization, that helps them to live peacefully together, and that provides individuals and communities the freedom to protect their dignity and actively contribute to the common good.”
Another Abortion Record at Planned Parenthood: Organization Tries to Mask Impact Abortion Really Has Its Healthy Bottom Line

By Randall K. O’Bannon, Ph.D.

Recent public comments by Planned Parenthood (PPFA) that abortion constitutes “only 3 percent” of its services radically downplay the centrality of abortion to the group’s mission and mask abortion’s enormous impact on the organization’s bottom line. This reported percentage, touted relentlessly by PPFA president Cecile Richards, fails to include ancillary services that may be sold along with the abortion and ignores the fact that abortion provides PPFA with a huge — and steady — stream of revenue.

PPFA’s most recent service report is a perfect example. We learn that the nation’s largest abortion chain has again performed a record number of abortions at its clinics, in the process raking in millions of dollars.

According to the 2005 service report, available at www.planned parenthood.org/about-us/who-we-are/pp-services-5552.htm, Planned Parenthood performed 264,943 abortions in 2005, about 10,000 more than it did in 2004 (255,015) and nearly double the number it did just 10 years ago (139,899 in 1995). During that time, Planned Parenthood’s “market share” has almost exactly doubled — from 10.3 percent of all abortions done in the U.S. in 2005 to about 20.6 percent today. [1]

On its Web site and in public statements, Planned Parenthood is increasingly attempting to minimize the significance of this trend, claiming that abortions constitute “only” 3 percent of services it performs for clients. Planned Parenthood apparently obtains such a figure by counting each pregnancy test, each packet of pills it passes out, every test it does for sexually transmitted diseases, etc., as a uniquely rendered “service.”

By this strained bookkeeping procedure, PPFA obtains an overall figure of 10,112,642 “total services.” The 264,943 abortions reported by Planned Parenthood comprise about 2.6 percent of that total, but this is extremely misleading, as we shall demonstrate.

First, this counting obscures how several of these non-abortion “services” may in fact be bundled together and sold with the abortion. For example, if every woman having an abortion first receives a pregnancy test at the clinic to confirm her pregnancy, the percentage of services directly associated with abortion jumps to more than 5 percent.

If every aborting woman was also tested for an STD, the figure becomes 7 percent to 8 percent. If she received contraceptives as part of her “going home” package, “services” obtained by the abortion-patient would comprise perhaps 10 percent to 11 percent. Any other services sold to the mother in the process of performing her abortion — a breast exam, treatment for an STD, etc. — would push the percentage even higher.

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Planned Parenthood doesn’t identify the services that are part of its abortion package, but it does admit in the service report that the 10 million plus receiving services actually represent only 3,051,144 “unduplicated clients.” In other words, though there were 10 million services, there were only about 3 million individual customers.

Considered against this backdrop, if we make the common-sensical assumption that there weren’t substantial numbers of women obtaining multiple abortions in a given calendar year, the 264,943 abortions Planned Parenthood reports represent not 3 percent, but about 8.7 percent of the unduplicated clients that Planned Parenthood saw in 2005.

There is one other dimension here that, in the absence of further evidence, we cannot quantify. According to the service report, 1,040,803 women came to Planned Parenthood in 2005 to obtain a pregnancy test.

Assuming the availability of abortion induces some women who thought they might be pregnant to come to PPFA to purchase a pregnancy test and other services. Even if they turned out not to be pregnant and therefore didn’t have an abortion, this means PPFA’s marketing of abortion generates more services (and income) than simply that coming from the women who do abort.

Second, even if one does not consider the other services that often go along with the abortion, the relative impact of abortion alone compared to the rest of Planned Parenthood’s “services” on the corporation’s overall revenue stream is quite different.

While a pregnancy test or a pill packet may cost a client $10 or $15, a standard suction curettage abortion runs about $372. Even if, for purposes of discussion, you count every abortion as a first-trimester suction curettage abortion — and count only the abortion and none of the rest of the bundled services — this puts Planned Parenthood’s abortion income at least $98.5 million.

In truth, the real figure is certainly much higher. This is so, not just because of the additional related services, but also because we know from their own advertisements that some Planned Parenthood clinics also perform considerably more expensive abortions performed later in pregnancy.

(According to the Alan Gutmacher Institute, Planned Parenthood’s think-tank, the average cost of a surgical abortion at 16 weeks in 2001 was $774. At 20 weeks, the price was $1,179.)

Income figures for 2005-06, normally found in the group’s annual report, were not available by press time. However, reported figures for 2004-05 make clear how substantial abortion is to Planned Parenthood’s clinic business.

Even using the lowest estimate from above, the minimum of $98.5 million from 264,943 abortions in 2005 would represent, not 3 percent, but 28.4 percent of Planned Parenthood’s $346.8 million clinic income for 2004-05. Hardly an inconsequential part of the business.

The dedication of Planned Parenthood to abortion is apparent in other ways. Against 264,943 abortions, Planned Parenthood saw just 12,548 prenatal clients. This means that it was 21 times more likely that a pregnant woman coming into a Planned Parenthood clinic would receive an abortion than receive prenatal care.

In 2005, in its entire nationwide network of over 860 clinics, Planned Parenthood saw just 248 infertility clients. This means that PPFA treated just one infertility patient for every 1,068 abortions it performed. Adoption services or referrals aren’t even mentioned.

Planned Parenthood talks about giving women choices, but what is apparent from its latest service report is how rarely Planned Parenthood’s plans involve parenthood, and just how often they involve abortion.

(This article first appeared in the July issue of National Right to Life News. It is reprinted here with permission.)
Bishops Decry Failure of Reform

WASHINGTON — The U.S. bishops decried failure of immigration reform and its implicit exploitation of millions of people.

The position was voiced by Bishop Gerald R. Barnes of San Bernardino, Calif., chairman of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on Migration.

“As a nation, we cannot continue to employ an immigration system that leads to the exploitation of millions of our fellow human beings,” Bishop Barnes said. “We cannot accept the toll of a large underclass which does not have full rights in our society. This strikes at the very character of our nation and lessens us as a people.”

Bishop Barnes called on “Congress not to abandon this issue and to return to it as soon as possible.”

“The status quo is morally unacceptable and should not be allowed to stand,” he said. “The U.S. bishops shall continue to point out the moral deficiencies in the immigration system and work toward justice until it is achieved.”

The June 29 statement follows.

On behalf of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), I am deeply troubled that fair and comprehensive immigration reform legislation has failed to move forward in the U.S. Senate.

I applaud those U.S. senators of both parties who showed courage in working for comprehensive reform legislation and encourage them to continue their efforts to fix our broken immigration system.

As a nation, we cannot continue to employ an immigration system that leads to the exploitation of millions of our fellow human beings. We cannot accept the toll of a large underclass which does not have full rights in our society. This strikes at the very character of our nation and lessens us as a people.

I urge our elected officials in Congress not to abandon this issue and to return to it as soon as possible. The status quo is morally unacceptable and should not be allowed to stand. The U.S. bishops shall continue to point out the moral deficiencies in the immigration system and work toward justice until it is achieved.

In September 2006, Pope Benedict XVI made a visit to his home country of Germany. One of the places he visited was Regensburg University, where he presented a lecture which is a typical thing for a professor to do in the university setting. Pope Benedict had been a professor of theology before becoming an archbishop. He had hoped to retire and continue his writings on theology and other issues, but God had other plans for him.

In his lecture Pope Benedict asked whether religion, particularly Islam, and reason can have a dialogue. He quoted a Byzantine emperor, Manuel II, which caused a lot of problems and some murders or martyrdoms. Muslim radicals some days after the presentation of the lecture felt that the pope had insulted their religion and many protests and violence occurred. The pope had asked a simple question whether Islam is based on reason or not, could there be a peaceful dialogue or not. The violent protests showed that among some Muslims this is not possible.

Father James V. Schall, S.J., discusses the Regensburg lecture from an academic point of view. General readers may have a hard time reading this book. He includes the lecture as an appendix. The lecture should be read before reading Father Schall’s discussion and commentary. Father Schall points out that the pope says that universities are very important as places of dialogue and education. Also, universities should be free places to dialogue without the fear of being murdered or put into jail.

Father Schall’s second chapter is concerned with the issue of violence and God. This is discussing Islam and violence. Is it reasonable or rational for violence to be committed in the name of God? The pope is asking moderate Muslims to speak out against violence if Islam is really a religion of peace. He also asks if it is reasonable that innocents are killed by terrorists who say they act in the name of God or their religion. From a Christian point of view it is not. From a reasonable or rational point of view, these murders are not reasonable.

Father Schall’s third chapter is a discussion on Europe and its Christian roots. Secularism and Islam are contrary to European culture. Europe needs to return to its Christian culture. Secularism is allowing Europe’s Christian culture to be replaced by non-European cultures, cultures that are alien to Europe. The people from these cultures seem not to be willing to assimilate European culture. They declare European culture as depraved. In many ways it is because of secularism opposing Christianity. In Chapter 4 he discusses the “dehellenization” of Europe. This is about Europe and the West turning its back on Greek philosophy of reason and truth. This philosophy was used as a basis for Saint Thomas Aquinas’ philosophy and that of others.

In Chapter 5, Father Schall discusses revelation and culture. Some deny that reason exists and that religion has nothing to offer to humanity. The pope and others refute this claim. Culture needs reason or rationality to survive and to progress. The pope argues for the place of theology alongside that of science and philosophy in the university. To remove theology or religion from the university or culture would remove an important part, if not the most important part of western civilization.

In his conclusion, Father Schall’s one statement is very important, “No single idea is more dangerous to our kind than the idea that God approves of violence in his name. To claim to do violence, that is, to take the lives of the innocent, in the name of God is precisely blasphemy.” He says this violence is irrational and beyond reason.

The second appendix is an article titled “On the term ‘Islamo-Fascism.’” This term has appeared in other books and articles referring to radical Muslims and some Muslim governments like Iran. Terrorist groups like Hamas, Hezbollah, Al-Qaeda have been called this too. They are accused of being similar to the Nazis.

Father James V. Schall, S.J., is a professor of government at Georgetown University. He is the author of the forthcoming book Order of Things (Oct. 2007), Sum Total of Human Happiness (2006), The Life of the Mind (2006), Roman Catholic Political Philosophy (2004), and many other books and articles. He is also involved with the new edition of The Collected Works of G.K. Chesterton being published by Ignatius Press. This book is highly recommended to those interested in the discussion on Islam and the West, reason and non-reason, Christianity and secularism, the pope’s lecture at Regensburg, and Christianity and philosophy. It is a difficult book to read for general readers because parts of it are complicated and very academic. It is not a book to hurriedly read. It needs time and thought. And one may say prayer too.

Brother Benet Exton is a Benedictine Monk at Saint Gregory’s Abbey in Shawnee. Among other duties he serves as the librarian there and he writes book reviews regularly for several Catholic publications, including the Sooner Catholic.
OKLAHOMA CITY — As Kansas wheat farmer Jim French mowed down his rotting grains, he said he shook his head at the irony — and many growers are facing disaster, but their safety net, the U.S. Farm Bill, offers no help.

“We need a special appropriations by Congress to fund the disaster bill … We only have a program that effectively protects farmers when they have a crop and in the case of low prices,” he said. “So the incentive is to have as much crop as possible.”

That’s the kicker, French said. By design the Loan Deficiency Program and counter-cyclical payments received by farmers reward growers for quantity, even if there isn’t a market for grain.

French explained the problem with current U.S. farm policy for about 30 Oklahomans inside the Conner Center at The Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

French, Oxfam America lead field organizer and a Hutchison, Kans., farmer, is leading a charge to make changes to U.S. Farm Bill programs. He said current programs aren’t helping a majority of U.S. farmers or their communities while subsidies make it impossible for farmers from poorer nations to compete in the world market.

Oxfam, or the Oxford Famine Relief Society, formed in the 1940s to help Turkey, Greece, Middle East and North African nations devastated by World War II, has worked with international communities to create new farming methods and build local economies with the hope that nations could stand on their own. While the group helped countries create products to sell on the world market, they found richer nations’ policies and trade practices made it impossible for them to compete.

In years when market prices are low, French said the Loan Deficiency Program payments take up the slack and pay farmers a much higher amount for their crops than the market warrants. However, countries such as Senegal and Mali and other developing nations that depend on agriculture for at least 70 percent of their economy and jobs cannot afford to give farmers the subsidies. In 2004, he said cotton sold on the world market for 48 percent of the cost it took to produce it. The Oklahoma staple wheat didn’t sell for the cost it took to produce it. The on the world market for 48 percent of the cost it took to produce it.

Subsidies also give an artificial benefit to growing certain crops, French said. As prices of grain crops soar this year because of high demand of corn in the production of ethanol, farmers are turning wheat fields into cotton operations because the government is giving juicier subsidies for that crop because prices are lower.

“Wheat acres have actually been in decline,” he said. “People are growing less and less wheat and are growing more and more cotton, not because the market needs more cotton, but because it pays better.”

French said he doesn’t blame farmers who are trying to make a living, while paying off bank loans and sinking more money into buying equipment and fertilizer to start on the next year’s crop. Eighty percent of small farmers also work full-time jobs to make ends meet, he said.

French said he’s not advocating doing away with federal aid to farmers — his own operation is dependent on that aid.

“We are asking to create a system that creates a safety net for U.S. farmers but does not artificially flood the marketplace with unwanted grains and commodities, which hurts poor farmers in other nations,” he said.

One way to change the system could be patterned after the existing direct payment plan, which pays farmers based on historic average yields and acres farmed, not on quantities produced, French said. Other proposals suggest rewarding farmers for improving energy efficiency or adopting practices that conserve natural resources and habitat.

Research suggests these subsidies increase the gap between the rich and poor in America, French said, in essence, squeezing out the middle class. As rural economies shrink, young adults leave their hometowns and family farms for cities to seek work.

“My goal is not to have fewer neighbors, and that’s happening all of the time,” he said.

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One way to change the system could be patterned after the existing direct payment plan, which pays farmers based on historic average yields and acres farmed, not on quantities produced, French said. Other proposals suggest rewarding farmers for improving energy efficiency or adopting practices that conserve natural resources and habitat. He said it could also free up more funding for school nutrition and wellness programs, which are also rolled into the farm bill.

French isn’t seeking immediate changes, but he said he wants Congress to adapt a road map making gradual moves within farm programs. Many farmers may not like the existing system, but at least they know what to expect from it, he said.

“Local farmers support the status quo. They don’t want a revolutionary program that just throws them.”

French urged attendees to write letters to U.S. Rep. Frank Lucas, R-Okla., who serves on the U.S. House Agriculture Committee. He said there is political steam to reform farm law this fall with support coming from taxpayer watch groups, religious and social organizations.

“This year the diversity of voices is probably as great as it ever has been,” he said.

However, French said while groups agree there should be change, few of them agree on the details. If reform isn’t made this fall, he said he doesn’t expect the farm bill to rise in Congress until after the 2008 elections.

Musician Scholarships Awarded

The Catholic Foundation is pleased to announce the first recipients of the Bob Little Pastoral Musician’s Scholarships for the 2007-08 academic year.

Thomas Rady of Prince of Peace Catholic Church in Altus and An Pham of The Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in Oklahoma City will each receive a $1,000 scholarship, to be applied against the upcoming fall and spring semesters.

Thomas is attending Southwesten Oklahoma State University and An is attending Oklahoma City Community College.

Bob Little of Hinton recently established the Pastoral Musician’s Scholarship to promote a commitment to pastoral music — an area in which he is personally involved and very much committed. It is his desire to see more students pursue a career in the field of music, with a particular emphasis on music as a part of our worship and faith.
Church Lone Voice Exposing Contraceptive Contradictions

The Catholic Church remains almost a lone voice in our age defending the view that contraceptive sexual activity in marriage is wrong. Many young Catholic couples either are not aware of this teaching, or simply choose to ignore it.

When asked, few can explain the reasons behind it. Some venture to say that the Church opposes sex in general, and pleasure in particular. Others think that the Church wants everybody to have as many kids as possible. Some are even more cynical, and suggest that repressed, gray-haired celibates enjoy being able to stick their intrusive noses into people's bedrooms.

The reasons behind the Church's position on contraception, however, are actually a far cry from any of these old clichés. Among the deeper reasons behind the teaching, the Church stresses especially how contraception forces us to speak a false and contradictory language to our spouse through our body and our sexuality.

Because sex is a deeply interpersonal form of communication, we can consider some related examples of personal communication to see how the language of our own bodies is violated whenever we engage in contraceptive sex.

Would it be normal, for example, for a wife to insert earplugs, while trying to listen attentively to, or carry on a conversation with her husband? The earplugs bespeak the view that, “I don’t really want to hear you and be with you,” and they disrupt the couple’s mutual communication.

If a woman inserts a cervical diaphragm or a vaginal sponge while having intercourse, she is likewise employing a language that says she doesn’t really want to communicate openly and fully with her husband. She wants to keep part of who he is at a distance, at arm's length; that is to say, she shuns his fertility and fruitfulness. In that moment, she is rejecting the paternal aspect of his masculinity, and refusing to share with him the deep maternal meaning of her femininity.

We can further inquire whether it would it be normal to surgically excise healthy vocal cords, and then try to carry on a conversation with the spouse. Opting for a vasectomy and then pursuing sex involves a similar contradictory language of the body. When a husband puts on a condom during intercourse, he disrupts that intimate communication that is written right into the language of his body, much as if he had wrapped his mouth in cellophane before trying to have a verbal conversation with his wife. As professor Bill May puts it, a person does not put on gloves to touch a beloved one tenderly, unless one thinks that some disease may be communicated. But is pregnancy a disease? And is not the use of condoms, diaphragms, spermicidal jellies and the like similar to putting on gloves? Do husband and wife really become ‘one flesh’ if they must arm themselves with protective gear before ‘giving’ themselves to one another genitally?

The problem here is clear: Marital sexuality is actually all about loving someone totally and unreservedly, giving and receiving totally, and not holding back who we are for ourselves. It is a unique language of total self-giving.

Contraception, on the other hand, allows marital sexuality to devolve into a kind of mutual masturbation where each pursues erotic satisfaction apart from the total gift of self, and apart from any openness to life. Because of contraception, marital sexual activity slips into a subtle mode of mutual exploitation — a lifeless, self-focused, needs-centered apparatus.

Malcolm Muggeridge, the famous BBC correspondent who converted to Catholicism late in life, instinctively appreciated how the Church was resisting this trivializing of the gift of sex by its strong stance against contraception:

It was the Catholic Church’s firm stand against contraception and abortion which finally made me decide to become a Catholic ... as the Romans treated eating as an end in itself, making themselves sick in a vomitorium so as to enable them to return to the table and stuff themselves with more delicacies, so people now end up in a sort of sexual vomitorium. The Church’s stand is absolutely correct. It is to its eternal honor that it opposed contraception, even if the opposition failed.

The idea of serially eating and purging, in order to be able to eat and purge yet more, is a striking example of misusing our body in its most integral design. The one who dines in this way is seeking in a sense both to eat and not eat at the same time. Objectively speaking, he is engaging in damaging and contradictory behavior.』 Violating the inner order and meaning of his own body, and cheapening the basic and quintessential human activity of eating. This destructive behavior crosses a real moral line insofar as a person freely and knowingly chooses to do it.

Contraception involves this same sort of destructive and contradictory behavior. Unlike the case of the vomitorium, however, sex is an inherently relational activity involving two people. For that reason, the damage done by engaging in contraceptive sex as a couple will extend beyond the fabric of their individual persons and trigger damage at the heart of that intimate relationship which is their marriage.

The choice to use a condom during sexual intimacy speaks the same contradictory language of the vomitorium: the language of trying to have sex, but not really having it; of trying to do it, without really doing it. One is militating directly against the sexual act itself, violating its inner order and meaning by actively flusterling its obvious life-giving designs. Contraception, thus, always involves an objectively contradictory language, namely, that of not giving oneself totally to the other in the face of that innate language of sex which calls for a complete self-giving.

The reasons behind the Church’s teaching thus run deep and flow from profound considerations regarding the integral design of human sexuality. Pope John Paul II put it well when he stressed how couples who use contraception in their marriage presume to “act as ‘arbiters’ of the divine plan and they ‘manipulate’ and degrade human sexuality and with it themselves and their married partner by altering its value of ‘total self-giving.”

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

Fall 2007 Pastoral Ministry Classes Now Enrolling

Registration for the fall semester is continuing in the Pastoral Ministry Program. Pastoral ministry courses may be taken for theological education and formation for ministry, as well as continuing education or for personal enrichment. A variety of courses, times and locations are offered this fall. Courses ordinarily require 12 to 15 students to be offered. Now is the time to register. Call or e-mail (405) 721-4208, cgrimes@catharchdiocese-okc.org. Complete information is available on the Archdiocesan Web site: www.catharchdioceseokc.org, click on Chancery Offices, Education, Pastoral Ministry.

Weekly evening courses 7 to 10 p.m.

Monday, Bereavement Ministry, St. Andrew, Moore, Peggy Browne
Tuesday, Christian Morality & Social Issues, Holy Family, Lawton, Joe Forgue
Tuesday, Church History 2, Pastoral Center, OKC, Bill Gorden
Wednesday, Seminal Catholic Thinkers: Chardin & Rahner, Pastoral Center, Vince Brady

Thursday, Fathers of the Early Church, St. Joseph, Norman, Larry Riosow

Saturday morning courses 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

New Testament Literature, St. Mary’s, Guthrie, Jim Williams
Theology of Church, Pastoral Center, John Braniff

Internet-Enhanced
Requires Internet access, both classroom and online participation:

Gospel of Mark, St. John’s, Yukon, meets Aug. 25, Sept. 29, Oct. 27, Nov. 10 and Dec. 15; Lee Hunt

Spiritual Direction courses Credit available through Pastoral Ministry Program.

For information, call Benedictine Ministries, (405) 373-4739

Introduction to Spiritual Direction 1
Spiritual Classics 1
Spiritual Direction Practicum 2
Have you ever taken the time to look into a homeless person’s eyes, talked with them or asked their name? As a society, we are generally frightened to talk with these “strangers from the streets.” But that is not the attitude at Sister BJ’s Pantry.

Sister Barbara Joseph, CST, welcomes more than 250 visitors to her food pantry every Friday and Saturday morning. Everyone who steps into this sanctuary is not homeless. Some are just down on their luck, or maybe they just want a cup of coffee and a conversation with someone who isn’t judging them for the moment.

While visiting with a homeless man at Sister BJ’s Pantry recently, he shared with me some of his experiences of living on the street. He told me that his home is a shelter in Oklahoma City. He must be awake and gone from the facility by 5:30 a.m. daily. Then he spends the rest of the day looking for work, food or just something to occupy his time. This particular man said he spent many hours in the public library reading books. He shared how tough life was on the streets, and how much he looks forward to all the friendly faces and the sack lunch he receives at Sister BJ’s. This is the only time he doesn’t feel invisible.

There is another man who comes regularly to visit with Sister BJ. When asked why he is a regular every week, his response was “to have five minutes of your time.” Can you imagine that just five minutes of friendship and conversation every Friday and Saturday got him through the entire week?

The love that is shared at this food and clothing pantry is indescribable. There are volunteers making sandwiches and packing lunches, cleaning up in the kitchen and outdoor patio area, and organizing clothing — craftsmen of all kinds, in service to others.

Most important, though, there are lots of friendly faces that God has sent to help make this pantry a place of His love. No one is bound by a particular schedule, yet there are many regular volunteers who just show up, pitch in where needed and take care of the many needs of the “strangers from the streets.”

We are all called to share the Kingdom of God with those around us. Imagine how friendly our society would be if each one of us took the time to say hello to a shy co-worker, an isolated neighbor or even a lonely person on the street. I can recall attending a “mom’s group” several years ago when my children were very young. I was very shy, lonely and disconnected from the group. One of the other women asked me my name and invited me to help make the coffee. That one little encounter left an imprint on my heart — showing me how God wanted me to be more welcoming to others.

Maybe you don’t have the time to volunteer at a pantry, but everyone has five minutes to look someone in the eyes, learn their name and share a compliment or two that can make a difference in their life.

Could You Spare Five Minutes?

By Cher Casso
For the Sooner Catholic

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Knights Honor Carmelite Sisters

BY PAT MCGUIGAN
KNIGHTS COUNCIL 1038

OKLAHOMA CITY — Members of the Carmelite Sisters in Oklahoma were honored at an ice cream social by members of the Knights of Columbus, 44th Degree, Chief Justice Kane Assembly No. 848. The event honored the Sisters during their anniversary celebration, and for decades of educational work at Villa Teresa School.

Tom Gocke, newly elected Faithful Navigator of the Chief Justice Kane Assembly, led recognition of the nuns, thanking them for their historic service to the church and to Oklahoma City. The order is 90 years old, and has run Villa Teresa Catholic School for the last 75 years. Also participating were Al Roux, past Faithful Navigator, and other Knights.

Lou Falsetti and Joe Dunaway, Grand Knight and Deputy Grand Knight, respectively, at Oklahoma Council No. 1038 and members of the assembly, prepared refreshments. Knights presented the nuns with gift certificates from area retailers, movie passes and provided other recognitions.

Bill Cathey, a past Grand Knight of Council 1038, furnished homemade ice cream as a treat for the hard-working teachers and social workers who make up the Carmelites. Sister Veronica Higgins, principal at Villa Teresa, thanked the Knights for the event.

The ice cream social was held at Council 1038’s new home, the Santa Fe Club at North 63rd and Santa Fe Avenue in Oklahoma City. The council has announced a new capital fund-raising drive to add a swimming pool, meeting area and other features as part of developing a Catholic Family Life Center.

Carmelites Celebrate 90 Years

continued from page 1

In the early 20th century, Father Soler was ministering in Mexico when the Mexican Revolution broke out. As the revolution progressed, religious persecution spread throughout the country. Priests and religious were tortured and killed. To escape the slaughter, Father Soler and several other priests fled to Oklahoma.

In 1917, Bishop Theophile Meerschaert was the head of the Diocese of Oklahoma, which encompassed the entire Sooner state. His diocese was very short of priests. When he heard that Father Soler and his fellow priests wanted to stay in Oklahoma, he welcomed them warmly and sent them to southeast Oklahoma to build a Catholic church in Bentley.

Soon Father Soler and the other priests from Mexico found themselves at the end of the railroad line in Atoka County. Immediately, they began ministering to the few Catholic Russian, Polish and Italian immigrant miners and their families living in the little Oklahoma town and to the Indian children living in its vicinity.

Before long, it became apparent to Father Soler that if he and the other priests were to succeed in starting a Catholic parish in southeast Oklahoma, they would need additional help.

With this in mind, Father Soler traveled north to talk to a group of lay Catholic women in Chicago and sent letters to a second group of lay women in New England, encouraging them all to come to Oklahoma and help him as teachers and catechists. He did not ask any established women’s religious groups to help because there were too few students in Bentley to merit their coming there.

The population of the town of Bentley in 1917 was less than 100 and not all of them were Catholic. Also, the Bureau of Indian Affairs stipulated that all Indian children in the third grade and above had to attend Indian boarding schools. So, the only American Indian children needing teachers were in the first and second grades.

Anna Elder was the first lay woman summoned by Father Soler to arrive in Bentley. She brought with her several female friends. While living in Chicago, Elder had become a Third Order Carmelite, a lay group adhering to Carmelite principles. She had headed for Nebraska when she heard that there were some Carmelite Sisters serving there in Grande Isle. She left Nebraska for Oklahoma when informed of Father Soler’s need for teachers.

Sometime after Elder’s arrival, Marie Cavanaugh, a New Yorker teaching in Rhode Island, and her companion, Della Mitchell, arrived in Bentley from the East Coast.

Prior to 1917 when Cavanaugh came west, she had entered the Presentation Sisters community in Fitchburg, Mass. She was soon asked to leave, however, because of frail health.

Cavanaugh left the order but stayed on with the Presentation Sisters as a lay teacher. She reasoned that if she could not be a religious sister, she could at least teach for the Church. She was teaching in Rhode Island for the Presentation Sisters when she received Father Soler’s call. Although her family disapproved, she put her affairs in order and headed for the Sooner State.

In 1919, after teaching for two years in Oklahoma, Marie Cavanaugh, Della Mitchell and Anna Elder became Carmelite novices. Elder, who took the name Sister Carmelita, was put in charge of the group who now called themselves the Companions of the Little Flower. “The Little Flower” is another name for Saint Therese. Mitchell became Sister Philomena, and Cavanaugh, Sister Agnes Teresa.

Unfortunately, a few months later, because of continuing harsh conditions, Sister Carmelita and Sister Philomena left the Sooner state. Sister Agnes Teresa was elevated to the position of Mother Superior as a reward for her fortitude in staying in Oklahoma and was called Mother Agnes. She became the new order’s first superior general, serving in that capacity from 1919 until her death in 1951.

Just as Sisters Carmelita and Philomena headed east and out of Oklahoma, two new recruits, Oklahoman Olive Rody and Anne Ahearn from St. Louis journeyed west to join Mother Agnes. These new arrivals helped Mother Agnes teach in Bentley as best they could.

Bishop Meerschaert was pleased with their work and asked the three to leave Bentley and to start a new Catholic school in Gowen. So Mother and the two other women ventured to Gowen and struggled to open a school there. Once they got the Gowen school functioning, they traveled to Hartshorne where they opened a third Catholic school.

When the Companions of the Little Flower got the school in Hartshorne started, Bishop Meerschaert asked other Sisters to take over
Carmelites in Oklahoma Follow the ‘Little Way’

Saint Therese, born Therese Martin and also known as the Little Flower, was a young French girl from a devout French Catholic family. At the age of 15, she joined the Carmelite Order of Nuns in her hometown of Lisieux, France, in the late 19th century. Her two older sisters, Pauline and Marie, were already members of the same order.

Therese had joined the Carmelites to become a missionary, but because of ill health, she was unable to go abroad. Instead, she spent her days at the convent in intercession for missionary priests. Her whole short life became this prayer; she offered the entirety of her days, all her words, actions and sufferings, to Jesus for the missionary priests in distant lands.

And, like Blessed Mother Teresa who lived 50 years later, the Little Flower tried to do all things with love.

Therese died at the age of 24 after suffering for many months from tuberculosis. She had endured her pain in silence until it became so great she could no longer complete her convent chores. Through these long months, she never complained and went about the Carmel performing her mundane tasks with a smile and a joyful demeanor.

Some time after entering the convent at Lisieux, at the prompting of her older sister, Pauline, now Mother Agnes, the Mother Superior, Therese wrote her autobiography.

When this personal history, “The Story of a Soul,” was published after her death, it became a sensation. Lives changed as ordinary and not-so-ordinary people began following Therese’s “Little Way.” All that was necessary was for people to offer their little lives to Jesus and to try to do all they did with love. In return, the Lord would help them to grow in holiness.

The Little Flower is usually depicted wearing the brown, black and white habit of the Carmelites and carrying a crucifix surrounded by red roses. Before she died, Therese promised to “spend her heaven doing good on earth.” She said that she would let fall from heaven a shower of roses, symbolizing the graces and answered prayers she would obtain for God, for the living, through her intercession.

Therese died on Sept. 30, 1897, at the Carmelite monastery in Lisieux, France, and was canonized in 1925. In December 927 she became, along with Saint Francis Xavier, the Patron Saint of Missions. Pope John Paul II declared her a Doctor of the Church on Sept. 30, 1997, the centennial of her death.

Today, Saint Therese is one of the two most popular saints of the 21st century. The other is Saint Francis of Assisi.

continued from page 11

the running of the school so Mother Agnes and her Sisters could go to Oklahoma City. There Father Soler joined them to start Little Flower Parish. The building of Little Flower Church, originally known as Our Lady of Mount Carmel and Saint Therese Church, began in 1925, the same year that Saint Therese was canonized. It was completed the following year.

The Motherhouse of the Companions of the Little Flower had moved with the Sisters from Bentley to Gowen to Hartshorne. Now, it moved again, to Oklahoma City and Little Flower Parish.

Bishop Kelley took over as head of the Diocese of Oklahoma when Bishop Meerschaert died in 1924, just as Little Flower Parish was being established. The new bishop promised Mother Agnes to do all that he could to protect the Companions of the Little Flower and to help them obtain official approval of the Church. To this end, he sent the Very Reverend D.I. Lanslots to Rome to petition the Holy See for canonical recognition of the Carmelites.

When Pope Pius XI heard the story of the little Oklahoma Carmelite community, he exclaimed, “The Finger of God is there!” Papal approval followed, and on Dec. 27, 1928, Bishop Kelley proceeded with the canonical founding of the new congregation, to be known as The Carmelite Sisters of Saint Therese.

In 1930, Bishop Kelley asked the Sisters to take over the care of Saint Joseph’s Orphanage in what is now Bethany. So the Sisters of Saint Therese left Little Flower Parish and ministered at the orphanage for the next three years.

In 1933, the Carmelites began looking for a house in Oklahoma City so they could relocate their Motherhouse to a location more convenient to downtown. A mansion on Classen Drive came on the market. The Sisters liked the property, and the owners, the Anderson family, sold it to them for a reasonable price.

After moving into their new home, the Carmelite Sisters of Saint Therese lost no time in starting the first kindergarten in Oklahoma City. Their students were the children of working parents. Each year the Sisters added one additional class to their school until they had a complete Catholic elementary school of eight grades. They also opened a day-care at this time.

It was the Depression, and jobs were scarce. Many parents had to leave Oklahoma to find employment. Most could not take their children with them. Recognizing this need, the Sisters at Villa Teresa decided to open a boarding school that would accommodate these children and their parents. The children would stay at Villa Teresa where they would be well taken care of and get a good education, and their parents would be free to seek jobs across the country without having to worry about their children’s welfare. The arrangement worked well for 30 years.

By the 1960s, times had changed. More jobs were available in the Oklahoma City area. A boarding school was no longer needed. So the Sisters closed the boarding school and cut back their school from eight grades to five. They also began to specialize in early childhood education, an emphasis they have maintained to the present day.

Today, we have two schools: Villa Teresa in Oklahoma City and Villa Teresa in Moore,” Sister Immaculata said. Both schools take 3- and 4-year-olds and kindergartners. In addition, the school on Classen teaches children in the first five grades.

“Our first Sisters gave us values for living and working. First among them is our characteristic simplicity of life and willingness to pray and do ordinary tasks for the needs of the Church, especially here in Oklahoma.

“Our students are still the children of working parents who now come from all over the city and outside the city,” she said. “Our charisms of prayer and Christian education have changed only in relation to the people we serve and to the world we share with them. In the field of education, we will continue to do whatever needs to be done.”

As for prayer, because so many people today are not satisfied with how they pray, “the whole Carmelite Order has been encouraged to become a school of prayer. In the future, we hope to help more people to develop spiritually and to learn to pray,” Sister Immaculata said.

As the Carmelite Sisters of Saint Therese begin their 10th decade of service in Oklahoma, all those in the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City wish them a happy 90th anniversary.

Their preschool and school-aged students are wished a future bright with the Light of Christ, and the Oklahoma Catholic community looks forward to benefiting from their “school of prayer.”
Prayers of the Faithful

It was Easter Sunday, and her name was Mary. She was my patient in the ICU at the Catholic hospital where I worked. I knew that this shift would be memorable, because I had to work on Easter Sunday, but I had no idea how this Easter, and a patient named Mary, would touch my heart.

Because I had to work, making it to Easter Mass would be a time challenge. Normally, before an ICU shift, I was focused on preparing for the life and death challenges that may occur. I would collect my stethoscope, hemostats, scissors and pocket reference manual. I was always prepared for the next critical case.

This day was different. In addition to my normal preparation, I assembled my clothes for Mass. I would have to change from my scrubs, pony tail and tennis shoes into my Easter clothes in the dressing room, and I would only have a few minutes between the end of my shift and the time I needed to be on the road in order to get a seat at Mass.

Then I met Mary. During shift report with the previous nurse, I learned the complexities of her case. She was extremely ill and going downhill. I began working, and within the first hour, I was consumed with Mary's care.

One of the best habits that I developed as a nurse was prayer at the bedside. Each time I stuck a needle, I offered up a silent prayer, asking for God's guidance. Each time I spiked an IV bag, I offered up the same type of prayer. Mary's failing life gave me an abundance of opportunities for prayer. With each new IV drip I prayed. I prayed and prayed over Mary. I worked as hard and fast as I could to keep her alive. Mary's complex illness and mounting critical needs kept me busy every minute, but it seemed that no matter how hard I worked and how hard I prayed, Mary's critical condition continued to decline. When I reported off on Mary at the end of my shift, I was worried about Mary. I wondered if she would live.

My plan for changing from ICU nurse to Easter Mass parishioner went seamlessly. The Mass was beautiful and I was living the true celebration of the Resurrection! During the quiet times, I prayed for Mary, the patient that I had just left in the ICU.

Imagine my surprise when, during the prayers of the faithful, we ALL prayed for Mary! I had not known that my patient was a member of my parish family. I had never met her. Immediately, my eyes began to fill with tears. The life that I had spent the entire day praying for and fighting for was being lifted up in prayer by the entire parish! I knew immediately that God had been guiding me through my shift while I was entrusted with the care of His child. It was such a blessing to me to know that my parish family was supporting my patient along with me. I was humbled by the power of this prayer vigil versus the seemingly miniscule difference that I was able to accomplish with my many interventions over the entire day. On this most Holy feast, when we celebrated our Lord's resurrection from the dead, I knew that there could be no limits to God's love for us — and Mary. I began to pray with a different kind of confidence for this patient.

The following days, as I reported for my shifts I was eager to hear about Mary. Each time I was told that she was still alive, but remained critical. I continued to care for her shift after shift. Her difficult case kept each of my shifts busy. Many times I left work exhausted. Each Sunday, my resolve to continue the fight for Mary's life was renewed at Mass, when she was called by name and we, as a congregation prayed together for Mary.

Finally, Mary's condition began to stabilize and she was eventually transferred out of the ICU. The parish continued to pray for her every week, and I often wondered if she would ever fully recover.

Then came the week when Mary was not called by name for prayer by the congregation. Had she died? Was she better? I wondered what had happened. It wasn't until Mass was ended that I found the answer. As I knelt for a final prayer before leaving the church, I looked up and saw a seemingly familiar figure on the front row. It was Mary! I hesitated, but could not contain myself. As I exited, I enthusiastically greeted Mary. She looked perplexed. She had no idea who I was! You see, Mary had been comatose and extremely critical during my care. She had no memory of her time in the ICU, and consequently, no memory of me. I explained that I had cared for and prayed for her in the hospital, and that I was so pleased that she was doing well. Mary thanked me and explained that she was doing well and considered her recovery to be a miracle.

I know that Mary will never know how her illness touched my life. I also know the parishioners will never realize how their prayers for my patient enriched my life. I can only say that I am thankful. I am thankful for being given the opportunity to be used as an instrument in one of God's miracles, and I can honestly say that I personally know that the prayers of the faithful are working.

Laura Watson, RN
Oklahoma City

Letter of Thanks

Dear Archbishop Beltran,

God give you peace!

I am in receipt of your check No.133592 in the amount of $62,565.30, representing the gifts of the people of the Diocese of Oklahoma City to the Jerusalem Mother Church for the 2007 Good Friday collection. This gift will not only assist in the preservation of the Holy Places but will also help the people to whom the Franciscan Friars of the Holy Land Custody minister.

In the name of the Friars and those to whom they minister, I express our deepest gratitude to you, Bishop Beltran, and to our Sisters and Brothers in the Diocese of Oklahoma City, who continue to give most generously to help those who are in need! May God bless and reward all of you.

The Good Friday Collection is a Pontifical Collection and is absolutely vital. News reports are received daily about the important challenges in the Middle East. The Christian community is urgently in need of our help. As you know, we are charged also with the protection, physical and pastoral care of the Holy Shrines, which we make accessible to pilgrims.

With deep appreciation, much gratitude and a promise of prayer for you and the People of God in the Diocese of Oklahoma City, I am yours,

Sincerely and gratefully,
Brother Joe Rogenski, O.F.M.
Commissary of the Holy Land
St. Louis Region

The Parish Rock

I read in the Sooner Catholic about the reception given in honor of Father Charles H. Schettler and his 34 years as the judicial vicar for the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. A well deserved honor.

I first became acquainted with Father Schettler in 1954, when he was an assistant pastor for the Corpus Christi Parish. Msgr. Walde was the pastor at that time.

My sister, Barbara, was the secretary for Hugh Paine, the president of the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation, and her husband, Dr. Rousal Carubelli, who was teaching at the University of Oklahoma Medical School and also doing research at the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation.

They were both members of Corpus Christi Parish and very close friends of Msgr. Walde. That's how I came to know Father Schettler. He has become a very good friend to me and my family. Father Schettler says that he will probably spend his retirement years as our priest-in-residence at Saint Francis of Assisi Parish in Oklahoma City. We all hope it will be for a long time.

I know that I speak for everyone there, that we are most fortunate to have him with us.

Father Schettler is the "rock" of Saint Francis of Assisi Parish. He creates a sense of stability and continuity as one pastor is transferred out and another new pastor transfers in. He helps the new pastor become acquainted with the operations of the parish as I observed him doing for our new pastor, Father Charles Murphy at 7:30 a.m. Mass, Sunday June 24. This was the first time I met Father Murphy. Father Murphy is a very likeable priest and has a good sense of humor. And he likes the parish.

Tom Waken
Saint Francis
Oklahoma City

Was A Wheelchair Used?

In June we read that Oklahoma executed its second human being this year. This in itself is good news because in the past, Oklahoma has put to death many more people in a six-month time period.

The tragedy of this last execution is, why were we, the state of Oklahoma, in such a rush to kill a man who was already dying from three types of cancer — lung, brain and bone?

To die from any form of cancer is bad enough but to have three different cancers at once must be truly horrendous. Brain cancer itself would probably have killed this man in a very short time.

It is our understanding that it is our duty as citizens to punish those guilty of terrible crimes and indeed, Mr. Bland was convicted of taking the lives of two individuals. It appears that revenge and the power to kill is what really drives those who support the death penalty.

Cancer of the bone would make walking painful and difficult. Was a wheelchair needed to take Mr. Bland to the death chamber? At least he does not suffer any more. We did him a big favor and again made killers out of ourselves.

It is time for people who believe in the sanctity of life to demand that our legislators take us out of the business of killing. Sentence the guilty to life without parole and let them experience prison life on a daily basis. When God is ready for them, He will take them in His own time and manner.

Jim and Ann Fowler
Saint Charles Parish
Oklahoma City
Saint of Auschwitz: A Model of ‘No Greater Love’

“The most deadly poison of our times is indifference. And this happens, although the praise of God should know no limits. Let us strive, therefore, to praise Him to the greatest extent of our powers.”

Saint Maximilian Kolbe

I am part Irish and Polish. I was bubbling with pride the day Maximilian Kolbe was canonized. Aside from his Polish heritage, I was also drawn to this priest due to the fact he was a gifted journalist.

The words at the top of this article could have been written yesterday, but they were not. They are the words of a heroic and holy priest whom Pope John Paul II canonized on Oct. 10, 1982. They were the words of a humble priest, a servant of God who gave his life so another man could live. Saint John wrote the following: “Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13).

Maximilian Kolbe was born Jan. 8, 1894. He was given the name Raymond at baptism. Raymond Kolbe was baptized the day of his birth. He died Aug. 14, 1941. He was given a lethal injection after several weeks of slow starvation at the Nazi concentration camp at Auschwitz. The day of his death, Aug. 14, is now his Feast Day.

Tears of joy and pride came to my eyes the day this priest and martyr was declared a saint. “The Saint of Auschwitz” was ordained a Roman Catholic priest in 1918. Since his youth, Kolbe had a great devotion to Mary, the Mother of God. A visit early in life changed his life direction. Mary asked which cup would young Raymond prefer to drink from, “the cup of purity or that of a martyr?”

He responded, “Both.”

Our Blessed Mother lovingly responded, “Then, you shall drink them both.”

The Vatican Web site introducing Pope John Paul the II’s homily on Maximilian Kolbe gives visitors this background:

After suffering tuberculosis during his youth, he was a frail man for the rest of his life. He became a Doctor of Theology and founded the Immaculata Movement. He spread his movement through a magazine promoting Marian Spirituality called The Knight of the Immaculata.

He became a Franciscan priest. During his missionary work he was in Japan, but because of his poor health returned to Poland.

In 1941 he was arrested by the Nazis and sent to the concentration camp at Auschwitz. There he cared for the fellow prisoners and celebrated Mass in secret. Eventually there was an occasion in which some men were chosen to die in reprisal for a prisoner’s escape. Saint Maximilian offered his life to take the place of a young married man with children. He was put to death along with the other prisoners to die a slow death through starvation. He died after two weeks of suffering.

On an October day in 1982, the day Maximilian Kolbe was canonized, Pope John Paul II stated the following:

The Church has venerated Father Maximilian as “blessed” since 1971. By laying down his life for a brother, he made himself like Christ.

Gathered today before the Basilica of Saint Peter in Rome, we wish to express the special value which Father Maximilian Kolbe’s death by martyrdom has in the eyes of God.

What an example for us, The Church, this holy man is a role model for prisoners. He served prisoners by hearing Confessions and offering Mass for them to the end.

Martyrdom and the Christian Future in Iraq

In early June, I received a forwarded e-mail from a correspondent who’s done several tours in Iraq. He, in turn, had just heard from an Iraqi fellow-Catholic, a former translator for U.S. forces there, of the death of Father Raheed Ganni. The broken English of the Iraq’s e-mail conveys the force of the scene better than I ever could.

“Today 3 June, Sunday morning and after he did Sunday service in his church (The Holy Spirit) in Al-Nour neighborhood in Mosul, and while he and three of the [deacons] of his church were leaving the church, stopped them in a group of criminals of the Jihadists of Muslims extremist who call themselves members of Iraqi Islamic State and very close to the church, because they were waiting them outside the church and asked them to get out of the car and at the wall of the church they shouted them and kill all them, in the same time they planted some IEDs close to their dead bodies to make more hurt and damage happen when peoples come to evacuate them. Their dead bodies stayed out side the church many hours in the street ... actually I know this priest since 2 years ago. He is a very nice guy, respectable man, kind, love the others, always like visit and help the poor peoples. After his graduation from Rome, he was able to find him a church outside Iraq and stay there to do service for the expatriate of Iraqis, but he preferred to come back to Iraq to serve his own peoples. He was always praying to stop this violence in Iraq. I ask God the mercy for him and for the other martyrs.”

Subsequent traffic on the Catholic Internet circuit revealed a remarkable man. At his ordination in 2004, Father Raheed had evidently told a friend that he didn’t expect to live more than two more years; God gave him three. Father Raheed was martyred soon after receiving word that he had been accepted for doctoral studies in Rome, and as suggested above, his death had a biblical aura to it: like great Christian witnesses in the Book of Revelation, Father Raheed Ganni’s body and the bodies of his three deacon-companions were left in the street, unattended, until the IEDs could be disarmed and the remains of the saints taken into Father Raheed’s church.

I say “saints” with confidence, for there is no doubt that Father Raheed Ganni and his deacons are martyrs, killed “in hatred of the faith” by the haters who have created the current chaos in parts of long-suffering Iraq. We may, rightly, rejoice at the triumph of the martyrs. But we must also ask, now what?

The Holy See’s opposition to the use of force in Iraq in March 2003 is well known. Perhaps less well known is the widespread conviction in the Vatican today that a precipitous American withdrawal from Iraq would be the worst possible option from every point of view, including that of morality. Senior officials of the Holy See, with whom I discussed the issue in May share the view of American analysts who are convinced that a premature American disengagement from Iraq would lead to genocidal violence, Iraq’s collapse into a failed state, chaos throughout the Middle East, and a new haven for international terrorists. That all of this would make life intolerable for Iraq’s remaining Christians is perfectly obvious.

The question of Iraq’s Christians was discussed during June 9 meetings involving President Bush, Pope Benedict and senior Vatican diplomatic officials. U.S. Catholics and all those committed to religious liberty must urge the U.S. government to bring every possible lever into play to ensure that the Maliki government in Iraq takes seriously the religious freedom provisions of Iraq’s democratically ratified constitution, and moves to redress the plight of Chaldean Catholics and other Iraqi Christians who, too often, are being given three unacceptable choices: convert to Islam, face sometimes-lethal pressures to convert, or emigrate.

May the intercession of Father Raheed Ganni and his Companions hasten the day of peace with freedom and justice in Iraq.

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.
Super Bowl Hopes: The Promise of a New Season

T his year could be The Year. The year the 49ers win the Super Bowl. The year the Raiders regain their dignity. The year of Brady Quinn.

As the preseason unfolds, football fans are debating the impact of hot trades over grills, across cubicles and in chat rooms. Which incoming rookies and high draft picks will make the team a winner? Who will be a star and who will be a role player? Who’s a team player and who’s a playmaker?

They’re weighing old standings and statistics, then casting bold predictions. Anyone could turn any team around. Anything is possible.

There’s something about the advent of autumn that inspires a sense of possibility. Leaves may be dying, but something is being born, too: crisp of possibility. Leaves may be dying, but something is being born, too: crisp of possibility. Leaves may be dying, but something is being born, too: crisp of possibility. Leaves may be dying, but something is being born, too: crisp of possibility. Leaves may be dying, but something is being born, too: crisp of possibility. Leaves may be dying, but something is being born, too: crisp of possibility.

It stems from the school cycle that’s deeply ingrained in us. The start of a new year, well-rested minds and neat handwriting, the signature of a revamped wardrobe, blank notebooks or passy has a better idea, a piece of wisdom we haven’t conceived in all our praying, thinking and journaling.

But, just in case.

The trouble is, those thunderous expectations can muffle the whisper of the Holy Spirit. They can paralyze us with the knowledge that it’s impossible to fulfill every one.

We must slide outside the weight of others’ expectations. We must find that place where we’re alone with God — a bedroom corner, an empty chapel, an open meadow. And we must consider God’s expectations, the only ones that matter.

What does God expect of us? That we love our neighbor and live up to our God’s expectations, the only ones that matter.

It’s that simple. So go for it: Touchdown Jesus!

Christina Capecchi is a freelance writer from Inver Grove Heights, Minn. E-mail her at christinacap@gmail.com.

Save the Date

OKLAHOMA CITY — The Carmelite Seculars of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel and Saint Teresa of Jesus, Province of Saint Therese, Oklahoma Community invite you to attend an evening with Father Thomas Dubay. Father’s presentation will be “The Universal Call to Deep Intimacy with God.” This event will be held at 7 p.m. Jan. 21 at Epiphany Church, 7336 W. Britton Road. A reception will follow.

Father Thomas Dubay, S.M., is a well-known retreat master and expert in the spiritual life and appears regularly on EWTN. A Marist priest, Father holds a Ph.D. from Catholic University of America. He spent the last three years giving retreats and writing books on various aspects of the spiritual life. He is an expert on the teachings and writings of the two mystical doctors of the Church, John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila.

For more information about the conference, contact Deacon Jim Breazile, (405) 377-9478; Janet Midfelt, (405) 848-6275; Susie Spanier, OCDS, Tulsa (918) 749-4249.

Understanding Requires Commitment to True Listening

St. Francis prayer includes “…Oh Lord, grant that I may understand rather than be understood.”

When we are understanding another we are being loving, attentive, supportive, accepting, validating and affirming. When we are understanding, we are listening to and comprehending what the other is saying, thinking, feeling, wanting, proposing and sharing. When we are understanding, we are truly considering what the other is communicating, including their expressions and mannerisms.

When we are understanding, we are allowing another to fully explain, share and explore their ideas, opinions, beliefs, prejudices, with us. When we strive to understand, we only offer thoughts and/or questions to help us better comprehend what they are sharing.

Again, when we are focusing on understanding, we are loving another. Oftentimes, however, we can be quite selfish and self-centered when another is sharing.

This selfishness and self-centeredness shows itself in three barriers to understanding: defensiveness, advice giving/problem solving, and criticism.

Defensiveness is a barrier to understanding. When we are defensive we are generally taking their comments personally, are explaining our side of the story, or are blaming another. In addition, we are thinking about what we are going to say without further listening to nor understanding them.

Advice giving/problem solving is a barrier to understanding since we are usually trying to address an issue and/or fix a problem before we fully understand what the other is saying or is wanting from us. Oftentimes, we are insulting another’s intelligence and capabilities and are invading their right to experiment, make mistakes and grow from experiences.

It is better to focus on understanding and offering suggestions only after we have asked their permission. Only they can best address and resolve their issues from theirs and God’s viewpoints.

Of the three barriers to understanding, criticism is the worst offender. Criticism is a serious sin. It attacks and wounds the core, the spirit, the soul of another. Criticism is an absolute block to understanding.

There is no excuse for it. Criticism needs to stop. When there is criticism the other is better off walking away, explaining they do not tolerate criticism or, better yet, just walking away.

Now, how do we put aside these selfish and self-centered ways and be more understanding? Well, we certainly need God’s help. We can’t do it alone. We can notice which of these selfish traits have gotten in the way of our understanding others, be willing to let go and wonder, with God’s help, how we may be more loving and understanding, next time. This is tough and takes time. After all, we have been practicing these barriers to understanding most of our lives.

And so, we can notice when we have been defensive, have given unwarranted advice, have tried to solve their problems or have been critical. Again, we just notice our in-appropriate behavior and wonder how we might be more understanding and loving next time, and then we forgive ourselves as God has forgiven us.

To help us better understand, we might focus on truly hearing what another is saying, and notice how we might reflect back to them what we have heard and understood. We can also ask, “Am I understanding…?” Or “Have I understood correctly…?”, “How can I help?”, “What would you like from me?” Asking questions not only helps us understand, but validates to the other that we are understanding.

The key here is to be honest with ourselves about our difficulties with understanding others and be willing to change. As we better understand the other as well as ourselves, change happens. God sees to that and He smiles upon our honesty and willingness.

EDITOR’S NOTE: Joe Froehle has over 16 years experience in marital, individual and family counseling. He serves in the Counseling Center at St. John the Baptist, Edmond. He can be reached at (405) 539-8539 or by e-mail at jfroehle@swbell.net.
Buenas Noticias...

...El Centro Guadalupe de la Florecita

Con ese espíritu de alegría, felicité al pueblo de la parroquia de la Florecita. Estoy muy orgulloso y agradecido.

En marzo del año dos mil cinco, yo les dije para que construyan los fondos para la construcción de este nuevo edificio. Yo les prometí que la Arquidiócesis de Oklahoma City les enajenaría los fondos que pudieran alcanzar hasta el último mes de este año. Ustedes alcanzaron docientos sesenta y tres mil dólares, los que la Arquidiócesis le duplicó esa suma. Un millón y dos millones de dólares y alcanzaron el total de un millón y medio de dólares.

Con el tiempo y los consejos de la obra, se elevaron y se terminó recogiendo más de dos millones de dólares. Ustedes han trabajado duro y han realizado muchas actividades para ayudar a su misión y a Dios. El es el creador y el promotor de esta obra. Todas las actividades son un signo de su fe y por esto estoy muy agradecido y alabado.

Ustedes llevaron el nombre de Centro Guadalupe a su nueva parroquia. Lo que era maravilloso, la Santísima Virgen María, madre de Dios, es la más importante bendición que obtuvieron. La Iglesia siempre ha practicado una gran devoción hacia María. Tenemos una devoción muy especial a ella. Tengo el privilegio de organizar el día de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe. Cuando Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe se apareció ante Juan Diego, ella nos aseguró su amor maternal. Ella se dirigió a nosotros para que nos orientáramos hacia su Hijo Cristo Jesús, quien es nuestro Señor y Salvador.

Inagurablemente, la Virgen María es la madre de Cristo. Por eso, siempre que veamos la imagen de la Virgen María, nos recordará que estamos en el camino de la salvación. Por eso, siempre que veamos la imagen de la Virgen María, nos recordará que estamos en el camino de la salvación.

En la parroquia de la Florecita, el parrón y el vino se convierten en el cuerpo y sangre de Cristo. Ahora podemos recibir el verdadero alimento de la vida para que podamos crecer en él, en esperanza y en amor.

En los días y años que quedan por delante, ustedes con entrega sacarán de este bello Centro Guadalupe. Aquí, ustedes disfrutarán de la amistad de sus familiares y amigos. Aquí, ustedes y sus hijos podrán estudiar y aprender más de nuestra Santísima Virgen María. A través de estas actividades y clases, cada uno de ustedes podrá aprender más de nuestra Santísima Virgen María y el regalo de la fe que Jesús nos ha dado.

Por lo tanto, estamos muy agradecidos que nuestro Centro Guadalupe tenga este bello altar y tabernáculo para que nuestros hijos y nietos logren la misa Dominical y la Santa Misa durante los días de la semana.

Inagurablemente este es un lugar sagrado, el cual bendecimos y dedicamos en el día de hoy. Por eso, todos podemos y debemos celebrarlo con nuestra felicidad y bendecirlo.

También, queremos expresar nuestra gratitud a los Padres y Hermanos Carmelitas, quienes han sido y siguen siendo nuestro apoyo.

Por una parte, queremos expresar nuestra gratitud a los Padres y Hermanos Carmelitas, quienes han sido y siguen siendo nuestro apoyo.

Además, de una manera muy especial, agradecemos a la Madre de Dios, Madre de Jesús, quien ha sido nuestra guía y esperanza durante estos tiempos.

Institución necesaria para la conservación, propagación y desarrollo de la vida

El matrimonio es la base esencial de la familia, definiéndolo...

Por Mauro Yépez
Sooner Catholic

OKLAHOMA CITY — El matrimonio es un sacramento indisoluble y proclama el principio de la igualdad de los esposos. El Evangelio nos dice: “La familia unida en el matrimonio corresponde al diseño del Creador, desde el comienzo” (Mateo 19, 5). Por ende, el matrimonio es el inicio de la familia y para tener una sociedad saludable. El matrimonio es un sacramento que va unido al amor de Cristo su Iglesia, lo que no es el modelo del amor y que se encontrará en la familia y en la parroquia. No hay verdadero matrimonio entre el hombre y la mujer cuando se contrae el sacramento.

El matrimonio se define como la alianza por la cual, el hombre y la mujer se unen libremente para toda la vida con el fin de ayudarse mutuamente, procrear y educar a los hijos. Es la unión que se basa en el amor, implica un consentimiento interior y exterior, estando bendecida por Dios, al ser sacramental hace que el vínculo conjugar sea para toda la vida. Nadie puede romper este vínculo.

Por esta razón, debemos apoyar toda iniciativa que vaya a favor de la protección y conservación de la institución del matrimonio.

Para más información sobre el encuentro matrimonial, pueden contactar a la señora Juana Alicia Ramos al teléfono (405) 631-2655.
Alerta su episcopado
Momentos cruciales se acercan para la historia de Venezuela

CARACAS, (ZENIT.org). — El episcopado de Venezuela advierte de que el país "vive uno de los momentos más cruciales de su historia", vistos los pasos del presidente Hugo Chávez hacia una reforma constitucional a gran escala orientada al "establecimiento de un sistema socialista fundado en la teoría y la praxis del marxismo-leninismo".

La reforma constitucional, promovida para su aprobación el año que viene, contempla también la reelección presidencial indefinida.

Chávez convocó a las críticas de los obispos, preocupados por estas reformas, cuestionándolas como igno-rantes, poniendo en duda su apoyo a la verdad e incluso atribuyéndolos intenciones perversas en sus declaraciones.

Pero se van conociendo los contenidos de la reforma y la manera de llevarla a cabo, por lo que los prelados denuncian el "talante democrático" de tal procedimiento. Además, "diferentes decisiones oficiales, como el tema impuesto 'Patria, socialismo o muerte', y declaraciones del presidente y de voceros del gobierno, hacen suponer que esta reforma se dirige hacia el establecimiento de un sistema socialista fundado en la teoría y la praxis del marxismo-leninismo", advierten los obispos de Venezuela. Subrayan que el último "atentado a la libertad de expresión" - el cierre gubernamental de la cadena privada de radio-television RCTV, tras más de medio siglo de emisiones - "favorece una hegemonía indebida del gobierno en materia de comunicación social, lo cual es evidentemente antidemocrática". Asimismo, se preciamente "apunta los pasos del nuevo proyecto de Ley de Educación por su "pretensión de impartir una educación con una única y determinada orientación política e ideológica, que afectaría gravemente derechos y deberes de los educandos y de los padres de familia". "La solución a los problemas políticos y sociales de Venezuela debe ir más allá del popu-lismo que no va al fondo de los mismos y del militarismo que cada vez protagoniza más la vida en el estado milita-milo, al cual no le corresponde dicho papel", reclaman los obispos. "Nadie, y mucho menos el Presidente de la República, tiene derecho a insultar o acusar a perso-nas o instituciones que disientan de sus opiniones o proyectos", recuerdan.
Elementary School Principal
St. Mary’s School in Ponca City is seeking a principal who will be a faith leader as well as academic leader for the school. St. Mary’s has preschool through eighth grade and enrolls approximately 150 students. Applicant must: 1) be a practicing Catholic; 2) have a master’s degree in educational administration or a related field or be working toward such a degree; 3) have a minimum of three years teaching experience, preferably in a Catholic school. Salary is based on qualifications and experience. Position available immediately. For an application, contact Office of the Superintendent, P.O. Box 32180, Oklahoma City 73123, call (405) 721-4202, or contact mdubey@catholiccharitiesok.org.

Part-Time Bilingual Therapist
Catholic Charities / St. Joseph’s Counseling Center is seeking a part-time bilingual (Spanish) licensed counselor to work 20 hours per week providing professional counseling and related services to individuals, couples and families. Services will be provided in the St. Joseph’s Counseling Center at Catholic Charities and at selected parishes within the community. Submit a cover letter and resume to Human Resources, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, 1501 N. Classen Blvd., OKC 73106, or nlargent@catholiccharitiesok.org.

Director of Family Support Services
Catholic Charities has an opening for a licensed clinical social worker interested in creating service responses to the poor and vulnerable. Successful candidates should demonstrate the ability to supervise case managers and student interns. As a mission-based organization, Catholic Charities offers an employee and family friendly environment that is rich in opportunities for personal and professional growth. Benefits include paid health, life, dental and long-term disability insurance for employees. Employees work a 37.5-hour week and enjoy a generous paid leave. Send cover letter, resume and salary history to Human Resources, 1501 N. Classen Blvd., OKC 73106, or nlargent@catholiccharitiesok.org. EOE

Accountant
Catholic Charities seeks an accountant. Candidate should possess a bachelor’s degree in accounting or a related field; 1-plus years experience preferably in a nonprofit setting; computer proficiency, including Excel, Word and Outlook; organizational skills and the ability to multi-task; excellent analytical skills; positive communication skills and the ability to relate to and 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

Administrative Assistant
Catholic Charities seeks a bilingual administrative assistant for a position in the St. Joseph’s counseling office. Candidate should 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 relate to and 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

Job Coaches
The Center of Family Love is looking for job coaches. This position is best described as a mentor for our community-based clients, helping them to get to their jobs as well as helping them to understand what their employer needs and expects from them. We pay competitive wages, provide training and have a paid time-off program. For more information, call John Isenegger at the Center of Family Love at (405) 263-4658 or fax resume to (405) 263-4563.

Housekeeping
The Center of Family Love has openings on the housekeeping staff. We pay competitive wages, provide training and have a paid time-off program. For more information, call John Isenegger at the Center of Family Love at (405) 263-4658 or fax resume to (405) 263-4563.

Dietary
The Center of Family Love has openings on the dietary staff. We offer competitive wages, provide training and have a paid time-off program. For more information, call John Isenegger at the Center of Family Love at (405) 263-4658 or fax resume to (405) 263-4563.

Coordinator, Case Management
Catholic Charities seeks a licensed social worker with a clinical specialty to supervise the case management staff in our Family HOPE and Transitional Housing programs. This position supervises direct services to clients. Works with all programs to develop respectful relationships with persons served while helping the clients gain skills and confidence to solve their own problems. Catholic Charities is an equal opportunity employer offering competitive benefits and a supportive 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.

KIDS CLUB DIRECTO
All Saints Catholic School in Norman is looking for a part-time Kids Club director to plan educational and recreational activities, supervise assistants, supervise children 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. daily, and full day care on selected school holidays. Knowledge of DHS day-care regulations a plus. Send resumes to Principal Leslie Schmitt at 4001 36th Avenue, N.W., Norman 73072, or fax to (405) 447-7227.

Preschool Teacher
St. James Catholic School is seeking a teacher for 3-year-old pre-school. If interested, contact James Bleecker, Principal, at 636-6810. Resumes may be sent to 1224 SW 41st Oklahoma City 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, 700 E. Warner, Guthrie 73044, or call (405) 282-2071 for more information.

3 Year-Old Teacher
Villa Teresa Catholic School needs a teacher for 3-year-olds. Must have an associate degree in early childhood or CDA. This is a 12-month position. Those interested should call Sister Veronica at 232-4286.

Parish Food Fest Set
OKLAHOMA CITY — Corpus Christi Church, 1010 NE 16th St., is presenting its first ever Food Fest. The event is set from 6 to 8 p.m. Aug. 25 and will feature the different tastes of Corpus. We will also have a silent and live auction and games for the kids. Dinner tickets will be $20 for adults, $5 for 6-12 years of age and children under 6 eat free. Call Jan Lorenz for ticket information, (405) 715-4625.

Epiphany To Host Financial Peace University
OKLAHOMA CITY — Did you know there are more than 800 scriptures in the Bible regarding personal finances? Financial Peace University is a life-changing 13-week program on personal finance starting at Epiphany Church on Tuesday, Aug. 28. It is designed to empower people to eliminate debt and to be good stewards of God’s money. All material is biblically based and taught via video. Join us for a seminar presentation on Tuesday, Aug. 21 at 7 p.m. in Bryce Hall. For questions, e-mail Vickie at vgaglio@cox.net.

2-Bedroom Apartments Available
OKLAHOMA CITY — Saint Ann Retirement Center has a few 2-bedroom apartments available in our independent living community. Each apartment includes new carpet, scenic bay windows, two large bathrooms and all the amenities including three meals a day, seven days a week. Mass is celebrated daily. There is a special going on during the month of August, we are offering a $1,000 discount on the signing fee of 2-bedroom apartments. Call Richard Amend at (405) 721-0747 for more information.

Diabetes Seminar set Aug. 14
OKLAHOMA CITY — The third and final session in the health series titled “A Parish Approach to Diabetes” will be held Aug. 14 from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. in the Parish Hall of St. Francis of Assisi Church, 1901 N.W. 18th, Oklahoma City. The presentation will focus on medications, research and spiritual care for diabetics. Program presenters are registered nurse and certified diabetes educator Glenda Bronson and registered dietitian Diane Moore, both from Mercy Hospital. Though there is no fee, you must register by calling Catholic Charities Faith Community Nursing Coordinator Mary Diane Steltenkamp at (405) 523-3009.
School Choice

continued from page 4

found that black students moving from public schools to private schools showed a 9.2 percent overall gain in academic performance after two years. Analyses from Florida, Arizona, Wisconsin and other places find that public school test scores go up in areas with school choice.

None of this would have surprised the late great Milton Friedman. He wasn’t black. He had a great heart and the willingness to speak truth to power. In 1995, he wrote, “There is no respect in which inhabitants of low-income neighborhoods are so disadvantaged as the kind of schooling they can get for their children. The reason is partly the deterioration of central cities, partly the increased centralization of public schools. We all know the dismal results: some relatively good government schools in high-income suburbs and communities; very poor government schools in our inner cities with high dropout rates, increasing violence, lower performance and demoralized students and teachers.”

The Milton and Rose Friedman Foundation, in its 2006-07 analysis, says 2006 was “an irreversible turning point” for school choice, as Wisconsin expanded Milwaukee’s vouchers, Arizona created a tax-credit scholarship, then Iowa and Rhode Island followed. Taxpayer-financed charter schools are here to stay, indeed may become common, but before long, scrutiny will be on the states (like Oklahoma) where full-blown choice is not yet an option.

Someone wise once said that nothing is inevitable, neither the rise and fall of great nations nor the dawn of another day. History’s tide could shift against educational choice. But that’s not likely. This is an idea whose time has come, one that transcends the transient issues dividing us, reaching to the heart of human aspiration and dignity. When the history of this great movement for social justice and equal opportunity is written, there will be a special place of affirmation for those brave souls who in the face of shocking atrocities and real-world political opposition looked at the future and said, “Yes.”

Black politicians like Wisconsin’s Polly Williams (“the Rosa Parks of vouchers”), who devised Milwaukee’s choice program a decade ago, Washington, D.C.’s Anthony Williams and, perhaps, Oklahoma’s Jabar Shumate and Judy Eason McIntyre will deserve more than footnotes in the chronicles of choice. Still, the real heroes and heroines will be millions of parents and students who looked at possibilities and embraced for themselves a better future, consciously choosing a better place in the world.

A special place? Yes, they chose it and they deserve it — in heaven.

McGuigan, a parishioner at The Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, (M.A. in history, Oklahoma State University) is manager of The MidCity Advocate, a weekly newspaper serving the heart of Oklahoma City. A former state deputy commissioner of labor, he also taught at an inner-city public charter school serving at-risk youth. This article originally appeared in The July issue of Perspective, published by the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs, reprinted with permission.

Benedict XVI Guarded on China Question

AURONZO, Italy, (Zenit.org). —

Asked by journalists about a possible invitation to visit China, Benedict XVI said that the situation is “somewhat complicated.”

“I cannot speak about that in this moment — it is somewhat complicated,” the pope said today in Auronzo, close to his vacation spot, where he had a question-and-answer session with local clergy.

Earlier today, the Italian daily La Repubblica published an interview with the vice chairman of the Chinese government’s Patriotic Association, which oversees and monitors religion in the country.

The pope spoke of the “changing political and social context” in China, and the idea of a visit as a way to “promote peace and development.”

Anthony Liu Bainian was quoted as saying, “I hope with all my strength to one day see the pope here, in Beijing, celebrating Mass for us, the Chinese.”
**Pastoral Counselor Offers a Healing Presence**

By Candace Krebs  
For the Sooner Catholic

PIEDMONT — The library at the Red Plains Monastery is an intimate soothing place, filled with volumes of spiritual reading, a few comfy chairs and colorful afghans, an oasis for the spirit nestled into beautiful natural surroundings. The site of many of the community’s popular spiritual retreats, earlier this year it was the backdrop for longtime therapist and counselor Pat Ahern, who conducted two daylong Saturday retreats on healing, one on the topic of “The Self-Healing Personality,” the other on how to be “A Healing Presence.”

Ahern’s most recent retreat, a daylong discussion Aug. 4, concerned aging and how our fears and challenges can be re-created into a new vision of aging as “spiritual alchemy” and transformation.

“That’s something to start thinking about early, so later you don’t have regrets that you can’t change,” Ahern said. “The important thing is to identify what you are grateful for in your life and what you have learned.”

On Oct. 6, she plans to offer a Saturday retreat for caregivers, relevant to both professional caregivers and those who care for family members at home. An aging population, shorter hospital stays and other pressures are making the caregiver role increasingly common and vital. Ahern will speak from her own experience as someone who has provided professional care and now cares for her mother full time. “I like it a lot,” she says. “If I wasn’t doing it, I would probably crumple up and fade away. But there’s a high burnout rate. It takes somebody with a heart for it.”

She intentionally uses the term “caregiver” rather than “caretaker,” a distinction she plans to highlight during the retreat.

“Taking care of people usually comes out of your need,” she says. “When you are giving care, it comes out of your giftedness.”

Ahern is clearly someone with a vocation, not a job. In the broadest sense, she’s a healer, whose engaging personality mixes calmness with vitality, caregiving skills with healthy self-regard.

At one of her retreats last spring, she introduced herself as “a woman who came home to myself.”

Ahern was born in Texas and has lived in different parts of the country, raising four children as part of an Air Force family. She only recently moved to the Oklahoma City area to care for her mother. It is all part of a spiritual journey that has brought her full circle. One of the most rewarding elements of this “more reflective” stage in her life is her participation as an oblate of the monastery. At her local parish, Sacred Heart Catholic Church in El Reno, she is actively involved with the altar society and parish council. She continues to offer her talents as a licensed counselor and therapist of both mind and body who honors the essential connection between the two.

Ahern started her career with a bachelor’s degree in social work, but on the basis of her church and volunteer work, she was soon directed into grief counseling, which turned out to be a wonderful fit. “I had the freedom to do some incredible work,” she says, looking back. Working for the cancer program in a large hospital, she ended up developing pioneer-level training and professional development that was eventually integrated into the entire hospital. “We raised $1 million to make it more homelike,” she says. All employees were required to take several rounds of training on how to create “a healing environment.”

“That was back before integrative healthcare came on board,” she says.

Along the way, Ahern earned a master’s degree in pastoral counseling and explored healing of all kinds, from massage therapy to guided meditation to the wisdom of American Indian shamans, grounding it all in her Catholic faith. Where others might imagine a tool kit to help them through life, hers is a “medicine bag.” Her study of healing practices from many different spiritual traditions is motivated by her interest in the connection between the disease process and spiritual health, particularly the use of prayer.

During a retreat last spring, she asked participants to reflect on their own personal “prayer language.”

“Even if all of us were Catholic, we don’t all do that the same way,” she reminded a group of about 15 who were gathered informally around tables in the monastery library.

Studies have shown the most powerful form of prayer is one that seeks “love, light and blessings” on the other person rather than a specific outcome, she added.

By all indications, her work of “understanding the life force” has never been more needed. Some studies indicate that fully 75 percent of doctor visits are related to stress. Ahern prefers to redirect emphasis from the stress itself to healthy ways for handling stress. “Life will always be chaotic,” she says.

Another thing she advises is to seek “life-affirming relationships.”

“Most of us can only carry one caseload,” she says. “If you haven’t made a difference in another person’s life by now, it won’t happen. Ask yourself if they contribute to your health.”

Ahern, who has also worked as a chaplain, says most people have a blueprint of someone in their life who has modeled a healing presence.

In her case, she refers frequently to a deeply-admired friend and hospice volunteer who demonstrated to her what she now calls “hollow bone peace” — the healing presence of calm and stillness, even in the midst of the most chaotic or environmental threat.

We can also learn from these examples more about how to be our own healing presence, which she considers essential.

“When you meet something you don’t like in yourself, be gentle,” she urges. “Notice what keeps coming up for you and ask yourself what it is trying to say. Greet it by saying inwardly, ‘Hello, old friend, what do you want me to learn today?’”

Ahern has great sensitivity to the energy forces at work in and around us. She draws inspiration from the work of Masaru Emoto, a Japanese researcher and photographer who captured on film the differences in the ice crystals water forms, depending on whether it contains positive or negative energies. His work proves that human vibrational energy, thoughts, words, ideas and music affect the molecular structure of water. His theory and photos have been published in a lushly illustrated book called “The Messages of Water.”

Placing a glass of water on a piece of paper containing a written prayer can change the beauty of the energy it reveals, Ahern says. “Now remember that our bodies are 97 percent water,” she reminds.

“The cross itself has an energetic frequency we can measure,” she adds.

During one workshop, she used a quick and easy exercise to demonstrate that anger — which feels like strength — actually weakens us.

Pay attention to how your energy feels, she urged.

As an energy practitioner, Ahern uses the practitioner’s energy to redirect and heal physical energy patterns in the body. It’s an integrated whole person approach. “The emotions you don’t do are stored in your long muscles,” she says. “It’s all tied together.” She combines massage and healing touch with spiritual direction to help assist others in greater body awareness and in moving deeper into an understanding of their life’s spiritual journey.

To give back to the Benedictine community that has given her so much in the way of spiritual support, earlier this summer she started offering bodywork and spiritual counseling sessions in exchange for a free-will donation to the monastery. She is setting aside one afternoon and evening per month (normally the fourth Thursday) for appointments at Red Plains Monastery. A donation of $25 for each 30-minute session is requested.

To register for one of her upcoming workshops, call the monastery at (405) 373-4739 or register on the Web site at www.redplainsmonastery.org. Sister Marie Ballmann coordinates the retreats.

Ahern also offers consultations at her home, in addition to scheduling appointments one day a month at the monastery. Call her directly to learn more or to make an appointment at (405) 262-9342.