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## Holy Land Christians Celebrate Christmas Amid Violence And Bloodshed

By Judith Sudilovsky  
Catholic News Service

BETHLEHEM, West Bank (CNS) – A trickling of some 5,000 local residents celebrated Christmas in Nativity Square, Jesus' birthplace, following a year of violence and bloodshed.

"We are here because we are Christians but we don't really feel the holiday spirit. We come because it is our tradition to come and see our patriarch. I hope for some happiness for my son," said Adnan Geriasi, a Catholic resident of Beit Tsahour who came with his 5-month-old son dressed as Santa Claus.

"Our life is for our children. We try to make some happiness for them," added Shireen Geriasi, his wife.

Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah led a delegation of Christian leaders

on the morning of Christmas Eve to Ramallah to greet Palestinian Chairman Yasser Arafat. The Israeli government prevented Arafat from going to Bethlehem for refusing to arrest suspects in the assassination of Israeli Tourism Minister Rehavam Zeevi.

Arafat, a Muslim, has attended midnight Mass in St. Catherine Church, adjacent to the Church of the Nativity, every year since the 1993 Oslo agreement. His chair for the Mass remained empty and was draped by a Palestinian keffiyeh.

Palestinians in Bethlehem held up placards with Arafat's picture while a giant poster of the Palestinian leader was hung on the entrance of the Church of the Nativity.

While Israel said it would ease travel restrictions for Palestinians, it still took Amira Husray, 18, and her mother, Hanan, 48, four hours to

make the normally 45-minute drive from Ramallah to Bethlehem.

"We had to cross three checkpoints and take five taxis," said Husray, a Catholic.

"And all the way we didn't know if we would be allowed to pass. Now we don't know if we will be able to get back to Ramallah. We came to pray here on Christmas and be with our family. I hope there will be peace," she said.

Traditional parades took place in Nativity Square Christmas Eve day. Later a religious procession of priests, monks, seminarians and altar boys led Patriarch Sabbah into the Church of the Nativity.

Residents lined up to see the parades — the first sign of any celebration in nearly a year in a town that recently had some of its worst fighting in the 14-month Palestinian uprising.



### PALESTINIAN FAMILIES MAKE THE BEST OF CHRISTMAS

Bethlehem residents Adnan Geriasi, left, and Mariam Geriasi, center, attend a quiet Christmas Eve parade with their families Dec. 24. "We don't really feel the holiday spirit, but I hope for some happiness for my son," said Adnan Geriasi. Mideast violence kept tourists away from the Holy Land and made Bethlehem a ghost town for the 2001 Christmas season. (CNS photo by Debbie Hill)

The road leading to the square was lined with gutted buildings and burnt-out homes, evidence of the battles that raged between Israeli soldiers and Palestinian gunmen.

Children in the Nativity Square crowd clutched helium-filled bal-

loons, while mothers sat sipping soft drinks or feeding their younger children, but there was no hint of real festivity in their eyes.

"We are here but we feel upset,"

see "HOLYLAND," page ten

## Set Aside Anger, Begin New Year In Thanksgiving, Peace, Pope Says

By Cindy Wooden  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Pope John Paul II asked individuals and families to begin the New Year by setting aside feelings of anger and by giving thanks for the blessings they have received.

"Every year brings with it joys and sorrows, problems and new

prospects," the pope said Dec. 30, addressing visitors in St. Peter's Square.

"I ask everyone to conclude 2001 by giving thanks to God, leaving behind them every enmity in order to begin 2002 in the love and peace of Christ," he said during his midday Angelus address.

Marking the Dec. 30 feast of the

Holy Family, Pope John Paul said that although the Gospels do not provide many details about Jesus' growing up in Nazareth, there are enough hints to know that it was "an intimate community of life and love."

"The Redeemer of the world purposefully chose the family as the place of his birth and his growth, thereby sanctifying this fundamen-

tal institution of every society," the pope said.

"Gathering and prayer, mutual understanding and respect, personal discipline and communal asceticism, and a spirit of sacrifice, work and solidarity are the typical traits which make the family of Nazareth a model for all of our homes," he said.

Pope John Paul said the church

will not stop going against the current of modern societies by preaching the importance of family life, both spiritually and for the good of society itself.

But the church's teaching must be supported by the witness of Christian families themselves, who are called to show the world that strong families are a "sign of unity for the world," he said.

"May Jesus, Mary and Joseph bless and protect all the world's families so that in them will reign the serenity and joy, the justice and peace that Christ brought as a gift to humanity," the pope prayed.



# World Day for Consecrated Life

## “Be Seekers of the Lord” [Zeph. 2:3]

By Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI

The annual World Day for Consecrated Life will be celebrated in the United States the weekend of February 2-3, 2002. The theme of the event is “Be Seekers of the Lord” [Zeph.2:3].

Pope John Paul II called for this day of recognition with the goal of holding up for all to see the Consecrated Life in its many forms. It is my hope that parishes in our Diocese might use the occasion both to honor those who have embraced the consecrated life and to heighten their visibility in the Church community. This is also a day to express our gratitude to our dedicated religious who have consecrated their lives to serving God and the Church. Over the years, many of these consecrated people have served the communities of our Diocese, and we need to be very grateful to them.

Consecrated life is a vocation, a call from God, to conform one’s life to Jesus Christ through living as He did in poverty, chastity, and obedience, dedicating oneself to God for service to the Church and for the salvation of the world.

The greatest number of religious are women, called Sisters. Among the men, there are both brothers and priests. Whether they are ordained or not, brothers and religious priests are equally religious.

On this weekend when we honor those who have chosen the consecrated life, we need to pray for them, and to pray not only for more vocations to priesthood, but also for more vocations to the consecrated life.



# Jornada Mundial del la Vida Consagrada

## «Busquen Al Señor» (Sof. 2:31)

Por Obispo Miguel D. Pfeifer, OMI

La celebración anual de la Jornada Mundial de la Vida Consagrada se llevará a cabo este año el fin de semana de Febrero 2-3, 2002. El tema del evento de este año es “Busquen Al Señor” (Sof. 2:31).

El Papa Juan Pablo II estableció este día de reconocimiento con la meta de dar importancia a la vida consagrada en sus muchas manifestaciones. Espero que las comunidades de nuestra diócesis usen esta ocasión para agradecer a los que se han dedicado a la vida consagrada, y para reconocer el don que ellos han ofrecido a la iglesia.

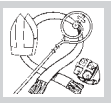
Estoy muy agradecido a todas las personas que se han ofrecido a la vida consagrada para servir a Cristo y a su iglesia en nuestra diócesis. Es un día para reconocerlos, para agradecerlos, y para pedir por ellos.

La vida consagrada es una vocación, un llamado de Dios para que una persona conforme su vida a la de Jesucristo, viviendo igual que él en pobreza, castidad y obediencia, dedicado a Dios para servir la iglesia y para la salvación del mundo.

Las mujeres constituyen el mayor número de personas religiosas y se les llama hermana, madre o sor. Entre los hombres, hay sacerdotes y hermanos. Ya sean ordenados o no, los hermanos o sacerdotes religiosos son todos religiosos.

Este día del la jornada mundial de la vida consagrada, es la ocasión para agradecerles a las personas que se han consagrado a este tipo de vida en la iglesia. También es el momento para pedir a nuestro Señor que nos conceda más vocaciones, no solamente al sacerdocio, pero también a la vida consagrada.

### The Bishop's Schedule



#### January 2002

- January 1: San Angelo, Cathedral Church of the Sacred Heart - Mass at 9:00 a.m.
- January 3-4: Rest and Prayer
- January 6: Bronte, Coke Co. Juvenile Detention Center - Prayer at 3:00 p.m. St. James Church - Mass at 5:00 p.m.
- January 7-9: San Juan, Meeting of Texas Border Bishops with Bishops of Mexico
- January 10: San Angelo, Mass for Staff of Diocesan Pastoral Center at 8:30 a.m. Staff meeting at 11:30 a.m.
- January 11-13: San Angelo, Concho Pavilion at San Angelo Fairgrounds - Youth 2000

- January 13: San Angelo, Fairgrounds - Mass for Youth 2000 at 10:45 a.m.
- January 15: San Angelo, St. Joseph Church - Farewell Mass and Dinner for Bishop-Elect Joe Vasquez
- January 16-18: Colorado Springs, Southwest Liturgical Conference
- January 20: Coahoma, St. Joseph - Mass at 9:15 a.m.
- January 21: San Angelo, Cathedral Church of the Sacred Heart - Prayer Service for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at 12:00 noon
- January 22: San Angelo, Cathedral Church of the Sacred Heart - Pro Life Mass at 12:00 noon
- January 23: Houston, Ordination of Bishop-Elect Joe Vasquez
- January 26: Brownwood, Attend

- Knights of Columbus Bi-District Banquet. Mass at 4:00 p.m.
- January 27: Coleman, Sacred Heart - Mass at 10:30 a.m.
- January 28-31: Honduras, Diocese of San Pedro Sula
- February 2002**
- February 1: San Angelo, Convention Center - NACCP Banquet at 7:00 p.m.
- February 2: Midland, St. Ann - Catholic Schools Commission Meeting
- February 3-7: Fort Worth - Retreat for Bishops of Region X
- February 9: Midland, First Presbyterian Church - Presentation at the Faces of Children Conference at 4:00 p.m.
- February 10: Odessa, St. Anthony - Mass at 10:00 a.m.

- February 12: San Angelo, Diocesan Pastoral Center - Personnel Board Meeting at 11:00 a.m. Cathedral Church of the Sacred Heart - Endowment Board Meeting at 7:00 p.m.
- February 13: San Angelo, Cathedral Church of the Sacred Heart - Ash Wednesday Mass at noon
- February 14-15: Rest and Prayer
- February 16: San Angelo, Cathedral Church of the Sacred Heart - Annual Scouts Mass at 5:00 p.m.
- February 17: San Angelo, Cathedral Church of the Sacred Heart - Rite of Election at 1:30 p.m. and 4:00 p.m.
- February 18-19: Houston, Texas, Conference of Churches - Board Meeting and General Assembly
- February 20: San Angelo, Dioc-

- esan Pastoral Center - Meeting of Diocesan Legal Team from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Wall, St. Ambrose - Presentation to the RCIA at 7:00 p.m.
- February 21: San Angelo - Dinner to Honor Mary Sue Brewer on her 40th Anniversary of Service to the Diocese
- February 23: San Angelo - Diocesan Conference Day Mass at 2:45 p.m.
- February 24: Millersview, Our Lady of Guadalupe - Mass at 9:30 a.m.
- February 27: San Angelo, Newman Center - Mass at noon
- February 28: San Diego - Dialogue of Border Bishops



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# Thank You From the Vatican

by the Vatican Secretary of State

Dear Bishop Pfeifer,

I am writing to inform you that the Apostolic Nunciature has transmitted to the Holy See the sum of \$23,584.58 which you forwarded as the 2001 Peter’s Pence offering of your Diocese.

The Holy Father has asked me to thank you for this latest gift. He appreciates the effort which individual donations required and he is aware of the faith and love which they reflect. He is grateful for the devoted sentiments which prompted your people to contribute to the works of his ministry.

Assuring you of his prayers, His Holiness cordially imparts his Apostolic Blessing to you and to the priests, religious and lay faithful of San Angelo.

# Vocation Circle

by Michael Matthiesen

Greetings! My name is Michael Matthiesen. I am a seminarian for the Diocese of San Angelo. I was born to the proud parents of Billie Jean and Norbert Matthiesen on December 19, 1971. I was raised in the small farming and ranching community of Doole, Texas about sixty miles east of San Angelo with my five sisters and one brother. We all worked hard on the family cotton farm taking care of and watching out for one another.

After graduating from Brady High School in 1990, I attended TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY and majored in Entomology (the study of insects) and eventually graduated with a BS degree in 1994. WHOOP!! I was planning on returning to an agricultural area to invest my time in crop protection. However, my first employment landed me in a research laboratory in Sugar Land, Texas (a suburb of Houston). Can you imagine a small town country boy in the big city? Lord have mercy! I did not know what to do, but I quickly became acculturated to the beautiful city of Houston. I worked there for almost two years before returning home to help out on the family farm. After almost a year on the farm, I decided to move to the panhandle of

Texas to a town named Farwell. In Farwell, I worked for a fertilizer, seed, and chemical company as a crop consultant for corn and cotton farmers. It's so flat out there I could almost see the holy lands of College Station! However, I would not trade the sparkling night sky of the Panhandle for anything in the world. But, I did. I worked a deal with the seed company in Farwell that allowed me to go to Australia and work with a friend of mine as a cotton crop consultant and then return to Farwell after the growing season in Australia. In August of 1997, I left for Australia to live and work in the Down Under for seven and a half months.

I actually only worked for six months. Then, for the other month and a half, I traveled around the eastern half of the country. What a beautiful and untamed land. I returned to the States in May of 1998, resigned from my position at the seed company in Farwell, and applied to be a seminarian for the Diocese of San Angelo. I walked into the doors of Holy Trinity Seminary in Irving, Texas in August 1998.



Michael Matthiesen, seminarian of the Diocese of San Angelo.

How in the heck did this happen? I went from living la vida loca to a situation that fostered the development of the human person and building a relationship with God and others. I had never as a young child or young adult considered being a priest. I remember my parents asking me as a child what I thought about being a priest, but I was going to be a professional basketball player. How was I going to be able to play basketball and be a priest too?

I think I first felt the call to the priesthood when I was 26 and had returned to work on the family farm in 1997. You know, driving tractors gives you a lot of time to think (maybe more people in this world need to drive tractors). I believe God spoke to me one day, not in words, but in grace. Warm feelings of peace and love can break down barriers of pride and self-centeredness. So quietly, I began considering the priesthood. It was not until I was in Australia that I seriously considered the priesthood. God bless Fr. P.J. O'Neil in Walgett, New South Wales, Australia. Through prayer and visiting with Fr. P.J., I decided to enter the seminary when I returned to the States.

My seminary experience has been incredible. My first two years were spent in Holy Trinity Seminary in Irving Texas. Because I already had a college degree (did I mention from TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY!), I entered as a pre-theologian focused on studying philosophy in order to meet the thirty-six hours requirement to enter a theology seminary. I met many wonderful people from all over the world at

see "VOCATION," page ten



## Msgr. Halfmann Retires

by Colette Solpietro

Monsignor Curtis T. Halfmann, a long-time member of St. Boniface Roman Catholic Church in Olfen, Texas, will retire from pastoral ministry on January 31, 2002, after 40 years of service in the Texas Panhandle Region. A retirement reception will be held in Lubbock.

The reception is on Sunday, Jan. 20 from 2:00 to 4:30 p.m. in the Saint John Neumann School Gym (west of the church building) located at 5802 22nd St., Lubbock, Texas. A money tree will be available for those who wish to give a retirement gift.

Msgr. Halfmann was born in Olfen, Texas as one of eight children of Paul and Elizabeth Fuchs Halfmann. He was ordained to the Roman Catholic priesthood in 1959 at St. Boniface, where he also received the sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation.

Monsignor Halfmann studied at Assumption Seminary in San Antonio, and later earned a Master's Degree in Social Work from Our Lady of the Lake College in San Antonio. Monsignor Halfmann has served in pastoral ministry for 40 years in churches in Borger, LaMesa, O'Donnell and Tahoka, Morton, Lockney and Floydada, Slaton, and Lubbock.

In addition to his pastoral duties, Monsignor Halfmann has worked as executive director for the Catholic

see "HALFMANN" page ten

### More Vocation Articles on Page 10!

Bishop Pfeifer, Fr. Tom Barley, and the Diocesan Vocation Team had a Christmas dinner with seven of the seminarians at the Western Sky restaurant on Saturday, 29 December. (Photos by Pete Micale, WTA)



## Meet the Sisters

A "Meet the Sisters" weekend will be held at Incarnate Word Convent in Victoria, Texas, on January 19-20, 2002, for single Catholic women between the ages of eighteen and fifty. For information, please call (361) 575-7300 or e-mail iwbsvoc@yahoo.com.



# Will Anti-Terrorism Plan Make Life More Difficult On Mexican Border?

by Patricia Zapor  
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) – Americans understand that tightened immigration controls may be a necessary part of the war on terrorism.

But a new report by the Catholic Legal Immigration Network Inc., known as CLINIC, asks whether fighting terrorism means migrant workers from Mexico and Central America must be at greater risk of death and exploitation, abuse of human and civil rights, and division of their families.

“The migrants discussed in this report have nothing to do with international terrorism and it would be unfortunate . . . if our nation’s manifest security concerns were to delay indefinitely consideration of their plight,” said the introduction to the report from Miami Auxiliary Bishop Thomas G. Wenski, who chairs the board of directors for CLINIC, the U.S. bishops’ immigration legal aid organization.

The report has special significance as the U.S. Catholic Church observes National Migration Week Jan. 6-12 with the theme “Called to One Table.”

The U.S.-Mexico border will be where the challenge of fighting terrorism by controlling immigration while safeguarding immigrants’ rights is played out, said Bishop Wenski.

The CLINIC report used immigrants’ personal stories, an analysis of how Immigration and Naturalization Service agencies work and a discussion of U.S. economic, immigration and trade policies to detail just how complicated that challenge is.

Take what the report describes as the “chaos along the border.”

A border blockade strategy begun by the Border Patrol in the early 1990s brought thousands more agents to California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas. The agency upgraded fences and installed miles of high-powered lighting, underground sensors, portable watchtowers, and cameras at major crossing areas along the border. Agents were equipped with infrared scopes,

night-vision lenses, helicopters, air-planes, all-terrain vehicles and horses.

The result was that more would-be migrant workers began attempting to enter the United States in remote desert and mountainous areas. Hundreds of people are known to have died in desert heat and sudden winter storms, and hundreds more have been rescued, the report notes. Out of water, often abandoned by smugglers who were paid to deliver them safely, some people even turn themselves in to the Border Patrol to avoid dying in the desert.

The report tells stories like that of a 13-year-old Guatemalan girl who was helped by Father Bob Carney at St. Luke’s Catholic Church in Douglas, Ariz., after she was found in the hills, “afraid to move, stung by cactus and insects.”

It also cites a University of Houston study showing 3,676 deaths of foreign-born nonresidents in U.S. border counties from 1985 to 1998. The study only counted deaths from causes such as heat, cold, drowning, vehicle accidents and homicide.

Other problems discussed in the CLINIC report include:

- Human smuggling;
- Physical abuse of people in custody of the Border Patrol;
- Exploitation of legal and illegal immigrant workers through low wages, unsafe working conditions and threats;
- The effects of free trade laws on border communities;
- Difficulties some tribes of Native Americans face because the border bisects their tribal territory;
- The impact of a 1996 immigration law which made it more difficult and costly for families to legally bring relatives into the United States.

The report tells of U.S. bishops who visited a Honduras prison housing some of the people picked up in Operation Forerunner, a multinational effort to stop illegal immigrants in transition countries. The bishops found people who “had been detained in unsanitary conditions for weeks, had no access to legal representation and no idea when they would be returned to their home

countries,” it said. They learned that the United States provides “advisers” to the governments conducting Operation Forerunner sweeps and pays the cost of repatriating people who are caught.

“A U.S. official admitted to the delegation that it costs the United States less ‘to take care of the problem here than when they reach the United States,’” the report said.

Coming out just before Christmas, the report’s stories of people trying to keep families together, struggling to make a living and searching for a safe place to stay struck a chord with border-area church leaders. Bishops from the dioceses of Tucson, Ariz., and Hermosillo, Mexico, used parts of the report in the text of songs and prayers for “posada” processions at the border Dec. 15.

The tradition re-enacts the efforts of Mary and Joseph to search for lodgings in overcrowded Bethlehem. Participants on both sides of the Mexican border told contemporary stories of people who struggle to keep their families together, while the young “Mary” and “Joseph” went from place to place looking for a room.

“The ‘posada’ that we will walk today recounts our tradition of turning these migrants away at our border and at borders around the world,” read the leaders on both sides of the border. “Again the strangers among us are rejected, are unwelcome in the inn.”

The procession’s goal of bringing attention to border problems echoed some of the CLINIC report’s 18 policy and legal recommendations.

“Immigrant advocates tend to view the border in symbolic terms,” the report concluded. “For them, the border reflects many of the nation’s injustices and offers a window on its soul. . . . If you want to see how the United States balances its national security concerns with its historic openness to newcomers, watch what happens on the border in the upcoming months.”

# A National Day Of Penance And Prayer For Life

by Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

This past November, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops reaffirmed their previous decision to adapt the General Instruction of the Roman Missal in order that “in all dioceses of the United States of America, January 22 (or January 23, when the 22nd falls on a Sunday) shall be observed as a particular day of penance for violations to the dignity of the human person through acts of abortion, and of prayer for the full restoration of the legal guarantee of the right to life.

The Mass “For Peace and Justice” (n.21 from “Masses for Various Needs”) should be celebrated with violet vestments as an appropriate liturgical observance for this day. While this action is awaiting confirmation by the Holy See (and is not yet, therefore, particular law for the dioceses of the United States of America) January 22, 2002 may still be observed in this way at the discretion of the bishop for celebrating Mass on Tuesday, January 22.

On January 22nd, I strongly encourage all of our people to do some penance, and to offer prayers for life, especially for the unborn. Prayer is our greatest power, and more than ever we need the light, the wisdom, the courage and love of Jesus as we deal with the critical issues facing human life.

## National Catholic Youth Choir

by Michelle Plombon

The National Catholic Youth Choir is accepting applications for its second season – June 23 - July 11, 2002. This choir, directed by Dr. Axel Theimer, is open to Catholic students entering grades 10, 11, and 12 and is held on the beautiful wooded campus of St. John’s Abbey and University in central Minnesota. Students are accepted on the basis of their application and audition tape. For the entire camp there is a special price of \$450 that includes both room and board. Curriculum includes intensive daily choral rehearsal of classical literature, and daily music and religion classes. Applications are due March 15 2001. Contact for information and application materials: Michelle Plombon, St. John’s University, School of Theology, Collegeville, MN 56321. Telephone number: 320.363.2062, FAX: 320.363.2614, Email: mplombon@csbsju.edu. Website: <http://www.CatholicYouthChoir.org>

## Province of San Antonio Convention

by Martha Orem

The Diocese of Corpus Christi Ladies will be hosting the Province of San Antonio Convention in February.

Theme: *Women Spreading The Good News Through Service*

Where: Corpus Christi, Texas at the Ramada Inn Bayfront and Convention Center

When: February 22, 23, & 24, 2002

All Texas Ladies are invited. Please spread the Good News to all ladies of your Diocese. More information will follow. For information write or call Martha Orem, 1313 Washington, Alice, Texas 78332, Phone 361-664-6417.



# The Right To Life Is The Most Fundamental Of All Rights

by Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer,  
OMI

(My annual pro-life message for the Angelus recalling the tragic Roe Vs. Wade decision, comes from the homily I will give at Mass on January 22, 2002.)

Today we remember the tragic Roe Vs. Wade decision of our Supreme Court which gave the legal right to kill the unborn at any stage of pregnancy. Tragically, this decision does not recognize the unborn as being a human person. However, the Word of God on which we should base our lives and ultimately make our decisions, gives us the truth about the unborn. We hear in the Gospel from Luke (1, 39-47) about the meeting of two unborn children, one who is only a few days old in the womb of Mary. These two unborn – Jesus and John the Baptist – are referred to as persons.

Earlier in the Gospel of Luke (1, 26-38), the annunciation scene tells us of Christ's conception, and we recall that Jesus did not come into our world as a fully formed baby. Like all of us, he began as an embryo. The first coming of Jesus did not begin in a manger, but in the womb of Mary. For nine months prior to his birth, Jesus was already carrying out his father's plan of salvation. Mary being pregnant with the Son of God shows that God's love did not begin at birth, but at conception of Christ.

Jesus Christ, the very Son of God, the godman, was once an unborn child. Therefore, every unborn child is united through Christ with God. In the words of Second Vatican Council: "By his incarnation – that of Jesus – the Son of God has united himself in some fashion with every human being." Does not this divinely created and redeemed small person – Jesus Christ – deserve our love and protection? Does not every unborn child like Christ deserve our love and protection? Centuries before the coming of Christ, God through the great prophet, Isaiah, (Is 49, 1-6) teaches us that the unborn is someone precious to God, that the unborn is a person. The unborn is not a glob of flesh. As our beautiful psalm 139 tells us: "Truly you have formed my

inmost being; you knit me in my mother's womb. I give you thanks for I am fearfully, wonderfully made." As we hear these proofs from sacred scripture about the sacredness and dignity of the unborn, we ask ourselves how could a human court deny the personhood of the unborn, and give the right to kill these little ones at any stage of a pregnancy?

Human life is our first gift from God the Father, and the condition for all other earthly goods. We know that no human government or court can legitimately deny the right to life or restrict it to certain classes of human beings. Therefore, the court's abortion decision deserves only to be condemned, reputed and ultimately reversed.

The right to life is the most fundamental of all rights. Any candidate for political office, or any public policy, is to be evaluated above all on how that candidate or policy impact human life and the dignity of the human person from conception until natural death as determined by God. Abortion, though not the only issue, is the pre-eminent human rights issue. Abortion is an act of violence claiming some 4,000 lives every day, and cannot be tolerated by a civilized society. The teaching of the Church down through the ages is that it is morally wrong to cooperate in an abortion in any way. This cooperation can include speaking out in favor of abortion, or in participating in efforts to protect or advance the practice of abortion, which obviously includes the choices made in the voting booth.

No public official or any party or religion can responsibly take a "pro-

choice" position on abortion. Although pro-choice people don't want to admit it, in the final analysis, the choice they promote is the killing of the unborn. Anyone who identifies himself or herself as "pro-choice" on abortion contradicts the teaching of the Catholic Church. There is not



more than one Catholic teaching on abortion. Furthermore, this is not only a Catholic issue, but one of fundamental human rights. Catholic teaching holds that stealing is wrong. That doesn't mean that non-catholics can steal. Nor does it mean that the laws against stealing are an imposition on one group's religious belief or the nation.

Abortion not only contradicts the teaching of the Catholic Church, but as pointed out, it contradicts the Gospel, as well as the principles of the Declaration of Independence.

Abortion not only takes a life; it

makes a statement about life, not only about the life it takes, but about the lives of all of us. Abortion says we are disposable. Abortion says our value is determined by others. Abortion says there is not intrinsic dignity in human life that requires its absolute protection, and no destiny that reaches beyond this world.

The first right given to us as Americans by the Declaration of Independence is the right to life. As United States citizens, we must deplore the fact that our nation is at risk of forgetting the promise made to generations including the unborn. In that Declaration of Independence we say that our nation will respect life as first among the inalienable rights bestowed on us by our creator. To uphold that promise, the nation's founders pledged their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor. We must do no less.

The promises of our Declaration of Independence are not just for the strong, the independent or the healthy. They are for everyone – including the unborn children. We are a society with enough compassion and wealth and love to care for both mothers and their children, to seek the promise and potential in every human life, born and unborn.

The compassion of Christ calls us as his followers to reach out to the weak and defenseless and to try to help them. When we see the hardships of many young mothers and their unborn children, with Christlike compassion we must reach out to them and care for both of them. As a church, we offer any woman who is pregnant and feels unable to maintain that pregnancy, no matter what her ethnic, social or religious background, that she can come to us, and we will see to it that she and her child receive all the help they need. And to anyone who has suffered the pain and grief that fol-

lows abortion, we declare that the doors of our church are open to them in love. We are ready to assist these women to find forgiveness, healing and peace, and to make a new beginning.

Following the compassionate call of Pope John Paul II, in his memorable statement, *The Gospel of Life*, we pledge ourselves to the great goal of working toward the day when every child is welcomed in life and protected in law. We know that this will not come easily or all at once, but the goal leads us onward to build a culture of life, affirming that every person, at every stage and season of life, is created equal in God's image. The culture of life based on hope overcomes a culture of death and a culture of despair.

So many of today's social ills are tied to an absence of hope. Some young women choose abortion because they can't trust or hope for help from family or friends. Absence of hope that others can truly love them leads people to promiscuity. The death of hope leads some, both young and old, to suicide. Hope is not the simplistic assertion that "the sun will come up tomorrow." Hope acknowledges darkness. But hope reminds us that darkness is not the end of the story. Hope makes sense because of the light that darkness can never overcome.

The traditional, humane pro-life ethic sees every human life as valuable in itself. It offers loving acceptance and care to every human being without distinction of size, shape, skin color, or self-sufficiently. It assumes that every life is worth living – the handicapped and the aged are here as much for us, perhaps as for themselves.

In the beautiful gospel scene of Mary's visitation to her cousin, Elizabeth, we not only hear about the joy and faith of these two great women, but we hear about the reaction of the two unborn in their mothers' wombs – "the moment your greeting sounded in my ears, the baby stirred in my womb for joy." Elizabeth proclaimed blessed the fruit of Mary's womb. As all human life comes from God, we proclaim with Elizabeth that the fruit of every woman's womb – a human person – is blessed and precious because that unborn life is made in the true image and likeness of God.



# Pope Urges Believers To Work For Peace, Promote Forgiveness

By *Cindy Wooden*  
*Catholic News Service*

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – While world events make it difficult to look toward the future with hope, those who believe in God must use every opportunity to promote peace in the certainty that evil will not prevail, Pope John Paul II said.

At his Jan. 1 Mass marking the feast of Mary, Mother of God, and World Peace Day, the pope made a special appeal for an end to hostilities between Israelis and Palestinians.

“The voice of blood’ cries to God from that land; the blood of brothers spilled by brothers who recognize the patriarch Abraham; sons, like every man, of the same heavenly Father,” he said.

Pope John Paul said that, believing in the same God, Christians, Jews and Muslims are called by God to renounce violence always.

“No one, for any reason, can kill in the name of God, who is one and merciful,” he said.

“God is life and the source of life,” the pope said. “To believe in him means witnessing to him with mercy and forgiveness, refusing to exploit his holy name.”

Pope John Paul told the congregation in St. Peter’s Basilica that he realized it was difficult to reflect on peace “in a climate of widespread worry because of the recent dramatic events which have shaken the world.”

“But no matter how humanly difficult it may seem to look toward the future with optimism, we must not give in to the temptation of discouragement,” he said.

“On the contrary, we must work for peace with courage, certain that evil will not prevail,” the pope said.

“Justice and forgiveness, these are the two pillars of peace,” he said, referring to the theme of the World Peace Day message that was sent to heads of state around the world and published in early December.

Justice and forgiveness are not contradictory, but complementary, and are essential for creating lasting peace, the pope said.

To turn a cessation of hostilities into peace, right relationships must be restored with justice, he said. And “only forgiveness can quench the thirst for vengeance and open the heart to an authentic and lasting reconciliation between peoples.”

“In the name of God, I renew my

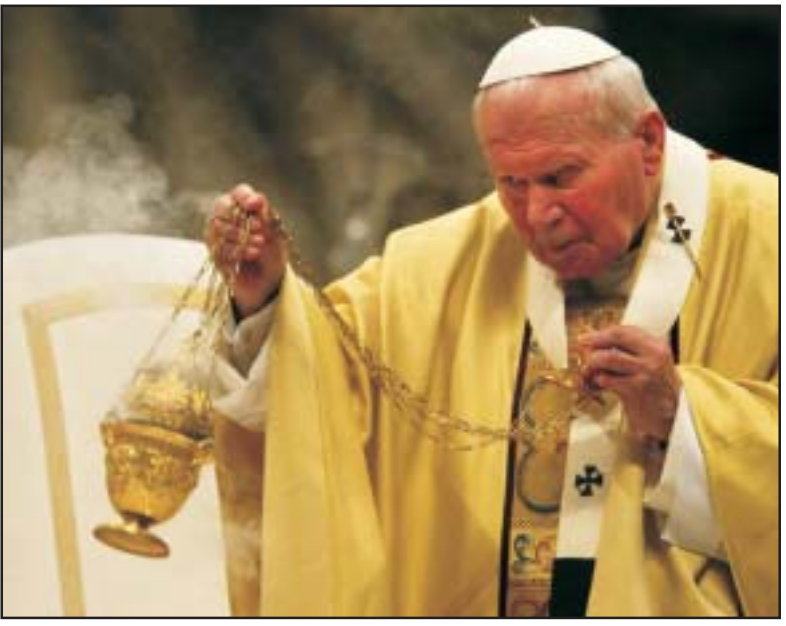
heartfelt appeal to all, believers and nonbelievers, so that the twin terms ‘justice and forgiveness’ always mark relationships between individuals, among social groups and between peoples,” the pope said.

A prayer that leaders of nations and international organizations would promote justice and forgiveness “in the face of the serious problems which afflict our times” was read in Arabic.

A prayer in Hebrew asked that families and nations, “although tried by useless carnage and outraged by serious violence, would be helped to understand that the capacity to forgive is at the basis of every project for a fraternal society which is more just and marked by solidarity.”

Another prayer, in Portuguese, was offered that terrorists would be freed “from the spirit of vengeance for injustices they may have suffered and from every form of fundamentalism.”

Speaking in Chinese, another reader prayed for religious leaders throughout the world that they would never show tolerance for any form of terrorism, “convinced that terrorist violence is contrary to faith in God the creator and contrary to hu-



Pope John Paul II blesses the altar during the New Year’s Day Mass at St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican Jan. 1. The pope made a heartfelt appeal for an end to hostilities between Israelis and Palestinians. (CNS photo from Reuters)

man dignity.”

Reciting the Angelus after the Mass, Pope John Paul again pleaded with people of good will to stand up with courage, justice and love to those, “guided by perverse interests, who aim to make the world a theater of war.”

“Together we must firmly oppose the temptations of hatred and violence which give only the illusion of resolving conflicts, but in fact bring real and permanent losses,” he said.

“Forgiveness, as opposed to the

instinct of responding to evil with evil, is an attitude which, especially for Christians, has deep religious motives, but it also has a rational basis,” the pope said.

“The rule of doing unto others as we would have them do unto us is valid for all, believers and nonbelievers,” he said. “This ethical principle, applied on a social and international level, is the way to build a more just world.”



Pope John Paul II appears stronger and clearer at the Vatican’s New Year’s Day Mass Jan. 1. The pontiff, who struggled through his “urbi et orbi” speech at Christmas, prayed for the strength to continue his ministry to the church of Rome and to the world. (CNS photo from Reuters)

## Amid New Rumors Of Papal Health, Pope Prays For His Own Strength

By *Cindy Wooden*  
*Catholic News Service*

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Amid continuing questions about Pope John Paul II’s health, the 81-year-old pontiff publicly prayed for the strength to continue his busy ministry.

The pope obviously struggled through his long speech Christmas Day, but moved with greater ease and

spoke more clearly on New Year’s Eve and New Year’s Day.

A small Italian newspaper’s Dec. 30 report of the pope’s allegedly failing health was ignored by most media until the pope himself spoke Dec. 31.

“I ask God for the strength to continue for as long as he wants in faithful service to the church of Rome and the whole world,” he prayed at a thanksgiving service marking the end of 2001.

The papal prayer came immediately after he had told the congregation that 2001 had brought the number of Rome parish visits he had made up to 300. There are 34 parishes in the diocese still to go.

But, while mentioning the parish

visits and planned 2002 trips to Bulgaria and Toronto, many media also referred to the Dec. 30 Libero newspaper report that Pope John Paul would preside over the canonization of Blessed Padre Pio, the Italian Capuchin, before the end of February because he was not sure how much longer he would live.

Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls assured journalists that “the pope’s health condition is stable.”

Navarro-Valls also said the canonization of Padre Pio before spring is out of the question. Before a date is set, the pope must convoke a meeting of cardinals in Rome. The date for that meeting had not been chosen as 2001 ended.

## Parish Assignments

Rev. Quirino Cornejo will become the pastor of St. Joseph and St. Margaret in San Angelo, January 16, 2002.

Rev. Floro Hinacay will become the pastor of Sacred Heart in Menard and St. Theresa in Junction, January 16, 2002.

Rev. Colm Mulligan, MSC, will become the pastor of St. Patrick in Brady, January 16, 2002.



# Youth Participate In The 2001 National Catholic Youth Conference



by Sister Hilda Marotta

Eighty-three youth and their adult chaperones from the Diocese of San Angelo participated in the National Catholic Youth Conference. They were among the over 24,000 youth and their adult chaperones who gathered for the 26th Biennial National Catholic Youth Conference at the RCA Dome and Convention Center December 6-9, 2001 in Indianapolis, Indiana. Participating parishes included: St. Stephen's-Midland; Holy Angels, Sacred Heart, St. Joseph - San Angelo; St. Ambrose-Wall. Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI, S. Hilda Marotta, OSF and S. Carol Markus, SSND also participated.

A special track at the NCYC is the Youth Congress which this year focused on vocations. It provided an opportunity for youth representatives from each diocese to dialogue with bishops about vocations and how God calls each one of us to live a life of holiness. Representing the Diocese of San Angelo were Eliza Alvarado-St. Joseph, San Angelo and Dan Cervantes - St. Stephen, Midland.

The NCYC was a wonderful opportunity for high school youth to celebrate their Catholic faith. Their energy, giftedness, enthusiasm and faith were clearly evident throughout the four day NCYC experience.

(Photos by Sr. Hilda Marotta.)



(Photos by Daniel and Sandy Seidel.)

## Charismatic Day Of Renewal

by Sandy Seidel

ABILENE – “Harvest Time” was the theme for the Charismatic Day of Renewal held at Sacred Heart November 10th. It was organized by the “Hearts In One Accord” Abilene city-wide prayer group. Participants came from San Angelo, Ballinger, Santa Anna and Abilene for a day of inspirational talks and to sing, praise, and worship the Lord in the Holy Spirit. Focus was centered on the scriptures the Lord gave for the day “I tell you, lookup and see the fields ripe for the harvest” Jn. 4:35 and “The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few.” Matt: 9:27.

The morning talks laid the foundation for a “how to” evangelization talk and workshop given by Father Bob Bush, Pastor at Sacred Heart. Father Bush’s talk on “The Great Commission” motivated participants

to be more docile to the Holy Spirit’s lead in evangelizing. He also gave helpful advice on how to “individualize” one’s personal testimony when witnessing.

Other guest speakers were Daniel and Sandy Seidel from Holy Angels, San Angelo. Their talks were how

to “Prepare for the Harvest” and “The Power of Prayer”. Dee Halbert from Holy Family, Abilene, opened with her talk “Trust in the Lord of the Harvest.” Music was provided by Gail and Mike Waldmann and Daniel Seidel.

## Cursillos During 2002

The dates for the upcoming English speaking Catholic Cursillos to be held at Christ the King Retreat Center in 2002:

- Women’s August 22 – 25, 2002
- Men’s October 24 – 27, 2002

There will also be a men’s Spanish Cursillo at St. Francis parish in Abilene on March 14 – 17, 2002.

Applications may be obtained from Max Parker at his office: 314 W. Harris; San Angelo, TX; 1-800-727-4529.



# Time On Your Hands

by Msgr. Jim Lisante  
Director, The Christophers

So, how are you spending all that leisure time you've got on your hands?

If your mouth just fell open or if the thought flitted through your head that this column must be meant for somebody else, give me a minute. I know that you're busy. You have your job - you know, the one that lets you afford a place to live, put food on the table, and all the rest - work around the house, shopping and other errands. Don't forget getting the children to school and, of course, their other activities, your obliga-

tions to parents, church, and the additional commitments you've taken on. Add in efforts at "quality time" with family and friends. And who would begrudge you an occasional night on the town - or on your couch? No doubt, you can come up with an even longer list of things you have to do.

No argument from me that you are busy. But I would like to point out that the English word leisure comes from the Latin for "to be permitted." I want to encourage you to give yourself permission to spend your time as carefully - yet generously - as you do your money.

OK, I'm making some assumptions here. But most people are very concerned, if not actually worried, about finances these days. Layoffs, cutbacks, recession are some of the troubling factors on everybody's minds as they stretch dollars and budgets. The amazing thing is that there has never been a time when people have been as determined to help others in need. And folks are in need. Every town and every country has men, women and children lacking the most basic necessities. And, at the same time, every neighborhood still tries to meet social, educational and cultural demands that make life a little more human, a little more meaningful. Here are a couple of people who have decided to take

time to do good:

- Jean Zecha has grandchildren to care for, but makes time to volunteer at a soup kitchen once a month. She says, "I don't feel that I'm especially talented or outgoing, but I can give of myself - and that is what faith is all about, sharing of one's time and self."

- James O'Neill attends town meetings, writes letters and makes phone calls to let politicians know his views. "Why?" he asks. "I believe it is a part of living out my faith and showing concern for the poor and voiceless."

"I want to do something" has become a common expression of the desire to reach out to others, to give of one's self. I won't pretend that

carving time out of your schedule for what is, essentially, service to others will be easy, but I guarantee it will be worth it. Listen to the words of two people who are celebrated for their service to humanity:

The only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve.

– Albert Schweitzer

Not everybody could be famous but everybody can be great because greatness is determined by service.

– Martin Luther King, Jr.

Both happy and great – what more could anyone ask? Offer yourself, your compassion, your time and you will gain as immeasurably as you give.

# The Anger of Survival

by Terry Loncaric

We are always being told that anger is destructive, but if it is channeled in the right direction, anger can be a righteous and beautiful thing. Anger is justice. Anger is making things right. Anger is overcoming adversity.

Just look at the way anger has affected the course of history. If blacks didn't get angry, they might be still sitting at the back of the bus.

If women didn't get angry, they might never have earned the right to vote or left the home to assume their rightful place in society.

If Americans didn't get angry at Hitler, the dictator might have wiped out the Jewish population and then steamrolled the world.

I know the New Age perspective is to achieve inner peace and remain perfectly calm. Though I have tremendous respect for the Dalai Lama's peaceful ways, I think anger can be the most appropriate response to horrible situations.

Anger can shake up the universe and precipitate necessary change. The justification for life-changing anger could not have been clearer than when Osama's henchmen brazenly bombed the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center Sept. 11 and killed thousands of innocent people just beginning their work day.

If the President had ignored the aggressive acts of terrorism that led to these tragic deaths, then another

Hitler, Osama bin Laden, might have taken down more people and gone on an even more destructive rampage that involved the world.

Often the calm is the sweetest when it follows the storm. Osama bin Laden is a coward. He hides in caves. He vents his anger through his sorry henchmen. But the anger that makes us want to stop Osama is the same rage that drove our forefathers to protect the rights of other humans from being trampled by despots.

Sometimes an absence of anger over morally reprehensible acts means an abrogation of responsibility to do the right thing – to make the world a more sane and calm place.

Jesus expressed anger at the men who mocked and even tried to stone Mary Magdalene to death. He saw right through the hypocrisy of Mary Magdalene's accusers and made them feel discomfort when he asked them to examine their own flawed souls. His anger saved one woman's life.

Many explosive moments have made the world a more peaceful place. Moses became enraged at the Egyptians who enslaved his people. When he screamed out, "Let my people go," he didn't add, "but if you don't, I won't really be upset."

There are many angry passages in the Bible. But the anger was always justified. God did not hesitate to express his displeasure when he

knew his children were heading down a shaky, uncertain path. Like any good father, he wanted to spare his children the pain that would surely result from making hasty, unwise decisions.

There is anger that is wrathful, misdirected and driven by ego and power. That kind of anger is never good. It leads to destruction.

But the anger that makes citizens fight for equality, respect and dignity is a good kind of anger. It is the anger that puts tyrants in their place. History has taught us that ignoring tyranny has never made it go away. We certainly learned that in the American Revolution. If freedom-loving revolutionaries hadn't made a little noise, life as we know it, might not exist. Sometimes things have to get a little messy before they truly get better.

There are moments when anger is a thundering wake-up call – a reminder that the world has lost its moral axis.

Without anger, there would not be a Constitution, slaves would still exist, women would be the property of their fathers and husbands, and terrorists would have carte blanche to roam the globe and bring down civilization.

Peace has its place. But so does anger. Without it, we would languish in a sea of social injustice. Anger is raw and powerful and sometimes our greatest tool of survival. Now doesn't that make you feel good about being angry?

# I Wish You Enough

by Bob Perks

(Note from the Editor: too many stories/articles/papers/magazines come across my desk/computer and I resist passing them on to you; however, sometimes a "pearl" – in my estimation – is received that I feel compelled to pass on. This is one of them. Pete Micale, WTA)

Recently I overheard a father and daughter in their last moments together at the airport. The airline had announced her departure and standing near the security gate, they hugged and he said, "I love you. I wish you enough."

She in turn said, "Dad, our life together has been more than enough. Your love is all I ever needed. I wish you enough, too, Dad." They kissed and she left. He walked over toward the window where I was seated. Standing there, I could see he wanted and needed to cry.

I tried not to intrude on his privacy, but he welcomed me in by asking, "Did you ever say good-bye to someone knowing it would be forever?" "Yes, I have," I replied. "Forgive me for asking, but why is this a forever good-bye?"

"I am old and she lives much too far away. I have challenges ahead, and the reality is, the next trip back will be for my funeral," he said.

"When you were saying good-bye I heard you say, 'I wish you enough.' May I ask what that means?"

He began to smile. "That's a wish that has been handed down for many generations within my family. My parents used to say it to everyone." He paused for a moment, looking up as if trying to remember it in detail, he smiled even more. "When we said 'I wish you enough,' we were wanting the other person to have a life filled with just enough good things to sustain them," he continued and then turning toward me, he shared the following:

- I wish you enough sun to keep your attitude bright.
- I wish you enough rain to appreciate the sun more.
- I wish you enough happiness to keep your spirit alive.
- I wish you enough pain so that the smallest joys in life appear much bigger.

- I wish you enough gain to satisfy your wanting.
  - I wish you enough loss to appreciate all that you possess.
  - I wish you enough 'Hellos' to get you through the final 'Good-byes'.
- Then he walked away.

I think too often we expect our lives to be perfect, taking for granted all of the "inconveniences" that come our way. We all need to remember the bad things are as important as the blessings in life because they help to develop character. How would we appreciate joys in life without sorrow?

My friends, I wish you enough.

Written by Bob Perks whose website is [www.iwishyouenough.com](http://www.iwishyouenough.com)

*Pray for Peace*





# The Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist

by Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

In this edition of the Angelus, I feature for your reflection Question 4 and 5 of the U.S. Catholic Bishops' document: *The Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist*. I encourage all, especially parents and their children, to reflect on these questions and answers together.

4. *Does the Bread Cease to be Bread and the Wine Cease to be Wine?* Yes. In order for the whole Christ to be present-body, blood, soul, and divinity – the bread and wine cannot remain, but must give way so that his glorified Body and Blood may be present. Thus in the Eucharist the bread ceases to be bread in substance, and becomes the

Body of Christ, while the wine ceases to be wine in substance, and becomes the Blood of Christ. As St. Thomas Aquinas observed, Christ is not quoted as saying, "This bread is my body," but "This is my body" (Summa Theologiae, III q.78, a.5).

5. *Is it fitting that Christ's body and blood become present in the Eucharist under the appearance of bread and wine?* Yes, for this way of being present corresponds perfectly to the sacramental celebration of the Eucharist. Jesus Christ gives himself to us in a form that employs the symbolism inherent in eating bread and drinking wine. Furthermore, being present under the appearances of bread and wine, Christ gives himself to us in a form that is

appropriate for human eating and drinking. Also, this kind of presence corresponds to the virtue of faith, for the presence of the Body and Blood of Christ cannot be detected or discerned by any way other than faith. That is why St. Bonaventure affirmed: "There is no difficulty over Christ's being present in the sacrament as in a sign; the great difficulty is in the fact that He is really in the sacrament, as He is in heaven. And so believing this is especially meritorious" (In IV Sent., dist.X,P.I,art.un.,qu.1). On the authority of God who reveals himself to us, by faith we believe that which cannot be grasped by our human faculties (cf. Catechism, no. 1381).



Bishop-elect Joe Vasquez is presented with a congratulatory gift from Catholic Life Insurance by Msgr. Larry Droll, spiritual advisor of the fraternal organization.

## Communicants In Texas Run Little Risk Of Exposure To Meningitis

by Catholic News Service

FORT WORTH, Texas (CNS) – Health officials said parishioners who drank wine from the chalice during a Dec. 30 morning Mass at St. Vincent de Paul Church in Arlington are considered to be at an "extremely remote risk of contracting bacterial meningitis," even though a woman who drank from the chalice died two days later of one form of the disease.

Linda Pflieger, a 49-year-old elementary school teacher from Arlington who developed meningococ-

emia during the weekend of Dec. 29, died 12 hours after being brought to the hospital of multiple complications and infections from the disease. Her memorial service took place Jan. 3 at St. Vincent de Paul.

Tarrant County Public Health Department officials released a statement Jan. 2 saying that anyone who drank from the chalice during the 9:15 a.m. Mass Dec. 30 and had symptoms of low-grade fever, headache and stiff neck within the week should consult their physician to possibly obtain a two-day series of

antibiotics that can reduce the risk of infection.

Meningococemia is caused by a bacteria that infects the bloodstream and can cause a form of meningitis when the bacteria attacks the spine.

The disease is commonly spread by coughing, sneezing, kissing and immediate sharing of unwashed eating utensils. Riding in a car, attending public gatherings and casual contact do not provide sufficient exposure for the illness to spread. The incubation period – the time from exposure to the germs and the

onset of symptoms – is two to 10 days, with an average of three to four days.

Father Tom Craig, pastor of St. Vincent de Paul, said in a statement issued by the Diocese of Fort Worth that the standard procedure for cleaning the Communion cups between Masses included washing them with soap and water.

County health officials said churches did not need to stop using a shared Communion cup because the risk of contagion was so "very, very remote."

But one nearby Catholic church, St. Maria Goretti in Arlington, announced it would temporarily suspend offering wine in the Communion cup simply to ease parishioners' concerns. Last year eight parishes in the Diocese of Youngstown, Ohio,

temporarily withheld the Communion cup because of an outbreak of meningococemia that killed two teen-agers.

In 1985, the U.S. bishops' Committee on Liturgy released a statement advising parishes in the United States not to stop making the common Communion cup available because of concerns about AIDS or other communicable diseases.

The statement said "pastors should advise those who are fearful" about sharing the common cup that they have the option of intinction – dipping the consecrated bread in the wine – or receiving the consecrated bread only. It said pastors also should "advise communicants who have communicable illnesses to refrain from drinking from the chalice."

## Catholic Conference Director Critical Of Decision To Seek Death Penalty In Yates Case

by Br. Richard Daly

The Executive Director of the Texas Catholic Conference, the public policy arm of the Catholic Bishops of Texas, has issued a statement critical of the decision by Harris County District Attorney Chuck Rosenthal's to seek the death pen-

alty for Andrea Pia Yates. Mrs. Yates has been charged with capital murder for drowning her five children last year.

Noting that the Catholic Bishops of Texas are opposed to the death penalty in all cases, Holy Cross Brother Richard Daly, Executive

Director of the TCC, noted that this case requires special scrutiny. He noted that Mrs. Yates was diagnosed with postpartum depression after the birth of her fourth child, and that she has been hospitalized four times and each time released and has attempted suicide at least twice.

Brother Daly quoted from a statement from an anti-death penalty group, Texas Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation, which noted that "usually prosecutors cite the concern for the victims' family as a rationale for seeking the death penalty. No one in the families most in-

temporarily affected by this horrible crime have sought the death penalty for Mrs. Yates." The full statement follows:

"Speaking on behalf of the Texas Catholic Conference, the public policy arm of the Catholic Bishops in the fifteen dioceses of Texas, I would like to add my voice to those who have been critical of the district attorney in Harris County for seeking the death penalty in the case of

see "CRITICAL" page eleven



# Chaplain's Message From The Other Side Of The World

by Navy Lt. Chaplain Steven Hicks

*Editor's Note: Navy Lt. Chaplain Steven Hicks, from the Diocese of San Angelo, is serving aboard the USS PELELIU sailing in the Arabian Sea near Afghanistan, recently sent the following message to Bishop Pfeifer.*

Bishop Pfeifer,

First of all, I wish to extend to you a blessed Christmas season, one that we all will probably remember for the rest of our lives, given the events of this year.

As you know, I am stationed onboard the USS PELELIU, a ship that has been in the news a lot since Sept. 11. We were the first group of amphibious assault ships in the Arabian Sea and have been heavily

tasked by the "higher ups" for the past four months. It's been tense, stressful and exhausting for everyone here. Many of our Marines have gone into harms way. In fact, just a couple of weeks ago, one Marine lost a leg when he and two others stepped on a landmine. We have received several Afghan citizens into our medical clinic for surgery who were injured by the bomb drop too near to our troops several weeks ago. One was a 16 year-old boy whose left arm was practically severed. We have been holding several Taliban detainees, along with the infamous John Walker (the U.S. citizen) in the ship's brig. Our deployment has been extended beyond the usual six-months. So, we are tired and worn out, and I have been busy!

Christmas Eve was, believe it or not, one of the most moving Masses I have experienced. We held the entire service out on the ship's flight deck in darkness under the bright stars and a very bright moon. What better environment could there be for celebrating and contemplating the "simplicity" of the Christmas event? It was emotional for everyone. With all that has happened and all that we have been through, that single night made it all worth it. I'm glad I was here for our Catholic people who are away from their families for this special time. Please give my regards to everyone back home. I expect to be there for a visit sometime in March.

God's blessings, Steve Hicks.

## NATIONAL VOCATION AWARENESS WEEK January 5-11, 2002

**The week of January 5-11 has been designated as "National Vocation Awareness Week".** During that week, ask your family to pray for vocations each day. Pray for faithfulness in strong marriages, dedicated chaste single people, our deacons and diaconate candidates, for our priests and women religious, and for the courage for some of our young adults to enter religious life and the priesthood. Pray that your own children will listen to God's call to a vocation of service in the Church and have the strength to go wherever God's invitation will take them. Jesus always gives grace to everyone who responds to His call.

## WORLD DAY FOR CONSECRATED LIFE

The weekend of February 2-3 has been designated as World Day for Consecrated Life. On that day we are to pray for religious priests (those who are not diocesan), brothers, and women religious who serve the Church with their special community charisms and ministries. The religious men

and women who have served in our Diocese have blessed us in so many ways. We should also pray for vocations to consecrated life from our own families and communities. Over the past years several of our young men and women have gone off to become members of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and the Precious Blood Fathers and several religious women's communities. Say a special pray for them.

## SEMINARIAN EDUCATION SPECIAL COLLECTION

**February 2-3, 2002**

**The Annual Diocesan Special Collection for Seminarian Education will be taken up on the weekend of February 2-3.** Special envelopes will be distributed and collected within the parish. Each year, the cost of training our eight seminarians is expensive. Last year the people of the Diocese of San Angelo contributed over \$39,000 to this end. This year our seminarians have received scholarships amounting to over \$22,000. Grants have been obtained from various sources to help with their education. We should have three new priests ordained in 1 1/2 years. Your generosity in the past and this year

helps make this possible. **Please support the education of our seminarians.** Keep them in your family's prayers each day.

## THREE COME-&-SEE EXPERIENCES IN FEBRUARY

During the last weekend of February there will be three statewide come-and-see experiences - two for men to visit a seminary and one for women to visit a convent. This is for juniors in high school or older. Each seminary or the convent sponsors its experiences.

1) *Holy Trinity College Seminary in Irving on Thursday-Sunday, February 21-24.*

2) *Assumption Seminary in San Antonio on Saturday-Sunday, February 23-24.* This will be held in conjunction with Assumption's annual Fiesta of the Arts. We currently have four seminarians at Assumption.

3) *The Sisters of Divine Providence at Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio will have "A Walk with Providence" on Saturday-Sunday, February 23-24.*

If you are interested in learning more about a vocation to the

priesthood or sisterhood and are interested in going to any of these experiences, contact Fr. Tom Barley, Director of Vocations and Seminarians at 651-7500 or write to Fr. Tom at the Diocesan Pastoral Center, P.O. Box 1829, San Angelo, Texas 76902. Fr. Tom will be at Assumption Seminary in San Antonio just prior and then during the experience there.

## VOCATION

from page three

Holy Trinity Seminary. There were guys from Mexico, Vietnam, Philippines, Venezuela, Columbia, Spain, and even Arkansas. We prayed, we studied, we worked, and we played! After completing my studies at Holy Trinity Seminary, I was accepted to study theology at St. Mary's Seminary in Houston, Texas. I am currently in my second year at St. Mary's Seminary and loving every bit of it. As I continue to look within myself, I learn more and more about who I am and what I am called to become - not a perfect human being, but an instrument to be used by God to reveal the message of love that His Son so beautifully wrote on the cross and that we so nonchalantly read, only later to forget. God willing, I will be ordained a priest of the Diocese of San Angelo in May 2005.

Am I still living la vida loca? You better believe it. I am a seminarian that prays, studies, goes to the movies, plays basketball, football, tennis, soccer, racquetball, and softball, works in soup kitchens, teaches CCE, cares for the sick in the hospital, goes on mission trips to less fortunate parts of the world, loves my family and friends, likes country, top-forty, and rock music, likes to fish, snow ski, water ski, and hike, and last but not least, serves at the altar of God.

What are you doing with your life?

## PRIEST

from page twelve

"In the church we are dealing with all the same people - community residents, victims and perpetrators," he continued. "I think that, because of my background, it is easier for me to communicate and talk with all the folks."

## HOLYLAND

from page one

said 25-year-old Eleanora Abuawad, a Greek Orthodox resident of Beit Tsahour, recalling how a boy was killed in the square two months ago.

"Inside we are very sad," she said.

The few foreigners in the crowd were members of diplomatic corps or employees of aid agencies already stationed there. Those people who traveled from outside Bethlehem had to cross through a checkpoint replete with armed soldiers, police and military vehicles.

In the stillness of the Church of the Nativity, local faithful came to light candles and pray at the site of Jesus' birth.

"We try to be happy but it is very difficult with the situation the way it is," said Hala, 34, a Catholic resident of Bethlehem who asked that her last name not be used. "We are afraid of the future and don't know what will happen."

She said she misses the most the multitude of pilgrims who usually celebrate Christmas in Bethlehem.

"We miss all the people. They really added something to Bethlehem and made it happy, because Christmas is for the whole world to celebrate, not just for us here. When we see the friends of Bethlehem we are very happy that they join us," she said.

## HALFMANN

from page three

Welfare Bureau (which later became Catholic Family Services, Inc.); as an associate director for the Cursillos movement; as diocesan vocations director; as president of the presbyteral council; as vicar general; as a member of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops committee on priestly life and ministry; and has served as administrator of the diocese (in the absence of a permanently-assigned bishop). He has been very active in the local community, establishing a Child Development Center under the Texas Migrant Program as well as conducting youth retreats and directing parish renewal.

For more information you may contact Colette Solpietro at Colette.Solpietro@ttu.edu or contact the church office at (806) 799-2649.

# Human Life Is Our First Gift From God – A Gift We Are Called To Care For And Protect.

by U. S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

*What is urgently called for is a . . . united ethical effort to activate a great campaign in support of life.*  
– Pope John Paul II, The Gospel of Life, no. 95

We see how fragile this gift of human life really is when we are confronted with acts of terrorism or war or mass starvation. We see it in the faces of hungry children, in the eyes of the man on death row, in the suffering of the very old or very sick who are alone and lonely.

We do our best to rise to the challenge, to give of ourselves in whatever way is possible. We respond as neighbors, one human being to another, with persistent advocacy and care for those whose very survival depends on us.

Human lives can be in jeopardy

for different reasons, and protecting human life and promoting human dignity are tasks with many facets.



Abortion is an ongoing and critical concern because it destroys the lives of innocent human beings. While circumstances may mitigate personal

culpability, abortion and euthanasia are always gravely wrong.

Issues involving human life are necessarily intertwined and interdependent. It is not hard to understand that when a society allows human life to be destroyed in one instance, as in abortion, it undermines respect for life in all other contexts. Similarly, where unborn human life is protected, all human life benefits, not only the unborn.

## THE FRUITS OF ROE V. WADE

Today in the United States abortion is legal throughout pregnancy. State laws may prohibit abortion only in the third trimester of pregnancy, but then only if abortion is permitted where a mother's life or health is concerned. And, according to the Supreme Court, health must include all aspects of physical, emotional, and social "well being."

# Bishop-Bashing Abounds In D.C.

by Gail Quinn

In the Nation's Capitol the Pageant of Peace surrounds the national Christmas tree. But ride the subway or stand at a bus stop and the message of peace is no more. In its place are signs accusing Catholic bishops of contributing to the deaths of millions.

Catholics for a Free Choice (CFFC) launched an ad campaign recently charging that the bishops "ban condoms" and don't care if millions die from AIDS. The statement is ludicrous on its face. In fact, it might be called Stupid Statement #1. When was the last time you saw a bishop demand the pharmacy shelves be cleared of condoms? The ads are laden with anti-Catholic bigotry. They would be laughable, as most CFFC statements are, if people too busy to be informed did not take them seriously.

CFFC is funded generously by foundations pleased to help undermine the Church's teachings here and abroad. Its president Frances

Kissling is known for her cynical statement: "I spent twenty years looking for a government that I could overthrow, without being thrown in jail. I finally found one in the Catholic Church" (Mother Jones, May/June 1991, p. 11). With overthrow of the Church as an agenda, disinformation campaigns are the norm. That's what CFFC accepts big money to do.

But to claim that the bishops don't care if millions die from AIDS is to expose one's ignorance. The Catholic Church provides over 25 percent of the care for AIDS patients worldwide. Its teaching, urging sexual abstinence before marriage and fidelity within, is the only sure way to avoid contracting the disease sexually. Condoms, on the other hand, have a 15 percent failure rate.

D.C. Metro transit officials reportedly saw the ads as simply an "opinion." Yet the system is tax supported, and many Metro riders are Catholics who were deeply offended by the ads. Would it post ads mock-

ing and misrepresenting another faith group? I can't imagine seeing Metro ads that claimed the NAACP's actions or beliefs were a cause of harm, even though someone somewhere might hold that opinion.

Maybe there's an anti-Catholic bacteria in the waters of the Potomac. In 2002 the City Council passed an ordinance to force employers with prescription drug coverage to provide employees with coverage for all contraceptives, including those that act as abortifacients. The Council refused to exempt the Church, although to comply with the law the Church would have had to violate its own beliefs.

Ridiculing Catholic bishops or the Church seems to be taken lightly in Washington, as ridicule of politically correct issues and groups is not. But selling ad space to charge that Church teaching kills and the bishops don't care is beyond the pale. It is irresponsible and an abuse of the public trust.

Gail Quinn is Executive Director of the Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, D.C.

# Mother Angelica's Condition Improving

by Scott Hults

EWTN Global Catholic Network

Irondale, AL (EWTN) – Doctors treating Mother Angelica for a stroke in a Birmingham hospital say her condition remains serious, but they hope to upgrade her status within the next 24 hours. Doctors said she is more alert now and is resting comfortably. Mother Angelica suffered her second stroke in three months on Christmas Eve, and after a two-hour operation to remove a blood clot from her brain, she remained in critical condition throughout the week. The doctors also reported that Mother's vital signs are stable but she is still in intensive care.

The Mother Vicar of Our Lady of the Angels Monastery, Sister Mary Catherine, said she is gratified that so many thousands of well wishers continue to telephone and email EWTN offering prayers for Mother's complete recovery, and that priests all around the world are offering Masses for her and that prayer groups, families and individuals are praying Rosaries for her.

"Prayers are what Mother Angelica needs now more than anything else," Sister Mary Catherine said.



## CRITICAL

from page nine

Andrea Pia Yates. While the Texas Catholic Conference opposes the death penalty in all instances, clearly this case deserves special scrutiny.

"Clearly, a very disturbed woman, Mrs. Yates was diagnosed with postpartum depression after the birth of her fourth child. She has been hospitalized four times and each time released. In addition, she has attempted suicide at least twice. She has confessed to drowning her five children.

"Mrs. Yates is being well represented by attorneys who have indicated that they will enter a plea of not guilty by reason on insanity

"On December 3, a number of petitions were denied by the trial judge including one to exclude the death penalty as appropriate punishment in this case.

"I would like to quote directly from a statement from Texas Murder Victims' Families for Reconcili-

ation, which has pointed out that normally prosecutors cite concern for the victims' family as a rationale for seeking the death penalty.

"If Harris County prosecutors really are really so concerned with families of victims, why are they so insensitive in the Andrea Yates case? . . . In this instance, the prosecutors are re-victimizing the Yates' and Kennedy families by making them

focus on saving Andrea from the death chamber rather than getting on with their healing. These two

families do not need another casket, another funeral. We are appalled that the prosecution is so bent on exacting the ultimate penalty from this entire family.'

"This tragic case has caused enough pain and suffering for all the individuals and the families affected. We do not need another victim but rather healing."

Mrs. Yates' trial is scheduled to begin on January 7.

Abolition of the death penalty, laudable though it is, is only one step towards creating a deeper respect for human life. If millions of budding lives are eliminated at their very roots, and if the family of nations can take for granted such crimes without a disturbed conscience, the argument for the abolition of capital punishment will become less credible.

ARCHBISHOP RENATO MARTINO



# Skills From Law Enforcement Hold Michigan Priest In Good Stead

By Brett McLaughlin  
Catholic News Service

CHEBOYGAN, Mich. (CNS) – To the occasional irritation of his fellow officers, Deputy Paul Megge was always trying to save the poor souls in the cellblock.

Today, saving souls, in and out of jail, is Father Paul Megge's job. "I feel like I've been a priest all my life," said the pastor of St. Mary-St. Charles Church in Cheboygan.

Father Megge's law enforcement career saw him become second in command in two different county departments. But "only being able to deal with peoples' legal problems was frustrating," he said. "I couldn't get into why men were being abusive to their wives, or parents were neglecting their children or juveniles were involved in crime.

"Every time I would try to do that, someone would tell me, 'That's not your job. Turn that over to someone else,'" he said. "I tried to talk with parents of kids who got in trouble, but the job just didn't allow it."

Father Megge's road to a job that not only allows that kind of personal involvement, but also frequently requires it, is filled with unusual twists and turns.

In December 1965, at the urging of a fellow auto production-line worker in Pontiac, Father Megge moved with his wife and the first of their four sons to rural Tuscola County. He continued to drive to Pontiac for three years before he successfully applied for a job as a Tuscola County sheriff's deputy.

As he rose through the ranks at work, he also became involved in the church. Eventually he was promoted to lieutenant and, when the late Sheriff Paul Berry was elected to the first of two terms, Father Megge was named his undersheriff. It was a great job until Berry lost in his bid for a third term and Father Megge, whose job was no longer protected by the union and whose marriage had unraveled, found himself divorced and unemployed.

"I was devastated by the divorce and I was losing my job," Father Megge recalled. And then, along came Ron Kalanquin, the sheriff in Lapeer County, to offer him the same job he had held in Tuscola. He moved one county south and immersed himself in both his new job and his new parish – Immaculate Conception in Lapeer.

He attended a "ministries fair"

and became involved in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. A product of Catholic grandparents and parents, a former altar server in Union Lake, a Catholic school student and, in the late 1950s, a high school seminarian, Father Megge suddenly saw that his early faith life began to take on new meaning.

His marriage annulled, Father Megge was taking a lay ministry course when he first began to seriously consider the priesthood. After learning that church law did not forbid him from becoming a priest, Father Megge set about making contacts that eventually led to his ordination for the Diocese of Gaylord.

Father Megge had marked his 25th anniversary in law enforcement in August 1993. The following Jan. 5, one month before his police retirement would actually take effect, he headed for Sacred Heart School of Theology in Hales Corners, Wis.

"I was 52 years old and everything in my life was falling into place," he recalled with a smile. "I spent five wonderful years in seminary."

Father Megge's sons – Gary, Michael, David and Adam – sup-



Father Paul Megge, center, is seated next to his father, George, and surrounded by Father Megge's four sons – clockwise: David, Michael, Adam and Gary. He is pastor of St. Mary-St. Charles Church in Cheboygan, Mich. (CNS photo from Catholic Weekly)

ported their dad's decision to pursue the priesthood "110 percent." Father Megge said, "Mike kept saying he would be able to call me 'my father, the father.'"

After completing seminary training, Father Megge was assigned to Sacred Heart Church in Elk Rapids. The day after his July 1998 ordination as a deacon, he presided at the baptism of his granddaughter. That Dec. 19 he was ordained a priest and four days later he was on assignment

as associate pastor at Immaculate Conception Church, Traverse City. This past summer he was transferred to Cheboygan.

"Law enforcement gave me real knowledge on working with all types of people," Father Megge said, "from some of the finest people in the community like mayors and judges, to some of the poorest people and people with the most problems.

see "PRIEST," page eleven



Sir Knights of Father James F. Norman assembly #2229 celebrated their 10th anniversary with a Mass and dinner with their wives and families afterwards. Pictured are the Sir Knights of the Fourth Degree assembly with Fr. Jerry of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Midland.



The Feast of Immaculate Conception marked the annual General Reunion of the Legion of Mary at the Kessler Building of Sacred Heart Church in Abilene. Coinciding with the monthly Coffee Hour of the parish, some eighty people were present to share with each other, both faith and food. Active members of Our Lady, Queen of Peace Praesidium renewed their promise to the Blessed Mother. A Living Rosary was prayed with all present, followed by a light dinner. People from as far as Midland and San Angelo were in attendance, including some not of the Catholic faith. (Photos courtesy Ca Nguyen)