Couple Tells How Ministry Helped Save Their Marriage

Little Flower Church Turns Out to Pray, Celebrate New Center
The Main Event, Wrestling With God

In his memoir, Report to Greco, Nikos Kazantzakis shares this story: As a young man, he spent a summer in a monastery during which he had a series of conversations with an old monk. One day he asked the old monk: “Father, do you still do battle with the devil?” The old monk replied: “No, I used to, when I was younger, but now I have grown old and tired and the devil has grown old and tired with me. I leave him alone and he leaves me alone.” “So your life is easy then?” remarked Kazantzakis. “Oh no,” replied the monk, “it’s much worse, now I wrestle with God!”

There’s a lot contained in that remark — “I wrestle with God.” Among other things, it suggests that the struggles in later life can be very different than what we struggle with earlier on. In the normal pattern of things, we spend the first half of our lives struggling with sensuality, greed and sexuality, and spend the last half of our lives struggling with anger and forgiveness — and that anger is often, however unconsciously, focused on God. In the end, our real struggle is with God.

But wrestling with God has another aspect. It invites us to a certain kind of prayer. Prayer isn't meant to be a simple acquiescence to God's will. It’s meant to be an acquiescence, yes, but a mature acquiescence, come to at the end of a long struggle.

We see this in the prayer of the great figures in Scripture: Abraham, Moses, Jesus, the apostles. Abraham argues with God and initially talks about can be a bad thing, but it can also be a mature form of prayer. The Book of Genesis describes an incident where Jacob wrestled with a spirit for a whole night and in the morning that spirit turned out to be God. What a perfect icon for prayer! A human being and God, wrestling in the dust of this earth! Doesn’t that accurately describe the human struggle?

We would do well to integrate this, the concept of wrestling with God, into our understanding of faith and prayer. We honor neither ourselves nor the Scriptures when we make things too simple. Human will doesn’t bend easily, nor should it, and the heart has complexities that need to be respected, even as we try to rein in its more possessive longings. God, who built the world, will not be mastered easily, nor should it, and the heart has complexities that need to be respected, even as we try to rein in its more possessive longings. God, who built the world, will not be mastered easily, nor should it, and the heart has complexities that need to be respected, even as we try to rein in its more possessive longings. God, who built the world, will not be mastered easily, nor should it, and the heart has complexities that need to be respected, even as we try to rein in its more possessive longings.

The classical mystics speak of something they call “being bold with God.” This “boldness,” they suggest, comes not at the beginning of a spiritual journey, but more toward the end of it, when, after a long period of fidelity, we are intimate enough with God to scarcely be “bold,” as friends who have known each other for a long time have a right to be. That’s a valuable insight: After you have been friends with someone for a long time, you can be comfortable with expressing your needs to him or her and in the context of a long, sustained relationship, unquestioning reverence is not necessarily a sign of mature intimacy. Old friends, precisely because they know and trust each other, can risk a boldness in their friendship that younger, less mature, friendship cannot.

That is also true in our relationship with God. God expects that, at some point, we will kick against his will and offer some resistance. But we should lay out our hearts in honesty. Jesus did.

God expects some resistance. As Nikos Kazantzakis puts it: “I wrestle with God.”

The struggle between God and humans breaks out in everyone, together with the longing for reconciliation. Most often this struggle is unconscious and short-lived. A weak soul does not have the endurance to resist the flesh for very long. It grows heavy, becomes flesh itself, and the contest ends. But among responsible persons who keep their eyes riveted day and night upon the supreme duty, the conflict between flesh and spirit breaks out mercilessly and may last until death. The stronger the soul and the flesh, the more fruitful the struggle and the richer the final harvest. The spirit wants to have to wrestle with flesh which is strong and full of resistance. It is a carnivorous bird which is incessantly hungry; it eats flesh and, by assimilating it, makes it disappear.

Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser, theologian, teacher and award-winning author, is president of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio. He can be contacted through his Website www.ronrolheiser.com.
Prayer for Religious Vocations

Gracious and loving God, help the men and women of our Archdiocese to hear the call to serve the people of God.

Our needs are great and our people thirst for your presence.

Open the hearts of many, raise up faithful servants of the Gospel, dedicated holy priests, sisters, brothers and deacons, who will dedicate themselves for Your people and their needs.

Bless those who are serving now with courage and perseverance.

Grant that many will be inspired by their example and faith.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen
Ethical Blind Spots: Are We the People Who Turn Away?

When I traveled to Auschwitz a few years ago, one question played over and over in my mind: Did they know? Did the German people know what was happening in this camp near their own border, in their own occupied territories? With the trains coming and going year after year, with the long lines of prisoners and the billowing smokestacks, did they just turn a blind eye to the atrocities? Had they become desensitized to the point that they could no longer see the carefully choreographed death operations nearby?

Some concentration camps, like the one in Dachau, were set in comfortable suburbs right inside Germany itself, and the townsfolk could stroll past them during their daily routine. The grass in those suburbs continued to grow as green as anywhere else, young people got married, babies were born, men went to work, and life went on.

Walking through a place like Dachau or Auschwitz, one wonders: Could it ever happen again? Could a similar scenario play out today in middle-class America? Most would instinctively say no — after all, we live in a more enlightened time and culture. A more perceptive eye, however, can discern troubling parallels. Nowhere are these parallels more evident than in the bioethical issues of our day. Our society, in fact, faces virtually the same temptation that Germany did: the temptation to normalize certain well-scripted death operations in the midst of polite society.

If we look within our own culture and within our own time, we will see that suction machines have replaced smokestacks, and that fertility clinics and women’s health centers have replaced the barbed wire. Unborn humans and embryonic children are now dispatched with the same desensitized ease as camp inhabitants once were, and ne’er a word is mentioned in respectable society. Our great universities, which need to serve as a beacon of intellectual freedom, are now silent. There is a certain banality about evil.

We need look no further than the planned parenthood clinics which are dotted across our country. Future generations are likely to be appalled by the statistics: nearly 2 million deaths per year. They are sure to wonder about a people that ended the lives of their own children at the rate of one every 23 seconds through elective abortion. They are sure to ask, “How could they?” and “Did they know?”

We need look no further than the fertility clinics present in every major American city. Future generations are sure to be scandalized by the numbers: in vitro fertilization making hundreds of thousands of embryonic humans, to be chilled in liquid nitrogen and turned into, in the words of one commentator, “kidsicles.” They are sure to deplore the many other human embryos treated as objects, discarded as medical waste, poured down the sink or experimented upon and strip-mined for their embryonic stem cells.

There is a certain banality about evil. It doesn’t necessarily present itself in a monstrous or dramatic way. It can take the shape of simple conformity to what everyone else is doing, to what the leadership says is right, to what the neighbors are doing. The gradual encroachment of evil in our lives can be something we might not even notice because we are not paying attention; it can be something barely on the periphery of our consciousness.

The majority of those who collaborated with some of history’s most terrible crimes and falsehoods need not be cast as inhuman monsters; instead, they were often like us. They were capable of giving and receiving sympathy and love; they could have beautiful feelings and noble ideals; heroism, loyalty, family and culture could all coexist with almost unbelievable evil.

During the Nazi years, there often were no momentous decisions to be made for or against evil. People were concerned with their daily affairs, and on that level, Nazism seemed good: it seemed to bring prosperity, it made things work, it allowed people to feel good about themselves and their country. The moral issues — the ones that we now see as having been central — were carefully avoided.

When the full horror of Nazism was revealed at the end of the war, the German people responded, “We didn’t know.” When a local townsperson was asked whether he knew what was going on in the camp, he gave a more complete answer. “Yes, we knew something was up, but we didn’t talk about it, we didn’t want to know too much.” Primo Levi, a writer and a survivor of Auschwitz, described the German ethical blind spot this way:

“In spite of the varied possibilities for information, most Germans didn’t know because they didn’t want to know. Because indeed, they wanted not to know. ... Those who knew didn’t talk; those who did not know did not ask questions; those who did ask questions received no answers. In this way the typical German citizen won and defended his ignorance, which seemed to him sufficient justification of his adherence to Nazism. Shutting his mouth, his eyes and his ears, he built for himself the illusion of not knowing, hence not being an accomplice to the things taking place in front of his door.”

Martin Luther King Jr. used to say that what pained him the most was the silence of the good.

There is a certain banality about evil. It doesn’t necessarily present itself in a monstrous or dramatic way. It can take the shape of simple conformity to what everyone else is doing, to what the leadership says is right, to what the neighbors are doing.

There is a certain banality about evil. It doesn’t necessarily present itself in a monstrous or dramatic way. It can take the shape of simple conformity to what everyone else is doing, to what the leadership says is right, to what the neighbors are doing.
Retrouvaille: A Lifeline for Troubled Marriages

By Larry and Janette Feist

Our marriage of more than 40 years was on the rocks, and with feelings of anger, despair, disappointment and many other unpleasant emotions, our words and actions “told on us.”

Our children were very concerned and began offering help. A brochure that our daughter obtained at the church she and her family attended in Oklahoma City started the ball rolling.

In a telephone conversation, she told us what she had learned about this program, which the brochure described as a lifeline for troubled marriages. A lifeline was what we needed, and we decided that we owed it to ourselves and our children and grandchildren to give our marriage a chance by participating in this program.

Last September, as we went through the weekend phase and the post-weekend sessions, couples who were not strangers to conflict, anger, pain and guilt shared stories of their struggles and how they had been able to put the past behind them and rediscover loving relationships.

Their stories were powerful. Some had separated, and some had even divorced before finding this program. These couples gave us hope that we could one day be where they were in their relationships.

It was obvious that they were in loving relationships. They looked at each other when speaking and touched or held hands. This was something we each wanted for ourselves.

In our marriage, communication had deteriorated into shouting matches, with one or both of us clamping up or running away. The new tools we were handed allowed us to communicate once again without resorting to that.

Learning to use listening, forgiveness and the dialogue process, we began healing our marriage. No one ever asked about what sort of troubles we had that brought us to the program. We were so relieved that everything was confidential. Our first names were all the others knew.

We began talking to each other in a loving way, and each of us started listening to the other.

There were other positive changes. After many years of tardiness to all sorts of events, which often resulted in conflict, we started arriving on time more regularly.

And common courtesies were extended: a phone call when one of us is going to be late, a compliment when one does something to please the other.

We make “prayer together” a major part of our lives and now say “I love you” to each other. We have learned more about each other and ourselves and about how to manage conflict.

This program hasn’t “fixed” all of the things that were wrong in our marriage. What Retrouvaille has done is given us hope and the tools to build a loving and lasting relationship.

Our marriage is healthier now because of the courage and strength we’ve received. We believe in this program and are committed to it. Once a month we make the trip that takes three hours one way from our home to attend meetings of a support group called C.O.R.E. This stands for Continuing Our Retrouvaille Experience.

Being with our new friends sharing fellowship, stories, ideas and giving and receiving support is a part of our lives as we all continue to build on what we have already received from Retrouvaille.

If you or someone you know is in a troubled marriage and want more information, please call 918-685-7010 or go to www.helpourmarriage.com

Larry and Janette Feist live in Wakita, northwest of Enid near the Kansas line. They attend Wakita’s St. Mary’s Assumption Parish in the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City.

Help for Marriage

Do you feel alone? Are you frustrated or angry with each other? Do you argue ... or have you just stopped talking to each other? Does talking about it only make it worse? Retrouvaille (pronounced retro-vi with a long i) helps couples through difficult times in their marriage. This program has helped thousands of couples who are experiencing difficulties in their marriage, even those already separated or divorced. For confidential information about or to register for the fall program beginning with a weekend on Sept. 14-16, call Randy or Stephanie at (918) 685-7010 or visit the Web site at www.helpourmarriage.com.

For Your Marriage Web site offers resources for couples of all faiths

WASHINGTON — Putting a modern image on traditional values, the U.S. Catholic bishops recently launched a Web site designed to promote healthy marriages. The Web site, which is located on the Internet at www.foryourmarriage.org, can aid couples of all faiths. With everything from daily marriage tips to statistics on divorce and cohabitation, this site is an up-to-date resource.

The For Your Marriage Web site includes resources for everyone, including engaged and married couples, and facts about Catholic marriage. The Web site is designed for a wide and varied audience and is part of a larger campaign which includes television public service messages which can be viewed on the site. In just one month, the site has received nearly 500,000 hits with the average visitor viewing six to 12 pages.

The site offers daily marriage tips that suggest simple ways to cultivate a healthy marriage. A link on the home page also gives couples a tool to find Catholic marriage information locally. A monthly marriage quiz can serve as a conversation starter on sensitive issues.

Information on conflict resolution, communication and financial concerns is posted throughout the Web site. Topics such as intimacy and parenting also are featured. Visitors also can view stories and advice from married couples.

“The Internet has become a crucial means for evangelizing, especially among younger people,” said Archbishop Joseph Kurtz, chairman of the bishops Marriage and Family Life Committee. “We hope youth especially will find inspiration and hope at the stroke of a key.”

The contemporary design of the For Your Marriage Web site has versatility and accessibility to enable the Internet to be a medium for evangelization and education.

The For Your Marriage Web site is part of a multi-year National Pastoral Initiative for Marriage. The simple exhortation to do something for your marriage is the practical advice promoted by the Web site and the entire campaign.

The For Your Marriage Web site and the TV and radio spots are funded by the U.S. Bishops Catholic Communication Campaign, which collects money in parishes nationwide to support church media efforts.

Two Adorers Celebrate 60 Years as Professioned Religious

In July, two women religious who have ministered in the Oklahoma City Archdiocese, Sisters Elizabeth Ann Schmidt and Beata Weiss, celebrated 60 years as Adorers of the Blood of Christ at the Wichita Center in Wichita.

They had made their first profession of vows on July 1, 1947.

Sister Elizabeth Ann Schmidt was born in Spearville, Kan. Her 60 years of ministry have focused on education, with her first 23 years spent in classrooms in Kansas, Nebraska and Oklahoma. In the Oklahoma City Archdiocese, she taught at Corpus Christi (1969-1971), assisted teachers at Christ the King in 1988, and was a special education teacher at Elmhurst School (1989-1990). After obtaining a master’s in educationally handicapped, her educational ministries shifted to tutoring, assistant teacher and special needs students in Oklahoma, Kentucky, Missouri, Nebraska and various schools in Wichita. She also served as Director of Temporary Professioned Sisters for three years at the Wichita Center.

Sister Beata Weiss was born in Oferle, Kan. She taught in several schools in Kansas, Colorado and Oklahoma. These included Holy Trinity School in Okarche (1966-1969) and Corpus Christi School (1969-1970) and McGuinness High School (1971-1973) in Oklahoma City. She served as the Dean of Women at the then Sacred Heart College in Wichita. In 1973 she began working in Topeka at the Human Development Office as an inter-community team member and then as a peace and justice field representative. After completing her CPE, she ministered for 17 years at St. John Hospital in Springfield, Ill.

Both are currently Living Mission in Later Life at the Wichita Center.
The Catholic Coronado Club
Fosters Sixty Years of Marriage

By Eileen Dugan
For the Sooner Catholic

OKLAHOMA CITY — Tinker Air Force Base and the naval base in Norman were just two of the many U.S. military bases located in and around Oklahoma City during World War II. To help Catholic military men stationed in the area meet local, Catholic girls, the Coronado Club was started. It was a Catholic club that resembled a USO.

“Catholic military men from out of state would go to the Coronado Club in Oklahoma City. It gave them a home base,” Betty Perkins said. She had been one of the pretty, Catholic, teenage girls who attended the Coronado Club back then.

“The Coronado Club was a Catholic Club for single Catholics which met down at the old Knights of Columbus Hall in downtown Oklahoma City,” she said. “A person became a member just by signing up.”

Most members of the Coronado Club were Catholic; a few non-Catholics sometimes attended. The girls had to be 18. The boys had to be in the military. Most boys were, at least, 18, but a 17-year-old boy could get in if he had gotten his parents’ permission to enlist.

“I was a senior in high school when I started going,” Perkins said. “My mother was a sponsor, one of the chaperones. There were rules you had to follow: one rule was that you could never leave with one of the guys.”

This rule, plus the fact that there were chaperones on the premises, put most Catholic girls parents’ minds to rest. Most of these parents viewed the Coronado Club as a safe place for their Catholic daughters.

“Approximately 100 people attended regularly,” Perkins said. “A lot of people met, and eventually married, someone they met at the Coronado Club.”

Perkins was one of them. Betty met her future husband, Lee Perkins, at the Coronado Club. Paul and Betty Forgue and John and Grace Porter also met their mates there. In fact, all three couples were married in the same year, 1947. So all three are celebrating their 60th wedding anniversaries this year.

Betty and Lee Perkins commemorated theirs in July. A special Mass in the couple’s honor was celebrated by Father Cletus M. Bash at the Pastoral Center on July 26, 2007, the exact date of their anniversary. A dinner celebration catered by Olive Garden took place at the Church of the Epiphany in Oklahoma City on July 21.

“We celebrated with family and a few close friends we have known for 60 years,” Lee Perkins said. Four of those friends were Paul and Betty Forgue and John and Grace Porter.

“Our four daughters and two sons-in-law were there: Carol Dill, Joan and Mel Benson, Kitty Perkins and Patty and Steve Eckleman. Four of our five grandchildren and one great-granddaughter attended, as did my two sisters, Rita McCormick and Jane Coleman, and my brother, Bob Eufinger. We all had a wonderful time,” Betty Perkins added.

Father Uhen Leads Prayers for Peru During Oklahoma Visit

By Steve Gust
For the Sooner Catholic

EDMOND — This month’s deadly earthquake in Peru sent figurative shock waves as far away as Oklahoma. Perhaps nobody is more aware of the pain than Father Joe Uhen, who was in Edmond shortly after the tragedy.

Father Uhen grew up here, attending Christ the King and Bishop McGuinness before answering God’s call. That call eventually led him 14 years ago to serve Christ and 30,000 Catholics in Piura, Peru. His parish, Santisimo Sacramento (Blessed Sacrament) is about 750 miles north of the quake-affected area of Pisco.

The Aug. 15 disaster claimed, by one count, more than 540 lives.

Prayers were sought for Peru victims by Father Uhen at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in Edmond. St. John’s, along with Christ the King and St. Monica’s, have been strong supporters of Father Uhen’s work. For years they have sent food and clothing and financial help to his parish. Father Uhen departed Peru for Oklahoma the day after the earthquake. Annually he travels to Oklahoma to visit with his sister parishes.

“I’m sure many of my parishioners have family members affected,” he said.

Above, Father Joe Uhen celebrates a marriage at his parish in Peru, while at left he oversees a construction site.

Sooner Catholic File Photos

“Right now we’re still trying to absorb what has happened and what we can do.”

What is clear is that many of the victims were killed while celebrating Mass at the 300-year-old San Clemente church in Pisco.

“This really speaks to who the Peruvian people are,” Father Uhen said. “They are all such a Catholic and devout people. It’s what they do best. It would only make sense they would be in Mass worshipping.”

Father Uhen, a devoted and inspired servant, also welcomed the opportunity to meet some of the people who have made a difference in the lives of his parishioners. Many from St. John’s, who have been to Peru for medical and other missions, were at a weekend dinner at the Edmond Knights of Columbus activity center.

“This is such a beautiful thing to be with the people who have traveled to Peru and the people who haven’t been there, but still help with their support and prayers. It’s wonderful.”

To know more about the mission work in Peru, call St. John’s at (405) 340-0691.
Celebration of Life
Annual Birth Choice Event Set for Oct. 7 in Downtown Oklahoma City

In conjunction with Respect Life Sunday, the 15th “Annual Celebration of Life!” will be held once again at the Myriad Gardens on Sunday, Oct. 7. Located between Reno and Sheridan and Hudson and Robinson in downtown Oklahoma City, parking on Sunday is never a problem. This marks the 12th year the event has been held at the gardens. Come show your support for life and see just how beautiful the gardens are!

Everyone receives free balloons to carry in the one-mile walk through Bricktown, which will once again be led by a contingent from the ever-faithful, pro-life Knights of Columbus. Upon returning from the LIFE Walk, there will be a free moon bounce and big slide, along with clowns, face painting and hair decoration in the Children’s Activity Court. The “Fearless Factor Follies” for teen youth group competition continues for the third year in a row, and includes “Big Hair,” “Amoebae Race,” “Musical Carpet Squares” and two hula hoop contests. A new event has been added for this year’s Celebration of Life, the Bishop McGuinness Senior and current McGuinness sophomore, Andrew. Lauren Brown. Brown also has a parent of alumni Matt Brown and Chris Wilson and Cam McLain.

The annual event is one of the main fundraisers for Birth Choice. The Celebration of Life helps provide funding for Birth Choice centers in Edmond, Norman and south Oklahoma City, including the ultrasound program, and prenatal assessment program in Edmond, along with Rose Home, a Birth Choice shelter for homeless pregnant women. All services are provided at no charge. The 2007 annual budget for Birth Choice is $449,737. It takes about $37,478 to provide for the Lord’s ministry at Birth Choice. The more walkers, the more income generated to help moms and babies. If 200 walkers raise $100 each, that equals $20,000, 400 walkers equals $40,000 and so forth.

Be sure to mark Oct. 7 on your calendar today and join in the fun! For more information, call Jan O’Neill at 606-8426.

Annual Golf Tourney Supports McGuinness

OKLAHOMA CITY — The 2007 Clancy’s All Sports Tee-Off Golf Classic was held Aug. 3 at Silverbourn Golf Club. The 116 players were greeted by the Fighting Irish athletes and coaches.

The winning team of the Championship Flight with a score of 54 included Blake Naifeh, Pete Penner, Jason Davey and Billy Garrett. In second place shooting a 56 was the team of Jerry Williams, Blake Brezny, Jake McLean and Cam McLain.

The tournament was a great success through the generosity of our sponsors, players and volunteers. Proceeds benefit the Irish athletic programs.

King: Abortion Leads to Jump in Murder Rate

ATLANTA, Aug. 15, Christian Newswire — Dr. Alveda King, Pastoral Associate of Priests for Life and the niece of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., today reacted to the release of new Department of Justice crime statistics showing African Americans to be the victims of nearly half of the murders committed in 2005.

“That 49 percent of all Americans murdered are black is shocking,” said Dr. King. “That 93 percent of those people are victims of black-on-black crime is not really surprising. The abortion industry has told African Americans for decades that killing our own children is beneficial, even therapeutic. We bought their lies and life in the inner city has become cheap.”

“You want another shocking statistic?” asked Dr. King. “Black women are now three times more likely to abort than white women. Yes, 8,000 African Americans were murdered by guns and knives in 2005, but hundreds of thousands more were terminated by more socially acceptable weapons. We have sown the wind of death in abortion clinics and reaped the whirlwind of violence in our streets.”

“The killing has to stop,” declared Dr. King. “If we are to restore our communities and our families, respect for individuals has to begin when their lives begin, in the womb.”

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Catholic Women Develop Recipe for Bible Study

By Dee A. Nash  
For The Sooner Catholic

EDMOND — Twelve years ago, three women from St. John the Baptist Catholic Church were members of Bible Study Fellowship (BSF), an inter-denominational Bible study, held at a local Baptist church. Although they loved BSF’s format, they soon noticed differences between what they believed as Catholics and what was being taught. Kacee Van Horn felt the differences open into chasms during the study of the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew 16:18 described Peter as the rock upon whom Jesus would build his church, a passage Catholics believe denotes papal authority.

“There were two pages of commentary concluding that Christ meant Peter’s faith, not the man,” said Van Horn. “This directly contradicted the teaching of the Catholic Church, not to mention being highly unlikely due to the grammatical structure of the text.”

Concerned, she looked around at the other participants. “I noticed a lot of other Catholic women at BSF. It made me wonder if our parish church was ‘missing the boat’ in not providing Bible study.”

She expressed her concerns to her friends. They agreed to meet and discover whether they could start a Bible study in their own parish. Then they contacted their priest.

“I wrote a letter to (the late) Father Petuskey asking him why, we as Catholic women, had to go outside our own church for an in-depth, comprehensive Bible study with practical applications to everyday life,” said Diane DeHekker. “He phoned me immediately and promised support from the parish if I could get a group together to organize the study.”

Deacon Bill Bawden helped the group create a mission statement and strategy. They formed a planning committee and named their group Catholic Bible Study for Women (CBS).

“We wanted something as good as BSF, but Catholic,” said Cher Casso, who helped facilitate CBS for five years.

The group had specific, if lofty, goals. They wanted a study that would provide four major criteria:

- Address a historical/cultural context, Catholic doctrine and apologetics;
- Children’s program for ages 3 years and older, plus a nursery for younger children;
- Questions to be answered in writing prior to meetings, followed by small group discussion led by knowledgeable facilitators that guided discussions rather than providing answers; and
- A dynamic speaker who lectured each week, further explaining the text and encouraging personal application.

A search committee set out to find a Bible study that met their criteria. That’s when they hit their first roadblock.

None existed.

Leadership settled upon a liturgical study, Living the Good News, because it included a children’s study that followed along with what their mothers were learning.

“It was wonderful studying the readings that we would hear the following Sunday at Mass, and it certainly brought much to the celebration of the Mass,” said Van Horn.

The search committee also found a speaker, JoAnn Forgue, who provided insight into personal application of biblical text, but she left after the first year.

“While we were originally determined to have a woman, we found in our midst a wonderful speaker, who happened to be male. Dr. Harry Kocurek, a pastoral associate at our parish, has been our speaker since the second year, and we are truly blessed to have him,” said Van Horn.

From those humble beginnings, CBS has operated continually ever since. Leaders and participants have changed, but the group has always stayed true to its mission: to provide a challenging Bible study while remaining flexible to changing membership needs.

“Our study is a little more involved to maintain and motivate participants who have been involved for years and yet, is welcoming to newcomers,” said Kocurek.

After the first two years, participants wanted to do a book study. When leadership couldn't find satisfactory materials, they again formed a committee of three who co-wrote and self-published studies on the Gospels of John and Matthew, the Acts of the Apostles and Paul’s letters to the Romans and Galatians. Kocurek was part of that group, and if asked to do it again, he would.

“Yes, because I enjoy writing, but I really need to take a year to write a study on most books. Isaiah and Revelation would probably require two years.”

Fortunately, studies abound in comparison to those first lean years. CBS considers the Little Rock Scripture Study a good solid series and Loyola Press has several studies for adults and teens. Dr. Scott Hahn, professor of theology and scripture at Franciscan University of Steubenville, has also written studies on various topics, often focusing on apologetics.

“The challenge is to know the participants’ learning styles and desired level of depth, along with length of time for the study,” said Kocurek.

For parishes considering beginning a Bible study, Kocurek suggests they plan ahead, taking at least six months to a year to prepare to launch a study, CBS. “For the first time since I have been here, three other groups are studying the Psalms, so I am referring to this as the ‘Year of the Psalms’ at St. John’s.”

Other fruits were born of CBS’s endeavors.

“It prepared Catholic women to build up their sense of community,” said Casso.

“I made and kept friends that I’ll have for life,” said Van Horn. “We’ve helped each other through births and death and everything in between.”

She then stressed that the final thing for a successful study is the most important.

“Prayer! We must always remember that these endeavors are God’s and God’s alone. We are only His tools, and we should never forget to constantly ask for His guidance and grace to accomplish His work.”
Father Gerrer’s Works Featured in Special Exhibit

By April Wilkerson
Shawnee News-Star

SHAWNEE — He could have become one of the most famous artists of his time, or amassed wealth through his multi-faceted artistic skills.

But Father Gregory Gerrer’s heart was always in Shawnee, and his love of art was always destined to benefit Oklahoma. Gerrer, the namesake and founder of the Mabee-Gerrer Museum of Art in Shawnee, was both artist and collector, educator and lifelong learner. His passion for art left a legacy in Shawnee, and a new exhibit sheds a bit more light on the man who started it all.

“Father Gerrer was, he deeply believed in art as education and inspiration,” said Dane Pollei, director of the Mabee-Gerrer Museum. “He kept improving as an artist no matter what, and he always put his art on display for everyone to see.”

Gerrer was born July 23, 1867, in France as Robert Francis Xavier Gerrer, and in 1872, he emigrated with his family to the United States to escape German troops. In 1892, Robert Gerrer received the Benedictine habit and was given the name Gregory. In addition to his musical talents, Gerrer pursued his artistic skills and interests through the monastic community. He took art lessons, traveled to Europe to study art, collected pieces and taught art at Notre Dame.

By the time of his death in 1946, Gerrer had traveled the world extensively. He helped establish the landing place of Columbus in the Caribbean in 1907, and he made trips to the Holy Land, Africa, across Europe (before and after World War I) and throughout the United States. Each trip not only furthered his painting career but provided opportunities to add to his collection.

“Gerrer’s artistic skills are evident in the oil paintings on display, which show his classical training and use of light. He worked in Realism and leaned a bit toward Impressionism, Pollei said, but his Italian tutelage was never in doubt,” Pollei said.

“Gerrer was a very well-known artist. He was never an avant-garde artist because he didn’t like modern art. He was very much trained in the classical Italian of the 20th century,” Pollei said. “It was all about technique and skill and was very traditional.”

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“He also was in demand for art restoration and authentication. In the early 20th century, he probably was one of the three best art restorers in North America. He consulted with corporations that were buying art, and if a painting wasn’t signed, he could figure out who it was or, if attributed to someone, if it was accurate.”

Gerrer also was well known among Catholics for his large portrait of Pope Pius X. The original painting still hangs in the Mabee-Gerrer’s galleries, and a copy is in the Vatican. Pollei said the painting was on display at the World’s Fair in Chicago in 1905 before coming to Shawnee. Gerrer had wanted to paint the official portrait of the next pope, Pius XI, but because portraiture took some time and planning, their schedules could never be coordinated. However, he was commissioned to paint at least 79 portraits during his lifetime.

The exhibit also showcases Gerrer’s diverse eye for collecting objects, which numbered at least 6,400 from cultures around the world, from the time of the Egyptians into the 20th century. Items on display range from a Roman terra cotta oil lamp, to a Persian vase from 1200 AD, to postcards Gerrer sent from his world travels. There’s also his 1903 passport, granted by the U.S. Embassy in Rome. The large paper, featuring calligraphic writing, describes Gerrer: full forehead, grayish blue eyes, straight nose, firm, prominent chin, ruddy complexion and sparse face.

As inquisitive and artistic as Gerrer was, he deeply believed in art as education and inspiration, Pollei said. He could have become wealthy because of his art skills, but the money he earned was really the abbey’s, and Gerrer was intent on putting his art on display for everyone to see.

“Gerrer created this collection as an educational resource, and there wasn’t anything like it in Oklahoma at the time,” Pollei said. “That’s what is unique about our museum. Most museums start with not much of a collection, or somebody’s personal collection amassed for their home, but everything Father Gerrer collected was done so it could teach people something.”

Before the Mabee-Gerrer Museum was opened in 1979, Gerrer’s collection was on display for a time in Benedictine Hall, the large building on campus. Pollei said it wasn’t unusual for Gerrer to be there when people visited, which allowed them to learn from him directly.

“He was very easygoing,” said Pollei, who has read Gerrer’s memoirs. “He loved to talk about the artifacts and tell stories about his travels. He was a natural teacher.”

Jim Holden of Oklahoma City, who is a great-nephew of Gerrer, was about 10 years old when Gerrer died. He knew him as “Uncle Rob” and knew that when his family pointed their car toward the “building with the four towers,” they were in for a fun time.

“We did a lot of things together; he was part of our family,” Holden said. “He dressed me up in that suit of armor. He was quite a comedian.”

“I remember very clearly being 5 or 10 years old and asking my parents when we were going to see Uncle Rob. That struck me as interesting because to go see a 75- to 80-year-old man, he was fun to be with, obviously.”

Gerrer was a great-uncle to Sister Phyllis Braniff, who grew up in Tulsa and now is a sister of Notre Dame de Namur at Trinity University in Washington, D.C. She remembers family visits from her “Uncle Rob,” as well as going to see his elaborate collection, where she was fascinated by “Minnie” the mummy, a mummified cat and shrunken heads.

“He had a marvelous sense of humor. I don’t remember him having anything but a shock of white hair,” Braniff said. “On the few occasions we came to Shawnee, it was always a thrill to go. He had more darn stuff than you could ever want to imagine, and it was always fascinating.”

“And I remember he would sit me on his lap and tell me stories. He started out by saying, ‘Once upon a time, when a pig was a swine, and the turkey chewed tobacco ‘til the spit rolled down his chin.’”


(reprinted with permission)
Emmaus Days 2007

Emmaus Days, a retreat for young men in high school who want to learn about the call to the priesthood and explore their relationship with God, was held in early August. This was the seventh year for Emmaus Days, sponsored by the Vocations Office. A total of 26 young men from the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City attended the three-day retreat, held at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Youth Camp. The young men who attended the retreat represented 16 different parishes. They spent time listening to priests and seminarians share their faith journey and also enjoyed outdoor activities and small group discussions. This retreat gave these young men an opportunity to experience Christ in a retreat-type experience so they can be open to his invitation to follow him. If you would like to learn more about the priesthood, please visit our Web site www.archdioceseokc.org or contact Father Lowell Stieferman, vocations director, at (405) 721-9351.

Top: Father Bill Novak and Father Ed Weisenburger play four square during the retreat weekend. At right: Ice breakers were used to help the young men learn who everyone was.
Journey with Christ 2007

Come, Journey With Christ, Catch Your Dream! This invitation called 18 young women and 10 Sisters from the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City and the Diocese of Tulsa to meet for a weekend in early August at Our Lady of Guadalupe Youth Camp to explore the call to religious life. Throughout the weekend, the Sisters shared their own vocation stories, reflected upon the themes of call and friendship, and shared the varied ways of prayer which they experience in community. Each retreat participant made her own dream catcher as a memento of the weekend. Lots of good food, swimming and quiet time made for an informative, fun and prayerful weekend. Held on the first weekend in August each year, Journey With Christ 2008 will be held Aug. 1-3. Catholic young women between the ages of 15 and 20 who want to learn more about the call to religious life and to consider their own vocation are invited to save the date and join us in 2008.
Community Garden Planted by Saint Charles Parish

OKLAHOMA CITY — In early July, Father Joseph Irwin, associate pastor of Saint Charles Borromeo, presided over the dedication and blessing of the Saint Charles Community Garden. Justin Sine, 17, designed and built the organic garden as an Eagle Scout project. He and members of Scout Troop 179, led by Tom McGivney, worked three weekends in April and built five raised beds. The gardens are next to the Dorothy Day Center, 4909 State Street, a food-sharing ministry of Saint Charles Parish. Anyone can sign up for garden space and plant whatever they wish, as long as it is organically grown. Gardeners may keep the produce, share it with friends and family, or donate some to the Dorothy Day Center. The garden has produced an abundance of tomatoes, cucumbers, basil and peppers.

Furniture Donations Needed

OKLAHOMA CITY — The Refugee Resettlement Department at Catholic Charities is in need of furniture donations in good condition for several families who will be arriving in the next few weeks. The department helps people who have been persecuted for religious, ethnic or political reasons in foreign lands to achieve economic and social self-sufficiency upon arriving in the United States.

Volunteers Sought

OKLAHOMA CITY — Birth Choice is in need of volunteers to help in several areas and in several offices. Volunteers are needed in Bethany, Edmond, Norman and south Oklahoma City. A pro-life organization helping women with unexpected pregnancies since 1973, Birth Choice needs phone volunteers, field volunteers, clerical skills, clothing room, receptionists and RNs for the ultrasound program and prenatal assessment clinic. An information session will be held from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Thursday, Sept. 6 at 4701 S. Western. To register and obtain more information, call Marilyn at 799-7195.

Apartment Available

Saint Katharine Drexel Retirement Center in El Reno has apartments available for lease. A ministry of Sacred Heart Catholic Church and sponsored by the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, Saint Katharine’s offers a retirement center where the best in life comes together ... daily Mass, peace of mind, a sense of security and the services and amenities that help you enjoy the lifestyle you deserve — all in a beautiful new Catholic retirement center. For information, call (405) 262-2920.

Father Augustine Mundackatt V.C. in OKC

OKLAHOMA CITY — Epiphany of the Lord Catholic Church will host Father Augustine Mundackatt V.C. and the Divine Mercy Team from Potta, Kerala, India, Sept. 7-9 for three days of Mass, prayers for healing and Eucharistic Adoration. Friday services will be 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., Saturday 11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and Sunday 2:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. For more information, contact Joseph Mathews at 324-6869 or Carolyn Ehl at 793-7664.

Saint Peter Claver Celebration Set

OKLAHOMA CITY — Corpus Christi Catholic Church will host the statewide Saint Peter Claver Day Mass on Sunday, Sept. 9. Archbishop Beltran Cumby will serve as homilist. A luncheon will follow Mass.

The National and International Claver celebration honors Saint Peter Claver and his ministry in caring for the slaves. The annual celebration is hosted by Oklahoma City Council No. 264. Michael Clayton is Grand Knight and Alma Moore is Grand Lady.

Red Mass

NORMAN — St. Thomas More University Parish will host the 28th Annual Red Mass for law students and lawyers on Sunday, Sept. 16 at 5 p.m. at 100 E. Stinson. Father James Goins will be the guest celebrant and homilist. Father Goins graduated from the University of Oklahoma, College of Law in December 2006. He was admitted to the Oklahoma Bar in April 2007. Presently, Father Goins is the pastor of Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Chickasha.

This liturgy, known as the Red Mass, continues an ancient English tradition. The Red Mass was celebrated at the beginning of the Fall Court Term at Westminster. The liturgy asks God’s blessing for those who administer law. After the Mass, the OU Catholic law faculty and staff will host a wine and cheese reception for lawyers and law students. The reception will begin about 6:15 p.m. at the church.

Retreat at Turtle Creek

OKLAHOMA CITY — Equinox — the time of equal light and dark, a time of balance — is a good time to come aside, rest awhile and reflect on your life. Sister Mary Moloney, SP, is offering a one-day Equinox Retreat at Turtle Rock Farm Retreat Center, Saturday, Sept. 29. Reflection exercises will be provided and there will be time to spend outdoors, with friends, yourself and your God in quiet, prayer and sharing.

Contact Sister Mary Moloney at (405) 848-5181, mmoloney@theshop.com. Contact Turtle Rock Farm Retreat at (580) 725-3411 or go to www.turtlerockfarmretreat.net and click on calendar to find the retreat application. Cost of the retreat is $65 if registered by Sept. 15; $75 thereafter. Turtle Rock Farm Retreat Center is located 80 miles north of Oklahoma City, two miles off I-35.

Faith Community Nurse Training Set

GUTHRIE — Registration is under way for “The Basic Preparation Course for Faith Community Nursing” to be held Oct. 28 to Nov. 4 at Our Lady of the Lake Retreat Center in Guthrie. Faith Community Nurses, formerly known as Parish Nurses, are registered nurses who provide holistic care to members of parishes or other faith communities to facilitate optimal wellness and thereby reclaim the healing ministry of the congregation. The specialty is recognized by the American Nurses Association.

The training registration fee is $450 and includes all course materials, room and board and nursing contact hours. Registered nurses interested in the program may contact Faith Community Nurse Curriculum Coordinator Marilyn Seiler at Catholic Charities, (405) 523-3009.
Letters

Thanks to You

On behalf of the board of directors, staff, volunteers and most especially the women and babies served by Birth Choice of Oklahoma Inc., we are writing to say thank you! The 2007 Mother’s Day Collection was the best yet! The churches of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City help Birth Choice centers provide the means and opportunity for women to choose life. Birth Choice centers throughout the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City served 20,283 women in 2006 thanks to you. Birth Choice centers offer complimentary pregnancy testing and limited ultrasounds, prenatal assessments, prenatal vitamins, maternity and infant clothing, diapers and formula. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your generosity, your faith and support of Birth Choice, and most of all, for your prayers!

With love and appreciation for all you do!

On behalf of the unborn and their mothers,
Barbara J. Chishko, Executive Director
Ruth A. Blakley, Finance Director
Jan L. O’Neill, Development Director

A Timely Article

In regard to Patrick B. McGuigan’s article in the Aug. 12 Sooner Catholic, I have the following comments that will reflect on this timely article.

In a 1991 issue of Time Magazine, there was an article by Dr. James Coleman, a University of Chicago sociologist, who did a study comparing Catholic schools to public schools. He called his study a comparative report card. I would like to share his findings.

Student to teacher ratio, 30 to 1, for public schools as compared to Catholic schools, 18 to 1. Percentage of students graduating on time was 38 percent for public schools as compared to 99 percent for Catholic schools. Spending per student for public schools was $7,107 in 1991, as compared to $1,735 for Catholic schools. Using the percentage of cost for today’s dollars, it would cost 75 percent more for educating students in public schools as compared to the 25 percent for Catholic schools.

The government would save 75 percent of its budget for education if it would implement a voucher system of school choice. The critics of the voucher system say that it would put an end to public schools as we have today. The opposite would be true; it would only make the public schools better, because they would have to compete in the open market of education. Public schools would have to justify their existence for tax dollars spent.

As McGuigan says in his column, many parents would like to send their children to a Catholic school or to a private school, but cannot afford the tuition. If the government would shift our tax dollars from support for a failed public school system by supplementing the voucher system of school choice, it would reduce the tuition for parochial or private schools, then parents would be able to send their children to get a better well-rounded education.

School choice is not widely accepted because of prejudice against religious schools.

Of course, politics plays a large part in contributing to the failed public education system. The National Education Association has its own political agenda. The NEA wants to control what books can or cannot be used in public schools. The books that are chosen for students tend to favor the secular way of life. This differs from the Catholic and private schools that offer books that give students a balance of both the spiritual as well as secular education, thereby making their education far more superior to that offered in the public schools.

Tom Waken
Saint Francis
Oklahoma City

Author Provides Biblical Basis for Primacy of the Pope


John Salza has provided a great book to show that the office of the pope or the papacy has basis in the Bible and the writings of the Fathers of the Church. Salza has written this book so that Catholics can have a discussion with non-Catholics about the primacy of the pope who is the successor of St. Peter. Salza shows using Scripture verses that Jesus founded his Church on the profession of faith of Simon Peter when Peter said that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah and the Son of God. Jesus replied that no mere man had revealed this to him, but that God his Father had done this. That is when Jesus changed Simon’s name to Peter to show that he was to have an important ministry or part in the salvation of the world.

Salza begins with an introduction into what he plans to present to the reader. He uses the Douay-Rheims Bible and the Catholic Edition of the Revised Standard Version Bible for the Scripture quotes. He also addresses the issue of Protestants’ idea of Scripture alone and their ignoring Tradition which came before Scripture. It is forgotten by non-Catholics that Tradition decided what would be the canonical Bible. In Chapter 1, Salza discusses why St. Peter is held to be the first amongst the Apostles using many Scripture verses. In Chapter 2 he discusses what the name “Peter” means and refutes those who would say that Jesus did not intend for the Church to be built upon this “rock.” He addresses the various arguments that contradict the true meaning Jesus had in renaming Simon, Peter. In Chapter 3, Salza examines the issue of what the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven means. In Chapter 4 he shows what binding and loosing means from a Scripture point of view and from Tradition. Chapter 5 discusses what “chief shepherd of the Church” means. In Chapter 6, Salza shows from the Bible that Peter was acknowledged as the leader of the Early Church and shows that the other apostles always recognized his primacy.

In Chapter 7, Salza examines the issue of apostolic succession. All the Apostles had successors which are the bishops, but Peter’s successors were special since he was special as the leader of the visible Church on earth. The tradition of the Church has recognized that Peter’s successors in Rome starting with St. Linus up to today’s current pope, Benedict XVI, held the office of primacy in the college of bishops. The Eastern Orthodox agrees that the successor of Peter has primacy, but disagree with Roman Catholics as to how this office functions. Salza does not discuss the controversy between the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox churches. His main concern is with refuting Protestant opposition to the primacy.

In Chapter 8, Salza quotes various Fathers of the Church from both the East and the West on the topic of the pope. For those who do not know the Church Fathers, they are those who were bishops and/or theologians from the second to the fourth century. Some of the earlier ones knew the Apostles themselves. They pass on the teachings of the Apostles that were not always written down. This is part of what is called Tradition.

In Chapter 9, Salza discusses what “no salvation outside of the Church” means based on various councils and popes. This chapter at first seems out of place in this book about the papacy, but to deny the primacy of the pope can lead a person outside of the Church. He finishes his book with a list of the popes. There is not an index or bibliography. There are footnotes.

John Salza is the author of the books: “Masonry Unmasked: An Insider Reveals the Secrets of the Lodge” (2006) and “The Biblical Basis for the Catholic Faith” (2005) which this reviewer has reviewed. He is the creator of an extensive Catholic apologetics site, www.ScriptureCatholic.com. Salza is a lawyer and apologist. He is a frequent speaker on Catholic radio, including his own daily feature on Relevant Radio called “Relevant Answers.” This present book on the papacy is highly recommended to those interested in the study of the papacy, those needing a book to refute those opposed to the papacy, and for those wanting to know more about the biblical basis for the papacy.
God Smiles When We Express Ourselves Truthfully

Fear seems to be what prevents us from appropriately and honestly expressing our thoughts, stating and/or asking for what we want and need, saying no and setting boundaries. It is sad that fear is such a barrier to being honest about and true to ourselves, true to our spirits, and true to who God wants us to be.

So often we are afraid of what others will think of us if we appropriately and honestly express our thoughts, ideas, preferences and opinions. And yet it is these expressions that communicate who we are. We have every right to say, “I like the liberal views on immigration,” “I prefer the color yellow,” “I’d like to stay home tonight,” “I believe the conservatives have it right when it comes to taxes,” “That rose is beautiful,” etc.

Oftentimes fear causes us to avoid expressing ourselves while covering the flame of God’s spirit residing within our souls and our hearts.

At other times, our fears about inconveniencing or hurting others cause us to not ask for another cup of coffee, to not ask another to lower the volume on the I Phone, to not ask someone to take us to the store, to not ask for help on a project, etc.

And yet we have every right to ask and, yes, that have every right to say no. There’s nothing wrong with that, although many of us take no personally, which may be another part of the problem.

And that brings us to the point about our fears regarding saying no. Many of us say yes even though we mean no and we wish we could say no. And so often when this happens, we build up resentments toward others even though it was us who were unable to say no.

Every request can be answered with a yes or no. The problem is that many of us believe that all or most requests should be answered in the affirmative and that saying no is being unkind. These beliefs, oftentimes from childhood, may contribute to our fears.

Similar fears cause us to not set appropriate boundaries such as: “I can’t stay on the phone when you are yelling at me,” “I need to leave if you continue criticizing me,” “I’m going to read in the other room unless the TV is turned down,” “You are standing too close to me,” etc. When we set appropriate boundaries, we acknowledge where the other person ends and where we begin and, in doing so, we are being true to who we are.

Most of these fears have been with us since childhood when erroneous beliefs were formed and when we experienced difficult hurts, guilt and shame. Today we can admit to ourselves we are afraid, wonder where these fears originated, tell ourselves the fear is not about expressing ourselves in the current situation, move through the fear and assert ourselves. This can be scary.

It’s kind of like Indiana Jones stepping out over the looming, dark chasm, questioning his faith that a step really is there.

And much of the time, we will be unable to move through the fear. That’s OK. This is about progress and not perfection. But we can wonder “What’s the worse thing that can happen?” So others get upset, the important thing is when we appropriately express ourselves, we are being true to God’s will for us and are allowing the flame of our spirit to brightly shine.

Jesus Himself reminds us “fear not” many times in the New Testament. We have every right to express our thoughts, ideas, beliefs and opinions, to say no, to ask and to set boundaries. No matter what happens, God is with us. He will not abandon us. He is there to protect and comfort us. He is there to reassure us that even if we do mess up, he loves us.

And when we know we have confronted and moved through the fear and said the right thing … we can congratulate ourselves for a job well done and enjoy the victory, remind ourselves it will get easier, and know that God is smiling.

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) 359-8539 or by e-mail at jfroehle@swbell.net.

Sooner Catholic • August 26, 2007

The Ripken Ethic: Baseball Could Sure Use It Now

In “Men at Work,” George F. Will began his celebration of baseball defense with a tale of Cal and Bill Ripken turning a rally-killing double play while their father watched from the visitors dugout in Toronto — and concluded with an appropriately blue-collar ending:

“After the third out the two Ripkins ran off the field, same pace, arms held in the same position, forearms cocked slightly above parallel to the ground, eyes straight ahead, looking into the dugout. They ran past their father, the third-base coach. It was just another night on the factory floor for the Ripken men…"

Cal Ripken’s induction into the Hall of Fame last month — along with Tony Gwynn, the San Diego Padres hitting machine — was a cleansing moment in baseball’s ongoing season of shame. Yes, steroid use is way down (as is the musculature of players, I won’t mention). But the memory of cheatingingers and festers, the wound made worse by denial on the part of some and scurrying for the high grass on the part of others. Seeing Ripken and Gwynn, two regular guys, enter the Cooperstown aristocracy on the merits, period, was a happy reminder of better days.

Anyway, this is supposed to be a column about Cal Ripken, not about steroids. Cal, as everyone in the state of Maryland calls him, was the son of a lifelong baseball man whom Dr. Will once described thus: “Cal Ripken Sr. smokes Lucky Strikes and drinks Schlitz beer. The Luckies are not filtered and the Schlitz is not light. He is a former minor league catcher who looks like something whittled from an old fungus bat… The Luckies finally killed him, a few years ago, but long before, Cal Ripken Sr. had given both of his baseball-playing sons something even greater than instruction and support: a respect for the game, his determination to live the game, his sense of baseball smarts.”

A lot of which is, alas, in short supply in today’s pastime. The corruptions of baseball in 2007 are not just (or perhaps even primarily) chemical. How many times have you seen a bunt properly laid down in recent years? Or a hit-and-run smoothly executed? How often have you watched a multimillion-dollar-per-year player forget how many outs there were in the inning? Or fail to run out a ground ball? Money — lots of it, showered on people too young to know how to handle it — has something to do with this. But so does a decline in respect for what Will called, aptly, the “craft of baseball.”

Cal Ripken Jr. could be mullishly stubborn. Had he listened to batting coaches, his lifetime average might have been 20 points higher. But no matter how mired in a sometimes-self-perpetuated slump he was, you always sensed his respect for the game, his determination to live the work ethic his father had taught him, and the intensity of his competitive spirit. A power-hitting fielder of genius, he redefined the position of shortstop, but he was essentially a throwback who exemplified the cardinal virtue of fortitude.

In other words — a good man, in moral as well as sporting terms.

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.
Search for Catholic Fiction Often Difficult Challenge

In 1995 I interviewed five Protestant publishers while covering a story on trends in Protestant fiction. As Protestants, we were quite proud of our fiction. Bookstores carried our favorite titles. They were available at most libraries. Protestant fiction had inserted itself into the popular culture and staked a solid claim on shelf space.

When I converted, I turned my attention to Catholic fiction, and I immediately had a problem: What exactly is Catholic fiction? There was no clear definition.

One list included literary giants like Flannery O’Connor, J.R.R. Tolkien, Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene because they were writers who also happened to be Catholic. While their books certainly have literary acclaim, the primary goal of their fiction is not to advance their Catholic identity — although they each do this to some degree. Their primary goal is to entertain the reader — which they all do quite successfully. Indeed, they contain some of the best writing in British and American literature.

After a quick glance over another list, I realized that the compiler was defining Catholic fiction from a reader’s viewpoint. Many of the books weren’t even written by Catholics, nor were they about the Catholic faith. They were simply good books with morally sound messages that Catholic readers might appreciate. By this standard, Peter Rabbit would qualify.

A third list narrowed the definition of Catholic fiction to titles that highlight our Catholic identity, but even those authors weren’t always good stewards of Catholic faith. One would think, for example, that books by Father Andrew Greeley would not only explore Catholic identity (as the titles seem to suggest), but also promote fidelity to Catholic teaching. Not so.

Father Joseph Girzone’s book “Joshua” is another possibility. I read this book many years before converting to the Catholic Church. I would call it Christian fiction, but I didn’t see anything uniquely Catholic about the book.

For Catholics who enjoy reading fiction that promotes a Catholic identity, I suggest Morris L. West’s book “The Shoes of the Fisherman” and Rumer Godden’s “The House of Brede.” But don’t hand them to a Protestant and expect him to “get” the Catholic faith. While these books are well-written and provide a delightful reading experience about life in a monastery or life at the Vatican, they are not meant for evangelization.

There are a couple of Catholic fiction authors who are quite promising in their effort to evangelize through fiction — Michael D. O’Brien (“Father Elijah”) and Marcus Grodi (“How Firm a Foundation”). The only problem is that you probably won’t find them in Borders or your local library.

For their books, you’ll have to try Catholic bookstores or go online.

So, we not only have a problem in our definition of Catholic fiction. We also have a problem finding Catholic fiction. In fact, at a local Borders bookstore, “Joshua” and its sequel were the only “Catholic” books I could find on the Christian fiction shelf — even though there were hundreds of titles. They were all Protestant.

What is going on here? Well, most secular publishers of Catholic fiction do not label their books as Christian fiction. You will find their titles in the sections labeled science fiction, romance, adventure or mystery, but never on the Christian fiction shelf. In contrast, Protestant publishers have hundreds of fiction titles and they do label their books as Christian fiction.

Finally, Catholic publishers rarely publish fiction. When they do market a fiction title, it is primarily marketed to Catholic bookstores or by direct mail.

Before you tell yourself that none of this really matters, consider this: The Protestant publisher HarperCollins has sold over 65 million copies. “The Late Great Planet Earth” sold over 28 million copies. According to a Publisher’s Weekly survey, between 66 and 71 percent of men and women buy their Christian fiction books at Borders or Barnes and Noble rather than at a Christian bookstore. For heaven’s sake, why don’t we have some Catholic titles available for such readers? If you ask the average reader on the street to name a Catholic fiction title, chances are he wouldn’t be able to do it or he’d name a Dan Brown or Andrew Greeley book simply because he couldn’t come up with anything better. What is a faithful Catholic to do? Here’s a guideline for reading and sharing our books with others.

Read authors like Tolkien and Waugh and remind the world that they were Catholic. We have every right to brag about our literary giants.

Read West and Golden but don’t hand them to a Protestant and expect them to win converts. They simply are not meant for Catholic evangelization.

Whatever you do, don’t pass around Andrew Greeley or Dan Brown books. They do more damage than other secular fiction books with equally offensive scenes because they link their sordid fiction to our Church and the readers (especially those outside the Church) are not equipped or inclined to sort out fact from fiction.

As for Marcus Grodi and Michael D. O’Brien, I suggest that you read everything they write and pass their books along to Protestants. Donate copies to your local library and ask your bookstore to carry them. By doing this, we will begin to stake our own claim on the religion shelf, and it’s about time.

Editor’s Note: Denise Bossert is the mother of four children. She lives with her husband in New Melle, Mo., where she is a member of Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church. She writes a monthly column for the St. Louis Review that traces her journey from Protestantism to Catholicism. Her columns will run from time to time in the Sooner Catholic.

Cardinal: Party Platform Not Above Conscience

NASHVILLE, Tenn. Zenit.org. — Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone says that politicians should right to follow their conscience, even if their views are not in accord with the stance of their political party. The Vatican secretary of state said this at a press conference during his visit last week to Nashville and the annual Knights of Columbus convention.

Cardinal Bertone was asked about pro-abortion Catholic politicians, if they should receive Communion, and if the Vatican plans to give guidelines to bishops for these cases.

“I don’t think that it is necessary to repeat new norms because the norms are well explained in the doctrine of the Church,” he said. “I don’t understand how a person in public office or one engaged in political activity can be obliged to renounce his Catholic identity because the party, be it in the U.S. or in other countries, imposes an ethical choice on the basis of the party’s program.

“This, according to me, does not respect freedom of conscience. It even seems to me to be an oppression of conscience. Where is the freedom of conscience that is so proclaimed and defended in America?”

Cardinal Bertone also spoke of his phone conversation with U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

“The telephone conversation should really remain private,” the cardinal said, “notwithstanding the fact that some of those conversations may be able to be tapped. The conversations dealt primarily with the state of Christians in the Middle East. I told her that her travels by plane, in her efforts for peace, are accompanied by the angels. If they weren’t accompanied by the angels, then she would never be able to knit back together all of these relationships that have been so fragile and difficult.”

The Vatican secretary of state was also asked about the scandal of sexual abuse by priests.

“First of all, I would like to say the Church in the United States has suffered deeply because of this situation, has responded with great dignity, and invites everyone to truly commit themselves to a reversal of this situation,” the cardinal said.

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The 72-year-old cardinal told journalists about his impressions of the Church in the United States and his thoughts about how the Church should handle future situations. He added that the Church has responded with great dignity, and invites everyone to truly commit themselves to a reversal of this situation.

Cardinal Bertone also spoke of his phone conversation with the U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

“The telephone conversation should really remain private,” the cardinal said, “notwithstanding the fact that some of those conversations may be able to be tapped. The conversations dealt primarily with the state of Christians in the Middle East. I told her that her travels by plane, in her efforts for peace, are accompanied by the angels. If they weren’t accompanied by the angels, then she would never be able to knit back together all of these relationships that have been so fragile and difficult.”

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Fallicen dos religiosas en Ica y un sacerdote queda herido

Trágico terremoto destruye numerosas iglesias en el Perú

LIMA, (REUTERS) — El terremoto del 15 de agosto ha destruido en Perú numerosas iglesias y otras propiedades edilicias, según informa la asociación católica internacional Ayuda a la Iglesia Necesitada (ADU).

La diócesis más afectada es la de Ica. Su obispo, monseñor Guido Efraín López, ha comunicado por televisión que la ciudad ha quedado totalmente destruida.

Además, otras 12 iglesias han derrumbarse y el seminario diocesano ha sufrido daños graves. Según ha informado el obispo, dos religiosas de la orden de las Visitas han muerto y un sacerdote está herido a causa de la caída de un edificio natural.

Varios sacerdotes se han quedado sin casa tras derrumbarse las casas parroquiales. Los sacerdotes de las han acogido en el complejo dañado del seminario a muchas personas que han perdido todo a raíz del terremoto.

El obispo López ha denunciado que, por desgracia, también ha habido casos de saqueos y que, además, ha habido una primera asociación de ayuda que ha recibido información acerca de las necesidades de la iglesia local.

La Iglesia señala que la prioridad del diario es reconstruir las iglesias derrumbadas y especialmente, la catedral, además de enviar ayuda humanitaria a los sacerdotes que se han quedado sin una de las necesidades de la iglesia.

La Prelatura de Yanque y las Diócesis de Lurín y Huancavelica también han sufrido graves daños, con varias iglesias derrumbadas.

Aparte, la Iglesia de Callao es la menos afectada, aunque no ha quedado intacta.

Una Iglesia no es una simple Organización No Gubernamental (ONG)

VATICANO, (REUTERS) — La Iglesia no puede ser reducida a una simple organización no gubernamental (ONG), según el teólogo y arzobispo Bruno Forte, arzobispo de Chieti-Vasto.

El número de la Comisión Teológica Internacional ha hecho esta declaración después de que organismos de Europa hayan señalado que el gobierno de Uganda pretendía reducir el estatuto de la Iglesia católica a una ONG. Por esta razón, el secretario de Estado de la Santa Sede rompió su estatuto diplomático para definir "la gran más grande ONG del mundo".

En declaraciones a "Radio Vaticano", monseñor Forte explicó que esta propuesta "ha sido de una diabólica interpretación ideológica del papel de la Iglesia, que es totalmente incapaz de comprender su historia profunda, eso sentido único que todo el mundo ha vivido esa experiencia de la grandeza de Dios".

"Para la şi ona de ONG en este mundo, el clérigo que seamos y especialmente económico, la Iglesia sólo puede presentarse como una agencia entre otras muchas fuerzas de la historia", añadió el teólogo.

Subraya el obispo coordinador del evento en Australia, monseñor Fisher

JORNADA MUNDIAL DE LA JUVENTUD, (REUTERS) — La Jornada Mundial de la Juventud (JMJ) se presenta como "una oportunidad de cooperación interreligiosa", confirmó el obispo Anthony Fisher, coordinador de la XXXII edición del evento que acontece, en la ciudad australiana de Sydney el próximo verano, al Papa y al sumo pontífice.

Por ello la organización ha celebrado una reunión informativa con algunos representantes de la Comunidad Islámica Australiana, anunciando una próxima cita con líderes judíos y comenta que ya se han celebrado sesiones similares con representantes de otras denominaciones cristianas.

"La paz y cooperación entre las personas de todas las tradiciones religiosas son un objetivo común", expresó el obispo Fisher, según un comunicado de la JMJ para la próxima semana.

Como subraya el encargado de la JMJ, "es una oportunidad como posas para poder aprovechar cada aspecto de la vida de la JMJ en Australia".

Y si bien en una iniciativa católica, la JMJ "históricamente ha tenido un impacto positivo en el aspecto interreligioso de otros países donde se ha llevado a cabo", apunta.

"Es un momento para reflexionar sobre las relaciones principales que quisiéramos transmitir", apuntó el secretario general, "y que se conviertan en la próxima reunión, a la que audieron representantes de la Federación Australiana de Consejos Islámicos y otros invitados desde diferentes países".

El obispo católico pidió a los ciudadanos inmigrantes a sus iglesias sobre el evento y ayudar a minimizar cualquier eventual tensión interreligiosa respecto a la JMJ.

"También los hemos pedido que consideren participar en los eventos interreligiosos y facilitar como voluntarios instalaciones de voluntarios".

"Lo más importante" añadió "es que no hayan argentinos que la JMJ será una oportunidad de cooperación interreligiosa y de entendimiento para todas las personas de buena voluntad".

Se calcula que unos 200.000 jóvenes judeoárabes acudirán a la JMJ en Sydney. Del 15 al 25 de julio, este evento convocará a las ciudades en torno a las palabras de judeoárabes: " Feroces las fuerzas del Espíritu Santo, que descienden sobre vosotros, y sean más fuertes" (Hechos 1, 8).

Para preparar esta convocatoria, Benedicto XVI ha difundido un Mensaje para los jóvenes del mundo.

Cáritas Perú reparte tres mil comidas diarias en la ciudad de Pisco

LIMA, (REUTERS) — Cárcoles del Perú comenzó este lunes con el reparto de 3.000 raciones diarias de comida que vienen a sumarse a las que ya estaba entregando.

Esta ampliación de su operativa humanitaria es posible gracias a la ayuda recibida de una empresa local.

El tránsito interregional que se ha comprometido a mantener durante toda esta semana en el suministro diario de comidas se mantendrá.

Los carros de Cáritas serán los responsables de transportar y repartir las raciones en la ciudad de Pisco, tarea que se llevará a cabo en diferentes centros de la Iglesia, ha explicado esta institución a Fons.
Un gran acontecimiento en la historia de nuestra Iglesia en Oklahoma

El nuevo Centro Guadalupano es un regalo de Dios Todopoderoso

Por Mauro Vences
Sooner Catholic

OKLAHOMA CITY — El pasado 12 de agosto, el Arzobispo de la Arquidiócesis de Oklahoma City, monseñor Eusebio Bellián, agradeció a los fieles de la Florencia su gran generosidad y espíritu de colaboración y anhelo a esta comunidad a que sigan ayudando cada día más en los apostolados de la Iglesia Católica.

Más de 1,000 fieles, decenas de sacerdotes y monjas se hicieron presentes junto al Arzobispo Bellián para celebrar la misa de dedicación del nuevo Centro Guadalupano de la parroquia de la Florencia.

La parroquia la Florencia está administrada y conducida por la Congregación Carmelitas Descalzas, quienes han estado más de 80 años a esta parroquia para evangelizar. Al respecto el padre Jéronimo de la Cruz, quien es sacerdote de esta congregación y parroco de la Florencia, mencionó que el Centro Guadalupano es un testimonio de amor hacia Dios.

Desde su consagración, la Iglesia la Florencia ha sido uno de los principales centros de ayuda para los inmigrantes hispanos en la

El Arzobispo Eusebio Bellián y el Padre Jéronimo de la Cruz.

Arquidiócesis de Oklahoma City.

El Centro Guadalupano se encuentra localizado adjunto a la Capilla de la Iglesia de la Florencia y cuenta con una capacidad para 600 personas sentadas para las celebraciones eucarísticas. Además, el Centro Guadalupano tendrá múltiples usos que satisfacerán la necesidad evangelizadora de una población cercana a 20,000 personas hispanas que viven ahí.

Al término de la misa en la que se dedico el nuevo Centro Guadalupano de la Florencia, el Arzobispo Eusebio Bellián expresó su agradecimiento personal al Padre Jéronimo de la Cruz por su contribución y su trabajo para la culminación de tan importante obra. El Arzobispo también destacó que este nuevo centro extremadamente más la devoción a la Virgen de Guadalupe en Oklahoma City y señaló que hemos sido muchas las veces que hemos rezado a Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe por este centro y se han hecho una realidad.

El Centro Guadalupano es un nuevo comienzo y un nuevo esperanza para todos los que buscan al consuelo y refugio de Dios.
JOBS BOX

2 1/2-Year-Old Teacher
Villa Teresa Catholic School needs a teacher for 2 1/2-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.

Adjunct Faculty
The College for Working Adults at St. Gregory’s University on the Shawnee campus has openings for adjunct faculty at the undergraduate and graduate level: General Education, Business and Business Law, Computer Science, Professional Development and Psychology. A master’s degree is required, preference for candidates with experience teaching adults. Candidates must be supportive of and willing to contribute to the Catholic and Benedictine identity of the university. Send a cover letter, vita and transcripts to hr@stgregorys.edu or mail to Dr. Denise Short, Associate Dean, St. Gregory’s University, 1900 W. MacArthur, Shawnee, Okla. 74804.

Campus Minister
St. Gregory’s University in Shawnee is looking for a campus minister to oversee and implement a comprehensive Catholic and Benedictine campus ministry program, coordinate student-led retreat ministry as an outreach to area parishes and high schools, coordinate student liturgies and student liturgical ministries and assist in the planning of campus-wide liturgies, provide catechetical and faith formation activities such as Bible study, Lectio Divina, discussions on Catholic social teaching, small faith groups, etc., develop discussions on Catholic social teaching as Bible study, Lectio Divina, and faith formation activities such as Bible study, Lectio Divina, and faith formation activities such as Bible study, Lectio Divina, and faith formation activities such as Bible study, Lectio Divina, and faith formation activities such as Bible study, Lectio Divina, and faith formation activities such as Bible study, Lectio Divina, and faith formation activities such as Bible study, Lectio Divina, and faith formation activities such as Bible study, Lectio Divina, and faith formation activities such as Bible study, Lectio Divina, and faith formation activities such as Bible study, Lectio Divina, and faith formation activities such as Bible study, Lectio Divina, and faith formation activities such as Bible study, Lectio Divina, and faith formation activities such as

V.P. of Institutional Advancement
St. Gregory’s University in Shawnee is looking for a vice president of Institutional Advancement. St. Gregory’s University was founded in 1875 by Benedictine monks. It was originally chartered as the Catholic University of Oklahoma in 1916, and is a private Roman Catholic university founded in the Benedictine tradition. The university’s educational mission quickly expanded, and today St. Gregory’s serves a diverse population of Catholics and other faiths from many states and foreign countries. We offer a number of majors across the spectrum including Natural Science, Social Science, Arts, Business and Theology. As a Catholic university, St. Gregory’s does not avoid the difficult questions of our day, but rather prepares students to confront these questions creatively and objectively while striving for their destiny with faith and hope. St. Gregory’s University in Shawnee, Oklahoma’s Benedictine, Catholic university, invites nominations and applications for the position of vice president of Institutional Advancement. The vice president reports directly to the president and will be responsible for the planning and direction of all philanthropic initiatives for the university. The vice president will plan and lead all advancement initiatives to capitalize on the university’s success story, engage a broad range of constituents and grow the endowment. The vice president will work closely with staff, senior administrators and board members to identify short- and long-term priorities for fund-raising and manage a portfolio of major gift prospects. The university is currently in the silent phase of a major capital campaign.

The successful candidate will possess the ability to embrace and communicate St. Gregory’s unique attributes and mission while leading a broad advancement program and enhancing the existing relationships with constituents across the country. A master’s degree is required. It is strongly preferred that this individual be a practicing Catholic with knowledge of Benedictine spirituality. Salary and benefits are commensurate with experience.

Electronic applications are preferred, and should include a cover letter and resume. Review of applications will begin immediately and continue until the position has been filled. Nominations, expressions of interest or requests for the complete position specifications may be sent directly to the university: Mr. Shingi Goto, Executive Vice President, St. Gregory’s University, 1900 W. MacArthur, Shawnee, Okla. 74804, sngoto@stgregorys.edu or by phone, (405) 878-5435.

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. Please 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
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 a family friendly environment that is rich in opportunities for personal and professional growth. Benefits include paid health, life, dental and long-term disability insurance. Employees work a 37.5 hour week and enjoy 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. Successful 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. Successful 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.
5. Establish strong social networks.

4. Achieve mastery in accomplishing mental fitness.

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.

Speaker Addresses Life Issues
Mary Lou Bates, adjunct professor at Southern Nazarene University and a true advocate for elders, recently visited Saint Ann Retirement Center to speak to the residents on the topic of Harvesting Your Life and Reaping the Blessings from Life Experience. She said that harvesting shows us that we have made a difference in the world. We sense that our lives have meaning; that we have contributed to others; and that we are worthwhile human beings. Bates said that as we age, changes occur. Many times we face widowhood. Our self-worth is questioned. It is not a question of how old we are, but how we are old. It is not chronological, it is a state of mind. The challenge is to become elders, not elderly.

Bates challenged us to use five categories of activity that can significantly boost the power, clarity and subtlety of our brain and mind.

1. Exercise mentally.
2. Exercise physically.
3. Pick challenging leisure activities.
4. Achieve mastery in accomplishing mental fitness.
5. Establish strong social networks.
Little Flower Offers Prayers, Celebration For Centro Guadalupano

More than 1,000 members of Little Flower Church turned out Aug. 12 for the blessing and dedication of the new Centro Guadalupano center. Archbishop Beltran led the blessing, assisted by Father Jenaro de la Cruz, pastor of the predominately Hispanic parish located at 1125 S. Walker in Oklahoma City. Archbishop Beltran congratulated the Little Flower parishioners for their deep faith and commitment in making this project possible. Many obstacles and delays were overcome in making the $2 million center a reality. Following the blessing ceremony, a parish dinner and dance were held to celebrate God’s blessings on the Little Flower Parish and the completion of the long-awaited Centro Guadalupano. Photos/Mauro Yanez and Rex Hogan

Archbishop Beltran blesses the new building with Father Jenaro de la Cruz following.

A woman and little girl are all smiles as the celebration unfolds.

Little Flower parishioners packed the church for the blessing and celebration.