‘They have taken the Lord, and we do not know where they have laid him’

World Youth Day-USA to be celebrated at McNease Convention Center in San Angelo

San Angelo — Young Adults, ages 18-39, are invited to participate in World Youth Day USA, July 30, 2016, at McNease Convention Center in San Angelo. This stateside celebration will be held the same day as World Youth Day Vigil in Krakow, Poland. Eleven pilgrims representing the San Angelo Diocese will be going to Krakow, July 24-August 1. They will connect via Skype with the local group sometime during the day.

The Pilgrim Cross follows the example of the original Pilgrim Cross blessed at St. Peter’s in Rome by Pope Francis on Palm Sunday. It will travel to Poland for World Youth Day in July. Bill Ruiz made the Pilgrim Cross for the diocese that was blessed at the Cathedral Church of the Sacred Heart in San Angelo by Bishop Michael Sis on Palm Sunday before traveling through the diocese to different parishes (schedule, page 5). A resource booklet for the Pilgrim Cross event has been developed by Howard Pope. In addition to the Pilgrim Cross, personal intercessions to be lifted up in prayer will be collected and taken to the holy sites by the diocesan pilgrims visiting Poland.

WYDUSA will include catechesis by the bishop, workshops, Praise and Worship by Sacred Sound, opportunities for Reconciliation, the Divine Mercy Chaplet, cultural displays, dance and music by our various cultural and ethnic groups, vocation displays, organization displays, lunch, and the Holy Eucharist (Sunday Vigil).

The diocese invites all young adults to participate in this WYD celebration and experience the richness of our Church. Young adults are also invited to share their many gifts with the Church.

The cost for this event is $25 per person. For more information check your parish bulletins or go to www.sanangelodiocese — click ‘Offices’ and go to Office of Evangelization and Catechesis, or call 325-651-7500.

The committee organizing the event is composed of Roselva Ruiz, Chair, Holy Redeemer-Odessa; Bill Ruiz, Holy Redeemer-Odessa; Linda Navarro, St. Mary-Odessa; Penny and Howard Pope, Holy Family-Abilene, and Sister Adelina Garcia, OSF, Office of Evangelization and Catechesis, sponsor of the event. The committee met with the pastors at deanery meetings to inform them of the event and about the Kick-Off with the Pilgrim Cross. (Related story, pg. 5)

Odessa Deacon Miguel Romero to be ordained Missionary Servant of the Word priest, April 15

By Jimmy Patterson
Editor / The Angelus

ODESSA — Few people have spread God’s word in Mexico with the same vigor and daring as Blessed Miguel Pro. In the face of violence, killings, and anti-Catholicism, Pro would often dress in layman’s clothing to elude detection as a priest among those who would have killed him for his faith. Despite repeated warnings that he would be executed, “Miguelito,” as his family called him, continued to travel about Mexico spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ.

His killers finally caught up to him, and on November 23, 1927, he was executed by a firing squad for preaching the faith. Before he was shot, Pro forgave his persecutors, shouting, “Viva Cristo Rey!” Long live Christ the King!

“I want to be like him,” said Miguel Romero, a deacon at Holy Redeemer Church in Odessa since July 2015.

While prepared to show the same courage in preaching the gospel wherever he may be sent, Romero, who will be ordained a priest at Holy Redeemer on April 15, says he has always been a missionary at heart.

Romero is a member of the Missionary Servants (Please See ROMERO/19)

Young adult Bible study flourishing at Holy Redeemer

By Jimmy Patterson
The Angelus

In his relatively short time as a deacon at Holy Redeemer Church in West Odessa, Deacon Miguel Romero helped with a renewed young adult Bible study at the parish. Working together, Deacon Romero and Fr. Fernando Bonilla, MSP, have revitalized a once-dormant young adult Spanish Bible study program.

“We started with over 100 people, and we still have more than 80 every week,” said Fr. Michael Rodriguez, Holy Redeemer pastor. “The people are really hungry. We need a bigger classroom.

Fr. Rodriguez noted his parish’s Redemptorist spirit is still very much alive, and he expects more evidence of that to come with the formation of a young married couple’s Bible study. People are already making inquiries about the class, Fr. Rodriguez said.

“We have a lot of people from Mexico reaching out to them,” Fr. Rodriguez said. “As the groups become more solidified they will want to become involved in different things, and reach out to the community around us as well. Deacon Romero and Fr. Bonilla have been very well received by the people and I’m glad they came and helped organize this. They have tapped into the talent that is here.”
Las Palabras Pueden Herir o Sanar

Obispo Michael J. Sis

La retórica y las acciones de los líderes de ISIS se centran en lo que los separa de los demás. Con crueldad desconsiderada, atacan y destruyen todo lo que es diferente de sí mismos. Si todo el mundo actuara de esa manera, la raza humana se auto-exterminaría en un tiempo muy corto.

Aquí en los Estados Unidos, estamos en un año electoral. Parece que este año electoral está trayendo aún más de lo normal de insultos en el discurso político, con algunos candidatos encontrando más que nunca formas coloridas para hablar mal de sus oponentes. Esto ocurre en todos los niveles - local, estatal y nacional. Sin embargo, mientras que ridiculizar o demonizar al oponente es una herramienta frecuente de ciertos políticos, no es la manera correcta para que un Cristiano se comporte.

Es importante que nosotros hablemos en contra de la injusticia y que corrijamos el error. Sin embargo, las palabras que usamos a veces pueden hacer más daño que bien. En Efesios 4:15, San Pablo nos anima a “hablar la verdad con amor.” Él no dice de hablar la verdad con crueldad o con animosidad. Las enseñanzas sociales de la Iglesia Católica dicen que debemos buscar el bien común, en solidaridad, respetando la dignidad de cada ser humano.

La solidaridad es una actitud que se enfoca en cómo estamos conectados a los demás, no importa qué tan lejos o qué diferentes se parezcan. Si estamos viviendo en un espíritu de solidaridad, cada vez que alguien está sufriendo, en cualquier parte del planeta, es importante para nosotros.

Una persona que vive a cabo la enseñanza social Católica es una persona que defiende la dignidad de cada ser humano, desde el Indio intocable en las cunetas de Calcuta, al adolescente en Honduras que es amenazado con violencia si no se une a una mara local, al joven de color en los Estados Unidos que recibe un disparo por el color de su piel, a la chica Yazidi en Irak, que se vende como esclava sexual porque su religión es diferente a las suyas vecinos poderosos, al pequeño bebé en el vientre que parece ser inconveniente para nosotros.

Como Cristianos Católicos, estamos llamados a vivir nuestra fe con valor, con mucho gusto estar dispuesto a dar razones de nuestras
SEMINARIAN OF THE MONTH

‘We have heard for ourselves that this is the savior of the world’

By Kevin Lenius

Gazing out the window from my room on the 5th floor of St. Joseph’s hall of Conception Seminary College I can easily look upon the few acres of clustered, redbrick buildings that have been my home away from home for the last four years of my life. It’s a rather simple place — just a few buildings gathered around a Benedictine monastery in rural, northwest Missouri. Yet when you step away from the area and look back upon the abbey and seminary, it’s easy to see the rather extraordinary impact it has. The Basilica Church towers into the sky piercing the horizon of empty farmland with the cross of Jesus Christ, the two forward steeples ringing their bells, calling the monks to prayer.

The sight of these towers will forever move my heart to be grateful to God for all that he has done for me through this small community tucked away in the rolling hills of Missouri. It is here that I have met someone special, and I met him in many ways I did not expect.

When I became a seminarian for the diocese in February of 2012, I thought I knew what was in store for me. I was coming to the seminary to learn about how to be a priest, and while in many respects this has been true, the horizons of learning have been much broader than I thought. Now that I am about to graduate from college seminary, I can see that I principally have learned two things: who I am, and who Jesus is. Seminary has graced me with the opportunity to come to terms with myself, to understand who I am, and to accept what I find. I have come to realize that I am a sinner... a sinner redeemed by the mercy of God! Once I was given the grace of this self-knowledge, I have had the experience of encountering Jesus as a real person, not just a lofty idea or distant deity. Jesus has come to me, made himself known, loved me, and is teaching me how to love him.

In the end, my time at Conception has given me the opportunity to meet Jesus Christ, our redeemer who is madly in love with us. I have encountered him in myself, in the unbelievable friendships I have made with my brother seminarians, in the Eucharist, and in the face of others. As I prepare to move on to graduate studies at St. Mary’s Seminary in Houston, I look forward to continuing priestly formation for the diocese and experiencing what Christ wishes to teach me there. I can only hope that he will form me into a true man of love — a lover of myself, of him, and of his people, the Church. As for now, I can only echo the words of the Samaritans after having heard the witness of the woman at the well: “We no longer believe because of your word; for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the savior of the world.” (Jn 4:42)
Catholic missionaries are often today’s unsung heroes

By Dr. Lorenzo Penafiel

Every day we read or hear about heroes in our country. Some are men and women in uniform – in the military, police officers, firemen who are in the service of their country and/or in their line of duty. Some are ordinary citizens from all walks of life who have done incredible acts in a single occasion when someone is in danger or needs help for some other reason. Whether they are awarded a medal, lauded in the media, honored as a celebrity or not, they all deserve our praise and gratitude.

What is a hero? One simple definition of hero is a person “of distinguished courage or ability, admired for his achievements and noble qualities, and who has performed a heroic act and is regarded as a model or ideal.” Most often we regard the heroic act as a single deed of courage, bravery, and sacrifice to save the life of another, help someone in distress, prevent destruction of property, or win the battle against the enemy. And soon we forget the name of the hero.

But there are many great leaders in this world whom we consider heroes too, not for just a single heroic act but for their distinguished traits, noble qualities, and exemplary characteristics and who will be forever remembered, honored and venerated. Who does not know of Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa, or Mahatma Gandhi, just to name a few “successful heroic leaders”? One writer names the following characteristics common to this kind of hero: courage, selflessness, sacrifice, compassion, humility, patience, passion, and dedication. And for a missionary like Mother Teresa I would add “faith.”

Our Catholic missionaries today share the same characteristics. Their heroic acts are not one single incident – they are lifetime commitments. They are priests, brothers, nuns and laymen all over the world serving in different countries of varying cultures and religious beliefs. Some are doctors, nurses, engineers, educators, and other professionals who give up their wealth, take the risk of their assignments in dangerous parts of the world, and live without the conveniences they had at home. They take care of orphaned children, they provide medical care to indigenous people who have never seen a doctor, they distribute food to refugees, they help victims of natural

(Please See MISSIONARIES/20)
Renewing our commitment to merciful living

By Fr. Knick and Sandie Knickerbocker

Pope Francis, in his gift of this Jubilee Year of Mercy, said, "How much I desire that the year to come will be steeped in mercy, so that we can go out to every man and woman, bringing the goodness and tenderness of God!" What is mercy? "The Gospel is the revelation in Jesus Christ of God's mercy to sinners" (CCC 1849). Divine Mercy is the Gospel—the Good News! It is the Good News of God's love meeting us where we are and helping us in the midst of our sin and suffering. Mercy is "love's second name" (Dives in Misericordia 7). In Jesus Christ, mercy and truth have met.

Having just observed Divine Mercy Sunday, it is appropriate that we renew in our minds and hearts Jesus' call and, therefore, the Church's call: "Be merciful just as your Father is merciful" (Lk 6:36). How can we, busy people, live out mercy day-to-day?

**Receive God's mercy.** Jesus waits for us in the confessional. By the authority given the priest, Jesus ministers to us in the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) and gifts us with forgiveness, healing, and rest for our souls.

**Apologetic and ask forgiveness of those we have wronged.** Pray for the grace to say, "I'm sorry; please forgive me." That simple act will help to bring peace to our family, workplace, school, and community — as well as to ourselves.

**Pray for the grace to forgive in our past.** Most of us live with hurts from our past that we find difficult to let go. Unforgiveness is poison to our souls. Jesus tells us to forgive "seventy-times-seven times": there are no limits on forgiveness. We can ask God to grace our will to want to forgive and then to forgive — both those who are living and those who are deceased.

**Show mercy to our family.** Do we find it the most difficult of all situations to live mercifully with our family members? We can make a list of family members and beside each name write one way to show mercy during the remainder of this Year of Mercy: a visit, phone call, note, helping with tasks, listening, showing respect, forgiving and asking forgiveness. By the end of this Jubilee Year, we will have habituated some aspects of merciful living that will make a difference in the quality of our lives.

(Artist's rendering of the new Angelo Catholic Middle School)

Angelo Catholic Middle School to open in fall

The Angelus

SAN ANGELO — San Angelo and surrounding area families will have another option for their child’s education when Angelo Catholic School expands with the opening of a middle school.

A seventh grade will be added in the fall of 2016, with an eighth grade to begin in the fall of 2017. A groundbreaking is scheduled for May 2016. Completion of the expansion project with will be spring 2017.

"Catholic schools make a tremendous impact on forming the whole person spiritually, intellectually, and socially," Bishop Michael Sis said. "The expansion of Angelo Catholic School represents a welcome growth of Catholic education in the Diocese of San Angelo."

Angelo Catholic currently serves students of all religious, racial, ethnic, and income backgrounds in grades K-6.

For interested students and parents, registration is available online at Angelocatholicschool.org or call Angelo Catholic School at 325-949-1747 to schedule a tour.

An open house for prospective students will be held on April 13 from 5-7 p.m. at the Angelo Catholic School Campus, 2315 A & M Avenue in San Angelo.
Pilgrims listen as Pope Francis celebrates Mass in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, Feb. 17.

## Speaking of Saints

### St. Peter de Betancur begged on street for sick

**By Mary Lou Gibson**

Peter de Betancur was a poor shepherd of his family’s small flock in Villaflores on the island of Tenerife in the early 17th century. As a young boy, Peter learned to see God in everything around him. When he heard about the poor people of the “West Indies” (including present day Guatemala), he felt called to take the Christian message to them.

So with little money and no formal education, he set sail for Guatemala hoping to connect with a relative who was working in government service there. Editor Bernard Bangley writes in “Butler’s Lives of the Saints” that he ran out of money in Cuba and had to work as a deck hand to pay for the remainder of his journey.

After landing in Honduras, Peter walked to Guatemala City. He was so poor that he had to stand in line for food each day at the Franciscan friary. This proved to be a good place for him because he met Fr. Fernando Espino there. The priest became Peter’s lifelong friend and helped him find work in a textile factory.

A short time later Peter started studies for the priesthood at the Jesuit College in San Borgia. But, he later withdrew when this proved to be too difficult for him. Still drawn to the religious life, Peter sought help from his confessor, Fr. Manuel Lobo, who invited him to join the Franciscan Order as a lay brother.

Peter, however, felt that God wanted him to remain in the world and in 1655 he joined the Third Order of St. Francis. Matthew Bunson writes in “John Paul II’s Book of Saints” that he took the name of Peter of St. Joseph.

He then started his work among the poor founding a hospital called “Our Lady of Bethlehem,” a hostel for the homeless, schools for the poor and abandoned children and an oratory. Throughout his life, the Child of Bethlehem was the focus of Peter’s spiritual meditation according to several biographers.

Bunson writes that Peter supported the hospital and his other charitable institutions by begging on the streets. He begged for alms to endow the Masses celebrated by poor priests and also encouraged Masses to be celebrated in the early hours so that the poor might attend.

He also started the practice of gathering children to sing the Seven Joys of the Franciscan Rosary on each August 18 to honor the Blessed Mother, a custom that still continues in Guatemala.

(Please See SAINTS/21)

## Mexican bishop details merciful plan for migrants

**By Alma Perez**

Special to *The Angelus*

SAN ANGELO — Bishops at the Tex-Mex Border Bishops Meeting, Feb. 29-Mar. 2, consented that since we are tied to the border, the critical question of immigration needs to be regarded as a common pastoral issue for the bishops and archbishops of the 16 border dioceses and archdioceses represented at the meeting.

San Antonio Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller eloquently delivered his homily at the noon Mass, March 1, at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in San Angelo and urged us to not convert “faith, dignity and family” values into a political issue.

“Our border is in the path of the migration of thousands of people who flee from Mexico and Central America,” he said. “These migrants need to be treated with compassion and unbending principles for the sake of their own self-respect. We need to strengthen our social and pastoral bonds with them as they arrive at our borders. Our solidarity with them, especially the vulnerable minor children from Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala, will protect these children from further harm as they settle in a new country in a Catholic environment.”

One of the priests at the bi-annual meeting, Father José Guadalupe Valdez Alvarado from Piedras Negras, Coahuila, has proposed the following four points in order for us to maintain the maternal presence of the Church alive in our faith and in the spirit of charity:

1. **Establish shelters to make migrants feel at home** and maintain a clear dialogue with the municipal, state and federal authorities as we participate and denounce any type of violation to human rights.

2. **Find ways to maintain the dignity of the migrants** by proposing laws and more humane and just treatment for the migrants.

3. **Commit ourselves along with the dioceses of the migrants** in our pastoral work to open our churches to restore the dignity of these people.

4. **Strengthen the pastoral and social relationships**, such as the support that was given by Archbishop García-Siller to the Central American minors who were mutilated on the “La Bestia” train in Mexico.

In his recent trip to Mexico, Pope Francis declared that “we need to bathe with balm the tired feet of these migrants who traverse our frontier when they abandon their roots in search of a better life. As brothers we need to follow them and reach their souls beyond the border.”

## El Paso, Juarez ‘one city with a line across it’

**By Jimmy Patterson**

West Texas Angelus

EL PASO — The Diocese of El Paso helped coordinate celebrations of two different groups during Pope Francis’ February visit to neighboring Ciudad Juarez. One group, numbering in the tens of thousands, filled the Sun Bowl Stadium on the campus of the University of Texas at El Paso. The other, known as “Pope Francis’ VIPs,” were seated along the border at a location as close to the Papal Mass across the Rio Grande as they could legally get, being a country away. The VIP group was comprised of the homeless, refugees and migrants. For at least on this one day, those were the dignitaries, the honored guests.

The coordination and working together required to make sure the papal visit came off without a hitch, El Paso Bishop Mark Seitz said, was a shining example of the unity that exists across the border.

“We’re really like one big city with a line drawn across it,” said Bishop Seitz, speaking at the conclusion of the biannual Tex-Mex Border Bishops Meeting in San Angelo. “We are two nations of great pride but at the same time we recognize there is more that unites us than divides us.”

On the subject of the recent controversial political issue of building a wall between the two countries, Bishop Seitz said the people of El
**Hard to say ‘I’m sorry’**

**Penitence and the science of remorse**

Dr. Greg Popcak

Lent is a time of reparation. A season of sorrow for sins committed and expressions of a sincere desire to reform our lives. But what does it mean to be sorry? What are the components of real remorse?

Whether we are expressing sorrow to God, a spouse, family member, or friend, it can be hard to say, "I'm sorry." It can be even harder to say it well. Sometimes, when people say that they are sorry to us, we can feel like there is something missing. Often, it's because there is. But what? As we express our sorrow to God this Lent for the ways that our lives do not reflect his plan for us, it can be important to make sure our "I'm sorry's" have all the components of sincere remorse. Researchers note that good apologies involve three ingredients; empathy, restitution, objective criteria.

Empathy: When people offer a sincere apology rooted not in obligation but genuine remorse, they tend to express a real emotional understanding of how their actions hurt us. "I am SO sorry for doing that. I NEVER meant to treat you that way. I know how badly you were hurt. Please forgive me." The truly remorseful person doesn't make excuses or tell the person they hurt that they were "just kidding" or that the wounded party needs to get a thicker skin or a better sense of humor. They understand the impact of their actions and they let you know that they feel your pain. When we express our sorrow to God this Lent, are we going through the motions of repentance, or are we allowing ourselves to express genuine sorrow for the pain God feels when we reject his attempts to love us and make us whole?

Restitution: When people offer a sincere apology rooted not just "say the magic words." They offer a plan for making things right again. Or, if they don't know what to do to make it right, they ask you what you need them to do to heal the hurt their actions caused. They say things like, "The next time I feel that angry about something, I'm going to this instead of that." or, "I really want to make this right. What can I do to earn your trust again?" Restitution isn't about asking people to jump through hoops for the sake of watching them dance. It is about committing to the process of reconciliation: healing the wounds our actions caused. When we confess our sins this Lent, have we put some time into how we would handle similar problem-situations differently in the future? Hearing the words, "I absolve you" is just the beginning. How will we let the grace of that absolution compel us to heal the wounds our actions have caused those we love, and make sure to avoid those problem behaviors the next time we are tempted to go down a similar path?

Objective Criteria: Truly sorrowful people don't hide out behind the belief that "the REAL problem" is that others are expecting too much of them. If we are truly sorry, we recog-

(Please See POPCAK/20)
**Bishop: Analysis of second collections provides a ‘tremendous testimony’ to generosity in diocese**

By Bishop Michael J. Sis

Sometimes second collections in Mass can feel bothersome. However, when we understand the logic behind them, we can appreciate them as opportunities to make wise and deliberate decisions about our charitable works. Whenever a second collection is being taken up, each one of us should consider the particular cause that is being supported, and choose how much we want to support that cause.

Through our parishes, each one of us participates in a global community of faith. When we contribute to a special collection, we remember that, despite our local difficulties, there are many who have far less than we do. We share what we can as an expression of our gratitude to God and our solidarity with our brothers and sisters in greatest need.

The various special collections are opportunities to hear the good news of the Church at home and around the world, and to participate intentionally in the life and evangelizing mission of the Church.

In this issue of the *Angelus*, we are publishing the total amounts given in special collections over the past few years. It is a tremendous testimony of the generosity of Catholics in the Diocese of San Angelo. May God who has inspired your acts of generosity bring them to fulfillment in the Kingdom of God.
Pope Benedict frail, but mind lucid

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Although retired Pope Benedict XVI is growing more frail, there are no particular concerns or worries regarding his health, a Vatican spokesman said.

Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, the Vatican spokesman, issued a statement March 25 following an interview with Archbishop Georg Ganswein, the retired pope's personal secretary, in which the archbishop said Pope Benedict was slowly "fading."

"In April, Pope Benedict XVI turns 89 years old. He is like a candle that is slowly, serenely fading, as it happens with many of us. He is calm, in peace with God, with himself and the world," Archbishop Ganswein told the Italian magazine BenEssere.

The retired pope's personal secretary added that Pope Benedict still retains "his refined, subtle sense of humor" and remains fond of cats.

"Contessa and Zorro, two cats that live in our gardens, come often to say hello to the pope emeritus," he said.

After questions were raised regarding the aging pontiff's health, Father Lombardi said his condition "does not raise any particular concerns."

"Of course, it is part of the effects of old age and a gradual, growing fragility of the physical condition as with any elderly person," he said.

"(Pope Benedict's) mind is perfectly lucid as we recently witnessed in his extraordinary interview with an Italian publication."

In that interview, published in mid-March with Belgian Jesuit Father Jacques Servais, Pope Benedict reflected on the theme of mercy as a "sign of the times" that shows how, deep down, people still experience a need for God.

"Mercy is what moves us toward God, while justice makes us tremble in his sight," he said.

(Please See EASTER/21)
Several years ago, nearly 20 by now, when our kids were kids and I was too in many ways, we would take meals to people on Tuesdays in the summer. Karen and I saw it as a teaching opportunity. And the kids still remember it today. Together, we met all sorts of fascinating people.

We were really taken with one woman. Miss Jimmie was her name. One summer the kids handcrafted Miss Jimmie a birthday card and a smile spread across her face as she opened it. When July gave way to August and school began again, visits with Miss Jimmie and the others ended for the year.

When school was over the next May, we piled in the car again for our summertime routine. When we stopped at Miss Jimmie’s, the kids noticed that thumb-tacked to her living room wall, almost a year later, was that handcrafted birthday card.

We met another woman during those hot months. She lived in a small wood frame house where a cattywampus screened door feebly tried to keep the flies out. Each week, the kids would rap on that door and it would rattle up against the doorjamb. It became a sound synonymous with those summers.

The woman, Alice was her name, would walk slowly to us each week. Her hair tucked haphazardly underneath a cloth bonnet, she had to be in her 70s. I remember her being sight-challenged in some way, and through the summers of our visits, it became apparent that Alice suffered with some type of learning difficulty. It may have been age, or something longer-term, but she lived alone and was able to care for herself. And she only spoke when it was absolutely necessary.

And she would always say the same thing. Every week. Her words were always unchanged. Over and over.

She was insistent. Confident. Never wavering. Perpetual.

For a while, the kids were taken aback, maybe even a little intimidated. They had never met anyone like Alice. But when three or four weeks passed, and the same words came, over and over, the kids learned she was just like them, trying her best to face the challenges of her life.

The words she spoke so often even rattled me. What she said I had not really heard before. I was at a point in my life, still a young guy with not much wisdom, and certain pieces to the puzzle just didn’t have the weight they do today. But when Alice spoke, what she said would stay with me. I would think about it for a while, at least until something else pushed its way into my head and the echo of her words fizzled away until the next week or the next summer. But each time she spoke, it would make me stop and think. I did have a basic understanding, just not an understanding that took hold with any definitiveness on my uninspired path.

“By his stripes we are healed.”

Over and over.

“By his stripes we are healed.”

It was all she ever said in three summers.

“By his stripes we are healed.”

She may have suffered from a learning issue. But Alice knew what she needed to know. And I may not have fully understood what her words meant then. But I understand them today.

Especially today.
Fr. Frank Chavez, at left, washes the feet of young parishioners on HOLY THURSDAY at St. Joseph in Odessa. (Photo by Alan P. Torre)

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton pastor Fr. Mark Woodruff leads the Eucharistic Procession on HOLY THURSDAY. (Photo by Alan P. Torre)

Monsignor James Bridges, of St. Stephen’s Church in Midland, lights a candle at the beginning of Easter Vigil Mass on HOLY SATURDAY. (Photo by Alan P. Torre)

Fr. Francis Onyekozuru, at right, sprinkles Holy Water on the faithful at Midland’s St. Ann’s on EASTER morning. (Photo by Jimmy Patterson)

The Holy Redeemer-Odessa youth group in Odessa re-enacts the Passion on GOOD FRIDAY. (Photo by Alan P. Torre / aptorre.com)

Fr. Michael Rodriguez, pastor at Odessa’s Holy Redeemer Church, lights a bonfire as part of Easter Vigil Mass, HOLY SATURDAY. (Photo by Alan P. Torre).
Bishop to new Catholics: Be not afraid

By Bishop Michael J. Sis

You are becoming members of the oldest continually existing institution in the world.
We outlived the cruel persecution of the powerful Roman Empire, the Persian Empire, the Goths, and the Vandals.
During the social upheavals of the Dark Ages, we preserved faith, knowledge, art, music, literature, philosophy, and the Sacred Scriptures. In the Middle Ages, we fostered the growth of science and human knowledge by founding the first universities.
Over the centuries, we have outlasted the persecution of the British Penal Laws, King Mwanga of Uganda, the Tokugawa regime in Japan, the Mexican Constitution of 1917, the Nazis, and the Soviet Union. We take a lickin’ and we keep on tickin’.

Currently, our fellow Catholics are living the faith heroically in places of modern persecution, such as China, North Korea, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Syria, to name a few. Eventually, with God’s grace, we will outlive the brutality of ISIS, which has burned our churches, imprisoned our priests, and beheaded our members for refusing to renounce Jesus Christ.
You are joining a group that has been around for a long, long time, and we will be around until the end of history.
We have not recruited you by pressure tactics. Rather, we have respectfully shared our faith with you and allowed you the freedom to respond according to your conscience.
We have not promised that joining our Church would get you an easier life or material prosperity in this world. We have, instead, encouraged you to respond boldly to the invitation of Jesus Christ to deny yourself, take up your cross every day, and follow him.
You did not sign up with us by filling out a form online, or swiping a card, or attending a high-powered rally. You have gotten to know a living, breathing faith community in a gradual process of becoming familiar with our beliefs and practices through contact with regular human beings.
You are joining a community that is not perfect. We are made up of saints and sinners who sometimes fail, and we are in need of constant reform and renewal. We’re still a work in progress.
We do not claim that it is easy to be a Catholic. In a world of individualism, self-indulgence, violence, and moral relativism, Jesus challenges us to a life
Hearing and heeding the call for heightened prudence

By Fr. Eugene Hemrick
Catholic News Service

I keep hearing many of my friends say that they are planning to move to Canada, given the present political malaise in our country. No doubt, many of us are bombarded this year with negative comments, attacks from one candidate to another, attacks among groups that support one candidate or cause over another. How might we navigate a sound course through such growing discontent?

One way to do this is to accept that we live in an age calling for heightened prudence, an age prompting us to avoid throwing overboard our intellectual powers and our ability to wisely cope in rough waters.

In an age of instant commentaries and a plethora of analysts and predictors, it's easy to allow them to steer our course. Prudence, however, dictates we not sit on the sidelines, but be players on the field. This translates into seeking reliable resources and consulting with knowledgeable persons to enable us to obtain intelligent control over the moment.

The docility called for prompts us to do our homework and not leave it in the hands of others. Not only should we be involved physically and mentally, but we should also work at making sound judgments.

Sound judgment is difficult to create because of a media explosion that bombards us continuously with overwhelming issues to consider. Making good judgments in these complex situations is always difficult, and yet, achieving good judgments is our best means for avoiding capsizing in rough times.

How do we best cultivate good judgment? Mornings in my parish on Capitol Hill in Washington often are filled by large numbers of people from the government and the Supreme Court of the United States. Many come to church for the quiet atmosphere of God's temple whose massive doors symbolize shutting out the outside world and entering into a contemplative atmosphere.

St. Paul points out that Christ implores us to "go into your room." This silence is where our deepest thoughts and affections are contained; it is the doorway through which we enter into our very center. Equally important, it is where sound judgment is best developed.

I believe today's hectic times call us to cultivate greater docility and sounder judgments: the heart of prudence and our best navigational instruments for steering through turbulence.

What God must be like ...

By Fr. William Byron
Catholic News Service

There are two abiding and important religious questions, both significant but one more important than the other, that we tend to confuse in their order of importance. The first is, "What is God like?"

This is a theological question of enormous importance, an exploration into God, an important question to be explored reverently in prayer and systematically in study and reflection.

The second important question is, "What must I do? How must I behave?" This is a question of moral theology, of religious ethics, a question of moral right and wrong.

Most of us tend to put the second question first and leave the exploration into God for others who are more prayerful, more intellectual and, presumably, more faithful. We want to make sure, of course, that we live within the moral boundaries, do the right thing, do good and avoid evil, although we often seem to be more concerned with avoiding evil than doing good.

Avoiding evil, of course, is not unimportant, but if we become preoccupied or, worse, obsessed with considerations of avoiding both evil and error, we might just be missing the progress God wants us to make on the path of a growing awareness of how good God is and how much God loves us for ourselves, not for what we do.

The Gospel story of the prodigal son tells us a lot about what God is like. It presents for our consideration a wonderfully generous, warm, outreaching, forgiving, understanding father who runs out and literally trips over himself in his hurry to gather up an errant son in a forgiving embrace.

Jesus is painting a portrait in this story, a portrait of his father. Jesus is telling us here what God is really like.

We can see ourselves in either or both of the two sons. The younger son is rebellious, irresponsible, soft of character, sensuous and self-centered. The older son is judgmental, unforgiving and proud of his seniority, his record, his hardheaded (and hardhearted) loyalty.

The father loves them both. Recall what he says to the older son toward the end of this story when the older son bitterly complains about the father's outpouring of generosity to the wayward younger son. "My son," the father says to the older brother, "you are here with me always, everything I have is yours" (Lk 15:31).

Shortly after I was ordained to the priesthood in 1961, a much older and wiser priest told me, "One of the most difficult jobs you're going to have as a priest is to convince people that God loves them." That sounded quite strange to me then; it is not at all strange now. I've had plenty of experience of the difficulty of persuading people that God loves them. What a pity.

"My son, [my daughter], you are with me always and everything I have is yours." Too bad that we find it so difficult to take him at his word.

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Making Sense of Bioethics

There are acceptable uses of contraceptives for Catholics

By Fr. Tad Pacholczyk

Contraceptives include drugs and devices like condoms, the Pill, and spermicides. It might come as a surprise to some to learn that the Catholic Church does not always oppose the “use of contraceptives.” A couple of trivial examples can help explain this point. The Church would not oppose the use of a contraceptive spermicidal gel to lubricate the axle of a bicycle tire to improve its rotation, nor would it specifically oppose the use of inflated condoms as party balloons. The particular context is important. More serious examples of acceptable contexts and uses for contraceptives would include using the Pill medically to treat serious gynecological problems, or using the Pill to block the release of an egg from a woman’s ovary in a situation of rape to protect her from becoming pregnant from the attack. Contrary to popular confusion, as we can see, the Church does not always oppose the “use of contraceptives.”

What the Church does always oppose, however, are acts of contraception. An act of contraception is a very particular type of disordered human action that involves the decision freely to engage in marital intercourse, while pursuing countermeasures in anticipation of, contemporaneously with, or after the completion of the sexual act, to try intentionally to block it from achieving its proper finality, namely, the engendering of new human life. These countermeasures can include, to borrow the words of Pope Paul VI, “any action which either before, at the moment of, or after sexual intercourse, is specifically intended to prevent procreation—whether as an end or as a means” (Humanae Vitae, n. 14).

Pope Francis, in a recent interview, pointed out that Pope Paul VI, in a difficult situation in Africa, “permitted nuns to use contraceptives in cases of rape.” This use of contraceptives by a group of nuns occurred during an exceptional wartime situation in the Belgian Congo. Although no document has ever been found in the Vatican indicating that permission was actually given by the Pope, these women were given the Pill by their physicians because they appeared to be in imminent danger of sexual assault during the uprisings of 1960. The Pill was provided to prevent their ovaries from releasing an egg, so that if they were raped during the chaos, the attacker’s sperm would not be able to fertilize any of their eggs, and a pregnancy would not occur. This “use of contraceptives” would clearly not be an act of contraception, because there would be no consensual sexual act, but only an act of violence and brutality forcibly directed against the women. Hence, this use of contraceptives constituted, in its essence, an act of self-defense, not an act of contraception. A rapist, of course, has absolutely no right to forced sexual intimacy with his victim, nor does he have any right to bring about her impregnation, and the woman has absolutely no moral duty to make her eggs available to an attacker’s sperm. Hence the use of contraceptives in an emergency situation like this would be morally permissible precisely because it would not constitute, morally speaking, an act of contraception, but would rather represent a defensive and self-protective maneuver in a situation of grave and imminent danger.

The use of contraceptives can be morally acceptable in other contexts as well, again, because such uses do not constitute acts of contraception. For example, when a woman has severe menstrual bleeding, or pain from ovarian cysts, the hormonal regimen contained in the Pill may sometimes provide a directly therapeutic medical treatment for the bleeding or the pain. This use of contraceptives is an act of medical therapy to address a pathological situation, not an act of contraception. The secondary effect from the treatment, namely, marital infertility, is only tolerated, and should not be willed, desired, or intended in any way by the couple. It is worth noting that it would not be acceptable to make use of contraceptives like the Pill for these medical cases if other pharmacological agents or treatments were available which would offer the same therapeutic benefits and effects without impeding fertility.

In sum, while the Church has always taught that marital acts of contraception are morally wrong, the use of contraceptives can sometimes be acceptable within certain other contexts outside of consensual conjugal acts. Janet Smith has succinctly summarized the issue this way: “The Church teaches that acts of contraception are always against the plan of God for human sexuality, since God intended that each and every act of spousal intercourse express both the intention to make a complete, unitive gift of one’s self to one’s spouse and the willingness to be a parent with one’s spouse. These meanings of the spousal act are, as Humanae Vitae stated, inseparable.”

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

Believe it or not, some good can come out of the rejection letter

By Eric Rommel
Catholic News Service

One of the most emotional moments of your life will be when you walk out of your college dorm room for the last time. It’s undeniably powerful because you are literally closing the door on one path and opening the door to another path of life.

In my case, I left something behind that door. Taped to the wall was a rejection letter. To the person who sent it, it was nothing more than a few words telling me they weren’t interested in considering me for a job. To me, it was a letter from someone who didn’t know what he or she was missing.

That letter is one of many rejections I’ve received in my life. It’s what happens after those moments that shape the person we become. In that regard, I am no different from you, and we are no different from those who hold on pedestals.

Back in 1979, RSO Records sent a rejection letter to Paul Hewson. They felt his band was not suitable for a record contract. Today, Hewson is better known as Bono, and his band U2 has been one of the most popular in the world.

The same happened to Madonna in the early 1980s. The president of a record label refused to sign her, saying she wasn’t yet ready. Soon after, she took the world by storm and never looked back.

Musicians are not the only ones who face rejection. Anyone who applies for a job, an internship or project stands to face rejection. Rejection is painful, but it isn’t always bad. Those who received those letters proved the sender wrong. They exceeded expectation.

When I closed my dorm room door for the final time, I left that letter behind, but not what it represented. Its memory continued to motivate me. In less than a year, I had a job better than the one I had not received and I started on a path to become the person I am today.

What if things had worked out differently? That letter hung on the wall of my dorm room in Pennsylvania. It had been sent from a business in Idaho. What if I had received that job? It’s doubtful I’d be sitting where I am today. It’s doubtful my life would have unfolded the way it did. Maybe it would have been better, maybe not. Regardless, it would not be the life I currently enjoy.

The same is true for every rejection. What if U2 had been signed to an earlier contract? What if the person who rejected Madonna had decided she was ready for a career? Would we know them as the great artists they are today? What if they had given up? What would have happened to the people they inspired?

Every rejection is the equivalent of a dorm room door closing for the final time. It’s a moment when the path that we set to follow shifts. We can’t judge what would have happened on the road not taken, but that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t look back at what might have been.

Be reflective. Question your failures, but also question your success. Don’t get trapped imagining a world that never existed. Don’t ask, what if? If you do, you’ll miss the next great moment to come, and you won’t be prepared for the way it will change the direction of your life.
Fear can hold a crippling power over people

By Fr. Ron Rolheiser

Fear is the heartbeat of the powerless. So writes Cor de Jonghe. That’s true. We can deal with most everything, except fear.

The late Belgium spiritual writer, Bieke Vandekerkehove, in a very fine book, *The Taste of Silence*, shared very honestly about the demons that beset her as she faced a terminal illness at age nineteen. She singled out three particular demons that tormented her as she faced the prospect of death, sadness, anger, and fear, and she suggested that we can more easily cope with the first two, sadness and anger, than we can with the third, fear.

Here’s her thought:

Sadness can be handled through tears, through grieving. Sadness fills us like a water glass, but a glass can be emptied. Tears can drain sadness of its bite. We have no doubt all experienced the release, the catharsis, that can come through tears.

Tears can soften the heart and take away the bitterness of sadness, even while its heaviness remains. Sadness, no matter how heavy, has a release valve. So too does anger. Anger can be expressed and its very expression helps release it so that it flows out of us. No doubt too we have also experienced this. The caution, of course, is that in expressing anger and giving it release we need to be careful not to hurt others, which is the ever-present danger when dealing with anger. With anger we have many outlets: We can shout in rage, beat drum, punch a bag, use profanity, physically exercise until we’re exhausted, smash some furniture, utter murderous threats, and rage away at countless things. This isn’t necessarily rational and some of these things aren’t necessarily moral, but they offer some release. We have means to cope with anger.

Fear, on the other hand, has no such release valves. Most often, there’s nothing we can do to lighten or release it. Fear paralyzes us and, this paralysis is the very thing that robs us of the strength we would need to combat it. We can beat a drum, rage in profanity, or cry tears, but fear remains. Moreover, unlike anger, fear cannot be taken out on someone else, even though we sometimes try, by scapegoating. But, in the end, it doesn’t work. The object of our fear doesn’t go away simply because we wish it away. Fear can only be suffered. We have to live with it until it recedes on its own. Sometimes, as the Book of Lamentations suggests, all we can do is to put our mouth to the dust and wait.

With fear, sometimes all we can do is endure.

What’s the lesson in this?

In her memoirs, the Russian poet, Anna Akhmatova, recounts an encounter she once had with another woman, as the two of them waited outside a Russian prison. Both of their husbands had been imprisoned by Stalin and both of them were there to bring letters and packages to their husbands, as were a number of other women. But the scene was like something out of the existential literature of the absurd. The situation was bizarre. First of all, the women were unsure of whether their husbands were even still alive and were equally uncertain as to whether the letters and packages they were delivering would ever be given to their loved ones by the guards. Moreover, the guards would, without reason, make them wait for hours in the snow and cold before they would collect their letters and packages, and sometimes they wouldn’t meet the women at all. Still, every week, despite the absurdity of it, the women would come, wait in the snow, accept this unfairness, do their vigil, and try to get letters and packages to their loved ones in prison. One morning, as they were waiting, seemingly with no end in sight, one of the women recognized Akhmatova and said to her: “Well, you’re a poet. Can you tell me what’s happening here?”

Akhmatova looked at the woman and replied: “Yes, I can!” And then something like a smile passed between them.

Why the smile? Just to be able to name something, no matter how absurd or unfair, no matter our powerlessness to change it, is to be somehow free of it, above it, transcendent in some way. To name something correctly is to partly free ourselves of its dominance. That’s why totalitarian regimes fear artists, writers, religious critics, journalists, and prophets. They name things. That’s ultimately the function of prophecy. Prophets don’t foretell the future, they properly name the present. Richard Rohr is fond of saying: Not everything can be fixed or cured, but it should be named properly. James Hillman has his own way of casting this. He suggests that a symptom suffers most when it doesn’t know where it belongs.

This can be helpful in dealing with fear in our lives. Fear can render us impotent. But, naming that properly, recognizing where that symptom belongs and how powerless it leaves us, can help us to live with it, without sadness and anger.

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The often disorienting quality of real prayer

By Bishop Robert Barron

One of the most impressive literary figures of the twentieth century was the Irish writer Iris Murdoch. You may have heard of her surprising and thoughtful novels such as *A Severed Head* and *The Good Apprentice*; or perhaps you are conversant with her more abstract philosophical texts such as *The Sovereignty of Good and Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*. She reached her greatest notoriety, posthumously, in the work of her husband John Bayley, who penned a moving memoir of his wife’s slow and emotionally wrenching descent into Alzheimer’s disease. To hear the story of one of the brightest women of her time gradually losing her mind is, to say the least, unnerving. But due to Bayley’s artful telling, the experience becomes, almost despite itself, uplifting as well.

A careful examination of Murdoch’s fiction and non-fiction reveals her consistently dark take on human nature. Left to our own devices, we are, she thinks, self-absorbed, violent, and all too willing to draw the whole world into the narrow confines of our egotism. In this conviction, of course, she is not far from the classical Christian doctrine of original sin. What we require, she concludes, are spiritual exercises that serve to break us out of the prison of our self-absorption; and since we are so ensconced in the pattern of self-reference, these must be rather shocking reversals of the status quo. We need the Good—in one form or another—to burst through the carapace of our fearful self-regard.

A first such exercise, Murdoch suggests, is the learning of a foreign language. Playing at another language can be a mildly diverting experience and it can convince one that the language can be used after the manner of a game. But when one is really compelled to learn a language well, for the sake of survival or success, one quickly discovers just how unyielding, how demanding, and how unforgiving that language can be. French doesn’t care whether you learn its nuances, its vocabulary, or its sometimes irrational spellings; German could care less whether or not you appreciate its (to English-speakers) confusing word order; Greek is not the least bit put out if you cannot master its alphabet, and Latin is utterly indifferent to you struggles with its endings and cases. All of these linguistic systems are, in their objectivity, order, confusion, and beauty, massively there, and they compel the one who would dare to learn them to submit.

The demanding “there-ness” of the French language was symbolized for me one day soon after I had arrived in Paris for my doctoral studies. I was with some friends in a crowded restaurant at the height of the dinner rush when a stereotypically haughty and impatient waiter came to take our order. When he turned his imperious gaze toward me and uttered a curt “Oui?” I promptly forgot all of my carefully memorized restaurant vocabulary and every one of my past participles and devolved before his eyes into a muttering, incoherent child. His reaction to my plight? He turned and walked away.

A second spiritual exercise recommended by Iris Murdoch for the disciplining of the ego is a confrontation with a true work of art. Second rate art is designed to please. Comfortable, familiar, likeable, it presents no particular challenge to the sensibilities of the one who takes it in. For example, the music heard in an elevator or a doctor’s waiting room is meant simply to provide a mild distrac-
Gestures, postures during Mass; support during scandal

By Fr. Kenneth Doyle
Catholic News Service

Q. I recently joined a small parish where the entire congregation holds hands together at the Our Father. I feel uncomfortable holding hands with people I don't know; so instead, I put my hands in a prayer position as a signal to others not to grab for my hands.

There is no other parish close by, and I don't know how to handle this. (Charleston, West Virginia)

Q. Several priests and seminarians of our diocese have reminded the faithful that only the priest should have his palms raised and extended during the Lord's Prayer.

However, elsewhere in the country local customs persist. Most typical is that of joining hands with adjacent worshippers. Many end by raising joined hands after the doxology (the closing portion of the prayer). Can you please clarify the preference of the [Catholic Church]? (Since your column reaches a broad audience, I am hoping that this will help to bring back some harmonization.) (Wichita, Kansas)

A. The two questions above reflect many that I regularly receive, and they demonstrate the continued angst over bodily gestures at Mass -- especially during the Our Father. And even though I answered a similar question in this column four years ago, that has not -- surprising as it may seem -- resolved the matter for all time! So let's try again.

One fact is clear: In response to a query about the correct congregational posture while the Our Father is prayed, the website of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops says simply: "No position is prescribed in the Roman Missal for an assembly gesture." I take that to mean that, within reason, people are free to do as they wish.

If you want to raise your hands with palms uplifted, have at it. If you prefer to join hands with your family or a (willing) pew-mate, then do that. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (in No. 42) says that, in the liturgy, "a common posture, to be observed by all participants, is a sign of the unity of the members of the Christian community."

That, however, gives no priest the right to impose a specific and universal gesture when the liturgical guidelines do not call for one. Surely the passion of some for uniformity and "harmonization" does not override everything else. More important, I think, is to leave worshippers free of anxiety and able to lift comfortably their minds and hearts to God.

Q. My wife and I were recently married, and we both feel strongly that we need to set a positive example in a secular culture, which seems to condone so much immorality (sex outside of marriage, contraception, abortion, etc.).

Our dilemma is that there is a really "nice" Catholic couple (recently engaged) in our circle of friends whom we love going out with. The problem is that, as we recently learned, they are cohabiting.

We feel that if we were to continue to socialize with them, we might be condoning immorality. How do we balance our friendship against the "sin of scandal"? Is it appropriate to cut off social ties with them until they marry or decide to live separately? In other words, how do we show them the love of Christ while still upholding the teachings of the church? (Atlanta)

A. Thank God for people like you and your wife, people willing to adhere to the church's teaching, which has guided Christians successfully and happily for many centuries.

Your issue now, though, is not so much one of morality as of strategy: What action by you and your wife can best help lead your friends to see the wisdom of the church's view?

It seems to me that if you were to cut off all ties with them abruptly, this could create resentment and entrench them more deeply in their choice of an immoral lifestyle. (By the way, not just the Catholic Church but many religions hold that couples should not live together as man and wife until they have made a religious and civil commitment that is formal and permanent.)

Why not, instead, take the courageous step of explaining to them, in a quiet and kind way, how much you enjoy their company but also how much the moral values of the church mean to the two of you and how it saddens you to see them stray from those values?

You could suggest to them that they will surely be looking for God's blessings throughout their marriage and that they might want to speak with the priest who will do their wedding about how to stay close to the Lord until that wonderful day arrives.

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

Don’t forget to put the important things on your bucket list

By Karen Osborne
Catholic News Service

The movie "The Bucket List" inspired the public to reflect on what each person wants to do before he or she dies. What's on your bucket list?

From the time I was a teenager, my list was always full of flights of fancy. I wanted to sing on Broadway, play the violin at Carnegie Hall and visit New Zealand. Even teens I know have made bucket lists, too. Ever since the movie came out a few years ago, everyone seems to have been busy imagining what they want to do in life.

I have actually been able to accomplish some of the crazy things on my bucket list, and until recently I was pretty proud of that. I visited Roman ruins, got married and saw the pope.

I honestly thought I was doing well -- until the cancer scare.

Recently, I sat in a doctor's office in a revealing, embarrassing white paper gown, watching the doctor put me on the fast track to the surgery suite. A few days later, I was being wheeled down a hallway on my way to anesthesia and a biopsy.

I became terrified of the road ahead, of the possibility that the decades stretching before me had become years or days. It was easy to think I was invincible, before that hallway and that white paper gown.

When that changed, so did my bucket list.

Gone were the "things" I wanted and wanted to do: the Victorian house with the wraparound porch, the birthday trip on the "vomit comet" space plane. Suddenly, I found that my bucket list was small and topped off with people.

I wanted to talk with my mom and eat her chicken soup, to hang out with my dad and hear his dad jokes, see my friend from Boston and talk about obscure books and movies, sing with my band from college again, babysit my best friend's new daughter and reminisce with my post-college theater group and my friends in Florida.

All of the material things I wanted suddenly didn't seem so important anymore. In fact, they didn't seem important at all.

A common complaint from parents about teenagers is that teens don't always understand that they're not invincible: They drive too fast, risk too much and don't think about their future enough. On top of that, it's really easy to get caught up in the cultural noise that says our self-worth is based on having the newest iPhone or being able to drive at 16 or how popular we are on Instagram.

Our culture puts emphasis on things, when we really should be focusing on people.

It's not healthy to be morbid or crazy about the future, especially when you're young and looking forward to a long life, but the truth is, our time in this life is transitory. We're only going to be here a short time, and we're not going to be able to take our things with us when we move onward.

As you're putting your life together -- and your own bucket list -- don't forget to put people on it: your friends and your family, your college best friend. Don't forget the moments that seem small but are unforgettable: That feeling you get on a sports team or drama cast, when you've won a game or closed a show, laughter at a school dance, high-fives, jokes, hugs, triumphs, emotional moments, singing along at concerts, smiles and people doing what people do.

That kind of bucket list is one full of life.
The Angelus

Angelus editor, noted Midland oilman publish first two books in children’s adventure series

MIDLAND — West Texas Angelus editor Jimmy Patterson and noted Midland oilman, and philanthropist Jim Henry will release the first two books in a continuing series of a children’s adventure stories, May 14-15, 2016 in Midland.

The Adventures of Willy Nilly & Thumper and The Lost Treasure of Mount Methuselah, and The Adventures of Willy Nilly & Thumper and The Hermit’s Last Hairs, are the first of four titles to be released in 2015-2016.

Conceived as bedtime stories told by Henry to his children and grandchildren over the last 40 years, the stories tell of Willy Nilly, a dog, and his rabbit best friend, Thumper. The stories have been praised by West Texas educators as being high in educational content, and by mothers who have measured their children’s interest level high.

After Henry recorded the telling of the stories over the last four decades, he commissioned Patterson to rewrite them to fit a children’s book format. Two editors and a book designer, formerly with HarperCollins Children-New York, and a world-renowned illustrator from South Africa were also brought into the project.

The books will be introduced at a public launch event from 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Saturday, May 14, 2016 at Midland’s Centennial Library, and at a book signing Saturday, May 15, 2016, from 1-3 p.m., at Barnes & Noble in Midland. A signing at St. Ann’s Church is forthcoming.

A third book will be released in November, and the fourth book in the Spring of 2017. More books are planned. A Spanish translation of the first two books is set for August. The books emphasize Christian-based values, problem solving, helping the poor and the importance of friendship.

For every book purchased, a book will be donated to literacy charities in Texas.

Henry, 82, is a pioneer in the petroleum industry, and a member of the Permian Basin Petroleum Museum Hall of Fame. Patterson has been editor of the Angelus since 2005.

Both books are available online at Amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com.

World Youth Day will require work from many volunteers, as well as donations, Garcia added. To contribute, contact the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis and make checks payable to the Diocese of San Angelo.

We want the young people to feel a part of this endeavor because it’s worldwide, and we want them to feel connected,” Sister Garcia said. “The Church seems to be getting old whenever we forget to include them; we forget there’s this energy out there.”

The stateside observation of World Youth Day will also feature a catechesis with Bishop Sis, speakers, multi-lingual recitation of the Rosary, live music, Reconciliation, Stations of the Cross and a closing Mass.

of the Word community, a relatively new religious community founded in Mexico by Fr. Luís Butera Vullo. Established in 1983, the community currently has 101 members, and will ordain four more this spring — two in Brazil, one in Spain, and Romero in Odessa.

The community’s mission is to spread the word of Jesus with Bible in hand.

“Our mission is to evangelize people,” Deacon Romero said. “In Matthew 28, Jesus, before he ascends, tells his disciples to go out and preach the gospel to all nations.”

Romero said the Missionary Servants of the Word — or MSP (the ‘P’ being an abbreviation for palabra, Spanish for ‘word”) — could not achieve their mission to evangelize if not for their use of the Bible.

“We work with the Bible in our hands,” he said. “We want to see what God wants from us. The Word of the Lord is the purpose of our community.”

Bishop Michael J. Sis invited the Missionary Servants of the Word to serve in the San Angelo Diocese.

“Many years ago, I became familiar with the evangelization work of Father Luís Butera,” Bishop Sis said. “He has developed an extensive program for training Catholics to better understand the faith and to share it more effectively.

When I became bishop of San Angelo, I approached their community and asked if they would be able to send us one or more priests to assist in parish ministry in our diocese. Their superiors came to visit us, and we came to the agreement that they would send us a priest, Fr. Fernando Bonilla, and a transitional deacon, Deacon Romero.

Romero, 32, a native of Tlaxcala, Mexico, also lived in Vera Cruz, Mexico, and attended high school in San Diego, Calif. In addition to Blessed Miguel Pro, Romero considers Fr. Butera as someone who has helped form him.

“Every time Fr. Butera would preach to us at the seminary, he would tell us we need to be saints. The world doesn’t need good people, he said, it needs saintly people.”

Nor did Fr. Butera’s words about being a priest in violent countries of the world intimidate Deacon Romero.

“He told us that one of the most dangerous professions in Mexico is to be a priest,” Romero said. “Even today they are killing priests in Mexico. You do not see it in newspapers or on TV, but there are a lot of priests killed in my home country.”

Fr. Butera’s message did not dissuade Romero, whose April 15 ordination will take him one step closer to being able to assimilate the life of one of his spiritual heroes, Blessed Pro.

“He was always trying to take God to people,” Deacon Romero said. “It will be fun doing the will of God. And he will help me. If this is his will, he will support me and he will be with me.”

The MSP community considers all people they serve at their home parish to be family members. As a result, Deacon Romero’s ordination at Holy Redeemer this month is considered a gift to those parishioners.
MISSIONARIES

(From 5)

In the early 17th century the Franciscan movement spread to the Caribbean, then to Mexico, Central America, parts of South America, and some parts of the southwestern United States. Although their main goal and top priority was to spread Christianity, they were regarded by some as tools of imperialism. Nevertheless, they were able to spread the Spanish language, culture and political control aimed at the urbanization of the Indians.

Today Catholic missionary societies and organizations in the country and in other parts of the world are following Jesus’ statement more than 2,000 years ago. Some of those I am familiar with are the Franciscan Mission Associates (now in the 54th year of their worldwide mission); the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (founded in France in 1816, now serving the United States and 60 countries); the Salesian Missions (with more than 28,000 priests, brothers and sisters around the world operating 3,200 Don Bosco technical schools, 70 colleges, 90 clinics and hospitals, and 330 orphanages and shelters); the Society of the Divine Savior, or Salvatorians (founded 130 years ago with various ministries around the globe); the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers (established a seminary for foreign missions in 1911); the Maryknoll Sisters (began in 1912 with a group of American Catholic sisters assigned to overseas missions); the Missionary Society of St. Columban, or the Columbans (with 480 priests serving in 16 countries); and the Catholic Relief Services (CRS). The CRS was founded in 1943 by the Catholic Bishops of the United States to serve World War II survivors in Europe. Since then, the CRS has expanded in size to reach 85 million people in 101 countries in five continents. Their mission is to assist impoverished people overseas “working in the spirit of Catholic social teaching and to promote the sacredness of human life and the dignity of the human person.” They are “motivated by the example of Jesus Christ” to ease suffering, provide development assistance and foster charity and justice to all people, regardless of race, religion, or nationality.

After Vatican Council II there have been many profound changes which make the missions explicitly conscious of social justice and aware of the dangers of cultural imperialism or economic exploitation disguised as religious conversion.

Contemporary missionaries argue that working for justice is a constitutive part of preaching the Gospel and as one group of missionaries state, they are “called to live God’s word as Jesus did, to proclaim it broadly to others, to work it into the fabric of human society and culture, and to express God’s love to all, especially to the oppressed, suffering, and poor.”

In his address to all Catholics on World Mission Day 2015, Pope Francis said that “Being a missionary is not about proselytizing or mere strategy, mission is part of the ‘grammar’ of faith, something essential for those who listen to the voice of the Spirit who whispers ‘Come’ and ‘Go forth’.” Those who follow Christ cannot fail to be missionaries, for they know that Jesus walks with them, speaks to them, and breathes with them. They sense Jesus alive with them in the midst of the missionary enterprise.”

Our Catholic missionaries are also heroes, but they do not need trophies and medals nor to be honored as celebrities. They need our assistance and our prayers. Through our prayerful and financial support of our Catholic missionaries around the world we “live, speak, and breathe” our Catholic faith wherever and whomever they serve. As followers of Christ we, too, can be missionaries, and we join them to help others see the depth of Jesus’ love.
EASTER

(From 10)

"May the Lord of life also accompany efforts to attain a definitive solution to the war in Ukraine, inspiring and sustaining initiatives of humanitarian aid, including the liberation of those who are detained," he prayed.

On Easter and throughout the Holy Week liturgies that preceded it, Pope Francis showed special concern for the fate of refugees and migrants fleeing violence and poverty and for Christians facing persecution in the Middle East and other parts of the world.

At Rome's Colosseum Good Friday, after presiding over the Stations of the Cross, the pope offered a long meditation on how Christ continues to be scorned, tortured and crucified in suffering people around the world.

"O Cross of Christ," he said March 25, "today too we see you raised up in our sisters and brothers killed, burned alive, throats slit and decapitated by barbarous blades amid cowardly silence."

"O Cross of Christ, today too we see you in the faces of children, of women and people, worn out and fearful, who flee from war and violence and who often only find death and many Pilates who wash their hands," he said.

Two days later, celebrating the Resurrection, Pope Francis said the Easter message "invites us not to forget those men and women seeking a better future, an ever more numerous throng of migrants and refugees — including many children — fleeing from war, hunger, poverty and social injustice. All too often, these brothers and sisters of ours meet along the way death or, in any event, rejection by those who could offer them welcome and assistance."

Celebrating the Easter vigil March 26, Pope Francis said Easter is a celebration of hope, one that must begin within the hearts of each Christian.

"Christ wants to come and take us by the hand to bring us out of our anguish," he said in his homily. "This is the first stone to be moved aside this night: the lack of hope which imprisons us within ourselves. May the Lord free us from this trap, from being Christians without hope, who live as if the Lord were not risen, as if our problems were the center of our lives.

"Today is the celebration of our hope, the celebration of this truth: nothing and no one will ever be able to separate us from his love," the pope said.

"The Lord is alive and wants to be sought among the living," Pope Francis said. "After having found him, each person is sent out by him to announce the Easter message, to awaken and resurrect hope in hearts burdened by sadness, in those who struggle to find meaning in life. This is so necessary today."

During the Easter vigil, Pope Francis baptized eight women and four men, including Yong-joon Lee, the South Korean ambassador to Italy, who took the baptismal name, Stephen. The ambassador's wife, taking the name Stella, was also baptized. The other catechumens came from Italy, Albania, Cameroon, India and China.

ANGELICA

(From 10)

"Mother Angelica brought the truth and the love and the life of the Gospel of Jesus to so many people, not only to our Catholic household of faith, but to many thousands of people who are not Catholic, in that beautiful way she had of touching lives, bringing so many people into the Catholic faith," said Bishop Robert J. Baker of Birmingham, Alabama, in whose diocese EWTN is located.

"Mother Angelica was a pioneer of the new evangelization before that term ever became popular," said Msgr. Walter Rossi, rector of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, the site of many Masses televised live each year by EWTN.

"By providing religious programming, the Mass and devotions, first by television and now by every form of communications media, Mother Angelica and EWTN proclaimed the message of the Gospel to millions of people throughout the world," he said.

"She untiringly exhorted all to pursue holiness by living with God in the present moment. We are grateful for your prayers for this courageous daughter of the church," said Mother Dolores Marie, superior of the Poor Clare Nuns of Perpetual Adoration of Our Lady of the Angels Monastery in Hanceville, Alabama. The monastery is north of the Birmingham suburb of Irondale, where EWTN has its headquarters.

"Her voice and her message will be with us for a long time," said a statement from Father Frank Pavone, national director of Priests for Life, about Mother Angelica.

"We have all lost a friend, a mentor, a spiritual mother, a voice of conscience, and a source of laughter and encouragement."

"Mother Angelica was a true media giant. She proved that the church belonged in the popular media alongside the news, sports, and talk shows," said Franciscan Father Michael O. Sheridan, president of the Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio. The show "Franciscan University Presents," a round-table theology discussion, has been produced by the university for EWTN since 1993.

"She heeded the call of the Second Vatican Council to bring the Gospel message into contemporary society. With humor and the occasional stern word, but always moved by a deep love of people, Mother Angelica faithfully conveyed the knowledge and love of God to Catholics, Christians, and nonbelievers alike," Father Sheridan added.

"Mother Angelica leaves behind a legacy of holiness and commitment to the new evangelization that should inspire us all," said Carl Anderson, supreme knight of the Knights of Columbus.

"I was honored to know and be able to assist Mother Angelica during the early days of EWTN. Over the years, that relationship grew, and today the Knights of Columbus and EWTN partner regularly on important projects. Mother Angelica was fearless, because she had God on her side," Anderson said. "She saw what he needed her to do and she did it!"

EL PASO

(From 7)

Paso see it differently than people in other parts of the country. "We recognize how interconnected we are here," he said.

"For many people elsewhere, it is something that separates us from them. It separates us from the aliens. But in El Paso, that's never been the case. We started as one city and even today it is rare that a family in one city doesn't have family on the other side. Many children from Juarez come to El Paso to go to school. Many of our people are manipulators. We see Juarez as a place where we would not want to divorce ourselves from. Here, their sufferings our ours and there celebrations are our celebrations."

SAINTS

(From 7)

Peter was joined by other tertiaries, but he had no wish to organize a community. He simply wanted to establish his hospital. Later he wrote up an adaptation of the Rule of St. Augustine for the community that included the active apostolate of working with the poor, the sick, and the less fortunate. According to Wikipedia, this led to the formation of the Order of Our Lady of Bethlehem or Bethlemites.

Peter died on April 25, 1667 in Guatemala City and is remembered as the “St. Francis of the Americas.” Pope John Paul II beatified him in June, 1980 and in his remarks honored Peter’s humility, dedication and service of the blessed, all of which reflected Franciscan joy. Pope John Paul II canonized Peter on July 30, 2002 in Guatemala City. He is the first saint native to the Canary Islands, and is also considered the first saint of Guatemala and Central America. Peter’s tomb is in the San Francisco Church in Antigua, Guatemala.
BISHOP

(From 3)

Our discourse should be marked by civility and respect, using words to heal rather than to destroy, to encourage rather than to degrade. Our humor should not elicit laughter at the expense of another person’s dignity. Jokes that are racist, misogynistic, or cruel have no place on the lips that receive the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

Disrespectful words lead eventually to disrespectful actions. Violent words lead eventually to violent behaviors. Divisiveness is a sign of a situation that is closed to the action of the Holy Spirit. Unity is a sign of a situation where the Holy Spirit is active.

In this Year of Mercy, we will do well to choose our words wisely. St. Paul gives good advice in Ephesians 4:29-32: “Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for edifying, as fits the occasion, that it may impart grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”

WELCOME

(From 14)

of continual conversion, self-sacrifice, humble service, and self-control. We offer you the Catholic moral vision of a consistent ethic of life, from conception to natural death, pursuing the common good in solidarity, and respecting the dignity of every human being.

At the very core of the experience of the Catholic faith is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ our Lord. We seek to live in such an intimate communion with him in this life that our relationship with him will endure into eternal life.

You are entering the Catholic Church during the Jubilee Year of Mercy. You have received the unmerited mercy of God, and you have responded to that gift by repenting of your sins and reforming your life. Now, as active Catholics, you must pass on that mercy to those you meet along the way. Wherever you go, people should find in you an oasis of mercy.

This Easter Vigil is not a graduation ceremony. It is initiation—a new beginning in a lifelong practice of faith. Tonight I am inviting you to stick with it for the rest of your life. As Jesus says, “You will be hated by all nations because of my name… the love of many will grow cold, but the one who perseveres to the end will be saved.” (Mt. 24:9-13)

You have come to us from a wonderful variety of different backgrounds. Some come from no particular religion, and some from active participation in another faith or another Christian church. We respect your personal life history, your family, and your upbringing. It has helped form you into the beautiful person you are today. By becoming a Catholic, you’re not throwing out all that you learned from your parents. You’re building on what they gave you. Your choice to become Catholic is not a rejection of them. It is a response to the action of the Holy Spirit speaking to you in your own conscience, on the basis of your own experience.

Your wonderful gifts and talents bring new life to the Church. We need you and we invite you to be active members of your local parish community. Thank you for saying “yes” to God’s call. I look forward to walking with you along the journey.

As you step forth into this new phase of your life, and you face the uncertainties of the road ahead, remember the words of the risen Lord Jesus: “Be not afraid.”

We believe in God. And God, who has begun this good work in you, will bring it to fulfillment in Christ Jesus our Lord.

BARRON

(From 17)

tion or a feeling of calm in the listener; and the paintings that hang in most hotel rooms or corporate lobbies are intended to provide low-level entertainment. These works fit predictably into universally recognized canons of appropriateness and, as such, are forgotten almost as soon as they are taken in. But a great and true work of art does not aim to please. Rather, it presents itself in its integrity on its own terms, remaining fundamentally indifferent to the reaction of the viewer or listener. In a scene from his autobiographical masterpiece, A Portrait of the Artist as Young Man, James Joyce brilliantly displays the dynamics of confronting the truly beautiful. Stephen Daedalus (Joyce’s fictional alter-ego) is pacing listlessly on the strand outside of Dublin when he spies, standing out in the surf, a woman of surpassing beauty. He is stopped in his tracks—in the state of aesthetic arrest—and takes the woman in. She turns to him at one point and “quietly suffered his gaze,” before turning back to look out at the open sea.

Indifferent to his feelings or reactions, she allowed him to watch. Finally, changed utterly by this encounter, Stephen cried out, “Oh, heavenly God” and resolved from that moment on to become an artist, a reporter of such epiphanies of the beautiful.

The lovely girl standing just off the strand did not so much please Stephen Daedalus as change him, drawing him effectively out of his morose self-regard and giving him his vocation. Hans Urs von Balthasar observes, in a very similar vein, that the beautiful elicits the observer and then sends him on mission to announce what he has seen. Not many years ago, Rolling Stone magazine asked a number of prominent popular musicians to name the song that first “rocked their world.” Some of the responses were relatively banal, but the vast majority of them had a Joycean resonance: the respondents knew instinctively the difference between songs (however great) that had merely pleased them and songs that had shaken them out of their complacency and rearranged their vision things. This kind of aesthetic encounter is the spiritual exercise that Murdoch is speaking of.

It is against this Murdochian background that I should like to consider the familiar Gospel story of the Pharisee and the publican (Lk 18:9-14). Jesus tells of a Pharisee who “took up his position and spoke this prayer to himself, ‘O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity—greedy, dishonest, adulterous—or even like this tax-collector.’”

This is, Jesus suggests, a fraudulent, wholly inadequate prayer, precisely because it simply confirms the man in his self-regard. The words are, obviously enough, just elaborate self-congratulation, but even the Pharisee’s body-language gives him away: he takes up his position, standing with a confidence bordering on arrogance in the presence of God. The prayer itself confirms the Pharisee’s world. Like a second-rate work of art, or like the tourist’s language spoken by the dilettante, it functions simply to please. And the god to which he prays is, necessarily, a false god, an idol, since it allows itself to be positioned by the ego-driven needs of the Pharisee.

But then Jesus invites us to meditate upon the publican’s prayer. First, his stance is telling: “but the tax-collector stood off at a distance would not even raise his eyes to heaven…” This man realizes that he is in the presence of a power that he cannot even in principle manipulate or control; and he signals with his body, accordingly, that he is positioned by this higher authority. Then he speaks with a simple eloquence: “he beat his breast and prayed, ‘O God, be merciful to me, a sinner.’” Though it is articulate speech, proceeding from the mind and will of the publican, it is not language that confirms the independence and power of the speaker, just the contrary. It is more of a cry or a groan, an acknowledgement that he needs to receive something, this mysterious mercy for which he begs.

In the first prayer, god is the principal member of the audience arrayed before the ego of the Pharisee. But in this second prayer, God is the principal actor, and the publican is the audience awaiting a performance the contours of which he cannot fully foresee. And therefore the publican’s prayer is the kind of spiritual exercise of which Iris Murdoch speaks. It is akin to the experience of being mastered by the French language, or by Picasso’s Guernica, or by Bernini’s Ecstasy of St. Teresa.

In the eastern Christian tradition, the “Jesus prayer” is all-important. Whether recited throughout the day by the contemplative monk or spoken occasionally by the business person immersed in the cares of the secular world, this prayer anchors the spiritual life of many Christians. It is a formula derived from the tax-collector’s prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” It is simple, unadorned, even blunt. But it has the essential virtue of knocking the ego off of its pedestal and rocking the world of the one who utters it.

In this, it both opens the sinner to transformation and honors the true God.
marriage and family relationships.

**Practice the Corporal Works of Mercy.** These are ways Christians are called to respond to Jesus' teaching that we will be judged according to how we treat others--"the least of these": feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, sheltering the homeless, visiting those in prison, comforting the sick, and burying the dead.

**Practice the Spiritual Works of Mercy.** Giving correction to those who need it, instructing the uninformed, counseling the doubtful, comforting the sorrowful, being patient with those in error, forgiving offenses, praying for the living and the dead. As individuals, couples, and families, let us pray about and decide on concrete ways to practice the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy in our daily lives.

**Make a pilgrimage to a Holy Door.** We are pilgrims traveling His Way to our eternal salvation. We can think of the opening of Holy Doors by the Bishops as symbolic of opening the door that leads to God's merciful heart, through the pierced side of Christ on the cross (Jn 19:34). In our pilgrimage to and through a Holy Door, we are making an act of faith and can receive a Plenary Indulgence for forgiveness of sin and its effects, according to these conditions: Confession while on the pilgrimage or a few days before or after; Mass and reception of Holy Communion, preferably on day of pilgrimage; praying an Our Father and Hail Mary or other prayers for the intentions of the Holy Father; making a pious exercise e.g. assisting at a liturgical celebration, praying the Stations of the Cross, rosary, or meditation, ending with Our Father, Nicene or Apostles Creed, and prayers to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

**Share the Good News of God's mercy.** Through our words and deeds, we can tell others about God's love for them. Each of us knows someone who is lonely, without hope, in need of encouragement or assistance, ashamed of something in their past, in need of a prayer partner/soul friend, hungering to know Jesus, in need of a Bible and guidance in reading it; waiting for an invitation and/or a ride to Mass.

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**Holy Door**

At last comes dawn for which we've longed
Since we in Adam fell;
In garden we have not belonged,
Cast out to hear death knell.

But now we see an open Door
Of tomb in garden new,
With grave clothes empty on the floor,
As life begins anew.

He's raised from dead, and we're with Him;
Our sin is left behind.
The devil's left with "might have been,"
Cast down with his own kind.

Through Holy Door at dawn we step,
To mercies fresh and new;
His promise to us Jesus kept:
New Life in us imbued!

--- Fr. Knick Knickerbocker

Support local charities that extend mercy to those in need. We can participate in these merciful efforts monetarily, as well as with our time, talents, and prayers.

**Learn about St. Faustina,** canonized by Pope John Paul II on April 30, 2000. God revealed the depth and scope of His mercy through this Polish mystic in the 1930s. He gave her a prophetic message for a particular time in history. More than ever, the world needs the source of relief and hope found in the eternal mercy of God. Now is a time of extraordinary mercy because "Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (Rom 5:20). We can read in her diary the remarkable account of God's revelations of Divine Mercy: Divine Mercy in My Soul. To learn "how we can tap into the extraordinary graces of our time," we recommend two booklets by Fr. Michael E. Gaitley, MIC: Divine Mercy Explained, Keys to the Message and Devotion, "a brief and easy-to-understand introduction to Divine Mercy" that includes Divine Mercy prayers, and Divine Mercy Image Explained, which includes Enthronement Prayers. Both are available from Marian Press.

**Pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet.** When we pray the Chaplet, we are uniting ourselves and those for whom we pray with Jesus Christ in the Sacrifice of the Mass: "Eternal Father, I offer you the Body and Blood, Soul, and Divinity of your dearly beloved son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world." In particular, we are encouraged to pray the Chaplet for the sick, the dying, and for the holy souls in purgatory.

**Display the Divine Mercy Image.** We can "enthrone" in our homes the image Jesus revealed to St. Faustina: "I desire that this image be venerated... throughout the world." In The Divine Mercy Image Explained, Fr. Gaitley tells us, "The pierced Heart of Jesus and the blood and water that flow from it are the ultimate symbols of God's love and mercy.... He wants us to let him approach us, embrace us with the rays of his mercy, and receive his healing grace and blessing...." [The image] is a 'sacramental' that draws its power from the Word of God and the Paschal mystery and communicates grace though the promises of Christ."

As we contemplate the many acts of mercy Jesus has extended to us, we invite His love to change our hearts and create us anew, to see as He sees: to see ourselves and our brothers and sisters as worthy of God's love and mercy. This should compel us to show the same love and mercy to one another. "Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy" (Mt 5:7).

"As a gift to humanity, which sometimes seems bewildered and overwhelmed by the power of evil, selfishness and fear, the Risen Lord offers his love that pardons, reconciles and reopens hearts to love. It is a love that converts hearts and gives peace. How much the world needs to understand and accept Divine Mercy! Lord, who reveal the Father's love by your death and Resurrection, we believe in you and confidently repeat to you today: Jesus, I trust in you, have mercy upon us and upon the whole world" (Pope John Paul II).

Pray for us Blessed Mother Mary, Mother of Mercy.

Fr. Knick Knickerbocker is a retired status priest in the Diocese of San Angelo.
Clockwise from top, two boys listen as Bishop Michael J. Sis leads the Stations of the Cross ... Top right, members of the Knights of Columbus establish a perimeter near the Concho River, where the Stations of the Cross is located at Christ the King Retreat Center ... Lower right, Fr. Emilio Sosa with two youngsters processing ... And above, Bishop Sis begins the procession at St. Margaret's.

Photos by Karen J. Patterson