Fulfilling Dream,
Pope Opens Great Jubilee Of The Year 2000

By John Thavis
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Fulfilling his dream to lead the church into Christianity’s third millennium, Pope John Paul II opened the Holy Door of St. Peter’s Basilica and launched the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000.

The Christmas Eve ceremony highlighted the joy of Christ’s coming and the universality of the modern church. An updated rite featured Asian string music and the flowers and fragrances of Oceania, along with traditional Latin invocations.

The Mass marked the start of the busiest Christmas ever for the pope, who also delivered a blessing “urbi et orbi” (to the city of Rome and the world) Dec. 25 and presided over a prayer service and Holy Door opening at Rome’s Basilica of St. John Lateran.

For the 79-year-old pontiff, unsteady on his feet but as firm as ever in his resolve, the few steps through the Holy Door at St. Peter’s symbolized an invitation for all to enter through the door of conversion. The door was last opened for the Holy Year that ended in 1984.

“With joy we open the year of the great jubilee ... a year of grace and true freedom, of reconciliation and peace,” the pope said.

The church’s main jubilee message, the pope said, was that Christ himself is “the door of mercy and grace, always open to sinners, a door that offers salvation to all those entering.”

The pope needed to be supported on both arms as he ascended the three steps to the Holy Door, and at one point he began to fall backward before being steadied by an aide.

“Open for me the doors of justice,” he intoned before pushing on the bronze doors. A few moments later, they were pulled open from inside and the pontiff, again supported by assistants, knelt in prayer on the threshold.

The pope then withdrew to watch a procession of lay faithful anoint the door with oils and fragrances, and decorate it with flowers.

He returned to the threshold with the Gospel book in his hands and, after holding it up for all to see, entered the door with labored steps. Three Nigerian laymen wearing feathered headdresses blew on elephant-tusk horns, and the whole basilica echoed with low notes of joy.

Pro-life Services Planned For
San Angelo, Midland

By Fr. Mark Woodruff
Pastor, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Odessa

The Diocese of San Angelo is preparing a pro-life gift for Christ to commemorate the 2000th birthday of Christianity. Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer, in conjunction with the Diocesan Pro-Life Office and the Knights of Columbus, have scheduled two mammoth rallies to honor the gift of life.

The rallies are scheduled to coincide with the 27th anniversary of the infamous U.S. Supreme Court decision Roe vs. Wade that legalized abortion in the United States. The rallies will be held in Midland and San Angelo, and are being prepared by area councils of the Catholic men’s organization, the Knights of Columbus.

The Midland rally is planned for Saturday, January 22nd at 10:00 a.m. with a prayer service and march to the Cathedral Church of the Sacred Heart. A pro-life Mass will be celebrated there at about 11:00 a.m.

Bishop Pfeifer has called on all his brother Knights throughout the Diocese of San Angelo to make a special effort to attend, and to invite thousands of others, both Catholic and Protestant, to take part in the gatherings.

The Bishop has set a goal for the pro-life gift for Christ – to have at least 2,000 people present at both rallies, each one representing one year of Christianity.

“What a wonderful way to honor Christ on his birthday by offering him this pro-life gift, with Mary, his mother – our mother,” the Bishop wrote to the various Knights of Columbus councils in the Diocese.

The Knights of Columbus in Texas and around the United States are especially noted for their pro-life work and the support of pro-life causes. They are well known for erecting monuments to the unborn in the form of tombstones and supporting other pro-life and anti-abortion efforts.

For more information, readers of the West Texas Angelus should contact their local Catholic parish.
“Anyone who says I love God and hates his brother is a liar, since a man who does not love a brother that he can see cannot love God whom he has never seen.” [1 John 4:20]

It is easy to say in word that we believe in Jesus Christ, that we accept his Gospel, but the proof is found in how we love one another and reach out toward one another in service. Our love, charity, is especially expressed by the way we help the poor, the abandoned and the unloved of our society. As we stand on the threshold of the Third Millennium, as Christians we need to seriously examine how we of the Church are reaching out to the poor and needy.

Pope John Paul II during his address at Yankee Stadium in October, 1997, offered the following challenge: “The poor of the United States and of the world are your brothers and sisters in Christ. You must never be content to leave them just the crumbs from the feast. You must take of your substance and not just of your abundance in order to help them. And you must treat them like guests at your family table.”

Our world today urgently needs Christians to express their faith in love and service. Thirty-five thousand persons die of hunger and its consequences every day in all parts of the world. More than 80 percent of the world’s people live in developing countries. They use just 20 percent of the world’s wealth. The remaining 20 percent of the world’s people live in industrialized nations and control 80 percent of the world’s wealth. More than 35 million people, roughly 1 in every 7 Americans live in poverty. Nearly 15 million children under age 18 live in poverty, and the number is increasing steadily. Forty-four percent of African-American children and 36 percent of Latino children are growing up poor.

Some citizens of the United States may succumb to the temptation of blaming those who are poor for the conditions which oppress them. Pope John Paul II cautions us in the Gospel of Life: “It will be necessary above all to abandon a mentality in which the poor as individuals and as people are considered a burden, as irksome intruders trying to consume what others have produced.” Such a mentality has led to the grave assault on life which plagues our present times, including abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, and assisted suicide. During his pastoral visit to the United States in 1995, Pope John Paul II described a society truly worthy of the human person as one in which none are so poor that they have nothing to give, and none so rich that they have nothing to receive.

We Catholics are invited and expected to be good stewards of the blessings we have received—that is, we are invited to share our time, talent, and treasure with our neighbors, especially with those who have less than ourselves. We are strongly urged to put our faith into action by our willingness to serve one another through love—one another’s burdens—and so fulfill the law of Christ. For some Catholics there is a widening split between our faith and our everyday life choices.

In their message on “Everyday Christianity,” the U.S. Bishops posed the following questions: How do we connect worship on Sunday to work on Monday? How is the Gospel proclaimed not according to the way we choose to live our lives but in the context in which we live them? Is there a need to make a more clear distinction between what we believe and how we live?

“Anyone who says I love God and hates his brother is a liar, since a man who does not love a brother that he can see cannot love God whom he has never seen.” [1 John 4:20]
Annual March for Life

By Fr. Frank Pavone
National Director, Priests for Life

The Annual March for Life held in Washington DC on the anniversary of the Roe vs. Wade abortion decision, is more than meets the eye.

Under the experienced leadership of Miss Nellie Gray, this event is actually a series of educational workshops, inspirational gatherings, and a beautiful dinner. This year, the March itself will be held on Monday, January 24. But on the 22nd and 23rd, there will be a Convention, featuring speakers, workshops, and exhibit booths. Among the speakers will be Norma McCorvey, the former Jane Roe of Roe vs. Wade, who later became pro-life and whom I had the privilege of confirming in the Catholic Church in August of 1998.

The March for Life Education and Defense Fund (www.marchforlife.org) publishes an institutional Report each year, which enunciates the “Life Principles.” This is the heart and soul of the annual March, and these principles are the foundation of all life.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all human beings are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among which is the right to life; and therefore

- The right to life of each human being shall be preserved and protected; and therefore

- The life of each human being shall be preserved and protected from that human being’s biological beginning when the father’s sperm fertilizes the mother’s ovum;

- The life of each human being shall be preserved and protected from the biological beginning throughout the natural continuum of that human being’s life by all available ordinary means and reasonable efforts;

- The life of each human being shall be preserved and protected at each stage of the life continuum to the same extent as at each and every other stage regardless of state of health or condition of dependency;

- The life of each human being shall be preserved and protected to the same extent as at each and every other stage regardless of state of health or condition of dependency;

- When there is any doubt that there exists a human being’s life to preserve and protect, such doubt shall be resolved in favor of the existence of a human being;

- When two or more human beings are in a situation in which their lives are mutually endangered, all available ordinary means and reasonable efforts shall be used to preserve and protect the life of each and every human being so endangered;

Wherefore, Pursuant to these Principles, we recommend and urge the adoption of a Mandatory Human Life Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America.

As we observe another anniversary of the Supreme Court’s most deadly decision, let us join in the March for Life as we can: if not in Washington, then in our own cities; if not physically, then spiritually. In all cases, let’s resolve to continue our march throughout the year by practicing and proclaiming the Life Principles.

Contact Priests for Life at PO Box 141172, Staten Island, NY 10314; Tel: 888-PFL-3448, 718-980-4400; Fax: 718-980-6515; email: pfl@priestsforlife.org; web: www.priestsforlife.org

Workshop Will Explore Popular Hispanic Celebrations Part Of The Mustard Seed Program For Lay Leadership Training

By Father Mark Woodruff
Pastor, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Odessa

On Saturday, January 29 another in a series of Mustard Seed Workshops will be held in the Diocese of San Angelo. The January 29th program will focus on ways the Hispanic community celebrates important life moments. Special emphasis will be placed on quinceaneras, weddings and funerals.

About 80% of the Catholics of the Diocese of San Angelo are Hispanic.

St. Thomas Parish in Big Spring is hosting this particular workshop. It will begin at 9:30 a.m. Departure will be at 4:00 p.m. The Mustard Seed Office, 804 Ford Street, San Angelo, TX 76905 (915-651-7500), is handing the registration for the workshop. A $20 per person fee is being charged, which includes lunch.

The presenters of the workshop will be Father Rudy Vela, SM and Sister Rosa Maria Icaza, CCVI. Both presenters have come from the Mexican American Cultural Center in San Antonio and have extensive experience in the study of Liturgy, Hispanic culture and Hispanic expressions of faith.

Father Vela, a Marianist priest of the St. Louis Province, has served variously as a missionary in Peru and as an associate pastor in Fort Worth, TX. Among other activities, he has written reflections in Spanish for the liturgical magazine Liturgia y Cancion.

Sister Rosa Maria, a member of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word in San Antonio, TX, is a university teacher and fellow and has just completed a new ritual book for quinceaneras that has been approved by the Bishops’ Committee on Liturgy and by Rome.

Weddings and funerals are common in every culture, but quinceaneras have a special hold in Hispanic culture. A quinceanera celebrates a young woman’s 15th birthday when she enters the more committed and responsible world of adulthood.

The Mustard Seed Program is a leadership-training program for parish and mission churches across the Diocese of San Angelo. It seeks to train lay leaders who are taking increasingly more responsibilities for the programs and activities of their local congregations.

In writing to parish leaders, Bishop Michael D. Peifer, OMI, added his encouragement to the program and hoped that one or two representatives would come from each parish and mission of the Diocese.

Knights of Columbus Launches New Web Site

New Haven, CT – The Knights of Columbus Supreme Council unveiled its new Internet Web site located at: http://www.kofc.org. “The new site and its comprehensive features can open a whole new vista of awareness and understanding of the Knights of Columbus among the general public and those with special interests, such as clergy, journalists, students, and civic-minded citizens.” At the same time, it will provide up-to-date information about the Order to our members and their families,” said Supreme Knight Virgil C. Dechant, chief executive officer of the 1.6-million-member Roman Catholic family fraternal service organization.

The new Web site was developed in order to satisfy the information needs of a broad range of potential users. Visitors to the new site are greeted by a home page featuring four main topics: Knights, Founder, Faith and Insurance. A click on any of these will lead visitors deeper into the site, where information on the Order, its history, programs and mission can be found. Important Supreme Council announcements and news releases also can be accessed directly from the home page at the link “Announcements.”

The Knights area features an online edition of Columbia, the Knights’ award-winning monthly magazine which enjoys a 1.8 million monthly circulation in its printed version. In addition, site visitors can access information on membership, volunteer service programs, and spiritual activities of the Knights of Columbus.

The Faith area includes material covering the Catholic Information Service (CIS), religious vocations, the Gospel of Life, and a link that enables visitors to search, by topic or citation, the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Other highlights of this section are online versions of many CIS pamphlets on the faith, and the full text of Pope John Paul II’s Gospel of Life encyclical and an accompanying study guide.

A featured area of the Web site is devoted to Father Michael J. McGivney, who founded the Knights of Columbus in 1882. Father McGivney is a candidate for sainthood.

The Knights of Columbus operates a top-rated insurance program for members. Types of insurance, a needs calculator and a request form for additional information on K of C insurance products are features of the site’s Insurance section.

The Knights of Columbus is the world’s largest Catholic family fraternal service organization. It provides members and their families with volunteer opportunities in service to the Catholic Church, communities, families, and young people. The Knights of Columbus at all levels of the organization distributes an aggregate $110 million to charitable causes annually. In addition, Knights volunteer approximately 55 million hours of service a year.

Pray for Vocations

Knights of Columbus Insurance Earns Top Rating From Standard & Poor’s

New Haven, CT – Standard & Poor’s has affirmed the triple-A financial strength rating of the Knights of Columbus. The rating, according to a press release distributed by S & P, “reflects the society’s competitive advantage in the Catholic market, as well as its extremely strong capitalization, profitability and liquidity.”

An insurer rated AAA by Standard and Poor’s has “extremely strong” financial security characteristics. A triple-A rating is the highest insurer financial strength rating assigned by Standard & Poor’s.

Consistent top ratings demonstrate anew that the Knights of Columbus spirit of mutual support for members, communities and the Church is firmly grounded in a sound financial structure to sustain our fraternal mission,” said Supreme Knight Virgil C. Dechant. The Knights of Columbus has more than $38 billion of insurance in force for members.

“I said I got it off the web.”
Living The Gospel Of Life In The New Millennium

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

"Here, then, I have today set before you life and prosperity, death and doom . . . Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live" [Deut.30:15 and 19].

As we end the deadliest century in the history of humankind and begin a new millennium, the question before us is will we choose life or death? In this new millennium, humankind must make some basic choices for life, otherwise we will bring about our own death. At the beginning of a new century, pro-lifers must recommit themselves to prayer and action to overturn the decision of Roe vs. Wade of our Supreme Court on January 22, 1973. That tragic decision has given legal sanction to the killing of some 40 million precious unborn.

In November, 1998, the U.S. Catholic bishops adopted what is arguably the bishops’ most important statement on pro-life issues: “Living the Gospel of Life: A Challenge to American Catholics.” This statement on which I base many of my reflections calls upon Catholics to reclaim the principle on which our nation was founded – foremost, the recognition and protection of the inalienable and God-given right to life. The bishops challenge American Catholics, as citizens, politicians, and voters to bring these principles to bear on all public decisions and thus participate in building the culture of life. This position is based on the understanding of the human person as a temple of the Holy Spirit – the living house of God. Hence, all direct attacks on innocent life, such as abortion and euthanasia, strike at the house’s foundation.

Adopting a consistent ethic of life, the Catholic Church promotes a broad spectrum of issues seeking to protect human life and promote human dignity from the inception of life to its final moment. The basic principle is simple: we must begin with a commitment never to intentionally kill, or collude in the killing, of any innocent human life, no matter how broken, malformed, disabled, or desperate that life may seem. Any politics of human life must work to resist the violence of war, abortion, euthanasia, and the scandal of capital punishment. Any politics of human dignity must seriously address the issues of racism, poverty, hunger, employment, education, housing, and healthcare.

Sad to say, we as a nation have allowed the killing of the unborn to become a “legal” right. In many ways because of this, America’s conscience has been aborted as well. Just because something is legal doesn’t make it moral. Abortion is a crime against humanity; thus it is a human rights issue as well as a moral issue. Pro-lifers working to overcome the evil of abortion are to refrain from violence. However, they are also to refrain from silence because to know the truth and not speak up is irresponsible. The key to ending abortion is love, prayer and education about the dignity and sacredness of all human life from its earliest beginnings.

While the Church teaches that the act of killing an unborn child is intrinsically bad, it does not teach that the mother who seeks an abortion is also intrinsically bad. There is a difference between condemning an act, and judging the guilt of the actor. The Church has great compassion and care for women struggling with a difficult pregnancy decision and extends a loving hand of forgiveness and support to those who might have experienced abortion.

In The Gospel of Life, the Holy Father says: All of sacred Scripture shows such profound respect for human life, as the work of God’s hands, that it requires as a logical consequence, that the commandment “You shall not kill” be extended to the unborn, even if a abortion is not mentioned by name in Scripture. In the face of temptation to suicide, abortion, euthanasia and other violent responses to life’s difficulties, the Pope proclaims a positive message that life is good; life is inviolable; life is to be respected and cherished.

During his visit to St. Louis the Pope noted “America first proclaimed its independence on the basis of self-evident moral truths. America will remain a beacon of freedom for the world as long as it stands by those moral truths which are at the very heart of its historical experience. And so, America: if you want peace, work for justice. If you want justice, defend life. If you want life, embrace truth – truth revealed by God.”

Our Holy Father offers wise words about the paradox of modern society: At the close of the 20th century and the beginning of a new millennium, we are witnessing a strange paradox: the sanctity of human life is being denied by an appeal to freedom, democracy, pluralism, even reason and compassion. Words have become unmoored from their meaning, and we are left with a rhetoric in which the language of life is used to promote the culture of death. Freedom is sullied from truth, and democracy from the moral values required for its survival; a faulty notion of pluralism loses sight of the common good; and a false sense of compassion is incapable of facing the limits and the demands of our nature as created and dependent beings. The language of human rights is constantly invoked but the most basic of them – the right to life is repeatedly disregarded. So great is its confusion at times that for many people the difference between good and evil is determined by the opinion of the majority, and even the time-honored havens of human life – the family, the law and medicine – are sometimes made to serve the culture of death. Bad laws and defective moral reasoning produce the evasive language to justify evil of abortion.

Some Catholic elected officials have adopted the argument that, while they personally oppose evils like abortion, they cannot force their religious views onto the rest of society. Real pluralism depends on people of convictions struggling vigorously to advance their beliefs by every ethical and legal means at their disposal. Catholic public officials who disregard Church teaching on the inviolability of the human person indirectly collude in the taking of human life. A private call to conversion should always be the first step in dealing with these leaders. Only tireless promotion of the truth about the human person can infuse democracy with right values. No appeal to policy, procedure, majority will or pluralism ever excuses a public official from defending life to the greatest extent possible. As is true of leaders in all walks of life, no political leader can avoid the accountability for his or her exercise of power. Those who justify their inaction on the grounds that abortion is the law of the land, need to recognize that there is a higher law, the law of God. No human law can validly contradict the commandments: Thou shall not kill.
Vatican Agency Says 31 Missionaries Killed

By Benedicita Cipolla, Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Thirty-one church personnel were killed in mission territories in 1999, Vatican missionary news service Fides said.

Fides, the news agency of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, counted 15 martyrs in Africa, 10 in Asia and six in South or Central America. Rather than being a cause for mourning, Fides director Father Bernardo Cervellera said, martyrdom belongs to the joy of Holy Year 2000.

“The jubilee year is a year of grace, conversion, (and) pilgrimage,” Father Cervellera said in a Dec. 28 editorial preceding Fides’ annual list of martyrs.

Father Cervellera said martyrs received grace for their witness to the church as they preached its universal message to diverse peoples around the world.

Many on Fides’ list were killed while working in trouble spots like East Timor, which spiraled into violence in September following a vote for independence from Indonesia; Congo, where civil war has raged since August 1998; and Colombia, which spiraled into violence in September following a vote for independence from the United States.

“The death of a martyr is a sign that these places of desperation have been redeemed, made holy,” Father Cervellera said.

Martyrdom can also have positive social consequences, said Fides. The agency offered East Timor as an example, saying the deaths of three seminarians, four redeemed, made holy, “Father Cervellera said.

14 years.

Where rebels have waged a guerrilla campaign against the government for the past 14 years.

In 1999

The Holy Land, said an Israeli Ministry of Tourism official.

Celebrate Mass With

Youths In Holy Land

By Judith Sudilovsky Catholic News Service

JERUSALEM (CNS) — Some 45,000 young people will accompany Pope John Paul II at a Mass on the Mount of Beatitudes during his March pilgrimage to the Holy Land, said an Israeli Ministry of Tourism official.

Though dates and times have been more or less set for the pope’s visit, they cannot be released due to security considerations, Zvi Liran, director of the special segments marketing division of the Ministry of Tourism, said Dec. 29.

The Vatican has not confirmed dates for the pope’s pilgrimage, but church sources said Pope John Paul plans an overnight March 20-21 visit to Jordan as the first leg of a trip that would also take him to Jerusalem and holy places in Israel and the Palestinian territories.

During the pope’s stay in Israel he will overnight in Jerusalem and will fly to and from Nazareth and the Galilee, said Liran.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak will most likely meet with the pope at the Mount of Beatitudes. In addition to Barak, the only other Israeli officials the pontiff was scheduled to meet were Israeli President Ezer Weizman and Chief Rabbi Meir Lau.

In Bethlehem, Mayor Hana Nasser, who is a member of the Palestinian committee organizing the pope’s visit to the city, said the pope will be visiting one of the three refugee camps surrounding the city. He added that Palestinian National Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat would attend an open-air Mass the pope will celebrate in Manger Square.

Logistics of the visit were already being worked out, Nasser said, downplaying the threats against the pope issued recently by Muslim extremists in Nazareth.

“I think the Holy See has been one of the rare leaders in the world which has showed real feeling for Palestinians and especially the problems of the refugees and their right to self-determination,” said Nasser, who called the pope “a freedom fighter.”

“I don’t think there is any room for any individual, whether he be Muslim or Christian extremists, to do something. But of course we will always be on the alert and take all precautions to keep the visit of the pope running smoothly,” he said.

Some 700 buses will be used to transport the pilgrims. Officials said coordination is still needed for the arrangement of entry permits for pilgrims from countries who do not have diplomatic relations with Israel and for the landing of large numbers of chartered airplane flights.

Pope’s New Wheels Help Him Move Around, Keep Personal Contact

By Benedicita Cipolla Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The first time Pope John Paul II entered St. Peter’s Basilica after his election in 1978, he refused to be carried on the one-time-traditional portable throne, much preferring his own two feet and proximity to the people.

Twenty-one years and five major operations later, the pope entered the basilica on wheels.

At a two-part Dec. 29 general audience — the first part in St. Peter’s Basilica — the pope made his way to the main altar standing on a wheeled, 2-foot-tall platform. It was pushed by two “papal gentlemen” — elegantly dressed ushers who, in their previous incarnation as “sedan,” once carried popes above the heads of the faithful.

Thus, the last general audience of the millennium marked the new platform’s virgin voyage.

Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls said the platform was used “to allow all pilgrims to see the pope and to facilitate movement.”

The large crowds expected for jubilee events and the considerable distance between the basilica’s sanctuary to the main altar make the platform especially useful in St. Peter’s, Navarro-Valls said, adding that the latest papal vehicle might also make an appearance at a Dec. 31 Te Deum prayer service.

With three small steps on either end, the platform enabled the 5,000 pilgrims gathered in St. Peter’s Dec. 29 to get a better view of the pope.

At the same time, its relative nearness to the ground allowed for personal contact with the people, something Pope John Paul has insisted on throughout his pontificate.

More significantly, though, the platform symbolized the pope’s increasing frailty.

“It recalls the Passion, the message of the cross, the suffering servant whom Isaiah prophesied, rather than the triumphant king,” said Cardinal Paul Poupard, president of the Pontifical Council for Culture, in the Italian newspaper La Repubblica.

Walking and even standing upright have become extremely difficult for the pope ever since hip surgery in 1994. Even with the use of a cane, his gait is slow and unsteady. Though still unconfirmed by the Vatican, it is commonly believed that the pope suffers from the neurological disorder Parkinson’s disease.

The pope fulfilled his longtime dream of ushering the church into the third millennium Dec. 24, but his goal of seeing through the jubilee, which ends Jan. 6, 2001, still lies a long way off and includes a busy schedule of events.

By Faith, Youths Can Ensure Peace In Third Millennium, Pope Says

By Cindy Wooden Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Young people, by their faith and example, can ensure that acceptance and peace mark the third millennium, Pope John Paul II said.

“Jesus himself asks you to light a fire on earth, the fire of his love,” the pope wrote to a youth gathering sponsored by the ecumenical Taize Community.

The community’s Dec. 28-31 pilgrimage meeting was expected to bring some 100,000 young people to Warsaw, Poland, to usher in the new year together.

In a letter addressed to Brother Roger, the prior of Taize, the pope said he hoped the gathering would be “a privileged time of mutual acceptance and of brotherhood, prayer and contemplation which will lead to an ever greater openness to God and to others.”

The text of the pope’s message was released Dec. 28 at the Vatican.

Pope John Paul told the young people the first step toward building a better world was to recognize that God is “an extremely loving and merciful Father” who makes one big family out of all humanity.

Too many people today, the pope said, live lives marked by violence or fear of the future or bewildement over the meaning of life.

“Christians must be more zealous and vigorous witnesses of the hope they live,” he said. They must reach out to others and invite them to join in the process of building communities marked by acceptance and forgiveness.

“To each one of you, I say: Where you live, in your families, in your schools, where you work or relax, always be servants of the Gospel of hope,” he said.

The most powerful way to spread the message of hope is by recognizing that each person is a brother or sister to welcome and love, the pope said.

Each individual’s love for another must be allowed to start a chain reaction so that it extends throughout each community, each region and around the world, he said.

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Fr. Barley Appointed New Director Of Vocations And Seminarians

(EDITOR’S NOTE: This article is the first in a series which will focus on the clergy and religious of the Diocese. The reader will come to know the spiritual journey taken by our priests and religious through the sea of life prior to their ordination and acceptance of vows; and the many joys, and perhaps sorrows, they experience while bringing Christ to us. Families and young men and women will learn vocations are nurtured in the crucible of life.)

I wish to introduce myself. On January 17, 2000 I, Fr. Tom Barley, will transfer from being the pastor of St. Lawrence near Garden City and St. Thomas in Midkiff to assume the position of Director of Vocations and Director of Seminarians from Fr. David Espitia. I will live in San Angelo and will be officed in the Diocesan Pastoral Center. (Fr. David Espitia has been appointed as Pastor of St. Lawrence parish, effective January 17, 2000.)

My own vocational journey began when I was very young. In my earliest memories I remember a desire to be a priest. Priests in my parish were good pastors and easy to talk with. The Presentation Sisters who taught me in elementary school were challenging, loving, and supportive. One parish priest, Msgr. Michael Holden, made an impression on me by his patience, humble leadership, self-sacrifice, service, and his friendship up to the time of his death. I entered high school seminary in 1966 at the personal invitation of Msgr. Larry Stuebben, the Vocation Director for the Archdiocese of San Antonio. Over the next 25 years I attended seminaries for San Antonio, the Maryknoll Missionaries, and finally San Angelo in addition to taking time out for several years for education, professional work, and spiritual development.

Those years included living in a Benedictine monastery in Mexico for a few months after college. My education includes college and masters degrees in social work (MSW), business administration (MBA), theology (MDiv), and canon law (JCL). I worked in hospital social work as a department manager over ten years in San Antonio, McAllen, and Odessa. I have professional licenses in social work (LMSW-ACP), and canon law (JCL). I have lived in Germany, Mexico, Guatemala, Chicago, Boston, and around Texas.

My years with Maryknoll taught me of the beauty of the ministry of the Catholic Church in its service of spreading the Gospel and social justice to and in the foreign missions, especially the poor and people on the fringes of society. The early Maryknoll Fathers were giants in the American foreign missions priesthood. They dedicated their lives to spread the Gospel in poor countries all over the world, just like missionaries of many other Catholic religious groups. I learned to appreciate my own background and beliefs as well as to respect those of others.

I am proud of my mixed heritage of Mexican, Spanish, German, and Irish ancestors and growing up in the military. My time at the Benedictine monastery in Mexico introduced me to communal meditative prayer. Many of the monks were very dedicated to the people in the area. One elderly monk formed many food co-ops, started a medical clinic, visited collections of families abandoned by their fathers, and went into the federal prison to minister to prisoners. He was the saint of Morelia, Michoacan and a tremendous sign of the love of Christ.

My studies in theology revealed the depths and strength of our Catholic Faith. We have been around since the time of Christ. In my ten years in hospital social work I did a lot of growing up. I was privileged to walk with the dying and the abused, the elderly and the disabled, poor and rich during their hospitalizations. I taught and learned from them and worked with many other medical professionals dedicated to helping others. Many friends from those years have kept in touch. I worked, learned, and served.

Over the years I played and coached soccer for 29 years. I learned about teamwork and the need to push myself hard to accomplish my goals. I often felt the strength of prayer and a renewed awareness of God’s gifts of faith and vocation. These and many other experiences kept bringing me back to my journey to answer God’s call to a priestly vocation.

I was finally ordained in 1991 for the Diocese of San Angelo from the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio. At one point I had thought of transferring to the new Diocese of Tyler where I have many relatives. Then I remembered three things that have bonded me with west Texas since 1980. These are the sunsets, the people, and a sense of mission in west Texas. I have not regretted my decision to stay in the Diocese of San Angelo.

My two parish assignments, St. Joseph and St. Isidore in Stanton and Lenorah respectively, and St. Lawrence and St. Thomas near Garden City and Midkiff, have been tremendously life-giving. My time in ministry in the Eng王晓顾 and the Marriage Tribunal has been very fulfilling. I describe my years of priesthood as a time of joy, hard work, inner peace, many friends, sacrifice—more than I need—challenges, and sense of fulfillment. While I have done other things in life that pay more and have greater social position, I choose priesthood. Some would see the priestly vows of chastity, obedience, and poverty as limiting. I see them as greatly liberating, allowing me to be used by Christ in love to others.

During this whole vocational journey my parents, brother, sister, and large extended family proudly supported me at every step. They freely helped me to serve God and our Church as a priest. Never once was there a discouraging word. Whenever I visit family and old friends I am given a position of honor. See “BARLEY”, page eleven.

Seminarians Are Expensive!!!!

Special Collection Coming Sunday, February 6

By Father Mark Woodruff
Pastor, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton,
Odessa

On Sunday, February 6, the Catholics of the Diocese of San Angelo will be asked for special donations to the SEMINARY TUTION FUND. This is the first collection of its nature to be taken up in the Diocese. Happily, the need for increased funds is due to the large number of seminarians studying for the priesthood for the Diocese. Currently over ten seminarians are studying for the Diocese of San Angelo. Several attend college (once called the minor seminary) while the rest attend the major seminary. Some of these seminarians may be ordained to the priesthood as soon as two years. The appeal will take place annually for the immediate future.

What does it cost the Diocese of San Angelo to educate one seminarian for one year? As any parent can testify, the cost of higher education for young people today is enormous. Since many of our seminarians come from lower income families, and since they will be serving the people of the Diocese after ordination, the Diocese assumes much, if not all, of the cost of each man’s seminary tuition and room and board. Other incidentals such as books, travel and even a monthly allowance are given. This amounts to about $18,000 a year per student.

The seminarians are usually unable to defray any of the cost of their education. The seminary curriculum and the spiritual and pastoral formation are so rigorous that seminarians are unable to hold part-time jobs during the academic year. Many summer programs, such as Pastoral and Clinical Education programs and language studies in Mexico preclude the possibility of summer jobs.

How does the Diocese pay the annual costs of the 9+ seminarians (about $162,000)?

The Diocese maintains a SEMINARY BURSE, which now totals $1 million. The burse, however, earns only about $5,000 annually. The Diocese also receives grants from the Catholic Church Extension Society and Catholic Home Missions (about $50,000 a year). With this income, a shortfall of about $62,000 is expected this year alone.

That’s why parishioners around the Diocese are being asked to assist in this extraordinary collection. The benefits to each parishioner are obvious since those who complete their seminary training return to the Diocese to serve their people as priests.

Please be generous on February 6. Also, consider making a gift to the DIOCESAN SEMINARY BURSE. (P. O. Box 103, San Angelo, TX 76902).
Honduras Relief

By Msgr. Larry Droll

It is time to say “Thank You” to all who have assisted our Catholic brothers and sisters in Honduras through the November collection. The Diocese of San Angelo has adopted the Honduras Diocese of San Pedro Sula, to help them recover from Hurricane Mitch.

As of this writing, $14,900.00 has been received from individuals, parishes and missions. I want to express my gratitude to all who have given so generously. I also want to thank pastors and other parish leaders who facilitated this collection.

Part of the proceeds have already been sent to the bishop of the Diocese of San Pedro Sula as a Christmas gift for hurricane relief. We are awaiting information about other, more specific projects we might fund. Fr. Tom Goekler, a priest associated with Maryknoll who works in an area devastated by the hurricane, told me recently of the need to purchase a plot of land for a mission church in the middle of a housing project of 4,000 units. This would be one example of the type of project that can assist our Catholic brothers and sisters. There are many other needs, of course, from building bridges to health care to serving youth.

I would like to invite individuals and organizations interested in continuing various types of aid to contact me. One parish in our diocese is discussing adopting a parish in Honduras. Several people have suggested taking groups down to San Pedro Sula to build a home or undertake some other project. If anyone needs more offering envelopes to organize an event, please contact me.

During the Christmas season, we are reminded that giving and sharing is what love is all about. Thank you for your loving generosity.

Diocesan Snapshots

Bishop Pfeifer speaks to female inmates at the Tom Green County jail during the Christmas Eve celebration of mass.

Bishop Pfeifer leads the Procession into the Cathedral through the Holy Door.

Bishop Pfeifer and the Very Rev. Maurice J. Voity, Rector of the Cathedral, reading the prayers and proclamation prior to opening the Holy Door.

Main entrance to the Cathedral with the banner depicting the time of the Holy Door opening.

Deacon Jerardo Trevino, Jr. Pastoral Associate, stands with the Bishop at the opened Holy Door.

Cathedral Holy Door.
By Fred Kammer, S.J.

As our heads swim with the details of the holiday season and we move into a new century and a new millennium, I hope we can keep in mind that religion doesn’t have to be complicated.

The U.S. Catholic bishops make this point very well in their new pastoral letter, “In All Things Charity: A Pastoral Challenge for the New Millennium.” They remind Christians that Jesus told his disciples, “I give you a new commandment: love one another. . . . This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:34).

“They remind Christians that Jesus told his disciples, “I give you a new commandment: love one another. . . . This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” |

With these words,” the bishops said, “the entire Christian vocation is conveyed in a simple, profound definition of charity. The ‘new commandment’ of charity unites love of God with love of neighbor; it bridges Old and New Testaments; it provides the foundation for human morality; it spans all time and all peoples.”

Whose job is charity? Everyone’s.

Where should we live out charity? In every aspect of our lives: in our homes, on our jobs, in our voluntary activities, and in our public lives.

As Christians, as Catholics, and as Americans, we believe that the first line of attack against poverty must be to build and sustain a healthy economy that provides employment opportunities at just wages for all adults who are able to work. All of society – individuals and governments – has an obligation to help those unable to work, or unable to work at a wage that allows for human dignity.

The bishops point out that “For at least a century, religious and community-based nonprofit organizations have been providing social services under contracts with government at all levels. This system of joint responsibility has served children and families, communities, and society very well.” Catholic Charities agencies are proud to be part of this relationship as we provide social services and emergency aid to millions of people each year, without regard to race or religion.

But the Church is not naive about charity. The bishops note that “Frequently, people are tempted to blame the poor for the conditions that oppress them.”

In recent years, charity has often been perceived negatively. Those who undertake charitable activities are seen as well-meaning ‘do-gooders’ who actually foster dependency. Those who receive charity are treated in a demeaning manner. In recent years, charity has often been perceived negatively. Those who undertake charitable activities are seen as well-meaning ‘do-gooders’ who actually foster dependency. Those who receive charity are treated in a demeaning manner.

The bishops’ pastoral says, “In the Christian life, no distinction can be made between the giver and the receiver. Even when it appears that one person provides a service and the other receives the benefits of that service, the ‘giver’ often receives the most benefit from such acts of charity. Thus, in 1995, during his pastoral visit to the United States, Pope John Paul II described a society ‘truly worthy of the human person’ as one ‘in which none are so poor that they have nothing to give and none are so rich that they have nothing to receive.’”

Many Americans are turned off by the way the New Millennium has been hyped and commercialized. The bishops offer Catholics a way to make the Millennium meaningful by reminding us that it is also a Jubilee Year, which calls us to take charitable activities are seen as well-meaning ‘do-gooders’ who actually foster dependency. Those who receive charity are treated in a demeaning manner.

In All Things Charity: A Pastoral Challenge for the New Millennium

Sign the Jubilee Pledge is simple. Living it out takes a little more work. Please join your local Catholic Charities agency in making it happen for you and our brothers and sisters in need.

Fred Kammer, S.J. is president of Catholic Charities USA.

Bishops’ Pastoral: Charity Is A Simple, But Challenging, Commandment

Everybody Can Be Great, Because Anybody Can Serve (Dr. Martin Luther King)

By Bishop Michael D. Pfeiffer, OMI

On his upcoming birthday, Martin Luther King, Jr., once again reminds us where true greatness is found. Dr. King inspired many to reach upward for equality, peace and justice which he believed is achieved through the power of love which in turn motivates people to serve. King sincerely believed that: “Everybody can be great, because anybody can serve.” This equality and justice come about through the power of love.

As we remember Dr. King on his special anniversary, it is fitting that we listen once again to his inspiring comments on “The Strength to Love.”

“Like an uncheked cancer, hate corrodes the personality and eats away its vital unity. Hate destroys a man’s sense of values and his objectivity. It causes him to describe the beautiful as ugly and the ugly as beautiful, and to confuse the true with the false, and the false with the true.

Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. Hate multiplies hate, violence multiplies violence, and toughness multiplies toughness in a descending spiral of destruction. . . . The chain reaction of evil – hate begetting hate, wars producing more wars – must be broken, or we shall be plunged into the dark abyss of annihilation.”

This power of love described by Dr. King was exemplified in a newspaper photo. An eighteen-year old black woman was using her body to shield a white Ku Klux Klan member who had fallen to the ground during a not. This man was being beaten by anti-Klan demonstrators. What an act of compassion!

This woman, whose color and ethnicity are the KKK’s target of cruel prejudice, risked being beaten herself to protect her enemy.

This photo presents us with the challenge to love in a Gospel manner. It reminds us that we are to love and have the courage to do exactly what that woman did, to reach out even to our enemy and to those who persecute us. This young woman could have stood by on the sidelines cheering to see her enemy being battered and beaten. Instead, she ran into the danger and tried to protect another human being from harm.

As we remember this great civil rights leader on his holiday, we all need to pledge ourselves to the spirit of love as exemplified in the writing and life of Dr. King. And we need to express this love in service where true greatness is found. Dr. King’s widow, Coretta Scott King, reminds us of the best way to remember her husband: “The greatest birthday gift my husband could receive is if people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds celebrated the holiday by performing acts of service and love.”
Pioneer Missionary Group Marks 150 Years Of Serving Texas

By Peter N. Micale, WTA

150 years ago on December 3rd, 1849, a small gathering of men from France arrived in Brownsville as missionaries. They were members of the Missionary Oblates of Mary immaculate. For many years following their arrival, these men and their replacements rode horseback up and down the Rio Grande River and along the coastline into Corpus Christi, bringing religion to the area while at the same time helping to settle the area.

On December 10th a celebration was held at the Oblate School of Theology campus in San Antonio, marking the 150th anniversary. The celebration began with Mass at 6 p.m. and a procession to the recently renovated Oblate Grotto, where the image of Our Lady of Lourdes on one side of the Grotto has just been complemented by beautiful bronze statues of Our Senora de Guadalupe and Juan Diego at the top of the Grotto Hill. There the Oblates and friends asked for Mary’s continued accompaniment and intercession as they move into a new millennium, and also remember the more than 270 Oblate Missionary priests and brothers buried in the adjacent cemetery, who labored in this area over the past 150 years.

FAITH from page two

only in the pulpits of our parishes but also in the everyday lives of Catholic people? How does the Church gathered on the Sabbath act as the people of God scattered and active every day of the week? How can we best carry the values we have taught into the complexity of social problems, the arrivaledness of human beings who are “less” between us.

In the face of so much need around us, it is too easy to be immobilized by the complexity of social problems, the feelings of exhaustion in the faces of endless human needs, or the seeming powerlessness of one person to change the world. Yet the wonderful lesson of the Gospel is the power of the few to be loved by the many and the continuing wonder of planting small seeds from which great forests grow. Each of us can begin to make the reign of God a reality by our own efforts. Volunteering time, talent, and money to work for greater justice is a fundamental expression of Christian love and social solidarity. All who have more than they need must come to the aid of the poor.

To get started, two steps are recommended. First, reach out to a person in need: tutor a child; visit a frail or sick elder; provide transportation to a disabled or home bound person; counsel a troubled teenager; or work in a parish food pantry or a soup kitchen. This helps to put a name and a face upon Christ among the poor and transform the one who is helping. Second, make one social issue a special concern for yourself, whether that be hunger, homelessness, family violence, HIV/AIDS, criminal justice reform, or poverty.

To overcome poverty, we need to bring this issue into our prayer and worship, we need to preach about it, we need outreach and charity and to become involved in legislative action and community organizing. We need to think globally and act locally to help the poor and needy.

Fe from page two

división entre nuestra fe y los escogimientos de cada día. En su mensaje “Cristianismo Cada Día,” los Obispos de los E.U. presentaron las siguientes preguntas: ¿Cómo conectamos la oración del Domingo con el trabajo del Lunes? ¿Cómo es el Evangelio producido solamente en los púlpitos de nuestras parroquias pero también en la vida diaria de la gente Católica? ¿Cómo se porta la Iglesia que se reúne en el Sábado como el pueblo de Dios disperso y activo cada día de la semana? ¿Cómo podemos llevar los valores de nuestra fe a la vida familiar, al mercado y a la plaza pública?

Nuestro Santo Padre en su visita a St. Louis, Missouri, nos animó y desafió con sus palabras: “ América: su ustedes quieren paz, trabajan por justicia. Si ustedes quieren justicia, defendan la vida. Si ustedes quieren vida, abrazan la verdad – la verdad revelada por Dios.” Necesitamos hacer un lugar en la mesa familiar para todos, especialmente para los que son “menos” entre nosotros.

En la cara de tantas necesidad alrededor de nosotros, es muy fácil ser inmovilizado por la complejidad de problemas sociales, los sentimientos de agotamiento en las caras de necesidades humanas interminables, o lo parecido impotente de una persona para cambiar el mundo. Todavía la lección maravillosa del Evangelio es el poder de los cuantos para ser la vanguardia para muchos y la maravilla continua de plantar semillas pequeñas de que crecen un bosque. Cada uno de nosotros podemos empezar hacer el reino de Dios una realidad por nuestros mismos esfuerzos. Ofreciendo nuestro tiempo, talento, y dinero para trabajar por justicia mas grande es una expresión fundamental de amor Cristiano y solidaridad social. Todos los que tienen mas de lo que necesitan tienen que venir a la ayuda de los pobres.

Para empezar, dos pasos son recomendados. Primero, ayuda a una persona necesitada: enseña a un niño; visita a un anciano enfermo o frágil; ofrece transporte a una persona incapacitado o que esta encerrada en casa; aconseja a un joven en peligro; o trabaja en la dispensa de comida de la iglesia o una cocina de sopa. Esto ayuda poner un nombre y cara en Cristo entre los pobres y transformar los que están ayudando. Segundo, has un tema social un asunto especial para ti, sea el hambre, los sin hogar, la violencia familiar, HIV/SIDA, la reforma de justicia criminal, o la prolife.

Para vencer la pobreza, necesitamos traer este asunto en nuestras oraciones y culto, necesitamos predicar y enseñar sobre ello, necesitamos incluir asistencia y caridad y ser envueltos en acción legislativa y organización comunitaria. Necesitamos pensar globalmente y actuar localmente para ayudar a los pobres y los necesitados.

POPE from page one

Outside, watching on giant TV screens, some 60,000 pilgrims from all over the world filled most of St. Peter’s Square, and the ceremony included live satellite links with churches in Belfield, Havana, Washington, Dublin and Soweto, South Africa. The three-hour service was broadcast worldwide.

“It was important for us to see the pope celebrate the last Mass of the millennium here in Rome,” said Rico Zarrella, a U.S. Catholic who sat with his family in the chilly square for four hours before the start of midnight Mass.

After opening the Holy Door, the pope walked up and down the main aisle to the altar without apparent difficulty, stopping at times to bless babies in the crowd.

In his sermon, he explained how the birth of Christ had truly “changed the course of human events,” through an act of redemption and triumph over death.

“This is the truth which on this night the church wants to pass on to the third millennium. And may all of you who will come after us accept this truth, which has totally changed history,” he said.

Like the first shepherds who knelt in adoration of Jesus, he said, modern Christians feel amazement and joy 2,000 years afterward, knowing that through this unique event they were given a share in eternal life.

On Christmas Day, delivering his “urbi et orb” blessing from the central balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica, the pope offered Christmas greetings in 58 languages and prayed that the new millennium would bring an end to the “senseless use of arms, and the recourse to violence and hatred which have doomed individuals, peoples and continents.”

He invited people to make a spiritual pilgrimage to the resting places of the “victims of brutal conflicts and cruel slaughters.” Christ came to bring the Gospel of life, he said, yet recent history shows that men and women have not always welcomed human life as a precious gift.

In remarks that appeared aimed at the many non-Christians in his television audience, the pope explained in simple terms why Christmas is so holy to Christians: It is a moment when “we recognize the unmistakable stamp of the one who is holy, full of mercy and goodness,” he said.

Later in the day, the pope opened the Holy Door at the Basilica of St. John Lateran, where Pope Boniface VIII declared the first Holy Year in 1300.

Following a procession of more than 100 monks, priests, bishops and cardinals, the pope waved momentarily as he approached the wooden door, its frame garlanded with yellow and white flowers. At the crucial moment, he pushed three times on the Holy Door before two deacons pulled it open from behind.

Then he prayed in silence on the threshold before stepping inside and processing up the basilica’s central aisle for an evening prayer service. In his homily, the pope recalled that Pope Martin V had opened a Holy Door for the first time at St. John Lateran during the 1423 jubilee.

“Here is the heart of that special dimension of the history of salvation, tied to the grace of jubilees, and the historical memory of the church of Rome,” he said. Some 20,000 people attended the service, 5,000 inside the basilica and 15,000 in the piazza outside.

At an Angelus blessing Dec. 26, the pope made a jubilee-year appeal for “the rights of the family, of life and of childhood.” In particular, he spoke about respect for life from the moment of conception and the importance of marital and family unity — all of which he said were threatened by an “individualistic” mentality in contemporary culture.

The pope also offered prayers for the many people suffering from civil strife and discord in the world. From Chechnya in southern Russia to the Ivory Coast in western Africa. He urged all sides in such conflicts to have the courage to undertake genuine dialogue.

Pray
Ecumenical Prayer Service Celebrates 2,000 Years Of Christianity

By Jennifer Lim Catholic News Service

HOUSton (CNS) — Thousands of Houston-area Christians stood on common ground Dec. 27 to celebrate a mutual history — two millennia of God's grace to all Christian Churches.

Celebrate 2000, an ecumenical prayer service at Houston's Compaq Center, was "a response of the Christian community of the Houston area to the most important event in human history," Bishop Joseph A. Fiorenza of the Catholic Diocese of Galveston-Houston told the crowd representing more than 35 Christian organizations.

That event was "the moment 2,000 years ago when Jesus began to live among us as our redeemer and savior and gave to those who believe in him a share of his eternal life," he added.

"We are members of many different Christian traditions, but tonight we are one in faith in Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday, today and forever," said Bishop Fiorenza, who is president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Preparations for Celebrate 2000 began in October 1998. The event, initiated by Bishop Fiorenza, was a response to Pope John Paul II's call to heed the ecumenical aspect of the jubilee year accountantings.

"It brings about a spirit of unity, a better understanding between the different denominations, as well as different racial and ethnic groups," he added.

"Hopefully, that spirit of unity and hope that is present here tonight will continue throughout the millennium.

For participants, the worship service offered a unique opportunity to cross denominational lines in praising a common savior.

Emilio and Annie Rodriguez, parishioners at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church, attended the event to heighten their awareness of God's saving presence to all believers.

"This celebration is a once-in-a-lifetime event," Annie Rodriguez said. "So, I thought, in what better way to end the year than having all Christ's followers together, one in faith to celebrate what the reason of the season is.

Colleen Ashton-McKinney, who cantors at St. Michael and St. Ann Catholic churches, had a particular interest in the ecumenical service. Her interfaith marriage to a Baptist has helped her become "more aware of respecting others' faith journeys, customs and traditions, and opening myself up to learning and dialoguing with those traditions," she said.

She saw her involvement in the Celebrate 2000 Festival Choir as a chance to cooperate with other Christian denominations in praising God.

"I hope the Spirit will move people to break down the walls and the fears they may have of other denominations or of being involved with other churches so that we're not sequestered so much," she said.

The Celebrate 2000 Festival Choir and Orchestra inaugurated the evening's events with a song fest; 75 members of the Houston Children's Choir also sang at the service. The events common to the different faith traditions — incense, a paschal candle, a Bible and several crossings — were then processed to the center of the assembly. Clergy and lay leaders entered the assembly carrying images of those who have witnessed Gospel living to them. The program continued with a service of the Word, a renewal of baptismal vows and a commitment to mission and ministry.

The Rev. William Lawson, pastor of Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church, preceded the evening's sermon, which emphasized Christians' common mission and salvation through Jesus Christ.

"Recognize that what Jesus Christ has taught us, as we listen to his words from his Sermon on the Mount, was that it does not matter whether you belong to a big church or a little church. It doesn't matter whether you come with ancestors from Africa or Mexico or Europe.

"Jesus says that it matters most if you are poor in spirit, or meek, or merciful, or a peacemaker," Rev. Lawson added.

To extend Jesus' mission to those in need, a collection was gathered to serve the hungry and homeless. Because several individuals, businesses or participating churches or organizations underwrote the cost of the event, 100 percent of the donation went to the poor through the Houston Coalition for the Homeless and the Houston Food Bank.

Those in attendance expressed hope that the one-time event would lead to further commitments to common mission and ministry among Christian denominations.

Garland Pohl, who chairs the Catholic diocesan Commission for Ecumenism and Interreligious Affairs, saw Celebrate 2000 as empowering Christians to recognize their collective potential.

"I hope this would bring people to the realization that we are stronger together than we are as individual churches," she said. "When we begin to see ourselves as the one church of Jesus Christ, then we begin to understand our strength and our power to change the world and to effect the will of God.

Opening Holy Door, Frail Pope Gives Strong Spiritual Witness

VArcTAN CITY (CNS) — He never looked so physically weak, yet rarely has Pope John Paul II left a stronger spiritual impression than when he opened the bronze Holy Door in St. Peter's Basilica to usher in the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. Long ago he let the world know how important this moment was for him: From the time of his election in 1978, he felt destined to be the "pope of the millennium," the one who guided the church into its third millennium.

National Migration Week Observance Set For Jan. 3-9

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The observance of National Migration Week Jan. 3-9 offers an opportunity for American Catholics "to recommit ourselves to welcoming the stranger among us," according to the chairman of the U.S. bishops Committee on Migration. Bishop Nicholas A. DiMarzio of Camden, N.J., wrote about the year 2000 theme, "Open Wide the Doors," in a letter published with a resource packet for parishes, schools and other groups interested in celebrating National Migration Week. The resource booklet and a poster were sent to each parish, elementory and secondary school, college and university in the country, as well as to those people in every diocese with responsibility for communications, refugee resettlement, pastoral care or social action.

Cardinal Oks Initiative Of Sainthood Cause For Archbishop Sheen

NEW YORK (CNS) — Cardinal John J. O'Connor of New York has given provisional approval to initiate the sainthood cause of Archbishop Fulton Sheen. Archbishop Sheen, who died in 1979, rose to radio and television fame in the 1930s, '40s and '50s and was a popular speaker at retreats and conferences. His famous television series of talks, called "Life Is Worth Living," was broadcast Tuesday evenings in prime time on ABC-TV from 1951 to 1957. Archbishop Sheen was also director of Propagation of the Faith, wrote newspaper columns and conducted a successful convert ministry. His sainthood cause is being promoted by the Archbishop Sheen Foundation, based in the archbishop's home town of El Paso, Ill.

Long Lines At Holy Door Leave Little Time For Prayer On Threshold

VArcTAN CITY (CNS) — At the start of Holy Year 2000, long lines at St. Peter's Basilica's Holy Door left little time for prayer on the threshold. "The queue is too fast," said Carlos Roberto, a 24-year-old Brazilian Catholic on vacation in Rome. At noon Dec. 27, pilgrims passed through the Holy Door at a rate of about 90 per minute, granting them less than a second to pause before being swept in by the crowd. Only a few people managed to kneel in the doorway for a reflective moment amid the midday rush. "You have to come early in the morning if you want to stop," said one security of ficial inside the basilica.

Vatican Official Calls Confession Essential Part Of Holy Year

VArcTAN CITY (CNS) — Holy Year 2000 offers a unique opportunity for spiritual renewal, but Catholics can take full advantage only if they return to the sacrament of penance and confess their sins, a top Vatican official said. Cardinal Jorge Medina Estevez, prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments, said it was important that the jubilee go beyond "external spectacle" and reach the faithful at the deeper level of individual conscience. An essential element of participation in the Holy Year is the sacrament of penance, he said in an interview with Catholic News Service in late December. "To rediscover the sacrament of penance means above all rediscovering the sense of sin, being aware that some actions and attitudes are not in harmony with the Gospel," he said.

In Bethlehem, Catholic Patriarch Urges Reconciliation

BETHLEHEM, West Bank (CNS) — In his Christmas Eve homily, Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah of Jerusalem called for peace and reconciliation on political, religious and personal levels in the Holy Land and around the world. "We ask God to grant us, with this New Year, justice, peace and reconciliation between peoples and religions, here in this land and in the whole world," he said at Mass Dec. 24 in Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity. "To our Holy Land, and to the whole region, we wish and pray so that the peace which started (here) finds a just conclusion."
Midland/Odessa Deanery Youth Event

High School youth from across the Midland/Odessa Deanery gathered on November 13, 1999 at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton for the 1999 Midland/Odessa Deanery Youth Event. The theme for the day focused on issues of Justice and Peace. Keynote presenter, Tom Bright from the Center for Ministry Development in Naugatuck, Connecticut gave two challenging presentations to the young people. Following the presentations, the youth were divided into small groups and led through a process entitled “Making A Difference As People Of Faith”. Each group was asked to identify one problem, name four causes that create or directly contribute to the problem and then determine possible action steps that can be taken to eliminate or at least lessen the effect of the problem in people’s lives. Some problems identified were: violence; drug/alcohol abuse; suicide; racism/discrimination; teen pregnancy; homelessness. Some of the action steps identified were: communication with parents; more respect for one another and less criticism; more involvement in church and community activities; prayer; education; acceptance of each other’s culture; self-respect and self-acceptance; be drug and alcohol free. Youth were also asked to identify a personal change they would take to make a difference for the good.

The day also included various community building activities, time for prayer, music, a delicious meal and dance. Bishop Michael Pfeifer was the presider at the Eucharistic Celebration.

Bishop To Host Three Ecumenical Prayer Services

Week Of Prayer For Christian Unity To Be Marked

By Father Mark Woodruff
Pastor, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Odessa

Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI, will host three ecumenical prayer services to mark the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity later this month. One service will be held in each of the three Deaneries in the Diocese, and members of the Diocese, along with other Christians, are invited to attend.

The services are scheduled as follows:

- **Monday, January 17 at Sacred Heart Cathedral, San Angelo**, beginning at noon.
- **Tuesday, January 18 at Holy Family Parish in Abilene**, beginning at 7 p.m.
- **Tuesday, January 25 at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Odessa**, beginning at 7 p.m.

The January 17th service at Sacred Heart Cathedral will combine prayers for Christian Unity with a commemoration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Officially the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity begins on January 18 and concludes on January 25.

Ministers of other denominations will be joining Bishop Pfeifer in the reading of scripture and prayer in each of the services. Among the symbols to be used in the services will be the blowing of trumpets to herald the Year of Jubilee and candles to remind participants that Christians are called to be the light of the world.

BARLEY

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This is a truly humble beginning. Until their deaths a few years ago, my parents loved to attend Mass with me when I visited home. My mother, a cradle Catholic, and my father, a Protestant, both beamed with pride for all three of their children. Their encouragement was one of the major factors that helped me to endure in my searching to live God’s invitation to priesthood.

I have greatly enjoyed my time and friends at St. Lawrence and St. Thomas. I will miss our October parish festival, CCD and CYO, daily and weekend Masses, meetings with parish organizations, our sports teams, the peace and solitude of living in the country, the support I received from so many parishioners each week and in my times of need, our community coming together at weddings and funerals, the hard work of the Altar Society in taking care of the church, meals, and most of all my many close and loyal friends.

After a period of adjusting to the idea of this transfer, I look forward to the next three years as Director of Vocations and Director of Seminarians. My responsibilities will include visiting all of the parishes and missions in the diocese to give a vocations presentation. Supporting the parishes in their continuing efforts to develop an awareness of the presence of vocations in our own communities and families; working with parish vocations groups and individuals who are interested in learning about diocesan and religious priesthood and sisterhood; developing deanery vocations teams and conduct vocations retreats; developing other vocational activities such as Nun-Runs, Days with our Sisters, and visits to parishes and seminaries; and getting to know, visit, and support our current seminarians. I will also continue to be a judge on the Marriage Tribunal, be a member of the Engaged Encounter Team and the Presbyteral Council, and serve on the team developing the new Deacon Program in the diocese. In my free time I plan to sleep, take a walk or go fishing.

As you can imagine, I will need your help to be successful in this ministry. While money is important (and there will be a special diocesan collection in February), I ask first for your prayers as community, family, and individuals for vocations. Then encourage your own sons to consider priesthood or diaconate and your daughters to consider sisterhood. Get active in any of the service ministries of your own parish. Attend Mass and receive the Eucharist. Help Catholics married outside of the Church to talk to their priests and work through the Tribunal to straighten things out. Prepare our youth for marriage instead of weddings. Pray that people let go of anger and help them to seek reconciliation with the Church and others. Then pray for all of us who will be working on vocations in our Diocese. The stronger we are as family and parish, the stronger will be our response to God’s invitation to vocations in His Church.

Catholic Outreach Services Volunteer Of The Year

Margie Calhoun was recognized recently as the Catholic Outreach Services Volunteer of the Year, announced Pat Dishman, executive director.

“Margie is our volunteer director and contributes an untold number of hours to Catholic Outreach every week of the year,” Ms. Dishman said. “Not only is she an active volunteer, but she recruits, trains and schedules volunteers to work in the thrift store and then fills in herself when another volunteer has to be out.”

In addition to her volunteer contributions for the thrift store, Mrs. Calhoun also assists the executive director with special projects and in representing Catholic Outreach throughout the community from time to time.

Margie and Millard Calhoun have lived in San Angelo about 27 years. Active members of Holy Angels Catholic Church, Margie was a member of the teaching team for Rate of Christian Information for Adults for four years and was RCIA sponsor for three years. She has co-chaired the kitchen detail for the annual church festival, worked with Helping Hands and served on the environment committee.

Community activities include active membership in Beta Sigma Phi and a former volunteer for Hospice of San Angelo. Mr. and Mrs. Calhoun have seven children, 18 grandchildren and one great-grandchild. Catholic Outreach Board Chairman Sain Smith presented Mrs. Calhoun with a gift certificate.

While I will work for vocations to priesthood and sisterhood, we all have the vocations to build up God’s Church in our Diocese.

I will see you whenever I break away from my desk at the Diocesan center, and at Mass when I come to your parish. I can be reached by phone at 651-7500, or by mail at P.O. Box 1829, San Angelo, TX, 76902.

May God bless you.
The theme for the recent National Catholic Youth Conference in St. Louis, Missouri, November 18-21, 1999 was gateway@st.louis.NCYC99. Among the participants were 110 youth and adults from the Diocese of San Angelo. Participants came from: Holy Family - Abilene; Our Lady of Lourdes - Andrews; Good Shepherd - Crane; St. Stephen’s - Midland; Holy Angels, St. Joseph, St. Mary - San Angelo; St. Ambrose - Wall. Bishop Michael Pfeiffer also attended the conference.

In conjunction with the NCYC was the Youth Congress on Scripture. Brandon McAuliffe (Holy Family - Abilene) and Lesli Leifeste (St Ambrose - Wall) participated. Lesli submitted the following of her experience of the congress and conference:

Recently I attended the National Catholic Youth Conference in St. Louis, Missouri, with other youth from the San Angelo Diocese. While I was there, I served on the NationalYouth Congress, along with approximately 300 other delegates from different dioceses from all over the country. In the Congress, we discussed various scripture readings with bishops and worked on applying the scripture in our lives. I really enjoyed being on the Youth Congress because I became friends with people from other states that I would never have met otherwise. Outside of the congress, we spent our time going to workshops, listening to Christian bands, gazing at exhibits, and sight seeing. We heard from many different inspirational speakers, including a girl from Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, who spoke about overcoming the tragedy her community faced through the love of God. I got a chance to see and experience many things that were new to me. I saw 22,000 young people professing their faith, priests dancing on the stage, and nuns playing Frisbee. Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed the conference and appreciate the fact that I had the chance to attend it. I feel that everyone who attended grew stronger in his or her own faith as a result. We also learned that we, the youth of our country, are not only the church of the future; we are the church of today.

(Left) Participants in the National Catholic Youth Conference in St. Louis, MO, November 18-21, 1999 From the Diocese of San Angelo. Shown are youth from Holy Family - Abilene, Our Lady of Lourdes - Andrews, Good Shepherd - Crane, St. Stephen's - Midland, Holy Angels, St. Joseph and St. Mary - San Angelo, and St. Ambrose - Wall.

(Left) Participants in the National Catholic Youth Conference on Scripture. Brandon McAuliffe (Holy Family - Abilene) and Lesli Leifeste (St Ambrose - Wall) participated. Lesli submitted the following of her experience of the congress and conference:

Trudo’s Celebrates Twenty Years

The turn of the century will mark the 20th anniversary of Trudo’s Religious Store. Frank and Ruth Trudo came to San Angelo in 1966 after Frank retired from the Air Force. Frank was ordained a Deacon at the Cathedral Church of the Sacred Heart in 1976 where he served until his death. When they learned that Mrs. Englert was closing her store downtown they decided to open a Religious store and carry a few items to supply the needs of the Catholic faithful. They opened on January 2, 1980 utilizing the front room of their home at 1705 Kenwood Dr. Encouraged first by Bishops Fiorenzo and Pfeiffer, Frank and Ruth kept adding more and more to their inventory. Their small business ministry grew to larger proportions than ever imagined and it literally consumed every bit of space in their home.

It wasn’t long before small outlying parishes requested they come out to Sunday masses and display some of their stock. This led to many a Saturday night with Ruth packing until 1 or 2 am and leaving at 5 am to arrive, set up, sell, pack up and return home. Dedication but no rest!!

This was a “Mom & Pop” operation in the best traditions and Trudo’s adopted the Motto: “Small enough to know you, big enough to serve you.” The store became the largest supplier for the Catholic faith from Lubbock to San Antonio and Austin to El Paso.

During this period of time, Frank continued his full schedule of duties for the Diaconate and the running of the store fell mostly on the shoulders of Ruth.

In 1991 Frank became seriously ill and with Ruth taking care of him, her 96 year old mother and running the store it was apparent that it was time to retire. That same year, while visiting, their daughter Pat and her husband Jim Fennell decided to buy the business and keep it in the family. They went back to Arizona; Pat gave her notice with Walgreens and moved in January of 1992. Jim sold his Chiropractic practice and arrived in March. Frank passed away one week later on March 21st.

After several months of learning the business they were able to rent the building at 624 West Avenue N, only one block from the house. Their prayers had been answered. After renovation they moved the store in October of 1992. They added an 800 number for better customer service and business prospered even more and they purchased the building on January 3, 1995. With two expansions, one in 1996 and the other in 1998, the store was complete. Frank and Ruth’s dream had been fulfilled.

There are now two full time employees, both of whom speak Spanish, and it’s a great help to a lot of the customers. First was Berta Torres who had been with Nathan’s Jewelers for 25 years. Next came Bea Barron who had been with Service Merchandise. Carianne Lovell, a student at ASU and from Odessa, is the part time member of the staff. The year 1999 saw the implementation of technology with computerization of the store and thus added Tricia Affleck as the computer expert and bookkeeper.

We’re sure the older customers miss the smell of freshly baked cookies or a pot of chili simmering on the stove in the kitchen, but alas, that’s progress.

Ruth still comes in every day to help and enjoys chatting with old friends. Small touches such as the children’s play area, good customer service, expanding inventory, dedication of the staff and hard work will keep Trudo’s around for many years to come.

The next time you’re in San Angelo or just passing by, stop in and see what this West Texas success story is all about.

Religious or Spiritual?

Six of 10 Americans say religion is very important in their life. Asked how they would describe their beliefs, U.S. adults responded:

- 54% Religious
- 30% Spiritual
- 9% Neither
- 6% Both
- 1% No opinion

A little more than half of U.S. adults consider themselves to be religious, while 30 percent say they are spiritual, but not religious. (CNS graphic by Anthony De Feo) (Dec. 30, 1999)