Ordination Day                             Saturday, May 30, 2015

Serving the Diocese of San Angelo, Texas
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Father Felix Archibong, (left), Father Adam Droll and Father Ryan Rojo
Coverage Pgs. 2, 12-13

Photo by Alan P. Torre / aptorre.com
Three ordained in moving Mass

By Jimmy Patterson
Editor / The Angelus

SAN ANGELO — San Angeloans trudged their way through the dreary month of May, which, statistically, is now the second-wettest month in the history of the city. Thirteen of the first 29 days of May featured measurable rain and for the month, more than nine inches fell.

Nothing much changed the morning of May 30, 2015. Before the sun had even peeked its head over the horizon, the skies opened up again.

But later in the day, it was the heavens that opened up and San Angelo found itself instead showered with grace as Bishop Michael J. Sis ordained three young men to serve as priests in the diocese. Deacons Felix Archibong, Adam Droll and Ryan Rojo all made the transition to the priesthood during the beautiful, moving 2 1/2 hour Mass.

Once ordained, the three men briefly took their turns at the podium.

“My name is Father Ryan Rojo and I am a priest in the Diocese of San Angelo,” Rojo joyfully said.

Father Droll, a San Angelo native, acknowledged that he was having some difficulty accepting the overwhelming show of love directed his and his fellow ordinands’ way on their morning. So present was that love that the pews at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart were filled to capacity more than thirty minutes prior to the opening procession.

Father Archibong acknowledged the love and support of his father, who, although he died March 17, 2004, still made his presence felt to the young seminarian-turned-priest, “even up to this moment,” he said.

The three ordinations brought to 10 the number of priestly ordinations in the Diocese of San Angelo in the last five years.

“Consider carefully the nature of the rank in the Church to which these men are about to be raised,” said Bishop Sis, who was presiding over his second ordination since his own January 2014 ordination as the sixth Bishop of San Angelo. “God has made his entire holy people a royal priesthood in Christ, but Jesus Christ chose certain disciples to carry out a priestly office in the Church publicly in his name, and on behalf of all humanity.

(Please See ORDINATION/24)
From The Bishop’s Desk

Religious freedom vital to our 21st century world

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

Religious freedom is necessary for the health of a democratic society. However, it is being increasingly threatened around the world today, including in our own beloved country. The Fortnight for Freedom is being observed by Catholics in the U.S. from June 21 through July 4, 2015, as an initiative to highlight the right to religious liberty. Our diocesan observance of the Fortnight for Freedom will kick off with a Mass at 10:30 a.m. on Sunday, June 21, 2015, at Holy Redeemer Parish in Odessa. I will preside and preach on religious freedom. Everyone is invited. Each parish in the diocese will choose how it will observe the Fortnight for Freedom at the local level. I also encourage parishes to include prayer for religious liberty in the Masses of Saturday, July 4.

The Fortnight for Freedom began in 2012, and is even more vital in 2015, as this year marks the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council Declaration on Religious Freedom, Dignitatis Humanae. This landmark document teaches that religious freedom is rooted in the freedom of conscience. Human beings should be immune from compulsion in everything related to the making or rejecting of an act of religious faith. Furthermore, religious organizations should have immunity from coercion in the public expression of their faith and of the social implications of that faith.

How is religious liberty being threatened today? On a world scale, religious persecution is increasing. According to the Pew Research Center Forum on Religion and Public Life, 70 percent of the world’s population lives in countries where religious faith is highly restricted. The International Society for Human Rights reports that 150,000 Christians are killed for their faith each year. Some estimates report that, during the 20th century, 45 million Christians died for their faith. Pope Francis has acknowledged that there are more Christian martyrs today than in any other time in our history.

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(Notas de autor: Parte de la información contenida en este artículo fue tomada de "ISIS e India: la Crisis Mundial de la Libertad Religiosa y Responsabilidad Católica" por Thomas F. Farr 26 de abril de 2015, Fortnight4Freedom.org.)

By Michael J. Sis
Obispo de San Angelo

La libertad religiosa es necesaria para la salud de una sociedad democrática. Sin embargo, está cada vez más amenazada por todo el mundo hoy en día, incluso en nuestro propio país amado. La Quincena por la Libertad será observada por los católicos en los Estados Unidos del 21 de junio al 4 de julio, como una iniciativa para poner en alto relieve el derecho a la libertad religiosa.

En la Diócesis de San Ángelo, nuestra observancia diocesana de la Quincena por la Libertad se iniciará con una Misa a las 10:30 a.m. el domingo 21 de junio de 2015, en la Parroquia Santísimo Redentor (Holy Redeemer) en Odessa.

(Última página)

**DIOCESAN BRIEFS**

Priest assignments
Fr. Charles Okonkwo will depart Holy Spirit Parish Sweetwater, June 30 for reassignment by his home bishop.
Fr. Nilo Nalugon is assigned as Pastor, effective July 3 to Holy Spirit Parish in Sweetwater.
Fr. Felix Archibong, ordained May 30, is assigned as Parochial Vicar, effective July 1 to Our Lady of Guadalupe, Midland.
Fr. Adam Droll, ordained May 30, will return to Mundelein Seminary in Chicago to continue his Theological Studies.
Fr. Ryan Rojo, ordained May 30, will return to Mundelein Seminary in Chicago to continue his Theological Studies.

Pro-Life Speaker to appear in Midland
Choose Life Midwest presents Trent Horn, author of "Persuasive Pro-Life, at the Wagner Brown Auditorium on the campus of Midland College. With a Masters Degree in Theology from Franciscan University of Steubenville and in pursuit of a graduate degree in philosophy from Holy Apostles College, Horn's presentation in Midland will draw on over a decade as a pro-life organizer and help listeners "cut through pro-choice talking points in order to accurately frame the moral and legal issues surrounding abortion." Admission is free. For more information, call 432.695.6955.

Healer Alan Ames returns to diocese
Healer Alan Ames, will be in Abilene, and San Angelo. Alan’s schedule: 7p.m. Mass Monday, June 15 - Abilene, St Francis of Assisi Church, and 7p.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 him 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 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.

San Angelo to host national District III Engaged Encounter convention
SAN ANGELO -- San Angelo Catholic Engaged Encounter will host the 2015 District III Convention, June 12-14, 2015, at the Clarion Hotel in San Angelo. The guest speaker will be Dr. Ellen Raffaello Barbeilla, who will present on "The Monastery of Marriage: Marriage as a Spiritual Discipline" and "Holy Matrimony: Joyful Witness." Bishop Michael Sis will lead Sunday worship to conclude the convention. If you have attended an Engaged Encounter weekend, your attendance at this event is welcome. For more information or to register, please visit San Angelo Catholic Engaged Encounter's website. www.sanangelocatholicce.org

Calvary Cemetery in San Angelo
SAN ANGELO -- Calvary Cemetery rules specify that there should be no more than one flower arrangement per grave. The only exception to this flower rule is at the time of interment, when additional flowers may be placed on a grave. (A copy of the cemetery rules is available at the pastoral center and is posted at the entrance of the cemetery.) We have tried to be flexible, but many people take advantage and place too many flower arrangements on graves, including decorations such as rocks, artificial turf, curbs, borders, statues, crosses, solar lights, Halloween and Christmas decorations, etc., making it almost impossible for the mourners or backhoe to move between the graves. This also creates a safety hazard and can damage tombstones when mowing. Lastly, it leaves the cemetery looking very unsightly, which is evidenced by the many complaints we receive. In order to alleviate this problem, effective June 15, 2015, everything found on grave sites will be removed by cemetery personnel on a regular basis except one flower arrangement, in order to conform to cemetery rules, with the exception of extra flowers at the time of the funeral. Small flags on the graves of veterans on holidays such as Memorial Day and Veteran’s Day are always permitted. We ask that you please cooperate by following the cemetery rules and helping to keep the cemetery looking as nice as possible for all who visit.

GRN event to feature Colin Raye
Save the Date!
Guadalupe Radio Network for West Texas will host the 2nd annual Fishers of Men Dinner, 7 p.m., Saturday, October 3, 2015, at the Midland Center. This year’s keynote presenter is Colin Raye, former country music recording artist ... San Angelo Bishop Michael J. Sis will also be honored at the dinner. Also appearing will be the Texas Nuns and the Poor Clare Sisters of Perpetual Adoration.

(Mira OBISPO/22)
St. Margaret’s celebrates 50th anniversary

By Becca Nelson Sankey

SAN ANGELO — As thunder rumbled outside, approximately 150 people filled the pews of St. Margaret of Scotland Catholic Church, May 26, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the smallest parish in the city of San Angelo.

In his homily, Bishop Michael Sis reminded parishioners of Solomon, who built a temple while fully acknowledging it could not contain God. Jesus had great respect for the temple, Sis said, and famously drove out its money changers.

“He said, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up,’” Bishop Sis said. “He was actually referring to the temple of his body. St. Paul says, ‘Your bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit.’ As we celebrate this anniversary tonight, we should all commit ourselves to being holy temples... a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. You are a temple.”

As parishioners are consecrated in the service of God, so too was St. Margaret, Bishop Sis said. When the church was first established in May of 1965, the oil of chrism was smeared on the church’s walls and on the top of its altar, Sis said.

Since then, “thousands of people have come here and been set free from sin through baptism and reconciliation,” the bishop said.

The parish, he added, also has been the site of weddings, confirmations and humble and sincere prayers.

“God’s work has been done here,” he said. “Priests, deacons, sisters, parishioners, leaders, volunteers, staff — so many people have contributed to the building up of this community. For all those people, we give thanks to God today. We seek to build on what they have done, improve on it, and leave (the parish) a little better than we found it; that’s what good Christian stewardship is all about.”

Following the Mass, parishioners, church staff and clergy gathered in the parish hall for dinner and cake. As he waited in line to gain entry to the hall, Ray Zapata enthusiastically greeted fellow church members.

It’s “close-knit, family-based,” Zapata said of the parish. While the church has evolved in some ways — namely

(Please See 50th/20)
100th Anniversary of St. Joseph-Loraine

Full church rings in St. Joseph’s centennial

By Loretta Fulton
Special to The West Texas Angelus

LORAINE — “You’ve got to look at this — it’s history.” The two young children gazed upward at the statue of Jesus as Bishop Michael Sis instructed. They stared at the small, perfectly round hole in the back of the head of the statue inside St. Joseph’s Catholic Church in Loraine.

It was hard to comprehend that what they were looking at was a bullet hole. Who would do such a thing? Who would desecrate a statue of Jesus inside a church?

Many believe it was the work of the Ku Klux Klan, whose members were known to be anti-Catholic. The destruction occurred in 1924, shortly after St. Joseph's opened. Many of the members were so frightened by the attack that they considered moving out of fear for their personal safety.

But most stayed and on May 17, Bishop Sis honored their perseverance by celebrating an anniversary Mass at the church. St. Joseph's opened in 1924, but the first Catholic Mass was celebrated in Loraine in 1915, making 2015 the centennial year.

“Let us honor the memory of 100 years of Catholic faith in this town,” the bishop said at the opening of the service. Among the 124 people who crammed into the small church for the Mass were descendants of the church's founders, Antonio and Maria Pantoja. Two of those descendants were great-great-grandchildren Carlos Diaz, 7, and Sofia Diaz, 11, the brother and sister who got a history lesson from Bishop Sis. They were with their father, Cesar Diaz, a great-grandson of Antonio and Maria.

The family lives in Alvarado and traveled to Loraine to attend the Mass and present the church with a new chalice. “It’s so new, it’s still in the package,” Bishop Sis said as he unwrapped it. “We will bless it for use in this church in the next 100 years.”

Cesar Diaz proudly related the story he has heard many times in his lifetime about his great-grandparents and how they founded St. Joseph’s. When Antonio and Maria Pantoja arrived in Loraine in 1905, there was no Catholic presence. Couples were married in civil services and babies were not being baptized. By 1915, Maria was deeply concerned and expressed her convictions to her husband.

“We need to do something about this,” she said.

So, a dutiful Antonio took the train to Abilene to speak to the Rev. Joseph Campbell, about coming to Loraine to celebrate Mass and to perform marriages and baptisms. They offered their home for the visiting priest.

Father Campbell agreed to speak to the bishop of the Diocese of Amarillo — which at the time included Loraine — for permission to celebrate the Church's rites in Loraine. Once permission was granted, Campbell traveled to Loraine once a month for Saturday Mass. He stayed overnight and taught catechism classes the next day.

Eventually, Campbell saw enough interest that he advised the families to gather signatures for a petition requesting a mass be established in Loraine.

Antonio and others transformed a former school building into a church for Loraine worshippers and named it “St. Joseph’s.”

ST. JOSEPH’S AT A GLANCE

Founded: 1915
First Mass: 1915 in home of founders Antonio and Maria Pantoja, Mexican immigrants who moved to Loraine in 1905.
Current church: In 1924, Antonio Pantoja and others transformed an old school building into the present church.
Current priest: Rev. Michael Udegbunam
Anniversary: Bishop Michael Sis celebrated the 100th anniversary Mass at St. Joseph’s on Sunday, May 17, 2015.
Historical tidbit: A statue of Jesus inside the church bears a bullet hole sustained in the 1920s when the church was vandalized. Many believe the vandalism was the work of the Ku Klux Klan because of their hatred of Catholics.

(Please See CENTENNIAL/20)
Sister Mary Kay Bailey, O.P. entered eternal life on Sunday, May 17, 2015. Sister was the daughter of the late Leona Sessinghaus and John Edwin Bailey, Sr. Born in Kilgore, Texas, on August 4, 1937, her family moved to Houston while she was still in elementary school. She is predeceased by her two brothers John Edwin, Jr. and Thomas Bailey. She is survived by nieces and nephews.

After graduation from St. Agnes Academy in 1955, Sister Mary Kay joined the Dominican Sisters of Houston. She earned her B.A. in mathematics from Dominican College and her Masters in Theology from St. Mary University in San Antonio.

Sister Mary Kay’s persistent seeking of truth and her desire to share her search with others shone in her varied ministries. Her students remember her as an excellent teacher: Houston (St. Peter the Apostle, St. Pius X H.S.), LaMarque (Queen of Peace), Galveston (Galveston Catholic H.S., O’Connell H.S.), San Antonio (Antonio H.S.).

In 1972 her ministry turned to leadership in Religious Education in San Antonio (Holy Spirit, San Jose Mission) and in the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council Office. In 1979-80 she ministered at Oblate College. The years 1986-93 were spent in pastoral administration in Pleasanton (St. Andrew, Sacred Heart). Her election by the Dominican Sisters to Council Member allowed her to serve her community in that capacity for six years. Returning to pastoral ministry, she went west to the Diocese of San Angelo, where she served Sterling City (St. Paschal) and Carlsbad (St. Theresa) followed by a time in Brenham doing adult faith formation.

She resided in Taylor (St. Mary) for a time before retiring to St. Dominic Villa in Houston. Sister Mary Kay will be remembered as always eager to engage anyone in a meaningful discussion on almost any subject, but particularly about Liturgy or Theology — truly a Dominican.

Sister’s services were at St. Dominic Villa where her body was received on Wednesday, May 20; a wake service followed; Mass of Christian Burial was Thursday, May 21, Rev. John Rooney presiding. Interment was at Forest Park Lawndale Cemetery.

In lieu of the usual remembrances, donations may be made to Dominican Sisters Retirement Fund, 6501 Almeda Road, Houston, TX 77021.

ABILENE – On May 17, 2015, Sacred Heart celebrated its annual Corpus Christi procession led by Monsignor Robert Bush and including parishioners from all of the Abilene Catholic churches.

The event started in the garden of the parish’s Adoration Chapel and wove around the streets of the surrounding neighborhood with the assistance of the Abilene Police Department.

The procession of the annual ritual was led by the Knights of Columbus and featured three different altars where the Blessed Sacrament was featured for a reading, a homily and a brief adoration period.

After the final adoration, the event wound its way into the parish where Sacred Heart held its May Crowning.

“What an awesome country America is, were we can publicly worship and profess our allegiance to Christ,” Sacred Heart parishioner Joe Tauer said.

In fact, Msgr. Bush spoke during the morning Mass about how the event was a way to publicly profess our faith in ways that most countries don’t have the freedom to do.

“(People) talk about the reverence given to (Jesus) our Paschal Lamb, not just here on earth, but the love and adoration that He receives in heaven,” said Deacon Dwayne Hennessey, of Sacred Heart Church. “The adoration that they give God’s son is too numerous to count.”

Hennessey said that everything that we consider new in our faith, is only because of what Jesus went through. He also talked...
Lady in Blue Day

“It is fitting that we honor the Lady in Blue. Her first appearances in the early 17th century led Spanish missionaries to come to the San Angelo area in 1629 and 1632, marking the birth of our Catholic faith in West Texas. Sor María helped change our way of life forever. We owe a debt of gratitude to our Jumano brothers and sisters who opened their hearts to the instruction of this mystical lady who appeared over 500 times throughout the Southwest.”

— Bishop Michael J. Sis.

Seminarian makes mission trip to Nogales, Mexico

By Josh Gray
Seminarian / Diocese of San Angelo

I went to Nogales Sonora in Mexico for five days this past month to give aid to the migrants who have been deported after trying to enter the U.S. illegally. The place I visited was called Iniciativa Kino para la Frontera or the Kino Border Initiative.

There was a sticker on the refrigerator where I was helping out that said, Nadie es ilegal. That is one of the most important statements to keep in mind when thinking about the migrants. I met men who had walked for weeks from as far as Honduras. They were desperate, but not any less deserving of the rights that we all have. They would teach the migrants some of the main rights which we possess: the right to life, to work, to education, to food and drink, to shelter, and many others.

We often take these rights for granted, but some of these migrants have lived their entire lives without knowing they have certain rights! I saw men, women, and children come into the comedor or “House of Food,” with looks of fear, uncertainty, anger, and hopelessness. As I worked with other volunteers serving food and drinks, giving away clothes and medicine, they began to laugh and I could see hope return to their faces.

This place is where the kingdom of God is present. It is a place of hope. Let us remember the words of Christ:

“Then he said to the host who invited him, ‘Rather, when you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; blessed indeed will you be because of their inability to repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.’

— Luke 14:13-14
The annual Day of Reflection for Directors/Coordinators of Religious Education, Youth Ministers and School Principals was held on May 12, 2015 at the Newman Center in San Angelo. This day provides catechetical and youth ministry leaders and principals the opportunity to take time to reflect on their own spiritual journey at the end of the year.

Approximately 21 individuals participated in the day which focused on the theme of “Encountering God in Your Daily Life.” Carol Ann Hunt, Director of Religious Education at St. Ann’s in Midland, was the presenter for the day. Hospitality and a delicious meal was provided by Sr. Kathy Kudlac, OSF. Carol Ann led the participants in prayer, reflection, faith sharing, song and ritual on three focal areas. The first was, “Exploring My Call,” which focused on baptism and one’s call to ministry. Within this topic the participants focused their faith sharing on forgiveness of sins, the grace received in the sacrament and the responsibility each person has to respond to the call to mission.

The second focal point was “Looking Deeper – Moments of Grace,” and was based on the Scripture passage of Micah 6:8. The participants were asked to take this passage to heart and to use the three key words of Justice, Love and Humility to reflect on their relationship with God and others.

The third focal point, “Moments of Grace,” called each one to find God in everyday life. Carol Ann noted that it is through practice and choice that we become closer to God as we live our lives in the world. Carol Ann closed the Day of Reflection with a water prayer ritual sending forth the participants with a renewed awareness of God’s presence in their lives.

Blessing of the Bikes

Bishop Michael J. Sis, at right, visited Sealy Flats, a San Angelo Blues club, to bless motorcycles and riders. The blessing was a part of the opening of the annual San Angelo Blues Festival, May 9, 2015. (Photo by Becca Nelson Sankey).

Knights of Columbus State Convention

Bishop Michael J. Sis, second from left, with, from left, Terry Simonton, Knights of Columbus Texas State Deputy; Most Rev. Joseph Fiorenza, Fourth Bishop of San Angelo and Archbishop Emeritus of Galveston-Houston; Cardinal Daniel Dinardo, Archbishop of Galveston-Houston; Most Rev. Joseph Strickland, Knights of Columbus State Chaplain and Bishop of Tyler, and Estelle Simonton, wife of Terry Simonton. The annual KC state convention was May 2, 2015 in Houston. (Courtesy photo).

Fall Festival / Family Fair season is fast approaching. Please send details about your special parish event to jpatterson@sanangelodiocese.org as soon as possible to ensure ample exposure before your event day arrives.

BROWNWOOD

St. Mary Catholic Church Fall Festival

The 2015 Fall Festival will be held on Sunday, October 4, 2015 from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm at St. Mary Queen of Peace Catholic Church at 1103 Main Avenue. There will be live and silent auctions. Our top raffle prize is $2,000. Also included in the raffle this year are Four Tickets to a Cowboy game with a Parking Pass. Third prize is $1,000, and a 55-inch Smart TV flat screen for a fourth prize. Raffle tickets are $5.00 each. Music will be provided by a DJ and other groups throughout the day. There will also be a cake walk, a country store, a loteria, a children's area, children's rides, children's art contest and a car show. From our many food booths, roasted corn, gorditas, Filipino food, hamburgers and curly fries, flautas, menudo, homemade cookies and more. The approximate schedule for this festival's activities is as follows: CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES: 10 am-5 pm; COUNTRY STORE: 10 a.m.-5 pm; CAKEWALK: 10 am till sold out; SILENT AUCTION: 10 am-3 pm; LIVE AUCTION: 3-5 pm; FOOD: 10-5 pm. Bring your family and friends to help celebrate our Fall Festival. All proceeds from this year's activities will go into our fund for the renovation of our Parish Hall.
Rural Life Mass

Bishop: ‘Agriculture a most noble, ancient profession, and a vocation from God’

By Becca Nelson Sankey
Special to The West Texas Angelus

OLFEN — Beneath an overcast sky and surrounded on all sides by miles of farmland, the sprawling red brick church in Olfen beckoned parishioners to the Rural Life Mass like a beacon. Officiated by Bishop Michael J. Sis, the annual event commemorates the May 15 Feast of Saint Isidore, the patron saint of farmers, and is typically held in rural areas where agriculture is the predominant trade.

“Every year it’s in a different place,” Sis said after he blessed bags of seeds, a basket of eggs, farm equipment, a school bus and various animals outside St. Boniface Catholic Church in Olfen. “We always try to do it in a rural environment so we can celebrate the blessings of agricultural life. Last year we were in Winters on a ranch.”

Charlie Evans, director of Rural Life Ministry and a deacon at St. Boniface, said the Mass in previous years has been held in Coleman, Melvin and Midland, and often takes place outside. “This time we celebrated the Mass indoors because I love to pray in this gorgeous church building,” Bishop Sis said, smiling. “People bring things to be blessed, and we enjoy a big meal of locally grown foods.”

During the Mass, Bishop Sis told the crowd of approximately 100 people gathered that “anybody involved in agriculture is carrying on one of the most noble and ancient professions … it’s a vocation from God.”

Quoting Pope Francis, Bishop Sis said there is no humanity without the cultivation of land. He proposed a rediscovery of love for the earth and a covenant with the land, “so it’s a source of life for the entire human family.”

Bob Fuchs, a farmer and member of St. Boniface, attends the Rural Life Mass every year, regardless of where it’s held. “Most of the equipment (brought to be blessed) are tractors and planters; everybody’s going to be using those soon,” Fuchs said, adding that he preferred the Mass be held at St. Boniface. “Of course I’m kind of prejudiced; I like our church.”

Added Gary Weishuhn, who was attending the Rural Life Mass for the first time: “It worked out great with the big parking lot.”

Fuchs just planted his 46th crop, he said. Asked if he feels having his equipment blessed helps him produce a more bountiful crop, Fuchs said, “We have to have faith that the good Lord’s on our side. He said (that) where two or more gather, he’s in our presence. (I believe) he blesses our efforts.”

While blessing farm equipment, crops and everything related to farm life is a crucial component to the Rural Life Mass, Bishop Sis said the event also is an opportunity to extol the virtues of those whose livelihood is tied to agriculture.

They “need to be acknowledged and appreciated,” he said. “Farmers, Bishop Sis said, are faithful folks. It’s typical of people in agriculture that they draw close to God in the beauty of the created world around them,” he said. “It’s also very typical that when working the land, a person prays. Prayer is a regular practice in the rhythm of agricultural life.”
Speaking of Saints ...  

St. John Scalabrini: Friend to immigrants in Northern Italy

By Mary Lou Gibson  
Special to the West Texas Angelus

Today’s news is filled with sad stories of migrants making dangerous land and water journeys in search of a better life. And so it was too in the 18th and 19th centuries when thousands of Europeans left their homeland to come to America hoping for more and better opportunities for work. It was such a group of people who were crowded together in a Milan, Italy railway station that caught the attention of Bishop John Baptist Scalabrini.

It was 1887 and he saw about 300-400 individuals, poorly dressed . . . “marked by premature wrinkles drawn by privation.” They were emigrants leaving various provinces of northern Italy. Paul Burns writes in “Butler’s Lives of the Saints” that Bishop Scalabrini found they were waiting for the train to the Mediterranean and from there they would embark for the Americas . . . to find less hostile fortune.

By this time Bishop Scalabrini had been a priest for 13 years and a Bishop for the last two years. He discovered on the first of his many pastoral visits that most of these emigrants were young men who were leaving behind villages populated by elderly and young women. He began to have a great concern for migrants and became a passionate champion for their welfare.

Blessed John Baptist Scalabrini (Giovanni Battista Scalabrini) was a man of boundless energy and purpose. He was born in Fino, Mornasco, Italy on July 8, 1839, the third of eight children. His intelligence and capacity for hard work led him from junior high school, to minor seminary and then to major seminary. He was ordained in 1863 at the age of 24 and appointed professor and rector of St. Abundius Seminary.

It was during his first pastoral assignment at San Bartolomeo in Como that he became active ministering to the young people and to the textile and other factory workers in the parish. Paul Burns writes that he founded a kindergarten here and wrote his first catechism dedicating it to the memory of his mother. Some years later Pope Pius IX recognized this accomplishment and called him the “Apostle of the Catechism.”

In 1876, he became bishop of Piacenza, a rural diocese in northern Italy. For the next 29 years, he worked tirelessly for the clergy and people. Fr. Stelio Fongaro writes in “A Portrait” that Bishop Scalabrini’s first concern was for the clergy. He introduced a new curriculum in his three seminaries and started courses in Gregorian chant. He also worked to bring harmony among the clergy.

Burns describes him as a model bishop visiting all 365 parishes under his care at least five times, sometimes traveling on foot or mule back to parishes in the mountains.

These pastoral visits included popular missions where he met with all the people – children, young people, women, workers, the sick and the aged. He also took time to consecrate churches and cemeteries and to bless bells.

Bishop Scalabrini celebrated three synods during these years designed to bring about renewal programs and restoration of doctrine. He was also a great defender of the poor and helpless. Matthew Bunson writes in “John Paul II’s Book of Saints” that during a cholera epidemic, Bishop Scalabrini sold all that he had to buy food and medical supplies that saved hundreds of lives.

At one point he even opened the bishop’s residence as a dispensary. Burns describes his charity as abundant and discreet when he aided both the poor and noble families who had lost their wealth. He founded an institute for those with hearing and speaking difficulties and organized protection for the young women who worked in the rice fields. He established mutual aid societies, workers’ associations, rural banks, cooperatives, and Catholic action centers.

He spoke often of the plight of emigrants and refugees and according to Burns, forced this topic into the arena of national debate. In 1887, Bishop Scalabrini founded the Congregation of Missionaries of St. Charles (with St. Charles Borromeo as their patron). They were called the Scalabrinis and were to be migrants with the migrants. He convinced Mother Frances Xavier Cabrini to go to America to care for Italian immigrants. And in 1895, he founded the Missionary Sisters of St. Charles.

In the last ten years of his life, Bishop Scalabrini made pastoral visits to his missionaries first in the United States and later to Brazil. His three-month visit to the eastern United States in 1901 was covered extensively by reporters who had before then had seldom visited Italian immigrant neighborhoods. While in Washington, DC, he was received by President Theodore Roosevelt.

Throughout his life, Bishop Scalabrini had a special devotion to the Holy Eucharist and to the Blessed Virgin Mary. His motto as pastor was St. Paul’s “make yourself everything to everyone.” His Episcopal coat-of-arms was the verse: Video Dominum in nitium scalae (I see the Lord at the top of the stairway). He died on the feast of the Ascension, June 1, 1905. Pope John Paul II beatified John Baptist Scalabrini on November 9, 1997. Today, the Scalabrinis serve in Europe, Africa, North and South America, Canada, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Venezuela. The order runs seminaries, parishes, schools, missions, migration study centers, offices and shelters.

By Mary Lou Gibson

National Day of Prayer

San Angelo Bishop Michael Sis, center, leads a group of San Angelo pastors in prayer over Capt. Bryan Fox, chaplain at Goodfellow Air Force Base, and other military members during the annual National Day of Prayer. The event was observed in San Angelo on Thursday, May 7, on the lawn of the Tom Green County Courthouse. (Photo by Becca Nelson Sankey)

In Memory of Monsignor James Plagens

We would like to express our sincere appreciation for all who expressed their love and sympathy in so many comforting ways during James’ recent illness and death.

Many thanks to Bishop Sis, Msgr. Larry Droll, Father Frances Onyekozuru, Father Joseph Ecker, the Knights of Columbus, St. Ann’s Parish and its’ wonderful people for all the kind and comforting acts of sympathy.

With grateful hearts we thank “Team Plagens” for all your love and care during his illness. Not only did you go above and beyond for Msgr. Plagens, but you were our “solid rock” when we needed you.

We would also like to extend our appreciation to the clergy from the San Angelo Diocese for your participation and attendance during the memorial service.

We will be forever grateful for the kindness and thoughtfulness shown to us by so many. The evidence of God’s grace in his life during this difficult time has strengthened our faith and given us the courage to move forward.

The Plagens family
Making Sense of Bioethics

What is VSED and why should it matter to us?

By Fr. Tad Pacholczyk

More than 20 years ago, Dr. David Eddy, writing in the Journal of the American Medical Association, described how his mother, though not suffering from a terminal illness, chose to end her life through VSED (voluntarily stopping eating and drinking). She was "very independent, very self-sufficient, and very content." When she began to be afflicted by various ailments, including rectal prolapse, she talked with her physician-son about "how she could end her life gracefully."

When she asked him, "Can I stop eating?" he told her that if it was really her intention to end her life, she could also stop drinking since, "without water, no one, not even the healthiest, can live more than a few days." After a family bash celebrating her 85th birthday, she "relished her last piece of chocolate, and then stopped eating and drinking." She died of dehydration six days later, with her son arranging for pain medications to be administered during her final days and hours.

Choosing not to eat or drink can be packaged as a noble and well-intentioned way to avoid intense pain and suffering, but VSED ultimately represents a flawed choice. It subtly draws us into the mistake of treating the objective good of our life as if it were an evil to be quelled or extinguished. We have a moral duty to preserve and protect our life, and to use ordinary means of doing so. Suicide, even by starvation and dehydration, is still suicide and is never morally acceptable.

For some critically-ill patients, continued attempts to ingest food and liquids may cause significant complications, including severe nausea, vomiting, or complex problems with elimination. Such patients may find themselves effectively incapable of eating or drinking. This is not VSED, but a direct manifestation of their advanced disease state, and does not raise any of the ethical concerns associated with VSED.

As disease or severe illness advances, and a patient draws near to death, various bodily systems may begin to fail, and a natural decrease in appetite can occur. This is also different from a voluntary decision to stop eating and drinking — VSED refers specifically to a conscious, elective decision on the part of a patient not to eat or drink when eating and drinking would be anticipated to provide benefit to them without undue burdens.

As people are dying, the real evil that often needs to be quelled or extinguished is pain, and severe pain is properly addressed by non-suicidal means, that is to say, through effective pain management and palliative care strategies.

Dr. M. Scott Peck, in his book "Denial of the Soul" argues that the, "failure to treat pain is medical malpractice ... [and] one of the worst crimes in medicine today." We live in an age that possesses a remarkable arsenal of methods and pharmaceuticals to address physical pain, depression and death-related anxiety, leaving little excuse for individuals to fear undergoing agonizing and pain-racked deaths.

Some have sought to suggest that patients who choose VSED may feel less pain because the nervous system becomes dulled and the body may end up releasing chemicals which provide natural analgesia or pain relief: "What my patients have told me over the last 25 years is that when they stop eating and drinking, there's nothing unpleasant about it — in fact, it can be quite blissful and euphoric," said Dr. Perry G. Fine, vice president of medical affairs at the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization in Arlington, Va. "It's a very smooth, graceful and elegant way to go."

Such claims, however, remain highly controversial and strain credulity.

Dehydration and starvation constitute a form of assault against the integrity of the body and the whole organism, and if the body reacts by releasing chemicals, this is a form of "shock" response to an escalating traumatic situation. As noted for Dr. Eddy’s mother, pain medications were required to control the significant suffering and discomfort that would otherwise have ensued from her dehydration/starvation.

Even those who promote VSED advocate uniformly for concurrent pain control. In fact, Helga Kuhse, a well-known advocate of assisted suicide, once argued that when people see how painful a death by starvation and dehydration really is, then, "in the patient's best interest," they will soon come to accept active euthanasia through, for example, a lethal injection. Indeed, VSED is frequently promoted by right-to-die advocates as one method among others to carry out suicide or euthanasia.

By its nature, VSED appears to be defined by the intent to cause death by forgoing the most basic requirements to conserve human life. Intentionally engaging in such damaging and self-destructive behaviors, by foisting dehydration and starvation onto our mortal frames so as to shutter our earthly existence, can never represent an ordered kind of human choice.

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

Questions asked in the life of the domestic church

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

As parents and children live their vocation as the Domestic Church, there are questions that need to be considered as each member participates in the Church in the home.

Here are five such questions.

What is spiritual warfare? Scripture and the Church teach us that we are in a cosmic struggle between good and evil. Through His death on the cross and His Resurrection, Jesus cancelled the power of sin and death. However, the devil, whose successful temptation of Adam and Eve brought sin and death into the world, is still active among us. As St. Peter teaches us in 1 Peter 5:8, "Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith" (RSVCE). A mortally wounded lion is still dangerous. Numerous Popes, including Pope Francis, have warned us about the danger of the devil. In the Baptismal liturgy, we renounce Satan and all his empty promises. We ignore the threat about evil and the evil one to our peril. Three of Satan’s primary weapons are deception, confusion, and division, and the family is under attack by Satan using all these weapons. One of the biggest deceptions Satan promotes is that he is not real. Evidence of confusion is all around us: confusion about objective morality — right and wrong, good and evil, truth and falsehood; about marriage and family; about sanctity of human life. Division is destructive: the division of couples, families, friends, co-workers, nations, the Church. Remember, speaking the name of Jesus casts out Satan and principalities and powers of darkness. Satan is a fallen angel (Rev. 12). He is not divine. He is not equal with Jesus. We can pray EPHESIANS 6:10-20, putting on the armor of God, when we are experiencing particular temptations or darkness and are in need of protection. We should pray the St. Michael prayer for ourselves and our family members every day. Even Jesus was tempted by Satan (Mt. 4:1-11, Mk. 1:12-13, Lk. 4:1-13). He understands the temptations we face, and He knows our weakness (Heb. 2:18, 4:15). In II Cor. 12:9 we read, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (RSVCE). Obviously, our conversation about the reality of evil in our world and the weapons God has given us to combat it will depend on the age and maturity of our children and grandchildren.

Can we be delivered from the burden of bad memories and generational sin? Healing of memories and deliverance from generational sin are necessary because of our fallen state. Each of us lives with brokenness, sin, hurts, and unforgiveness from our past and from family members of previous generations. There is urgent and critical need to pray for personal healing, healing of family relationships, healing of generational sin, and to work toward that healing. Parents should offer their children, teens, and especially young adult and adult children opportunities to talk about hurts, resentments, and unforgiveness from their growing up years so parents can ask forgiveness from their children and receive requests for forgiveness from their children. We need to do this as spouses with extended family as well.
The Ordination of Father Felix Archibong, Father Adam Droll and Father Ryan Rojo

Ordination Day

May 30, 2015

Cathedral Church of the Sacred Heart

San Angelo, Texas

Photos by Alan Torre / aptorre.com
Understanding and appreciating our differences

By Fr. Ron Rolheiser

It’s common for us to see God’s grace and blessing in what unites us. We naturally sense the presence of grace when, at our core, we feel a strong moral bond with certain other persons, churches, and faiths. That, biblically, is what defines family.

But what if what separates us, what if what makes other persons, churches, and faiths seem foreign and strange is also a grace, a difference intended by God? Can we think of our differences, as we think of our unity, as a gift from God? Most religions, including Christianity, would answer affirmatively.

Thus in both the Jewish and the Christian scriptures there is the strong, recurring motif that God’s message to us generally comes through the stranger, the foreigner, from the one who is different from us, from a source from which we would never expect to hear God’s voice. Added to this is the notion that when God speaks to us we generally experience it as a surprise, as something unexpected, and as something that does not easily square with our normal expectations as to how God should work and how we should learn. There’s a reason for this. Simply put, when we think we are hearing God’s voice in what’s familiar, comfortable, and secure, the temptation is always to reshape the message according to our own image and likeness, and so God often comes to us through the unfamiliar.

Moreover, what’s familiar is comfortable and offers us security; but, as we know, real transformative growth mostly happens when, like the aged Sarah and Abraham, we are forced to set off to a place that’s foreign and frightening and that strips us of all that is comfortable and secure. Set off, God told Sarah and Abraham, to a land where you don’t know where you’re going. Real growth happens and real grace breaks in when we have to deal with what is other, foreign, different. Learn to understand, writes John of the Cross, more by not understanding than by understanding. What’s dark, unfamiliar, frightening, and uninvited will stretch us in ways that the familiar and secure cannot. God sends his word to the earth through "angels" and they’re not exactly what we’re familiar with.

If this is true, then our differences are also a grace. Accordingly, seeing things differently does not mean that we are not seeing the same things. Accordingly, different notions about God and different ways of speaking about God do not mean that we’re speaking of a different God. The same holds true for our churches, having difference concepts of what it means to be church does not necessarily mean that there isn’t some deeper underlying unity inside our diversity. Similarly, for how we conceive of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, how we imagine Christ as being really present inside of bread and wine, can take many forms and can be spoken of in different ways, without it meaning that we’re speaking of a different reality.

John Paul II, addressing an interfaith gathering, once commented that "there are differences in which are reflected the genius and spiritual riches of God to the nations." Christian de Cherge, after a lifetime of dialogue with Islam, suggests that our differences have a "quasi-sacramental function", that is, they help to give real flesh in this world to the riches of God, who is ineffable and can never be captured in any one expression.

Our differences then are part of the mystery of our unity. Real unity, which needs to reflect the richness of God, does not exist in uniformity and homogenization, but only in bringing into harmony many different gifts and richness, like a beautiful bouquet of flowers brings together of a variety of different flowers inside one vase. Our legitimate differences are rooted inside of the same God. This has implications for every area of our lives, from how we receive immigrants in our countries, to how we deal with different personalities inside our families and places of work, to how we deal with other Christian denominations and other religions. Without endorsing a naive syncretism and without denying the rightful place for discernment, it must still be affirmed that our differences, conceived as an expression of a deeper unity that we cannot yet conceive, open us up more fully to the deep unfathomable, ineffable mystery of God and, at the same time, prevents us from making an idol of our own ideas, our own religious traditions, our own ways of understanding faith, and our own theologies and ideologies. Moreover, accepting differences as being intended by God and as the presence of grace in our lives should prevent us from constructing our identity, particularly our religious identity, on the basis of opposition to others and the unhealthy need to forever protest our own uniqueness and truth against what’s other.

God loves us all equally. Difference, then, understood as part of the mystery of unity, should help keep us humble and honest enough to let others take their proper place before God.

Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser, theologian, teacher, and award-winning author, is President of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, TX. He can be contacted through his website www.rolheiser.com.

‘The Avengers,’ Nietzsche and the future of humanity

By Very Rev. Robert Barron

C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, and their colleagues in the Inklings wanted to write fiction that would effectively “evangelize the imagination,” accustoming the minds, especially of young people, to the hearing of the Christian Gospel. Accordingly, Tolkien’s Gandalf is a figure of Jesus the prophet and Lewis’s Aslan a representation of Christ as both sacrificial victim and victorious king. Happily, the film versions of both The Lord of the Rings and The Chronicles of Narnia have proven to be wildly popular all over the world. Not so happily, Joss Whedon’s “Avenger” films, the second of which has just appeared, work as a sort of antidote to Tolkien and Lewis, shaping the imaginations of young people so as to receive a distinctly different message. It is certainly relevant to my purpose here to note that Whedon, the auteur behind Buffy The Vampire Slayer, Firefly, and many other well-received films and television programs, is a self-avowed atheist and has, on many occasions, signaled his particular dissatisfaction with the Catholic Church.

I won’t rehearse in too much detail the plot of Avengers: Age of Ultron. Suffice it to say that the world is threatened by an artificial intelligence, by the name of Ultron, who has run amok and incarnated himself in a particularly nasty robotic body. Ultron wants to destroy the human race and has produced an army of robots as his posse. Enter the Avengers—Tony Stark (Iron Man), the Hulk, Black Widow, Captain America, Hawkeye, and Thor—to do battle with the dark forces. There is an awful lot of CGI bumping and banging and blowing things up, but when the rubble settles, we see that the real struggle is over a perfect body—a synthesis of machine and flesh—that Ultron, with the help of brainwashed scientists, is designing for himself. After pursuing the bad guys on a wild ride through the streets of Seoul, the Avengers recover the body, and Thor, using one of the fundamental building blocks of the universe or lightning or something, brings it to life. Exuding light, intelligence, and calmness of spirit, this newly created robot/human/god floats above the ground and announces that his name is “I am.” Just before his climactic battle with Ultron, “I am” declares that order and chaos are two sides of the same coin and that wickedness is never eliminated but keeps coming around in an endless cycle.

Although some have seen Biblical themes at work in all of this, I see pretty much the opposite, namely, an affirmation of a Nietzschean view of life. Whedon, who was a philosophy student at university, delights in dropping references to the great thinkers in his work, and one of the most cited in “Ultron” is none other than the man I take to be the most influential of the 19th century philosophers, Friedrich Nietzsche. At a key moment in the film, Ultron in fact utters Nietzsche’s most famous one-liner: “what does not kill me makes me stronger,” and the observation made by the newly-created “I am” is a neat expression of Nietzsche’s doctrine of the eternal return of the same. At the heart of the German philosopher’s work is the declaration of the death of God, which

(Please See BARRON/22)
Catholic Voices

Moving forward, with the Holy Spirit in tow

By Carolyn Y. Woo
Catholic News Service

Recently, Holy Cross Father Theodore M. Hesburgh, president emeritus of the University of Notre Dame, passed away at the age of 97. During my years at Notre Dame, Father Ted, as some of us called him, became a mentor and a friend whose guidance has been imprinted on every decision I made since our first meeting in 1997.

His hallmark advice was to invoke the Holy Spirit at all times. "Just pray, 'Come, Holy Spirit,'" he would say. In fact, Father Ted would emphasize that there are no situations in which it would be inappropriate or unnecessary to call on the Holy Spirit.

While I had learned about the Holy Spirit, I did not actively invoke the Spirit. At Notre Dame, I developed the habit of stopping at the grotto in the morning for prayer and reflection, departing with the plea, "Father, Son, Holy Spirit and Blessed Mother: Today is a workday and we all need to go to work." At the office, I would bring a cup of coffee into the tiny rosary chapel down the hall -- as I do now at St. Stephen's chapel at Catholic Relief Services -- take in the aroma of the brew, place my hands around the cup to feel its warmth, and "talk" about the day with the Father, Son, Holy Spirit and Blessed Mother.

When I am dealing with "unwinnable" situations (regular fare for administrators), I note explicitly that God does not ask us to win, just to show up, give our best, do what we think is right and, most important, to remember that the Holy Spirit will be with us.

I sometimes leave a chair empty for the Holy Spirit, a physical reminder casting back to the sisters' admonition at high school dances that the couple should hold each other at arms' length, leaving room for the Holy Spirit. I am keenly aware of my shortcomings and find peace when I have asked the Holy Spirit to take over: please possess me.

The next morning, after grappling with the unwinnable, I muse on those occasions when I did not control my emotions as I had wished, showing exasperation, frustration and even tears. I wonder whether the unintended expressions were the Spirit at work.

It is interesting that commencement sea-

The duty we have to save and nourish life

By Moises Sandoval
Catholic News Service

My friend of many years, Emma Gomez, from New Mexico, asked me one day several years ago: "What do you do for pain?" Since she begins each day with Mass and the Eucharist, I thought she wanted to know whether I prayed over my pain and offered it up. But she was interested in what pills I was taking and I was of no help. I am one of those who endure without them if at all possible.

I thought about this conversation recently while pondering over a bill in the Connecticut legislature called by its proponents "aid in dying" and by its opponents, including the Catholic Church, as "assisted suicide.

It is no surprise we have come to this stage. We have a pill for every pain or discomfort we might experience, from headache to muscle ache, restless legs, stiff joints, diabetes, nerve pain on the bottom of our feet, lack of sleep, anxiety, soreness, depression and countless other maladies.

Whatever bodily dysfunction we might experience, there is a pill for it, produced by a pharmaceutical industry earning tremendous profits. In addition, we have alcohol and drugs of an infinite variety, some legal and others illegal, used to cope with life's stresses.

And when the end is near, we have medications to help us endure the pain, no longer hoping to make us well but to help us endure, a compassionate response to suffering.

Now, in Connecticut, as in three other states, we could have a pill to end life at a time of our choosing. The legislation would allow a physician to prescribe "a medication that [the] patient can self-ingest," if the patient, being of sound mind and having no more than six months to live, decided to give up and die. The proponents call it a "compassionate choice." I think such a law would be a big mistake.

Almost 40 years ago, I was at the same stage. I was critically ill with the effects of an amoebic abscess in the liver that burst into my chest and filled my heart sac with inflammation. Almost no one survives. During the weeks I was in intensive care in Lenox Hill Hospital in Manhattan, everyone who cared for me bolstered my hope.

I particularly remember a nurse who took a special interest in me. She was of Irish descent, perhaps 35 years old, with a stocky frame and brown hair. She had an inner beauty I will never forget. She came into my cubicle daily and, instantly sensing when I was discouraged, held my hand and cheered me.

My weight had dropped to 90 pounds. I was emaciated. I could hardly stand. But every day, she got me out of bed, put her arm around me and took me for a walk down the hall.

One Friday afternoon, she told me, "I have the weekend off. I want you to promise me that you will be here when I get back on Monday." I did not want to disappoint her. I regret that I do not now remember her name.

That nurse and everyone else fulfilled what I see as the only roles of medical care: to save and nourish life. It seems seductive to choose when to die, but assisted suicide is a Rubicon we should not cross: too many risks, possibilities for abuse. Worse, it is morally wrong. It will demean all of life. Is the fullness of life to avoid pain, or to learn and grow from it?
Our Faith

Divorced woman wants to become Catholic; Holy water fonts

By Father Kenneth Doyle
Catholic News Service

Q. I am a 68-year-old woman and am seriously considering converting to Catholicism. But I have been married more than once, have now been divorced for 11 years, and, prior to the divorce, was separated for 10 years.

I was exposed to Catholicism at an early age (when the service was in Latin), and I remember many of the prayers. Now I read online that I cannot become a Catholic because I am divorced. Is that true? If it is a sin to divorce, I thought that Jesus forgives those who sin. I feel that, although my life has been difficult, I am at the same time very blessed. I really need to know what I can do to become a Catholic, or is it an impossible desire? (Laurel, Maryland)

A. Your question is a complicated one, and the answer, which I learned when I consulted a canon lawyer, surprised even me. My top-of-the-head response would have been that, since you are not currently married, you would be free to become a Catholic.

But what I learned was this: Since you entered into a second marriage while you may still have had an existing marital bond, under the church's current legislation, this would present an obstacle to your entrance into the Catholic Church.

Remember that the Catholic Church recognizes, as valid, marriages that take place when two people exchange consent according to the norms of their own faith traditions. So presumptively your first marriage "counted" and precluded you, in the Catholic Church's eyes, from entering into a second marriage.

The church is guided by the words of Jesus on the indissolubility of marriage, found in Matthew 19:6: "Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate." Divorce itself is not necessarily sinful. (Sometimes a divorce happens with virtually no responsibility on the part of one of the spouses.) What is prohibited is a second marriage while a previous bond still exists.

What you should do is talk with a priest about the circumstances of your first marriage. It may be that your first spouse is already deceased, in which case there would be no obstacle; or perhaps your first spouse was a Catholic who married outside the church, which would be grounds for nullity.

So it could be that your way is clear to seek entrance into the Catholic faith, but I would need to know more about the circumstances of your first marriage.

Q. At the entrance to our worship space, we have a free-standing baptismal font with a waterfall. Engraved around the top edge are the words, "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Since we dedicated this space some 10 years ago, we have been going to this font upon entering and leaving church and marking ourselves with the sign of the cross as a reminder of our baptism. (This, according to our liturgical architect, is what it was designed to be used for.)

Now, some parishioners have asked (and our pastor has agreed) that holy water fonts be attached to the wall (within two steps of the font.) They say that it is inconvenient for people to walk the extra distance to the font and that children cannot reach the water in the font. Our pastor says that, henceforward, the baptismal font is to be used only for baptisms.

I don’t understand the theology of this. When the font was built, we researched this extensively and came to understand that the baptismal font is the "womb and the tomb" of our faith, and we catechized parishioners on the importance of approaching the font whenever they were entering or leaving the church.

Can you explain this for me and many of my fellow parishioners? (Virginia)

A. A fair number of churches now have a baptismal font, which flows continuously, reminding congregants of the "living waters" of baptism. Those arriving for worship do often bless themselves with this water, recalling their own baptism into Christ. Often, I would think, that water is technically not yet "holy water," since it is during the baptismal ceremony itself that the water is blessed for the sacrament.

Perhaps your pastor is simply placing the smaller fonts where worshippers (including both children and the elderly) can access them more easily, or perhaps he prefers to pronounce the customary prayers of blessing over that water before it is poured into the fonts.

Questions may be sent to Father Kenneth Doyle at askfatherdoyle@gmail.com and 40 Hopewell St., Albany, N.Y. 12208.

'Humbition' and leading from the center, not the top

By Father William J. Byron, SJ
Catholic News Service

I’ve been thinking a lot these days about the geometry of leadership. Those thoughts are prompted by invitations I’ve had to speak to college students about leadership and also by the recent death of a great educational leader, Holy Cross Father Theodore M. Hesburgh, and by the emergence in Iowa and New Hampshire of presidential hopefuls as the primary season begins to heat up.

By mentioning the "geometry of leadership," I’m calling attention to a top-of-the-pyramid perspective on leadership. Many impute a "king of the hill" attitude to the mind of the leader.

Draw a triangle and picture yourself at the top; the horizontal line running from left to right below can support a wide base of potential followers. They may or may not be responsive to orders from above. If they are, you are exercising leadership. If not, you are whistling in the wind. And note, by the way, the possibility of impalement that is associated with a position at the top of the triangle!

It can be lonely at the top. The top can also be an out-of-touch, can-hardly-see-you, certainly-can’t-hear-you perch that is usually accompanied by title and perks, but is largely ineffective as a power source or center of influence. I recommend instead a "center-of-the-circle" image of leadership.

There you are, at the center, on a level plane, able to be seen and heard as you yourself see and hear, able to lift (encourage) and touch (pat on the back) because you are also one of the on-the-ground followers even though you carry the title of leader.

I urge students to keep in mind the geometry of leadership as they approach graduation and the world of work, indeed as they work their way toward the top in any career, understanding as they go that the top is really in the center and on common ground with their partners in the enterprise.

Few business schools teach that leadership is a blend of humility and ambition. I recommend that blend, however; it is an amalgam of humility and ambition known as "humbition," a word worth adding to the would-be leader’s vocabulary. Most films and novels about business overlook humility altogether in their portrayal of business leaders and in their depiction of the qualities of effective leadership.

The qualities that are needed to be a good leader in any organization are integrity, honesty, intelligence, creativity, character, service and commitment. To gain an even fuller understanding of the nature of leadership, you have to add some additional qualities: decisiveness, compassion, respect for human dignity, persistence, perseverance, steadiness and vigor.

A will to succeed has to be there, too; without it, not much is likely to happen.

So there you have it, the geometry of leadership. It applies to business, politics and any form of organizational life. Let those who want to lead ponder the meaning of all the qualities I’ve listed. Let those who elect or appoint others to positions of leadership use these qualities as selection criteria.
Giving yourself time to rest

By Bill Dodds
Catholic News Service

Sometimes I sense that God is telling me to rest awhile. And I strongly suspect that sometimes that's what he's telling you.

I've come to realize what I need to pay attention to, what I need to remind myself of, is Christ telling the apostles to "come away ... and rest awhile" (Mk 6:31). I can't set down all the "crosses" I carry each day, but I can cut myself some slack.

It might seem a little harsh to refer to raising children, caring for an aging loved one or even volunteering at a school or parish as a "cross." But, certainly, there are aspects of doing any one of those things that calls for you to "deny yourself" and shoulder on. But resting also is necessary to keep going forward.

So, how can you come away and rest awhile? Or maybe better put, "get away and rest awhile"?

You're probably familiar with the idea that there are sins of "commission" and sins of "omission." In the words of the Confiteor: what you have done and what you have failed to do. In a similar way, you can get away by doing something or by not doing something.

How can you get away by doing something? A week at the beach might be lovely, but your kids might notice you weren't around the house. On the other hand, it might be possible to see if you can squeeze in a short afternoon nap, or a walk around the block, or 30 minutes of a television show, or just 10 pages of reading that book you've been trying to complete since you went to the hospital for the birth of your first child.

You can also "get away" by not doing something, by excusing yourself from an activity. Don't consider yourself a failure if you're not the perfect parent, the perfect caregiver or the perfect volunteer. You can let that go. You're not the perfect anything and you never will be and that's OK.

Then, too, not doing something can mean saying no.

You can say, "No, darling child, you can't be on the basketball team and then go right into softball. Choose one or the other."

You can say, "I can't personally provide all the help you need at this point. We're going to have to bring in outside help."

You can say, "No, parish director of religious education, I'm not going to be the fifth-grade teacher again this year. You'll have to find someone else."

The simple truth is that saying no can be a very positive thing to say, especially if the Holy Spirit has been nudging you to slow down. Don't be so overwhelmingly concerned about others that you have disregard for yourself.

Loving your neighbor as yourself includes loving yourself.

A Lenten lesson you can practice throughout life

By Father Eugene Hemrick
Catholic News Service

On a recent trip out West, I once again became aware of one of St. John XXIII's reasons for initiating the Second Vatican Council: to encourage the church to adjust to changing times.

It's no exaggeration to say that much of today's life is shifting dramatically and calling for drastic changes. When I was in California, residents there were talking about passing laws and taking other measures to preserve water, since the state finds itself going through a historic drought.

After my visit to California, I traveled to Portland, Oregon. At the airport, I rode its light rail into the city, and while in the city, I noticed its vast transformation over the decades.

In both experiences, the common denominators seemed to be conservation, sacrifice and austerity.

In the case of water consumption in California, the public was asked to cut down on watering their lawns, among other measures. Hotels and institutions were asked to curtail excessive use of water, and recycling water was highly encouraged everywhere. Because of the drought, a plant to remove salt from ocean water is under construction near San Diego.

In Portland, people had to endure streets being torn up and trains invading their neighborhoods in order to have fewer cars on the road to reduce pollution. They also had to endure losing some of city's antiquity because of the rail.

In both cases, there was resistance. Some people in California complained about the farmers' use of water. They were told farmers need water so they can produce food that people can eat.

In Portland, there was resistance from wealthy home- owners who didn't want a streetcar from Lake Oswego to Portland going through their neighborhood. Even in Washington, D.C., where streetcars are being reintroduced to the city, some people complain that the wires overhead destroy the look of the neighborhood.

It is no exaggeration to say that any politician running on a platform of conservation, sacrifice and austerity would have little chance of winning. And yet if droughts continue, if air pollution increases, if global warming continues and the fish in our oceans become scarce or disappear, Mother Nature just might create its own age of austerity.

During Lent, we were reminded to do with less in order to better appreciate God's blessings. Austerity is one of life's golden rules!

We can appreciate this lesson beyond Lent. Perhaps austerity can be used as a means to effectively cope with change, to create a brighter future, if we practice it throughout life and learn to take better care of our resources.
Confirmation 2014-2015

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Odessa

St. Ann's, Midland

St. Mary's, Odessa

(Photo by Alan P. Torre).
Confirmation 2014-2015

San Miguel Arcangel-Midland (above), and Our Lady of Perpetual Help-Ozona, below. (Photos by Alan P. Torre).

Deacon Art Casares spoke on what a covenant means to the church and how it relates to our current day affairs.

"A covenant is like a legal contract that can’t be broken," he said. "God has kept his covenant and the people said that they would do what He asks. God has always kept his end of the covenant, but somehow we have failed to complete our end."

Deacon Casares briefly spoke about an opportunity he had the night before the Corpus Christi procession to speak of the many ways that God has been a part of his life and bailed him out of many situations.

"He still stands firmly by us," said Deacon Casares. "Our God is an awesome God and helps us through all the things we encounter in life. We are the ones that sometimes give up. Our commitment as individuals has to be hand-in-hand with God."

Deacon Casares added that even when we fail, we have to remain confident that God is going to stay by our side.
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Newman Center 50th

The Newman Center, on the
campus of Angelo State
University, celebrated 50 years of campus ministry,
Saturday, April 18. Presenters
and honored guests at the
event included, top row (l-r):
Joe Munoz, Senior Executive
Assistant to Angelo State
President Brian May; Bethany
Brunell, current student
leader at Newman; Sr.
Rebecca Otter, OP, Campus
Ministry Director (1975-82);
Bishop Michael Sis; Sr. Kathy
Kudiac, OSF, current director,
and Ed Gerber former student
member. Seated (l-r), Sr.
Malachy Griffin, OP, director,
(1984-2010); Alejandra
Perales, current student
leader at Newman; and
Loretta Burgess, active member
and mother to two ASU
students. Not pictured:
Bishop Michael Pfeifer, Msgr.
Bernard Guly.

CENTENNIAL

(From 4)
in the generations who attend and the expan-
sion of the buildings themselves – much has
remained the same, Zapata said.
“The young ones have grown up, gotten
married and had their children baptized here,”
said Zapata, adding that he was married in the
parish and his two children were baptized
there.
Gilbert Gallegos’ parents and grandparents
were charter members of the church. Gallegos
was a member of the church until he moved to
Sacred Heart Cathedral, where he and his wife
were married, but he said celebrating St.
Margaret’s anniversary was a way for him to
reminisce and honor his grandparents and
father, who are now deceased.
“It was rough at first,” he said of the
church’s beginnings. “Everybody would do
what they could to pitch in.”
St. Margaret was formed after Most Rev.
Thomas Drury, first Bishop of San Angelo,
stopped by Gallegos’ parents’ home while they
were holding catechism classes there.
“The bishop said, ‘We need to get a church
over here,’” Gallegos said.
At first, the church and hall were one and
the same. “All the festivals and celebrations
were done there. We would take the chairs
down to have Mass,” Gallegos said.
Fr. Adam Droll, 26, is a lifetime member of
St. Margaret’s and the parish’s first member to
become a priest. Droll celebrated his first Mass
in the parish following his May 30 ordination.
“I was baptized here at 3 weeks old,” Droll
said. “I’m really excited to celebrate my first
Mass with this community. There are people
who have been here the whole 50 years, so to
be part of that is amazing.”
Droll said he remembers attending the
church when it didn’t have a priest. “We had a
permanent deacon running the affairs,” he said.
“Whenver we finally got a pastor, there was a
lot more life, I think. People felt this wasn’t a
dying parish.”

Though St. Margaret’s is relatively young
compared to other parishes in the diocese, Sis
did recognizing its anniversary provides an
opportunity for parishioners to reflect on
where they’ve been and where they’re going.
“Celebrating an anniversary of a church
community helps us to assess our mission and
our goals,” Sis said. “It also helps us to
express gratitude to God for guiding a commu-
nity over the years. … (and) is an opportunity
for us to really commit ourselves to active
stewardship so that the community may grow
and thrive. An event like this helps those of all
ages to appreciate the wisdom figures, and it
encourages the young to make this community
their home.”

(From 5)
“That’s where we are today,” said Diaz, the
great- grandson of the founders.
Other Pantoja descendents, who came
from as far as Georgia and New Mexico, also
were present for the celebration and to honor
the legacy of the Pantojas.
When the couple came to Loraine in 1905,
Antonio found work on a ranch owned by
“80 John” Wallace, a well-respected African-
American rancher who bought his first herd
from money saved while working on another
man’s ranch.
Some of the ancestors at the anniversary
celebration remembered growing up with
their “Grand Pa Pa,” as he was called. Vickey
Washington, a granddaughter who now lives
in Augusta, Ga., was 10 when Antonio died.
“He was my life,” Washington said.
Even as a child growing up in Loraine,
Washington realized the prejudice against her
family and other Mexican immigrants in
the community. She also noticed something spe-
cial about how people treated her grandfa-
ther.
“There was so much racism,” she said, “but
not against him.”
Participating in the service was Manuela
Pantoja, a granddaughter of the founders who
has lived in Loraine all her life. She was 14
when her grandfather died.
“He used to come to open the church,”
Pantoja remembered.
In wintertime, he would get the wood stove
going so that the church would be warm for
worshippers. In summertime, he would come
early to open the windows, letting the cool
morning air freshen the church.
She related the story of her grandparents
that has been passed down through the gener-
ations. Her grandfather moved from his
native Mexico to California at age 14. His
mother insisted he go because revolutionaries
were recruiting young boys to join them.
Pantoja and another boy stayed in
California four years. After returning to
Mexico at age 18, Pantoja soon yearned for
California.
He married and was the father of a six-
month-old daughter when the promise of
plentiful jobs in Texas lured the family away.
Manuela Pantoja wasn’t sure why they
chose Loraine, but they possibly ran out of
money and were forced off the train at the
Loraine depot. They lived in a tent until
Antonio Pantoja got a ranching job.
For whatever reason Antonio and Maria
settled in Loraine and made an impact on the
lives of their fellow Catholics, who still
revere them 100 years later. If not for Maria’s
insistence that “we need to do something
about this” and Antonio’s willingness to
make the long train ride to Abilene to talk a
priest into coming to Loraine, St. Joseph’s
Church might not be here.
It is a great legacy that not only descend-
ants of the church’s founders, but also
untold numbers of Catholics in the area, cher-
ish to this day.
Manuela Pantoja, the granddaughter who
never left Loraine, clings to the memory of
her “Grand Pa Pa” and how he was respected
by members of the community. She remem-
bers the pride she felt when he told her about
opening the church on Sunday mornings.
“I’m still proud of him,” she said.

(From 5)
A common cause of physical ailments is the unwillingness to forgive others and the unwillingness to receive forgiveness from God and others—as well as the difficulty of forgiving ourselves. We should remember Jesus teaching us that if our brother has something against us, to go first to forgive him and then come to God’s altar. Do not wait for the person to come to us and ask forgiveness (Mt. 5:23-24). (For prayers of protection from Satan, deliverance, and healing of generational sin, we recommend Spiritual Warfare Prayers published by Valentine Publishing House.)

**Is our temperament a gift from God?** The classical temperament types—sanguine, choleric, melancholic, phlegmatic—were named by Hippolytus in ancient Greece and have been used by the Church down through the centuries as one way of understanding the human person. Our temperament is how we are "hardwired" by God who created us. The reason for learning about our temperaments is to provide insights to enable us to be fully who God wants us to be in relation to Him and others. Also, God will transform the negative aspects of our temperament, which are caused by sin, when we submit to Him. Two very enlightening and helpful books are “The Temperament God Gave You” and “The Temperament God Gave Your Spouse,” by Art and Laraine Bennett. Two other helpful books are Florence Littauer’s “Personality Plus for Parents: Understanding What Makes Your Child Tick,” and Gary D. Chapman’s “The Five Languages of Children.”

**What is the greatest gift parents can give their children and grandchildren?** The finest gift parents can give their children and grandchildren is a strong, loving, prayerful Christian marriage. In this way the sacrament of matrimony becomes a great healing sacrament for the Church and our culture. The relationship of husband and wife is a participation in the relationship of Christ and His Church. Husbands and wives should show affection and other acts of kindness and love to each other, children, and grandchildren. It is important for dads to show affection to sons as well as daughters, and moms should do the same. We should find ways to communicate to our spouse, children, and grandchildren that each is God’s beloved. Life tends to beat us down, discourage us, and try to defeat us; therefore, it is imperative that we affirm and encourage one another in the home as the Body of Christ. Unconditional love, forgiveness, communication, and prayer are essentials of a strong Christian marriage, and therefore, of a Christian family. Unity is a gift of the Holy Spirit through prayer. Couples must pray together every day to grow in humility in order to be of one heart, will, mind, and body with Christ. A good way to begin praying together is to hold hands and pray the Our Father before going to sleep. As J.A. Maten writes, "It is a reciprocal love in marriage, a man and woman in union will reflect in a very real and visible way the Presence of Jesus and the Mystery of the Incarnation, alive through the manifestation of love in union with Christ" ("Shrine Herald," 1-29-06). It is the responsibility of couples to recognize signs of an unhealthy marriage such as unresolved differences about parenting, finances, and extended family. It is their responsibility to recognize destructive patterns of behavior with each other and with their children. In faithfulness to the marriage covenant with Christ, parents can seek help from their priest and professional counselors recommended by the Diocese who are trained in marriage and family counseling. Most of all, couples should pray together and pray with the entire family for humility, forgiveness, understanding, reconciliation, and healing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Part of the gift to children by their parents of a loving Christian marriage and home is teaching children and teens the truth about human sexuality. They should not receive their understanding of human sexuality from the media, their peers, or even their school.Parents must teach them the Biblical Christian understanding of the dignity of each person, the beauty of sexuality, and objective morality. The only Christian option is chastity/purity before marriage and faithfulness in marriage. Fornication, adultery, and homosexual acts are sins, as Scripture and the Church teach. Catholic Christian families should be counter-cultural by standing strong in their moral values. St. John Paul II’s Theology of the Body and the book and DVD Theology of the Body for Teens are excellent resources.

**What does our Catholic Christian faith teach us about freedom?** Our culture teaches us that we should be the captain of our ship and the master of our souls, that we should be free to do our own thing. We need to understand that there are levels of freedom. Freedom is an important issue for adults, teens, and children—something we deal with every day in our thinking and decision making, at home, at school, at work, at church—wherever we are. Very simply stated, we can think of freedom on four levels:

- Freedom is having what I "want" with the emphasis on "want" (not need).
- Freedom is having what “I” want with the emphasis on “I, me, and mine.”
- Freedom is seeking a higher good for myself and others.
- The highest level of freedom is submitting my will to God's will, to God's truth.

Jesus tells us, "I am the way and the truth and the life" (Jn. 14:6a) "And you will know the truth and the truth will set you free" (Jn. 8:32). The ultimate freedom is being freed from subjection to self and liberated by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to live according to His plan for our lives. This is such an important teaching of Jesus that we find this truth of the Christian faith in all four Gospels. In Mark 8:35 we read, "For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake will save it." (RSVCE) As Richard M. Hogan, in his book Dissent from the Creed, says: "The Holy Father points out that freedom and truth are two sides of the same coin. We are made in God's image; therefore we are free. But God is not only freedom; He is also Truth. Freedom and truth are both united in God and are not in opposition. They should not be in conflict in us...The Church teaches the truth which makes us free, and freedom guarantees that we can seek the truth" (323).

To quote St. John Paul II in The Role of the Family in the Modern World: (52): "The future of evangelization depends in great part on the Church of the home. This apostolic mission of the family is rooted in Baptism and receives from the grace of the Sacrament of marriage new strength to transmit the faith, to sanctify and transform our present society according to God's plan." Then, quoting *Lumen Gentium*, he says, "The Christian family loudly proclaims both the present virtues of the Kingdom of God and the hope of a blessed life to come."
OBISPO

(Para 3)

¿Cómo está amenazada la libertad religiosa hoy en día? A escala mundial, la persecución religiosa es cada vez mayor. Según el Foro Pew Centro de Investigación sobre Religión y Vida Pública, el 70% de la población mundial vive en países donde la fe religiosa está muy restringida. La Sociedad Internacional para los Derechos Humanos informa que 150,000 cristianos son asesinados cada año por la fe. Algunas estimaciones indican que, durante el siglo 20, 45 millones de cristianos murieron por su fe. El Papa Francisco ha reconocido que hoy hay más mártires cristianos que en cualquier otro momento de nuestra historia. En China hay represión periódica contra los Budistas Tibetanos, Musulmanes, Católicos, y Protestantes. La Iglesia en Vietnam ha sufrido tremenda persecución por el gobierno en los años recientes. En Irak, ISIS atacó a la comunidad cristiana de Nínive la cual ha existido ya por 2,000 años. Hogares cristianos fueron marcados con una "N" en árabe la cual significa "Nazareno". Los cristianos han sido ya sea deportados o asesinados, y sus antiguas iglesias se están destruyendo y profanando. Casi todos los días encontramos nuevos informes de actos brutales de terror contra los cristianos perpetrados por grupos con interpretaciones extremistas del Islam. La libertad religiosa también se ve amenazada en muchas partes de Europa Occidental y América del Norte, donde la expresión pública de la religión y los valores religiosos tradicionales son cada vez menos acogidos. En los Estados Unidos, mientras que la libertad de religión es la "primera libertad" protegida en la Primera Enmienda de la Carta de Derechos, muchas voces en nuestra cultura contemporánea nos dicen que la fe religiosa no tiene derecho a afectar la manera en que hacemos negocios en el mundo.

En algunos estados, por ejemplo, aquellos que intentan vivir sus vidas de una manera que sea consistente con sus creencias religiosas sinceras acerca de la verdadera naturaleza del matrimonio son etiquetados como odio y fanáticos. Ha habido muchos casos en que las personas que tratan de vivir su vida pública en conformidad con su fe han sido forzadas por las presiones sociales y gubernamentales a cumplir con el nuevo consenso social. En una democracia que respeta verdaderamente la libertad religiosa, el estado no debe tratar de coaccionar a la conciencia religiosa.

En los primeros siglos de nuestra fe Cristiana, nuestros antepasados en la Iglesia enfrentaron la opción de o confirmar los dioses romanos o de ser echado a los leones. Muchos de los cristianos del Medio Oriente de hoy en día se les han dado la opción de convertirse al Islam, o el exilio, o la muerte. En los Estados Unidos, los católicos y otros cristianos comprometidos se están ofreciendo la opción de o ceder a la norma cultural contemporánea o de sufrir la pena por el gobierno. Todos estos casos demuestran una intolerancia de las enseñanzas tradicionales de nuestra fe. La libertad religiosa no es un derecho creado por el Estado. Es un derecho humano fundamental que viene de Dios. El tema para la Quincena para la Libertad de este año es "La libertad para dar testimonio." Oremos durante las dos semanas de esta celebración que Dios pueda fortalecer nuestra propia voluntad de dar testimonio a la verdad del Evangelio.

Para encontrar las actividades sugeridas para marcar la Quincena por la Libertad en casa o en la parroquia local, consulte la página web especial de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de los Estados Unidos en www.Fortnight4Freedom.org.

BISHOP

(From 3)

In China there are periodic crackdowns on Tibetan Buddhists, Muslims, Catholics, and Protestants. The Church in Vietnam has suffered tremendous persecution by the government in recent years. In Iraq, ISIS attacked the 2,000-year-old Christian community of Nineveh. Christian homes were marked with an Arabic “N” for “Nazarene.” Christians have been either deported or killed, and their ancient churches are being destroyed and desecrated. Almost every day we encounter new reports of brutal acts of terror against Christians perpetrated by groups with extremist interpretations of Islam.

Religious liberty is also threatened in many parts of Western Europe and North America, where the public expression of religion and traditional religious values are increasingly unwelcome. In the United States, while the freedom of religion is the “first freedom” enshrined in the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights, many voices in our contemporary culture tell us that religious faith has no right to affect how we do business in the world.

In some states, for example, those who attempt to live their lives in a way that is consistent with their sincerely held religious beliefs about the true nature of marriage are labeled as haters and bigots. There have been many cases where people trying to live their public lives in conformity with their faith have been coerced by social and governmental pressures to comply with the new social consensus. In a democracy that truly respects religious liberty, the state should not attempt to coerce the religious conscience.

In the first few centuries of our Christian faith, our ancestors in the Church faced the option of either affirming the Roman gods or being fed to the lions. Many of today’s Middle Eastern Christians are being given the choice of either converting to Islam, exile, or death. In the United States, Catholics and other committed Christians are being offered the choice of either giving in to the contemporary cultural norm or facing punishment by the government. All these cases demonstrate an intolerance of the traditional teachings of our faith.

Religious freedom is not a right created by the state. It is a fundamental human right that comes from God. The theme for this year’s Fortnight for Freedom is “The Freedom to Bear Witness.” Let us pray during the two weeks of this observance that God may strengthen our own resolve to bear witness to the truth of the Gospel.

To find suggested activities for marking the Fortnight for Freedom at home or in the local parish, please see the special web page of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops at www.Fortnight4Freedom.org.

BARRON

(From 14)

signals that all values are relative, that we live in a space “beyond good and evil.” Into that space, Nietzsche contends, the Übermensch, the superman, should confidently stride. This is a human being who has thrown off the shackles of religion and conventional morality and is able to exercise fully his Wille zur Macht (Will to Power). Asserting this will, the superman defines himself completely on his own terms, effectively becoming a god. Here we see the significant influence of Nietzsche on Sartre and the other existentialists of the twentieth century.

The Avengers is chock-a-block with Ubermensch, powerful, willful people who assert themselves through technology and the hyper-violence that that technology makes possible. And the most remarkable instance of this technologically informed self-assertion is the creation of the savior figure, who self-identifies with the very words of Yahweh in the book of Exodus. But he is not the Word become flesh; instead, he is the coming together of flesh and robotics, produced by the flexing of the all too human will to power. I find it fascinating that this pseudo-savior was brought about by players on both sides of the divide, by both Iron Man and Ultron. Like Nietzsche’s superman, he is indeed beyond good and evil—which is precisely why he cannot definitively solve the problems that bedevil the human race and can only glumly predict the eternal return of trouble. If you have any doubts about the Nietzschean intention of Joss Whedon, take a good look at the image that plays as The Avengers comes to a close. It is a neo-classical sculpture of all of the major figures in the film locked in struggle, straining against one another. It is in complete conformity with the aesthetic favored by Albert Speer, Leni Riefenstahl, and the other artists of the Nazi period.

What the Christian evangelist can seize upon in this film is the frank assertion that the will to power—even backed up by stunningly sophisticated technology—never finally solves our difficulties, that it, in point of fact, makes things worse. See the Tower of Babel narrative for the details. And this admission teases the mind to consider the possibility that the human predicament can be addressed finally only through the invasion of grace. Once that door is opened, the Gospel can be proclaimed.

Msgr. Robert Barron is the director of Word on Fire Ministry.
Deadline to apply for seminarian scholarships nears

SAN ANTONIO—Catholic Life Insurance is accepting applications for the 2015 Msgr. Albert G. Henkes and Msgr. Lawrence J. Stuebben Scholarships. These scholarships are designed to offset tuition expenses of Roman Catholic seminarians. The deadline to apply is June 15, 2015.

Rev. Msgr. Stuebben Scholarship Fund: Students attending Assumption Seminary in San Antonio, Texas, may apply for the Rev. Msgr. Lawrence J. Stuebben Seminarian Scholarship. Scholarships totaling more than $165,000 have been awarded through this non-profit fund since its establishment in 1994.

Rev. Msgr. Henkes Scholarship Fund: Any seminarian studying for a diocese located in Texas, Arizona, Florida, Louisiana, Oklahoma, New Mexico or Mississippi may apply for the Rev. Msgr. Albert George Henkes Seminarian Scholarship. Scholarships totaling close to $180,000 have been awarded through this non-profit fund since its 1987 establishment.

Applications may be found online at www.cliu.com in the “Community Involvement” section, by contacting the Communications Department at (210) 828-9921 or 1-800-292-2548, by sending an email to branch@cliu.com, or by writing to Catholic Life Insurance, Attn: Communications Department, P.O. Box 659527, San Antonio, TX 78265-9527.

St. Mary’s First Communion Class

CORRECTION: This photo, first published in the May 2015 West Texas Angelus, was incorrectly identified. The group of students above represent the 2014-2015 First Communion Class at St. Mary’s Church in Odessa.
International Day
St. Mary’s Catholic School, Odessa

Students at St. Mary’s Catholic School in Odessa, top photos, and at left, dress in costumes depicting several world cultures during the school’s annual International Day, celebrated this year on April 17.

Ar right, Fr. Hilary Ihedioha, pastor at St. Mary’s, performs a dance for the children.

Photos by Alan P. Torre

ORDINATION
(From 2)

“Christ was sent by the Father. Then he, in turn, sent the Apostles into the world so that, through them and their successors, the bishops, he might continue to exercise his office of teacher, priest and shepherd. Priests are co-workers of the order of bishops, with whom they are joined in the priestly office and with whom they are called to serve the people of God.”

After the laying of hands and prayer of ordination, Father Archibong was vested by his mother, Beatrice Archibong; Armando Sanchez, who represented Fr. Archibong’s late father; Fr. David Herrera, pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Midland; Fr. Isidore Ochiabuto, a friend, and classmate Fr. Enobong Udoidiong. Father Droll was vested by Fr. Fabian Maria Rosette, prior of Mt. Carmel Hermitage, and Msgr. Larry Droll, vicar general of the diocese and Fr. Droll’s uncle. Father Rojo was vested by Fr. Michael Rodriguez, pastor of Holy Redeemer in Odessa.

Father Droll was surrounded by family from in and around San Angelo, where many call home. Several in the congregation let loose with a loud show of support for Father Archibong when it was announced Our Lady of Guadalupe parish in Midland would be his first priestly assignment, and Father Rojo took a moment to introduce Sister Kay Jo Evelo, a guiding force for the priest as a young student at St. Rita’s Catholic Church in Fort Worth.

“I remember one day we were talking in the school cafeteria/gym when she asked me, ‘Have you ever thought about becoming a priest?’ I don’t know if I took her question seriously at the time, but she was the first person to ever ask me.”

Bishop Sis told the three new priests that they could encourage others to consider the priesthood simply through their walks of faith.

“In his 2005 Letter to Priests, St. John Paul II said that vocations will certainly not be lacking if our manner of life is truly priestly, and if we become more holy, more joyful, and more impassioned in the exercise of our ministry.

“So Felix, Adam, and Ryan, as you prepare to enter into the amazing adventure of the priesthood, open yourself completely to God’s grace. Through your cooperation with that grace, allow your daily experience of ministry to mold and shape you into a man who becomes gradually more Christlike, more prayerful, more generous, more courageous, more wise, more compassionate, and more capable of loving.”

Father Droll and Father Rojo will serve in relief roles at parishes in the diocese before returning in the fall to Mundelein Seminary, where they will complete one final year of graduate level theological studies.