Msgr. James Plagens, 77, dies in Midland

By Jimmy Patterson
Editor / The Angelus

MIDLAND — Remembered as a man of compassion, patience and kindness, Reverend Monsignor James A. Plagens, 77, died Friday, April 17, 2015 following 49 years of service to the Diocese of San Angelo.

Hundreds of friends and families crowded into St. Ann’s Church in Midland to remember a man passionate about the liturgy and with a healthy love for cooking and eating.

Msgr. Plagens served as many as 20 different parishes as either pastor, assistant pastor, priest supervisor or parochial administrator beginning with his first appointment in 1966 at St. Mary’s in Odessa.

Bishop Michael J. Sis called Msgr. Plagens a “true gentleman with a kind spirit.”

Confirmation

Fr. Hilary Ihedioha, above, talks with young people during a recent confirmation Mass at St. Mary’s in Odessa. Photos, page 23.

INSIDE

Speaking of Saints ...

Andrew (André) Fournet (1752-1834) was determined that he was not going to be a priest. His mother, however, was just as determined that he would.

The two battled each other for years over what would be Andrew’s career choice.

He even inscribed a declaration in one of his school books that read: “This book belongs to André Hubert Fournet, a good boy, though he is not going to become a priest or a monk.”

(Please See PLAGENS/8)

Three new priests to be ordained at cathedral, May 30

The Angelus

SAN ANGELO — Bishop Michael J. Sis will ordain three new priests for the Diocese of San Angelo at a 10:30 a.m. Mass, Saturday, May 30, 2015, at Sacred Heart Cathedral in San Angelo.

Deacons Adam Droll, Ryan Rojo, seminarians at Mundelein Seminary in Chicago, and Deacon Felix Archibong, seminarian at Assumption Seminary in San Angelo, will be ordained at the Mass.

To read reflections from each of the three seminarians, see Pgs. 12-13.

Newman Center

Leaving a legacy for half a century at ASU

By Jimmy Patterson
Editor / The Angelus

SAN ANGELO — It didn’t take long for someone to put into perspective just how long the Newman Center at Angelo State University has been changing lives.

“Wow, 50 years,” noted Msgr. Bernard Gully, currently pastor at Big Spring Holy Trinity, and one of the early campus ministers for the center in San Angelo. “That’s 1/20th of a millennium.”

And that is a long time.

Those involved in the Newman Center through the years

(Please See NEWMAN/4)
God gives us all we need, but not always all we want

By Bishop Michael J. Sis

My friend had a lovely wife. She was the joy of his life. When she was diagnosed with cancer, he prayed for her healing. Her cancer was very aggressive, and she died very quickly. As my friend mourns and grieves her loss, he is troubled by the fact that, despite every fervent prayerful petition, his wife still died of cancer.

This is a dilemma that sometimes causes people to give up on prayer. They ask God for things in prayer, and then don’t get what they asked for, and then they are tempted to give up on God.

Prayer of petition is a very important form of prayer, but we don’t always get what we ask for. When we ask God for things in prayer, we should take on the attitude of Jesus when he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night before his death. He said, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me; nevertheless, not my will but your will be done.” (Luke 22:42) Jesus was submitting his human will to the loving will of God.

Also, when Jesus taught his disciples how to pray, he gave them the Our Father. This is a vitally important prayer which we should pray every day. In this prayer we say, “Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done.” We don’t say, “My will be done.”

The point of prayer is not to get everything you want. It’s not God’s job to do our will. It’s our job to do God’s will.

God didn’t create us to have instant gratification of our every desire. God created us to know him, love him, and serve him in this life, and to spend eternity in union with him in Heaven.

God is already on our side. He loves us more than we love ourselves, and he always has our greater good in mind. However, we have to remember that God sees the bigger picture, from an eternal perspective, of which we cannot always perceive.

(Please See BISHOP/20)

¿Contesta Dios Nuestras Oraciones?

By Bishop Michael J. Sis

Mi amigo tenía una esposa encantadora. Ella era la alegría de su vida. Cuando la diagnosticaron con cáncer, oró por su sanación. Su cáncer era muy agresivo, y ella murió muy rápidamente. Mientras mi amigo está de luto y lamenta su pérdida, está molesto por el hecho de que, a pesar de sus fervientes peticiones de oración, su esposa aún murió de cáncer.

Este es un dilema que a veces causa que la gente se renuncie a la oración. Piden a Dios por cosas en oración, y luego no consiguen lo que han pedido, y luego se ven tentados a renunciar a Dios.

La oración de petición es una forma muy importante de la oración, pero no siempre obtenemos lo que pedimos.

Cuando le pedimos a Dios por cosas en oración, debemos asumir la actitud de Jesús cuando oraba en el Jardín de Getsemaní, la noche antes de su muerte. El dijo, “Padre, si quieres, aleja de mí esta copa; pero que no se haga mi voluntad, sino la tuya.” (Lucas 22:42) Jesús estaba sometiendo su voluntad humana a la voluntad amorosa de Dios.

Además, cuando Jesús enseñó a sus discípulos a orar, les dio el Padre Nuestro. Esta es una oración muy importante que debemos orar todos los días. En esta oración decimos: “Venga tu reino, hágase tu voluntad.” No se dice: “Hágase mi voluntad.”

El punto de la oración no es el de conseguir todo lo que queremos. No es el deber de Dios el hacer nuestra voluntad. (Mira OBISPO/20)
**CALENDARS**

**BISHOP SIS’ SCHEDULE**

**MAY**

8 — SAN ANGELO, St. Joseph, Confirmation Mass at 6:00 p.m.
9 — OZONA, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Confirmation Mass at 6:00 p.m.
10 — SONORA, St. Ann, Confirmation Mass at 10:30 a.m.
10 — MERTZON, St. Peter, Confirmation Mass at 4:00 p.m.
13 — SAN ANGELO, Vocation Team Meeting at 2:00 p.m.
14 — OLFEN, St. Boniface, Rural Life Mass at 6:00 p.m.
15 — ABILENE, Holy Family, Confirmation Mass at 6:30 p.m.
16 — ABILENE, St. Vincent Pallotti, Confirmation Mass at 5:30 p.m.
17 — LORAINE, 100th Anniversary Mass at 8:30 a.m.
17 — SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Marriage Jubilee at 3:00 p.m.
19 — SAN ANGELO, Meeting of Presbyteral Council and Finance Council at 11:00 a.m.
19 — SAN ANGELO, Meeting of Presbyteral Council at 2:00 p.m.
21 — MIDLAND, St. Stephen, Confirmation Mass at 6:30 p.m.
22 — STANTON, St. Joseph, Confirmation Mass at 6:30 p.m.
23 — ODESSA, St. Joseph, Confirmation Mass at 11:00 a.m.
24 — ANDREWS, Our Lady of Lourdes, Confirmation Mass at 10:30 a.m.
24 — SAN ANGELO, Christ the King Retreat Center, Lady in Blue 350th Anniversary Mass at 6:00 p.m.
26 — SAN ANGELO, St. Margaret, 50th Anniversary Mass at 6:00 p.m.
29 — SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Graduation Mass at 8:30 a.m.
30 — SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Priests Ordination of Felix Archibong, Adam Droll, and Ryan Rojo at 10:30 a.m.
31 — BRADY, St. Patrick, Confirmation Mass at 10:30 a.m.
31 — SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Confirmation Mass at 6:00 p.m.

**JUNE**

1-5 — Lubbock Priests Annual Retreat.
8 — Heart of Mercy Prayer Group
12-14 — Deacon Formation
15 — Heart of Mercy Prayer Group
18-21 — Small Town ACTS Women’s Retreat
21 — Father’s Day
22 — Heart of Mercy Prayer Group
25-28 — Girls Chrysalis Flight
29 — Heart of Mercy Prayer Group

**NECROLOGY**

**JUNE**

17 — Rev. Barry Mclean (2012)
28 — Bishop Stephen A. Leven (1983)

**Catholic Charities of Odessa Banquet**

Bishop Michael J. Sis, second from right, with, from left to right, Valerie Longoria, Director of Catholic Charities of Odessa; Shelby Landgraff, host and emcee of this year’s banquet; Estella Molina, Catholic Charities Volunteer of the Year; Emily Marruffa, Employee of the Year; Pastor Doug Herget, recipient of Catholic Charities of Odessa’s Pope Francis Spirit of Charity Award; Mary Beth Kenworth, recipient of the Sister Mary Thomas McNeela Award, and Sarah Ramirez, Executive Director of CC of Central Texas. (Photo by Alan P. Torre / aptorre.com).

**SEMINARIAN OF THE MONTH**

**Odima eager to begin service as ‘God’s instrument’**

By Reggie Odima

I was born and lived half of my life in Kenya and the other half in Dallas, which is where my family currently lives. I did part of my undergraduate studies at Angelo State University and completed my studies at Mexican American Catholic College in San Antonio during my seminary years. I go to Assumption seminary, in San Antonio, where I have been for the past 5 1/2 years.

I entered the seminary when I was 20 years old, so a bit young but I have come to understand that it was the proper time for me to begin to answer God’s call. Although I have three more years of formation remaining, I have come to understand that no priest is excited about his time in the seminary in the same way that no doctor is excited about his time in studies before he receives his white coat, but that education is necessary.

Seminary life is difficult because it challenges every aspect of yourself; mind, body, spirit, and relationships. It tries to purify every single aspect so that we could one day be good holy priests fully ready to serve God and His people to our greatest capacity. But seminary life also has its fruits that I could already see.

Here are a few: I am the first in my family to graduate from college, I have become proficient in Spanish, I have grown not just as a man but as a man who seeks for holiness and I have never experienced greater peace in my life, even during the most difficult times (Oh yeah, I also received the wonderful opportunity to study Spanish abroad). If you know of someone, man or woman, who has a call to the religious life or priesthood, pray for them, encourage them, direct them to a spiritual leader about their call (pastor, sister, youth minister, or seminarian, to name a few), and PRAY for them and their vocation! I thank you all for your support and prayers, I cannot wait for the day I will be used as God’s instrument for you. We are also praying for you.
Principles instilled at Newman have stayed with former ASU students

By Jimmy Patterson
Editor / The Angelus

SAN ANGELO — Finding someone eager to talk about the positive effects the Newman Center has made in his or her life is an easy task. Just ask Paul Martinez, a young parishioner in Midland who also just happens to be a soon-to-be father.

Interviewed while waiting for his wife’s doctor to arrive for her regular appointment, the thought of becoming a father has been one that has been made easier thanks to the lessons he learned at Newman.

“I have more avenues through which to reach Christ; different perspectives,” he said. “Newman allowed me to grow in my faith.”

Martinez recounted a recent story during which the priest talked of a young girl processing with others for Holy Communion. Before she received the Body and Blood, Martinez said, she ran back to her father and told him she was scared to continue.

“To me, that is a teachable moment for a father,” Martinez said. “My wife and I will be the first teachers for our child. And we will be able to be better teachers because of the faith formation passed down at the Newman Center.”

Fr. Emiliano Zapata, OP, pastor at St. Elizabeth in Lubbock, a parish made up largely of students from nearby Texas Tech, was also a regular during his years as a student at Angelo State University.

“I attended a lot of the classes Sr. Malachy had,” Fr. Emiliano said. “What intrigued me was how she emphasized the need to know your faith. Another issue was always to be of service to others. In high school, I had never really heard that or put it all together, but being involved at the Newman Center helped me be a whole person and peaked my interest in the Dominican order.”

Betsy Brininstool says Newman helped her learn the answers to all the “whys” she asked about, which helped further her commitment to her faith.

“The Newman Center was like a home away from home, especially the first times I went there. I always looked at it as somewhere safe to go. It’s important to find a place with people of your own faith when you’re in college. It can be a hard time of life and it’s when a lot of young people walk away from their faith, but the Newman Center really kept me commit to my faith. I’ve chosen the Catholic life and I am raising my children Catholic and so it really made a difference in all that for me.”

Chris Wilde, a former educator in Wall, agreed with Brininstool that Newman is a wonderful place to broaden your knowledge base of your faith.

“When you get into college, you need direction and you need to keep connected to your faith,” Wilde said. “One of the biggest things you can learn from Newman is that everyone is included and there’s a spot and a role that everyone has to play regardless their strengths. Newman includes everybody and it was amazing the different sorts of people that would show up, from young to old.”

And former student Terri Huseman, of Amarillo, said, “Conversations that challenged me to think and digest Church teaching not only strengthened my understanding then, but led me to ask questions of myself daily about how my actions align with what I am called to do. Sr. Malachy (former director of the ASU Newman Center) said on a daily basis, ‘Honey, if you’re not growing, you’re dying.’ Those simple words have stayed with me and continue to keep me grounded in my faith. It isn’t easy and it will never be perfect because I am human.”

Chaplain’s job: to ensure offenders have freedom to practice their faith

By Jimmy Patterson
Editor / West Texas Angelus

EDEN — As a Dominican religious, Sister Delia Herrera, OP, has a duty to “go where the work is great and difficult,” as the order’s founder, St. Dominic, charged. While the tendency might be to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ, the reality for Sr. Herrera, chaplain of the Eden Federal Detention Center, is to provide unfettered access to practicing one’s faith, whatever it might be.

Recognized religions that are allowed to observe inside the prison walls include Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, even Santeria, an Afro-Caribbean religion steeped in Yoruba beliefs and traditions; traditions that include animal sacrifice.

Fifteen-hundred international inmates call the Eden Federal Prison facility home. It is the last place federal prisoners are housed before they are released and deported back their home countries. Reaching that many inmates who practice sundry faiths is not always an easy job.

Sr. Herrera is a native San Angeloan, Angelo State graduate and former regular at the Newman Center on campus.

“It can be difficult,” Sr. Herrera said. “But as a Roman Catholic nun, I must make sure a Buddhist has what he needs” (Please See HERRERA /21)
Francis: Death penalty inadmissible no matter the crime

Editor’s Note: On March 10, 2015, Pope Francis wrote the following letter Federico Mayor, President of the International Commission against the Death Penalty. In it, he stated clearly his position on capital punishment. The pope’s letter is below in its entirety.

I have shared some ideas on this subject in my letter to the International Association of Penal Law and the Latin American Association of Penal Law and Criminology of May 30, 2014. I had the opportunity to take a closer look at these ideas in my talk before the five largest associations in the world dedicated to the study of penal law, criminology, victimology and prison issues on October 23, 2014. I want to take the opportunity on this occasion to share with you some reflections by which the Church can contribute to the humanist effort of the Commission.

The Church’s Magisterium, based on Sacred Scripture and the thousand-year experience of the People of God, defends life from conception to natural end, and supports full human dignity inasmuch as it represents the image of God (cf. Gen 1:26). Human life is sacred since from its beginning, from the first instant of conception, it is the fruit of God’s creating action (cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2258). And from this moment man, the only creature that God has loved for itself, is the object of a personal love on the part of God (cf. Gaudium et spes, 24).

States kill when they apply the death penalty, when they send their people to war or when they carry out extrajudicial or summary executions. They can also kill by omission, when they fail to guarantee to their people access to the bare essentials of life. Just as the commandment “Thou shalt not kill” sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say “thou shalt not to an economy of exclusion and inequality” (Evangelii gaudium, 53). “Life, especially human life, belongs only to God… Not even a murderer loses his personal dignity, and God himself pledges to guarantee this…” As St. Ambrose wrote, God did not want to punish Cain by a homicide “preferring the correction rather than the death of a sinner” (cf. Evangelium vitae, 9). On some occasions it is necessary to repel an ongoing assault proportionately to avoid damage caused by the aggressor, and the need to neutralize him could lead to his elimination; this is a case of legitimate defense. (cf. Evangelium vitae, 55).

Nevertheless, the presuppositions of legitimate personal defense do not apply at the social level, without the risk of misinterpretation. When the death penalty is applied, it is not for a current act of aggression, but rather for an act committed in the past. It is also applied to persons whose ability to cause harm is not current since it has been neutralized and they are already deprived of their liberty. Today the death penalty is inadmissible, no matter how serious the crime committed. It is an offense against the inviolability of life and the dignity of the human person, one which contradicts God’s plan for man and society and his merciful justice, and impedes the penalty from fulfilling any just objective. It does not render justice to the victims, but rather fosters vengeance.

For the rule of law the death penalty represents a failure as it obliges the state to kill in the name of justice. Dostoievsky wrote: “to execute a man for murder is to punish him immeasurably more dreadfully than is equivalent to his crime. A murder by sentence is far more dreadful than a murder committed by a criminal.” [from The Idiot, ed.] Justice can never be accomplished by killing a human being.

The death penalty loses all legitimacy because of the defective selectivity of the penal system and the real possibility of judicial error. Human justice is imperfect and not recognizing its fallibility can convert it into a source of injustice. By the application of the death penalty the convict is denied the possibility of repenting or making amends for the harm caused; the possibility of confession, by which a man expresses his inner conversion; and contrition, the gateway to atonement and expiation, in order to reach an encounter with God’s merciful and healing justice.

Furthermore, capital punishment is frequently taken up by totalitarian regimes and groups of fanatics in order to exterminate political dissidents, minorities, and any subject labelled as ‘dangerous’ or who may be perceived as a threat to its power or to the achievement of its ends. As in the first centuries, the Church at the present also suffers the application of this penalty to its new martyrs.

The death penalty is contrary to humanitarian sentiment and to divine mercy which must be the model for human justice. It involves cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, as well as the anguish prior to the moment of execution. [It also involves] the terrible wait between the sentence being pro- nounced and the application of the penalty, a “torture” that, in the name of due process, usually lasts for many years and in the prelude to death often leads to infirmity and insanity.

In some quarters there is a debate about the method of killing, as if it were possible to find ways of “getting it right.” Throughout history a variety of mechanisms of death have been defended as reducing the suffering and agony of the condemned. But there is no humane way of killing another person.

In reality, not only do there exist means of suppressing crime without definitively depriving those who commit them of the possibility of redeeming themselves (cf. Evangelium vitae, 27), but there has also developed a greater moral sensibility in relation to the value of human life. [This] provokes an increasing aversion to the death penalty and support in public opinion for various provisions that lead to its abolition or the suspension of its application (cf. Compendium of Social Doctrine of the Church, 405).

On the other hand, life imprisonment, like those that because of their duration imply for the prisoner the impossibility of planning a future of freedom, can be considered as a sort of covert death penalty, as they not only deprive detainees of their freedom, but they also attempt to deprive them of hope. But even though the penal system can claim the time of convicted persons, it can never claim their hope.

As I said in my talk last October 23, “the death penalty implies the negation of the love of enemies preached in the Gospels. All Christians and men of good will are obligated not only to fight for the abolition of the death penalty, legal or illegal and in all its forms, but also for the improvement of the conditions of incarceration out of respect for the human dignity of the persons deprived of their liberty.” [This is not an exact quote. ed.]

My dear friends, I encourage you to continue with your work because the world needs witnesses to the mercy and tenderness of God. I say goodbye commending you to the Lord Jesus, who during his life on earth did not want harm done to his persecutors in his defense—“Put your sword back in its sheath (Mt 26:52) — was arrested and unjustly condemned to death, and identifies himself with all [emphasis in original, ed.] those imprisoned, guilty or not: “I was in prison and you visited me” (Mt 25:36).

“(May Jesus), who when confronted with the woman caught in adultery did not ask questions about her guilt but rather invited her accusers to examine their own consciences before stoning her (cf. Jn 8:1-11), give you the gift of wisdom, so that your actions taken for the abolition of this cruel punishment be successful and fruitful.

— Francis

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**Easter Symbols**

Easter is not over. We are in the middle of the Easter Season, which continues for 50 days, until Pentecost Sunday. Here then, some thoughts on some of the symbols of the season:

The Paschal candle is a symbol of the risen body of Christ and the fire of the Spirit. It is decorated with a cross, the Greek Alpha and Omega (Christ yesterday and today and the beginning and the end); and the numbers of the current year (all time belongs to Him and all the ages; to Him be glory and power through every age forever). Four grains of incense, sealed with red wax nails, are inserted at the ends of the crossbars and one is inserted where the crossbars meet (by His holy and glorious wounds, may Christ our Lord guard us and keep us. Amen). The candle remains lit throughout the fifty days of Easter and is extinguished on Pentecost. It is then used for its resurrection symbolism at baptisms and funerals.

Easter eggs and the Easter bunnies are not “pagan” symbols, as sometimes written. Eggs are likened to the tomb of Christ; they crack open to bring forth new life.

Rabbits are associated with the dawn; they were thought to spend the night in the dark. Strange as it sounds, Christians, on Easter Eve, are likened to rabbits; they kept vigil throughout the night in anticipation of the resurrection of all creatures.

— Sister Adelina Garcia

Diocesan Office of Evangelization and Catechesis
Encountering God in differing faith traditions

By Becky Benes

In college, I was visiting with a young man about Christianity and he said, "Why would I be a part of a religion which worships a God that sends 80% of the world's population to Hell?"

This comment jarred my thinking, it woke me up and I began to ask questions about my faith. As I was and will forever be one who loves all people, I could not imagine being involved with such an organization. I felt a deep connection with people from all over the world and I had never considered that Christianity stood for God condemning people of different faiths to Hell.

This dilemma began my exploration and research of other faith traditions. Along my journey I discovered many similarities and common grounds among all major faith traditions. For example, all major faith traditions and even those of indigenous tribes share similar core values and teachings:

- The Golden Rule: Treat others the way in which you would like to be treated.
- Love your neighbor.
- The World is our Family.
- And Blessed are the Peacemakers.

Along my journey of questioning, I was led through the doors of many different religions where I also encountered God. This amazed me as I began to see the higher truths and the common grounds of their sacred texts. As I explored, parts of me felt disloyal and disobedient to my Catholic upbringing until I was introduced to the Second Vatican Council’s proclamation, Nostra Aetate, the Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1965.

In this document, I found affirmations that I was actually being true to my Catholic roots. Nostra Aetate offers five points for Catholics to consider in regard to non-Christian religions. Here is my overview for your convenience, yet I encourage you to read the entire document. (Don't worry, it is not a book, just a page in layman terms so it will take maybe 20 minutes of your time, but a lifetime to consider.)

1. As we become more and more a global society, we realize the importance of promoting unity and love among all people and all nations. In so doing, we must seek our commonalities which pull us together as one in fellowship. In all religions, people grapple with the unsolved riddles of the human condition which stir the hearts and souls of all.

2. The Church recognizes that from the beginning of time, people have perceived a hidden power which hovers over the lives of humanity; many have come to believe this hidden power to be a Supreme Being. The Church while holding true to and proclaiming Christ as "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), honors with sincere reverence other religion's ways, concepts, and precepts which enlighten all people. She also calls her people into dialogue and collaboration with other religions, to "recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men."

3. The Church regards Muslims with esteem, understanding that they adore the one God, revere Jesus as a prophet, and honor Mary, his virgin Mother. Despite the conflicts of the past, the sacred synod urges all to work for mutual understanding and the greater good for all people.

(Please See BENES/21)
The domestic church and the parish church

By Fr. Knick and Sandie Knickerbocker
St. Theresa Church, Junction

In a previous article, we wrote about the family as the Domestic Church. In this article we consider the Domestic Church as it is related to the parish church and the diocese. We must always remember that the spirituality of the Domestic Church is grounded in the spirituality of the parish church, and the spirituality of the parish church is formed by the sacraments and the liturgical year. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches, "The Eucharist is 'the source and summit of the Christian life.' The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch" (CCC, #1324).

If the family is to be the Domestic Church, it is absolutely necessary for the family to attend Mass in the parish church on Sundays and Holy Days. A good habit to develop is for the family to attend at least one week-day Mass together and to practice a family Holy Hour once a week. If the parish church has a Perpetual Adoration Chapel, this is easily managed. If it does not, talk with the priest about providing Eucharistic Adoration at a time when your family can be present.

When a child is baptized, it is an opportunity to talk with your children about the meaning of their own Baptism. Ask your priest to baptize your children during a Sunday Mass to emphasize that Baptism is the rite that initiates a person into the sacramental life of the Church.

When children are prepared for first communion, they are also prepared to make their first confession. Parents can teach their children by their own regular and frequent participation in the Sacrament of Reconciliation that their child's first confession is just the beginning. Teach your child that we can be honest and open with the priest who hears our confession, because it is really Jesus who is hearing our confession, and He is pleased that we want to talk with Him about our sins and desire the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives to overcome sin. As a parent, your relationship with your children as a mother and father who love, encourage, and forgive will do much to show how the forgiveness and power of the confessional extend into your family life.

When your child is being prepared for the Sacrament of Confirmation, if you have not done so before, talk with your child about his or her vocation in life. We often use the word "vocation" (vocare, calling) to refer only to the priesthood and religious life, but every baptized Christian has a vocation in Christ. Each person is called and gifted by the Holy Spirit in Baptism, and the call and gifts are strengthened in Confirmation. Preparing for Confirmation is an excellent time to talk with your child about the vocations of marriage, consecrated single life, priesthood and religious life. Read with your child Scripture passages from Jeremiah (1:5) and the Apostle Paul (Gal. 1:15) that speak of being called from the moment of conception in our mother's womb. Read with your child passages from Scripture about spiritual gifts (for example, 1 Cor. 12-13 and Eph. 4:11-12) and relate those passages to the Catholic understanding of vocation.

When the Sacrament of Matrimony is celebrated in your parish, take your children to the celebration. Explain to them that a sacramental marriage is the foundation of the Domestic Church and that your family is the church in the home. Talk about marriage as a life-long commitment of a man and woman, a commitment that insures the stability of the Domestic Church. Talk about the sanctity of human life, openness to life, and protection of human life from natural conception to natural death.

When the Sacrament of Holy Orders is celebrated in your diocese, make an effort to attend these ordination masses with your entire family. When ordination is to the permanent diaconate, talk with your child about the vocation of the deacon, who can be a married man. Talk about the role of the deacon in the liturgy and in pastoral work and the fact that the deacon is ordained to serve both in the Church and in the world. When ordination is to the priesthood, talk about the discipline of celibacy as a joyful calling that is the gift of God to priests and religious, who commit themselves with singular intent to serve the Church. When ordination is to the episcopacy, talk about the bishop as the successor of the Apostles and the relationship of bishops to the Pope. Talk about fidelity to the Pope and Magisterium of the Catholic Church. This is an excellent time to instruct your children not only about the Sacrament of Ordination but also about the meaning of the Eucharist and its central place in the life of the Church.

When it is possible, let your children be present with you when a priest administers the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick to a family member. Take the opportunity to teach your children about the spiritual value of suffering and about death and resurrection with Christ.

As you participate in the sacramental life of the parish and diocese as the Domestic Church, you will participate in the seasons of the liturgical year. The liturgical year will be the context in which you place both

‘We all have the power to lead people to God’

By Joshua Carpenter

SAN ANGELO — Laity and clergy of the Diocese of San Angelo gathered at Sacred Heart Cathedral in San Angelo April 17 to eat, drink, and celebrate the fruits of their labor over the last year.

An annual event sponsored by the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis, the 6th Annual Diocesan Awards Banquet for Catechesis and Youth Ministry is a night to honor the good and faithful works of catechetical leaders and outstanding youth throughout the diocese.

Maurice G. Fortin, Ph.D., Executive Director of Library Services at Angelo State University, spoke on a wide range of topics concerning faith and morality in the modern world. Giving the examples of the White Rose, a successful non-violent intellectual resistance group of college students in Nazi Germany, whose founding brother and sister died for their cause; the civil rights movement headed by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero; Coptic Christians, and others.

Dr. Fortin presented “What it Costs to Foster Moral Conscience,” noting, in particular, the Chinese man carrying two sacks of groceries who stopped an entire column of tanks at Tiananmen Square as a powerful symbol of peaceful resistance to oppression.

Dr. Fortin asked for a show of hands in the room of those who were teachers. He emphasized that it is an awesome responsibility to be a teacher.

A teacher often does not know the impact of what they do,” Dr. Fortin said. “He encouraged the assembled to give examples of the faith to others.

“We all … have the power to lead people to God … In our troubled world, we need peace.”

Dr. Fortin closed with the St. Francis quote, “Where there is hatred, let me sow love.”

The two most prestigious awards of the evening, both representing the highest recognition from the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry that a diocese can confer, included the Timothy Award for a junior or senior in high school who has shown outstanding leadership, wit-
PLAGENS

(From 1)

“Msgr. Plagens was born in my hometown of Bryan but moved to Wall at an early age,” Bishop Sis said. “He is well remembered by people throughout the state. He had a great love for the liturgy of the Church, and he helped others to appreciate the dignity and beauty of Catholic liturgy. In his retirement years he continued to serve generously in many ways. The Diocese of San Angelo has been blessed by his long and faithful service.”

Msgr. Plagens’ knowledge of church liturgy ran deep. He served as chairperson for the Diocesan Liturgy Committee for many years; was a member of the board of directors on the Southwest Liturgy Conference; a member of the National Federation of the Diocesan Liturgy Commission, and the diocesan Senate of Priests.

Monsignor Plagens was a retired senior priest at St. Ann’s Church in Midland at the time of his death. Cause of death was complications from lung cancer.

“Msgr. Plagens and I traveled to Italy together in 1995,” recalled Msgr. Larry Droll, pastor at St. Ann’s in Midland. “He had a great sense of church history, and on this occasion we visited Milan, Bologna, Ravenna, and other places in that area. In Trent, as we sat in the church in which the great sixteenth century Council of Trent took place, I remember he took out of his pocket several decrees from that Council and began to read them solemnly. At Verona, we even got in on the conclusion of the opera season.

“Msgr. Plagens was much influenced by the Second Vatican Council, being a seminarian in Rome during those years. He saved a lot of memorabilia from the events of those heady days and pictures that he took, using them 50 years later in presentations about Vatican II.

“In Sacrosanctum Concilium (the Decree on the Sacred Liturgy), we read: ‘Christ sent the apostles ‘to bring into effect this saving work that they proclaimed, by means of the sacrifice and sacraments that are the pivot of the whole life of the liturgy.’ Armed with a Masters Degree in Liturgical Studies from The Catholic University of America, the liturgy became Plagens’ specialization in the priesthood. He chaired the Diocesan Liturgy Commission for years. He trained people for better proclamation of the Word of God during the Mass and for presiding at prayer in Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest. He was involved in the design of churches in the Diocese of San Angelo and took special interests in the gathering space. I credit him with much of the inspiration behind the Commons at St. Ann’s in Midland.’

During his comments at Msgr. Plagens’ funeral, Msgr. Droll noted his friend’s love of fellowship with others.

“He elevated coffee and donuts to a ministry,” Msgr. Droll said.

Msgr. Plagens was born on February 15, 1938, and baptized at St. Joseph’s Church in Bryan on March 10, 1938. After graduating from Wall High School, he earned his Associates Degree from San Angelo College in 1959. He attended seminary at St. Mary’s in Lebanon, Kentucky (1959-62), and the North American College and Gregorian University, in Rome (1962-1966). Msgr. Plagens was in Rome at the time of the Second Vatican Council and later returned upon the 50th anniversary of the council in 2013. He was honored with the title of “Monsignor” (Chaplain to His Holiness) in February 2009.

He was ordained a priest in the Diocese of San Angelo on December 18, 1965 by Bishop Francis F. Reh, at St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome.

His first assignment was at St. Mary’s Church in Odessa (assistant pastor, 1966-1970), during which time he also served Our Lady of Lourdes in Imperial and St. Isidore in Coyanosa. Assignments that followed were at St. Therese in Carlsbad, Texas, and St. Paschal in Sterling City (pastor, 1970-1971); Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Ozona, (pastor, 1971-1977); St. Francis of Assisi, Abilene, (pastor, 1977-1981); St. Ambrose in Wall and Holy Family in Mereta, (pastor, 1982-1992); St. Patrick in Brady and St. Francis Xavier in Melvin, (pastor, 1992-1996); Director of Parish Leadership in the diocesan office (1996-1999); Sacred Heart and St. Thomas parishes in Big Spring (pastor, 1999-2008), and Immaculate Heart of Mary, Big Spring (parochial administrator, 2000). Msgr. Plagens served St. Ann’s in Midland as Senior Priest (2008-2011). His official retirement date was December 31, 2011.


His hobbies included playing and watching tennis, family genealogy, cooking (and eating!), and travel.

Msgr. Bernard Gully succeeded Msgr. Plagens as pastor at Holy Trinity Church in Big Spring. Prior to Msgr. Gully’s arrival in Big Spring, the city had three parishes before consolidation brought the three churches, plus a mission in Coahoma, into one.

“For a number of years I served on the liturgy commission with him,” Msgr. Gully recalled, “and my great memory is when I was in Andrews and going to meetings in San Angelo with him I would stop over at St. Thomas and pick him up. He would always have a cup of coffee or two waiting for me when I got there. We always had a good time speaking of liturgy because of his love for the liturgy.”

Fr. Joseph Uecker, C.P.P.S., a retired priest in Odessa with the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, was close to Msgr. Plagens for many years.

“From the time I met Fr. Plagens back in 1977, I was very impressed with his love of the liturgy,” Fr. Uecker said. “He and I shared that love and I think that is what brought us close together. In his later years when he lived in Midland, we would often meet at the Stripes station on Hwy 158 and I-20 and would travel together to San Angelo for this or that. And the topic of conversation was often the liturgy and how we could celebrate it better and how the people could become more involved in the celebrations.”

When Msgr. Plagens was diagnosed with Stage 4 lung cancer, Team Plagens was formed. Four loving and caring couples from St. Ann’s Church came forward to unite with the Plagens’ family to help provide care, medical support and comfort for James. They are Ed and Terrie Martinez, Tony and Nanette Paredes, Rene and Nancy del Villar, and Torivio and Norma Duran.

In lieu of flowers, please prayerfully consider a donation in Msgr. Plagens’ memory to Catholic Relief Services, c/o Diocese of San Angelo, Box 1829, San Angelo, TX, 76902.

Msgr. Plagens is preceded in death by his mother, Victoria Ostersteny Plagens, and father, Edward Plagens, Sr., both formerly of Bryan, Texas; brother Norman Plagens, formerly of Rankin, Texas; brother Clarence Plagens, formerly of Rockwall, Texas; Emory Lero, brother-in-law, formerly of Bryan, Texas, and Wanda Plagens, sister-in-law, formerly of Hamilton, Texas.

He is survived by seven of nine siblings: brother Milton Plagens and his wife, Albina, of San Angelo, Texas; sister Alice Lero, of Bryan, Texas; brother Edward Plagens Jr., and wife, Bernadette, of St. Lawrence, Texas; brother Frank Plagens and wife, Cathy, of Richardson, Texas; brother Donald Plagens and wife, Lynn, of Hamilton, Texas; brother Earl, and wife, Sheila, of Colorado City, Texas; brother Robert Plagens, and wife, Cathy, of Bryan, Texas; sister-in-law Georgia Plagens, of Midland; sister-in-law Leigh Plagens, of Rockwall, Texas, and 30 nieces and nephews.

Photo: Msgr. Plagens enjoys a game of checkers at a priest retreat in San Angelo in 2008. (Photo by Alan P. Torre).
Funeral Mass for Msgr. James Plagens

At left, members of the Plagens family and clergy gather in the foyer of St. Ann’s Church prior to Msgr. Plagens funeral, April 20, 2015.

Below left, Bishop Michael J. Sis, presider of the funeral Mass, blesses Msgr. Plagens with incense.

Below left, visiting priests join Bishop Sis during the consecration.

Photos by Alan P. Torre
Speaking of Saints ...

Andre Fournet: Rebellious Frenchman becomes spiritual leader

By Mary Lou Gibson

Andrew (André) Fournet (1752–1834) was determined that he was not going to be a priest. His mother, however, was just as determined that he would be. The two battled each other for years over what would be Andrew’s career choice. He even inscribed a declaration in one of his school books that read: “This book belongs to André Hubert Fournet, a good boy, though he is not going to become a priest or a monk.”

Paul Burns writes in “Butler’s Lives of the Saints” that this was Andrew’s reaction against his pious and overbearing mother. The more she pressed him to consider becoming a priest, the more Andrew declared he was bored by religion. He refused to pray and instead spent his time in idleness and amusements.

He rebelled in many ways including running away from school and refusing to study law and philosophy at Poitiers. At one time he even joined the Army, but his mother bought out his service. Burns writes that she tried to find him a post as a secretary, but his handwriting was too bad.

His mother was now frantic about Andrew and decided to try one more thing to help him settle down. She talked him into going to stay with his uncle, a priest in a remote rural area of France. For some unknown reason, Andrew agreed. This proved to be a turning point in Andrew’s life. (www.holyspiritinteractive.net/dailysaint/may/0513.asp)

Andrew’s uncle was a holy man and far more tactful than his mother. He recognized his nephew’s good qualities and eventually steered him to the study of theology. A couple of years later in 1776, Andrew was ordained a priest and served first as his uncle’s curate and then in a nearby town.

In 1781 Andrew was transferred to his home parish in Maille. His mother was jubilant and she and Andrew reconciled. Richard McBrien writes in “Lives of the Saints” that Andrew became a loving and caring priest and adopted a life of simplicity and was generous to the poor.

This simple life ended with the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1788. In July 1790, the Civil Constitution on the Clergy attempted to make the clergy into civil servants. Burns explains that they were required to swear an oath of loyalty to the State and its laws. Things got even worse in 1791 when the new “Liberty – Equality” oath was required. Priests, bishops and religious who refused to take the oath were removed from their posts and hunted and massacred.

Andrew refused to take the oath and continued to minister to his flock in secret. Donald Attwater writes in “Penguin Dictionary of Saints” that Andrew was arrested on Good Friday 1792 for his activities. He declined being taken to jail in a carriage, saying that because Jesus carried his cross, his followers should also travel on foot. He was able to escape at one point taking the place of a dead body on a bier. He continued to try to minister to his flock but because his life was in danger, his bishop sent him to Spain. He spent five years there before secretly returning to France even though the danger was still great for priests.

He was protected by his flock as he celebrated the Eucharist, heard con-

Cardinal Francis George dies after long fight with cancer

CHICAGO (CNS) -- Cardinal Francis E. George, the retired archbishop of Chicago who was the first native Chicagolan to head the archdiocese, died April 17 at his residence after nearly 10 years battling cancer. He was 78.

His successor in Chicago, Archbishop Blase J. Cupich, called Cardinal George "a man of peace, tenacity and courage" in a statement he read at a news conference held outside Holy Name Cathedral to announce the death.

Archbishop Cupich singled out Cardinal George for overcoming many obstacles to become a priest, and "not letting his physical limitations moderate his zeal for bringing the promise of Christ's love where it was needed most."

A childhood bout with polio had left the prelate with a weakened leg and a pronounced limp throughout his life.

With the cardinal's death, the College of Cardinals has 223 members, of whom 121 are under 80 and thus eligible to vote for a pope.

Cardinal George was a philosophy professor and regional provincial then vicar general of his religious order, the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, before being named a bishop in 1990.

He was named bishop of Yakima, Washington, in 1990, then was appointed archbishop of Portland, Oregon, in April 1996. Less than a year later, St. John Paul II named him to fill the position in Chicago, which was left vacant by the death of Cardinal Joseph Bernardin in November 1996.

By retiring in 2014, Cardinal George accomplished what he often joked was his aspiration, to be the first cardinal-archbishop of Chicago to step down from the job, rather than dying in office, as his predecessors had.

"They've run out of tricks in the bag, if you like," he recently said of his declining health. "Basically, I'm in the hands of God, as we all are in some fashion."
Making Sense of Bioethics

Pondering the implications of the three-parent embryo

By Fr. Tad Pacholczyk

An ethical Rubicon was crossed when the first in vitro fertilization (IVF)-conceived baby came into the world in 1978. With human reproduction no longer limited to the embrace of a man and a woman, people felt empowered to take their own sperm and eggs, or those of others, and create their much desired children bit-by-cellular-bit. As they mixed and matched these cells, they soon were drawn into other twists and turns of the advancing technology, including screening the genes of their test-tube offspring and eugenically weeding out any undesired embryonic children by freezing them in liquid nitrogen or simply discarding them as laboratory refuse.

Recent developments have exacerbated this situation by offering additional options and choices for generating children, recasting human embryos as modular constructs to be assembled through cloning or through the creation of three-parent embryos. While cloning involves swapping out the nucleus of a woman’s egg with a replacement nucleus to create an embryo, three-parent embryos are made by swapping out additional cellular parts known as mitochondria through the recombination of eggs from two different women. Even more baroque approaches to making three-parent embryos rely on destroying one embryo (instead of an egg) and cannibalizing its parts so as to build another embryo by nuclear transfer.

We risk trivializing our human procreative faculties and diminishing our offspring by sanctioning these kinds of “eggs-as-Lego-pieces” or “embryos-as-Lego-pieces” approaches. Ultimately there is a steep price to be paid for the ever-expanding project of paving our own beginnings and rupturing the origins of our children.

Part of that price includes the significant health problems that have come to light in children born from IVF and other assisted reproduction techniques. Researchers have found an overall doubling in the risk of birth defects for children born by these technologies when compared with rates for children conceived in the normal fashion.

For retinoblastoma, a childhood eye cancer, a six-fold elevated risk has been reported. Assisted reproduction techniques are also associated with heightened risks for a number of rare and serious genetic disorders, including Beckwith-Wiedmann syndrome, Angelman’s syndrome, and various developmental disorders like atrial septal and ventricular septal defects of the heart, cleft lip with or without cleft palate, esophageal atresia and anorectal atresia.

Considering the various harsh and unnatural steps involved in moving human reproduction from the marital embrace into the petri dish, it should perhaps come as little surprise that elevated rates of birth defects have been observed, even when certain genetic defects may have been previously screened out.

As children born by assisted reproductive techniques become adults, they are starting to be tracked and studied for various psychiatric issues as well. A growing number of young adults are vocalizing their strong personal concerns about the way they were brought into the world through techniques like anonymous sperm donations, because they find themselves feeling psychologically adrift and deprived of any connection to their biological father.

It should be obvious how any approach that weakens or casts into question the integral connection between parents and their offspring will raise grave ethical concerns. Whether it be three-parent embryos, anonymous sperm donations, or surrogacy, we need to protect children from the harmful psychological stressors that arise when they are subjected to uncertainties about their own origins. As one fertility specialist bluntly commented, “As a nation, we need to get a conscience about what we are doing here. Yes, it’s nice when an infertile couple is able to build a family, but what about the children? Shouldn’t their needs be in the mix from the very beginning too? I think it is ridiculous that a donor-conceived child would need to ‘research’ to find out their genetic origins. Give me a break. What if you had to do that? Is it fair?”

Beyond these immediate concerns about the wellbeing and health of our progeny, we face further serious concerns about our human future in the face of these burgeoning technologies. As procreation becomes reduced to just another commercial transaction, and our children become projects to be assembled piecemeal in the pursuit of parental desires, we invariably set the stage to cross another significant ethical line.

That bright ethical line involves the creation of humans that have heritable genetic modifications (changes that are passed on to future generations). When the first three-parent baby is born, which will likely take place in the next year or two, we will have stepped right into the middle of that hubris-filled brave new world of manipulating the genetic traits of future children. We will have transitioned to a paradigm where biomedical experimentation on future generations is seen as acceptable and justifiable.

Now is the time to ponder carefully the implications of our rushed reproductive choices, and to stand firm against the preventable injustices that inexorably flow from assisted reproductive technologies.

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.

The high price of great expectations

By Erick Rommel
Catholic News Service

There are people we meet who make a mark and leave an impression that never fades. They enter with a simple introduction, but soon you realize their meaning to you is anything but simple. They become one of the most interesting people you’ll ever meet.

One name on my list is Timothy Miller. I first met Tim my junior year of college when he was a freshman. We attended a small school, but not so small that everyone knew everyone. Tim was one of the few exceptions. Everyone knew Tim -- at least by reputation.

In our circle of friends, he was the doer of the impossible. He could participate in a stress-reducing water pistol battle during finals week that drenched every uncovered dorm surface from ceiling to carpet and somehow escape from it completely dry.

To others, Tim was a romantic. He gave roses to random girls, not to flirt -- though he did -- but because he wanted to brighten their day.

Some knew Tim for his talent. He’d walk up to unsuspecting pianos and start playing music. It was rarely a tune you knew, often one he wrote himself, but always one you’d never forget.

When I graduated, distance kept us apart, but little else. He was my link to friends left behind. He encouraged me, and when he graduated, I encouraged him. He wanted a career in music but felt frustration because others didn’t immediately see his abilities. The idea of paying dues and working his way up were an unexpected and devastating roadblock.

During one homecoming, our group reunited, but something was different. Rather than being the center of attention without trying, Tim’s actions felt forced.

Our regular communication slowed as I moved to another city. It abruptly ended with one awful phone call from Tim’s mom. “He’s gone,” she said. Tim died of a drug overdose at age 25.

I remember driving to his memorial service and thinking how much I would have missed my best friend. It was the first time I understood family and friends for what they were: people you’ll never forget.

There were people we meet who make a mark and leave an impression that never fades. They enter with a simple introduction, but soon you realize their meaning to you is anything but simple. They become one of the most interesting people you’ll ever meet.
It's been eight years since I started at Conception Seminary College about an hour and a half north of Kansas City. I have not been able to wrap my mind around the idea that I will be a priest in so short a time. I feel like on a wedding day, I am eager to take my bride, Christ, and enter into the priesthood.

I am very positive that my new fraternity and brotherhood with my brother seminarians in the seminary, I will know my diocese a little better and to get to meet the priests in the Diocese of San Angelo. I am confident that he is proud to witness my formation.

I am thankful to God for knowledge acquired, and favored by God despite my unworthiness. I was so rough, to push on in my formation. I am confident that my vocation, and I praise God that he has shown me my vocation, and I praise God that he has shown me what I am most looking forward to this summer; a body of Christ. In my opinion, if love is the goal of uniting with one another to re-evangelize and from what I gather, life will never be quite like the one I have received from many of you over my life — even when it is hard. I know my diocese a little better and to get to meet the priests.

I am a new priest, I hope that I can bring the joy of Christ to others in our diocese and from what I gather, life will never be quite like the one I have received from many of you over my life — even when it is hard. I know my diocese a little better and to get to meet the priests.

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**Cauterize your bad habits by focusing on the good in life**

**By Re. Ron Rolheiser, OMI**

We all have our faults, weaknesses, places where we short-circuit morally, dark spots, secret and not-so-secret addictions. When we’re honest, we know how universally true are St. Paul’s words when he writes: “The good thing I want to do, I never do; the evil thing that I do not want to do – that is what I do.” None of us are whole, saints through and through. There’s always something we are struggling with: anger, bitterness, vengefulness, selfishness, laziness, or lack of self-control (major or minor) with sex, food, drink, or entertainment.

And for most of us, experience has taught us that the bad habits we have are very difficult to break. Indeed, many times we cannot even find the heart to want to break them, so deep have they become engrained in us. We bring the same things to our confessor year after year, just as we break the same New Year’s resolutions year after year. And each year we tell our doctor that this year will finally be the year that we lose weight, exercise more, and stick to a healthier diet. Somehow it never works.

Because our habits, as Aristotle said, become our second nature – and nature is not easily changed.

So how do we change? How do we move beyond deeply engrained bad habits?

John of the Cross, the Spanish mystic, suggests two paths that can be helpful. Both take seriously our human weakness and the unyielding strength of a bad habit inside us.

His first advice is this: It is very hard to root out a bad habit by trying to attack it directly. When we do this we often end up unhealthily focused on the habit itself, discouraged by its intransigence, and in danger of worsening its effect in our lives. The better strategy is to “cauterize” our bad habits (his words) by focusing on what is good in our lives and growing our virtues to the point where they “burn out” our bad habits.

That’s more than a pious metaphor: it’s a strategy for health. It works this way: Imagine, for example, that you are struggling with pettiness and anger whenever you feel slighted. Every sincere resolution in the world has not been able to stop you from giving in to that inclination and your confessor or spiritual director, instead of having you focus on breaking that habit, has you focus instead on further developing one of your moral strengths; for example, your generosity. The more you grow in generosity, the more too will your heart grow in size and goodness until you reach a point in your life where there simply won’t be room in your life for pettiness and childish sulking. Your generosity will eventually cauterize your pettiness. The same strategy can be helpful for every one of our faults and addictions.

John’s second counsel is this: Try to set the instinct that lies behind your bad habit into a higher love. What’s meant by that?

We begin to set an instinct behind a bad habit into a higher love by asking ourselves the question: Why? Why, ultimately, am I drawn this way? Why, ultimately, am I feeling this vengefulness, this pettiness, this anger, this lust, this laziness, or this need to eat or drink excessively? In what, ultimately, is this propensity rooted?

The answer might surprise us. Invariably the deepest root undergirding the propensity for a bad habit is love. The instinct is almost always rooted in love. Just analyze your daydreams. There we are mostly noble, good, generous, big-hearted, whole – and loving, even when in our actual lives we are sometimes petty, bitter, selfish, indulgent, and nursing various addictions. We have these bad attitudes and habits not because we aren’t motivated by love but because, at this particular place, our love is disordered, wounded, bitter, undisciplined, or self-centered. But it’s still love, the best of all energies, the very fire of the image and likeness of God within us.

And so we move to uproot a bad habit in our lives by, first of all, recognizing and honoring the energy that lies beneath it and inflames it. Then we need to reset this energy into a higher framework of love, a wider, less selfish, more respectful, more-ordered perspective. And that’s a very different thing than denigration or repression of that instinct. When we denigrate or repress an instinct this only increases its power in us and, most often, allows it to wreak even a worse havoc in our lives. Moreover, when we denigrate or repress an instinct that’s undergirding a bad habit we are in fact acting against our own health and we will then struggle, perhaps only unconsciously but without exception, to even find the heart to eradicate that bad habit. Energy must be honored, even as we struggle to discipline it and set into a healthier framework.

So how do we finally break our bad habits? We do so by honoring the energies that inflame them and by reordering those energies into a higher love.

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Ronald Rolheiser, a Roman Catholic priest and member of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, is president of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas.

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**Kenneth Branagh’s very Christian take on ‘Cinderella’**

**By Very Rev. Robert Barron**

Kenneth Branagh’s “Cinderella” is the most surprising Hollywood movie of the year so far. I say this because the director manages to tell the familiar fairy tale without irony, hyper-feminist sub-plots, Marxist insinuations, deconstructionist cynicism, or arch condescension. In so doing, he actually allows the spiritual, indeed specifically Christian, character of the tale to emerge. I realize that it probably strikes a contemporary audience as odd that Cinderella might be a Christian allegory, but keep in mind that most of the fairy stories and children’s tales compiled by the Brothers Grimm and later adapted by Walt Disney found their roots in the decidedly Christian culture of late medieval and early modern Europe.

In Branagh’s telling, Ella is the daughter of wonderful parents, both of whom instilled in her a keen sense of moral virtue and joie de vivre. The girl’s idyllic childhood was interrupted by the sudden illness of her mother, who, while on her death-bed, delivered to Ella the injunction always to be “kind and courageous.” Her father then remarried and brought his new wife and her two daughters to live with him and Ella. Some years later, Ella’s father left on a lengthy business trip. Before he set out, he enjoined him to send back to her the first branch that his shoulder would brush while on the journey. A few weeks later, a servant arrived with the branch in his hand and the dreadful news that Ella’s father had become sick and had died. The now utterly isolated Ella became the victim of her wicked stepmother (played by the always compelling Cate Blanchett) and her obnoxious stepsisters, who visit upon her every type of cruelty and injustice. They even take away her bedroom, forcing her to sleep by the dyming embers of the fire to keep warm. The ashes that stain her face give rise to the cruel nickname her stepsisters assign to her. Significantly, the cat belonging to Ella’s stepfamily is called Lucifer.

So we have a beautiful, vivacious, and morally upright young lady whose life becomes a nightmare through the intervention of untimely death and wicked oppression. So thorough was her loss of dignity that she finds herself covered in dust, her beauty obscured. It does not require a huge leap of imagination to see this as an allegory of the fall of the human race. God created us as beautiful, indeed in his own image and likeness, but through sin and the ministrations of the devil, we descended into dysfunction, and our beauty was covered over. In the technical language of the theologians, though we had kept the image of God, we had lost our likeness to him.

To return to Branagh’s traditional telling of the tale: while out riding in the country, Cinderella encountered a magnificent stag that was being pursued by a hunting party. Subsequently, she met the leader of the hunting brigade, a handsome young prince, the son of the King. The
Catholic Voices

Love and mercy for those who need it most

By Carolyn Woo

The first time I read the phrase "O happy fault" in the special Easter proclamation, or Exsultet, I pondered about God's love for his people -- from the start of creation, through infidelities, rejections, destruction. God persisted in his love for us. That love is more powerful than anything, including our sinfulness.

I wish my father had comprehended this. Born about a hundred years ago in China and educated as a young boy in a Catholic boarding school away from home, he became a Catholic. I doubt if the catechism of the faithful such as Trappist Father Thomas Merton, Dorothy Day or Father Henri Nouwen. Each came to know and love God deeply, all the more because of their failings. Respectively, one had a child out of wedlock, the other an abortion and the last had pride.

To remind us that mercy is the Gospel message, Pope Francis has proclaimed a Holy Year of Mercy, from Dec. 8, 2015, until Nov. 20, 2016. He calls us to do this by "welcoming the repentant prodigal son; healing the wounds of sin with courage and determination; rolling up our sleeves and not standing by and watching passively the suffering of the world."

I cheer for this if it brings one person such as my father back to the joy of God's boundless love.

Woo is president and CEO of Catholic Relief Services.

Spiritual progress and external forces

By Moises Sandoval

Catholic News Service

Recently, I was drawn to a slim volume on my bookshelf, "Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life," by the late Father Henri Nouwen. Father Nouwen wrote that loneliness and solitude, hostility and hospitality, and illusion and prayer are on opposite poles, constantly pulling at us.

Spiritual progress depends on being able find in our inner selves the only true solace for loneliness, to embrace unconditional hospitality and to jettison our illusion that we are masters of our fate and discover the power to pray.

Hostility is common in modern life. It is the root cause of why we, in the United States, imprison more people than any country in the world -- the overwhelming majority people of color -- of why we cannot reform the broken immigration system, of why people cannot feel secure without having firearms and being disposed to use them against fellow human beings, and of why encounters between police officers and civilians often end in violence.

One recent incident had special resonance for me. Sureshbhai Patel, a 57-year-old grandfather, traveled early in February from his native India to live with his son and wife in Madison, Alabama. He was there to help care for his grandson, a toddler.

Like me, Patel often went for walks. So it was not long before he was out in the street. A neighbor, seeing Patel in front of the son's house, called 911, reporting him as a black man walking in a suspicious manner, according to news reports. Two policemen responded. One of officers was Eric Parker.

They approached Patel, who does not speak English and could not understand what the police officers wanted. He did not resist in any way or try to run. But, suddenly, as he seemed to make a slight move, as shown in a video of the encounter, Parker picked him up and slammed him on the pavement.

Today, Patel is in a rehabilitation center and is partially paralyzed, facing a long and uncertain recovery. The governor of Alabama apologized and, in an unusual move in cases like this one, Parker was fired and charged with assault, to which he pleaded not guilty.

Calling 911 because you see a person of color walking in the street is not uncommon. My niece, Lynda Sandoval, for a time a police officer in a Denver suburb, said that sometimes while she was on the dispatch desk, someone would call 911 to report a black man walking in the street. She had to explain that this is not a crime.

Last year, when one of my sons bought a home in a wealthy gated community in a Houston suburb and invited me and my wife to visit for a while, I did not venture far from the front of my son's house at first, in the event someone would see my presence as suspicious and call police.

Fortunately, no one did and, as the days went on, I walked out in the neighborhood.

Later, I heard a tale of the opposite of hostility mentioned in the book: hospitality. But sadly, it was a tale of hostility that came at a high price.

On Feb. 19, Lauren Mohr, 34, of Wallingford, Connecticut, stopped to help victims of a hit-and-run crash on a bridge. She called 911 and was waiting with the victims when she apparently stepped back, slipped on snow and ice and fell over a concrete wall and off the highway bridge, 40 feet to her death. She had recently received an associate degree, was an Air Force veteran and a medical technician.

It was a tragic loss. But because of her hospitality in trying to help others, people like Mohr will one day hear: "Come blessed of my Father ..."
Our Faith

Too much focus on the Passion?; donating body to science

By Father Kenneth Doyle
Catholic News Service

Q. I have always wondered why we read the Passion during Palm Sunday services. Palm Sunday is a day of rejoicing and jubilation, as we remember Jesus riding into Jerusalem amid thongs of cheering people.

But then we read the passion of Christ, which we also read again on Holy Thursday and, for a third time, on Good Friday. There is no mistaking the fact that historically these events unfolded with Jesus arriving triumphantly into the city. We seem to be the only Christian denomination to turn Palm Sunday into such a sad and horrible day.

(Louisville, Kentucky)

A. First, a correction. The narrative of the passion is not read on Holy Thursday; the readings at Mass on that day focus on the Last Supper -- on Christ's institution of the Eucharist and his washing the feet of the apostles. The passion of Jesus is read twice in the Catholic liturgy: once on Palm Sunday, when the account is taken from one of the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark or Luke), and again on Good Friday, when John's Gospel is proclaimed.

On Palm Sunday, the Catholic liturgy is like an overture for all of Holy Week: At the beginning of the ceremony, palms are blessed and a short Gospel is read describing Jesus' triumphal entrance into Jerusalem riding on a donkey. During the Mass, the Passion is read, often in three parts.

The liturgy for Palm Sunday is something of a hybrid, like an overture for all of Holy Week: It begins in triumph, but quickly there looms the shadow of the cross. In fact, the joy of Christ's followers on the first Palm Sunday was short-lived. The crowd in Jerusalem was swelled immensely that day by Jews who had gathered for the Passover celebration.

Many in that assembly were unaware that the savior of the world was in their midst, and those followers who honored him with palms were doubtless in the minority -- as evidenced by his arrest just a few days later and the cries of the crowd for crucifixion.

For many Catholics, Palm Sunday is the only time they hear the Passion read, since the Good Friday liturgy is often held during workday hours and the congregation is much larger on Palm Sunday.

Q. I have been asked by several people who know that I am a Catholic whether the church permits people to donate their bodies to a medical center after death. Their intent is to enable others to live longer if any viable organs can be used or to provide the material for research that might prevent disease in the future. Following any procedures, the remains are then cremated. (Chadron, Nebraska)

A. The answer to your question is a resounding "yes." In fact, in October 2014, Pope Francis met with the Transplantation Committee for the Council of Europe and called the act of organ donation "a testimony of love for our neighbor."

That statement echoed the Catechism of the Catholic Church, which says in No. 2296 that "organ donation after death is a noble and meritorious act and is to be encouraged as an expression of generous solidarity."

Likewise, the catechism states in No. 2301 that "autopsies can be morally permitted for legal inquests or scientific research." In 1995, in his encyclical "The Gospel of Life," Pope John Paul II called organ donation an example of "everyday heroism."

The remains, after organ donation or medical research, must be treated with reverence and entombed or buried. In my diocese, our diocesan cemetery donates gravestones and burial services for the interment of the cremated remains of those who donated their bodies to science.

Q. I have a question with regard to the movie "Fifty Shades of Grey." Is it a mortal sin to see that movie? Also, does the church still rate movies, as it did in the past? And if so, where are those ratings listed? (Forest Hill, Maryland)

A. I have not seen the movie "Fifty Shades of Grey," nor do I have any intention (or desire) of seeing it. So I am limited to telling you what has been said by people whose opinions I value who have watched the film.

The Religious Alliance Against Pornography is an interfaith group that includes leaders from a wide range of religions -- Protestant, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Jewish and Muslim. They have said that the theme of the movie "is that bondage, dominance and sadomasochism are normal and pleasurable."

The group went on to observe that "the contrast between the message of 'Fifty Shades of Grey' and God's design for self-giving and self-sacrificing love, marriage and sexual intimacy could not be greater. The books and the movie undermine everything that we believe as members of the faith community."

As to whether seeing the movie constitutes a mortal sin, that depends to some extent on the person's motive for seeing it. If the purpose is a prurient desire for sexual gratification, it very well could be a mortal sin. (For purposes of review, a mortal sin requires serious matter, sufficient reflection and full consent of the will.)

Where the parish meets the business school

By Father William J. Byron, SJ
Catholic News Service

In the interest of full disclosure, let me say at the outset that I serve on the advisory board for the Center for Church Management and Business Ethics at the Villanova University School of Business. This frees me up to call attention to the fact that the Archdiocese of New York recently entered into an agreement with the Villanova center to provide online instruction to persons from the archdiocese over the next two years.

Villanova deserves credit for making the much-needed training available and with encouragement from the late Augustinian Father Edmund J. Dobbin, then-president of Villanova, assistance from a handful of religious and lay advisers, modest support from the business school administration and a generous supply of patience and hope.

Students learn a lot about budgets and audits; accountability, transparency and control; the spirituality of administration; human resource issues such as hiring, firing and performance evaluation; insurance and risk management; how to run a meeting; how to motivate and reward good work; effective communication and much, much more.

Those interested in learning about all of this can Google the Center for the Study of Church Management to find out more.

Jesuit Father Byron is university professor of business and society at St. Joseph's University, Philadelphia.

The Angelus
Family Life

The missionary spirit that moves the church

By Father Eugene Hemrick
Catholic News Service

It is one thing to read history, yet more impressive to touch it. Recently, I had the pleasure of a visit to the Mission San Carlos Borromeo del Rio Carmelo in Carmel, California.

The mission, which was founded in June 1770, is where Blessed Junipero Serra worked and died. As I viewed the cell in which he slept, it brought back memories of his life.

He was born in Spain and joined the Franciscans. Even though he was a brilliant student and teacher and could have remained in Spain, he opted instead to embark for the missions of Mexico.

Early on, he injured his leg, an injury that would plague him throughout his life. The injury, however, did not deter him from establishing missions and making long journeys on foot to baptize and confirm thousands of indigenous people.

As I viewed an old saddle used by the early missionaries, I wondered what it was like to come from the Spanish culture to a foreign culture and learn its languages, customs and how easy it is to violate a custom.

For example, in one case I read about, many of the indigenous children the missionaries encountered were undernourished. As was customary in Spain, milk was given to children to bolster and improve their strength. However, the indigenous children couldn't tolerate milk. It was one of many hard lessons the Franciscan missionaries had to learn.

As I viewed the old kitchen, sitting rooms and crude tools of the times in the museum, I wondered about what drives the missionary spirit in our church. Why do men and women opt for a foreign culture, learn its customs and literally forsake family and the comforts of home?

No doubt a sense of youthful adventure is one of the driving forces in missionaries. But as I learned, when I visited Guatemala, wanderlust fades quickly when you get amebic dysentery or the weather is dismal for weeks on end. You need more than a sense of adventure to survive.

Ultimately, the drive behind the missionary spirit is the spirit of Christ who taught that the purpose of life is to serve others, especially those in most need. It is to live the Golden Rule: to treat others as you want to be treated; to let your heart rule over your mind, allowing it to warm another's heart.

Come September, Blessed Serra will be canonized. Yes, we will extol his virtues, but it will also be a time to extol the missionary spirit upon which our church is founded.

Helping others in a time of pain

By Bill Dodds
Catholic News Service

In late 2012, when we knew my wife, Monica, had only a short time to live because of uterine cancer, people began asking me if I planned on writing a book about widowhood and grief after she passed away.

I told them no, explaining that I didn't know enough about those topics. It was about a year after her death that I realized I had been through a crash introductory course on the subjects. I still had a lot to learn, but I did know a thing or two.

Then a moment came when I heard television commentators discussing an upcoming recorded interview with actor Liam Neeson. As you may remember, his wife Natasha Richardson died of a traumatic brain injury in 2009. In 2014, he was promoting his latest movie and when asked about her, he described how grief still impacted his life.

The commentators seemed startled. My immediate thought was, "Well, duh." That was quickly followed by the realization that his words would have surprised me only a few short years ago. Of course Neeson was still deeply affected.

That was when it dawned on me that I didn't want to write a book about widowhood and grief for those who are experiencing it themselves, but I came up with a book that would help friends and family members get a glimpse of what those early days, months and years of grief can be like.

Fiction seemed the best way of doing that in a way that was more inviting, and less intimidating, to the reader. The result was a novel titled "Mildred Nudge: A Widower's Tale," published on the second anniversary of Monica's death.

It has been gratifying that some who have read it tell me they have a deeper appreciation of what a parent or grandparent went through. What a friend or family member is going through. There's a newfound sympathy and understanding.

At the same time, I now better realize how little I know about so many other tremendous hardships people go through: the death of a child, marriage that ends in divorce, the loss of a job that results in the loss of a home, drug addiction, chronic illness or pain. The list is long and varied.

I want to stay "blissfully ignorant," but I also want to be better at sympathizing and offering support.

That's one way of looking at a recurring theme in Pope Francis' messages to all of us: Look around, become more aware of others who are hurting. Find ways to walk with them and talk with them. Simply, and not so simply, be with them in times of sorrow.
Catholic News Service
By David Gibson

WASHINGTON — Jews from many nations, speaking a wide array of languages, were staying in Jerusalem at the time after Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension when a powerful wind swept upon a house where his apostles and some others, including his mother, were meeting.

Hearing the wind and curious to know what was happening, these people soon came upon a bewildering scene. They found Jesus' closest followers speaking about God in languages that all in their diverse crowd could understand. How could this be?

Some laughed, assuming the apostles were intoxicated.

These details of the first Christian Pentecost are found in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, the biblical book located immediately after St. John's Gospel. Acts introduces readers to people and events in Christianity's earliest history.

In Acts we witness the stoning of St. Stephen, remembered as Christianity's first martyr (7:54-60). We learn the early Christians shared everything they had; none were needy (4:32-35). And Acts memorably leads us into the earliest history.

But agreeing to all that this involved was no small accomplishment for early Christian leaders. After all, proclaiming Jesus' return to the Father. "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem ... and to the ends of the earth" (1:8).

Introducing himself, our author reveals that Acts is not his first writing. Earlier he "dealt with all that Jesus did and taught" (1:1). Who is he?

"It is well accepted that St. Luke authored the two-volume work of the Gospel of Luke and Acts," according to Benedictine Father Dale Launderville, a Scripture professor at Benedictine-run St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota.

Hellen Mardaga, who teaches Scripture at The Catholic University of America in Washington, agrees. "What Luke has in mind in his double work is to write a salvation history," she said in an interview with Catholic News Service. Acts treats salvation history "after Jesus' return to the Father." It treats "the founding of the early churches."

Father Launderville commented that "in some ways the narrative line running through Acts is about how the church spread from Jerusalem to Rome," from one end of the earth to another in the thinking of the times.

Mardaga noted that Acts' first nine chapters focus on "proclaiming God's word in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria." The "major characters are Peter and the Spirit "poured out on the gentiles also."

The author of Acts makes his underlying purpose clear from the start by recalling Jesus saying to the apostles at his ascension, "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem ... and to the ends of the earth" (1:8).

Meet the Players

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- The Acts of the Apostles introduces readers to many people of ancient Christian times. There are Jesus' apostles and discipies, men and women, catechists, members of the Jewish community and others.

Let's meet a few of them:

Sts. Peter and Paul: These apostles stand as Acts' central personalities. Peter's role is more dominant in early chapters, while later chapters highlight Paul as an apostle to the gentiles. Peter and Paul are recognized for their many healings, and we listen to each one preaching a basic message of Christ's death and resurrection.

St. Stephen: Known as the first Christian martyr, Stephen was stoned outside Jerusalem's gates after being falsely charged by people angered at not being able to get the best of him in debate. Acts presents him as wise and "filled with grace," one who worked "great wonders and signs," and whose words were prompted by the Spirit. (6:8-7:3).

Gamaliel: A Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, Gamaliel's wisdom still is consulted today. After the Sanhedrin forbade the apostles to teach in Jesus' name, Gamaliel proposed leaving them alone. He successfully advised that if their mission "is of human origin, it will destroy itself. But if it comes from God, you will not be able to destroy them" (5:38-39).

Eutychus: This young man sat on a windowsill in an upstairs room as Paul delivered a sermon that continued until midnight. Falling asleep, Eutychus fell from the window. "When he was picked up he was dead." Paul "threw himself upon him" and then said, "There is life in him. ... They took the boy away alive" (20:7-12).

Priscilla and Aquila: This married couple served as ancient-church catechists. After being expelled from Rome because of their Jewish backgrounds, they met Paul in Corinth. Like him, they were tentmakers. They travel with Paul to Ephesus in Asia Minor. The couple are remembered as faithful teachers of Apollos, who himself became a prominent, ancient-church teacher (18:1-3; 18:28).

The early Christians: The first Christians "had all things in common." Acts says, "They would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one's need." The community's bonds were strong. They were "of one heart and mind" (2:44-45; 4:32-35).
EDICTAL SUMMONS
April 23, 2015
CASE: HERNANDEZ (ACUNA)–HERNANDEZ
NO.: SO/15/11

The Tribunal Office of the Catholic Diocese of San Angelo is seeking Jose aka “Joe” L. Hernandez.

You are hereby summoned to appear before the Tribunal of the Catholic Diocese of San Angelo, at 804 Ford Street, San Angelo, Texas 76905, on or before the 31st of May 2015, to answer to the Petition of Oralia Her, now introduced before the Diocesan Tribunal in an action styled, “Lourdes Veronica Vera Fuentes and Jose aka “Joe” L. Hernandez, Petition for Declaration of Invalidity of Marriage.” Said Petition is identified as Case: HERNANDEZ (ACUNA) – HERNANDEZ; Protocol No.: SO/15/11, on the Tribunal Docket of the Diocese of San Angelo.

You may communicate with the Tribunal in person or in writing. Failure to communicate within the prescribed period of time will be considered your consent for the Tribunal to continue its proceedings in the above-named case.

Given at the Tribunal of the Diocese of San Angelo on the 23rd day of April 2015.

Reverend Tom Barley,
MSW, MBA, M. Div.,JCL
Judicial Vicar

EDICTAL SUMMONS
April 23, 2015
CASE: ACUNA – MALDONADO
NO.: SO/15/12

The Tribunal Office of the Catholic Diocese of San Angelo is seeking Emma Macias Maldonado.

You are hereby summoned to appear before the Tribunal of the Catholic Diocese of San Angelo, at 804 Ford Street, San Angelo, Texas 76905, on or before the 31st of May 2015, to answer to the Petition of Emma Macias Maldonado now introduced before the Diocesan Tribunal in an action styled, “Richard Acuna and Emma Macias Maldonado, Petition for Declaration of Invalidity of Marriage.” Said Petition is identified as Case: ACUNA – MALDONADO; Protocol No.: SO/15/12, on the Tribunal Docket of the Diocese of San Angelo.

You may communicate with the Tribunal in person or in writing. Failure to communicate within the prescribed period of time will be considered your consent for the Tribunal to continue its proceedings in the above-named case.

Given at the Tribunal of the Diocese of San Angelo on the 23rd day of April 2015.

Reverend Tom Barley,
MSW, MBA, M. Div.,JCL
Judicial Vicar
Estoy Dispuesto... Acepto

Padre mío,
Me abandono a ti;
Haz de mí lo que quieras.
Lo que hagas de mí, te lo agradezco;
Estoy dispuesto a todo, lo acepto todo.
Con tal que tu voluntad se haga en mí,
Y en todas tuscriaturas-
No deseo nada más, Dios mío.
Pongo mi alma en tus manos;
Te doy, Dios mío, con todo el amor de mi corazón,
Porque te amo y porque para mí, amarte es darme,
Entregarme en tus manos sin medida.
Con infinita confianza, porque tú eres mi Padre.

Oración por Charles de Foucauld

I am Ready ... I Accept

Father,
I abandon myself into your hands;
Do with me what you will.
Whatever you may do, I thank you;
I am ready for all, I accept all.
Let only your will be done in me,
And in all your creatures –
I wish no more than this, O Lord.
Into your hands I commend my soul;
I offer it to you with all
the love of my heart,
For I love you, Lord,
and so need to give myself,
To surrender myself into your hands
without reserve,
And with boundless confidence,
For you are my Father.

-- Prayer by Charles de Foucauld

When we pray, we must ask that God’s will be done. As it says in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, we should seek whatever pleases God the Father, centering on the Giver rather than on the gifts. (CCC, 2740)

God created us in his freedom, and he continues to act in freedom. He is master of the world and of its history. In our freedom, we lift up to God our prayers and our needs. We must then respect the freedom of God in his response to us. The ways of God’s providence are often unknown to us in this life, and we will fully understand them only in the next life. (CCC, 314)

It’s not God’s job to get us through this life with no problems, no pain, and no hardship. God never promised us a rose garden. Look, for example, at St. Paul’s “thorn in the flesh”, in 2 Cor. 12:7-10. We are not sure exactly what this was, but scholars say that it was most likely some painful physical ailment, or the struggle of continual persecution, or perhaps some kind of continual temptation.

Whatever it was, Paul begged God three times to take it away, but God didn’t do what Paul asked him to do. God didn’t take away Paul’s thorn in the flesh. Instead, God used it for a greater good, so that Paul would completely lean on God’s power and grace. The Lord said to Paul, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”

Never give up on prayer, and never give up on God. Express your needs to God, and then open yourself up to whatever is God’s will.

I highly recommend the use of a popular prayer by the Catholic priest Charles de Foucauld. It is included in a box on this page.
ARCHIBONG – ORACIÓN

(From 12)

guard God’s flock with tenderness and love. I will represent them as “a voice to the voiceless” and “offer my shoulders to all” excluding no one.

As a man of prayer, I will always be on my knees before God asking for grace to keep my promises I will make on my day of ordination and always seek to draw strength from the Trinity at all times. My nourishment from the Divine Eternal Fountain will then open me up to be a fountain, an instrument, through whom God will use to bless God’s people.

Dear people of God, I humbly ask for your prayers and encouragement as I am about to accept the ministerial roles of a Shepherd (King), Prophet and Priest in the Catholic Church in a unique way.

May God bless my mother, siblings, family, friends, and in fact you all. To my father and all the souls grant eternal rest. Amen.

Lord Prepare me to be a sanctuary; pure and holy, tried and true. With thanksgiving, I’ll be a living sanctuary for You.

(by John Thompson and Randy Scruggs)

ORACION

(Para 20)

No es el trabajo de Dios llevarnos por esta vida sin problemas, sin dolor, y sin dificultades. Dios nunca nos prometió un jardín de rosas. Miren, por ejemplo, la “espinilla clavada en el cuerpo”, de San Pablo, en 2 Cor 12:7-10. No estamos seguros exactamente de qué se trataba, pero los expertos dicen que probablemente era alguna enfermedad física dolorosa, o la lucha de persecución continua, o tal vez algún tipo de tentación continua.

Fuera lo que fuera, Pablo rogó a Dios tres veces que se la quitaran, pero Dios no hizo lo que Pablo le pidió que hiciera. Dios no le quitó esa espinilla clavada en el cuerpo de Pablo. Más bien, Dios la usó para un bien mejor, para que Pablo completamente se apoyara en el poder y gracia de Dios. El Señor le dijo a Pablo: “Te basta mi gracia, mi mayor fuerza se manifiesta en la debilidad.”

Nunca renuncie la oración, y nunca renuncie a Dios. Expresen sus necesidades a Dios, y luego ábrase a lo que sea la voluntad de Dios.

Recomiendo mucho el uso de una oración popular escrita por el sacerdote católico Charles de Foucauld. Se incluye en un cuaderno en esta página.

HERRERA

(From 4)

to practice, or a Native American. Or a Wiccan, or Santerian. I have learned a lot about world religions. It has made me appreciate my own.”

Sr. Herrera, a native San Angeloan, graduated from Angelo State University where she found her faith strengthened at the Newman Center. Her experiences with the campus ministry led directly to her vocation as a religious.

“My mission is to spread the gospel in whatever way I can,” she said. “And that is related to what has been nurtured in me through the SEARCH program and the Newman Center.” Both programs, Sr. Herrera said, provided her with a good foundation.

Healer Alan Ames returns to West Texas

Healer Alan Ames, will be in Abilene, and San Angelo. Alan’s schedule:

7 p.m. Mass Monday, June 15 - Abilene, St Francis of Assisi Church, and 7 p.m Mass Tuesday, June 16 – San Angelo, Holy Angels Church.

Alan’s services and God’s messages to us are for everyone….not just those wanting to be healed. Alan’s story and God’s message that Alan delivers are so powerful, you won’t want to miss his talk and buy his books and other materials to understand God’s messages on how we must live our lives in order to gain eternal salvation. Alan has travelled to over 50 nations spreading God’s word. Many healings have occurred and information about healing testimonials, Alan’s books and materials, his travel schedule, and more may be found in Alan’s web site: alanames.org. Please invite your family, friends and neighbors to come and listen to his experiences.

BENES

(From 6)

4. The Church recognizes the spiritual ties of Christians and Judaism. She encourages fostering mutual understanding and respect and "in her rejection of every persecution against any man, the Church, mindful of the patrimony she shares with the Jews and moved not by political reasons but by the Gospel's spiritual love, decrees hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone."

5. To love God is to love all and to understand that all humanity is created in God’s image and that we are all linked to God. Therefore, there is no foundation for any discrimination between God’s people as far as human dignity is concerned. Therefore the "Church reproves, as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against men or harassment of them because of their race, color, condition of life, or religion."

These five powerful concepts presented by Pope Paul VI affirm my journey.

I hope this has given you food for thought and you are challenged to reach across religious boundaries; you may encounter God in the other and discover a deeper dimension to your sacred journey.

Becky J. Benes, MPS, Oneness of Life.com
SAINT

(From 10)

Twelve," but with the conversion in Chapter 9 of Saul, henceforth known as Paul, Acts is about to shift focus to a larger world.

Interestingly, Saul's conversion also highlights the suffering the first Christians endured. Before Saul's conversion he breathed "murderous threats against" Jesus' disciples, Luke writes (9:1).

Saul's transforming encounter with the risen Lord occurred in a flash of light as he traveled toward Damascus, intent on seizing Christians. The Lord asked, "Saul, why are you persecuting me?"

Now, as Paul, he will carry the Gospel to far distant places.

Luke, it appears, was often Paul's traveling companion. Even if this cannot be proved, "it is clear that the narrative in Acts presents him this way," Father Launderville stated.

Luke makes his presence alongside Paul known numerous times in Acts' so-called "we passages." Near the book's conclusion, for example, Luke mentions the decision that "we" should sail to Italy (27:1).

The voyage then undertaken was Paul's fourth missionary journey. It followed a lengthy detention in Caesarea after some Asian Jews objected to his preaching and ministry. Paul appealed to Rome, and a centurion named Julius had custody of him during the voyage.

Sailing toward Italy, Luke describes a violent storm and tells how, once "we" reached safety on an island after suffering shipwreck, "we" learned it was called Malta (27:6-28:1).

Finally, Luke writes about the ultimate moment when "we" arrived in Rome (28:14).

In Rome, a first-century center of power and influence, Paul made it emphatically clear that gentiles would not be excluded from receiving his proclamation of Christ (28:29).

"Vengan bendecidos de mi Padre …" gibson was the founding editor of Origins, Catholic News Service's documentary service. He retired in 2007 after holding that post for 36 years.

"Catholicism" and "Catholicism:The Global Ministry, Word on Fire, and the Rector/President of Mundelein Seminary. He is the creator of the award winning documentary series, "Catholicism" and "Catholicism:The New Evangelization."
St. Mary’s Confirmation

Above, the 2015 Confirmation class at St. Mary’s Church in Odessa. At left, Fr. Hilary Ihedioha, gives the young people a few words of wisdom during Confirmation Mass.

Photos by Alan P. Torre

FAMILY

(From 7)

the life of your Domestic Church and the life of the parish church and diocese.

It is useful to organize the life of your Domestic Church as it participates in the life of the parish and diocese in a “Family Rule of Life.” For example, a “Family Rule of Life” could look like the following:

+Fidelity to the Pope and Magisterium of the Catholic Church.

+Promotion of human life from natural conception to natural death.

+Mass on Sunday and Holy Days (weekday Mass and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament when possible).

+The Sacrament of Penance (Reconciliation) monthly or at regular intervals.

+Daily prayer and Bible reading as a family and individually, including Liturgy of the Hours and the Rosary as appropriate.

+Participation in the liturgical seasons through celebrations, use of Christian symbols, art, music, food, and decor.

+Age-appropriate educational formation including study of the Catechism, Christian literature, PRE/CCD, seminars, preparation for sacraments, parochial or home schooling.

+Family/couple/individual retreats.

+Simplicity of lifestyle and stewardship of all resources;

+Hospitality to persons of all ages, including priests and religious.

+Service to the community (local and global), especially to persons in greatest spiritual and physical need, including evangelization of the unchurched.

+Ecumenical concern for the Universal Church.

Of course, each family should adapt this rule of life to its particular circumstances through prayerful discernment and discussion as a family.

At this time in the life of the Catholic Church and our western culture, the Catholic family as the Domestic Church can serve the Church and the world in the same way that monasteries served the Church in the Middle Ages. The family as the Domestic Church can become the center for the evangelization of our culture, a culture that needs to be rebuilt on the foundation of Christianity.
Easter Glow

Projects at Girl Scouts’ parishes help three earn Gold Award

ODESSA — Area Girl Scouts who have earned their Gold Award were recognized April 25 at the Girl Scouts of the Desert Southwest’s annual meeting in Odessa. Three Trinity School students — Miriam Shayeb, Sally Anne St. Jacques and Carmen Dragun — will be among those honored. They are members of St. Ann’s Girl Scout Troop 31177 in Midland.

The Gold Award is the highest award a Girl Scout can receive and involves a project that has made a “measurable and sustainable difference in their communities.”

Shayeb and St. Jacques, both seniors, undertook book projects for Medical Center Hospital in Odessa. Shayeb created a reading program for inpatients and conducted training sessions with hospital volunteers to include reading with pediatric patients. Shayeb also distributed books to those attending the MCH Farmer’s Market to foster an interest in literacy. St. Jacques worked with MCH’s Friendship Home to provide books for families and patients who are being treated for a serious injury or illness. Both girls received book donations from St. Ann’s Family Fair.

Dragun, who is a sophomore, conducted “adopt-a-family” programs for back-to-school and at Christmas. Parishioners of St. Ann’s Catholic Church helped families that were clients of the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

-- Source: Trinity School. Reprinted with permission from the Midland Reporter-Telegram

Photo (courtesy of Trinity School): Trinity School seniors Miriam Shayeb, left, Sally Anne St. Jacques, second from left, and Carmen Dragun, right, were among those Girl Scouts who were recognized April 25 for earning their Gold Award. With the girls is Diane Flanagan, CEO of the Girl Scouts of the Desert Southwest.