DECEMBER 2014: A MONTH OF CELEBRATIONS

Celebrating the Anniversary of the Consecration of the Cathedral

At 6:30 p.m., December 22, 2014, a Mass commemorating the 50th anniversary of the consecration of the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart will be celebrated. At the same Mass, the 50th anniversary of the priesthood of San Angelo Bishop Emeritus Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI, will be celebrated.

At left, Sacred Heart Church as it looked prior to its elevation to a cathedral. Inset, Sacred Heart Cathedral today.

Stories, photos, Pg. 5-6.

Celebrating two bishops

December brings the one-year anniversary of the appointment of Most Reverend Michael J. Sis, left, as Bishop of San Angelo. He was named bishop on December 12, 2013, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Read more about the bishop's first year on Pg. 2.

Bishop Emeritus Michael D. Pfeifer, left, will celebrate the 50th anniversary of his priesthood, December 22, 2014, as part of the celebration Mass for the 50th anniversary of the consecration of the Sacred Heart Cathedral. Story, page 6.

Celebrating the birth of Christ ...

Check your parish bulletins for Mass times for these important celebrations during this Advent and Christmas season.

Also check our web site, www.sanangelodioce.se.org, for a listing of Advent Penance Services throughout the diocese.

Monday, December 8
The Immaculate Conception*

Friday, December 12
Feast Day of Our Lady of Guadalupe

Thursday, December 25
Christmas Day*

Sunday, December 28
Feast of the Holy Family

Thursday, January 1
Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God*

Sunday, January 4
The Epiphany

(* — Holy Day of Obligation)
By Jimmy Patterson
Editor / West Texas Angelus

Bishop Michael Sis has spent his first year as shepherd doing exactly what he said he would do: meeting people, visiting parishes and assessing the diocese.

One of the first things people notice about Bishop Michael J. Sis is how much young people and young adults are drawn to him. The second thing to notice is how strongly everyone else is drawn to him.

The former vicar general for the Diocese of Austin, Bishop Sis was named the sixth shepherd of San Angelo on December 12, 2013, the Feast Day of Our Lady of Guadalupe. In the time he has been here, he has listened more than he has talked, watched and learned, shaken hands and hugged babies, and blessed most everything from lizards to low-riders. He has ridden from Mass on horseback and walked with a bucket of water on top of his head to demonstrate how natives of Africa transport the most precious commodity.

His understanding of the diocese and its history has grown, and his appreciation for the land and its people has deepened. In the time it takes to sprinkle holy water on a few thousand people, he has gone from West Texas newcomer, to, as many like to think, one of us.

In his one-year assessment of the Church in West Texas, Bishop Sis has found the priests in the diocese to be a dedicated, hard working group with a spirit of cooperation throughout. Likewise the deacons, who Bishop Sis says “must be relied on heavily” in the diocese.

Bishop Sis found the retreat movements and ministries that are alive in the diocese — such as ACTS, Cursillo, Marriage and Engaged Encounters, Charismatic Renewal, the Ministry of the Third Cross, prison visitation ministries, youth ministries, and Movimiento Familiar Cristiano — to be vibrant with a noticeable positive effect. He has referred to the prison ministry in the diocese as being “more highly developed than in many other dioceses.”

“These movements and retreat experiences have fostered the evangelization efforts of the Church broadly throughout the diocese and that’s a very good sign,” Bishop Sis said.

He is impressed with the way parish communities incorporate people of many different ethnic backgrounds in the same parish family and calls that spirit of cooperation “a beautiful sign of maturity of faith.”

Sis complimented the diocesan staff, whom he called a small, hard-working group that works as a team and of whom he is very proud.

Ahead, Bishop Sis finds still much work to be done to continue the diocese on the positive and productive path it has forged.

He is encouraged about the young people who have shown an interest in the priesthood and religious life, pointing to a discernment group at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton; a group of interested young men who traveled to Conception Seminary with Fr. Rodney White, Director of Vocations and Seminarians for the diocese; and new aspirants and postulants at both the Carmelite communities south of Christoval.

Bishop Sis is interested in exploring ways that the diocese can become more effective in reaching out to those who work in the oil fields and related industries that have resulted in many moving

(Please See YEAR/23)
From The Bishop’s Desk

Church to celebrate The Year of Consecrated Life

By Most Rev. Michael J. Sis
Bishop of San Angelo

Pope Francis has called the Church worldwide to observe a Year of Consecrated Life from the First Sunday of Advent 2014 until February 2, 2016, the World Day of Consecrated Life. This year is a time for all of us to remember gratefully those who have dedicated their lives to God as religious priests, brothers, and sisters. It is also a time to look with hope to the future and support new vocations to the consecrated life.

Religious priests, sisters, and brothers are those who make vows or promises in religious orders (for example, the Franciscans or the Carmelites) and therefore belong to these religious communities, although a few individuals may dedicate their lives through private vows (such as some hermits). Diocesan priests belong to the diocese in which they are incardinated and are not referred to as members of the “consecrated life.”

The Year of Consecrated Life gives all of us the opportunity to appreciate more deeply those men and women who serve Christ and the Church in the particular vocation of consecrated life. On behalf of the whole Church, I would like to express our profound gratitude for their commitment to Christ and their sacrifice for the good of others through the Church.

I hope that all members of our diocese will take this opportunity to understand more fully the nature of the vocation to the consecrated life. It has been an important part of Christian history for almost 2,000 years, and it continues to bring people into a real encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Evangelical Counsels

The three evangelical counsels are chastity, poverty, and obedience. Christ proposes that we live 100% for Him. (Please See BISHOP/23)

El Año de la Vida Consagrada

Por el Obispo Michael J. Sis

El Papa Francisco ha llamado a la Iglesia por todo el mundo a observar el Año de la Vida Consagrada comenzando el primer domingo de Adviento 2014 hasta el 2 de febrero de 2016, el Día Mundial de la Vida Consagrada. Este año es un tiempo para que todos nosotros recordemos con gratitud aquellos quienes han dedicado sus vidas a Dios como sacerdotes religiosos, religiosos, y religiosas. Es también un tiempo para mirar con esperanza hacia el futuro y apoyar nuevas vocaciones a la vida consagrada.

Sacerdotes religiosos, religiosas, y religiosos son aquellos quienes hacen votos o promesas en ordenes religiosas (por ejemplo, los Franciscanos o Carmelitas) y así pertenecen a estas comunidades religiosas, aunque algunos individuos tal vez dedican sus vidas por medio de votos privados (tal como los ermitas). Sacerdotes diocesanos pertenecen a la diócesis en la cual fueron incardinados y no son referidos como miembros de la “vida consagrada”.

El Año de la Vida Consagrada nos da a todos la oportunidad para apreciar más profundamente a estos hombres y mujeres quienes sirven a Cristo y a la Iglesia en la vocación particular de la vida consagrada. De parte de la Iglesia entera, me gustaría expresar nuestra profunda gratitud por su compromiso a Cristo y su sacrificio por el bien de otros a través de la Iglesia.

Espero que todos los miembros de nuestra diócesis tomen esta oportunidad para entender mejor la naturaleza de la vocación a la vida consagrada. Ha sido (Mira OBISPO/20)

DIOCESAN BRIEFS

Intercultural liturgy/Music Workshop
BIG SPRING. January 10, 2015 at Holy Trinity Catholic Parish, 1009 Eam Street, Big Spring, in the Our Lady of Guadalupe Family Center, 9:00 am-3:00 p.m., for all those involved in enhancing the multicultural worship experience in the Eucharistic Liturgy: priests, deacons, musicians, lectors, greeters, catechists, RCIA, and servers. Early Registration Fee (before Friday, January 2, 2015): $30/couple, $20/person. Late Registration Fee: $40/couple, $30/person. The day will consist of conversations on what it means to worship and pray as a culturally diverse community who gathers as “one Body of Christ” in the context of sound liturgical practices, learning new multilingual repertoire to add to your parish, and practical suggestions for encouraging full, conscious and active participation. Material will be provided. Continental breakfast and Lunch provided.

Holy Angels Summer Trip
SAN ANGELO. Holy Angels parish will be sponsoring a 10-day Canada & New England Cruise from July 31, 2015 to August 10, 2015. Enjoy stops in Boston, MA, Bar Harbor, ME, Halifax and Sydney, Nova Scotia, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Quebec City, Montreal, and Canada. For more information, or to request an emailed brochure, call or email Lori Hines, (325) 942-8192 or haedu61@verizon.net

Apologist to mission in Midland
MIDLAND Catholic apologist Steve Ray will lead a four-night mission, culminating with the premiere of “Abraham,” part of his multipart video series. His schedule is as follows:

Sunday, January 11-Tuesday, January 13, 2015 Mission at St. Stephen’s Catholic Church.
Thursday, January 15, 2015: Knights of Columbus Clergy Appreciation Dinner. Steve Ray will be the keynote presenter. The mission and dinner will include the opportunity to donate to the fundraiser for the completion of the last two shoot years in the series “Footprints of God, the Story of Salvation.” Those films will be Elijah and Elisha, and Doctors of the Church.

Retirement fund for Religious

On December 13-14 you will have the opportunity to participate in the 2014 Retirement Fund for Religious annual appeal in the Diocese of San Angelo. Please support this collection as generously as you have done in the past. A recent study shows that while many retired religious spend hours each day in front of the Blessed Sacrament where they hold you up to God in prayers of thanksgiving, while many others give hours of volunteer service to support the ministry of younger members of their Orders, Congregations and Communities. Know that many of the retired religious spend days and nights, and months and years in prayer for you. They are deeply loved, valued and cherished by all who love the Lord Jesus Christ.

WJD spots open
World Youth Day 2016 will take place in Krakow, Poland, from July 24 to August 1, 2016. The Diocese of San Angelo has 5 spots available for individuals 21 years of age or older. Total Cost: $3,138.00 For more information, please contact Sr. Kathy at newmancenter2010@gmail.com or by phone at 325.949.8033. Your name and mailing address is the information needed.

USCCB reports collection for Catholic Communications Campaign
The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has reported that the total collection received for its annual Catholic Communications Campaign from the Diocese of San Angelo for 2014 was $22,441.06. Money raised help with the cost of communicating in the diocese (through resources such as the West Texas Angelus, the diocesan web site and DOSAMail.

2015 Holy Land Trips
March 16-25, 2015 with Father Serafin Avenido, Saint Joseph Fort Stockton ($3,450.00 from Midland International Airport)$4,230.00 from Midland)
July 6-15, 2015 with Father Hilary Ihedioha, Saint Mary Odessa ($3,790.00 from Midland)
August 3-12, 2015 with Father Michael Udegbanu, Saint Ann Colorado City ($3,790.00 from Midland)

Package price should include the following:
1. Meet & assist at Ben Gurion Airport upon arrivals and departures.
2. Three nights’ accommodation in Tiberias in double occupancy with breakfast and dinner.
3. Two nights’ accommodation in Jericho in double occupancy with breakfast and dinner.
4. Three night’s accommodation in Bethlehem in double occupancy with breakfast and dinner.

Newman Apostolate and Newman Club, located at 2451 Dena Dr. will celebrate 50 years of active ministry to Angelo State University students in April 2015. To receive a SAVES THE DATE card and formal invitation for the April event, please contact Sr. Kathy at newmancenter2010@gmail.com or by phone at 325.949.8033. Your name and mailing address is the information needed.

2015 Holy Land Trips
March 16-25, 2015 with Father Serafin
Avenido, Saint Joseph Fort Stockton
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July 6-15, 2015 with Father Hilary Ihedioha,
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4. Three night's accommodation in Bethlehem in double occupancy with breakfast and dinner.

5. Nine days sightseeing in a modern air-conditioned private bus.
6. English-speaking government licensed Christian tour guide for arrival and all touring days.
7. Entrance fee to places of interests whilst on tour in the Holy Land
8. Mass every day at different Religious sites.
9. Round trip flight tickets.

Wishing you a Blessed Advent & Merry Christmas from
The West Texas Angelus
From the Editor

**Technology: Has it become the new alcohol?**

*By Jimmy Patterson*

The world is a mess. The threat of terrorist activity looms, racial unrest strickens many of our cities, we are saddled with seemingly endless government bickering, and there is always the threat of war.

Yet, when I get together with a group of men every Tuesday at my parish, the conversation often turns to one topic: it is none of the topics I just named, nor is it even an offshoot of what the speaker has focused on that week.

On one Tuesday morning in November at our “That Man is You” session, the program’s creator, Steve Bollman, delved at length into the alarming drop in the global birthrate and how, if that decline continues at its present rate, it could one day threaten the very existence of some countries. Steve talked about the birth control pill and how it is polluting society -- literally -- and delivered a strong argument on the ills of birth control.

When we broke up into our small groups, we were given two questions to respond to on the subject, one addressed threats to our society.

And here’s where the conversation turned as it often has:

We volleyed around the topic a few minutes until one of the men in our group brought up the subject of technology and how it is a real threat itself to the family.

I bring this up not to discuss how small groups can and sometimes do wander off topic but, because it is such a recurring theme, I am led to believe that I have come to believe that it is, in fact, a very real threat to the family dynamic.

Smart phones, Facebook, texting, Instagramming, tweeting, the accessibility of internet pornography; we touched on it all. As negative as all those things either are or can be (pornography of course being among the former), there were two other techno-offshoots that cause even more concern:

The obvious is texting while driving, which is a clear danger. It used to be when you approached a car weaving or going slower than the posted speed, you wondered if the driver was drunk. Today, you look into the car and chances are good that the person glancing down at his or her phone is either reading, writing or sending texts. Take this chal-

(Please See PATTERSON/22)
Nicholas James Ruiz

Date of Birth: February 22, 1996
Birth Place: Odessa, TX
Siblings: 6 Sisters, 3 brothers

What Seminary do you attend? Conception College Seminary
What level are you? 1st Philosophy

What led you to enter into formation as a seminarian?
It started out with a discernment group and attending a “come and see,” and plenty of thinking until I realized that God might actually be calling me.

Home Parish: Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton
Favorite Saint: Saint John Bosco
Favorite Scripture: Romans 8:31
Favorite Color: Purple
Favorite Sport: Judo
Favorite Team: Cowboys
Favorite Food or Restaurant: Thai Food
Favorite Dessert: A Nap
Any Hobbies: Putt Putt, Go Karts, Pool

Nicholas’s Biography
My name is Nicholas James Ruiz (18), I am from Odessa. My home parish is Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton. I am the “baby” seminarian of our diocese. It’s been about two to three years since I started thinking about a vocation to the priesthood and through a lot of discerning and praying I have made it to the beginning of my studies here at Conception Seminary College. I am a very outgoing person and I’m always looking for an adventure. My parents are Jesse and Ladonna Ruiz, we are a family of six girls and five boys. I know that is a lot but I am a survivor. I also have fourteen nieces and nephews with whom I enjoy spending a lot of time. I have spent a lot of time with SEARCH and Teen ACTS, working with the youth of all ages is definitely one of my favorite things to do. I like traveling but sometimes it’s nice to just sit at home and read a book or watch a movie. If I had to summarize my life in a few sentences I would say it has been a very wild roller-coaster but it is the life that God has handmade for me and He gives me the tools I need to pursue my dreams and reach my goals. I am blessed to be able to be a seminarian there is nothing else I would be doing at this point in my life. Thanks for all the encouragement and prayers, God Bless.

The original Immaculate Conception Church, built in 1884, was replaced by Sacred Heart Church, above, in 1906. The church was later remodeled and consecrated as a cathedral in 1964. (Diocese of San Angelo archives).

Sacred Heart to host celebration of 50 years as cathedral

By Jimmy Patterson
Editor
West Texas Angelus

SAN ANGELO — The heart of the church in the Diocese of San Angelo has for many years sat at the corner of Beauregard and South Oakes. Long before it was elevated to the dignity of cathedral church, though, the physical church building has stood in the same location.

Constructed under the guidance of Fr. Mathurin Parrier, first resident priest in San Angelo, the initial church, Immaculate Conception opened in 1884. Less than 20 years passed before Sacred Heart Church was dedicated, in 1906. It would be 53 more years before construction began on the current church building, and two years later, on August 1, 1961, the current Sacred Heart church building was dedicated. It was raised to the dignity of a cathedral church by the Most Rev. Thomas Drury, first bishop of San Angelo, on December 21, 1964. Two major remodels — in 1979 and 2005 — have been carried out.

Parishioners and others will gather on December 22 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the consecration of the cathedral. Mass, which begins at 6:30 p.m., will also mark the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the priesthood of Bishop Emeritus Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI, fifth bishop of San Angelo, on December 21, 1964. Two major remodels — in 1979 and 2005 — have been carried out.

The Ministers of The Consecration of The Cathedral of the Sacred Heart
Celebrant — The Most Reverend Thomas J. Drury, D.D.
Personal MC to the Bishop — The Very Rev. Bernard Biwesire
Assistant Priest — The Rt. Rev. Monsignor Andrew Marchaler, V.G.
Officiating Deacon — The Rev. Romin Einhaus, O.F.M.
Officiating Subdeacon — The Rev. James O’Donoghue
Deacon, Guard of the Church — The Very Rev. James Ostrander
First M.C. — The Rev. Bernard Gully
Second M.C. — The Rev. Thomas H. Seibl
Priest Who Incenses the Altar — The Very Rev. Kevin Heyburn
First Acolyte — The Rev. Hilarian Lapinsky
Second Acolyte — The Rev. Michael O’Dwyer, S.A.C.
Thurifer — The Rev. Fabian Diersing
Bookbearer — The Rev. Paul Surlis
Candlebearer — The Rev. Benedict Zientok
Mitrebearer — The Rev. Vincent Daughtins
Crosierbearer — The Rev. Cyril Lange
Holy Water — The Rev. Alvin Wild
Chanters — The Rev. Lucian Biassi
The Rev. Cecil Lobet
The Rev. Alfard Hudepohl, O.F.M.
Clerics for Washing the Bishop’s Hands — The Rev.
Melvin Holtei, O.F.M.
The Rev. Evan Redinbo, O.F.M.
Priests Who Carry the Relics — The Rev. German Valladars
Bishop Pfeifer looks back on priesthood

Editor’s Note: The following article is reprinted from the December 1989 West Texas Angelus and includes recollections of Bishop Pfeifer on the occasion of his 25 years in the priesthood.

By Father Maurice Voity
Former Editor
West Texas Angelus

SAN ANGELO — Silver and Golden anniversaries are always a time to reflect on what has happened over the years, whether it be the anniversary of a wedding, religious profession or ordination.

Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI, who is celebrating his 25th anniversary of ordination in the priesthood, is no exception in this regard.

In an interview with the West Texas Angelus, the bishop reminisced over the past quarter century, and even a little bit further back than that.

Bishop Pfeifer said that he began to feel God’s call to priestly service early in life. His older brother, Ted, is a priest. The bishop recalled his brother, five years older than he, and said, “Ted had a tremendous influence on my life, especially as a young teenager. You tend to look up to your older brother, and Ted was studying to become a priest. I thought that was great.”

The bishop said his family, especially his mother and father, strongly encouraged the religious vocations of both their sons. He says that the “Holy Ghost Sisters, who taught me in grammar school, were also a strong model of the value of religious service to all of us as we grew up under their care.” Additionally, Bishop Pfeifer remembers many other priests and sisters who served as good examples to him in his formative years. “As I grew older, and with the help of God’s grace,” he said, “I was able to discern more carefully that God was calling me to his special service as a priest.”

Seminary days are remembered fondly by the bishop. He said that he especially enjoyed the “great sense of community” that was fostered among the seminarians of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the order of priests to which Bishop Pfeifer belonged prior to being named a bishop. “I also fondly remember and give thanks to God for the good priests and professors that the oblates provided for all the seminarians who were in training to become priests,” he added.

Bishop Pfeifer spent the summer of his diaconate year in the mountainous region of Oaxaca, Mexico, working there with the oblate missionaries, including his brother, Ted, who, by this time, had been ordained a priest and was working in the missions, an assignment which Father Ted still carries out today. It was the beginning of a long period of missionary service to the Mexican people by Bishop Pfeifer.

His first priestly assignment was to Mexico City, where he was primarily a seminary teacher and director of an elementary school. He remembers that at first he felt “let down” by the assignment to teach school. However, he said as he looks back, “the hand of God” was in that assignment. He made many friends and helped the Church community to grow.

Bishop Pfeifer said that, looking back, he was probably happiest when he was working in the Oaxaca region as a missionary.
Lenorah opens new activity building

West Texas Angelus

LENORAH — A new activity building to serve the parishioners of St. Isidore Mission in Lenorah is nearing completion. It will provide space for religious education and social functions for this community north of Stanton. The activity building has long been a dream of many in this mission congregation and its construction was often encouraged by the former bishop of the San Angelo Diocese, Most Rev. Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI. Deacon Clemente Villa is the Pastoral Coordinator of St. Joseph Parish in Stanton and its mission in Lenorah. He has worked closely with JTC Construction of Midland in completing the structure. Msgr. Larry Droll is the Canonical Pastor of these communities. The Activity Building is the result of years of savings in the mission community. There has also been a Building Fund Drive to which many parishioners responded and earlier this year St. Joseph Parish in Stanton donated the entire proceeds of its Mardi Gras Festival to its mission for the hall construction. A great boost was given to the community by a $50,000 grant from The John G. and Marie Stella Kenedy Memorial Foundation of Corpus Christi, Texas, for which the Lenorah Catholics are very grateful. The Kenedy Memorial Foundation is organized exclusively for charitable purposes. Founded in 1961 by Sarita Kenedy East, granddaughter of Mifflin Kenedy and Petra Vela Kenedy, the Foundation has donated more than $200 million to charitable causes and organizations in Texas. In South Texas, where the majority of its contributions have been made, the foundation is one of the major charity organizations. In his first visit to St. Isidore Mission for Sunday Mass on January 25, 2015, the current bishop of the Diocese of San Angelo, Most Rev. Michael J. Sis, will offer the official blessing of the new Activity Building.

Deacon Clemente Villa, pastoral coordinator at Lenorah's St. Isidore Mission. (Courtesy photo)

Position filled

Recently, positions were filled in three governing bodies in the Diocese of San Angelo — the Presbyteral Council, the Priest Personnel Board and the Mission Council.

Presbyteral Council

The Presbyteral Council of the Diocese of San Angelo advises the Bishop on matters which concern the pastoral life and governance of the diocese. The following is the newly selected list of members of the Presbyteral Council as of November 1, 2014:

President: Most Rev. Michael J. Sis, Bishop
Rev. Msgr. Larry Droll, Vicar General (ex officio)
Mr. Mike Wyse, Chancellor (ex officio)
Rev. Msgr. Robert Bush, Abilene Deanery Representative
Rev. Hilary Ihedioha, Midland-Odessa Deanery Representative
Rev. Tom Barley, San Angelo Deanery Representative
Rev. Serafin Avenido
Rev. Sam Matthiesen
Rev. Fred Nawarskas
Rev. Michael Rodriguez
Rev. Prem Thumma
Rev. Hubert Wade

Priest Personnel Board

The Diocese of San Angelo Priest Personnel Board advises the bishop on the assignment of priests. The board was recently reorganized. Effective November 1, 2014, the membership of the seven-member board is as follows:

Ex officio members:
Most Rev. Michael J. Sis, Bishop
Rev. Msgr. Larry Droll, Vicar General (chairman)
Mr. Mike Wyse, Chancellor

Elected members:
Rev. Msgr. Fred Nawarskas
Rev. Bernardito Getigan
Rev. Hubert Wade
Rev. Patrick Akpanobong

Mission Council

The Diocesan Mission Council is an advisory/consultative body that advises on matters of missions within and outside the diocese.

Members:
Fr. Francis Onyekozuru, moderator
Fr. Serafin Avenido
Brenda Lehr
Mike Canon
Andrew Peterson
Carissa Ramirez
Monica Petersen
Kathy Galinek
Antonio Herrera
Tim George

Sweetwater confirms 7 in October Mass

The Angelus

Holy Spirit Parish was honored to have Bishop Michael Sis celebrate Mass on Sunday, October 12, 2014, confirming seven of our young parishioners. Bishop Sis presided with Fr. Charles Okonkwo and Deacon Bill Butler. The church was filled with numerous parishioners, as well as many out-of-town guests who attended in support of the Confirmation candidates. Everyone enjoyed the celebration, as well as the beautiful music from the choir. Bishop Sis was very gracious by taking pictures with each Confirmation candidate, their parents and sponsor. The reception began with Bishop Sis saying a prayer and blessing all those in attendance, and then the fellowship and music ensued.

During the reception, Bishop Sis was presented with an address by Pastoral Chairman Domingo Castillo, Sr. The Bishop was presented with gifts by the pastoral council secretary, and one of the gifts given to the Bishop was a newly published book named “Our Mother Who Crushes the Serpent,” whose author is a Holy Spirit parishioner by the name of Victor Rubio. The Confirmation candidates were also presented with a gift.

The reception ended with Bishop Sis recounting his recent trip to Rome, his time going to “Baby Bishop School” and his short but very meaningful meeting with Pope Francis. Holy Spirit Parish is very thankful that Bishop Sis was able to celebrate Mass with us and also join us for the reception.

Sweetwater’s Holy Spirit parish’s seven Confirmation candidates, front row, Madeline Gibson, Gabby Reyes, Alexis Castillo and Danielle Dean. Back left, Daniel Medellin and Kevin Pantoja; back right, Mark Ruiz. Also in back row are Deacon Butler, Bishop Michael J. Sis and Fr. Charles Okonkwo.
MIDLAND — On November 7, at the height of football season, a group of players from the Bishop Nolan High School football team traveled over 300 miles to visit with the students of St. Ann’s Catholic School before their game against Midland Christian School scheduled for that evening. The team stepped off the bus Friday morning with one goal: put a smile on a child’s face. So, on that Friday morning, the team humored and entertained the elementary and junior high students of St. Ann’s Catholic School.

The day began with a welcoming breakfast hosted by the St. Ann’s Church Knights of Columbus, followed by a celebration of Mass, presided by Father Lorenzo Hatch. The pews were packed and songs of praise were sung with voices of excitement and enthusiasm from the students, families, friends, football players and their supporters who attended the service. It was quite a sight to see so many brawny young men sitting intermingled with the adorable cherubs of the Pre-K and Kindergarten classes, especially as they all mirrored sign language movements to the presentation hymn, “Spirit of Love,” led by the St. Ann’s Honor Choir. At the end of Mass, Father Hatch called up all of the football players for a special blessing and humorously seized the opportunity to take a “selfie” with the team and congregation behind him.

As the assembly concluded with a recessional hymn, the football team divided into groups of players who set off to join students in varying grade levels. Some were welcomed to informative Q&A sessions with quite inquisitive students whose questions ranged from, “What is your favorite subject?” to “What do you want to be when you grow up?” When asked, “What is the difference between a public high school and a Catholic high school?”, one football player responded, “I think one of the biggest differences are the teachers. Y’all have really great teachers and you don’t know it yet, but one day you’ll realize it.”

Other groups of players were welcomed into early elementary classrooms for one-on-one reading time with budding bookworms, while another bunch gathered outside to join the middle schoolers in a rousing game of kickball. There was even a “dance-off” in a third grade classroom as students and football players showed off their best moves! As the fourth and fifth graders finished their lunch and ran to the playground and grassy field for recess, they were fortunate to have just walked in on the football players warming up and getting in one last practice in preparation for their big game.

The younger school children looked up to the well-built boys of Bishop Nolan with eyes of wonder and admiration as the players tossed the pigskin. At one point, the football team was so kind to invite younger students to practice with them, teaching boys and girls alike how to get in a three-point stance, throw a spiral, and the proper way to tackle. And when the kids thought they couldn’t be more elated, the football players allowed their elementary kids the opportunity to try on their helmets!

By the time recess was over, the players’ practice concluded and they succeeded in their mission to brighten the students’ day and left feeling honored to do so.

Photos of Fort Worth Bishop Nolan High School players visiting the St. Ann’s campus, November 7.

Photos by By Heather Hughes
Founding fathers did not separate God from laws

By The Honorable Barbara Walther
Judge, 51st Judicial District Court of Texas

Remarks at Red Mass, October 22, 2014, Christ the King Retreat Center, San Angelo:

Thank you, Bishop Sis, for presiding at this Mass today and for bring us together for reflection and fellowship.

Members of the legal profession, thank you for your service to West Texas.

I quote from Isaiah:
"...learn to do good; make justice your aim, redress the wronged, hear the orphan's plea, defend the widows."

This is our challenge. How do we respond?
I’ve heard many times we are a nation of laws, not of men. I disagree. There are totalitarian countries that have constitutions that look an awful lot like ours, but they are not our country.

What is the difference?

Dr. Ronald Cherry, MD, in an article published in the American Thinker entitled The Judeo-Christian Values of America wrote:
“Our founding fathers separated church from state, but wisely did not separate God from state; they acknowledged God as the source of our rights, and in fact, they were careful to place Biblical morality directly into our founding documents and laws, and into our values and culture precisely to help prevent a future of totalitarian or tyrannical rule in America.”

Cherry cites examples. Quoting Thomas Jefferson:
“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness…”

Jefferson also wrote: “God who gave us life gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are the gift of God?”

John Adams wrote: “Our Constitution was made for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”

Louis Fohn pointed out last year at our Red Mass: “Our founding fathers did not separate God from our laws.”

I submit we can learn something about the relationship of God and government by examining the life of our patron saint, St. Thomas More.

More had a period when he contemplated the priesthood. He chose to marry.

St. Thomas More’s challenge was: would he separate his Christian beliefs from his public life.

History tells many interesting facts about our saint. He attended Oxford and, in 1496, was admitted to Lincoln’s Inn where he studied law.

He become famous as a member of the bar.

In 1529, he succeeded Cardinal Wolsey as Chancellor of England and became famous for his unparalleled success as a judge.

According to the Catholic Encyclopedia, More was such a great judge, the supply of cases was exhausted, an achievement memorialized by a rhyme:

We must end the cycle of payday loan debt for military, veterans, all Texans

By The Most Rev. Michael Sis
Bishop of San Angelo

As we honor the great sacrifices our veterans have made for us, it is vital to think beyond the banners and parades and look at what we are doing as a community and a society to support our veterans.

A recent Texas study found evidence that payday and auto title loan stores tend to cluster among veterans’ facilities in Texas.

This is an alarming finding, because it illustrates an industry that preys upon the financial misfortune of our veterans.

Throughout human history, governments have sought to protect the poor from exploitative interest rates on consumer loans. However, in Texas the rates charged for payday and auto title loans have been allowed to reach exorbitant levels.

In the Catholic faith tradition, as in most religions, we teach that taking advantage of individuals facing hardship is a form of theft. By that definition, Texas is in the middle of a crime wave.

In our state, payday lenders collected $1.4 billion in fees alone in 2013. This is money that is being taken away from our families and out of our communities.

This is money not being applied to grocery bills, rent, or medical bills. This is money being taken from those least able to afford the loss.

The Catholic Church does not denounce seeking profit in private business. However, the current business model of payday lending has reached a point where it is exploitative.

People are left destitute under the pretext of providing a service.

Payday lenders prey on borrowers who repeat loans. They earn most of their profit margin from borrowers who get caught up in a cycle of debt.

For example, approximately 75 percent of all fees on payday loans are paid by borrowers who take out eleven or more loans each year. These are individuals who are stuck taking out new loans to make the minimum payments on old loans.

Over time borrowers pay much more in fees and interest payments—often averaging more than 500 percent APR—than the original loan amount.

It is a business model that pushes people farther and farther into debt, profiting as the borrower’s financial situation becomes dreadful.

Usurious interest rates and fees pull money out of family budgets, leading people to become more and more dependent on the help of churches and other social assistance agencies.

Our agencies are unable to keep up with this current pattern of financial devastation. When loan fees and interest payments come to monopolize a growing share of a person’s resources, it reduces the capacity of the poor to regain self-sufficiency.

I call upon all people of good will to help tackle this challenge. Pope Francis, like Benedict XVI before him, has been forceful in his disapproval of payday lending, calling usury “a dramatic social evil that wounds the inviolable dignity of the human person.” We have an obligation to speak out and act to guard victims of usury.

I applaud the City of Midland for adopting an ordinance, which went into effect on September 1, 2014, to regulate this industry on a local level.

I am also proud of Tom Craddick, District 82 state representative from Midland, who introduced a bill in the Texas legislature in 2013 to place regulations on payday lenders. We still have much work to do to establish fair limits on the fees and rates of interest for consumer loans.

We can start by supporting new rules aimed to close loopholes in the Military Lending Act. This act was put in place in 2007 as a way to protect active duty soldiers from payday and auto title lenders who set up offices near our military bases such as Goodfellow in San Angelo and Dyess in Abilene.

Payday lenders seek young, financially inexperienced individuals with steady paychecks as fodder for chronic borrowing. The Department of Defense noticed the financial devastation payday lenders caused to troops, threatening their morale and readiness, and the threat to overall national security.

The new rules address the way that some unscrupulous lenders have managed to get around the law since it was first put in place. The updated Military Lending Act, with simple and fair rules, will cap rates at 36 percent, regardless of the other terms or the size of the loan.

These rules are a significant start; however, more is still needed to benefit society at large.

A statewide interest rate cap on personal loans would be the strongest way to tackle the crisis caused by payday lending.

Acknowledging the political difficulties of such a cap being enacted, it is essential that we also do what we can to support efforts by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to put vibrant rules into place that curb the worst abuses of the payday lending industry.

People must have access to fair loans that can be repaid over time without further entangling themselves in an impossible cycle of poverty and debt.

We will do well to explore ways to provide those in financial hardship with better alternatives, such as associations for mutual lending, savings and loans, credit unions, and emergency community assistance programs.

Our soldiers, our veterans, and our fellow Texans do not deserve to be exploited in their time of need. The human dignity of the individual person must be respected. The way we resolve this current moral challenge will demonstrate our character as a society.
Speaking of Saints ...

St. Stephen: 1st martyr was radical, bold, progressive

By Mary Lou Gibson

St. Stephen is usually identified as a “protomartyr” because he was the first Christian to die for the Faith (not including the Holy Innocents and John the Baptist). He was a bold preacher who Malcolm Day describes as having a modern, radical outlook in “A Treasury of Saints.” These were early times for Christians, 34 A.D., and Stephen’s preaching about Jesus as the Savior that God had sent made him many enemies among the Jews.

Stephen was a leader of the Hellenists, those Jews who lived outside Palestine and spoke Greek. As a group, they urged expansion of the Church’s mission to the Gentiles. Stephen was one of the seven deacons appointed by the apostles to look after the distribution of alms to the faithful and to help in the ministry of preaching. All that we know of his life is in the Acts of the Apostles (6-8).

According to Day, it was Stephen who suffered most when the Jewish authorities unleashed the first wave of persecution against the Church. He was accused of preaching blasphemy against Moses and against God and was arrested. When he was brought before the Sanhedrin, editor John Shea writes in “Lives of the Saints” that he boldly upbraided the chief priests of their hard hearted resistance to the Holy Ghost and with the murder of the “Just One.”

David Farmer describes the gist of Stephen’s defense in the “Oxford Dictionary of Saints.” He wrote that Stephen told his accusers that God does not depend on the Temple, in so far as like the Mosaic law, it was a temporary institution and destined to be fulfilled and superseded by Christ. Stephen said that Christ was the prophet designated by Moses and the Messiah the Jewish race had waited for so long.

Then Stephen further attacked his accusers for resisting the Spirit and killing the Christ. Paul Burns writes in “Butler’s Lives of the Saints” that the priests were enraged by Stephen’s defense and his condemnation of their whole approach to religion.

They condemned him to be stoned outside the Mosaic law and dragged him outside the walls of Jerusalem. Editor Michael Walsh describes the scene in “Butler’s Lives of the Saints”:

“When Stephen was led outside, he looked up to the heavens and said: ‘Behold I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God.’”

Stephen then cried out in a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.”

Diocese to participate in U.S.-Latin America sisters exchange program

Unprecedented program will impact thousands in communities throughout the U.S.

The Angelus

CHICAGO — Catholic Extension, a papal society that has been supporting Catholics on the margins in America since 1905, announced the formal launch of its U.S.-Latin American Sisters Exchange Program, which was made possible through an initial $3 million grant from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation. The program will span a five-year period and involve 10 Latin American congregations sending more than 30 women religious to dioceses throughout the United States. The Diocese of San Angelo will be hosting Sr. Guadalupe Ibanez Santos, Sr. Gertrudis Muñoz, and Sr. Leonilda Torres. The sisters were selected from Latin American congregations and are mutually agreed upon by the bishop in the host diocese and the congregation. The program, which began this summer and continues to 2019, will create a valuable partnership both for the Latin American congregations as well as the U.S. dioceses involved.

The sisters participating in the program will receive intensive pastoral leadership training and gain valuable ministry skills that will help them build up and strengthen the faith of the people they serve. Through their work the sisters will staff ministries that serve families, provide religious education, women's spirituality and youth and young adult ministry. At the end of the program, the sisters will return to their Latin American congregation, which will in turn benefit from their increased training and experience.

“We are very grateful that the Catholic Extension Society has selected the Diocese of San Angelo to share in the U.S. Latin American Sisters Exchange Program,” said Bishop Michael J. Sis, Diocese of San Angelo. "Our lives will be enriched through their ministry here, and they will take home with them many good ideas based on our experience. We trust that the Holy Spirit will use this opportunity to build bridges of solidarity and spiritual fraternity that will last for many years.”

In San Angelo the sisters will serve with the two priests who shepherd these parishes and missions bringing much needed additional church presence to the communities. The sisters will work with parishioners and others who are primarily (Please See EXCHANGE/23)
Making Sense of Bioethics

Brittany Maynard, assisted suicide and coming to grips with our fears

By Fr. Tad Pacholczyk

The prospect of a very attractive, recently-married young woman with a terminal illness facing excruciating pain and suffering as she dies is enough to move anyone. The life and death of 29 year old Brittany Maynard recently captured enormous media attention when she declared she was moving to Oregon to commit suicide after having been informed by her doctors that she had an aggressive form of brain cancer and likely had only six months to live. She brought her life to a close on Nov. 1st, a date she had selected ahead of time, by taking a lethal dose of barbiturates prescribed by her doctor.

In the public discussions that have ensued, some have ventured to argue that suicide under such desperate circumstances would, in fact, be justifiable. A recent on-line article from Time magazine observed that few fault those who were trapped on the top floors of the Twin Towers on 9/11 when they jumped to their deaths below as the flames surged around them. Similarly, the article suggests that those who face the prospect of a difficult, pain-racked death from a terminal disease should be able to take their own life through physician-assisted suicide without fault or blame.

For those jumping out of the Twin Towers, however, we recognize a horrific situation of desperation, and even the possibility of a kind of mental breakdown in those final panic-stricken moments. Their agonizing choice to hurl themselves out of the building to their deaths below would be, objectively speaking, a suicidal act, and would not represent a morally good choice, but their moral culpability would almost certainly be diminished, if not eliminated, by the harrowing circumstances in which they found themselves, driven by raw terror more than by anything else. Clearly, grave psychological disturbances, anguish, or grave fear of suffering can diminish the responsibility of the one committing suicide.

Yet, in the face of a terminal medical diagnosis, it is not reasonable to let our fears dictate our choices; instead it behooves us to confront and resolve those fears without yielding to panic and without allowing unpleasant future scenarios to loom large in our imagination.

Brittany Maynard not only greatly feared a difficult death for herself, but also argued that protecting her family from pain and suffering was an important consideration in her decision to carry out physician-assisted suicide: “I probably would have suffered in hospice care for weeks or even months. And my family would have had to watch that. I did not want this nightmare scenario for my family.” Yet even with very noble intentions and a loving concern for our family, we can unwittingly become overzealous in our desire to “protect” them from suffering.

Brittany’s desire to protect her family and friends from pain by committing suicide also led her to cross over critical moral boundaries such that she deprived her family and friends of the chance to love her through her sickness. Suicide in any form runs contrary to our duty to love - to love ourselves and to love our neighbor - because it unjustly breaks important ties of solidarity we have with family, friends and others to whom we continue to have obligations. It is always violent to eliminate suffering by eliminating the sufferer. We effectively give up on the Creator and all he has created. We refuse the help of our neighbor, the love of a family member, or even the beauty of another sun-drenched day to lighten our affliction.

Even as our lives wind down, we have a calling to be good stewards of the gift of life. Hospice and palliative care, along with careful pain management, can lighten our burdens during the dying process. The mutual support of family and friends enables us, and them, to grow in unexpected ways. By respecting and working through the dying process, we can encounter deep and unanticipated graces. We may recognize the need to ask for and receive forgiveness from others and from God. We may become aware of God’s presence and receive a strengthened faith. We gain peace in our dying days and hours by accepting our mortality and our situation, journeying down the road that still opens ahead of us, even as it becomes shorter, living it with the same tenacity and generosity we did when the road was yet longer.

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

Looking back so that we can move forward

By Eric Rommel

I didn’t go to school to become a writer. Writing is something I enjoyed, but it wasn’t something I imagined as a career.

When I was in college, I dreamed of becoming a television news producer. To me, it represented everything I loved. I enjoyed telling a story. I enjoyed the creative process. I enjoyed starting every day with a blank slate, ending each day not knowing what the next would hold.

By the time I graduated from college, I felt I had a good foundation for a successful career. I created a resume and what is called a resume tape that contained video clips of what I felt was my greatest work from an internship at a local newscast in Baltimore. I received my first job offer less than a month out of college but accepted a different job several months later.

My career in television was short-lived. While I enjoyed the work, other factors pulled me in a different direction. I moved onward and upward. I look back at what I did and miss it, but I enjoy what I do now much more.

Recently, I watched my original resume tape for the first time in many years. Some of it held up and reflected well on my skills at the time. It demonstrated my potential for future growth. But the video editing sample left a far different impression. It was awful.

I remember making the tape and being proud. Today, I see it with different, more experienced eyes. The skills I wanted to highlight weren’t examples of superior ability. They were talents so basic that most professionals take them for granted. It was the equivalent of an advanced mathematician bragging about his ability to count from one to ten.

That doesn’t change the pride I felt at the time. At that moment it was the best I could do. But that moment has passed, the years have passed and I have gained skills and knowledge that make me a better person. I have met people who have pushed me to what I thought were my limits and beyond. I have overcome obstacles and looked back to see my greatest fears were inconsequential.

The person I am today is different from the person I was then, or the person I’ll be in the future. Many years from now, I may choose to look back on what I’ve written. If I do, I hope I read this. I hope I remember how I felt when I wrote it. I hope reading it gives me insight.

Most important, I hope what I write reflects well on the skills I now have and demonstrates potential for future growth. It’s only through that growth that we gain the ability to expand beyond who we are in order to transform into who we are meant to be.

Diocese to lead group to Austin, capital for Advocacy Day 2015

Freddie Medina, Director of Deacons in the Diocese of San Angelo, will lead a group of West Texas Catholics to Austin on March 24, 2015, for Advocacy Day 2015. Catholics from across the Lone Star State will unite that day for the Texas Catholic Conference’s 2015 Texas Catholic Faith In Action Advocacy Day.

The bi-annual rally is hosted by the Texas Bishops to promote the Church’s values of Life, Justice, Charity, and Religious Freedom to members of the 84th Texas Legislature. The Bishops and event participants will address a broad range of diverse issues including advance directives reform, school choice tax credit scholarships, payday lending, Medicaid expansion, and abortion facilities regulation.

› LEARN more about Advocacy Day: Visit https://sites.google.com/site/2015advocacyday/
› ADVOCATE by traveling to Austin. Email Deacon Freddy for info: frmedina@sanangeldiocese.org
› JOIN the Texas Catholic Conference: Visit http://www.txcatholic.org/texas-catholic-network
OKLAHOMA CITY — Young people attending this year’s Region 10 Catholic Youth Conference (RCYC) in Oklahoma City learned valuable lessons of faith, love and never losing hope. Over 16,000 conference-goers, including 153 representatives from 13 parishes in the diocese, were encouraged to reach out to those who love them, and to always have faith in God.

A powerful portion of the conference came when attendees viewed a video on the 1995 bombing of the Murrah Federal Building, followed by a testimony from a woman who survived being in the building during the act of domestic terrorism. The conference was from November 21-23. Parishes who participated were St. Patrick (Brady), Our Lady of Guadalupe (Eldorado), St. Margaret of Cortona (Big Lake), St. Vincent Pallotti (Abilene), Holy Family (Abilene), St. Mary (Brownwood), Our Lady of Lourdes (Andrews), St. Ann (Midland), St. Mary of Holy Cross, St. Joseph (Odessa), Good Shepherd (Crane) and St. Peter (Mattoon).

Participants arrived enthusiastically on three chartered buses. Our youth from the diocese joined with others from Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas, the states which make up Region 10, at the Cox Convention Center in Oklahoma City. They came to experience the larger Church. They came to listen to stories of despair and hope, stories of pain and joy, stories of faith!

Five of our youth were animators, who led participants in prayer, song, drama, and dance. Animators visited Oklahoma City in the summer to train for their role.

Keynote speakers were former Oklahoma University football player Ben Barresi, along with Ben Walther, Jackie Francois and Leah Darrow. They shared their life stories of struggle, despair, and conversion.

Many workshops were offered, and well received. A Eucharistic Procession was held in the Cox Center with all participants, led by Oklahoma City Archbishop Paul Coakley. Also present was Oklahoma City Archbishop Emeritus Joseph Beltran and Bishop Emeritus Michael D. Pfeifer. It was a powerful experience for all.

Closing Mass was concelebrated with Archbishop Coakley, Archbishop Emeritus Beltran and Bishop Sis. The conference was also attended by a number of priests, including Fr. Sam Matthiesen, of Abilene Holy Family.

After the event the participants from the San Angelo Diocese met with Bishop Sis for photographs. It was truly a joy-filled event that served as an opportunity to celebrate our faith and unity.
Maintaining strong prayer life harder than it seems

By Fr. Ron Rolheiser

It's hard to sustain a regular life of prayer. Why? Why is it so difficult to pray regularly?

Some reasons are obvious: over-busyness, tiredness and too many demands on our time, constant distraction, spiritual laziness, worship services that bore us, and methods of prayer that leave us flat and inattentive.

But there is another reason too, suggested by monks and mystics. The problem we have in sustaining prayer, they say, is often grounded in the false notion that prayer needs to be interesting, exciting, intense, and full of energy all the time. But that is impossible, nothing is meant to be exciting all the time, including prayer and church services, and nobody has the energy to always be alert, attentive, intense, and actively engaged all the time.

Sometimes we don't pray regularly precisely because we simply cannot find within ourselves the energy, time, intensity, and appetite for active participation that we think prayer is demanding of us. But prayer respects that, even if it is energy, the time we are without our energy.

Prayer is meant to respect the natural rhythms of our energy. Praying is like eating and, as we know from experience, you don't always want a banquet. If you tried to have a banquet every day, you would soon find coming to the table burdensome and would look for every excuse to escape, to sneak off for a quick sandwich by yourself.

Eating has a natural rhythm: banquets and quick snacks, rich meals and simple sandwiches, high times with linen serviettes and low times with paper napkins, meals which take a whole evening and meals which you eat on the run. And the two depend upon each other: You can only have high season if you mostly have ordinary time.

Healthy eating habits respect our natural rhythms: our time, energy, tiredness, the season, the hour, our boredom, our taste.

Prayer should be the same, but this isn’t generally respected. Too often we are left with this impression: All prayer should be high celebration, upbeat, with high energy. The more variety the better. Longer is better than shorter. Time and tiredness should never be a consideration. During prayer, nobody should ever look at a wristwatch. People at a prayer service need not be told how long the service will last. The solution to boredom and lack of energy is more variety and imagination.

No wonder we are often lack the energy to pray and want to avoid church services.

Monks have secrets worth knowing. They know that if you pray regularly boredom and lack of energy will soon begin to wear you down. The answer then is not so much new prayer forms and more variety, but rhythm, routine, and established ritual. For monks, the key to sustaining a daily life of prayer is not so much variety, novelty, and the call for higher energy, but rather a reliance on the expected, the familiar, the repetitious, the ritual, the clearly defined. What’s needed is a clearly delineated prayer form which gives you a clear duration expectancy and does not demand of you an energy that you cannot muster on a given day.

There are times of course for high celebration, for variety and novelty, for spontaneity, and for long celebrations. There are also times, and these are meant to predominate just as they do in our eating habits, for ordinary time, for low season, for prayer that respects our energy-level, work pressures, and time constraints.

It is no accident, I suspect, that more people used to attend daily church services when these were shorter, simpler, less demanding in terms of energy expenditure, and gave people attending a clear expectation as to how long they would last. The same holds true for other prayers, the office of the church and basically all common prayer. What clear, simple, and brief rituals provide is precisely prayer that depends upon something beyond our own energy.

The rituals carry us, our tiredness, our lack of energy, our inattentiveness, our indifference, and even our occasional distaste. They keep us praying even when we are too tired to muster up our own energy.

There is much to be commended in stressing that prayer, particularly liturgy, should demand of us real energy, real participation, and real celebration. It is meant to be demanding, but sometimes, I fear, we misunderstand what it is asking of us and sometimes too, I think, we are working too hard at it and are not letting the rituals themselves work hard enough.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer had a little mantra he would sometimes use when he was preaching to a young couple on their wedding day. He would tell them: “Today you are young and very much in love and you think that your love will sustain your marriage. It won’t. But your marriage can sustain your love!”

That’s true too for prayer. We think that good intention and energy will sustain our rituals of prayer, but they can’t. Rather our rituals of prayer can sustain our good will and our energy.

Ronald Rolheiser, a Catholic priest and member of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio.

'Tis the heart that gives... the fingers just let go

By Father William J. Byron, SJ

Because of my past experience as a university president, I'm often asked for advice on fundraising. I find myself repeating advice I received long ago from a very successful fundraiser, namely, that "if you want to get milk from a cow, you don't send her a letter, you sit down and start talking to her."

There is no substitute for direct contact with potential donors, and no getting around the need to look a potential donor or ways of getting in touch with them. So attention has to be paid to "friend raising" before effective fundraising can begin. It also assumes that you have some idea of the amount a potential donor might reasonably be expected to contribute.

But by far the best advice I have to give is summed up in this simple dictum: "It is the heart that gives; the fingers just let go." I don't know where I first heard that.

Original or not, it is worth repeating and can be adopted as a working principle by anyone who has the responsibility of raising serious money.

No one likes to ask for money, but a lot of money remains on the table because an effective "ask" was never made. It helps, if the one responsible for the "ask" realizes that fear of rejection lies behind the common hesitancy to ask for money. Once it is understood that it is only the request, not the requester, that is subject to rejection, the fundraiser can hold his or her head high and remain smiling while making the "ask" regardless of the eventual outcome.

I once asked a wealthy donor who had no previous connection with my university for $10 million to endow a few faculty chairs and my request drew an immediate and flat refusal. I tried for $5 million and was turned down. "How 'bout car fare home?" I asked. He laughed and gave me $250,000 for scholarship assistance from his petty cash account.

He liked to help needy students but he had no interest in helping a university with an artistic connection which he had no personal links to celebrate its centennial. You won't win every time, but neither will you always lose if you just hang in there.

First find out where the heart is and then do your best to match up the request with the object of that heart’s affection.

Stories abound of multimillion-dollar gifts from successful alumni who, as students, lost a parent and were unable to pay tuition, but were kept on the rolls by institutional compassion and largesse. Cancer survivors give for cancer research. Parents of autistic children contribute to programs aimed at managing autism. Music and visual art lovers want to support the arts. Sports enthusiasts direct their philanthropy toward athletes and athletics.

Find out where the good memories of potential donors lie and match up the request with programs or persons at the institutions that are providing similar memories for others. It is particularly appropriate for Catholic institutions -- especially educational and healthcare institutions -- to direct their services toward the poor. Let potential donors meet, personally or by photograph or film, the impoverished beneficiaries. This, quite literally, puts a face on the service, a face that is capable of moving the heart.

Always remember, it is the heart that gives, the fingers just let go.
Catholic Voices

The time has come to fully embrace retirement

By Stephen Kent
Catholic News Service

It was more than a quarter-century ago that I found myself sitting in the office of the archbishop of Omaha, Nebraska. It was the third day on the job as editor of the archdiocesan newspaper after some two decades in the secular press.

I had written my first editorial in the new position and had sent it over to the chancery with a note to Archbishop Daniel E. Sheehan for his review, with the further suggestion that we discuss editorial philosophy.

"This is fine," he said, sliding the draft over his desk. "Now, you want to discuss editorial philosophy?"

I nodded, settling down for what should have been at least a two-hour conference.

"Well, we hired an editor to run the paper," he said.

"The only thing is: We do not criticize the pope. Can you live with that?" Archbishop Sheehan asked.

"Of course," I said.

"Then have a good day," he said, returning to some document on his desk.

That was the first and last editorial he saw prior to publication for the next 10 years. It set the tone for writing commentary and expressing opinion in the Catholic press. My appreciation increased as I came to learn from fellow editors in Catholic press who did not enjoy such freedom.

After retiring as editor of the Catholic Northwest Progress in Seattle, I was fortunate to be asked by Catholic News Service to continue writing a weekly column on current events.

This is the last of them.

After eight years of weekly deadlines, it's time to fully embrace retirement. Many authors have written fine books. It's time for me to read some of them. It's time, as well, to increase the humility that can only come from more time on the golf course.

When my son said a few months back, "There's finally a pope that agrees with you," it seemed to be a validation of the decision.

There are indelible memories, of meeting and shaking hands with a pope -- now a saint -- during an audience at the Vatican, of being in a sacristy of a church in Guatemala as the priest pointed out a bullet hole in a cabinet door made during the murder of the pastor whose views on liberation of people was not appreciated by the government, of being awed by the dedication and faith of those inspired by Catholic social teaching who worked in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, the slums of Jamaica and subhuman conditions of Haiti.

It takes a bit of chutzpah to put out opinions week after week and know they are read by thousands. The goal has not been to convince. It has been to raise questions, to hold up things and for events to be evaluated in light of the principles we Catholics believe. Thus, the "Consider This" title.

Some of the most critical times for the church coincided with the time of this column. The sexual abuse of children and subsequent cover-up of the offenses did much to stain the reputation of the church as a viable speaker in the public agenda.

Suddenly, things are changing.

What was eagerly anticipated in the wake of the Second Vatican Council 50 years ago may now finally be coming to pass.

"I believe in the surprises of the Holy Spirit," the late Cardinal Leo Jozef Suenens, a major voice at Vatican II, later wrote in his book titled "A New Pentecost?"

At this line of demarcation, of past and future, the book title no longer needs the question mark.

Kent is the retired editor of archdiocesan newspapers in Omaha and Seattle. He can be contacted at: considersk@gmail.com.

Our focus is on redemption beginning in November

By Moises Sandoval
Catholic News Service

November began with All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day. Both are about redemption, already achieved in the case of the saints and a work in progress for the rest of us. But it is not as simple as saving our own skin; we cannot redeem ourselves unless we redeem others.

These thoughts came to me after listening to a talk after Mass by a representative of the Order of Malta, a Catholic organization with a long history of helping the poor. It was a plea for support of the Malta Justice Initiative, which seeks to reform the criminal justice system in Connecticut.

It starts with reducing costs, lowering recidivism and increasing public safety. This is not a goal that would win votes for any politician.

With 2.4 million people behind bars, the United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world. By some figures, the U.S. is home to 5 percent of the world's population yet has 25 percent of the world's prisoner population.

"This situation exists notwithstanding the fact that U.S. crime rates are not materially different from those found in other countries," asserts a book published by the Order of Malta titled, "The Justice Imperative: How Hyper-Incarceration Has Hijacked the American Dream."

The huge boom in incarceration was a consequence of the war on drugs. In the 1990s a new prison opened in the rural U.S. every 15 days. Connecticut, a small state with almost 3.6 million people, has 15 prisons, now housing 16,600 inmates.

Nearly half were convicted of nonviolent drug crimes, or property and public order crimes, sometimes with sentences that seemed cruel and inhumane. One example is Danielle Metz, who became pregnant at 17 and later married a drug dealer who abused her. To placate him, she sometimes helped pick up cocaine and collect drug payments from Western Union. Though she had already left him, she was convicted and sentenced to life in prison. There are countless tragic stories like hers.

The logic of locking people up and throwing the key away still reigns. An editorial in the Hartford Courant newspaper says that Republicans are "panicking" about a program called Risk Reduction Earned Credits, one of several ways inmates can leave prison early. Those convicted of violent crimes are ineligible. It seems to be working; recidivism is down.

With systemic costs becoming unsustainable nationally, change must come: fewer rather than more prisons, programs to deal with nonviolent offenders without incarceration, rehabilitation that turns former offenders into law-abiding, tax-paying citizens.

In Texas, a state notorious for being tough on crime, a bipartisan initiative closed three prisons, invested in treatment programs, created specialty drug and prostitution courts, expanded probation, saved billions of dollars and still reduced crime. Michigan, New York, Missouri, Delaware and Kentucky, among others, have seen similar results.

Texas State Sen. John Whitmire, a Democrat, said: "There ought to be a requirement that you release a better person than the one you receive." And Republican Gov. Rick Perry declared: "The idea that we lock people up, throw them away forever, never give them a second chance at redemption isn't what America is about."

"Dare to be great," urges Malta's justice initiative in its mission statement. "Visit the incarcerated, affirming their human dignity and ministering to their spiritual needs; insist on change; volunteer with agencies involved with inmates; hire qualified ex-offenders."

En noviembre, a enforcarnos en la redención

By Moises Sandoval
Catholic News Service

Noviembre comienza con las fiestas de todas las almas y todos los santos. Ambas se enfocan en la redención, la de los santos ya lograda y la de nosotros en proceso. Para redimirnos tenemos que participar en la redención de los demás.

Realicé esto al escuchar una presentación por un representante de la Orden de Malta, una organización Católica con larga historia de ayudar a los pobres. Solicitaron apoyo para la Iniciativa Malta por la Justicia, que busca reformar el sistema de justicia criminal en Connecticut.

Empieza con la meta de reducir los costos, ayudar a los encarcelados y aumentar el bienestar público. Es un propósito que no gana votos para ningún político.

Con 2.4 millones de encarcelados, los Estados Unidos tiene la más alta tasa de encarcelación en el mundo. Según algunas cifras, los tiene cinco por ciento de la población del mundo, pero 25 por (Mira SANDOVAL/22)
Our Faith

Do beliefs matter? Forgiveness for divorced and remarried

By Father Kenneth Doyle
Catholic News Service

Q. Please help me to know how to answer people who say, "It doesn't matter what religion or beliefs you have, since we're all going to the same place anyway." (Versailles, Kentucky)

A. The quote you offer strikes me as a species of what the Second Vatican Council called "false ecumenicism." That is a fancy expression to describe the habit of playing down doctrinal differences for the sake of keeping the peace. (It comes from the Greek word "eirene," meaning "peace.") The council's "Decree on Ecumenism," in No. 11, said: "Nothing is so foreign to the spirit of ecumenism as a false ecumenicism, in which the purity of Catholic doctrine suffers loss and its genuine and certain meaning is clouded.

Simply put, what people believe matters. If I believe that God revealed himself by coming to earth in the person of Jesus, then I consider myself obligated to examine seriously what Jesus had to say and to align myself with whatever religious institution carries that teaching forward most faithfully. This certainly does not mean that someone must be a Catholic, nor even a Christian, to be saved.

In fact, the Catechism of the Catholic Church explicitly rejects that restrictive notion in No. 847, referencing Vatican II's "Constitution on the Church," where it says: "Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience -- those too may achieve eternal salvation."

But I believe that Catholics get "extra help" along the way to heaven -- especially through the guidance of the Sacraments and the Church teaching, since the truth of its fundamental doctrines is guaranteed by Christ. I, for one, am supremely grateful to be a Catholic and, to me, it makes a very big difference indeed.

Q. Sometimes things happen in life that we have no control over. You marry and your partner is unfaithful or cruel or he just disappears. Many times a woman is left alone, with children to raise by herself. The [Ten] Commandments say, "Don't kill, don't steal, keep holy the Sabbath, etc." and if we break any of them, we cannot go to confession, be forgiven and receive the sacraments. But a divorced person who remarries outside the church cannot be forgiven. Why does the church single out that person for punishment? (Walterboro, South Carolina)

A. The technical answer to your question is this: Sins are forgiven in confession when a person is sorry for them and has "a firm purpose of amendment." In other words, the person has the sincere intention of changing the behavior being confessed. When a person is divorced and has remarried outside the church, they may be sorry for the circumstances which led to this but rarely do they intend to change their status by leaving the second marriage.

But you deserve much more than a technical answer. I have deep sympathy for the situation you describe and pray that the church will find a way to deal humanely with such complex circumstances; there is strong evidence that the bishops gathered at the October 2014 synod felt your pain.

The concluding report on the Synod of Bishops on the family had two paragraphs that dealt with a proposal that would make it easier for divorced and civilly remarried Catholics to receive holy Communion. Though these two paragraphs did not get the required two-thirds vote for consensus and final approval, they did receive a simple majority and it seems likely that, with the benefit of further study, the matter will be raised once more at the larger synod in October 2015, which will make recommendations to the pope.

Q. Over the past few years, my faith has deepened, and I feel Jesus present with me. I want to know him better and so I have begun to pray and to read the Scriptures more, in addition to attending Mass and praying the rosary. I am not old or sick, but I have become more focused on passing on. The more I consider the promise of Christ, the less I want to live in this world. I assure you that I am not suicidal, but my eyes are already set on the final prize.

I know that the Gospel calls us to love and serve others after the example of Jesus, but why should I aspire to living a long time when I am just waiting for God to call me home? What spiritual message must I be missing? Can you share some wisdom on rekindling joy for this life? (Prospect, Kentucky)

A. I really can't find fault with anything that you are doing or thinking. Like you, I look forward to heaven and believe with all my heart in that which "eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and what has not entered the human heart, what God has prepared for those who love him," (I Corinthians 2:9). Not long ago, a woman told me on her deathbed what she thought it was going to be like to be with God in heaven: "Like a mother's love -- times ten thousand.

It is certainly right to aspire to that and even to hope that it comes sooner rather than later. The timing, though, is all in God's good hands, and meanwhile we accept this earthly existence as God's gift, if only because it offers us the chance to share with others our view of God's love and what lies beyond. The Hebrews sang in Psalm 126:2-3, "Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues sang for joy... The Lord had done great things for us."

Gratitude should be one of the essentials of any religion

By Father William J. Byron, SJ
Catholic News Service

As the Thanksgiving season spills over into Advent and Christmas, many people find themselves remarking that this is their favorite time of the year. Thanksgiving Day is, of course, a secular feast day. Christmas is not. And most of those who speak of "the holidays" as a not-so-artful dodge around the need to use the word "Christmas" -- which is indeed a holy day -- seem to be oblivious to the fact that "holiday" derives its very meaning from the word "holy."

Thanksgiving, in full secular splendor, is more than welcome in my religious lexicon. If I were pressed to reduce the entire meaning of religion to one word, that word would be gratitude. The case for making that one word love instead of gratitude is worth attempting, but I recall learning that it was God who first loved us, thus enabling us to love and therefore all we can be is grateful. Why? Because God first loved us, he graced us.

I am also fond of reminding anyone who cares to listen that the old American vernacular used to express gratitude was "much obliged." Obligation under God first loved us, he graced us. As adults, however, we often fail to measure ourselves on the gratitude scale. As children, success and security can make ingrates of us all. That's more than a bit strange, but true nonetheless. Perhaps it says something about self and selfishness, or it may simply be spelling out a little lesson in human nature, which does have an insular, self-enclosing, self-interested tendency. That may relate to the survival instinct.

But human nature is also social, relational, outward-reaching, and needing to link and bond in the quest for happiness. Human nature may not be inclined naturally to share, but it would be an error to conclude that sharing is unnatural when human happiness depends on it. So we have to learn to share. And we learn that through the development of our sense of gratitude.

As Thanksgiving moves toward Christmas, take a moment to assess your position on the gratitude scale. The closer you are to open and generous sharing, the better the promise of Christ, the less I want to live in this world. I assure you that I am not suicidal, but my eyes are already set on the final prize. ... The Lord had done great things for us."
Widowhood and sharing memories of loved ones at Christmas

By Bill Dodds
Catholic News Service

As I head toward my second Christmas as a widower, I now know the challenges begin with Halloween.

Yes, Halloween. Filled with happy "couple" memories, it's a tough day for a lot of widows and widowers. It is followed by Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's, one blow after another, in overlapping, unrelenting succession, pummeling an already broken heart.

There's the realization that, on earth, the best is not yet to come. The best has come and gone.

For a widow or widower, no matter how happy the occasion, the gathering, the event, there can be the unalterable fact that it would be so much happier if our loved one had lived.

The first days, weeks and months after the death of a spouse can be a time of complete numbness. Shock. Disbelief. A blur.

And the years that follow, no matter how many years may follow, can be a time of incompleteness. It still astounds me how little I knew about widowhood before my wife died of uterine cancer in January 2013. Just as she had time to prepare for her death, I had time to prepare for her dying. But not really, because I simply didn't know what it was like to have her gone.

Thanks be to God, I have a loving and supportive family, work I value, health, financial stability, a mortgage-free home, and on and on. But one description I've heard of widowhood is that life becomes like a nutritious meal that has no salt, no spice or like a can of pop, of soda, that has lost its fizz.

I don't say this because I want to whine. I try to limit my whining to prayer. I say this because those who aren't widowed don't know what this is like, and so when they want to help a loved one, they're unsure of what to do or not to do.

With that in mind, here are a few suggestions for dealing with your widowed friend's Christmas and the holidays leading to it.

Invite the widowed person to the gathering even if the person may not be able to come. Accept the fact that the person may want to come, but on that day, that evening, it's simply too much. He or she may call, email or text at the last minute to tell you he or she just can't leave the house. Your gracious acceptance of that helps tremendously. Prodding or pushing guilt buttons don't.

Please, please, please don't act as if the person's loved one never existed. Yes, in your eyes, he or she may have died a long time ago. In the widowed person's eyes, it seems like a long time ago and only yesterday. Use the person's name. Tell stories about the person. Share happy memories.

Your stories and memories may make the widowed person cry. Allow that to happen, especially around Christmas. It may make you uncomfortable, but it brings great comfort. It may be just what the widowed person needs for Christmas this year.

The best Christmas deal is free

By Father Eugene Hemrick
Catholic News Service

Stores began selling Christmas items long before Thanksgiving, and even Black Friday has been pushed up to attract bargain seekers. Each year, the messages and peddling of items seem to come earlier and earlier.

Sometimes it feels as if it's all too much: too much shopping, too much noise, too much running around during a season that's supposed to bring us peace.

Is there a way to avoid or to attack that hectic, stampeding effect that the business sector pushes on us during the Christmas season? Sure there is. But how? There is one way an author found effective.

In the book "A Eucharistic Christmas," Louise Pare says that she told God she would do anything he asked of her if he could set her spiritual life on fire during the holidays. She said she thought God's answer would be something big and dramatic such as a 40-day fast or a call to sell all of her possessions. Instead, the answer came quickly and quietly: Start going to Mass one day during Advent.

Pare goes on to ask an important question about seeking God during Christmas and Advent: "Why focus on the Eucharist at this busy time of the year?"

For some, even the busiest among us, it can provide a touchstone necessary to get through the day or through important moments in work or life. At daily Mass on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., Supreme Court justices, congressmen or congresswomen, and staff always are in attendance, as are others from various prestigious institutions.

I always marvel at how they find time in their busy schedules to attend Mass and to remain in the church after Mass to meditate. The marvel is that God is the most important part of their daily life even though they're in the limelight constantly.

Emmanuel is their chief consultant in dealing with national and world problems. It is he who blesses them with composure by drawing them away from the hectic world, enabling them to stroll while others are stampeding.

Perhaps it is impossible to attend daily Mass where we live or work. That doesn't have to stop us.

When we celebrate feasts of great churches like the Basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome, we are reminded that we have many sacred temples. All we need do is to take time to enter their doors in silence and be with Emmanuel, if only for a few minutes.

And this is the one "great deal" that you can't live without this Christmas.
By Dave Luecking
Catholic News Service

ST. LOUIS — Among the iconic images of the 9/11 tragedy, photographs of policemen and firefighters stand out: The first responders were entering the doomed World Trade Center as most everyone else was filing out.

They embraced the danger of the moment, most going ultimately to their death, because the job requires it. First-responders sign up for this risk; they accept it as part of their service.

Similarly, in the situation that has become known as simply "Ferguson," Sgt. John Wall of the St. Louis County Police Department knew in the second week of August that the time had come to stand up and be counted. Peaceful protests after the Aug. 9 shooting death of Michael Brown by a police officer during a confrontation had devolved into rioting and looting.

A QuikTrip near the shooting site had been looted and burned. Police had lobbed tear gas and shot rubber bullets to disperse crowds, presumably while real bullets flew in their direction. The situation was fraught with danger.

But did Wall think twice about going into it? Nope. "I volunteered," he said, on a recent morning at a coffee shop.

"I volunteered; it was kind of 'all hands on deck,' so everybody had to work it at some time," he explained, matter-of-factly. He added, "I was fortunate enough to work it the entire time."

Wall, a 50-year-old married father of a teenager, not only volunteered for duty, willfully taking the risk, but counted himself as fortunate for being there.

This from a man who in 12-hour shifts on his two weeks of voluntary duty was spit on, was hit by rocks, bricks and bottles of urine, and was berated -- with protesters calling him every name in the book.

"In those two weeks, I was called more things than in the 25 years I've been in this business," said Wall, who became a police officer in 1989 and joined the county force in 1998. "I've worked narcotics, I've worked homicide and I've never been talked to like that. Ever."

In those moments, his Catholic faith guided Wall, particularly the part about loving thy neighbor.

"Faith comes into every aspect of this job," said Wall, who became a Catholic in 1991. "You have to forgive. I can't personally hold a grudge against any of these people; they were not screaming at me as an individual. I understand, and most of us understand, they're looking at a uniform and not a face. They don't know me and everything that I stand for."

"You have to have forgiveness in your own heart," he told the St. Louis Review, the archdiocesan newspaper, in an interview some days before the grand jury handed down its decision that there would be no indictment of the police officer who killed.

When Ferguson Police Officer Darren Wilson, who is white, fatally shot 18-year-old Brown, an African-American, racial unrest in the St. Louis suburb led to protests. Some demonstrators looted and burned local businesses.

When it was announced that after three months of looking at the evidence and hearing more than 70 hours of testimony, the grand jury declined to indict Wilson, violent protests followed. Protests have continued in Ferguson and across the country.

From the beginning, Wall and fellow officers have leaned on the pastoral care of county police chaplains. Chaplains started each shift with a prayer before the officer's role call and briefing at the police command center. Catholic priests served among chaplains of many religions.

"No one went to church for two weeks either; you're working the whole time. So, it was very helpful to have the chaplains there," Wall said.

The prospect of having Mass or other religious services at the command post was out of the question. Work consumed the officers, for one, and it wasn't safe anyway. Bomb threats prompted Gov. Jay Nixon to call out the National Guard to protect the command center and make it a safe haven for officers.

The scene of the unrest on the quarter-mile stretch of West Florissant in Ferguson was unsafe. A native of St. Louis, Wall describes the venom directed at him and other officers in Ferguson as "unbelievable," particularly since he knew, or at least recognized, some of the people hurling insults.

"The people we took it from were ... people I had good relations with," he said, adding that he gave those people the benefit of the doubt. "There were people that just got caught up in the heat of the moment."

The protesters "came from all walks of life -- young, old, ministers," Wall said, noting that one woman among the latter "really laid into me, saying things like how we mistreat people, how we beat people, how we should be ashamed of ourselves, and all the people that I've killed. I was just looking at her. I haven't killed anybody. I haven't fired my gun in 25 years as a police officer. Been shot at, though."

It's a tough time for the men and women in uniform and their families, but Wall's attitude is to grin-and-bear it. "You just have to gut through it."

For all of the bad Wall has experienced in Ferguson, he also has experienced much good, starting with people closest to him -- "family members, friends and people of the parish."

People also have come up to him while he's in uniform and thanked him for being a police officer.

In the meantime, Wall's wife and daughter worry about his safety in Ferguson.

"My family has worried way more than I'd like them to," Wall said, adding, "I know how to take care of myself and take care of my people. They don't need to worry about me."

Thoughts of his wife and daughter are with Wall at all times; he has only to look at the two rings he wears on the little finger of his right hand. From his wife, he has a ring with crosses. From his daughter, he has a rosary ring. He also carries a rosary in his duty bag, hands out St. Michael the Archangel prayer cards and wears a St. Michael pendant that his wife gave him 24 years ago.

St. Michael is the patron saint for policemen, and even non-Catholic officers wear the medals and carry the prayer cards in their pockets.

"Almost every policeman will have a religious trinket of some kind," Wall said. "Faith is huge in the police department, and in the military, too. It's a big presence. "Like a minister, a policeman is there for good."
By Jimmy Patterson

By the time you read this, you will have either had the opportunity to see “The One I Wrote for You,” or you will be waiting for its at-home digital release. Along with the help of a dedicated support staff and team, David Kauffman, his family and friends, have done a remarkable job in launching a grassroots effort to educate people about his first film. Executive produced and written by Kauffman, the San Antonio-based Catholic artist who has appeared many times at churches in the San Angelo diocese and is a friend to many in West Texas, also wrote every song on the soundtrack and even had a small part in the film.

“The One I Wrote for You” is a family-friendly film with smart dialogue that avoids the traps and trite phrases that lesser-written films can often fall into. It tells the story of Ben Cantor (Cheyenne Jackson), a man whose dream is to be a singer-songwriter. After missing out on that dream, he opts to settle for life as a barista in a coffee house and turns his attention to being a good father. While certainly an admirable trait by an admirable character, Kauffman proves in this movie that you can have both — if you don’t start believing your newspaper clippings.

Encouraged by his family who convinces him he can pursue his dreams while still being a good dad, the storyline is touching because of the mutual love Cantor has for his family and his family has for him.

Cantor’s character enters a national songwriting competition (patterned after “American Idol” or “The Voice”). Eventually his following grows and, needless to say, his dream, which started simply enough, becomes complicated when Cantor loses sight of the bigger picture.

Fortunately, family and friends are there to pull him back in and make him see the light as he had before.

Kevin Pollak (“A Few Good Men”) does a wonderful job in the role of Cantor’s former manager and friend, and

(please see KAUFFMAN/22)


Reviewed by Mitch Finley
Catholic News Service

In his slim volume, “Joy to the World,” Scott Hahn -- a former Presbyterian who has become one of today’s most prominent Catholic authors, professor of theology and Scripture at Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio, and McEssy distinguished visiting professor in biblical theology at Mundelein Seminary -- reflects on the meaning of Christmas.

Masterfully leaving behind the academic theologian’s technical language and tendency to ask questions the average person is likely to find boring, Hahn speaks from his own experience and to the experience of the average person. At the same time, in everyday English he shares with readers insights from his many years of study -- biblical and theological.

“Joy to the World” explores the personalities who populate the Gospels’ narratives about the birth and meaning of Jesus. These include, of course, Joseph, Mary, Herod, angels and the Magi. But Hahn also draws on insights from the letters of St. Paul and the Johannine literature. He helps the reader see that the entire New Testament, not just the infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke, is about the meaning of Christmas. Hahn also draws upon and quotes the works of other Scripture scholars, theologians, preachers and popes including Pope Leo XIII, Pope Benedict XVI, Pope Francis and, yes, the Rev. Billy Graham.

Hahn even reminds us of the original meanings of such common Christmas traditions as baking Christmas cookies (“because the Messiah has come to lead us into a land flowing with milk and honey.”); decorating a Christmas tree (“to recover the tree of paradise, which was restored by the tree of Calvary”); and giving gifts (“because God has given himself to us as a gift, wrapping his divinity in true humanity.”)

"Joy to the World" is a fine and insightful book, one of the best to read if you want to deepen and enrich your understanding of Christmas, whose religious meaning can easily get lost in the dominant commercial culture.
OBISPO

(Para 3)
una parte importante de la historia cristiana por casi 2,000 años, y continúa trayendo a personas a un encuentro vital con el Señor Cristo Jesús.

Los Consejos Evangélicos
Los tres consejos evangélicos son la castidad, pobreza, y la obediencia. Cristo propone estos consejos a cada uno de sus seguidores, y son vividos en una variedad de maneras. Cuando los consejos evangélicos son profesados de entre un estado permanente de vida reconocida por la Iglesia, esto es llamado la vida consagrada. También es referida como la vida religiosa.

Al comenzar el Año de la Vida Consagrada, es útil reflexionar el profundo significado de estos consejos.

Castidad
El vivir este consejo da un testimonio poderoso al hecho de que hay un lugar muy a dentro de nuestro corazón que solamente Dios puede llenar. No hay ningún compañero humano o placer que se equivale a Dios.

La mayoría de cristianos son llamados a la vocación del Sagrado Matrimonio. Sin embargo, Jesús nunca se casó. Él fue célibe. Él llama a algunos de sus seguidores al celibato. En Mateo 19:1-12, Jesús dice que algunas personas se les ha dado la vocación a renunciar el matrimonio por el Reino en los Cielos. Así, en el Nuevo Testamento, hay un lugar para el celibato voluntario en servicio al Reino de Dios.

San Pablo vivió su consejo evangélico de castidad en el celibato. En I Cor. 7:8, él habla acerca de esta llamada al celibato. Él dice, “A los solteros y a las viudas les digo que es bueno que se queden solteros, como yo.” En I Cor. 7:32-34, él dice, “Yo quisiera librarlos a ustedes de preocupaciones. Él está soltero se preocupa por las cosas del Señor, y por agradarle; pero el que está casado se preocupa por las cosas del mundo y por agradar a su esposa, y así está dividido.”

Aunque el Nuevo Testamento está claro tocante a la belleza y dignidad del matrimonio, también resalta varios valores positivos en la llamada a la castidad en el celibato. Es un sacrificio fructífero por el Reino de Dios. Cuando se vive bien, conduce a mayor disponibilidad para servicio a otros seres humanos, a vida comunitaria fructífera, y a una devoción indivisa al Señor. Nos recuerda a cada uno de la verdad básica que nuestra realización última como personas humanas es el de vivir en unión con Dios.

La castidad en el celibato es una elección consciente hecha en respuesta libre a la invitación de Dios. Es la consagración de la vida entera de uno a Dios. Esto envuelve una cierta cantidad de sacrificio, ascetismo, y autodisciplina. El estilo de vida del celibato no es para todos. Es una llamada muy especial, llena de muchas bendiciones para las personas consagradas y para la gente a quienes ellos sirven.

Pobreza
En los Evangelios, Jesús llama a unos a vender lo que tienen, dar al pobre, y venir y seguirlo. No se espera que todo cristiano haga un voto formal de pobreza, pero sí se espera que vivamos con caridad y sin obsesión con las riquezas. Ellos quienes viven con fervor el consejo evangélico de la pobreza dan testimonio claro al hecho de que todos nosotros estamos totalmente dependientemente en la providencia de Dios.

La pobreza evangélica de nuestros religiosos, religiosas, y sacerdotes consagrados dirige nuestros corazones y mentes al Cielo, recordándonos que hay una sed en el alma humana que cosas materiales no pueden saciar.

Obediencia
Por medio de la obediencia de Jesús al Padre, él mismo se ofreció por los pecados del mundo entero. El aprendió de María su madre el estar abierto para hacer la voluntad de Dios Padre, incluso si eso implica inconveniencias o sacrificios personales.

Cuando religiosos consagrados viven la virtud de obediencia fielmente, es un antídoto contra el pecado del orgullo, y da testimonio a la unión de Cristo y su Iglesia.

Nuevos Vocacionales

En la Diócesis de San Ángelo, estamos bendecidos por las vidas de nuestros sacerdotes, religiosos, y religiosas consagradas. Algunos sirven en ministerio parroquial. Algunos llevan a cabo el papel de liderazgo en las oficinas diocesanas. Una es capellán de la prisión de tiempo completo. Algunos viven la vocación contemplativa en nuestro monasterio y ermita. Todos proveen un poderoso testimonio a Cristo Jesús.

Un valor fuerte para ellos quienes están en la vida consagrada es la de pertenecer a una comunidad religiosa. La comunidad religiosa provee compañerismo y apoyo para vivir los consejos evangélicos fructíferamente. Cuando una persona está discerniendo la posibilidad de una vocación a la vida consagrada, típicamente, pasará un tiempo llegando a conocer bien la comunidad.

Todos tenemos varias oportunidades en este Año de la Vida Consagrada para llegar a conocer aún más cerca de estos miembros maravillosos en nuestra Iglesia local. Anunciaremos una variedad de eventos a lo largo del año.

Oración para el Año de la Vida Consagrada

Oh Dios, tú que a través de los tiempos has llamado a mujeres y hombres a fin de que vivan la caridad perfecta por medio de los consejos evangélicos de la pobreza, la castidad y la obediencia.

Durante este Año de la Vida Consagrada te damos gracias por estos valientes testigos de la fe, que son también modelos de inspiración. Con su empeño por lograr la santidad ellos nos enseñan a ofrecer nuestra vida de una manera más perfecta.

Te pedimos que continúes enriqueciendo a tu Iglesia con hijos e hijas que, habiendo encontrado la perla de gran valor, atesoran el Reino de los cielos por encima de todas las cosas.

Por nuestro Señor Jesucristo, tu Hijo que vive y reina contigo en la unidad del Espíritu Santo y es Dios por los siglos de los siglos, Amén.

Nuevos Vocacionales

Durante los años de mi ministerio como sacerdote y obispo, he conocido muchos jovencitos y jovencitas quienes han entrado a la vida consagrada. Ellos son una inspiración para todos nosotros. Ellos abrazan con entusiasmo los consejos evangélicos de castidad, pobreza, y obediencia.

Como el Obispo de San Ángelo, he escuchado a jovencitas de nuestra diócesis quienes están discerniendo la posibilidad de entrar a una vida consagrada. Estas son jovencitas talentosas y capaces. Ellas tienen el amor tan fuerte por Jesús que están dispuestas a seguirlo a donde sea que él les hable.

Cerca de Christoval, en el Monasterio Carmelita de Nuestra Señora de Gracia y en el Ermita Carmelita de la Virgen María del Monte Carmel, están bendecidos al tener nuevos postulantes y novicios quienes se están abriendo ellos mismos a la llamada de la vocación contemplativa. En octubre tuve el gozo de presenciar la profesión de Votos Solemnes de la Hermana Mary Theodore Therese. Dios está poderosamente activo hoy en día a través de nuestros religiosos consagrados.

La comunidad más nueva de venir a nuestra diócesis estará sirviendo en Fort Stockton y Sanderson. Por medio de la generosidad de Catholic Extension Society, nuestra diócesis estará recibiendo a tres nuevas hermanas religiosas, socias de las Coadjutoras (cooperadoras) del Apostolado Social de Tlaxcala, México. Estarán participando en un proyecto de cinco años llamado Intercambio de Beneficio para Hermanas Latinamericanas y las Diócesis Estadounidenses. Estamos muy bendecidos al estar en una posición para beneficiarnos por medio de esta iniciativa emocionante.

En esta edición del Angelus, estamos incluyendo la Oración para el Año de la Vida Consagrada, en inglés y español. Los animo a todos a usar esta oración, para que las gracias de esta observación de todo un año sean derramadas abundantemente en nuestra diócesis.
these counsels to every one of his followers, and they are lived out in a variety of ways. When the evangelical counsels are professed within a permanent state of life recognized by the Church, this is called the consecrated life. It is also referred to as the religious life.

As we open the Year of Consecrated Life, it is helpful to ponder the profound significance of these counsels.

Chastity
Living out this counsel gives a powerful witness to the fact that there is a spot deep in the human heart that only God can fill. There is no human companionship or pleasure that is equal to God.

Most Christians are called to the vocation of holy marriage. However, Jesus never married. He was celibate. He also calls some of his followers to celibacy. In Matthew 19:1-12, Jesus says that some people are given the vocation to renounce marriage for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. Thus, in the New Testament, there is a place for voluntary celibacy in service of God’s Kingdom.

St. Paul lived out the evangelical counsel of celibate chastity. In I Cor. 7:8, he speaks of this call to celibacy. He says, “To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is well for them to remain single as I do.” In I Cor. 7:32-34, he says, “I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord, but the married man is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided.”

While the New Testament is clear about the beauty and dignity of marriage, it also points out several positive values in the call to celibate chastity. It is a fruitful sacrifice for the sake of the Kingdom of God. When it is lived well, it leads to more availability for service to other human beings, to fruitful community life, and to an undivided devotion to the Lord. It reminds everyone of the basic truth that our ultimate fulfillment as human persons is to live in union with God.

Celibate chastity is a conscious choice made in free response to God’s invitation. It is a consecration of one’s entire life to God. This involves a certain amount of sacrifice, asceticism, and self-discipline. The lifestyle of celibacy is not for everyone. It is a very special calling, full of many blessings for consecrated persons and for the people they serve.

Poverty
In the Gospels, Jesus calls some to sell what they have, give to the poor, and come and follow him. Not all Christians are expected to make a formal vow of poverty, but we are all expected to live with charity and to be detached from riches. Those who live out boldly the evangelical counsel of poverty give clear witness to the fact that all of us are ultimately dependent on the providence of God.

The evangelical poverty of our consecrated religious sisters, brothers, and priests directs our hearts and minds to Heaven, reminding us that there is a thirst in the human soul that material things cannot quench.

Obedience
By Jesus’ obedience to the Father, he made himself an offering for the sins of the whole world. He learned from Mary his mother to be open to doing the will of God the Father, even if that involves personal inconvenience and sacrifice.

When consecrated religious live out the virtue of obedience faithfully, it is an antidote to the sin of pride, and it gives witness to the union of Christ with his Church. Our Consecrated Religious

In the Diocese of San Angelo, we are blessed through the lives of our consecrated priests, brothers, and sisters. Some are serving in parish ministry. Some carry out roles of leadership in diocesan offices. One is a full-time prison chaplain. Some live the contemplative vocation in our monastery and our hermitage. All of them provide a powerful witness to Jesus Christ.

A strong value for those in the consecrated life is belonging to a religious community. The religious community provides fellowship and support for living out the evangelical counsels fruitfully. When a person is discerning the possibility of a vocation to the consecrated life, they will typically spend time getting to know the community well.

We will have several opportunities in this Year of Consecrated Life to get to know more about these wonderful members of our local Church. We will announce a variety of events throughout this year.

New Vocations
Over the years of my ministry as a priest and bishop, I have known many young men and women who have entered consecrated life. They are an inspiration to all of us. They embrace with enthusiasm the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty, and obedience.

As the Bishop of San Angelo, I have sat and listened to young women from our diocese who are discerning the possibility of entering the consecrated life. These are talented and capable young women. They have a love for Jesus that is so strong that they are willing to follow him wherever he might call them.

Near Christoval, in the Carmelite Monastery of Our Lady of Grace and in the Carmelite Hermitage of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel, they are blessed to have new postulants and novices who are opening themselves up to the call to the contemplative vocation. In October I had the joy of witnessing the Solemn Profession of Vows of Sister Mary Theodore Therese. God is powerfully active in our day and time through our consecrated religious.

The newest religious community to come to our diocese will be serving in Fort Stockton and Sanderson. Through the generosity of the Catholic Extension Society, our diocese is receiving three new sisters, members of the Coadjutors (cooperators) of the Social Apostolate from Tlaxcala, Mexico. They are participating in a five-year project called the U.S.-Latin American Sisters’ Exchange Program. We are very blessed to be in a position to benefit through this exciting initiative. (For more on this story, see page 10.

I encourage all to pray the Prayer for Consecrated Life, on this page, so the graces of this yearlong observance may be poured out abundantly in our diocese.

Prayer for the Year of Consecrated Life
O God, throughout the ages you have called women and men to pursue lives of perfect charity through the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

During this Year of Consecrated Life, we give you thanks for these courageous witnesses of Faith and models of inspiration. Their pursuit of holy lives teaches us to make a more perfect offering of ourselves to you.

Continue to enrich your Church by calling forth sons and daughters who, having found the pearl of great price, treasure the Kingdom of Heaven above all things.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.
SAINTS

Stephen imitated Christ by being compliant. Further, St. Gregory preached that the key figure in the struggle against demonic Guiley writes in the “Encyclopedia of Christmas” that his composed two homilies to him. Rosemary Farmer writes that the witnesses placed their clothes at the feet of Saul (later Paul) as was Kauffman’s objec-
tion/use has become such an addiction for many. It can become more than a distraction: dinnertime certain-ly doesn’t seem like a time to have a cell phone out, checking Facebook or texting. Driving home the point, my wife and I went to a restaurant recently, and at the table next to us, every one of the five-member family was busy on his or her phone or tablet. Such a sight likely no longer even shocks many people.

My wife puts her cell phone in the bedroom when she gets home from work every evening. It frees her up for real communication, or for focusing on other aspects of life that are less virtual, more real. Of course, I have not yet been able to pull the trigger on walking away from the cell at night, which makes her efforts of leaving behind technology not always as successful as she probably hoped for. Maybe some day I will reach that point and be able to walk away from the phone like she does. But then how would the kids (all grown now) contact us if needed? News flash to me: They will. Grown or not, your kids always find a way to reach you.

Mother Teresa always said to do small things with great love. Bending that to apply to technology addictions, you, too, can do two things with great results. Your actions may not shake the larger world, but they may change your world: Don’t text and drive. Simple. And walk away from your phone during family time every evening.

By not texting while driving you could possibly be saving either your life or the life of someone else. Walk away from your devices every evening. It will greatly enhance your ability to communicate, hear, share and love those with whom you share four walls. That possibility — of improving the family — is reason enough to walk away.

PATTERSON

(From 4)

SANDOVAL

(Para 11)

Casi la mitad de esos encarcelados cometieron delitos no violentos, pero recibieron sentencias crueles e inhumanas. Un ejemplo: Danielle Metz se encontró embarazada a los 17 años y después se casó con un hombre abusivo que trataba en drogas. Para apaciguarlo, a veces le ayudaba a conseguir cocaína y a colectar pago por drogas mandado por Western Union. Aunque ya lo había dejado, fue condenada con sentencia de vida. Hay muchos casos como el de Metz.

La lógica de encarcelar y tirar la llave todavía reina. Un editorial en el diario Hartford Courant dice que los republicanos están "aterrados" por un programa para ayudar a los encarcelados (que no han cometido crímenes violentos) salir de la cárcel más pronto. El programa se ve que está funcionando bien; los participantes sufran menos recaídas.

El costo de el sistema actual es insostenible y se necesitan cambios: menos presidencias; programas para los que cometen crímenes no violentos que no incluyen encarcelación, rehabilitación para convertir a los delinquentes en ciudadanos que obedecen la ley y pagan impuestos.

En Texas, un estado notable por ser duro contra el crimen, una iniciativa liderada por demócratas y republicanos cerró tres prisiones, invirtió en programas de tratamiento, creó tribunales especiales para adjudicar delitos involucrando drogas y prostitución, aumentó libertad condicional, salvo billones de dólares y redujo la tasa de crimen.

Michigan, Nueva York, Missouri, Delaware y Kentucky, entre otros estados, han visto resultados similares.

El senador tejano John Whitmire, un demócrata, declaró: “Debería haber un requisito diciendo que deberíamos de liberar a una persona mejor de la que recibimos”. Y el gobernador republicano Rick Perry dijo: “La idea de encarcelar la gente para siempre, sin darles el chance de redimirse no es de lo que Estados Unidos se trata”.

“Atrévanse a ser nobles”, urge la declaración de la misión de la orden de Malta. “Visiten a los encarcelados, afirmando la idea de encarcelar la gente para siempre, sin darles el chance de redimirse no es de lo que Estados Unidos se trata”.

SANTO

(From 10)

They stoned him then for blasphemy. Farmer writes that the witnesses placed their clothes at the feet of Saul (later Paul) who consented to his death. He was buried in a tomb and mostly forgotten until the fourth century when St. Gregory of Nyssa composed two homilies to him. Rosemary Guiley writes in the “Encyclopedia of Saints” that St. Gregory saw Stephen as a key figure in the struggle against demonic forms. Further, St. Gregory preached that Stephen imitated Christ by being compliant and bearing no hatred toward his murderers.

Guiley notes that Stephen’s supposed tomb was discovered by Lucian in 415. From the fourth century, his feast was kept in the East and West. He became one of the most popular saints on the continent in the Middle Ages. A church containing his relics was built outside the Damascus Gate in Jerusalem in 439. The ruins of this church were discovered by the Dominicans in 1882 and a new church was erected on the site.

St. Stephen is the patron of bricklayers, builders, horses and masons. Why horses? Gerry Bowler explains in “The World Encyclopedia of Christmas” that his December 26 feast day fell during a time of horse sacrifice in pagan Northern Europe. It was also a time of rest from agricultural work for both man and beast. Sean Kelly and Rosemary Rogers describe a Polish custom in “Saints Preserve Us!” when parishioners shower the priest with oats after Mass for the sake of their horses.

In England and Ireland children remember the saint by hurling rocks at wrens. Then he is also remembered in a 19th century Christmas carol by J. M. Neale that begins:

“Good King Wenceslas looked out
On the feast of Stephen
When the snow lay round about
Deep and crisp and even”

This carol is often sung on St. Stephen’s feast day which is Boxing Day in England, a time for seasonal charity.

St. Stephen is the patron of several churches and French cathedrals. At least 46 ancient churches were dedicated to him in England, most built after the Norman Conquest. His attributes in art are the book of the Gospels with a stone and palm of martyrdom.

In the New Testament, Christians regarded all baptized believers as “saints.” Kenneth Woodward writes in “Making Saints” that before the first century ended, the term “saint” was reserved exclusively for martyrs.

KAUFFMAN

(From 19)

it is always wonderful to watch Christopher Lloyd (“Taxi,” “Back to the Future”) work even tough his part here is minimal.

As was Kauffman’s objective, the movie is grittier than the average family-friendly fare without being off-color or in any way distasteful. Every time Cantor feels like popping off with an inappropriate word, his daughter, played by Avi Lake, is quick to pull out a jar in which Cantor must deposit money to remind him it is sometimes best not to verbalize your thoughts.

Avi Lake is a bright young performer, believable in her role as Cantor’s daughter. The film also features Kauffman’s daughter, Candace, who plays a young singer with a fierce desire to win the competition (and a mother with an even fiercer desire for the same).

The movie avoids the trappings of a predictable ending. Without giving anything away, the competition on “The Song,” is wrapped up in a nicely done, touching way.

“The One I wrote For You” is for all ages. If you like music, family, dreams, good stories and smart dialogue, spend a couple of hours watching this movie.

If it does well on its opening weekend (December 5-7), there is the opportunity for it to be held over and add screens. If not, we can all wait patiently for the digital at-home version.
YEAR
(From 2)
to West Texas.
"I see all this activity in the oil fields, with lots of people who have come to our area to work," he noted. "And I ask myself, 'How are we as a church reaching out to them?'"

The bishop also expressed concern over the growing number of young people who are choosing to be married, yet not with the grace of a sacramental marriage in the Church. "I have traced the numbers over the last ten years and it causes me to question why do we not have more couples celebrating the sacrament of Holy Matrimony? It is an area of pastoral life that we must study."

Bishop Sis also is also looking for ways to encourage people in their 20s and 30s to become more active in the Church. "Part of the solution is finding ways to communicate our faith that are appealing and make sense to that age group." He mentioned some efforts that are being used in the diocese, including parish youth groups, Theology on Tap, Search retreats, Youth 2000, and campus ministries like the Newman Center at Angelo State University.

"We will have a strong Church in the future," he said, "if we offer today a ministry to the young that is thriving, energetic and vibrant."

EXCHANGE
(From 8)
of Hispanic background, learning English in order to better communicate with parishioners who might be only Spanish speaking, only English speaking, or bilingual. They will also be supporting religious education, catechetical ministry, and participation in parish ministries such as working with youth, reaching out to the elderly, helping to prepare lay people for ministry. Through these ministries the sisters will support the number one mission of the Diocese of San Angelo, Family Life and Marriage.

"I met the Sisters who are coming to the San Angelo area and found them dedicated and delightful," said Sr. Elsa E. Garcia, CDP, Social Ministry Coordinator, St. Ann's Catholic Church. "We are in great need of Religious in this Diocese and they will be a great help in evangelization and bring a boost to the faith life of the Fort Stockton/Sanderson area."

When Catholic Extension announced the program last year, more than 30 mission dioceses initially requested to participate, and the 10 chosen include Bismarck, N.D.; Charleston, S.C.; Des Moines, Iowa; Kalamazoo, Mich.; Little Rock, Ark.; Monterey, Calif.; Richmond, Va.; San Angelo, Tyler, and Yakima, Wash. All of the dioceses selected for the program have a common thread of a booming Hispanic Catholic population, combined with a lack of resources and trained ministry leadership to meet the needs of the community. Many of these dioceses also have a large number of migrant farm workers and Latino immigrants that the sisters will minister to as well.

"For many years we have seen the prophetic witness of women religious in the poorest areas of our country," said Father Jack Wall, President of Catholic Extension. When speaking of the sisters and of this program he added, "These are women who are so motivated by a profound sense of mission and a calling to serve the Latino communities that they asked to serve on the margins where they can make a significant impact. It just so happened that these communities are here in the United States. This program will help us expand more opportunities for religious women to share their teaching and evangelizing charisms in communities with great needs."

Since its founding in 1905, Catholic Extension has distributed more than $1.1 billion in grants when converted to today's dollars to communities throughout the U.S. For more information on Catholic Extension visit www.catholicextension.org. For additional information or photography, email lisa@lgpr.com.

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Catholic Extension, a papal society, has been supporting Catholics on the margins in America since 1905. Based in Chicago, this national organization provides funding to dioceses and parishes to support programs and services that invest in people, their ministries and their churches. Since its founding, Catholic Extension has distributed more than $500 million to communities throughout the United States. For more information visit www.catholicextension.org.

JUSTICE
(From 9)
When More some time has Chancellor been No more suits did remain. The like will never more be seen, Till More be there again. Not even Judge Curt Steib was able to earn that reputation. But that is not why Thomas More became a Saint, nor why he became the patron saint of our legal profession, nor why he is associated with the Red Mass. More is remembered because in both his personal life and his public life he believed he was called to a life of Christian service.

Both his family life and public career document his belief that Christian service could, and should be pursued in the world at large. St. Thomas More was a man of courage. He could not—would not—separate his Christian beliefs from his public or private life. He gave up power and prestige in defense of his faith. He was executed because of his faith. Do we have the courage of St. Thomas More?

We have a choice. We can choose to have the courage of St. Thomas More. We can choose to use our Christian values in our everyday life at home and at the office. I ask each of you:
Will you choose to do good?
Will you make justice your aim?
Will you redress the wrongs?
Will you hear the orphan’s plea?
Will you defend the widow?
Isaiah’s challenge echoes through the years: "...learn to do good; make justice your aim, redress the wronged, hear the orphan’s plea, defend the widows."

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Bishop at Oklahoma City Memorial

Bishop Michael J. Sis, right, pauses to remember the victims of the bombing at the Alfred Murrah Federal Building, at the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum. The April 19, 1995, blast killed 169 people.

Bishop Sis was in the Oklahoma capital for the Region X Youth Conference.

Additional photos, story from the Region X Youth Conference, Page 12-13.

Wall

A beautiful but windy West Texas day marked the September 4, 2014, groundbreaking for a new Rectory at St. Ambrose. Bishop Sis, second from right; Fr. Joe Choutapalli, second from left; Deacon Dan Shannahan, left, and Deacon Allan Lange, right, ceremonially break ground to begin the construction. Completion date is scheduled for April 2015.

Houston. Members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem with Bishop Michael J. Sis, center, at the order's annual meeting in Houston in October. The Equestrian Order is comprised of Catholics in the Diocese of San Angelo who aid the church in the Holy Land.