Pope Urges Mideast Interfaith Dialogue

By Francis X. Rocca
Catholic News Service

BEREUT (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI signed a major document calling on Catholics in the Middle East to engage in dialogue with Orthodox, Jewish and Muslim neighbors, but also to affirm and defend their right to live freely in the region where Christianity was born.

In a ceremony at the Melkite Catholic Basilica of St. Paul in Harissa Sept. 14, Pope Benedict signed the 90-page document of his reflections on the 2010 special Synod of Bishops, which was dedicated to Christians in the Middle East. He was to formally present the document Sept. 16 at an outdoor Mass in Beirut.

A section dedicated to interreligious dialogue encouraged Christians to “esteem” the region’s dominant religion, Islam, lamenting that “both sides have used doctrinal differences as a pretext for justifying, in the name of religion, acts of intolerance, discrimination, marginalization and even of persecution.”

Yet in a reflection of the precarious position of Christians in most of the region today, where they frequently experience negative legal and social discrimination, the Pope called for Arab societies to “move beyond...
In my two previous columns I wrote about the importance of a properly formed conscience in the practice of faithful citizenship. Without a properly formed conscience rooted in universal moral principles and enlightened by our Catholic faith, we run the risk of following a blind guide. Our conscience would likely make erroneous judgments about the policies and candidates that promote or oppose the fundamental rights and authentic goods necessary for a just society to flourish.

Voting according to a properly formed conscience is greatly assisted both by the virtue of prudence and by prayer. But we also have to do our homework. We have to know the candidates and their positions, especially on the most important issues. If we intend to fulfill our civic and moral duty as Catholic citizens responsibly, we have to examine these matters not primarily from the perspective of partisan politics or enlightened self-interest, but in the light of faith.

In our personal and public life we have an obligation both to pursue the good and to oppose evil. While Catholics in good conscience may legitimately differ in their opinion on the host of courses of action regarding various proposals and strategies that would advance the common good, such as in debates about health care reform or the economy, there are some matters about which we cannot disagree without abandoning core teachings of the Gospel and the Catholic Church.

As Catholics we ought never choose something which is intrinsically evil, even as a means to a good end. Chief among these intrinsic evils is the deliberate destruction of innocent human life. (See last week’s article for others.)

We cannot ignore the more fundamental issues. Even before promoting certain good, there is a prior claim on our conscience to oppose acts which are always evil. In order to justify voting for a candidate who supports an intrinsic evil, such as the attempt to redefine marriage, this would require a proportionately grave moral reason for ignoring such a profound evil. This may be easier to conceive in theory than to discover in actual practice! This is particularly severe when we consider the destruction of tens of millions of human lives through abortion. What could be a proportionately grave moral reason that would allow a Catholic voter to ignore this evil?

Finally, if all of the candidates hold positions in favor of some intrinsic evil, conscientious Catholic voters face a dilemma. Because we have a serious moral obligation to vote, deciding not to vote is not ordinarily an acceptable solution. After careful deliberation, we may decide to vote for the candidate least likely to advance the morally flawed position and do the least harm, while promoting other authentic goods.

Voting is not merely a civic or political act. Voting is a moral act involving duties and responsibilities. It demands a properly formed conscience. It requires a careful and honest assessment of the candidate, issues and principles which are at stake for our society. As always in the upcoming election, there are very serious matters in the balance. Our choice of candidates demands a careful and prayerful consideration of the moral consequences of our political choices.

As believers we do not tell Catholic citizens which candidates they should vote for. Our duty is to teach. Our duty is to assist Catholics in the proper formation of our conscience so that we can make our political choices about issues and candidates in light of the truths of our Catholic faith and universal moral principles.

For more information and complete documentation, visit www.faithfulcitizenship.org

Archbishop Coakley’s Calendar

**September 23 -** Archbishop’s Annual Picnic for Priests and Religious, Deacons and Wives, CPC Staff, Principals, School Board Members at Catholic Pastoral Center, 5 p.m.

**September 25-26 -** Catholic Extension Mission Bishops Conference, Chicago, Ill.

**September 27 -** Catholic Charities Board Meeting, Catholic Charities Office, 11:30 a.m.

**September 27 -** Envisioning Team Listening Session, St. Mark the Evangelist Church, Norman, 7 p.m.

**September 28 -** Fall Institute for Catholic Schoolteachers, Catholic Pastoral Center, 8 a.m.

**September 28 -** Priests Jubilarian Dinner, 6 p.m.

**September 29 -** Archdiocesan Catechetical Congress, Catholic Pastoral Center, 8:30 a.m.

**September 29 -** Confirmation, St. Patrick Church, Oklahoma City, 2 p.m.

**September 30 -** Confirmation, Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, Hollis, 1:30 p.m.


**October 4 -** Ordination of Brian Busketter to the Order of Deacons, The Pontifical Basilica of St. Peter at the Vatican, Rome, 9:30 a.m.

**October 7 -** Ordination of Priest and Deacons, Clear Creek Abbey, Hulbert, Okla., 10 a.m.
Birth Choice Takes a Walk to Save Babies

By Emily Kindiger
For the Sooner Catholic

“We’ve got to save the babies — it’s a must,” said Barbara Chishko, executive director of Birth Choice of Oklahoma Inc.

On Sunday, Oct. 7, Birth Choice will hold its 20th annual Life Walk at Wiley Post Park. Registration will begin at 1 p.m. and the walk will begin at 2 p.m.

She said last year 800 walkers showed their support for life and about $30,000 was raised. She said their funds were slightly lower last year but she has high hopes for 2012.

“We’ve had an unbelievable year” at Birth Choice, Chishko said. She said their numbers are up and “we’ve been busy with the ultrasound program.”

“I would love to see 1,000 walkers,” she said. “I’d love us to do $40,000.”

She said those wishing to walk simply pledge a donation. For some added encouragement, each person who registers with $100 or more in donations will receive a free T-shirt, and anyone who registers with $25 or more will be entered for a chance to win an iPad.

During Life Walk, food and activities for the kids will be available in addition to the band Zero to 60.

“It’s a lot of fellowship … celebrating life and seeing how important human life is,” she said. “We must be in communion with each other.”

“This is a great opportunity for the community to come together” to show their support for the unborn and their mothers, Chishko said.

“We have to be there for them.”

She said Oklahoma City and El Reno are the two cities that currently have a Life Walk.

For more information on Life Walk or to download the registration form, visit the Birth Choice website at www.birthfortheunborn.org and click on the events tab.

By Emily Kindiger
For the Sooner Catholic

Prayer, Peace, Vigil Hallmarks of 40 Days for Life

People and churches will join together in prayer and peaceful vigil for the fifth annual 40 Days for Life.

Director Debby Krisch said from Sept. 26 through Nov. 4, people from “over 300 cities across the nation and internationally” will join together in hopes of ending abortion.

The mission of 40 Days is to give “an opportunity to pray, keep vigil and (give) a community outreach program to make others aware of the abortion crisis,” she said.

Typically between 300 to 400 people from various Oklahoma churches take turns keeping vigil. She said volunteers pick a time and “they go out and pray and hold up signs telling people to pray to end abortion.”

Oklahoma participants will show their support for life at Outpatient Services for Women in Warr Acres and Abortion Surgery Center in Norman.

Krisch said this is a peaceful display with three components. Prayer and Fasting is “the most important” and all are expected to understand and perform this. Peaceful Vigil includes going to the abortion clinics for “peaceful public witness” and Community Outreach involves spreading the pro-life message by trying to reach as many churches and groups as possible.

“We are hoping to get the abortion crisis out of Oklahoma City and Norman,” she said. “We need to get people to know what’s going on.”

She said many people live near the abortion clinics and don’t know what’s happening near them. People typically “don’t want to be around it,” she said, and informing these people helps 40 Days’ cause.

Until people participate, they don’t know “what kind of an impact it can have on them,” Krisch said. “They have immense feelings (about the value of life) as they come out to pray.”

40 Days will have a kickoff rally at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Oklahoma City, and speakers will talk about adoption versus abortion.

“Women get lost in their solution, they don’t think about adoption,” she said.

With information, “this can only be lifesaving … these children’s lives can only be a gift they can give and it’s a marvelous gift.”

For more information about the event, contact Krisch at 824-5578, or visit www.40daysforlife.com/OklahomaCity.
Parishes Join Together for Mile-long Eucharistic Procession

EDMOND — “So, could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?” (Matthew 26:40).

We all know the haunting words Jesus spoke in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night of his betrayal. His friends fell asleep in his darkest hour, instead of praying with him. The Catholic teaching of the Real Presence affirms that in the Holy Eucharist, Jesus is literally and wholly present — body and blood, soul and divinity — under the appearance of bread and wine. That “Jesus Christ continues alive and truly present in the Consecrated Host and the Chalice” is the central point of the Catholic faith. (Pope Benedict XVI)

This Eucharistic Procession will be held on Oct. 6 at St. John the Baptist Church. All are welcome to join in this holy event.

Together for Holy Mass followed by a mile-long Eucharistic Procession. All are invited to participate on Saturday, Oct. 6, beginning with Holy Mass at 8 a.m. at St. John the Baptist Church located at 9th and Boulevard in Edmond.

Eucharistic processions are an ancient tradition in the Catholic Church. The Church instructs, “In processions in which the Blessed Sacrament is solemnly carried through the streets to the singing of hymns, the Christian people give public witness to their faith and devotion toward the sacrament.”

ALL are invited to this joint procession, including families and children in strollers. The procession route is short and police escorts will provide security in the street. A reception will follow at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church located at 9th and Boulevard in Edmond.

Bishops to Lead Novena Prayers on EWTN’s Global Network

Irondale, Al — EWTN Global Catholic Network has collaborated with one of the pre-eminent Marian theologians in the United States on the creation of a new “Novena to the Mother of God for the Nation.”

Father Frederick Miller, chair of the Department of Systematic Theology at Mount St. Mary’s Seminary in Emmitsburg, Md., composed the meditations and prayers which invoke Mary’s intercession. The Novena will be prayed publicly beginning on the Feast of the Archangels, Saturday, Sept. 29 through Oct. 7, the Feast of the Most Holy Rosary.

“The Novena is available in both English and Spanish and can be downloaded for free from EWTN’s Novena website at www.religious.liturgy.org/novena.”

“Thus is a critical time for our nation,” said Michael P. Warsaw, EWTN president and CEO. “My hope is that as many people as possible will spread the word about this important devotion to their friends and neighbors, prayer groups and parishes and in every way possible.”

During the Novena, leading bishops from across the nation will celebrate the televised Mass from Our Lady of the Angels Chapel in Irondale, Ala., at 8 a.m. ET each day. Each bishop will deliver a homily highlighting the importance of prayer in the fight for religious liberty and will lead the novena prayers for that day. Celebrants will include Denver Auxiliary Bishop James Conley, who will open the novena; Kansas City Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann; Mobile (Ala.) Bishop Robert J. Baker; Milwaukee (Wis.) Auxiliary Bishop Thomas J. Roche; Allentown (Pa.) Bishop John RuYep; Philadelphia Archbishop Charles J. Chaput; and Birmingham (Ala.) Bishop Robert J. Baker, who will close the novena.

Memorial Gifts that Invest in the Future of Our Faith

When a loved one dies, many times the family asks that memorial gifts be directed to specific causes near to the deceased’s heart. Why not consider making the Catholic Church the recipient of these gifts.

In many cases the family adds to the obituary that in lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to a specific parish where the deceased worshipped or to a specific Catholic cause or program. In any case, the appropriate wording would be “In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the Catholic Church.”

The Catholic Foundation maintains an online presence and “[Deceased’s Name] Memorials” are added as a line item on the “Donate Now” page. The Foundation has memorial self-addressed envelopes for distribution at wakes or funerals if needed. Tracking the donations for memorials is taken care of by the Foundation.

Acknowledgement thank you notes are promptly sent to the donors and the family is notified of the gifts.

For more information about Memorial Gifts, please contact the Catholic Foundation Office.
PTO Sets Final Event

OKLAHOMA CITY — “Girls Just Want To Have Fun” Fashion Show and Luncheon will be held Saturday, Oct. 20 at 11:30 a.m. at the Bolds Isle Restaurant & Banquet, 1900 NW Expressway, 50 Penn Place, Third Floor. Reservations are a must and are $25, which includes lunch.

Call Mary Ann Schmitt at 943-5758 by Oct. 12 to reserve your spot.

This is a fundraiser for OKC Central Region Council of Catholic Women.

Heart of the City Campaign
Beneﬁts The Dorothy Day Center

OKLAHOMA CITY — If you work for the city of Oklahoma City or know someone who does, you can choose the hunger ministry, The Dorothy Day Center for your workplace giving. Designate The Dorothy Day Center a recipient by checking this important number: HTDC 9226. The Center is part of the Regional Food Bank federation of partner agencies. The Center was founded in 2005 and is an all-volunteer community of partner agencies.

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him establish "pastoral priorities." Father William Novak served as moderator for the session. He said the session was designed to "focus on the future" and said all "viewpoints and expression mattered." Father Novak explained the archbishop would not respond to questions or comments. He was there to listen.

A number of the Listening team coordinators who helped design the effort were also on hand to assist. Among them was Padre Moreno, the new Archdiocesan Director of Hispanic Ministry. He said he was pleased that more than two dozen Hispanic Catholics attended the kick-off session.

"That's more than 10 percent of the turnout so that's a very positive response," said Moreno, who served as a translator during the two-hour session.

Five more sessions are scheduled across the Archdiocese, although Archbishop Coakley said there would probably be more once he plans to schedule sessions with Archdiocesan employees and other groups.

Making up the audiences at the Conner Center were several priests, deacons, nuns, Catholic school principals and teachers. Dr. Greg Mann, president of St. Gregory's University, participated, as did Tim O'Connor, executive director of Catholic Charities.

But the majority of those participating were lay Catholic, eager to help build a stronger Church and Catholic faith in Oklahoma.

Participants were asked to answer three questions:

What do you most appreciate about the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City?

What is your vision for the Archdiocese in the next five years?

In the next 18 to 24 months, what three priorities should the Archdiocese name and fulfill to bring Christians forth from the faith?

Father Novak explained the Archbishop used comment cards to "capture these priorities."

"The compassion of the Catholic community could come together," he said.

"More outreach to non-Catholic communities and also in our Muslim communities and also in our Muslim communities."

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On July 21, an Eagle Scout Court of Honor was held at St. Cornelius Parish Hall in Cherokee to award Scouting's highest rank, which is attained by fewer than 5 percent of all Boy Scouts, to Connor Joseph McGee.

The 17-year-old son of Francis “Fritz” and June McGee of Cherokee is a member of St. Cornelius Catholic Church. Connor has just begun his senior year at Cherokee High School, where he is active in the speech and debate program and the Academic Bowl Team.

Currently serving as senior patrol leader for Burlington’s Troop 302, McGee has also held the positions of den chief and troop historian under Scoutmaster Linda Gordon of Burlington. Scouting has been a big part of his life over 11 years, since he became a Tiger Cub in first grade.

During this time, he served his community and surrounding areas in many ways, participating in food, toy and book drives and community cleanups, working on a veterans memorial site, planting park flower beds, and helping renovate an old cemetery. Other volunteer efforts include assisting with the Food Bank and the local library’s summer reading program, mentoring elementary school students, playing piano for residents at the nursing home, and taking part in the Children’s Memory Walk and Relay for Life.

Connor’s Eagle project, which must benefit a community, school or religious organization, must be planned, developed and led by the Eagle candidate, along with any necessary fundraising, then approved by the Eagle Board of Review. Before even beginning such work, however, the Scout must first have advanced through the ranks of Tenderfoot, Second Class, First Class, Star and Life, earned a minimum of 21 merit badges, and served in a troop leadership position for six months.

When the time came for Connor, he turned to Glen Hensley, biologist at the Great Salt Plains Wildlife Refuge near Cherokee. Upon learning of Hensley’s concern for the diminishing population of wood ducks at the refuge, McGee had found his cause.

The decrease in the number of these ducks was attributed not only to a lack of nesting habitats, but also to the loss of many eggs and ducklings which fell prey to snakes and raccoons, due to ineffective predator barriers. This information led to Connor, his troop and several volunteers, constructing and installing new nesting boxes and predator barriers in time for this year’s nesting season.
Holy Family Home Becomes Shelter for Women and Children

By Greg Horton For the Sooner Catholic

Holy Family Home, a residential shelter for homeless women and their children, opened in Midwest City on Aug. 20. The shelter, an outreach of Catholic Charities of Oklahoma City, has facilities for three families of up to eight members each and eight single women.

Amy Hampton, director of homeless services for Catholic Charities, said the outreach came as a result of asking homeless people where they stay in homeless services areas.

“Unfortunates, we put two answers,” Hampton said. “There is minimal shelter space for families in Oklahoma City, and barriers to entry for services for people without additions or mental health issues kept women and children off the streets.”

Women and their families who weren't suffering from addictions or mental health problems are regularly denied entry to shelters because they don’t meet the correct set of criteria.

“We have a chance to help a group of people who are already highly motivated to work or go to school,” Hampton said. “They simply lacked a safe place from which to do it. Holy Family addresses that need by providing a safe place, a stable, secure environment for families, homeless women need.”

Hampton said that the kinds of services offered at Sanctuary Women’s Development Center, another outreach of Catholic Charities, will be offered at Holy Family, but also expects residents of Holy Family to have even better access to the many kinds of services and services of millionaire needs.

“In terms of adult residents, we will only have a maximum of 11 at one time,” she said. “This number will be self-limiting as an adult resident. Most will be able to work or go to school during the week. Residents will be referred to the program through partner agencies like the Salvation Army, the YWCA, Salvation Army, and Youth Services.

“Holy Family is designed for motivated women to have to meet at least an hour per week with a case manager, who will work with them as a group of middle-aged men, she admitted.

Archbishop Conley said he was inspired to make the trek when he first converted to Catholicism, and said he received a “great sense of gratitude” and “confirmation of faith” from having completed the journey, especially on such a significant spiritual feast day.

Bishop Wall said that people realize that is a religious pilgrimage, “Bishop Conley said, because “this pilgrimage is built upon centuries of people’s lives.”

“Just hope and pray that the people realize what it pilgrimage, you ultimately will encounter the living Christ,” Bishop Conley said.

Holy Family Dormitory is a six-bed facility at 902 N.W. 92nd St. in Oklahoma City. (Photo courtesy)

Sewing Guild’s Prayers, Power Go Into Prayer Shawls

BarbaraMAIN, a member of the St. Anne’s Sewing Guild at St. Eugene Parish, Oklahoma City, and Mary Diane Steffenskopf, director of Catholic Charities Health Ministry, are good friends.

That’s how the Sewing Guild at St. Eugene’s became involved in making prayer shawls. The guild creates shawls for St. Eugene parish members who are in the hospital or not feeling well at home. But there’s more power in the shawls than just material.

“We pray while we make them to the person it’s going to. We put a tag on it that says, ‘Made for you with prayers from St. Eugene Church,” Main said.

Main said the St. Eugene’s Sewing Guild has about six members and have been making the shawls for the past four months.

“Most of our缝 materials are donated, and designed and donated for missionary women to wear for the purpose of self-reflection and security. It’s an area with entry level employment all around. The center is located close enough to Oklahoma City to take advantage of.”

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That’s how the Sewing Guild at St. Eugene’s became involved in making prayer shawls. The guild creates shawls for St. Eugene parish members who are in the hospital or not feeling well at home. But there’s more power in the shawls than just material.

“We pray while we make them to the person it’s going to. We put a tag on it that says, ‘Made for you with prayers from St. Eugene Church,” Main said.

Mary Diane Steffenskopf, organizer of the Health Ministry’s prayer shawl project, said, “Our prayer shawls have been handmade as the Health Ministry members make their own pray shawls. (Photo courtesy)

Steffenskopf said the project lets those who are going through a tough time in life that members of their parish are thinking of them. “It’s a way to say, ‘You’re not alone,” Steffenskopf said.

Main said the St. Eugene’s Sewing Guild has about six members and have been making the shawls for the past four months. She said it has become a parish-wide project.

“We have other ladies in the parish helping us and we have people donate yarn. It has somehow mushroomed from where we started,” Main said.

She said about 60 of the 60-80 inch shawls have been taken to the homebound and ill.

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Faith, Hope Provide Strength; Cancer Survivor Becomes an Inspiration to Those Around Him

By Steve Gust
For the Sooner Catholic

EDMOND — Spared some time with Matt Allen and you’ll renew your faith, hope, optimism and zest for life. One more thing — you’ll know you’re with someone who is close to God.

And what makes this even more extraordinary is that Matt, 45, is coming up on a special anniversary — three years of battling a cancerous brain tumor. For some this may not seem like anything to celebrate, but it’s pretty special for Matt. He was told in September 2009 he probably wouldn’t live to see the next Christmas. That was tough news to swallow.

Fortunately, Matt proved the doctors wrong.

The beginning
In summer 2009, Matt was living the American dream. He had a great job with a pharmacy company and was enjoying life as a family man. His marriage to wife, Kelly, was nearing the 20-year mark and the couple had been blessed with two children — a daughter, Taylor, and a son, Christopher.

Then came the headache. It was the headache that wouldn’t go away. He sought medical help. Before he knew it he was waking up in a hospital bed. A brain tumor the size of his fist had been removed.

“I just can’t believe you can have something that big in your head and not even know it,” he said.

And then more challenging news.

“I’m in a hospital bed with these tubes in me and these machines beeping behind me and they tell me, Matt, you have cancer,” he recalled.

And thus started a journey that has been long, arduous and difficult. Yet at the same time Matt Allen’s life has been enriched. He’s realized how blessed he’s been with family, church and friends.

Life with a tumor
Matt Allen has undergone not just one, but four brain surgeries.

“My doctors have told me that may be a record,” he said.

They also warned him surgery might lead to losing the use of his hand or leg.

They were wrong about that also.

“I could do handstands in here if I wanted to,” Matt said, looking down the aisle of a local restaurant. He also drives and functions as well as most people.

In fact, some could advance the theory he’s getting more bang for his buck with life than most of us.

Yet the challenges continue.

One of those obstacles occurred recently and it was the most serious since Matt first got the news three years ago.

“For so long I was just dealing with one tumor,” he said. “I had been blessed with just that.”

But the cancer spread. More tumors popped up on his brain. Even his vision was threatened. Over the summer, an aggressive form of radiation and treatment was ordered.

And then a couple of weeks ago the results.

“They told me all of those were gone,” he said. “It’s a good thing there wasn’t a camera on me then. I did a happy dance that would have been embarrassing.”

He next checkup is in about a month.

Usually, he’s doing treatment every two weeks. But it hasn’t had the effects on Matt that it does on many. He’s active and vibrant.

Faith and conversations with God
Matt Allen deals with his health by having conversations with God.

“I used to call it prayer, but it’s really a conversation I have,” he said.

He also has many, many people who ask God to help this happy family man.

“It may sound odd, but late at night when I’m having a conversation with God, I can swear that I can sense people praying for me,” he said.

Most of that centers on his Catholic faith. A convert to the Church in 1991, he has lots of concerned friends and prayer partners at Edmond’s St. John the Baptist Catholic Church.

He’s a member of the Knights of Columbus, and recently read a Bible passage to his brother Knights — outlining the faith that Abraham had with God in almost sacrificing his only son.

“It may sound odd, but late at night when I’m having a conversation with God, I can swear that I can sense people praying for me. It’s that faith in God that everything will work out that keeps me going and gives me peace.”

“I’m not the least bit scared of dying,” he said. “I worry about my family, but I’m not scared.”

An inspiration
Matt’s story isn’t new. Many people, even those outside of St. John’s, know about this brave and happy man.

When someone receives the news they have a tumor, Matt is there. He usually gives comfort and sympathizes with the new challenge another family is facing.

He also was close to the late Father Kirk Larkin, a Catholic priest who grew up in Edmond. Father Larkin had an aggressive tumor, which took his life in April 2011.

“Father Larkin’s faith was incredible,” Matt said. “He was prepared.”

The American Cancer Society also has seen Matt’s talent. They schedule him for speeches. He is set to be a speaker at an upcoming national convention in Dallas.

And sometimes the requests come from out of the blue.

“There was a hairdresser in town who told her customer about me,” he recalled. “Her husband had just gotten the diagnosis. I didn’t know the hairdresser and I certainly don’t need one now. Yet she had my cell phone number. They weren’t even in the Church.”

He was more than happy to talk to the woman’s husband.

Life today
Life for Matt Allen isn’t the same as for most people. In a way it’s a lot better because he knows every second.

“I wake up and take a breath and say, ‘That’s good. I’m breathing and I’m alive,’” he said.

He said people can make a choice when they wake up and decide what kind of a day it’s going to be.

The man who wasn’t expected to live for more than two months has experienced some real milestones. There was the graduation of daughter, Taylor from Bishop McGuinness last spring. And he got to see his son, Christopher, 15, belt a home run in Stillwater.

Then came the headache. It was the headache that wouldn’t go away. He sought medical help. Before he knew it he was waking up in a hospital bed. A brain tumor the size of his fist had been removed.

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SHAWNEE — A dozen members of the St. Gregory’s University Buckley Team visited the Center of Family Love in Okarche on Saturday, Sept. 8. Established in 1981, the Center of Family Love cares for more than 110 developmentally challenged adults of all ages and abilities.

“We wanted our Buckley Team members to perform a formational service project,” said SGU chaplain, Rev. Nicholas Ant, O.S.B. “Visiting the Center of Family Love on the birthday of the Blessed Virgin seemed a perfect opportunity to serve the people of God in a meaningful way.”

Throughout the afternoon, the Buckley Team assisted residents at three sites for several games of Bingo. The day ended with a game of T-ball.

“The residents were so happy to see us,” said Lizzy McDaniel, a junior from St. John the Baptist in Edmond. “But by the end of the day, we realized that we had received a gift as well.”

Myles Melson, a freshman from Our Lady of Sorrows in Chandler, agreed. “We walked away as better people,” he said.

Beginning its third decade of service to the Church of Oklahoma, the Buckley Team conducts high school retreats at parishes and on the campus of St. Gregory’s University.

For more information, call Marvin Bennett, Director of FIDE, at (405) 878-5382.

By George Weigel

Some years ago, the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor coined the term “exclusivist secularism” to describe a disturbing phenomenon in modern society: the determination of some intellectual, academic and political figures to exclude religious truth from public life. Taylor’s “exclusive secularism” is not the benign “secularity” — the separation of religion and political institutions in a modern society — that Pope Benedict XVI has praised for helping Catholicism develop its understanding of the right relationship between Church and state. No, by referring to “exclusive secularism,” Charles Taylor was raising a warning flag about an aggressive and hegemonic form of mind that seeks to drive out of public square any consideration of what God or the moral law might require of a just society.

Aggressive secularism was once thought to be a primarily European malady. It then migrated to Canada. Now it has become a serious problem in American public life. Catholics can do something about that, if they understand what the Church asks of “the world.”

The Catholic Church asks — and, if circumstances require, the Church demands — two things of any political community and any society for its own good: to be itself to the ends of its creation, to celebrate the sacraments, and to do the works of education, charity, mercy and justice, without undue interference from government.

The Church also asks any society to consider the possibility of its need for redemption. The “world” sometimes doesn’t take kindly to this suggestion, as the history of the martyrs reminds us. But overt persecution isn’t the only way the “world” resists the Church’s proposal. Secularism can affect a bland indifference to the truths taught by biblical religion. Cultures can mock the moral truths taught by God’s revelation to the people of Israel and God’s self-revelation in his Son, Jesus Christ. Educational systems can instill an ethos of nihilism and hedonism, teaching that the only moral absolute is that there are no moral absolutes.

On both of these fronts — the political-legal front and the social-cultural front — the Catholic Church is under assault in the United States today. Over the past four years, the federal government has made unprecedented efforts to undo religious freedom. The gravest assault was the “contraceptive mandate” issued earlier this year by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: an effrontery to conscientious Catholic employees who believe what the Church believes about the morality of human life and the ethics of the right to life, and a frontal attack on the institutional integrity of the Church. For with the HHS mandate, the federal government seeks nothing less than to turn the Catholic Church’s charitable and medical facilities into arms agencies that facilitate practices the Catholic Church believes are grossly evil.

Rather than break to such coercion, Catholic bishops across the country have made clear that they will, if necessary, close the Catholic medical facilities for which they are responsible — a drastic action that would imperil health services to the poor. But it doesn’t have to come to that. Aggressive, hegemonic secularism need not have the last word in the United States.

In this election cycle, Americans can issue a ringing call for religious freedom in full. U.S. Catholics can, and must, demand of all candidates an unambiguous commitment to the Church’s institutional freedom, and to the freedom of the Church’s people to follow the dictates of conscience as shaped by the moral truths the Church guardian and teaches. Self-respect requires nothing less.

George Weigel is a Distinguished 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.
Nuestros Deberes Morales Como Ciudadanos Católicos (Parte 2)

En mi columna anterior, empecé a escribir sobre nuestros deberes morales como ciudadanos Católicos. Entre estos deberes tenemos una obligación moral de votar. A través de este ejercicio de nuestra responsabilidad cívica y moral, nos es obligatorio venir a nuestras iglesias para formar adecuadas convicciones sobre nuestras actitudes en relación con los temas del matrimonio y la libertad religiosa. La Iglesia sobre el matrimonio y la libertad religiosa busca en las Sagradas Escrituras y las enseñanzas de la Iglesia sobre la base de los principios morales y de la formación de la conciencia implica varios elementos. Sin un adecuado entendimiento sobre el juicio de nuestra conciencia sobre lo que es correcto y justo, tenemos una responsabilidad moral igualmente elemental a formar nuestra conciencia correctamente y con mucho cuidado. Sin una adecuada formación sobre la base de los principios morales universales enraizados tanto en la razón humana y las verdades reveladas de nuestra fe, nuestra conciencia es probable que haga juicios erróneos sobre nuestras actitudes y obrar sin un juicio de la razón por el que la conciencia es un juicio de la razón por el que la conciencia es algo que a menudo es mal entendida e incluso adulterada. No es sólo una "muntada" o sensación de lo que se siente sino una especie para sustituir o relativizar.

La Iglesia: "La conciencia se es una juzgada por el juez de lo que la persona humana reconoce la calidad moral de un acto concreto" (CCC 1778). "La voz de Dios que nos habla personalmente, el Santo Espíritu, el agente y mediador de la gracia divina, que le da atributo al nombre de su Iglesia, se nos comunica en las Sagradas Escrituras y las enseñanzas de la Iglesia, tal como se presenta, por ejemplo, en el Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica. ¿Quién escucha la Iglesia sobre el matrimonio y la libertad religiosa, por ejemplo? A continuación, se debe hacer un examen cuidadoso de las hechos y antecedentes.

Tanto oponerse al mal y hacer el bien son obligaciones esenciales.

Vivencias de Fe

No Se Puede Escribir EVANGELIO Sin “Ángel”

Son muchos los mensajeros dentro de las parroquias que me comunican palabras positivas e incluso me aseguran que estarán orando por mí. De manera especial la Parroquia de los Santos Ángeles, a la que me comunican palabras positivas e incluso me aseguran que estarán orando por mí. De manera especial la Parroquia de los Santos Ángeles, a la que me comunican palabras positivas e incluso me aseguran que estarán orando por mí. De manera especial la Parroquia de los Santos Ángeles, a la que me comunican palabras positivas e incluso me aseguran que estarán orando por mí. De manera especial la Parroquia de los Santos Ángeles, a la que me comunican palabras positivas e incluso me aseguran que estarán orando por mí. De manera especial la Parroquia de los Santos Ángeles, a la que me comunican palabras positivas e incluso me aseguran que estarán orando por mí. De manera especial la Parroquia de los Santos Ángeles, a la que me comunican palabras positivas e incluso me aseguran que estarán orando por mí. De manera especial la Parroquia de los Santos Ángeles, a la que me comunican palabras positivas e incluso me aseguran que estarán orando por mí. De manera especial la Parroquia de los Santos Ángeles, a la que me comunican palabras positivas e incluso me aseguran que estarán orando por mí. De manera especial la Parroquia de los Santos Ángeles, a la que me comunican palabras positivas e incluso me aseguran que estarán orando por mí. De manera especial la Parroquia de los Santos Ángeles, a la que me comunican palabras positivas e incluso me aseguran que estarán orando por mí. De manera especial la Parroquia de los Santos Ángeles, a la que me comunican palabras positivas e incluso me aseguran que estarán orando por mí. De manera especial la Parroquia de los Santos Ángeles, a la que me comunican palabras positivas e incluso me aseguran que estarán orando por mí.
Cortes Enseñanzas de Apologética Católica

Retomando la temática de la edición anterior de Sooner Catholic, iniciamos poniendo en recuerdo la noción de la palabra APOLÓGETICA.

En términos muy elementales y desde una visión teológica, consiste en defender la fe, según enfoques o puntos de vista (históricos, bíblicos, patrísticos, etc.). La palabra apologetica proviene del griego apología, que quiere decir la acción militar de doblar frente a un adversario que ataca y ataca. Así pues, la Iglesia toma esta disciplina teológica para dar explicación, aclaración e ilustración de lo que el magisterio ensaya y ha ensayado a través de 2000 años de cristianismo. Así entendido, la apologética nos sirve para defender y sostener de manera sólida, seria y razonada la doctrina del magisterio eclesiástico.

Ahora bien, ¿defender qué? ¿defender a quién? ¿por qué? Son preguntas todas ellas muy interesantes pero también complejas de responder. Tratemos pues, de ir dando paso a paso a paso a resolver estas cuestiones.

Desde el origen mismo del cristianismo, en el siglo primero, segundo y terceros de manera particular, a la Iglesia no le fue muy bien que defi- endase, era persiguida, apareció hermano que desכיר- tualizaban los enemigos o los enemigos; ideológi- cas y todos los temas teológicos distorsionaban lo que ya la Iglesia enseñaba. No obstante todo esto, la Iglesia supo enfrentar y aliviar estos grandes obstáculos y problemas, definiéndose a través de confusión, desmuntando y aclarando la enseñanza de la Iglesia, para mantener la misma doctrina y el derroche de la fe justicia, como Cristo la transmitió a sus discípulos.

El Papa Hace un Llamado Para Lograr la Libertad Religiosa en el Medio Oriente

BEIRUT (CNS) — El papa Benedicto XVI presenta un documento importante que busca un llamado a los cristianos de los Medios Oriente a fin de que participen en diálogo con vecinos ortodoxos, judíos y musulmanos, pero también para afirmar y defender el derecho a vivir libremente en la región en donde nacieron los cristianos.

En una ceremonia en la basílica católica Maronit de San Pablo en Harissa, en el papa Benedicto firmó y entregó formalmente un documento de 90 páginas con sus reflexiones sobre el Sínodo especial de obispos del año 2010, que fue dedicado a los cristianos del Medio Oriente. En una sección del documento dedicado al diálogo interreligioso, se anima a los cristianos a que "construyan la religión dominante de esa región, el Islam, lamentando que "ambos lados hubieran usado las diferencias de doctrina como pretexto para justificar, en nombres de la religión, actos de intolerancia, discriminación, marginali- zación e, incluso, de persecución."

Y sin embargo, en una reflexión sobre la posici-ón preocupa de los cristianos en la mayor parte de la región, hoy día, en donde frecuentemente sufren discriminación social y negatividad legal, el Papa le hizo un llamado a la sociedad árabe para "trasladarse más allá de una simple toleran- cia hacia una religiosidad que descalifica a los de otras religiones".
Momento de bendiciones durante el Congreso de Sanación.

Por Frank Acosta
Para el Sooner Catholic

El último fin de semana de agosto cientos de Católicos Hacia se reunieron en la escuela Católica Bishop McGuiness para un fin de semana de alegría, formación y sanación.

Los presentes participaron en este Congreso de Sanación, "Jesús, Camino de Esperanza y Salvar" fueron el tema del Padre Ángel Enrique Olvera de Sonora México y el Padre José Luis Martínez de Monterey México.

El Padre Ángel Enrique Olvera Villanueva, M.A.P, Nació en la Ciudad de México, el 2 de Agosto de 1967, realizó sus estudios escolares en el Seminario Mayor de la Arquidiócesis de Guadalajara, Jalisco, y realizó sus profesiones el 13 de Agosto de 1995 y fue ordenado sacerdote el 27 de Diciembre de 1996.

Señor Acosta, en su editorial "urgencia de abordar la reforma de inmigración...", dijo en un editorial Robert Parham, director ejecutivo del Baptist Center for Ethics en Nashville, Tennessee, y financiador de la película "Gospel Without Borders", seguido por discusión desde la audiencia y del panel de voces.

Obispo Anthony B. Taylor de Little Rock, Arkansas


"La más amplia expresión de la enseñanza católica sobre la inmigración...", dijo el obispo. "La situación de los inmigrantes no está sujeta a la dignidad y la presencia de la persona humana...," dijo el obispo.

"Estar como las católicas, bautistas, metodistas..." fueron los temas presentados en el panel de voces.

En general una gran bendición contar con estos dos grandes predicadores en donde el más beneficiado, sin duda, es el pueblo de Oklahoma que una vez mas se sienta el favor de Dios. Hubo gran respuesta de asistentes donde se registraron 1250 personas en total en los dos días. Entre los presentes hubo personas de diferentes orígenes de los que no pagaron impuestos. La mayoría de los inmigrantes vienen a Estados Unidos impulsados por la pobreza, el crimen, la corrupción y la inseguridad. Cada uno de ellos, es un testigo de que la iglesia no se sienta el favor de Dios. Hubo gran respuesta de asistentes donde se registraron 1200 personas en total en los dos días. Entre los presentes hubo personas de diferentes orígenes y de diferentes países.

"El temor no debe impedir que la gente de buena voluntad continúe abogando por un sistema de inmigración...", dijo el Padre Olvera.

"Creo que estamos en un momento muy peligroso en la historia de este país cuando se trata de la situación de la inmigración...", dijo Carcaño.

"La más amplia expresión de la enseñanza católica sobre la inmigración...", dijo el Padre Olvera. "La situación de los inmigrantes no está sujeta a la dignidad y la presencia de la persona humana...," dijo el obispo.
Calendar

**Special Mass to Celebrate Catholic Charities Centennial**

All are invited to attend a Mass honoring Catholic Charities 100 years serving Oklahoma residents in need. Archbishop Paul Coakley will celebrate the Mass on Sunday, Nov. 4 at 3 p.m., in the Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, 3214 N. Lake Ave., Oklahoma City. A reception will follow in the Cooper Center.

**OCTOBER**

1. *Spoon Man Performances* at 7 p.m. at St. Paul Church, 2981 S. Sunnylawn Road, Del City. The Spoon Man is Jim Strauss from Grand Rapids, Mich., and a Catholic Evangelist.


5. *Parenting Class* Jessi Marino, M.Ed., LPC, will lead a six-week workshop titled “Positive Parenting in the Christian Home” at Christ the King from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. each Saturday from Oct. 4 through Nov. 8. Registration is $15, and child care is available. Register by contacting the RR Office at (405) 843-4766, or cindy@kofcok.org.

6. *Kolache Sale. St. John Nepomuk Altar Society in Yukon will be selling kolaches Oct. 5 from 3 to 7 p.m.* in the school gym.

7. *First Friday Sacred Heart Mass* at the Catholic Pastoral Center. For more information, contact All Frjes at 603-0761.

**SEPTEMBER**

21. *40 Days for Life Kickoff Rally* from 7 to 8 p.m. with mix and mingle from 7 to 8 p.m. For more information, go to watchforlife.org and click events.

22. *Birth Choice 20th Life Walk* at Wiley Post Park (2321 S. Robinson Ave.) Registration begins at 1 p.m., walk begins at 2 p.m. For more information, go to watchforlife.org and click events.

24. *The Byzantine Divine Liturgy* will be held at St. Mark, Norman, 5:30 p.m.

26. *Julie Carrick Concert* at St. Paul in Del City at 7 p.m. for a special mission concert, Living Our Lord Catholic Church.

27. *Octoberfest at 12 p.m.* at Rosary School. The event begins with a two-mile Fun Run/Walk and continues through the afternoon. For more information or to register, call 525-5972.

**Jobs Box**

**Secretary Opening**

The Sooner Catholic is looking for someone to help in the office. We need someone for about 10 hours per week. Duties are general office work and gay is negotiable. Computer experience helps and a pleasant attitude is a must. Send resume by email to rdo@soonerokc.org, or by mail to Sooner Catholic, P.O. Box 32180, Oklahoma City, Okla. 73121.

**Security When You Need It Most**

My husband Kevin was so passionate about the importance of taking care of our family. He was the kind of guy people would look at and say, “That is the kind of father I want to be.”

“Kevin is one of the many people who don’t have life insurance and haven’t taken the steps to protect their family. “Now, I am an advocate for life insurance. Without a policy, you don’t have a safety net if the worst should happen to the kids.” — Dorothy, a KofC member’s wife

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Festival Offers Heritage and Much More

NORMAN — Doing anything for the first time can be scary, nerve-racking and daunting, and establishing a new tradition for the community and its surrounding neighbors proved to be no exception.

Norman has a long history of festivals, such as the Medieval Fair, the Norman Musical Festival and the Norman Fair — making parishioners of Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Catholic Church wonder if there would be room for one more?

With no blueprint on how to have a large-scale festival that would appeal to the masses, most of whom would have little or no prior knowledge of the Maronite faith, its traditions and its culture — the community took on the challenge and organized Norman’s first Lebanese Heritage and Food Festival.

The one-day event featured a menu of traditional Lebanese dishes such as falafel, hummus, kibbi, tabouli, grape leaves and baklava. Entertainment included Lebanese folk dancers, booths of crafts and jewelry, as well as a DJ who spun the latest Lebanese and English music, and a presentation on Lebanese-American artist, poet and writer, Kahlil Gibran, by Dr. John Duncan. The festival also included a raffle drawing, with the first prize being a year’s supply of cakes from La Baguette, one of the festival’s primary sponsors. Proceeds are marked to fix a leaky church roof and to establish a library for its youth.

The annual Lebanese Heritage and Food Festival is already scheduled for April 27, 2013.

‘The Giving Trees’ — A Story of Work, Sacrifice, Benefaction

By Rex Hogan

For the Sooner Catholic

OKLAHOMA CITY — In the small town of Silva, Ill., there’s a street called Hero Street. It is 1 ¼ blocks long. It’s a Hispanic neighborhood. More than 100 young men and women from that neighborhood have served in the U.S. military forces since World War II. The Department of Defense in Washington, D.C., has documented that there is no other street of comparable size that has had as many men and women render service to the U.S. Armed Forces.

Of those 150 or more military men and women, six of them were killed in action during World War II and two during the Korean War.

This is one of the many facts that Charles Jaronek, a member of St. James the Greater Parish, writes about in his book, “The Giving Trees.”

The book is about the contributions that blacks, Native Americans, Asians and Hispanics have made to America. It chronicles how minority inventors and entrepreneurs had to overcome prejudice and discrimination to earn their place in American history, particularly in the areas of science and technology.

“The Giving Trees” is over 20 years in the making. Jaronek said.

“It was originally four posters displaying the contributions of our four minority groups living in the United States,” he said. “I did have a companion guide which explained each contribution. I decided to expand this information into a 250-page book, which went into much greater detail.”

It’s divided into four chapters. The book will be available for purchase in the next several weeks on creatingatexit.com, he said.

Jaronek, a math teacher at Oklahoma Community College, wrote his Ph.D. dissertation in counseling his Ph.D. dissertation in counseling about how minorities had contributed countless lives, the majority of these contributions that minorities have made to American society. He started working on the book after several years of making multi-cultural presentations at educational conferences.

“They said, ‘You know, you need to write a book,’” he said. “I finally got around to it. I worked on it for the past couple of years.”

Jaronek said his book details what few Americans know, and that’s the contributions that minorities have made in the building and development of America.

“People don’t know about the contributions that minorities have made to our society. It’s something that’s not written about in history books. We don’t learn about it in school, therefore, we have stereotypes about ethnic groups,” he said.

“For example, the Hispanics brought the cattle and ranching industry here,” he said.

Father Junipero Serra, a Franciscan, started the chain of missions, many of which are still in existence in California, he said.

Astronaut John Harrington was born in Wetumka and is a member of the Chickasaw Tribe. Jeff Han developed the software that allowed a user to move pictures around a computer screen. Dr. Charles Drew, a black physician, invented the method for storing blood, which made transfusion possible.

“Although many of these inventors and medical advances have saved countless lives, the majority of these contributions that minorities have received little or no credit in the literature of today,” Jaronek said.

“The book will be successful if it helps eliminate some of the prejudices which is becoming more evident in our society today,” he said. “A person should not be judged only by what he accomplishes in life, but by what he has to overcome.”

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Attendees included parishioners from the Maronite Churches in Lewisville, Texas, and Tulsa, and Oklahoma City Archbishop Paul S. Coakley. Thanks to the large and positive outpouring from the Norman community, the second annual Lebanese Heritage and Food Festival is already scheduled for April 27, 2013.

Charles Jaronek

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