Fr. Patrick Akpanobong, right, receives ashes from Deacon Alex Perez during Ash Wednesday Mass at San Miguel Arcangel Church in Midland, March 1, 2017. (Photo by Karen J. Patterson/The Angelus)
Fr. de Leon, former pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Midland, dies


Fr. de Leon professed his first vows as a member of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in August 1975. He was ordained on August 15, 1980 at Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church in Harlingen by Bishop Raymond Peña, D.D.

After ordination, Fr. de Leon was assigned to Immaculate Conception Cathedral in Brownsville as Assistant Pastor. He went on to teach at St. Anthony’s Seminary where he was involved as Vocation Director and a member of the Formation Team. He served as Parochial Vicar at Holy Family in Corpus Christi and later was Director of the Shrine in San Juan for many years. He used his expertise in technology as webmaster at Oblate Missions and served in various capacities at Oblate Renewal Center, Oblate School of Theology, as well as Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville, Illinois. Fr. de Leon served as Pastor at Our Lady of Guadalupe in Midland, Texas until July, 2011.

He was an Executive Board Member of the National Religious Vocation Conference in Chicago for two years and Chaplain to the Movimiento Familiar Cristiano. Fr. de Leon served as superior in many districts throughout Texas. He always seized the opportunity to deepen and strengthen communal spirit of Oblate brotherhood. Being proficient in several languages, he gained a following on social media with his spiritual and enlightening reflections that reached many people.

In addition to his Oblate family, Fr. de Leon is survived by his brothers, Jesse de León, Jr. (Clementina); Jose de León (Gloria); and sisters, Dora de Leon-Garcia (Frank); Connie Colmenero (Orlando); Rosie de Leon-McCrady (Phillip); and Teresa Kreger (Philip). He was preceded in death by his parents, Dionicia and Jesus de León, Sr. and brother Amador de León. Fr. de Leon will be remembered with gratitude by his Oblate brothers and all the people who were recipients of his pastoral care.

Funeral services were held at Immaculate Conception Chapel in San Antonio. A Vigil service and Rosary was held February 24, 2017. Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated February 25, 2017. Interment followed at the Oblate Cemetery.

Memorial contributions can be made to Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, 327 Oblate Drive, San Antonio, TX 78216.

Masses celebrated at McMurry, at ACU

300 attend Mass on campus of Church of Christ school in Abilene

By Loretta Fulton

ABILENE — Even something as ancient as Ash Wednesday can get a new twist.

Many people in Abilene learned that when Bishop Michael J. Sis conducted services at two of Abilene’s three church-affiliated universities — none of which is affiliated with the Catholic Church.

Sis welcomed about 65 people — students and members of the community — to McMurry University’s Radford Auditorium for a noon Mass, and about 300 to Abilene Christian University’s Chapel on the Hill for an evening Mass.

“I hope this time of Lent will be a time of true renewal for all of us,” Sis said to the gathering at McMurry.

It certainly was for Jesus Cortez, a McMurry freshman from Ft. Worth. Cortez doesn’t have a car and finds it difficult to get to Mass at one of Abilene’s four parishes on a regular basis. He couldn’t believe his good fortune when he learned the bishop would be bringing Mass to McMurry’s Methodist campus.

“I was very excited,” Cortez said, “especially with the bishop coming.” At 6 p.m., Sis presided over his second Ash Wednesday Mass of the day at Abilene Christian University, which is affiliated with the Churches of Christ. The university’s 300-seat chapel was completely filled, said Kevin Pantoja, president of Lighthouse, the ACU Catholic Students Association.

“We had many students attend the Mass, and from what I understand there may have been more non-Catholics than Catholics,” Pantoja said. “It was definitely a great turnout.”

Sis explained why he wants to celebrate Mass at all the college campuses in the diocese. Last year, he was at Odessa College and Midland College for Ash Wednesday Masses.

“I want you students to know,” he said, “that you are very important to me and to our church.”

Students at both universities got the message. ACU’s Pantoja was overwhelmed with the turnout and the goodwill felt by all who were present.

“It was a very special moment for me and to our church.”

(See Please ASHES/14)

“The cry of Christ in the voice of the migrant moves us’’

Editor’s Note: More than 20 Bishops along the border of Texas and Northern Mexico, including San Angelo Bishop Michael J. Sis, have issued a joint statement emphasizing the need for us to listen to the cry of our migrant brothers and sisters. The bishops issued the statement while participating in the biannual Tex-Mex Border Bishops meeting in February. The meetings included priests, religious and laypersons as well as invited representatives from other border dioceses in the United States and Mexico.

1. We greet you joyfully from the Basilica of Our Lady of San Juan del Valle, in the Diocese of Brownsville, Texas. We speak on behalf of the bishops, priests, religious, and committed laypersons who are participating in the biannual meeting of the Tex-Mex Border Bishops. For this meeting we have also invited representatives from other border dioceses between the United States and Mexico.

2. We began these biannual meetings in 1986 as an expression of the communion of the Universal Church. The primary concern in all these years has been to address the life and pastoral needs of our migrant brothers and sisters.

3. In this difficult moment in our history we hear the cry of our migrant brothers and sisters, in whose voices we hear the voice of Christ Himself.

4. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, as immigrants and refugees, sought a place to live and work, hoping for a compassionate human response. Today this history repeats itself; this morning we visited detention centers and respected centers for adults and their adolescent and minor children traveling with them. Centers like these have been described as places of intolerable and inhumane conditions. There we heard the gospel call: “Because I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was hungry and you gave me food…” (Mt 25:35-36).

5. Over the years we have seen firsthand the suffering that is brought about by a broken immigration system caused by political structures and economic conditions that result in threats, deportations, impunity, and
**Cuaresma con un toque diferente: un giro hacia el otro**

Obispo Michael J. Sis

Cada Cuaresma trae una oportunidad de cambio. Este año, el Papa Francisco ha fijado el tono para el tipo de cambio que le gustaría que ocurriera en nosotros. Él quiere que la conversión de nuestro corazón sea un giro hacia el otro.

**En su carta para la Cuaresma de 2017,** el Papa Francisco nos invita a acercarnos a nuestras prácticas ceremoniales con un enfoque en nuestros compañeros humanos y cómo podemos ayudarlos. Comienza señalando que otras personas son un don. Él dice:

> "La justa relación con las personas consiste en reconocer con gratitud su valor. Incluso el pobre en la puerta del rico, no es una carga molesta, sino una llamada a convertirse y a cambiar...cada persona es un don, ya sea nuestro vecino o un pobre desconocido."

**Papa Francisco**

Nuestro Santo Padre escribe: "La Cuaresma es un tiempo propicio para abrir la puerta a cualquier necesitado y reconociéndonos a nosotros mismos como el rostro de Cristo. Cada uno de nosotros los encontramos en nuestro camino. Cada vida que encontramos es un don y merece acogida, respeto y amor." 

> "Queridos hermanos y hermanas, la Cuaresma es el tiempo propicio para renovarse en el encuentro con Cristo vivo en su Palabra, en su Virgen, y en nuestro próximo. El Señor que en los cuatro días que pasó en el desierto venció los engaños del Tentador nos muestra el camino a seguir. Que el Espíritu Santo nos guíe a realizar un verdadero camino de conversión, para redescubrir el don de la Palabra de Dios, ser purificados del pecado que nos ciega, y servir a Cristo presente en los hermanos necesitados." 

> "Oremos unos por otros para que, participando de la victoria de Cristo, sepamos abrir nuestras puertas a los débiles y a los pobres. Entonces viviremos y daremos un testimonio pleno de la alegría de la Pascua."

En respuesta a la invitación del Papa Francisco, centramos esta Cuaresma en nuestros actos de amonestación en la forma de Cuaresma en la cual nos acercamos a las prácticas tradicionales de la oración, el ayuno, y la limosna aumente nuestro espíritu de solidaridad con nuestros hermanos y hermanas por todo el mundo.

**Fasting**

Fasting includes any voluntary reduction of food, drink, or luxuries. From the beginning of Christian history, fasting and abstinence have been an integral part of the experience of Lent. This year, when we make changes in our eating habits and take special time for prayer during Lenten observance, we should allow our hunger to bring to mind our brothers and sisters around the world who go hungry every day. Our little pangs of hunger are nothing in comparison to the suffering of a person in a famine or in a town whose food supply has been cut off by war or disease.

There are many ways to live out the practice of fasting, and it is good to try various expressions of this discipline in different years. For example, some choose to skip a meal on certain days of the week. Some do a juice fast. I know many who take on the ancient practice of going meatless for the entire season. A particularly powerful witness is to give up all alcohol during Lent. Fasting and abstinence can bring a new vibrancy to your prayer life. They also help the potential to increase in us the virtue of solidarity. Solidarity is an attitude that says, "What happens to other people matters to me, even if I do not know those people."

(Continued on Pg. 9)
El clamor de Cristo en el migrante nos urge

Comunicado de los Obispos de la frontera entre Texas y la frontera norte de México

1. Los saluamos con alegría desde la Basílica de San Juan del Valle, ubicada en la diócesis de Brownsville, Texas, los obispos, sacerdotes, religiosas y laicos que estamos participando en el primer Encuentro bi-annual Tex-Mex, que ahora ha incluido más diócesis fronterizas tanto de EU como de México.

2. Estas reuniones, que iniciaron desde el año 1986, como expresión de la comunión de la Iglesia Universal, han tenido siempre como preocupación central, la vida y realidad pastoral de nuestros hermanos migrantes.

3. En este momento difícil de nuestras historias, escuchamos el clamor de nuestros hermanos migrantes, en quienes escuchamos la voz de Cristo.

4. Jesús, María y José como inmigrantes y refugiados, buscaron un lugar para vivir y trabajar, esperando una respuesta de compasión humana.

5. Hoy, esta historia se repite, esta mañana visitamos centros de detención, y lugares de atención, particularmente a madres, adolescentes y niños migrantes. Este tipo de centros, son descritos como lugares que reflejan condiciones intolerables e inhumanas. Donde constatamos la exigencia de albergues para las necesidades de largos periodos.

6. Hemos presenciado el dolor, el temor y la angustia de las personas que han venido a nosotros, que tienen que vivir entre nosotros en las sombras de la sociedad. Muchos han sufrido explotación en el lugar de trabajo, han vivido bajo la amenaza constante de deportación y han soportado el peso del temor de una posible separación de sus familiares y amigos.

7. Este estado de realidad está siendo hoy muy marcado, ante las medidas que las autoridades civiles están tomando, pues palpamos el dolor de la separación de las familias, pérdida de trabajo, perjuicios, discriminación, expresiones de racismo, deportaciones innecesarias, que paralizan el desarrollo de las personas en nuestras sociedades y el desarrollo de nuestras naciones, dejándolas en el vacío y sin esperanza.

8. La inmigración es un fenómeno global de condiciones económicas y sociales, de pobreza e inseguridad, causando directamente el desplazamiento de poblaciones enteras, de familias que se sienten sin otras posibilidades para sobrevivir. El migrante tiene derecho a ser respetado por el derecho internacional y por cada país. Porque muchas veces, se encuentra entre la espada y la pared, ante la violencia, la criminalidad, las políticas inhumanas de gobiernos, y la indiferencia del mundo.

9. Independiente de su condición migratoria, los migrantes, como toda persona, poseen una dignidad humana intrínseca que debe ser respetada. Es común que sean sujetos a leyes punitivas y al maltrato por parte de las autoridades, tanto en países de origen, como de tránsito y destino. Es necesario que la adopción de políticas gubernamentales que respeten los derechos humanos básicos de los migrantes indocumentados.

10. Las ciudades fronterizas son hermanas y amigas, fruto de una larga historia, de compartir una misma tierra, la fe, las tradiciones, la cultura y la solidaridad. Nosotros como obispos, queremos asistirles en los caminos y acompañarlos en el camino del Papa Francisco, buscarnos construir puentes entre los pueblos, puentes que nos permitan derribar los muros de la exclusión y la explotación.

11. Afirmamos que la amistad existe entre familias y vecinos, puede potenciar la amistad entre pueblos y países. Nuestro encuentro es ya una clara manifestación de amistad, y signo de profunda esperanza. La cruz que se ha colocado, en la frontera, entre las ciudades del Paso y Cd. Juárez, recordando la visita del Papa Francisco en febrero del 2016, es un signo de encuentro, unidad y fraternidad.

12. Reiteramos como Iglesia, nuestro compromiso de atender y cuidar a los peregrinos, forasteros, excluidos y migrantes de todo tipo, aprobando que todo pueblo tiene el derecho a condiciones dignas para la vida humana, y si éstas no se dan, tiene derecho a emigrar (Papa Pio XII); y nos comprometemos, como obispos representantes de ambas Conferencias Episcopales, a dar acompañamiento y seguimiento a las situaciones que sufren nuestros hermanos migrantes en estos momentos.

13. Asegurarnos que en la Iglesia nadie debe sentirse como de menos, que las familias de migrantes deben encontrar siempre en cada Iglesia, su hogar y su Patria (JPII).

14. A través de Caridades católicas en EU, y de las diversas Casas de migrantes en México, continuaremos ofreciendo un servicio de calidad a los migrantes, que implica lo espiritual, lo legal, la asistencia material, y familiar.

15. Así mismo mantendremos nuestra presencia constante en campos de detenciones, casas y centros de asistencia a migrantes desde la frontera sur de México hasta todo EU.

16. Además, hay organizaciones laicas reconocidas que trabajan comprometedamente apoyando integralmente a los migrantes.

17. Esto, sin dejar de mencionar a tantas familias en México y EU, que asisten, atienden y apoyan a migrantes en el camino, abriendo su corazón y sus hogares.

18. Pero, aún con estos esfuerzos, no podemos dejar a un lado lo que nos sostiene, que es la oración, y la presencia tan significativa de nuestra madre, nuestra señora de Guadalupe, que ha acompañado al migrante y a nuestros Pueblos desde 1531 hasta nuestros días. “Que no estoy a un caso aquí que soy tu madre”.

19. Y por ello pedimos a todos, a las personas de buena voluntad, unimos en estos esfuerzos, y en la oración bendita, “Bajito tu amparo nos acogemos, Santa Madre de Dios, no desprecies nuestras súplicas en las necesidades, antes bien libranos de todo peligro, oh Virgen gloriosa y bendita. Amén.

14 de febrero, de 2017 San Juan, Texas USA

S.E. Mons. Gustavo García-Siller, MSpS
Arzobispo de San Antonio
S.E. Mons. Joe S. Vásquez
Obispo de Austin
S.E. Mons. Daniel E. Flores
Obispo de Brownsville
S.E. Mons. Raymundo J. Peña
Obispo Emérito de Brownsville
S.E. Mons. Mark J. Seitz
Obispo de El Paso
S.E. Mons. Jaime Tamayo
Obispo de Laredo
S.E. Mons. Oscar Cantú
Obispo de Las Cruces
S.E. Mons. David O’Connell
Obispo Auxiliar de Los Ángeles
S.E. Mons. Michael James Śis
Obispo de San Ángelo
S.E. Mons. Michael D. Peifer, OMI
Obispo Emérito de San Ángelo
S.E. Mons. Michael Boulette
Obispo Auxiliar electo de San Antonio
S.E. Mons. Rogelio Cabrera López
Arzobispo de Monterrey
S.E. Mons. Alfonso Gerardo Miranda Guardiola
Secretario General, Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano
S.E. Mons. José Guadalupe Torres Cano
Obispo de Ciudad Juárez
S.E. Mons. Guillermo Ortiz Mondragón
Obispo de Culiacán
S.E. Mons. Eugenio Andrés Lira Ruga
Obispo de Matamoros
S.E. Mons. Jesús José Herrera Quiñonez
Obispo de Nuevo Casas Grandes
S.E. Mons. Enrique Sánchez Martínez
Obispo de Nuevo Laredo
S.E. Mons. Alonso Gerardo Garza Treviño
Obispo de Piedras Negras
S.E. Mons. Raúl Vera López, O.P.
Obispo de Sahillé
S.E. Mons. Hilario González García
Obispo de Linares

Pope names director of spiritual center as San Antonio auxiliary

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- Pope Francis has named Msgr. Michael J. Boulette as an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of San Antonio.

The priest is the founder and director of St. Peter Upon the Water, a center for spiritual direction and formation in Ingram, near Kerrville.

The appointment was announced Jan. 23 in Washington by Archbishop Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio. Bishop-designate Boulette, 66, will be ordained March 20 in San Antonio.

The native of Hudson Falls, New York, spent much of his childhood in Texas and was ordained a priest for the San Antonio Archdiocese March 19, 1976.

He received bachelor’s and master’s degrees in psychology and, in 1975, earned his master of divinity degree for ministry from the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana. He received his doctorate of ministry in preaching and worship from the Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary in 1993.

Msrgr. Boulette

PRAY FOR OUR SEMINARIES

KEVIN LENIUS

1st Year Theology – St. Mary’s Seminary
Birthday: March 26, 1994
Hometown: Abilene
Favorite Food: Italian
Enjoys playing the violin, singing and reading

PRAY FOR KEVIN!
Document offers hope for farmers as ‘agricultural leaders’

By Mark Pattison
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — While today’s family farmers worldwide are tested as never before, the church believes they can contribute to a more just ordering of life, said a new document issued Dec. 7.

"Today, the world produces more food than ever before, as incredible advances in agricultural technology and models of heightened efficiency have combined to create bountiful yields and a surplus of life-giving sustenance," it said.

"Yet the development of globalized and industrialized food systems has not come about without its share of alarming consequences: Family farms are being squeezed out of existence by the powerful forces of a global market," the document said, adding, "The agricultural leader is responsible for contributing to a vision of the food system in which the various participants are treated with dignity and justice."

The circumstances facing the family in farming are especially distressing. In many respects, we have sought an abundant harvest in exchange for a more diminished culture of life," said the document, "The Vocation of the Agricultural Leader," released by the International Catholic Rural Association.

Agricultural leaders can be found at any link in the chain from seed to table, the document said. "The whole document is all about soil," said Bishop Michael Sis, Catholic Rural Life director for the Diocese of Las Cruces, N.M.

The pope was very passionate about the development of new leaders, he said. "If you think it is a message we need to hear in the United States, you have to start with the leaders who are supposed to be developing leaders," he said.

Bishop Michael Sis invited Catholic Rural Life to come to the Diocese of San Angelo because “so many of the men and women in our diocese make their living off the land. I think it is a message we need to hear in the agricultural heart of our great state.”

The whole document is all about soil, the bishop said. "The circumstances facing the family in farming are especially distressing. In many respects, we have sought an abundant harvest in exchange for a more diminished culture of life," said the document, "The Vocation of the Agricultural Leader," released by the International Catholic Rural Association.

Agricultural leaders can be found at any link in the chain from seed to table, the document said. "The agricultural leader is responsible for contributing to a vision of the food system in which the various participants are treated with dignity and justice."

"Today, the world produces more food than ever before, as incredible advances in agricultural technology and models of heightened efficiency have combined to create bountiful yields and a surplus of life-giving sustenance," it said.

"Yet the development of globalized and industrialized food systems has not come about without its share of alarming consequences: Family farms are being squeezed out of existence by the powerful forces of a global market," the document said, adding, "The whole document is all about soil."
Catholic News Service

KATY — Norma McCorvey, the plaintiff "Jane Roe" in the Supreme Court's 1973 Roe v. Wade decision legalizing abortion virtually on demand, died Feb. 18 at an assisted-living facility in Katy. She was 69.

The New York Times said a New York journalist named Joshua Prager, who interviewed her many times for a book he is writing about the Roe decision, confirmed that she had died. The cause of death was heart failure. Her funeral will be private, family members said.

McCorvey became a pro-life supporter in 1995 after spending years as a proponent of legal abortion. She also became a born-again Christian. A couple of years later, she said she felt called to join the Catholic Church of her youth. Her mother was Catholic and her father was a Jehovah's Witness. After instruction in the faith, she was accepted into the church in 1998.

"Losing a loved one is always a difficult time for a family. Losing a loved one who was also a public figure at the center of a national controversy brings additional challenges. It also brings additional consolations," said a Feb. 19 statement from McCorvey's family released by Priests for Life.

The family thanked the "many people across America and around the world who, in these days, are expressing their condolences, their prayers, and their gratitude for the example Mom gave them in standing up for life and truth.

Though she was the Jane Roe of Roe v. Wade, she worked hard for the day when that decision would be reversed.

McCorvey's family said Priests for Life would be organizing memorial Masses and other services around the country "to give more people an opportunity to remember Mom's life and work."

Born in Simmesport, Louisiana, Sept. 22, 1947, Norma Leah Nelson was raised briefly at her family's home in Lettsworth, Louisiana. The family later moved to Houston.

McCorvey was 13 when her father left. Her parents divorced, and she and her older brother were raised by their mother, Mildred, an alcoholic who was known to be violent toward her children.

Norma married Woody McCorvey when she was 16. When she was pregnant with the couple's first child, she moved in with her mother, alleging Woody had assaulted her. She gave birth to daughter Melissa in 1965. She struggled with alcoholism and came out as a lesbian. The following year, McCorvey became pregnant with her second child, who was put up for adoption.

In 1969, when she was 21 and became pregnant a third time, she tried to obtain an illegal abortion but had no luck as state authorities had shut down such operations. She was referred to lawyers seeking a plaintiff for an abortion suit against the state of Texas. The case took three years to reach the Supreme Court. McCorvey gave her baby up for adoption.

"I did sign the affidavit that brought the holocaust of abortion into this nation," McCorvey said later. "(But) I found out about Roe v. Wade like everyone else did -- in the paper."

McCorvey said she was told that legalizing abortion would end back-alley abortions and "probably" put a stop to rape and incest. "They [the lawyers] had a hidden agenda," she said. "They told me that they only wanted to legalize abortion in the state of Texas, but what they actually wanted to do was what they did -- legalize abortion across the land."

In 1994, after more than two decades of guilt-induced surplus. Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) — More U.S. dioceses are turning to foundations to help meet their financial and fundraising priorities. And foundation executives in the diocesan realm believe they've only begun to tap into the potential for these gifts.

Dan McKune, executive director of Catholic Community Foundation of Mid-Michigan, which covers the Diocese of Saginaw, said Catholic donors are used to giving to an annual diocesan appeal or a school fund. "They are getting used to it, but we still are not where we want to be," he said. "Our donor base is about 1,000 people and they've been very, very good givers," but he thinks the foundation could attract and retain 2,500 donors -- and possibly twice that.

The way the Saginaw foundation is set up, it "deals with the $25 million being managed in Saginaw. Both ministries in Maine, primarily through endowments."

In Maine, a previous bishop authorized the establishment of a Catholic Diocese of Saginaw, said Catholic donors are used to giving to an annual diocesan appeal or a school fund. "They are getting used to it, but we still are not where we want to be," he said. "Our donor base is about 1,000 people and they've been very, very good givers," but he thinks the foundation could attract and retain 2,500 donors -- and possibly twice that.

All applications must include the pastor's signature and are due by 5 pm on April 1, 2017. The Board of Trustees will review the Grant Applications and approve grants addressing some of the most critical needs throughout the Diocese of San Angelo at a meeting in April. All grants made will be paid before June 30.

Any person that would like to assist the Catholic Foundation in this endeavor in the future should consider making a tax-deductible donation to its Unrestricted Endowment Fund. A donation to this endowment fund is an investment in the future of the diocese, addressing the needs of the Church for years to come. The income and gain from the fund is distributed through the Spend Rate adopted by the Trustees each year. The principal of the gift is preserved in perpetuity.
World Marriage Day was celebrated during weekend Masses at St. Joseph, Rowena, February 11-12, 2017. The occasion was held to honor and salute the beauty of every couple for their faithfulness, commitment to love and sacrifice in the joy of daily married life. The couples were invited to come forward for Renewal of Vows and a special blessing given by Father Ariel Laganilla, Pastor. Quintin and Pauline Halfmann were honored at the Saturday evening Mass for being married the longest – 67 years. Paul and Ethel Jansa were honored at the Sunday Mass for their 64 years of marriage. Scrapbooks featuring pictures of couples married at St. Joseph’s Church since the first Mass held in the then new parish on November 1907, were on display. (Courtesy photo).

FOUNDATIONS

(From 6)

ments and foundations for the New York City-based Wilmington Trust, and himself a Catholic, had always wondered about the extent of diocesan foundations in the United States, but could not easily find the information he sought. So he made the subject the topic of his master's thesis.

His paper, titled "The Advancement of Religious-Based Fundraising Foundations in the United States," found that 122 of the 181 Latin-rite U.S. dioceses used a separate foundation, but that there were 143 Catholic foundations in all, including those dioceses that have more than one foundation. "There was a lot of growth in the area but very little information," Dillingham told Catholic News Service. Now, Catholic foundation executives have their own professional conference.

His paper also showed that religion-based giving still accounts for the largest share of all charitable giving in the country, although the 32 percent recorded in 2014 is down from 36 percent in 2000 – perhaps an aftereffect of the clerical sexual abuse scandal.

Dillingham cited a 2012 Gallup poll showing that one in five Catholics stopped donating to their local parish as a result of the scandal, and those who continued to give feared their donations were being used to pay for legal fees and settlement costs. The poll also showed 79 percent wanted greater transparency in how their donations were being used.

Foundations, as separate federally chartered nonprofit corporations, can provide that clarity, which is important for a donor who wants to make a perpetual gift restricted to a particular use, be it schools, liturgical music or what have you.

Badger said the Catholic Foundation of Maine handles 113 separate gifts that supporting a range of efforts, from schools to seminarian education to sacred art and other ministries.

Rick Suchan, who heads the Catholic Foundation of Buffalo, New York, had been a banker for 30 years in wealth management before he came to the diocese six years ago. "Now I raise money for Jesus instead," he joked.

"I use those 30 years of experience every single day because I spend a good chunk of the day with people talking about estate planning ... remembering how influential the church was for them and their families," Suchan said.
The Beatitudes

Making the Beatitudes become our attitudes

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

What is a Beatitude? It’s a literary device found in the Bible. It begins "Blessed is the one who...", and it then lists a virtuous quality.

There are more than 80 “Beatitudes” scattered throughout the Old and New Testaments.

It’s a way of teaching virtues, and promoting certain personal qualities, and communicating values that shape a culture.

When Jesus gave his Beatitudes, he totally flipped people out, because the very qualities he calls blessed are qualities we often don’t want, like persecution, poverty, and hunger.

Those aren’t on very many people’s Top Ten list.

If we were writing them, we might come up with a different set of values.

Imagine what would be the Beatitudes of West Texas in 2017. They might look something like this:

1. Blessed are those who have lots of friends on Facebook.
2. Blessed are those who drive a big new pickup.
3. Blessed are our sports heroes, when they win.
4. Blessed are those whose kid is a genius.
5. Blessed are those who can afford braces, Accutane, implants, Lasik, and a nose job.
6. Blessed are those whose house is always neat and clean.
7. Blessed are those with good connections.
8. Blessed are those who are never lonely.
9. Blessed are those who own the mineral rights.
10. Blessed are those who don’t have anybody crazy in their family.

11. Blessed are those who still have all their hair.
12. And finally, blessed are those who agree with me.

What are the Beatitudes that drive your life?

Remember that Jesus is God. And the reason Jesus gives us his Beatitudes is so that we can judge things according to God’s will, not according to the criteria of the culture around us.

Jesus takes our natural assumptions about the meaning of true happiness in life, and he turns them upside down.

With his Beatitudes, he gives us a new set of glasses, so that we can see what is truly honorable and worthy of praise in God’s eyes, not the way we are used to seeing it.

So, what are these qualities and virtues taught to us by Jesus in his Beatitudes? Let’s explore them a bit:

1. Blessed are the poor in spirit: This is not when we pity someone from a distance. It’s compassion. The ability to see things with the eyes of the other, to imagine how the other must feel, to get inside the other person’s mind and heart and suffer with them.
2. Blessed are those who mourn: This is remembering those who are suffering. It’s about facing things honestly and actively, making peace, even if that means going through a struggle.
3. Blessed are the meek: The Greek word is praous. It’s hard to translate. It is equity, a moderated temperament of soul. It refers to someone who has the appropriate balance between too much anger and too little anger. He has his instincts and his impulses under control. It’s the same adjective that is used to describe a powerful wild horse that has been tamed. Powerful, but with an even temper.
4. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness: This is not when we pity someone from a distance. It’s compassion. The ability to see things with the eyes of the other, to imagine how the other must feel, to get inside the other person’s mind and heart and suffer with them.
5. Blessed are those who show mercy: Being a peacemaker does not mean evading the issues. It’s not the passive acceptance of the way things are because we’re afraid of the trouble of doing anything about them.

6. Blessed are the peacemakers: A peacemaker is somebody who “produces right relationships.”

Remember the teaching of Pope John Paul II: The two twin pillars on which true peace is built are justice and forgiveness.

7. Blessed are you when you are persecuted for the sake of righteousness: The moment our Christianity costs us something is when we show our true loyalty to Christ.

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Is our Catholicism just a comfortable social club, or are we actually willing to undergo insults and social ostracism and suffering for our faith?

Is my relationship with Jesus Christ in my Catholic Christian faith something I am willing to pour out my entire life for?

Well, I guess we can say that Jesus can write some pretty challenging Beatitudes, huh?

Let’s pray to make his Beatitudes our attitudes.
¿Qué es una Bienaventuranza?

Obispo Michael J. Sis

Homenaje al Obispo Miguel Sis sobre las Bienaventuranzas (Mat. 5: 1-12), St. Ann, Midland, 1-28-17

Acabamos de escuchar las Bienaventuranzas del Sermón del Monte.

¿Qué es una Bienaventuranza?

Es un recurso literario que se encuentra en la Biblia. Comienza “Dichos los que…” y luego se enumera alguna cualidad virtuosa.

Hay más de 80 “Bienaventuranzas” dispersadas por todo el Antiguo y el Nuevo Testamento.

Es una manera de enseñar virtudes, y de promover ciertas cualidades personales, y de comunicar los valores que dan forma a una cultura.

Cuando Jesús dio sus Bienaventuranzas, volcó totalmente a la gente, debido a que las mismas cualidades que él llamaba benditu- tas son cualidades que a menudo no queremos: (como la persecución, la pobreza, el hambre). Esas no se encuentran en la lista de los “Mejores Diez de muchas personas.

Si nosotros estuviera escribiéndolas, tal vez llegaríamos a un conjunto diferente de valores.

Imagínense lo que serían las Bienaventuranzas del Oeste de Texas en 2017? Podrían ser algo como estas:

1. Dichos los que tienen un montón de minerales.
2. Dichos los que manejan una nueva camioneta grande.
3. Dichos nuestros héroes deportivos, cuando ganan.
4. Dichos los que tienen el hijo que es un genio.
5. Dichos los que tienen el dinero para fumos, Accutane, implantes, cirugía LASIK, y cirugía de nariz.
6. Dichos los que tienen sus casas limpias y ordenadas.
7. Dichos los que tienen buenas conexiones.
8. Dichos los que nunca se sienten solos.
9. Dichos los que son dueños de derechos materiales.
10. Dichos los que no tienen ni un loco en su familia.
11. Dichos los que todavía tienen todo su cabello.
12. Y, por último, dichos los que están de acuerdo conmigo.

¿Cuáles son las Bienaventuranzas que impulsan la vida de usted? Recuerda que Jesús es Dios. Y la razón por la cual Jesús nos da sus Bienaventuranzas es para que podamos juzgar las cosas según la voluntad de Dios, no de acuerdo a los criterios de la cultura que nos rodea.

Jesús está mostrando sus suposiciones naturales sobre el significado de la verdadera felicidad en la vida, y las revela al revés.

Con su Bienaventuranza, nos da un nuevo par de anteojos, para que podamos ver lo que es verdaderamente honorable y digno de elogio ante los ojos de Dios, no la forma en que estamos acostumbrados a verlo.

Así que, ¿cuáles son estas cualidades y virtudes que nos enseñó Jesús en sus bienaventuranzas? Vamos a explorarlas un poco:

1. Dichos los que tienen espíritu de pobres: Esto es cuando uno se da cuenta de que no puede hacerla por su propia cuenta. Usted necesita desesperadamente la ayuda y la fuerza de Dios. Usted es impotente sin la ayuda de Dios.
2. Dichos los que sufren: Esto se refiere no sólo a los que sufren por sus propios dolores, sino también para aquellos que se preocupan intensamente por los sufrimientos y las penas de los demás.
3. Dichos son los humildes: La palabra griega es praus. Es difícil de traducir. Es la ecuanimidad, un temperamento moderado del alma. Se refiere a alguien que tiene el equilibrio adecuado entre el exceso de ira y muy poco coraje. Él tiene sus instintos y sus impulsos bajo control. Es el mismo adjetivo que se utiliza para describir un caballo salvo que ha sido amansado. Potente, pero con un temperamento uniforme.
4. Dichos los que tienen hambre y sed de la justicia: Esto es tener hambre y sed por la santidad completa, no sólo parcial. A veces decimos, “hazme santo, pero no en este momento.”
5. Dichos son aquellos que muestran misericordia: Esto no es cuando nos da lástima de alguien a la distancia. Es la compasión. La habilidad de ver las cosas con ojos ajenos, de imaginarse cómo el otro se da de sentir, de entrar en la mente y el corazón de la otra persona y sufrir con ellos.
6. Dichos los de corazón limpio: Esto se trata de alguien que es bueno de corazón, una persona de integridad, cuyas acciones exteriores e intenciones interiores son un conjunto coherente de bondad constante de principio a fin.
7. Dichos los que trabajan por la paz: Al ser un trabajador por la paz no significa evadir los problemas. No se trata de la aceptación pasiva de cosas que son como son porque tenemos miedo de la molestia de hacer algo al respecto.
8. Dichos los que son de corazón justo: Esto significa “relaciones correctas.” Así que un trabajador por la paz es alguien que “pro- duce relaciones correctas.” Recuerde la enseña- na del Papa Juan Pablo II: Los dos pilares en los cuales se construye la paz verdadera son la justicia y el perdón.

En su Bienaventuranza, dichos somos cuando somos perseguidos por causa de la justicia: En el momento en que nuestro Cristianismo nos cuesta algo es cuando mostramos nuestra verdadera lealtad a Cristo.

¿Es nuestro Catolicismo sólo un club social cómodo, o estamos realmente dispuestos a someternos a insultos y ostracismos, social y a sustentar por nuestra fe? ¿Estoy dispuesto a derramar toda mi vida por mi relación con Jesucristo en mi fe Católica Cristiana?
Bueno, pues creo que podemos decir que Jesús puede escribir algunas Bienaventuranzas bastante exigentes, ¿eh? Oremos para que sus Bienaventuranzas o beatitudes sean nuestras actitudes.

CALENDARIOS (cont’d)

(Bishop Sis statement on ‘Santa Muerte’)

Obispo Michael J. Sis
Diocesis de San Angelo

Involvement with Santa Muerte is spiritually dangerous and it is not Catholic in any way. It should be completely avoided. It is a perversion of devotion to the saints.

In 2013, Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, the President of the Vatican’s Pontifical Council for Culture, denounced the Santa Muerte practice as “sinister and infernal.” He called it a “blasphemy of religion.”

The cult of Santa Muerte has been linked to violent drug cartels and brutal ritual killings. While it is popular in Mexican prisons, it has followers in many walks of life in Mexico and in some parts of the United States.

The principal sanctuary of Santa Muerte is in Tepito, Mexico City.

We must distinguish true saints from false saints and superstitions.

Authentic saints are those found in the Bible and those who have passed through the official process of beatification and canonization by the Vatican.

Santa Muerte is not one of them.

Rather than asking Santa Muerte for protection or favors, we should turn our life over to Jesus Christ, repent of our sins, make a sincere Confession, follow God’s commandments, and actively, doing the grace of God.

Catholics and other Christians should get rid of any Santa Muerte statues, candles, or other paraphernalia.

In his Resurrection, Jesus Christ conquered death. Through our Christian Baptism, we share in his victory.

Declaración sobre la Santa Muerte

Monseñor Michael J. Sis
Diócesis de San Angelo

El envolverse con la Santa Muerte es espiritualmente peligroso y de ninguna manera es Católica. Debe evitarse por completo. Es una perversion de la devoción a los santos.

En 2013, el Cardenal Gianfranco Ravasi, Presidente del Consejo Pontificio para la Cultura, denunció la práctica de la Santa Muerte como “siniestra e infernal.” Él lo llamó una “blasfemia de la religión.”

El culto de la Santa Muerte se ha relacionado con los carteles de drogas violentos y asesinatos brutales rituales. Aunque es popular en las cárcel de las mujeres, hay seguidores en muchos ámbitos de la vida en México y en algunas partes de los Estados Unidos. El santuario principal de la Santa Muerte está en Tepito, Ciudad de México.

Hay que distinguir los verdaderos Santos de los falsos santos y supersticiones. Santos auténticos son aquellos que se encuentran en la Biblia y los que han pasado por el proceso oficial de beatificación y canonización por el Vaticano.

La Santa Muerte no es uno de ellos.

En lugar de pedirle a la Santa Muerte por protección o favores, debemos de entregar nuestra vida a Jesucristo, arrepentidos de nuestros pecados, hacer una Confesión sincera, seguir los mandamientos de Dios, y confiar en la gracia de Dios. Católicos y otros Cristianos deben deshacerse de cualquier estatuas, velas, u otra parafernalia de la Santa Muerte.

En su Resurrección, Jesucristo ven- ció a la muerte. Por medio de nuestro Bautismo Cristiano, participamos en su victoria.

Calendar de Monseñor Michael J. Sis
Deacons Honored
Parishioners at Good Shepherd Church in Crane recently honored Deacon Apolonio Gutierrez, right, and Deacon Julio Carrasco for 39 years of service in the diaconate. (Courtesy photo).

Summit series to assist parishes with financial information

The challenges parishes face in managing the finances are continually increasing. With technology becoming ever more important in both improving parish productivity and reaching both parishioners and non-parishioners with its message, it is increasingly vital that parishes have up-to-date technology skills.

The tradition of passing the collection plate might become a relic of the past, as a majority of Americans pay bills electronically and move away from using cash or writing checks. Parishes have to gear up and be prepared for these types of changes.

Financial Summit Dates
February 28 — St Mary Catholic Church, San Angelo
March 21 — San Miguel Arcángel Church Midland
April 5 — Holy Family Catholic Church, Abilene.

Understanding trends such as electronic giving and online bill payment will be subjects covered with attendees to the deanery meetings.

In the past 18 months parishes within the diocese have moved much of their accounting functions to cloud-based applications. The cloud is a platform to make data and software accessible online anytime, anywhere, from any device. Two key functions that have been migrated to the cloud are parish financial programs and parish payroll processing. With the move to cloud based applications, parishes and the diocese are better able to collaborate on parish financial issues. Diocesan personnel now have online access to the parishes accounting and payroll records and can act as a resource to the parishes when questions arise.

Sections of the deanery meetings will address and answer specific “How do I...” questions that parishes have about their online accounting and payroll.

(Please See SUMMIT/23)

Speaking of Saints

St. Turibius: A great figure in the Church in Latin America

By Mary Lou Gibson

Turibius of Mogrovejo had pretty much settled into his life as a law professor at Salamanca University in Spain in the late 16th century. He had also acted as counselor to the Inquisition in Granada when he came to the attention of King Philip II.

When the first archbishop of Lima (Jeronimo de Loaiza) died, Philip chose Turibius to succeed him. Paul Burns writes in “Butler’s Lives of the Saints” that this was somewhat of a problem because Turibius was a layman. He had to quickly become a deacon and then go through ordination and consecration.

At this time Lima was the headquarters of the metropolitan see and had ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the whole of Spanish South America. It was not an easy place to be. Editor Bernard Bangley describes 16th century Lima in Butler’s Lives of the Saints as geographically isolated and morally lax. Travel was extremely difficult and the behavior of the Spanish conquerors toward the native population was atrocious.

Turibius was 42 years old when he landed in Piura in 1581 and set out to walk the 285 miles to Lima. Rosemary Guiley writes in the Encyclopedia of Saints that the archdiocese covered some 18,000 square miles, encompassing the present countries of Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Bolivia and a portion of Argentina. It is a tribute to Turibius that he traveled this vast territory three times during his tenure as archbishop.

According to Richard McBrien writing in Lives of the Saints, it took Turibius seven years to complete his first visitation of his diocese. He offered Mass daily even when on a journey where he might not have food or a bed.

Turibius’s first official event was to hold a Council of Lima. The most important measures passed during the Council concerned the pastoral care of the Indians. Their first language was Aymara or Quechua. Turibius wanted all the parish priests to learn the appropriate local language. He himself learned Quechua and studied other Indian dialects so that he could address the people in their own language. This brought him much success in making conversions.

Another important outcome of the Council and perhaps its greatest achievement was the publication in 1542 of a catechism in Aymara and Quechua as well as in Spanish.

When not traveling, Turibius was immersed with the problems in Lima which included competing claims of civil and ecclesiastical powers. He tried to resolve matters through a series of synods and had only some limited success.

He fought injustice and vice, among the clergy as well as laymen. Editor Michael Walsh writes in Butler’s Lives of the Saints that the clergy themselves were often among the most notorious offenders towards the native population. It was the first care of Turibius to restore ecclesiastical discipline and to make uniform the rites for sacraments and native practices. He also made it possible for Indians to be admitted to minor orders.

Turibius founded numerous churches, schools and hospitals and opened the first seminary in the New World in 1591.

Turibius died on Holy Thursday in 1606 in Sana. It took almost a year for his body to be carried back to Lima where it arrived in a remarkable state of preservation, as if he had only recently died.

According to Burns, Turibius baptized and confirmed about 15,000 Indians during his lifetime. In 1983 Pope John Paul II proclaimed Turibius Patron of Latin American bishops and set his feast day on the universal calendar as March 23. He is the patron saint of Peru and his feast day is celebrated there on April 27.
Suffering: How we can make sense of it all?

By Fr. Nick and Sandie Knickerbocker

When Bad Things Happen to Good People is the title of a widely read book that explores the perennial issue of suffering. St. Theresa of Avila, after being thrown off her horse into a river while on God’s errand for her religious order, said to Him, “Dear Lord, if this is how you treat Your friends, it is no wonder You have so few!” As Christians, how do we make sense of suffering, especially when we’re trying to do God’s will? Does God cause natural disasters and disease? What about the death of an innocent child or the “untimely” death of a spouse? Why does God heal some people physically and not others? How are we to understand God’s permissive will? This Lent let’s consider the troubling issue of suffering and reflect on how the Bible, the Catechism, and the lives of Christian believers illuminate it.

God has revealed through Scripture that suffering was not in His plan but is the result of original sin. In the loving perfection of His creation, He gave us free will, i.e. the freedom to love Him and to live according to His commands or to reject Him and, thereby, try to make ourselves gods. “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die” (Gen 2:16-17 RSVCE). Through our first parents’ disobedience, human nature fell from original goodness, creation fell, and sin (separation from God) came into the world, “transmitted by propagation” as the Catechism states (404). Evil, disease, natural disasters, suffering, and death entered the world. “Original sin entails ‘captivity under the power of him who thereforth had the power of death, that is, the devil’” (Council of Trent, CCC 407). God’s plan was for us to live forever in perfect harmony with Him, each other, and all of His creation. Since the fall, He has expressed His will for us through the law “written on the heart” (Rom 2:15) in reason and conscience; His commandments in the Old and New Testaments; the teachings of the Church; and the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. “Blessed... are those who hear the word of God and keep it!” (Luke 11:28). Many of our questions about pain and suffering pertain to God’s permissive will, i.e. why does the all-powerful God of love allow the devil, sin, suffering, and death to continue? His permissive will seems to contradict His nature. It is beyond our comprehension. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my thoughts,” says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts (Isa 55:8). St. Thomas Aquinas tells us God permits evil in order to bring forth a greater good. God’s love for us cannot be judged by our limited views. God’s love for us cannot be judged by our limited views. “It remains only for us not to oppose Him, for ‘it is He who works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure,’ ” (Phil 2:13). God’s love is perfect and is focused on our eternal salvation.

In The Problem of Pain, C. S. Lewis writes, “The real problem is not why some pious, humble, believing people suffer, but why some do not...Try to exclude the possibility of suffering which the order of nature and the existence of free-wills involve, and you find that you have excluded life itself.” In A Grief Observed, written after the death of his wife, Lewis writes, “We were promised sufferings. They were part of the program. We were even told, ‘Blessed are those who...’”

Second Greatest Story Ever Told focuses on Divine Mercy, Mary’s reaching out to all

By Brenda Lehr
San Angelo Diocesan Mission Council

Vicki Burbach’s article “Spiritual Reading Arms Us for Battle,” includes the following statement attributed to Saint John Chrysostom:

What do you say? The reading of these good books does not concern you? But I find this duty more incumbent on you, than on those living in the security of the cloister. For you who sail on the open sea, whether you will it or not are beset by a thousand occasions of sin. Thus, the aid of spiritual books is for you a necessity. A religious cannot be wounded, because she is far from the combat. But you who are in the midst of battle, must protect yourself with the buckler of holy thoughts drawn from good books.

The Second Greatest Story Ever Told, by Fr. Michael E. Gaitley MIC, lets us turn our gaze to those who have truly been touched by God’s Divine Mercy.

The following are a few selected points shared by Gaitley.

The book is a revelation to how our Blessed Mother Mary has been reaching out since she appeared to the three shepherd children in Fatima, Portugal, on May 13, 1917. This Marian apparition is a well-documented case in the Church, and has been recognized by pope after pope.

Another visionary, Helena Kowalska, is known today as St. Faustina. Her notebooks record the messages from our Lord Jesus, and are known today as the Diary of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska. The words contained within are God’s loving message of His Divine Mercy. St. Faustina once said, “We need to get out of his way and let him do it, for “it remains only for us not to oppose God’s action.”

First, let us look at two very important things:

(6x34)were part of the program. We were even told, ‘Blessed are

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(Please See KNICKERBOCKERS/23)

(14x20)

(Please See BOOK/20)
Speaking for those who can't
Making Sense of Bioethics

How does the Catholic Church resolve new bioethical questions?

By Fr. Tad Pacholczyk

A number of years ago, I participated in a debate at Harvard on embryonic stem cell research which also included a Jewish rabbi, an Episcopalian clergyman, and a Muslim imam. The debate went smoothly and cordially, although I was the only voice in the group who defended the human rights of individuals who happen to still be embryos. After the debate, the Episcopalian clergyman pulled me aside and told me how he thought Catholics should consider themselves fortunate to have such an authoritative reference point in the Church and the Vatican, particularly when it comes to resolving new bioethical questions. With surprising candor, he shared how he had sat on various committees with others from his own faith tradition where they had tried to sort through the ethics of embryonic stem cells, and he lamented, “we just ended up discussing feelings and opinions, without any clear way of arriving at conclusions.”

Many people, indeed, appreciate that the Catholic Church holds firm and well-defined positions on moral questions, even if they may remain unsure about how or why the Church actually arrives at those positions, especially when it comes to unpacking new scientific developments like embryonic stem cell research.

So how does the Church arrive at its positions on bioethics? For one thing, it takes its time, and doesn’t jump to conclusions even in the face of media pressure for quick sound bites and rapid-fire news stories.

I once had a discussion with a journalist for a major newspaper about the ethics of human-animal chimeras. He mentioned that a leading researcher working on chimeras had met the pope and afterwards implied that the pope had given his blessing to the project. I reminded him that it’s quite common for the pope to offer general encouragement and blessings to those he meets, though that wouldn’t be the same thing as sanctioning new and morally controversial techniques in the biosciences. As a rule, the Catholic Church does not address important bioethical questions that way, through chance encounters with the pope as you are experiencing through the hallways of the Vatican.

Instead, the Church may reflect for months, or even years, to identify important considerations and guiding principles when new moral dilemmas arise in the biosciences. Even with this slow and deliberative process, I think it’s fair to say that the Church generally stays ahead of the curve. By the time of the successful cloning of Dolly the sheep in 1996, for example, the Catholic Church had already been reflecting on the question of human cloning for many years, and concluded, nine years prior to Dolly, that human cloning would be morally unacceptable in an important document called Donum Vitae (On the Gift of Life).

This same document also identified key moral problems with doing human embryonic stem cell research 11 years before it was even possible to destructively obtain those cells from human embryos. When the first test tube baby was born in 1978, the serious moral concerns raised by the procedure had already been spelled out twenty-two years earlier, by Pope Pius XII, in his 1956 Apostolic Constitution, to the Second World Congress on Fertility and Human Sterility wherein he concluded: “As regards experiments of human artificial fecundation 'in vitro', let it be sufficient to observe that they must be rejected as immoral and absolutely unlawful.”

Whenever definitive conclusions about medical ethics are reached or otherwise clarified by the Church, they are normally promulgated through official Church documents, like papal encyclicals and addresses, or, with the approval of the pope, documents and commentaries from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF — the Vatican office responsible for preserving and interpreting Catholic doctrine), or other congregations, councils or dicasteries of the Church.

Even today, certain bioethical controversies remain under active discussion within the Church, such as the question of whether it would be allowable to “import” abandoned frozen embryos by implanting and gestating them in volunteer mothers. While a 2007 CDF document expressed some reservations and concerns about the proposal, debate continues inside and outside the Vatican.

New medical discoveries and technological developments challenge us to careful moral reflection and discernment. These scientific developments can either be an opportunity for genuine human advancement or can lead to activities and policies that undermine human dignity. The U.S. Bishops in a recent document summed it up this way: “In consultation with medical professionals, church leaders review these developments, judge them according to the principles of right reason and the ultimate standard of revealed truth, and offer authoritative teaching and guidance about the moral and pastoral responsibilities entailed by the Church.”

While the Church cannot furnish a ready answer to every moral dilemma, there are many questions about which she provides normative guidance and direction.

Rev. Tadusz 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

ASHES

(From 2)

No doubt, everyone knew that B was the correct answer, but the question certainly lightened the mood of the solemn occasion.

The service started with a festive procession through two lines of members of the Knights of Columbus in full regalia, including shining swords, with blades resting on their shoulders.

The bishop was assisted by Father Adam Droll of Holy Family Catholic Church and members of local Catholic parishes. Prior to the distribution of ashes, the bishop explained why the season of Lent, which began on Ash Wednesday, is a time of sacrifice. Giving up something helps ensure we don’t take everyday things in our lives for granted, it helps us be in solidarity with the poor and hungry, and it helps us to remember the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross.

“We want to be filled with Jesus Christ,” Bis said.

The 'whole life' approach

By Maria-Pia Negro Chin

Catholic News Service

Before this year's March for Life, seven major Catholic organizations sent a letter to the president and congressional leadership asking them “to prioritize human life and to promote policies that will enable life to flourish.”

This included the need to focus on issues such as the refugee crisis, global conflict and violence, immigration, health care, climate change, the need for a more just criminal justice system and an end to abortion.

This “whole life” approach was embraced by many marchers, who bore witness to the truth that every person is created with intrinsic dignity and value — that all human life comes from God and is sacred.

Several young marchers showed this through their signs and prayers, which called for an end to abortion but also focused on other pro-life issues (like an end to the death penalty and assisted suicide, as well as calls to action to promote human rights and opportunities for people to thrive).

They showed that defending the right to life of the unborn opposes trying to qualify some lives as more valuable or more deserving of human rights than others. Respecting all life mirrors Jesus’ teachings and inspires us to care for the most vulnerable, including the poor, the stranger.

(Please See CHIN/22)

El enfoque de 'toda la vida'

By Maria-Pia Negro Chin

Catholic News Service

Antes de la Marcha por la Vida de este año, siete organizaciones católicas enviaron una carta al presidente de Estados Unidos y la directiva del Congreso pidiendo “priorizar la vida humana y promover políticas que permitan que la vida florezca.”

 Esto incluyó la necesidad de enfocarse en temas como la crisis de refugiados, los conflictos y la violencia mundial, la inmigración, la atención de la salud, el cambio climático, la necesidad de un sistema de justicia penal más justo y un fin para el aborto.

Este enfoque de “toda la vida” o “vida completa” fue demostrado por muchos manifestantes, quienes dieron testimonio de la verdad de que cada persona es creada con dignidad y valor intrínseco — que toda vida humana viene de Dios y es sagrada.

(Varios jóvenes demostraron esto a través de sus pancartas y oraciones, que pedían el fin del aborto, pero también se enfocaron en otros temas pro-vida (como el fin de la pena de muerte y el suicidio asistido, así como llamamientos a la acción para promover los derechos humanos y oportunidades para las personas menos privilegiadas).

Ellos mostraron que defender el derecho a la vida de los bebés en el vientre materno no se opone a tratar de calificar algunas vidas como más valiosas o más merecedoras de derechos humanos que otras.

Respetar toda vida refleja las enseñanzas de Jesús y nos inspira a cuidar a los más vulnerables, incluyendo a los pobres, al extranjero, a los ancianos y a los enfermos.

He aquí algunas maneras como los jóvenes pro-vida continúan su compromiso con la protección de la vida humana y la promoción de la dignidad humana.

-- Orar. Ofrezca un rosario para las

(Mira VIDA/22)
Immigrants, migrants, refugees ... and your family

By Bill Dodds
Catholic News Service

My personal "immigrant" experience is very mild. I was almost 12 when the family moved from the Midwest to the Northwest.

For a time, on a very small scale, Dad and Mom and we five children were "strangers in a strange land." We had no relatives here. We knew no one.

We were the new people in the neighborhood and parish, at work and at school, who were from Nebraska and one of those "states in the middle that start with an "I." (As if Illinois, Indiana and Iowa were interchangeable.)

Apparently we pronounced a few words "incorrectly" and were to be pitied that our state, whatever it was, had no ocean or mountains. Iowa, they said, was nothing but cornfields on flat land and Nebraska was ... a shrug of the shoulders.

We could argue "rolling hills" in Iowa, but what was the point compared to mountain ranges? And there seemed to be no use saying something about "Omaha beef." (Take that, "Washington state apples!")

It was easy for us to adapt and learn local customs and idioms. Soon, to use the time-honored image of the melting pot, we blended in just fine. And we came to love this part of the country.

We were a middle-class white family that moved into a middle-class white neighborhood and became members of a predominantly middle-class, white parish, school and workplace.

Now I think of all that sometimes when I'm out on a walk and pass by my neighbors who are Vietnamese immigrants. A grandma and grandpa, middle-generation adults and some youngsters. The older folks give me smiles and waves. The others offer a courteous "hi" or "good morning."

A few houses down the street, there's a family from Egypt. I've visited with the dad quite a bit. He has told me about life in northern Africa.

(Then, too, there's the family right across the street.

Dad is from ... Iowa!) I've been thinking more about my personal history and neighborhood since the media have been covering so many stories about immigrants and refugees. I try to imagine what it would have been like if my family had had to "flee" the Midwest or were forced out. If we had then lost touch with extended family members left behind. If we could never return to visit.

There's nothing new about saying the United States is a nation of immigrants, including countless refugees. That all of us are "hyphen-Americans." (In my family's case, Irish-Americans.) Except, of course, for the "indigenous population," those who -- historians tell us - traveled from northern Asia and headed south to populate the Americas so long, long ago.

With all the news items about borders, the wall, visas and green cards, it's not hard to pick up on a sense of uneasiness, if not downright fear, among so many citizens and newcomers. And, coupled with that, a sense of helplessness.

What can a family do? What can your family do?
Catholic Voices

On welcoming the stranger and judging the quality of faith

By Fr. Ron Rolheiser

In the Hebrew Scriptures, that part of the bible we call the Old Testament, we find a strong religious challenge to always welcome the stranger, the foreigner. This was emphasized for two reasons: First, because the Jewish people themselves had once been foreigners and immigrants. Their scriptures kept reminding them not to forget that. Second, they believed that God's revelation, most often, comes to us through the stranger, in what's foreign to us. That belief was integral to their faith.

The great prophets developed this much further. They taught that God favors the poor preferentially and that consequently we will be judged, judged religiously, by how we treat the poor. The prophets coined this mantra (still worth memorizing): The quality of your faith will be judged by the quality of justice in the land; and the quality of justice in the land will always be judged by how orphans, widows, and strangers fare while you are alive.

Orphans, widows, and strangers! That's scriptural code for who, at any given time, are the three most vulnerable groups in society. And the prophets' message didn't go down easy. Rather it was a religious affront to many of the pious at the time who strongly believed that we would be judged religiously and morally by the rigor and strictness of our religious observance. Then, like now, social justice was often religiously marginalized.

But Jesus sides with the Hebrew prophets. For him, God not only makes a preferential option for the poor, but God is in the poor. How we treat the poor is how we treat God. Moreover the prophets' mantra, that we will be judged religiously by how we treat the poor, is given a normative expression in Jesus' discourse on the final judgment in the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 25. We are all familiar, perhaps too familiar, with that text. Jesus, in effect, was that a�a friend of the poor? What will the last judgment be like? What will be the test? How will we be judged?

His answer is surprising and, taken badly, is perhaps the most challenging text in the Gospels. He tells us that we will be judged, seemingly solely, on the basis of how we treated the poor, that is, on how we have treated the most vulnerable among us. Moreover at one point, he singles out "the stranger", the foreigner, the refugee: "I was a stranger and you made me welcome … or … you never made me welcome." We end up on the right or wrong side of God on the basis of how we treat the stranger.

What also needs to be highlighted in this text about the last judgment is that neither guilt nor rewards is reserved for those who got it wrong, knew what they were doing. Both initially protest: the first by saying: "We didn’t know it was you we were serving" and the second by saying: "Had we known it was you we would have responded." Both protests, it would seem, are beside the point. In Matthew's Gospel, matruch disciplship doesn't depend upon us believing that we have it right, it depends only upon us doing it right.

These scriptural principles, I believe, are very apropos today in the face of the refugee and immigrant issues we are facing in the Western world. Today, without doubt, we are facing the biggest humanitarian challenge the world has faced since the Second World War. Millions upon millions of people, under unjust persecution and the threat of death, are being driven from their homes and homelands with no place to go and no country or community to receive them. As Christians we may not turn our backs on them or turn them away. If Jesus is to be believed, we will be judged religiously more by how we treat refugees than by whether or not we are going to church. When we stand before God in judgment and say in protest: "When did I see you a stranger and not welcome you?" Our generation is likely to hear: "I was a Syrian refugee, and you did not welcome me." This, no doubt, might sound naïve, over-idealistic, and fundamentally flawed. The issue of refugees and immigrants is both highly sensitive and very complex. Countries have borders that need to be respected and defended, just as its citizens have a right to be protected. Admittedly, there are very real political, social, economic, and security issues that have to be addressed. But, as we, our churches, and our governments, address them we must remain clear on what the scriptures, Jesus, and the social teachings of the church uncompromisingly teach: We are to welcome the stranger, irrespective of inconvenience and even if there are some dangers.

For all sorts of pragmatic reasons, political, social, economic, and security, we can perhaps justly not welcoming the stranger; but we can never justify this on Christian grounds. Not welcoming stranger is anti-theological, anti-Christian, and morally wrong. This makes us too easily forget that we too were the outsider.

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

Dave Rubin, the Pelvic Issues and Larry David

By Most Rev. Robert Barron

Last week, I was interviewed in Los Angeles by Dave Rubin for his popular program "The Rubin Report." Dave is a stand-up comedian, political satirist, proponent of aleister Crowley, proponent of the ancient world — Platonism and Gnosticism come readily to mind — teach: We are to welcome the stranger, irrespective of inconvenience and even if there are some dangers.

To me, his strongest challenge is to Christians to address these Biblical instincts. I strongly believe that we will be judged religiously by how orphans, widows, and strangers fare while you are alive. The prophets coined this mantra (still worth memorizing): The quality of your faith will be judged by the quality of justice in the land; and the quality of justice in the land will always be judged by how orphans, widows, and strangers fare while you are alive.

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"Confession is good for the soul," they say. I agree. I also find that it helps us to live well no matter what our station or situation in life, especially if we make it a time to move fully out of our comfort zone. And while it is true that Advent, nearby parishes regularly have reconciliation services that allow us to reflect and prepare for these holy seasons. Often, before our regular parish Saturday evening Mass, the sacrament of reconciliation is offered, making it convenient to go to confession and Mass in one trip.

This year, I want to make a robust effort to revisit the sacrament of reconciliation when it might not be at the forefront of my schedule or mind, or even be convenient. This decision has led already to humor and grace and a tale to tell. Saturday ended a week punctuated by heavy rain, wind and very cool temperatures. I was snug inside, but decided to unwrap myself from the comfort of home and go to confession. The church I selected was in a very heavily trafficked area of the city. On a Saturday afternoon after a blustery, stormy week, I realized it would be next to impossible to find a nearby parking space.

This got my mind a-worrying: Over Christmas, my car had been burgled, and since then I'd been especially vigilant about keeping it close to where I lived. And even with the rawness of my recent experience, I still went forth (though I did faintly promise myself that parking was a problem, I'd try another church another time).

True to my hunch, traffic was thick and spaces all along the way were full ... except as I turned the corner in the last block. Right in front of the church was an empty parking space! I have to admit I was a little anxious about what God might have fixed so easy to park my car and ... save me a long walk in the chill. But I had no excuse now! This particular church had two confessions at opposite sides of the nave. I approached a gentleman sorting stacks of bulletins and asked him if he knew on which side confession would be heard.

"Sometimes it's one, sometimes the other," he replied. He glanced at me. "Sometimes both."

Was he being funny, or seeing something I didn't realize?

I laughed, nervously. "Oh, I only need one," I said.

Deadpan, he said, "I meant, sometimes there are two priests. It varies." And he went back to sorting the bulletins.

I noticed there were others entering, so I sat in a pew and read a page from the devotional I'd brought with me. Gradually, my breathing slowed and I began to pray with a sense fixed on the beautiful crucifix just behind the altar. Mundane concerns faded as I remembered the magnificent sacrifice made so that I could sit in silent reverence.

A feeling of disappointment in myself washed over me as I realized how small my thoughts had been before, when I'd worried about finding a parking space. Such a petty thing, compared to Jesus' act of selfless love. And with that, my body relaxed.

I could say that the reconciliation was in those moments before I went in to the confessional. But really the entire experience was necessary -- the private prayer, the reflection and the sacrament. Confession is good for the soul. And it helps us readjust so that our lives focus, not on that proverbial open parking space, but on the wide open arms of Jesus on the cross.

Distractions during prayer; Crediting parish with donation

Q. I have heard that it is sinful to let oneself get distracted in prayer. This makes sense to me as regards prayers that are obligatory: e.g., Sunday Mass, the Divine Office for priests and religious, or the penance assigned during confession.

But what if one is not required to say prayer in the first place: the morning offering, for example, or weekday Mass? Would it be better not to say those prayers at all, because then there would be no sin?

And at what point do distractions become sinful -- when they are intentional of course, but what about a quick thought regarding something I must remember to do when I get home from church?

Also, when I have a weighty decision to make or a stressful situation on my hands, I like to say the rosary because it seems to help me to think clearly and be calm. But should I not be using that time (in the context of prayer) to think things through? (Omaha, Nebraska)

A. Relax, and don't be so tough on yourself. Distractions during prayer are not necessarily sinful -- even during prayers that are obligatory; they come to everyone -- even to the saints, who have written often about this.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church recognizes the universality of the problem, calling distraction "the habitual difficulty in prayer" (No. 2729).

Distractions are an obvious sign that one's mind is wandering during prayer onto nonspiritual paths would be wrong, and the distracted thought itself might be sinful: dwelling delineately on thoughts of adulterous

pleasure, for example, or thinking vindictive thoughts.

But much more often, the distraction is a neutral one morally -- such as in the example you offer of thinking of something you need to do as soon as you get home. When distractions do occur, the strategy is simply to pause, refocus and move forward.

St. Paul of the Cross said, "Concerning distractions and temptations that occur during holy prayer, you don't need to be the least bit disturbed. Withdraw completely into the upper part of your spirit to relate to God."

As for your practice of "thinking things through" while you pray the rosary, I have no problem with that: You are using the soothing backdrop of the repeated words of prayer to commune with the Lord in a meditative way and to seek his guidance.

Q. I attend a very large Catholic parish that has some 4,000 families and 10,000 parishioners. Would it be appropriate for me to assign my contribution for our parish's annual appeal to a nearby smaller church that I sometimes visit?

Our own parish always exceeds its assessment for the annual diocesan appeal. The church is wider than one's own parish, and blessings should be shared.

A. The "rules" of the church on Sunday shopping are appropriately short on detail; instead, they place the responsibility on individual Catholics to determine whether their Sunday activities impact the day's primary purpose of rest and prayer.

The responsibility to attend Mass on the Sabbath is, of course, a serious obligation for every Catholic. As for activities during the rest of the day, here is the general guideline: The Code of Canon Law says that the faithful "are to abstain from those works and affairs which hinder the worship to be rendered to God, the joy proper to the Lord's day, or the suitable relaxation of mind and body" (No. 1247).

In my mind, the deciding question about whether the given activity is appropriate is this: How necessary is it? There is a big difference between dashing to a convenience store because you ran out of orange juice and making Sunday the shopping day for the rest of the week.

And you make a valid point about causing clerks (store clerks) to have to work: The Catechism of the Catholic Church says, "Every Christian should avoid making unnecessary demands on others that would hinder them from observing the Lord's Day" (No. 2187).

Q. Recently in a conversation with our pastor, I happened to tell him that, when my parents got married in 1930 (my father was not a Catholic), the Catholic Church did not allow a mixed marriage inside the church building, and so they were married in the living room of my mother's home by the local Catholic priest.

He responded that this could not have been recognized as a valid Catholic marriage if it did not occur inside a church. I do not believe that and would like to show him something to indicate that their marriage was recognized by the Catholic Church.

My mother was very religious; she went to Mass every day that she was able and would never have entered a marriage without the Catholic Church's approval. I was very upset at our pastor's response and would like to put my mind at ease. (Blaine, Minnesota)

A. You can relax and be at peace: I am quite sure that your parents' marriage was recognized as valid by the Catholic Church. At the time to which you refer (1930), interfaith marriage was not allowed in a non-Catholic were quite rare. Frankly, the church tried to discourage them and required that such a marriage, though officiated by a priest, take place not inside a Catholic church (in a celebration attended by family and friends) but in a private ceremony, usually in the church rectory.

Today, perhaps one-third of Catholic marriages in the U.S. are ecumenical or interfaith. Although, the church does not go out of its way to encourage such marriages (because of the additional challenges a couple must deal with), it does try to support these couples and help them to live holy and happy lives.

Questions may be sent to Fr. Kenneth Doyle at askfatherdoyle@gmail.com and 30 Columbus Circle Dr. Albany, New York 12203.
Help from Archbishop Flores at a critical time

By Moises Sandoval
Catholic News Service

Forty-seven years ago, on Cinco de Mayo in 1970, Father Patricio Flores, the sixth of nine children of illiterate parents who worked as sharecroppers, cotton pickers and rice harvesters in Texas, was ordained as the first Hispanic bishop in the United States. His death recently at age 87 reminded me of how he enriched my life and those of countless others.

In 1970, Hispanics welcomed his ordination with such enthusiasm that it had to be held in San Antonio's convention center to accommodate the 8,000 people who attended.

Those present, many from outside the archdiocese, saw the former migrant worker as their bishop, especially those who, like my own family, had also worked in the fields. Fortunately, Bishop Flores also saw the entire Mexican-American population as his own, and had the blessing of Archbishop Francis J. Furey to work throughout the country on their behalf.

He visited Cesar Chavez, the founder of the United Farm Workers, in California; met with the leaders of a huge demonstration in Los Angeles protesting the disproportionate Latino casualties in the Vietnam War; joined in the legal campaign to prosecute a Texas town marshal who had killed a young Mexican-American without justification; was known for his support for farm-workers, Mexican-American civil rights and his love of his culture and heritage.

A funeral Mass was scheduled for Jan. 17 at San Fernando Cathedral in San Antonio with Archbishop Gustavo Garcia-Siller presiding. The archbishop also will celebrate a Mass for the Dead Jan. 16 at the cathedral followed by visitation.

Los Angeles Archbishop Jose H. Gomez described Archbishop Flores as his good friend and mentor and "a pioneer and role model not only for me but also for a generation of Hispanic priests and Latino leaders."

He said the archbishop of San Antonio, who retired in 2004, "knew the struggles of Hispanics in this country, and he was a friend to the farm-worker and a voice of conscience for dignity and human rights. He taught all of us to celebrate our heritage and traditions and encouraged us to share our faith and values proudly and to become leaders in our communities."

Archbishop Flores, born in Ganado, was one of nine children and called "Ticho" by his family.

His younger sister, Mary Moreno, told Today's Catholic, newspaper of San Antonio Archdiocese, in 2004 that her brother would often walk up and down the road in front of the family home praying the rosary. "He was always very close to God," she said.

First Hispanic archbishop in U.S. dies

SAN ANTONIO (CNS) -- Retired Archbishop Patrick F. Flores, 87, the first Mexican-American bishop in the United States, died of pneumonia and congestive heart failure Jan. 9 at Padua Place Residence for retired priests in San Antonio.

The bishop, who dropped out of school to be a migrant farmworker, was known for his support for farm-workers, Mexican-American civil rights and his love of his culture and heritage.

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Hace 47 años en San Antonio, Texas, el 5 de mayo de 1970, el padre Patricio Flores, el sexto de nueve hijos de un matrimonio analfabeto, de padres quienes trabajaban como campesinos en el cultivo de algodón y arroz en Texas, fue ordenado el primer obispo latino de Estados Unidos. Su reciente muerte, a la edad de 87 años, me recuerda como él enriqueció mi vida y la de innumerables otros.

Latinos ese año acogieron su ordenación con tanto entusiasmo que la ceremonia se tuvo que celebrar en el centro de convenciones de esa ciudad para acomodar a las 8,000 personas que querían participar.

Los que se congregaron ese día no eran todos de la arquidiócesis pero vieron a ese hombre quien había sido campesino como su propio obispo, especialmente aquellos como mi familia, quienes habían trabajado en el campo.

Afortunadamente, el nuevo obispo también veía a todos los mexicano-estadounidenses como sus feligreses, y recibía la bendición del arzobispo Francis J. Furey de San Antonio para trabajar con ellos.

Él visitó a Cesar Chávez cuando estaba encarcelado en California; se reunió con los líderes de una gran mani

Palabras de consuelo del arzobispo Flores en un momento crítico

By Moises Sandoval
Catholic News Service

Carísimo Señor Sandoval: I was in DC last Thursday and learned about your being sick and in the hospital. I am indeed very sorry to hear it. I do want to remember and have the blessing of Archbishop Francis J. Furey for you on their behalf.

Those present, many from outside the archdiocese, saw the former migrant worker as their bishop, especially those who, like my own family, had also worked in the fields. Fortunately, Bishop Flores also saw the entire Mexican-American population as his own, and had the blessing of Archbishop Francis J. Furey to work throughout the country on their behalf.

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(See FLORES/23)

(See MOISES/22)
This Lent, vow to help a neighbor, visit grandparents

By Joanne Fox
Catholic News Service

SIOUX CITY, Iowa — Holy Cross-Blessed Sacrament sixth-graders started Lent on Valentine's Day -- sort of.

Father Daniel Rupp, pastor of Blessed Sacrament Church in Sioux City, took time Feb. 14 to talk to the students about the importance of Ash Wednesday, the first day of the Lenten season. This year it is March 1.

"How many days is Lent?" the priest asked.

"Forty!" was the nearly unanimous response.

The 40 days associated with Lent is an imitation of the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness after his baptism, explained Linda Harrington, former associate professor of theology at Briar Cliff University in Sioux City.

"This is called Ash Wednesday. " The 40 days in the Bible -- the 40 days it rained when Noah took the animals into the ark and the 40 years the Israelites wandered in the desert after leaving Egypt before entering the Promised Land," she said. "Some sources say periods of 40 days -- or years -- designate times of testing or trial."

Harrington pointed out that since Sundays are not fast days, counting back 40 days beginning with Holy Saturday, and skipping the Sundays, one lands on a Wednesday.

"Hence, Lent begins on Wednesday," she told The Catholic Globe, Sioux City's diocesan newspaper. "Since we use ashes as a symbol of our intent to 'turn away from sin and believe in the Gospel,' it's called Ash Wednesday."

Father Rupp discussed the three aspects of the penitential season with the students -- prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

"You can pray from a devotional book, or recite the rosary, or you can even go online and print off prayers," he said, as the students' eyes lit up with the mention of "online."

For fasting, Father Rupp admitted many might be giving up candy, as he planned to do.

"You know the Sundays are 'days off' from fasting," the priest confided. "I have found that I can eat enough sweets on Sunday to make up for not having them the entire week."

Then, with a grin, Father Rupp added: "You've got to know the loopholes."

Student Ethan Lamson also planned to give up candy for Lent, but he was uncertain what others in his family might be giving up.

"What are you giving up?" he asked his twin brother, Max.

"I'm giving up listening to my mother," he responded, then corrected himself at Ethan's horrified look. "I mean, I'm giving up NOT listening to my mother," Max clarified.

Father Rupp acknowledged most people associate almsgiving with money.

"But you could also give clothes or food to someone," he said. "You could also give of your time, maybe to help a neighbor with a meal or visiting your grandma or grandpa."

Before going through an exercise of placing ashes on students' foreheads, Father Rupp discussed the meaning behind the ashes.

"The ashes remind us of death," he said. "It's a reminder of how we have to get our act together before we die."

Although students had correct answers for almost all of Father Rupp's questions, he stumped them with his inquiry on whether Ash Wednesday was a holy day of obligation, which it is.

Sister Esther Mary Nickel, associate director of the Sioux City Diocese's Office of Worship, felt many Catholics attend Ash Wednesday services because there is a longing for the hope of eternal life.

"Lent, as a penitential season, has been a teacher for thousands of years of the (Please See LENT/21)

How to become a saint?
Pray for someone who doesn't like you

ROME (CNS) — A practical first step toward holiness — as well as for assuring peace in one's family and in the world — is to pray for a person who has caused offense or harm, Pope Francis said.

"Are you merciful toward the people who have harmed you or don't like you? If God is merciful, if he is holy, if he is perfect, then we must be merciful, holy and perfect as he is. This is holiness. A man or woman who does this deserves to be canonized," the pope said Feb. 19 during an evening parish Mass.

"I suggest you start small," Pope Francis told members of the parish of St. Mary Josefa on the extreme eastern edge of the Diocese of Rome. "We all have enemies. We all know that so-and-so speaks ill of us. We all know. And we all know that this person or that person hates us."

When that happens, the pope said, "I suggest you take a minute, look at God (and say), 'This person is your son or your daughter, change his or her heart, bless him or her.' This is praying for those who don't like us, for our enemies. Perhaps the rancor will remain in us, but we are making an effort to follow the path of this God who is so good, merciful, holy, perfect, who makes the sun rise on the evil and the good."

The day's first reading included the line, "Be holy, for I, the Lord, your God, am holy," and in the Gospel reading, Jesus said, "Be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect."

"You might ask me, 'But, father, what is the path to holiness? What is the journey needed to become holy?' Jesus explains it well in the Gospel. He explains it with concrete examples," the pope said.

The first example, he said, is "not taking revenge. If I have some rancor in my heart for something someone has done, I want vengeance, but this moves me off the path of holiness. No revenge. 'But he did this and he will pay.' Is this Christian? No. 'He will pay' is not in the Christian's vocabulary. No revenge."

In people's everyday lives, he said, their squabbles with their relatives or neighbors may seem a little thing, but they are not. "These big wars we read about in the papers and see on the news, these massacres of people, of children, how much hatred! It's the same hatred you have in your heart for this person, that person, that relative, your mother-in-law. It's bigger, but it's the same hatred."

Forgiveness, the pope said, is the path toward holiness and toward peace. "If everyone in the world learned this, there would be no wars."

Wars begin "with bitterness, rancor, the desire for vengeance, to make them pay," he said. It's an attitude that destroys families and neighborhoods and peaceful relations between nations.

"I'm not telling you what to do, Jesus is: Love your enemies. You mean I have to love that person?" Yes."

"I have to pray for someone who has harmed me? Yes, that he will change his life, that the Lord will forgive him," the pope said. "This is the magnanimity of God."

Pope Francis says using the church for personal ambition, power struggles 'shameful'

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Whenever one is tempted to use the church for pursuing personal ambitions or to be arrogant, pray to feel ashamed, Pope Francis said.

When the competitive bug strikes, reflect whether one can "see my Lord on the cross" and still be capable of wanting "to use the Lord for moving up" the ladder of success, he said Feb. 21 during his early morning Mass in the chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae.

"May the Lord give us the grace of shame, that holy embarrassment — when we find ourselves in that situation, with that temptation," he said.

In his homily, the pope looked at the day's Gospel reading (Mk 9:30-37) in which the disciples were arguing among themselves on the way to Capernaum about "who was the greatest." When Jesus asked them what they were arguing about, "they remained silent."

"They became silent because they were embarrassed about their discussion," the pope said.

The disciples "were good people, they wanted to follow the Lord, to serve the Lord. But they didn't know that the path of service to the Lord wasn't so easy. It wasn't like joining a group, a charitable organization, to do good. No. It's something else and they were afraid of this," he said.

Laypeople, priests, bishops — everyone is tempted, the pope said. It's part of being Christian, so whoever wants to serve the Lord had better be prepared to be tempted, he added.

Some of the many ways people may be tempted is to use the church to pursue their personal ambitions, like maneuvering, wrangling, pulling strings or backbiting to lead a church group or a particular parish or diocese, he said.

"The desire to be a big shot pushes people along a path of worldliness, which is why people must ask God for 'the grace of feeling ashamed when we find ourselves in these situations."

In the same Gospel account, Jesus is aware of what the disciples argued about and confronts them saying, "If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all."
BISHOP

(From 3)

people personally.” If we pray for the poor and hungry while fasting, and apply the money saved by fasting to the needs of the poor, our fasting has a much deeper spiritual meaning.

Almsgiving

Almsgiving includes acts of fraternal charity that express solidarity with the poor. It serves as a reminder of the Christian teaching that love of God goes hand in hand with love of neighbor. Through almsgiving, we are reminded that our spiritual lives must also be directed toward justice and charity. By recognizing the needs of those around us, we turn outward to the building of God’s kingdom in the world.

In our Lent this year, we should keep in mind that Pope Francis has urged us not to succumb to the “culture of indifference” toward the poor and the marginalized. By carrying out new acts of kindness and charity during Lent, the Church stretches our hearts to be more loving, and opens our mind to a greater awareness of the hardships suffered by our brothers and sisters. With God’s help, we might find our acts of service to be so fulfilling that we continue them after Lent has ended.

Throughout the Diocese of San Angelo, many of us will be using the little cardboard boxes of Operation Rice Bowl during the season of Lent. This project of Catholic Relief Services brings to millions of families a tremendous amount of financial assistance to the poor and hungry, as well as to those who are struck by natural disasters around the world. Each time we put something into one of the Rice Bowl boxes, we are reminded of the image of Divine Mercy, whose very life would be the culmination of our own lives.

A Turn Toward the Other

Lent has already begun, but it is not too late to make the decision to turn our attention to others in need of help and support. By almsgiving that will help us turn toward the other in new and creative ways, we can be transformed and spiritually enriched.

BOOK

(From 11)

because our time is marked by more suffering and sin than any other, as he too had witnessed the unprecedented and growing darkness of our time. John Paul II had great confidence in Mary's powerful intercession as he lead the Church to the triumph of her Immaculate Heart, as it is also the triumph of God's Divine Mercy.

After the shooting of Pope John Paul II, by Mehmet Ali Agca, he traveled to Fatima, Portugal in May of 1982, to give thanks to the mercy of God and Our Lady of Fatima for sparing his life the previous year. On this occasion, one of the bullets was placed in the crown of Our Lady of Fatima. Interesting note: It was 31 years later, on the same date that Pope John Paul II visited Agca in prison and forgave him the attempt on his life, when Agca returned to the Vatican to lay flowers on the tomb of Saint John Paul II.

he two mentioned in the book are other widely acclaimed spiritual giants, St. Therese and St. Maximilian Kolbe, whose stature in the Church leaves little room for doubt, concerning their hearing this message and acting on it.

He Book of Galatians (5:20).

Fr. Gaitley also said, “God’s Divine Mercy would not be accepted unless it did not involve centuries of building, undeniable miracles, clear fulfillment of prophecies, bold action against menacing evil, stunning victories, a most beautiful lady, and one of the greatest men who ever lived (Saint Pope John Paul II), whose very life would be the culmination of the drama that preceded it.”

FARMERS

(From 5)

affirming the vocation of farming,” Ennis told Catholic News Service in a Dec. 9 telephone interview from Rome, where he was helping lead a seminar on “The Vocation of the Agricultural Leader” one day before presenting it to Pope Francis at the Vatican.

“The average age of farmers has increased to about 58 years old, and the challenges of a globalized society and market and the impact that globalization has had is significant. It often squeezes out the smaller farmers,” Ennis said.

“Nevertheless, the church maintains hope that farmers, especially those inspired by Catholic social teaching, will see this vocation. We’re trying to retrieve the idea of vocation in agriculture.”

“Agriculture is increasingly and exclusively thought of in terms of profit, resulting in many short-sighted practices that have harmful results for both human communities and the natural environment,” the document said. “An excessive reliance upon the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides has caused demonstrable and significant degradation of the natural environment. This not only hurts members of the human family now, most usually the poor and the marginalized, but it also threatens long-term ecological sustainability.”

The document added, “Economies of scale, especially in the agricultural sector, end up forcing smallholders to sell their lands or to abandon their traditional crops. … Today’s economic realities make such a lifestyle virtually impossible for those seeking these celebrated models of family farming.”

“Agricultural leaders have a responsibility to ensure the conditions in which the family can remain a vibrant community amidst the production of foods and other agricultural products,” it said.

“Unable to compete due to their disproportionately diminished ability to participate in markets, many local food producers are forced to abide by the demands of larger, foreign, international entities, whose regard for local traditions and customs are rarely considered,” said “The Role of the Agricultural Leader.”

“This situation leads to disenfranchisement of local producers, economic dislocation, rural-to-urban migration and the inability of governments to properly regulate capital flows and enforce environmental protections. Globalization and international economic policies can have positive effects, such as competitive pricing and efficient distribution, but these possibilities are often not realized in practice.”

The document said, “Corporate concentration has taken over every link in the agri-food value chain. Some believe this creates a more efficient flow of food; others see it as a chokehold on farmers and consumers alike.” It added, “Globalization and trade liberalization have been uneven for the many kinds of farmers and farm operations around the world; they have been notably worse for the family and peasant farmers, particularly those struggling to emerge from rural poverty.”

“The entire order of creation, from the lowest creatures up to humankind, is permeated by God’s loving design. Agricultural life unfolds within its plan. In particular, the farmer who attends to the soil enters into a relationship with God, an order of creation that is already intelligently ordered by him,” said the document. “Life in toto is a rhythm of love.”

Note: Pope Benedict XV consecrated the future Pope Pius XII a bishop – May 13, 1917 – the Blessed Mother appeared to three shepherd children at Fatima, Portugal.
drug binges and various jobs at abortion clinics, McCorvey said she began to change her mind about the abortion industry, especially when Operation Rescue moved next door to her workplace and abortion clinic in Texas.

She was particularly enchanted with the friendliness of two little girls, Emily and Chelsea, who were the daughters of Operation Rescue workers. "I was on the pro-abortion side so long, I didn't know how to react to kindness and love that all these people and the children were showing me," McCorvey recalled.

She became disillusioned with her job admitting women for first- and second-trimester abortions. Each weekend, according to McCorvey, clinic staff had to perform enough abortions to meet a $40,000 quota.

"What I didn't understand at the time was that I was tiring of the abortion movement," she said, adding she was "fed up with the lies and the mistreatment of the women" coming in for abortions.

When she started counseling women that they were under no obligation to go through with their abortions, reducing the weekend numbers, she was fired, McCorvey said.

In 1995, while attending a church service with Emily and Chelsea's family, McCorvey answered an "altar call" to come forward and publicly accept Christ. In August of that year, she was baptized by the Rev. Flip Benham, then director of Operation Rescue National.

From there, increased contact with Catholic pro-life leaders both inside and outside the Dallas Diocese led to her decision to become a Catholic. She documented much of her conversion story in her 1997 autobiography, "Won by Love."

After receiving instruction in the Catholic faith at St. Albert's Priory at the University of Dallas, she became a Catholic Aug. 17, 1998. She received holy Communion and confirmation at a private Mass at St. Thomas Aquinas Church in Dallas and attended by more than 60 family members and friends from the pro-life movement.

Dominican Father Edward Robinson, who had instructed McCorvey in the faith for nearly two months, concelebrated the Mass with Father Frank Pavone, national director of Priests for Life, who also had a major role in McCorvey joining the church.

"While pro-abortion advocates used Norma McCorvey to advance their efforts to legalize abortion in the early 1970s, she spent the last half of her life attempting to right the terrible wrongs she visited upon the clinic," by the court's decision in Roe and its companion case, Doe v. Bolton, said Carol Tobias, president of National Right to Life.

"Norma became an outspoken advocate for protecting the lives of mothers and their unborn children. ... She was a friend and valued ally in the fight for life and she will be deeply missed," Tobias added in a Feb. 18 statement.

McCorvey "will be greatly missed from this world but is no doubt rejoicing in heaven with the lives she has helped to spare over her lifetime," said Kristan Hawkins, president of Students for Life of America.

She became "one of the most widely-known and effective advocates for the preborn of her generation," Hawkins added. "We cannot thank her enough and pray that she rests in peace."

**BISHOPS**

*(From 2)*

extreme violence. This situation occurs in relation to immigration both between Central America and Mexico and between Mexico and the United States.

6. We have seen the pain, the fear, and the anguish suffered by the persons who have come to us and who have to live among us in the shadows of our society. Many have been exploited in their workplace, have lived under the constant threat of deportation, and have suffered the fear of possible separation from their families and friends.

7. This reality is made evident today as we consider the measures taken by civil authorities. We can sense the pain of the separation of families, loss of employment, persecutions, discrimination, expressions of racism, and unnecessary deportations that paralyze the development of persons in our societies and the development of our nations, leaving them empty and without hope.

8. Immigration is a global phenomenon arising from economic and social conditions of poverty and insecurity. It directly displaces entire populations causing families to feel that migration is the only way to survive. The migrant has a right to be respected by international law and national law as he/she faces the violence, criminality, and inhuman policies of governments as well as the world's indifference.

9. Regardless of one’s migration condition, the intrinsic human dignity that every person possesses must be respected in the person of the migrant. They are commonly subjected to punitive laws and are often mistreated by civil authorities in their countries of origin, the countries through which they travel, and the countries of their destination. It is essential that governments adopt policies that respect the basic human rights of undocumented migrants.

10. The borders close themselves to be sister cities and friends, sharing a long history of the same land, faith, traditions, culture, and solidarity. We bishops shall continue to follow the good example of Pope Francis; we shall seek to construct bridges among peoples, bridges that help to break down the walls of exclusion and exploitation.

11. We affirm that the friendship between families and neighbors can result in friendship between peoples and nations. Our encounter is already a clear manifestation of joy and a profound sign of lasting hope. The cross that Pope Francis blessed between the cities of El Paso and Ciudad Juárez, in memory of his visit in February of 2016, has become a symbol of encounter, unity, and fraternity.

12. As a Church, we reiterate our commitment to care for pilgrims, strangers, exiles, and migrants, affirming that all persons have a right to live in conditions worthy of human life. If these are not given, they have a right to migrate (Pope Pius XII), and we pledge ourselves as bishops, members of two different Episcopal Conferences, to walk with and care for the suffering of our migrant brothers and sisters.

13. In the Church, no one ought to feel like a stranger, and migrant families should feel at home in every church as their homeland. (Pope John Paul II)

14. Through Catholic Charities USA and various houses for migrants in Mexico, we will continue to offer quality services to migrants, including spiritual, legal, material, and family assistance.

15. Likewise, we will maintain our constant presence in detention centers and assistance centers for migrants, from the southern border of Mexico and throughout the USA.

16. In addition, there are recognized lay organizations that offer wholehearted support to migrants.

17. We affirm the many families in Mexico and the United States who open their hearts and their homes to migrants on their journey.

18. In these initiatives we find our support in prayer and in the significant presence of Our Lady of Guadalupe, who has accompanied the migrant and our peoples since 1531. ““I am not here who am your mother?”

19. We invite all persons of good will to join us in carrying out this ministry and in this simple prayer: "We fly to your patronage, O Holy Mother of God, do not despise our petitions in this hour of need, but free us from all danger, O Blessed Virgin Mary. Amen." 

February 15, 2017
San Juan, Texas, USA

**LENT**

*(From 19)*

fruitfulness of self-discipline," she said. "It is a fruitfulness that flourishes in a deeper love of God, which pours out also into love of neighbor."

The Religious Sister of Mercy of Alma, Michigan, emphasized that Lent is not for "stochastic practices of self-mastery" or simple fidelity to a "new and improved diet plan."

"It is a time to overcome self-absorption and to look to others and, with the help of God's grace, to serve others by the corporal and spiritual works of mercy," she said.

Harrington felt many people attend Ash Wednesday services because "we all have a sense that our relationship with God could be better."

"We acknowledge we need help — from God and from other believers — to get back on track," she said. "The services on this day are an explicit, public acknowledgment of that fact."

Student Grace Nelson agreed with the "public" aspect of the sacramental.

"It’s nice to show you are Catholic with the ashes on your forehead," she said. "It also provides an opportunity for you to explain your faith to others who ask you about it."

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MOISES
(Para 18)

festación en Los Ángeles protestando las desproporcionadas casualidades latinas en la guerra de Vietnam; se integró a una campaña para llevar a la justicia a un oficial de la policía que asesinó a un joven latín sin justificación; y apoyó una organiza-

ción de gente pobre que exigía mejores escuelas y servicios municipales para los barrios de San Antonio.

Yo le conocí después de su ordenación episcopal cuando era obispo auxiliar en San Antonio y con los años lo entrevisté muchas veces, en especial cuando era el arzobispo. Lo llegó a ver como mi obis-

po en 1977 cuando yo me encontré grave-

mente enfermo en el Hospital Lenox Hill en Manhattan con los efectos de un absceso de amíbas que se revolvió. Nadie esperaba que sobreviviera.

Un día recibí una carta del obispo con el siguiente mensaje:

"Carísimo Señor Sandoval: Estuve en DC la semana pasada y me enteré que usted está enfermo y en el hospital. Verdaderamente lo siento mucho. Quiero unirse con su familia, sus muchos ami-
gos y con usted en oración a nuestro Padre Celestial. Todos le pedimos que le permita recuperarse rápidamente.

"Apúrese, sí … pero no mucho. Todos lo necesitamos muchísimo, como usted lo sabe. Pero necesita su salud y no debe tomar riesgos innecesarios apurándose demasiadamente. Ha hecho demasiado para los demás. Ahora es el tiempo de hacer algo para sí mismo. Cuidese." "Quiero asegurarme que continuaré recordándome de usted en mis oraciones diariamente. Avíseme si le puedo ayudar en cualquier otro modo. Ahora es el tiempo de recordar que somos tus hermanos. ¡Paz y bien!"

VIDA
(Para 14)

vidas de los más vulnerables. Rece al Espíritu Santo por el coraje para defender la vida en público.

Participé en actividades como "40 Days for Life", una campaña de 40 días enfoca-
da en terminar el aborto a través de la oración, el ayuno y las vigilias pacíficas. (La siguiente campaña comienza el 1 de marzo.)

» Ayopar la vida en todas sus etapas. Ayupar la vida en todas sus etapas. Ayopar a las organizaciones locales, nacionales e internacionales que ayudan a los que son vulnerables en la comunidad.

Las Caridades Católicas ayudan a cien-
tos de miles de personas en los Estados Unidos a romper el ciclo de abuso y aban-
donan de la pobreza y les da poder para lle-
vantar una vida autosuficiente y digna.

Involúcrase en activismo. Ayopar los esfuerzos pro-vida de su diócesis o inicie un grupo pro-vida en su parroquia o su escuela. (Studentsforlife.org tiene sug-

erencias y recursos sobre cómo hacer esto.)

Pregúntele al comité pro-vida de su diócesis, o la oficina de paz y justicia, sobre los asuntos de preocupación en su estado. Luego, póngase en contacto con sus funcionarios electos para discutir las leyes que reflejan una "ética consistente de la vida."

Este enfoque de "toda la vida" incluye apoyar leyes que ofrecen alternativas al aborto, incluyendo fondos para expandir la atención de salud, nutrición y educa-

ción y servicios para padres e hijos.

Esto incluye leyes que promueven de cuidados paliativos para los que están muriendo, la prevención de la legalización del suicidio asistido por médicos y el pago de los costos de mantener a los que la gente pueda necesitar. Sus donaciones pueden hacer una gran difer-
cuencia para las organizaciones que funcionan con presupuestos muy bajos.

» Estar educado y educar a los demás.

Nuestras acciones para respetar, proteger, amar y servir a toda vida humana dicen mucho. También es importante aprender a responder preguntas sobre lo que significa ser pro-vida. Leyendo el "Youcat", el cate-
cismo juvenil de la Iglesia Católica, es un buen punto de partida.

» Comparta este conocimiento con sus amigos para que ellos también puedan comprender el valor de toda la vida humana. Y que sus acciones celebren el regalo de la vida todos los días.

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Maria-Pia Negro Chin is bilingual associate editor at Maryknoll Magazine.

CHIN
(Para 14)

the elderly and the sick.

Here are some ways young pro-lifers can, and do, continue their commitment to the pro-

tection of human life and the pro-

motion of human dignity.

» Pray. Offer a rosary for the lives of the most vulnerable. Pray to the Holy Spirit for courage before standing up for life in public.

Participate in activities like 40 Days for Life, a campaign focused on ending abor-

tion through prayer, fasting and peaceful vigils. (The next campaign starts March 1.)

» Support life in all of its stages. Give support to local, national and international organiza-

tions that care for those who are vulnerable in the community.

Catholic Charities helps hundreds of thousands of people in the United States to break the cycle of poverty, abuse and neglect, and empowers them to lead self-
sufficient and dignified lives.

» Advocate. Support your diocese's pro-

life efforts or start a pro-life group in your parish or your school. (Studentsforlife.org has suggestions and resources on how to do this.)

Ask your diocese's pro-life committee, or peace and justice office, about the issues of concern in your state. Then, contact your elected officials to discuss laws that reflect a "consistent ethic of life."

This "whole life" approach includes supporting legislation that provides alter-

 natives to abortion, including funds to expand health care, nutrition and educa-

tion and services for parents and children. It includes promoting palliative care for those who are dying, preventing the legal-

ization of physician-assisted suicide and supporting efforts to end the death penal-

ty.

» Volunteer and donate. Your time can save lives and help people to have the tools to have dignified lives. Contact a local pro-life agency, like the Gabriel Project, Project Rachel or shelters for mothers and their babies to find out how you can help.

You can participate in 5ks to raise funds, organize fundraising drives and donate items people may need. Your donations can make a big difference for organizations that run on shoestring bud-

gets.

» Stay educated and educate others. Our actions to respect, protect, love and serve every human life can speak volumes. Learning how to answer questions about what being pro-life means is also impor-
tant. Reading the "Youcat," the youth cate-
cism of the Catholic Church, is a good place to begin.

Share this knowledge with your friends so they, too, can fully understand the value of all human life. And may your actions celebrate the gift of life every day.
SUMMIT

(From 10)
Insurance is an important area that all parishes and the diocese deal with regularly. The diocese obtains group health and accident coverage, workers compensation, property, vehicle, liability, cyber liability, crime, terrorism, and other insurance coverage for the diocese and the parishes. In the past year, the diocese switched insurance carriers. While this change resulted in significant savings to the parishes, it requires training for parishes on new forms, new claims-reporting processes, and training on new insurance program features. Essential information has already been shared with parishes but more in-depth discussions will be held as part of the upcoming deeney meetings.

Beyond the very important issues that will be addressed, diocesan staff members will share a number of best practices with attendees. In 2006, the USCCB drafted Diocesan Financial Management (A Guide to Best Practices) as an aide to those responsible for the financial administration of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States. The document spells out what best financial practices dictate that policies and procedures should be frequently monitored and personnel frequently trained. With 45 parishes and 21 mission in the Diocese of San Angelo, a vast amount of church assets has been entrusted to us. We will spend time at our meetings training attendees on best practices in the area of accounting, parish fundraising activities (Raffles/Bingo and festivals), collection procedures, expense practices, and purchasing.

The members of the finance office are looking forward to seeing and visiting with the hardworking people of the diocese that do the truly heavy lifting of managing parish finances. These deeney meetings are the first of what the diocese expects to be regular training sessions.

KNICKERBOCKERS

(From 11)
they that mourn,” and I accept it. I’ve got nothing that I hadn’t bargained for. Of course it is different when the thing happens to oneself, not to others, and in reality, not imagination. Everyone born into this fallen world suffers, and generally we are not allowed to choose our suffering— notwithstanding our choices that oppose God’s goodness and will and bring suffering upon others and ourselves. “It is in loving the Cross that one finds one heart, for Divine Love cannot live without suffering” (St. Bernadette).

Intuitively, we comprehend the truth that Satan, sin, and death do not have the final word, but the weight of suffering puts our faith to the test and may cause us to feel abandoned by God, to be bitter or angry, or to doubt His love and His will for us, our family, and for all victims of disease, natural disasters, and injustice. Scripture and the Church teach us that God allowed His only Son to suffer and die for our sins, not to prevent our suffering and death, but to unite us to Him in His redemptive suffering and death and so, through them, into His new resurrected life. “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the gospel will save it” (Mark 8:34–35 NAB; also Matt 16:24-25, Luke 9:23-24). Although God doesn’t answer prayerly questions—questions does show us how to embrace suffering—our suffering united with Jesus’ suffering. “By choosing to accept God’s will when we would prefer something else, we exercise our faith, hope, and love more intensely than in any other possible situation. We show that we trust Him, not because He fits into our limited, human calculations, but simply because we believe and hope in His infinite wisdom, power, and goodness” (Fr. John Bartunek). When we pray the prayer Jesus taught us, we say “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt 6: 10 RSVCE). God sees the big picture of His kingdom work. If we allow Him, He will incorporate our suffering into His plan, for salvation of souls and our growth in faith and love.

How do we attain the resurrection and new life we are promised in our suffering? Only by walking through our cross to the other side, accompanied by our Mother Mary whose heart was pierced by the sword. St. Padre Pio says, “Jesus who cannot suffer long to keep you in affliction will come to relieve and comfort you by infusing fresh courage into your soul.”

The Spirit itself leads witness to our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if only we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him” (Rom 8:16-17 NAB). Suffering can make sense only in light of the Gospel message. Suffering is an opportunity to give ourselves to God as an expression of sacrificial love in union with His redemptive sacrifice for us. Therefore, suffering can be redemptive for others and ourselves when we offer it to Him. St. John Paul II taught us not to waste suffering. We Catholics frequently say, “I’m offering it up.” “Trials and tribulations offer us a chance to make reparation for our past faults and sins. On such occasions the Lord comes to us like a physician to heal the wounds left by our sins. Tribulation is the divine medicine” (St. Augustine of Hippo). Not only our own bodies and souls can be graced and healed through our “offering up,” but also the bodies and souls of others in their needs. We enter resurrection and new life by the grace of the cross. Through the Garden of Gethsemane the cross becomes for us the Tree of Life.

As Christians, we are inseparably linked with Christ in His suffering. Most of the time, we don’t know how God is using our sufferings for His Church and individual members of it. St. Paul says in I Corinthians, “But God has so constructed the body...that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same concern for one another. If [one] part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy” (1 Cor 12:26). How can I, a new priest, allow my suffering to be for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body...the church...” (Col 1:24 RSVCE). Christ’s sufferings provided salvation; Paul’s sufferings in union with Christ’s helped carry the message of salvation to the world. In our “offering up,” let’s remember to offer up our sufferings for the Church and the needs of our brothers and sisters that only the Holy Spirit knows—those on earth and those in purgatory.

Are there consolations in our suffering? In sickness, heartache and loss, it can be very difficult to enter into the Scriptural promises of greater union with Christ and His present and eternal graces. An ordinate Christian response in any situation is to examine our heart and Christ’s suffering. We restate St. John’s and St. Mother Mary’s: “Most admirable Sacred Heart of Jesus, who so greatly loved men and spared nothing for them, unite with the Immaculate Heart of your loving mother, so full of merciful love, and together be for us our hope, our comfort, and our salvation.” (2) Like Job, we should refrain from blaming God and pray for courage and strength to try and always find hope and love. With humility we say, “Not my will, but Thine be done.” (4) We can take to heart God’s promise that He is our refuge and strength (Ps 46:1-2,6,2:8), our help in time of trouble (115:11), who will not leave us or forsake us (Deut.31:6). (5) We can praise the Lord because He is God almighty and worthy of our praise, our love, and our trust (Heb 13:15). (6) And, yes, by the grace of God, we can even rejoice because He has counted us worthy to suffer for Christ (Col 1:24). “If we endure with Him, we shall also reign with Him” (II Tim 2:12). “For this momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison” (II Cor 4:17 NAB). “Do not be afraid of anything that you are going to suffer...Remain faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Rev 2:10).

SANDOVAL

(From 18)
join your family, your many friends and you in prayer to our Heavenly Father. We all ask him to grant you a very speedy recovery.

“Hurry up, yes ... but don’t hurry too much. We all need you very much, and you know it. But you need your health and you cannot afford to take unnecessary risks too fast. You have done too much for others. The time has come for you to do for yourself. Take care.

“Let me assure you of a continued remembrance in my daily prayers. Let me know if I can help in any other way. Now is the time to remember que somos tus hermanos (that we are your brothers). Paz y bien.

“I want you to know that you are not alone. We will be with you in spirit and prayer. Peace and very best wishes.”

The letter brought tears to my eyes. What a joy to know that our first Hispanic bishop, though 2,000 miles away, cared enough to send a personal letter encouraging me in my desperate struggle and knew how difficult it is at a time like that to overcome the sense that one is all alone.

I kept the letter on the bedside table in the intensive care unit and when I became discouraged, I would read it again. When I finally left the hospital, I brought it home with me. Over the years, I lost it in my files but later found it. Rereading it, I realize once again what our first Hispanic bishop meant to me and to countless Latinos throughout the nation. He taught us we are not alone.

FLORES

(From 18)
He also had a light side, often winning dance contests with his sister Mary, and played a number of instruments and sang. Flores was ordained to the priesthood in 1956 in the Diocese of Galveston-Houston and was appointed auxiliary bishop of San Antonio in 1970. Eight years later, he was installed as bishop of El Paso, and in 1979, he was appointed archbishop of San Antonio.

He was a member of the Immigration and Refugee Department of the U.S. Catholic Conference, chairman of the Church in Latin America Committee of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, and chairman of the Texas Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

In 1987, he welcomed Pope John Paul II to the San Antonio Archdiocese as part of the pope’s nine-city tour. The pope celebrated Mass for a crowd of 330,000 people in a field that is now the site of John Paul Stephens High School. The Mass still holds the record for the largest gathering in the state.

In an interview with Today’s Catholic newspaper in preparation for his retirement, Archbishop Flores said what he remembered most fondly of his time as archbishop was simply his life as a priest.

“I’ve spent 48 years as a priest, and I have loved it all. If I had the chance to start all over again, I would not hesitate. I might have prepared better academically, or in some other ways. But I have literally found great satisfaction in simply being a priest -- being a bishop is simply assuming additional responsibility.”

“I have found it very challenging and very satisfying. So I’ve been happy at it and will continue to be happy,” he added.

Following Archbishop Flores’ retirement, he resided briefly at Casa de Padres retirement center for priests of the archdiocese, but he spent the past several years at the Padua Place residence for priests needing medical assistance.
Fish Fry Season

From left, Angel Carrasco, Joe Eric Rivera, Lorenzo Ramirez, Ruben Gonzalez, Paul Hernandez, Sylvester Cantu, Mike Hernandez and Joe Gonzalez, members of the Knights of Columbus from Our Lady of Guadalupe-Midland Council 9215, fry up some catfish on Ash Wednesday at the church’s parish hall.

(Photo by Karen Patterson/The Angelus)

OBISPO

(Pará 3)

Misa Diaria hace maravillas para nuestra vida de fe, y nos ayuda a orar de manera más consciente en unión con toda la Iglesia en la tierra, en el Purgatorio, y en el Cielo.

Cuando hacemos planes para ir a uno de los Servicios de Penitencia de la Cuaresma en una parroquia local, podríamos traer con nosotros algunos miembros de la familia o un amigo, para que también tengan la oportunidad de experimentar la alegría de la reconciliación sacramental. Un Servicio Comunitario de Penitencia sirve para ayudar a ver cómo es que el pecado afecta las relaciones sociales y como la misericordia de Dios renueva toda la comunidad.

La práctica espiritual tradicional de rezar el Viacrucis en la parroquia los viernes de Cuaresma es otro buen momento para invitar a otros a unirse para especialmente traer a los jóvenes, para ayudarles a desarrollar un amor más profundo por Jesucristo y una mayor familiaridad con las oraciones de la Iglesia.

 También recomiendo planear de antemano de asistir a algunas de las liturgias del Triduo en cualquiera de nuestras parroquias. Al invitar a otros a venir con usted para los servicios del Triduo, estará introduciéndolos a algunas de las liturgias más profundas que la Iglesia tiene que ofrecer.

Es útil de tener en cuenta a los de edad avanzada, y de llevarlos a algunas de las actividades espirituales de la parroquia durante la Cuaresma. Esto los sacará de la casa y los conectará con otras personas. Ya sea el llevarlos al Viacrucis o a Misa o incluso a una fritura de pescado, los está ayudando a sentirse menos solos en este mundo.

Ayuno

El ayuno incluye cualquier reducción voluntaria de alimentos, bebidas, o lujos. Desde el comienzo de la historia Cristiana, el ayuno y la abstinencia han sido una parte integral de la experiencia de la Cuaresma. Este año, cuando hacemos cambios en nuestros hábitos alimen-
tables y practicamos la abnegación del ayuno o la abstinencia, deberíamos permitir que nuestro hambre nos recuerde de nuestros hermanos y hermanas por todo el mundo que pasan hambre todos los días. Nuestros pequeños dolores de hambre son nada en comparación con el sufrimiento de una persona en una hambruna o en una ciudad cuyo suministro de alimentos ha sido cortado por la guerra.

Hay muchas maneras de experimentar la práctica del ayuno, y es bueno tratar diversas expresiones de esta disciplina en diferentes años. Por ejemplo, algunos optan por saltar una comida en ciertos días de la semana. Algunos hacen un ayuno de jugos. Conozco a muchos que asumen la antigua práctica de no comer carne para toda la temporada. Un testimonio que es especialmente potente es el de renunciar todo el consumo de alcohol durante la Cuaresma.

El ayuno y la abstinencia pueden traer una nueva vitalidad a nuestra vida de oración. También tienen el potencial de aumentar en nosotros la virtud de la solidaridad. La solidaridad es la actitud que dice: “Lo que le sucede a otras personas me importa, aunque no conozco a esas personas personalmente.” Si oramos por los pobres y hambrientos al ayunar, y aplicamos el dinero ahorrado por el ayuno a las necesidades de los pobres, nuestro ayuno tiene un significado espiritual más profundo.

Limosna

La limosna incluye actos de caridad fraternal que expresan solidaridad con los pobres. Sirve como un recordatorio de la enseñanza Cristiana de que el amor de Dios va mano a mano con el amor al prójimo. A través de la limosna, se nos recuerda que nuestra vida espiritual también debe orientarse hacia la justicia y la caridad. Al reconocer las necesidades de los que nos rodean, nos dirigimos hacia el exterior para la edificación del reino de Dios en el mundo.

En nuestra Cuaresma de este año, debemos tener en cuenta que el Papa Francisco nos ha instado a no sucumbir a la “cultura de la indiferencia” hacia los pobres y los marginados. Al desempeñar nuevos actos de bondad y caridad durante la Cuaresma, el Señor extiende a nosotros corazones para que seamos más amorosos, y así abre nuestra mente a un mayor conocimiento de las dificultades que sufren nuestros hermanos y hermanas. Con la ayuda de Dios, podemos encontrar que nuestros actos de servicio son tan satisfactorios que continuamos con ellos después de que la Cuaresma haya terminado.

Por toda la Diócesis de San Ángelo, muchos de nosotros vamos a utilizar las cajitas de cartón de la Operación Plató de Arroz durante el tiempo de la Cuaresma. Este proyecto de Catholic Relief Services aporta una enorme cantidad de ayuda financiera a los pobres y hambrientos, así como a aquellos que son afectados por los desastres naturales en todo el mundo. Cada vez que ponemos algo en la caja, deberíamos ofrecer una pequeña oración por aquellos que serán ayudados por estos fondos.

Para aquellos que tienen niños o adolescentes en el hogar, es especialmente importante usar la cajita del Plató de Arroz como una herramienta de enseñanza para formar a la próxima generación a ser sensibles a las necesidades de los pobres. Un buen lugar para colocar la cajita del Plató de Arroz es en el centro de la mesa de la cocina, para ayudar a los miembros jóvenes de la familia a ser más conscientes de los que pasan hambre mientras disfrutamos de nuestras comidas saludables en la seguridad de nuestros hogares. Junto con las cajitas del Plató de Arroz, Catholic Relief Services proporciona un calendario de oraciones para uso durante la Cuaresma que se puede utilizar para la reflexión personal o de grupo.

En Viernes Santo, parroquias Católicas por alrededor del mundo recogen una colecta especial para las necesidades de los Cristianos en la Tierra Santa. La recaudación de la Colecta de Viernes Santo se envía a la Custodia Francescana de la Tierra Santa. Los Francescanos han estado a cargo de los lugares sagrados allí desde 1209. También asisten a los pobres, operan escuelas, proporcionan becas, y llevan a cabo los ministérios pastorales para mantener vivo el Cristianismo en la tierra donde se originó. Cuando damos a la colección del Viernes Santo, estamos asistiendo concretamente al cuerpo sufriente de Cristo en el Medio Oriente.

Un Giro hacia el Otro

La Cuaresma ya ha comenzado, pero no es demasiado tarde para tomar la decisión de asumir las prácticas de oración, el ayuno, y la limosna que nos ayudarán a voltearnos hacia el otro en formas nuevas y creativas. La Pascua no es hasta el 16 de abril, así que todavía hay tiempo para asumir algunas disciplinas de la Cuaresma especiales que nos harán más conscientes y más sensibles a las necesidades de los demás seres humanos.