Midland woman says abortion issue boils down to faith issue

By Jimmy Patterson

Judy Rouse remembers precisely when her conversion occurred. Not a religious conversion, per se, but her conversion to the side of those who value the sanctity of life.

The diminutive Midlander with blond hair, Rouse, now the executive director

(Please See ROUSE/17)

Episcopal minister ordained Catholic deacon in Junction

Knickerbocker will become first married priest ordained in diocese January 28

By Jimmy Patterson

The fullness of truth found in the Catholic Church is what proved the difference for Waldo Emerson “Knick” Knickerbocker when he and wife Sandie made the decision to convert from Episcopalianism to Catholicism. And while he said convincingly that truth can be found in many other Christian faiths, it was only in Catholicism where it could be found in total.

On December 28, at St. Theresa Church in Junction, Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI, ordained Knickerbocker, a married former Episcopalian minister, as a deacon in the Catholic Church. On January 28, one month later, Knickerbocker will be ordained a Catholic priest. The Mass will take place at 6:30

(Please See KNICKERBOCKER/17)

Pope bestows honors on many serving diocese

SAN ANGELO -- Pope Benedict XVI, at the recommendation of the Most Rev. Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI, Bishop of the Diocese of San Angelo, has honored several priests, nuns, deacons and lay people serving in the Diocese. Pfeifer made the announcement after receiving official word from the Most Rev. Pietro Sambi, papal ambassador to the United States.

First, Pope Benedict XVI has upgraded

(Please See HONORS/13)

Infant, not fetus

The two precious unborn — Jesus and John the Baptist — are referred to during this visit not as globs of flesh, fetuses, but as persons, as infants.

Luke uses the word, infant. / Pg. 2

The Year in Dioce-Scenes

The year 2008 held much good for the Catholic Church and our diocese. See a photographic display of some of the high points. Pages 10-11. CNS Year in Review, Pages 12-13

The Visiting Priest

On the Feast of the Holy Family we pray: “Father, help us to live as the holy family, united in respect and love... Teach us the sanctity of human love, show us the value of family life, and help us to live in peace with all.”

The Visiting Priest / Pg. 3
From the Bishop’s Desk

36 years of sanctioned murder: We must change our laws

By Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer

“Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.” [Luke 1:39-56]

1st reading —Isaiah 49:1-6; (lectionary —The Nativity of St. John the Baptist. June 24 #587)
Psalm- 139 (lectionary for the Nativity of St. John the Baptist)
In the beautiful gospel that was just proclaimed about Mary’s visit to Elizabeth, who was six months pregnant with John the Baptist, we hear Elizabeth proclaim in a loud voice about Mary, “most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.” Elizabeth goes on to say that at the moment of the greeting of Mary, who brought the embryonic Jesus into the presence of Elizabeth, that the infant — John the Baptist — leapt for joy in her womb. Just think about this! The two precious unborn — Jesus and John the Baptist — are referred to during this visit not as globs of flesh, fetuses, but as persons, as infants. Luke uses the word, infant.

What Elizabeth said about the precious gift, Jesus, in the womb of Mary, God says about the fruit that is in every woman’s womb that is about to be born—blessed is the fruit of your womb, because that fruit, that human life is stamped with my divine image and likeness.

We are here to pray for the unborn, that they will be given the chance to celebrate a birthday. We are

(Diocesan Briefs)

San Angelo: Diocesan Conference Day, Feb. 7

DIOCESAN CONFERENCE DAY
Saturday, February 7, 2009
San Angelo Convention Center
9:00am – 4:00pm

THEME: ENGAGING THE PEOPLE OF GOD: A NEW MINISTRY MAP FOR A CHANGING TERRITORY

Presenter: Robert McCarty D. Min.
Early registration (mailed before Jan 22) - $20.00
Registration (mailed after Jan 22) - $25.00
Sponsored by the Office of Education and Formation 325-651-7500

Keynote Speaker: Robert McCarty, D. Min

Bob McCarty is the Executive Director for the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry. He has authored several books through St. Mary’s Press. Bob serves on the Board of Directors of “Ministering Together”, a consortium of ministry organizations fostering collaboration and is on the faculty at St. Mary’s Seminary / University of Baltimore, Washington Theological Union in DC and St. John’s University in Collegeville, MN. He has an MA in Religious Education from LaSalle University and a D. Min from the Graduate Theological Foundation in Indiana.

Choosing a Path that’s Right for You

"Act Justly, Love Tenderly, Walk Humbly with your God.”

Is God calling you to Religious Life? The Dominican Sisters invite you to explore this call during a weekend retreat. Women 18 to 40 are welcome to attend, January 23-25. The retreat begins at 5 p.m. Friday and concludes Sunday at 11 a.m.

The retreat includes: exploring the discernment process; quiet time for reflection; Group discussion and prayer, including Mass Sunday.

Register online at www.sinsinawa.org (Click on "News and Events” then click on “Choosing a Path,” complete the form, and click “submit” or by getting in touch with the area contact person.
Deadline to register: January 14. Cost: $35
Area contact: Sister Marie Malachy Griffin, O.P.
newman@wcc.net 325-949-8033.

Scholarships for Catholic Layity now available

SAN ANTONIO-- Catholic Life Insurance is currently accepting applications for the Rev. Msgr. Larry J. Droll Scholarship from Catholic laymen and women pursuing graduate education in theology and church-related professions.

"Today many dedicated Catholics who are not ordained clergy or women religious, serve parishes as parish coordinators or administrators, as pastoral associates, directors of religious education, youth ministers, liturgists, and many other roles," said Msgr. Droll. "This scholarship can help provide the funds to earn the advanced educational degree in theology or religious studies that is often required for these positions."

The scholarship is open to students who are currently enrolled in Catholic graduate schools of theology or religious studies and who have already completed a bachelor’s degree. The applicant, who does not have to be a Catholic Life member, must be a practicing Roman Catholic and must reside in one of the states in which Catholic Life operates which are Texas, Arizona, Florida, Louisiana, Oklahoma, New Mexico, or Mississippi. The scholarship funds are paid directly to the school where the student is enrolled. All applications must be received by Catholic Life no later than February 16, 2009. To obtain an application and an outlined list of eligibility requirements, please call Catholic Life Insurance at (210) 828-9921 or 1-800-292-2548 or write to Catholic Life Insurance, attn: Communications Department, P.O. Box 659527, San Antonio, TX 78265-9527. Applications may also be downloaded from the company website at www.cliu.com. Winners will be announced in June 2009.

Natural Family Planning

Helping couples to deepen conjugal love and achieve responsible parenthood is part of the Church’s total pastoral ministry to Catholic spouses. Fulfillment of this ministry includes both education and pastoral care. This means “instilling conviction and offering practical help to those who wish to live out their parenthood in a truly responsible way” (Pope John Paul II, Familiaris consortio, #35).

Below are scheduled seminars (San Angelo) and contact numbers for people who can help you with more information:

SAN ANGELO, Christ the King Retreat Center, (325) 651-5352, 2-4 p.m. 2009 Dates: March 8, May 17, Sep. 13, Dec. 6. Contact Amy at amdg@wcc.net.

MIDLAND-ODESSA, Our Lady of Guadalupe, call Christina Nevarez, (432) 682-2581;
ABILENE, Holy Family Church, call Mrs. Herman Blahak, (325) 692-1820.

(please see Bishop 18)
Working together for the strength of family

By Msgr. Larry Droll

On the Feast of the Holy Family we pray: “Father, help us to live as the holy family, united in respect and love... Teach us the sanctity of human love, show us the value of family life, and help us to live in peace with all.”

It has been said, “Pray as if everything depended on God; work as if everything depended on you.” Both are true, especially in family life and marriage.

God created the human family and marriage; just look at the Genesis story of Adam and Eve and their children. Jesus raised marriage to the level of a sacrament. St. Paul often addresses husbands and wives and children, calling them to reflect Christ’s love and live according to commandments. The Bible is also full of stories about families in which things did not go so well, in which sin and selfishness and abandonment harmed the family relationships. What we experience in our world today is very much like what we find in the scriptures.

To enable families to live joyful and fruitful lives and to address the problems families face in today’s world, Pope Benedict XVI in his message on the World Day of Peace (January 1, 2009) spoke about the natural family of husband, wife and children as the basis of the entire human family (and, therefore, as a community of peace). He discussed the human rights of families, called on families to build on a solid foundation of shared spiritual and ethical values, and pointed out that it is the family’s duty to educate their children to create a world community of solidarity and peace.

When he was in Washington, DC, in April of 2008, the pope had encouraged the Catholic bishops of the USA to have the Catholic Church do more to promote family life and marriage, especially to assist families at risk. Bishop Michael Pfeifer has recently echoed that call, saying that the priority for ministry in the Diocese of San Angelo by 2011 (the 50th anniversary of the founding of the diocese) should be service to family life and marriage. The 2011 Committee he established is working on a plan for this.

If the Catholic Church should assist families, who should be doing this?

Remembering that the Church is all of us, we can begin by looking at ourselves! How am I, how are we, enhancing the life of our family members? Then, how am I, how are we, offering assistance to families around us, especially those in need?

In a supportive role, the parishes can offer educational and pastoral services to promote the well-being of family life and marriage. They may do so through volunteers or professional ministers, as urged by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) document Co-workers in the Vineyard of the Lord.

The Diocese may provide some programs to support the work of the parishes. The church at the super-diocesan level may also help; currently the USCCB is preparing a document about this topic. In the area of advocacy with the state legislature, the Texas Catholic Conference is sponsoring Marriage and Family Life Day in Austin on March 31, 2009, featuring education on legislative priorities.

Every existing program in the dioceses—religious education, Catholic Schools, youth ministry—has a family life component. One thing every parish can do is become more intentional in developing that aspect of the existing programs.

God answers our prayer for a healthier family life; we too have to do our part as individuals and as church.

From the Editor

October 2011: Mark your calendars (and send your photos and nominations)

By Jimmy Patterson

I t is hard to believe, especially for those of you who have been in the Diocese of San Angelo for a long while, but we are now less than two years away from celebrating the 50th jubilee of the diocese. Mark your calendars for October 16, 2011 -- it was on that day 50 years ago when the Diocese of San Angelo officially came into being. Organizers and diocesan officials are still hammering out details on when and where exactly that celebration Mass will occur, but you can bet it will be well worth your time to attend.

I had the good fortune to attend the 25th jubilee of the diocese of Lubbock last year, and it was certainly a special Mass and a great time. Representatives from all 13 of Texas’ dioceses were in attendance, as was Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, of the ArchDiocese of Houston, Texas’ first cardinal. I would imagine we would have a similar showing.

To help commemorate this special occasion, Bishop Michael Pfeifer has commissioned the writing of a book that will perpetuate the first half century of the dioceses’ existence. It will be a publication two years in the making and will be divided into three main segments. Although we are still some distance away from the final product, we hope the final draft will include the following:

▶ The People who Have Shaped The Diocese. Certainly the bishops who have led us will receive attention but there have been many others. Who are they? And why do they qualify?

▶ The Events That Have Shaped The Diocese. What are the most important events that have changed us and guided us through the years? What makes that particular event so important?

▶ The Parishes. Each of the existing parishes throughout the diocese will be featured with a brief history of that parish and a photo of the church.

In order to make this monumental task work as well as it can, we are asking you, those of you who have been here and who have helped make us who we are today, for your input.

Please send us your nominees for those you would like to see included in our segment of those people who have helped form the diocese as well as your nominees for the events that have helped the diocese become what it is today.

In addition, if you have a photo of the exterior front of your parish that you are proud of (no people in the photo, please), I ask that you send it to me as well.

We know we can complete this task in time for October 2011, but we know we can do an even better job with your help. Email your nominees or photos to Jimmy@mrt.com, or mail to Jimmy Patterson, 3511 W. Shandon, Midland, TX 79707. We’ll keep you updated throughout the coming months.

Nunca podemos olvidar a los niños no nacidos

Por el Obispo Miguel Pfeifer, OMI

Como nación estamos en un nuevo comienzo de liderazgo. Al comenzar, nunca nos atrevemos de dejar atrás a los niños no nacidos. Ellos no tienen voz más que la nuestra, y nuestra voz se necesita ahora más que nunca. Nuestros hijos e hijas no nacidos son aún más amenazados como nunca jamás por la propuesta legislación y pólizas que borraría 36 años del progreso de pro-vida por medio de eliminar toda restricción tocante al aborto. Nos corresponde a nosotros actuar, y actuar ahora.

Al recordar la decisión mortal de nuestra Corte Suprema en la decisión de Roe v. Wade en el 1973, nosotros los obispos de los estados unidos estamos unidos y resueltos en nuestra defensa de los niños no nacidos desde el momento de concepción. Estamos comprometidos, no importa cuánto tiempo se lleve, no importa cuánto sacrificio se requiera, a terminar esa larga noche de oscuridad del aborto legal en los Estados Unidos. Nunca dejaremos de enseñar y dar testimonio de la dignidad humana del no nacido. Les pedimos a ustedes, nuestros hermanos católicos, de ponerse de pie con nosotros como nunca antes en la lucha preeminente de los derechos humanos de nuestro tiempo: obteniendo protección legal para los niños no nacidos. Desde Roe v. Wade en el 1973, 49 millones de niños inocentes han sido matados por el aborto. Un sinnúmero de hombres y mujeres han sufrido por haber tomado esta opción trágica de aborto. Ahora es el tiempo de rechazar, de una vez y para siempre, el reclamo falso de que los niños no nacidos son mejor servidos por medio de abandonar los esfuerzos de anular Roe v.

(Mira OBISPO/19)
Roe v. Wade at 36: We must never leave behind the unborn among us

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer

As a nation we are at a new beginning of leadership. We dare not begin again by leaving behind unborn children. They have no voice but ours, and our voice is needed now more than ever. Our unborn sons and daughters are threatened as never before by legislative policies that would wipe out 36 years of pro-life progress by eliminating all restrictions on abortion. It is up to us to act and to act now.

As we remember the deadly decision of our Supreme Court in the Roe v. Wade decision in 1973, we, the bishops of the United States, are united and resolute in our defense of the unborn child from the moment of conception. We are committed, no matter how long it takes, no matter how much sacrifice it requires, to end the long dark night of legal abortion in the United States. We will never stop teaching and bearing witness to the human dignity of the unborn. We call on you, our fellow Catholics, to stand with us as never before in the preeminent human rights struggle of our times; securing legal protection for unborn children. Since Roe v. Wade in 1973, 49 million innocent children have been killed by abortion. Countless women and men have suffered from having made this tragic choice. Now is the time to reject, one and for all, the false claim that unborn children are best served by abandoning efforts to overturn Roe v. Wade and by discarding the hard-won legal protections already in place for unborn children. Right now our federal tax dollars are not used to pay for abortions or to fund abortions in other countries. Right now a majority of states outlaw partial birth abortion and require that parents of minors seeking an abortion be notified. Right now laws in many states protect the religious liberty of health care institutions and the freedom of conscience of workers opposed to abortion. All that and more will be wiped out with the stroke of a pen if Congress passes the “Freedom of Choice Act” (FOCA) and our new president signs it into law. No one should be forced to cooperate in the evil of abortion.

Working — as we must and as we are — to eliminate the social conditions that can lead to abortion does not absolve us from working for the legal protection of the unborn. It’s not one or the other. We have

Now more than ever, your voice is needed to ensure the protection of the unborn

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer

The Catholic bishops of the United States have unanimously called all of us to prayer and action to prevent the passage of the radical Freedom of Choice Act [FOCA], and to oppose other attempts to overturn existing laws and policies. With the beginning of the new year 2009, your voices and prayers are needed more than ever to make sure that this terrible Bill will never be passed.

There are strong pro-abortion groups and their allies in Congress who are actively promoting the radical Bill called “Freedom of Choice Act.” If this extreme measure were enacted, widely supported and constitutionally sound abortion regulations will be knocked down nationwide.

FOCA would force taxpayers to fund abortions, would require all States to allow “partial-birth” and other late-term abortions, would violate the conscience rights of nurses, doctors, and hospitals, and would strip parents of their right to be involved in their minor daughters’ abortion decision. Please call our congressional leaders to oppose this deadly legislation.

My sisters and brothers in Christ: The unborn need your prayers and immediate action. CALL THE U.S. CAPITOL switchboard to contact the offices of your Representative and two senators: 202 – 224 – 3121. Urge them to oppose FOCA. Also, send letters to U.S.

February 11: World Day of the Sick

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer

Our Holy Father has proclaimed February 11, 2009, the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, as the annual World Day of the Sick. On this day, Pope Benedict XVI, like his predecessor, John Paul II, asks the whole Catholic world to pray for all the sick of the world. To mark this special day of prayer for the sick, I ask that on this day, or near this day, a special Mass be offered by all the priests of our Diocese for the sick, especially of each local community. And, I strongly encourage during this Mass that the sick be invited to celebrate the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

The World Day of the Sick reminds us that suffering and illness have always been among the greatest problems that trouble the human spirit. Christians feel and experience pain as do all other people; yet, their faith helps them to grasp more deeply the mystery of suffering and to bear their pain with greater courage in imitation of Christ, and strengthened by Christ’s words, they know that sickness has meaning and value for their own salvation and for the salvation of the world.

Our response to the sick is a witness to the world of their inherent dignity as persons. This response reinforces the truth that no matter one’s age, status, or condition of dependency, God granted each of us the gift of life. It is
Lector and Acolyte Installation
Dec. 13, 2008  Sacred Heart Cathedral, San Angelo

What is a lector and acolyte?

An instituted lector and acolyte have precedence over other lay ministers, and assume additional responsibilities. **Lectors** not only proclaim the Word in liturgical assemblies, they are also charged with teaching children and adults, handling sacramental preparations of the faithful and being evangelists, spreading the Word to people outside of the confines of the parish. **Acolytes** assist the priest and deacon at liturgical assemblies. We are very familiar with "altar boys" and "altar girls", but an instituted acolyte is also charged with the responsibility of being a special minister of the Eucharist, particularly in taking the Eucharist to the sick.

--- Deacon Tim Graham

Diocese of San Angelo Deacon Candidates installed as Lectors & Acolytes Dec. 13:

- Frank Aguirre  
  Cathedral, San Angelo
- Carlos Benavides  
  Our Lady of Lourdes, Andrews
- Alfred Camarillo  
  St. Mary's, Odessa
- Andy Gonzalez  
  St. Margaret, San Angelo
- Walter Hammons  
  Holy Angels, San Angelo
- Leonard Hendon  
  St. Stephen's, Midland
- Dwain Hennessey  
  Sacred Heart, Abilene
- Danny Holguin  
  St. Joseph's, Ft. Stockton
- Allan Lange  
  St. Ambrose, Wall
- Stanley Lange  
  St. Thomas, Abilene
- Michael Lopez  
  St. Mary's, San Angelo
- Marc P. Main  
  St. Francis, Abilene
- Luis Mata  
  Our Lady of Guadalupe, Midland
- Marco Mata  
  St. Mary's, San Angelo
- Freddy Medina  
  Holy Angels, San Angelo
- Hector Mendez  
  St. Mary's, Odessa
- Robert Moreno  
  Our Lady of Guadalupe, Midland
- Jesus Napoles  
  Our Lady of Guadalupe, Midland
- Ray Nunez  
  Sacred Heart, Coleman
- Victor Ramirez  
  St. Vincent, Abilene
- Gary Rhodes  
  Holy Family, Abilene
- Claudio Sanchez  
  St. Joseph's, San Angelo
- Robert Selvera  
  St. Patrick's, Brady
- Dan Shannahahan  
  St. Ambrose, Wall
- Ricardo Torres  
  Our Lady of Guadalupe, Midland
- Jesse Vasquez  
  Sacred Heart, Abilene
- Daniel Vaughan  
  Holy Family, Abilene
- Luis Villarreal  
  St. Agnes, Ft. Stockton
- David Workman  
  St. Mary's, Ballinger
- Steve Zimmerman  
  Cathedral, San Angelo

Top photo, Stanley Lange (front right) Michael Lopez, Marc Main and Luis Mata process into the Installation Mass, Dec. 13, at Sacred Heart Cathedral in San Angelo; top right, Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer, prepares to install the 30 candidates; candidate Gary Rhodes of Holy Family in Abilene, lower right, processes in and bottom left, Bishop Pfeifer and Fr. Maury Voity (at right in photo). Above, the candidates after they are announced.

Photos by Gary Rhodes, Midland Reporter-Telegram, except above, photo by Jimmy Patterson.
Making Sense of Bioethics

Germany and Italy have it, so shouldn’t we?

By Rev. Tad Pacholczyk

Nearly 500,000 human embryos are currently stored in liquid nitrogen tanks in fertility clinics in the United States, a number comparable to the population of a mid-sized city like Cleveland or Tucson. By contrast, only a handful of human embryos have been frozen and held in storage tanks in the entire country of Germany.

The reason for this striking difference lies in the fact that Germany enacted an Embryo Protection Law during the 1990’s which included provisions outlawing the freezing of human embryos. Italy has similar legislation in force. Both countries closely regulate in vitro fertilization treatments, and allow the production of no more than 3 embryos at a time, all of which must be implanted into their mother. Both countries forbid the production of extra embryos, experimentation on embryos, embryo cloning, and genetic testing of embryos.

The United States has largely failed to establish any reasonable legal or ethical framework to regulate its own multi-billion dollar infertility industry, and the result has been aptly described as a kind of “Wild West of Infertility,” a lawless frontier where nearly anything goes, including the routine freezing of scores of humans who are still in their embryonic stages. Indeed, this practice remains one of the great ongoing humanitarian tragedies of our time.

Not much ethical reflection is needed to appreciate the serious injustice involved in freezing another human being. The freezing and thawing process subjects embryonic humans to significant risk, and up to 50% of embryos may not survive the process. In many cases, stored embryos end up being abandoned by the couples who create them, condemned to a kind of perpetual stasis, and locked in time in the harsh wasteland of their liquid-nitrogen orphanages. Countless parents then find themselves caught in agonizing dilemmas about what to do with their offspring held in suspended animation. This injustice, once it has been foisted upon human embryos, is then used by others to argue on behalf of an even more egregious offense against their dignity, namely, the destructive strip-mining of embryos to acquire their stem cells.

The argument that embryos will “just be thrown away anyway” has been very effective in convincing lawmakers and politicians to rally on behalf of scientists who desire to destroy human embryos for research. By appealing to a kind of American pragmatism that tries to “maximize return on investments,” the embryo’s subjugation has become nearly complete in our society, as he or she is reduced to a mere “thing,” an object to be manipulated — valuable primarily for how he or she can serve the interests and desires of others.

Dr. Chi Dang, a professor of medicine at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, building on the argument that frozen embryos will otherwise be discarded, put it this way during a recent interview: “The question is: Is it ethically more acceptable to destroy these embryos by pouring acid on them, or do you deploy these clusters of cells to create new cell lines that could benefit us in the future?” By promoting such false dichotomies and constructing these kinds of ethical sand castles, we have begun to slip into a kind of complacency, a deadening moral slumber regarding our most basic duties towards the weakest and smallest of humans.

Writing in the New York Times, Gary Rosen once observed that even a basic course in Ethics 101 ought to be enough to let us see the problem here, namely, that we should not be treating other people as a means to our own ends, but as ends in themselves. Yet even the most basic ethics can be hard to square with the efficient, cold, clinical discussions of “harvesting embryos” and “deploying clusters of cells.” While the language of embryonic stem-cell scientists and their supporters remains thoroughly professional, it still exudes, in the words of Rosen, “an unmistakable whiff of cannibalism.”

In the United States today, we urgently need Embryo Protection Laws. The temptation to dehumanize our own human brothers and sisters is a perennial one, hearkening back to the time in our country when slaves could be considered three-fifths of a person for purposes of congressional representation. Treating embryos as zero-fifths of a person constitutes an even more deplorable human rights violation. The smallest members of our human family deserve legal protection. Laws like those in Germany and Italy, while they would not stop every injustice done to embryos, could go a long way towards stemming the tide and assuring that further forms of laboratory barbarism and human exploitation do not become commonplace.

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

Decidir en recta conciencia

Padre Tad Pacholczyk

(De la serie “Making Sense out of Bioethics”)

La idea de que todos y cada uno de nosotros es capaz de un entendimiento básico de la ley moral es un concepto siempre presente en la argumentación bioética. Esta capacidad distintiva del ser humano, que en la cultura occidental conocemos como “conciencia”, nos ayuda a elegir correctamente cuando tenemos que tomar algunas decisiones morales básicas. Hasta los niños parecen reconocer instintivamente esta ley superior cuando se les instruye sobre lo que está bien y lo que está mal. El hombre descubre en lo profundo de su conciencia esa ley que él no se ha impuesto a sí mismo, pero que debe obedecer.

La conciencia ha sido muy bien descrita como el núcleo más secreto del ser humano y su sagrario. Como creaduras conscientes que somos, estamos orientados a aspirar al bien y evitar el mal.

Pero debido a nuestra naturaleza quebrantada, misteriosamente nos atraen de igual manera las elecciones equivocadas y dañinas. Es posible también que otras voces a nuestro alrededor nos induzcan a silenciar o acallar lo que nuestra conciencia nos dicta. Conforme avanzamos en edad puede suceder, inclusive, que logremos cierto grado de refinamiento y justifiquemos las elecciones personales que no son buenas, elecciones totalmente contrarias a la ley de nuestro propio ser. El sagrario interior de la conciencia es muy frágil y podemos fácilmente transgredirlo, por lo que se requiere mucha atención de nuestra parte si queremos permanecer fieles a él.

Recuerdo el caso de una pareja que había estado...
PRAYER SHARING

I've lived here for 30 years, which means a lot of my friends have moved on to greener pastures, namely Heaven. I think of them often, mostly when I drive past their former house or past the building where they worked. It's comforting to say a simple, "God bless you, Donna" or "God bless you, Jack" in remembrance. Of course I'm sure God has blessed them in their new home. But if they are still in Purgatory, perhaps a few God bless you prayers will hasten their arrival in Heaven.

-- Linda, San Angelo

Send in your most cherished prayers or prayer practices to JimmyLPatterson@grandecom.net.

OBITUARY

Rev. Monsignor Louis B. Moeller

BALLINGER - The Rev. Monsignor Louis B. Moeller, 83, of Ballinger passed away Monday, Dec. 29, 2008, at Ballinger Memorial Hospital. The Rev. Moeller was born Dec. 13, 1925, to Joe C. and Mary (Muller) Moeller at Olfen. The family moved to Rowena in 1933. He completed 12 years of schooling at St. Joseph School in Rowena before entering the seminary. He was ordained to the priesthood at Immaculate Conception Cathedral in Denver, Colo., on June 2, 1951.

The Rev. Moeller began his priestly ministry in the Diocese of Amarillo where he pastored several Texas communities, including Amarillo, Happy, Tulia, Rowena, Stanton, Tarzan, Lamesa, O'Donnell, and Pep.

In 1962 when the Diocese of San Angelo was established, the Rev. Moeller served as pastor of Snyder, Odessa, Ozona, Big Spring, Sonora, Brownwood, Junction, Menard, Brady, Eldorado, San Angelo, and his last assignment, Ballinger. He has left his mark on every parish and community he has served. Since his official retirement in 1997 he had made his home in Ballinger and had recently been honored by the pope with the title Monsignor.

He is survived by a brother, Maurice Moeller and wife, Dorine, of Rowena; and a sister, Ruby Hlavinka, of Texarkana. Also surviving are seven nieces and nephews, and 19 great-nieces and nephews. Rosary was recited Thursday, Jan. 1, 2009, at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Rowena. Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated Friday, Jan. 2, also at St. Joseph Catholic Church. The principal celebrant was Bishop Michael Pfeifer, O.M.I., Bishop of the San Angelo Diocese; the principal Con-Celebrants were the Rev. Msgr. Larry Droll, the Rev. Magnus Chilaka, and the Rev. Hugh Wade. Other Con-Celebrants were the Rev. Msgr. Bernard Gully, the Rev. Barry McLean, and other diocesan priests.

Interment followed at St. Joseph Catholic Cemetery.

Arrangements were with Lange Funeral Home in Ballinger. Guests may register at ballingerfuneralhome.com. Memorials may be made to the St. Mary, Star of the Sea Scholarship fund or to the St. Mary Star of the Sea Seminarian burse or to a charity of choice.

-- Linda, San Angelo
By Father John Catoir
Catholic News Service

In the past, the church put the emphasis on "not offending God." Today's spiritual leaders agree with that, but now they emphasize the importance of trying to be happy with God. The idea is that we not only want to avoid offending God, we also want to be happy with him in this world and forever in the next.

The Little Flower, also known as St. Therese of the Child Jesus, was like a little child herself in her dealings with the Lord. She knew that God wanted to be happy with all his children, and so she decided to spend her days trying to make God happy. This simple insight was prophetic.


"There is a profound sense that happiness in God is an important way of showing our love for God, for he loves a happy soul, one perfectly attuned to him, content with all he wills or permits. The happy soul has faith in the loving providence of God, even in times of darkness and perplexity."

In order to attain this state of being, she taught us that joy is a choice. Living joyfully in the presence of God takes training of the will. For instance, when bad things happen in life, it's important to turn to the Lord quickly, remembering that it's not what happens to you in life that matters so much as how you react to it.

At every stage of our development we possess the spiritual freedom to choose joy as our basic spiritual attitude. This choice will determine our destiny.

Choose happiness every day in spite of the bad things that happen, and try to avoid drifting into gloom and discouragement.

Grace builds on nature. Unconscious forces and unruly emotions may knock you around from time to time, but you do not have to become morbid forever because of them.

The will is the center of the personality. The will says yes or no.

St. Thomas said, "If you want to be a saint, will it."

By God's grace, you have the power to pull yourself up to new heights. That means you can become a joyful person if you choose to. You must first decide to will it. Will it because God wants you to become a creature of love and joy.

The Little Flower achieved holiness and happiness by striving to remain happy in order to please God. She remembered how she could please her own natural father when she was a little child and simply applied the same technique to her heavenly Father.

The theory of theistic evolution is the belief that all men and women are works in progress. They are all part of the colossal struggle to advance human history to its ultimate purpose, namely, to be happy with God forever. In his spiritual classic "Abandonment to Divine Providence," Father Jean Pierre de Caussade wrote, "The secret of happiness and sanctity rests in our fidelity to the will of God as it is manifested in the duty of the present moment."

He continued, "The great and solid foundation of the spiritual life is to give oneself to God ... in such a way that the good pleasure of God and his happiness becomes our sole joy and good."

By Douglas W. Kmiec
Catholic News Service

The new year finds our new president addressing an age-old problem: How do we structure a just economy?

That's too big a question to answer in a single gulp, so let me play 20 questions instead.

1. Why has my pension disappeared?
2. How exactly did a lot of bad loans overlay-inflated real estate cause our economy, let alone that of the world (that presumably depends on far more than real estate) to crash?
3. What is the bailout bailing out?
4. Who got the checks and what are they doing with the money?
5. Does the bailing out acknowledge that the top 1 percent of American households is presently worth more than the lower 90 percent combined?
6. What will all those smart economists working for President Barack Obama actually be doing? How come Bush couldn't find these people?
7. What are the thousands of white- and blue-collar workers let go by auto companies doing?
8. Why don't we use the decline in the price of oil to wean ourselves off fossil fuel by self-imposing a carbon tax to develop alternative fuels?
9. Why don't we share more jobs to achieve the work/family balance we say we want?
10. How do corporate bailouts mesh with the "free" in free market -- other than the fact that they're free?
11. Does a free market achieve the common good?
12. What is the common good? Does it pertain to just material goods, or other than the fact that they're free?
13. How do we handle the problem of imperfect knowledge?
14. If we increase the money supply the old-fashioned way (viz., printing more of it), doesn't spending such money on public works jobs drive up the rate of inflation, hurting senior citizens on fixed incomes?
15. Why do so many people who say they want to be of service to others do work that leaves them feeling they're not of service to anyone?
16. Do we educate students about how to make good occupational choices?
17. With the number of corporate failures in the United States, should Catholics still understand corporations to be a form of community, harnessing initiative and mitigating the rough edges of individual competition, or is some other economic form now to be preferred -- say, employee ownership?
18. Aren't extreme levels of executive compensation without justification? And why shouldn't there be a nonmarket way to check the "Wal-Martization" of cities and towns if "everyday low prices" are not the sum of our values?
19. Why do we as consumers consume at the extraordinary rates that we do?
20. As we enter an era of change, what role should government play in the market system? Should it be restricted to preserving the market's rules of the game or should it occasionally allow democracy to trump economic efficiency -- to prevent the exploitation of immigrant labor domestically; to avoid taking advantage of subsistence wage levels in Third World nations to produce luxury goods; to moderate the effect of wealth on the political system itself?

None of these questions are easy, especially the first one about my disappearing pension.

In times past, when jobs and bank accounts were more secure, we could put off answering them. The coming year -- indeed years -- are not those times.

We bemoan the hardship for ourselves and regret it for others, but arguably, it is a healthy reminder that the economic system is only one aspect of the common good.

By Father John Dietzen
Catholic News Service

Q. My question concerns the lineage of Jesus. The accounts of his ancestors in Luke and Matthew do not agree. Which one is correct? I heard one interpretation that the man designated as Joseph's father was probably his father-in-law, thus tracing Mary's ancestors. Since Jesus did not carry any of Joseph's genes, why do the evangelists bother to trace Joseph's lineage instead of Mary's? Joseph should not be called the father of Jesus. He was merely the stepfather, and the writers were well aware of this. (North Carolina)

A. Genealogies in ancient times normally differed considerably, in nature and purpose, from the family trees we know today. Most obviously, for ordinary people, like Joseph for example, records going back even a few generations became extremely tangled. Thus, among the Jews, except for the priestly families, almost no one could trace family histories back very far, let alone 2,000 years or more. Some rabbis held that all this confusion would be resolved only when the prophet Elijah returned. Also, genealogies often were constructed for symbolic, instructive purposes, emphasizing the prowess or special significance of an individual, with no particular concern for historical accuracy. These realities, among others, are relevant to the many differences between the ancestry of Jesus given by Matthew (1:2-17) and Luke (3:23-38).
Number of Catholics in Congress edging up; more are Democrats

By Nancy Frazier O'Brien
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON -- The number of Catholic members of Congress is slowing creeping higher, but the Catholic contingent, like the full Congress itself, has taken a decided turn toward the Democratic Party.

When the 111th Congress convened in January 2007, it included 153 Catholics. Two years later there were 155 Catholics in the 110th Congress. But the new group of senators and representatives has 162 members who identify themselves as Catholics.

With nearly all the 2008 electoral battles settled by early December, and the Senate seat of President-elect Barack Obama still not filled, the Catholic delegation included 17 Democrats and nine Republicans in the Senate and 98 Democrats and 38 Republicans in the House.

At the start of the 110th Congress in January 2007, there were 25 Catholic senators (16 Democrats and nine Republicans) and 130 Catholic representatives (88 Democrats and 42 Republicans). Two years earlier, the 109th Congress counted 24 Catholic senators (13 Democrats and 11 Republicans) and 129 Catholic House members (72 Democrats and 57 Republicans).

That's a far cry from the start of the 80th Congress in January 1947, when 11 senators and 67 House members were Catholic, according to an article by Jesuit Father Edward S. Dunn in the December 1948 issue of the American Catholic Sociological Review.

Only 26 of the 78 Catholic members of the 80th Congress were Republicans; one belonged to the American Labor Party of New York and the rest were Democrats.

"Catholics, then, make up 11.5 percent of the members of the Senate and 15.4 percent of the members of the House of Representatives," Father Dunn wrote. "This is not up to the ratio of Catholics in the total population, which is estimated at about 18 percent."

Today the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, based at Georgetown University in Washington, estimates that Catholics make up 22 percent of the U.S. population. But they are at least 26 percent of the Senate membership, depending on who fills Obama's seat, and more than 30 percent of the House membership.

The numbers are fluid, however, as members of Congress resign to take different posts and their seats are filled by others.

Vice President-elect Joseph Biden, for example, still officially represents Delaware in the Senate, although he plans to step down sometime before the Jan. 20 inauguration. A Catholic, Biden is to be succeeded by one of his top political aides, Ted Kaufman, who was appointed to the post by Delaware Gov. Ruth Ann Minner and is also a Catholic.

Among the Catholics who will have to resign from the incoming Congress if confirmed for Cabinet positions are Sen. Ken Salazar of Colorado, whom Obama has said he will nominate as interior secretary, and Rep. Hilda Solis of California, the president-elect's choice as labor secretary.

Other Catholic Cabinet nominees not serving in the 111th Congress include New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson, expected to serve as commerce secretary; former Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle of South Dakota, Obama's pick as secretary of health and human services; former Iowa Gov. Tom Vilsack, to be nominated as agriculture secretary; and Rep. Ray LaHood, a Republican who has represented Illinois in Congress since 1994 but who did not run for re-election in 2008.

Depending on who gets appointed to fill the vacated seats of those in Congress, the number of Catholics could remain the same or even increase.

For example, the person most widely discussed to succeed New York Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, a Methodist who is to be nominated as secretary of state in the Obama administration, is Caroline Kennedy, daughter of the nation's first Catholic president. Another congressional seat needing to be filled will be that of Rep. Rahm Emanuel, Obama's White House chief of staff, who is Jewish.

Overall, the religious breakdown in Congress has remained relatively stable in recent years. After the 162 Catholics, the religious denominations with the most members in the 111th Congress are Baptists, with 64; Methodists, with 55; and Jews, with 45.

Vatican hopes Obama will foster peace, concern for poor, cardinal says

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

ROME -- The Vatican is concerned about President-elect Barack Obama's positions on the family and on the unborn, but it looks forward with hope to his presidency fostering more attention to the poor and easing violence around the globe, said retired Cardinal Pio Laghi.

The cardinal, a former Vatican nuncio to the United States, spoke about the prospects for U.S.-Vatican relations under Obama during a Dec. 22 conference in Rome sponsored by Limes, an Italian political journal.

Although some pundits have said Obama's support for legalized abortion and embryonic stem-cell research would poison the rapport the United States and the Vatican have developed under President George W. Bush -- despite the Vatican's opposition to the war in Iraq -- Cardinal Laghi said, "the Vatican does not fear" the end of close cooperation.

"One must wait to see how he acts with regard to the fundamental commitments -- which for us are very important -- to protect the family and the sacredness of human life from conception to the tomb," the cardinal said.

But another very serious issue is "the defense of Christians, of Catholics, who are threatened in India, in Iraq where there has been an enormous exodus and in the Holy Land," he said.

"This situation has worsened because of the war in Iraq. If the war had been avoided, there would not have been this huge exodus, especially from Iraq, and this sense of persecution, of real persecution," the cardinal said.

In 2003 Pope John Paul II sent Cardinal Laghi to the White House in a last-minute attempt to convince Bush not to invade Iraq.

Ignoring the pope's pleas and conducting a war that was much more complicated than foreseen, Bush's action exacerbated anti-Christian feelings in many parts of the world, Cardinal Laghi said.

Because the United States is considered to be a Christian country, he said, "where American soldiers go, the countries they occupy consider Christians to be their occupants."

Cardinal Laghi said the Vatican is hopeful that under Obama's leadership the United States will return to acting primarily as a force for peace, especially with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It also expects Obama to act on his promise to assist the middle class and the poor, particularly with health care, he said.

"But very important points, which could lead to contrast and difficulties on the part of the Holy See and of Catholics in the United States, are the family and the defense of life," he said.

"Obama brings with him to the White House the first Catholic vice president, Joe Biden. And I read today that Obama has put him in charge of a task force on the family. This is a good sign, if the family will be defended as it should be," Cardinal Laghi said.

The cardinal also said he hoped Obama would take his time and seek "good counsel" before acting on the proposed Freedom of Choice Act, which would protect abortion as a fundamental right throughout the United States, regardless of existing state laws to restrict it.

Beyond specific policy issues, Obama's election was a sign of renewed hope in "a country of hope," Cardinal Laghi said.

Obama's election, he said, capped the United States' liberation from the horrendous original sin that for many years marred the face of America: slavery.

"Obama's campaign was inspired and motivated by a spirit of reconciliation," he said, and Pope Benedict XVI, the U.S. bishops' conference and the Vatican newspaper each welcomed his victory as an opportunity for a new beginning.
In a historic visit, Pope Benedict XVI visited the United States in his first pontifical trip to America, attended also by a small contingent of Catholics from the Diocese of San Angelo; Bishop Michael Pfeifer blesses a calf at the annual Farm and Rural Life Mass in June.

Bishop Pfeifer and Fr. Bernard Gully talk prior to Gully’s installation as pastor of Holy Trinity Catholic Church, the newly named consolidated parish in Big Spring.

Bishop Pfeifer and others welcomed Msgr. Archimandrite Robert L. Stern, P.A., Secretary General of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association, third from right. Stern was in San Angelo to present a program on Christians, Muslims and Jews and to celebrate Mass.

A small girl comforts a baby and teenagers listen, both images taken during the annual Pro-Life Mass, conducted at the Prayer Garden in Downtown Midland in August.

Recording artist Sara Hickman sings during an evening to raise awareness about capital punishment, in San Angelo. The event was co-sponsored by the diocese and First United Methodist Church in San Angelo.

Tim Cuevas, a young confirmation student at Our Lady of Guadalupe reads during the Confirmation Mass in Eldorado, the small town near where over 400 children were removed from a polygamist compound in the spring.

Young adults gather with Bishop Pfeifer, center, and Sister Hilda, bottom row, left, at World Youth Day in Australia.
Election, economic crisis top 2008 national stories

By Nancy Frazier O'Brien
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON -- The election of the first African-American president and controversy surrounding the role of Catholic voters in the U.S. campaign topped the religious news stories of 2008, and Pope Benedict XVI and President-elect Barack Obama were the top newsmakers, according to the annual poll conducted by Catholic News Service.

The global economic crisis took second place among the 31 news stories on the ballot. Pope Benedict's six-day visit to the United States in April came in third.

Most first-place votes on the newsmakers list went to either Obama or Pope Benedict, with the pontiff edging out the president-elect by a small margin. Catholic voters were a distant third.

The poll was the 47th annual survey conducted by CNS. This year's ballots were distributed Dec. 5 and the deadline for returns was Dec. 11.

When the editors' poll was first conducted in 1962, the overwhelming choice for top story was the opening of the Second Vatican Council. Last year, editors chose the national debate over immigration issues as the top religious story of the year and Pope Benedict as the top newsmaker.

Editors were asked to vote for the top 10 news stories from a list of 31 selected by CNS staff, and the top five newsmakers from a list of 20. Votes were weighted by the rankings editors gave -- 10 points for a first-place vote, nine points for second, etc., and five points for top newsmaker, four for second, etc.

With 31 editors and CNS staff members submitting ballots, the maximum points a story could have received was 310. The most a newsmaker could receive on the five-point scale was 155.

The 2008 campaign began more than a year before the Nov. 4 election of Obama and Sen. Joseph Biden, the first Catholic vice president in U.S. history. The U.S. bishops' "Faithful Citizenship" document, issued late in 2007, emphasized a wide range of issues and prompted debate over whether Catholics could vote for candidates committed to keeping abortion legal.

The economic crisis, which church leaders said arose from distorted values, strained the resources of Catholic charitable agencies after the near-collapse of the U.S. banking system and the resulting mortgage crisis. Worldwide, a global food shortage had been reaching crisis proportions even before the economic downturn.

Highlights of Pope Benedict's April 15-20 U.S. visit were a private meeting with victims of clergy sex abuse, Masses at baseball stadiums in both cities and a solemn visit to ground zero to pray for victims of the Sept. 11 attacks.

Rounding out the top five for religious news stories were abortion-related developments, including comments by Biden and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi that church leaders said misrepresented Catholic teaching, and global tensions affecting Iraq, Afghanistan, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, Zimbabwe and elsewhere.

For pope, Vatican, 2008 was important interfaith year

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- Pope Benedict XVI will look back on 2008 as an important year for interreligious dialogue, with the inauguration of a major Catholic-Muslim forum, notable meetings with Jews in the United States, and the opening of ecology as a new terrain for interfaith cooperation.

At the same time, discrimination and violence against minority Christian communities in Asia and the Middle East clouded the interfaith horizon and pushed human rights to the top of the Vatican's dialogue agenda.

The initial meeting at the Vatican of the Catholic-Muslim Forum in November was a milestone in relations between the two faiths, and represented a remarkable turnaround after a low point in dialogue two years earlier.

The theme of the encounter was love of God and neighbor, and the Vatican representatives made sure to highlight respect for human rights -- including the rights of minority faith communities -- as an essential area of cooperation.

Pope Benedict addressed the 56 forum participants and emphasized the need for believers to show each other mutual respect and guarantee the right to freely profess and practice their faith.

In December, another major Catholic-Muslim session took place at the Vatican, this one involving representatives of the World Islamic Call Society. The discussion theme of the three-day meeting was the responsibility of religious leaders in times of crisis.

In April, an Iranian Muslim delegation arrived for talks at the Vatican, and participants said in a final statement that "faith and reason are intrinsically nonviolent." That was a key point raised by Pope Benedict in a 2006 speech in Regensburg, Germany, which prompted Muslim protests because it appeared to challenge Islam on the issue of violence.

The pope was at the center of another interfaith episode when, at a Holy Saturday liturgy in St. Peter's Basilica, he baptized a Muslim-born journalist, Magdi Allam. The Vatican downplayed its significance, but Allam did not; he issued an open letter that described Islam as inherently linked to terrorism and critiqued the Vatican's own policy of dialogue with Muslims.

Worsening violence and intimidation against Iraqi Christians by Muslim extremists prompted a number of papal appeals during the year, and the pope also condemned the violence against minority Christians by Hindu gangs in India.

Pope Benedict took first place in the CNS poll for his travels to France and Australia, as well as the United States, and his participation in World Youth Day, the Synod of Bishops on Scripture and a year dedicated to St. Paul. Obama, who received the support of 54 percent of the Catholic electorate despite his stand on abortion, was second.

Catholic voters were the third top newsmakers of 2008, with the missionary apostle St. Paul in fourth place and Iraqi Christians, often persecuted and forced from their homeland, rounding out the top five.
HONORS: Mass for honorees to be Feb. 6 in San Angelo

(From 1)

The Pope also bestowed the Pontifical Medal “Pro Ecclesiae et Pontifice” (“For the Church and Pope”) on several priests and nuns who are members of religious orders working in the Diocese of San Angelo, and on deacons and lay people of the Diocese. The medal is given to those who have served the Church and the Pope many years with loyalty and in an exemplary manner. The honorees include:
- Oblate Father Cornelius Scanlan, OMI, former Director of Christ the King Retreat Center, and who is doing reduced ministry in San Angelo.
- Precious Blood Father Joseph Ucker, CPPS, Pastor, St. Joseph/St. Anthony/St. Martin, Odessa;
- Congregation of Divine Providence Sister Helen Rivas, CDP, former Director of Lay Ministry program for the Diocese of San Angelo and present Director of Religious Education, Holy Family Church, Abilene;
- School Sister of St. Francis Hilda Marotta, OSF, Director of Religious Education/Formation for the Diocese of San Angelo;
- School Sister of St. Francis Adelina Garcia, OSF, Assoc. Director of the Education/Formation (Youth and Young Adult) for the Diocese of San Angelo;
- Deacon Tim Graham, Director of the Diaconate for the Diocese of San Angelo and Pastoral Associate for St. Theresa Church, Junction.
- Deacon and Mrs. Alan Neff – Deacon Neff is Associate Director of the Diaconate for the Diocese of San Angelo and assigned as Deacon of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church in Odessa.

The following lay people include:
- Dr. and Mrs. Vincent Priestner, Coordinators of Engaged Encounter for the Diocese of San Angelo
- Mr. and Mrs. Charles Keane, coordinators of Engaged Encounter for the Diocese of San Angelo
- Mr. and Mrs. Mike Wheeler, coordinators of Engaged Encounter for the Diocese of San Angelo
- Mary Sue Brewer, Bishop’s secretary
- Cynthia Hubbartt, Vicar General’s secretary
- Deborah Thompson, Chancellor’s secretary
- Oralia Sentena, has served for 50 years as a Catechist, St. Vincent Pallotti Church, Abilene

The present and new monsignors will be formally invested, and the papal medals will be bestowed on the priests, deacons, sisters and lay people in ceremonies to be held at 6:30 p.m., Friday, February 6, at Sacred Heart Cathedral, 19 S. Oakes, San Angelo, during the celebration of Mass. The public is invited to attend the event, which will be presided over by Bishop Pfeifer.

Bishop Pfeifer nominated all of the recipients for the honors. In his letter of nomination, he cited the seven new Monsignors for serving faithfully as priests for more than 30 years. He asked the Holy Father to bestow the papal medal on the religious order priests, nuns, deacons and lay people for their many years of dedicated service to the Diocese of San Angelo.

The title of Msgr. Larry Droll to Prothonotary Apostolic. Msgr. Droll is Vicar General of the Diocese of San Angelo and Pastor of St. Ann Church, Midland.

Pope Benedict has also upgraded the title of Msgr. Fred Nawarskas to Prelate of Honor to His Holiness. Msgr. Nawarskas is Pastor of Holy Family Church, Abilene.

Named Chaplains to His Holiness, with the title of Monsignor, are:
- Father Robert Bush, Pastor, Sacred Heart Church, Abilene
- Father James Bridges, Pastor, St. Stephen Church, Midland
- Father Francis Frey, Pastor, St. Mary Church, Odessa
- Father Bernard Gully, Pastor, Holy Trinity Parish, Big Spring
- Father Louis Moeller, retired pastor from St. Mary Church, Ballinger (posthumously)
- Father James Plagens, former Diocesan Liturgy Commission Chairman and present senior retired priest, St. Ann’s Church, Midland
- Father Maurice Voity, Rector, Sacred Heart Cathedral, San Angelo

In letters to the present and new monsignors announcing their appointments, Pfeifer said that he had nominated them for the honor because of “their constant fidelity in serving Christ priests, and because of the exceptional Gospel witness and dedicated service they have given to the people of God in the Diocese of San Angelo.”
Family

Need proof of God’s existence? Hurt a little. That should do it.

By Jimmy Patterson
Editor

The theologian C.S. Lewis once said finding God when you’re happy and everything is rosy is easy, but trying to find him when you need him and when everything isn’t going quite so well can sometimes feel as though he is slapping you in the face.

I understand that feeling. I just don’t necessarily agree with.

God is most visible when we are in pain. There is no better opportunity to see proof in his existence than when we are hurting. You just have to know where to look.

Lately there has been much hurt in my little corner of the world, which is no different than the millions of other little corners of the world. Through all the hurt and suffering I have seen of late, there is God, showing himself in the form of grace; using people to walk his walk.

A good friend loses a daughter, only 28 years old, to a horrific form of cancer. Kerry Faudree spoke to a crowded St. Ann’s Church in November during her daughter’s farewell with a poise and courage that could have only been the hand of God intervening. She spoke of the grace that as been bestowed upon her and her family through the acts of kindness and the huge community group hug given them. And she spoke of how not only her daughter Kristen but anyone who fights and ultimately dies of cancer does not lose that battle. They win it. Seeing the struggles of cancer patients at M.D. Anderson for several months, Kerry and her family saw only the faces and the fights of winners. “There are no losers among those who fight this horrible disease,” she said.

In November, 14-year-old Tanner Seedig, a classmate and friend of my son’s at Lee Freshman High School, was killed when he was thrown from a vehicle near Sweetwater. Almost immediately word began to spread through emails, instant messages, MySpace pages and maybe even through the old-fashioned telephone. By late Sunday, a page in Tanner’s memory had been designed and posted on the Internet by grieving friends and students, their way of dealing with loss and of spreading grace that could have only come from God.

A Texas family of seven drove off a bridge last week in northern Mexico, near Presidio. Back home in Irving, family members that had days earlier tried to rent a house and had paid a deposit received the news and told the homeowner they had to back out; their money must be redirected from a new home to funeral expenses for the family, who had been in Mexico to help establish a church. They were excused from their deposit by a kind and forgiving home owner.

God’s grace. All it can be.

A close friend recently told me his daughter left home. One day she was there, happy and full of joy like she had been for every morning of her entire life; the next day she was gone. There had been a disagreement about a boyfriend. At 11 at night, her father, my friend, heard the door shut. And he and his wife’s world changed at the sound of the closing door. They were riddled with grief, puzzled at what they had done wrong, in total question of their ability to parent and incredibly lonely at the absence of someone who had been such a huge part of their life for so long and who had seemed and acted so happy through all of it. “It’s almost as if she is dead,” my friend told me.

While the daughter might not have literally died, the reaction by this family’s community of friends and church was as though she had. He told me the support he and his family received was indescribable. Humbling.

(Please See PATTERSON/19)

Bill & Monica Dodds

Discovering the best movies ever can be fun

By Bill and Monica Dodds
Catholic News Service


Lots of good movies. Lots of choices. Lots of opinions.

A young lady might prefer one in which the hero and heroine, after many hurdles and heartaches, finally end up in each other’s arms. A young fellow might opt for one in which, after (or during) an extended car chase, many items are blown up.

In 1995, to mark the 100th anniversary of the cinema, the Vatican compiled a list of 45 "great films." Among them were "Shrek," "The Muppets Take Manhattan" and ...

Just kidding!

Among them were "Ben-Hur," "Chariots of Fire" and "Fantasia."

There’s no shortage of "best movie" lists from publications, critics, actors and just plain folks. The advantage of checking a few of them from time to time is they offer two reminders:

First: There have been many great movies.

And second: It’s easy to have overlooked some of those motion pictures or forgotten about them. "Discovering" a good film -- even one made half a century or more ago -- is a treat. (And let’s be honest. So is finalizing your own "Top 10" list can be a pleasant, and challenging, task. You can have each of the kids make his or her own.

2. Odds are you can find some of those favorites at the local public library. (Yes, you may have to reserve some. You can’t expect to just walk in and find a popular classic on the shelf. Probably, you can make reservations over the Internet.) That’s also where you can get some of the "best films" you’ve never seen.

3. Remember that friends and extended family may also have some good movies that they’d be happy to loan to you. Arrange an exchange. Tell them what’s available in your family’s library.

4. For cheap, indoor entertainment on a cold winter’s weekend, you can plan a "family film festival." Watch three Hitchcock movies. Or three films with Tom Hanks. Or Disney, Disney, Disney! (And, of course, the best film festivals don’t scrump when it comes to food. Bonus points if what’s being served somehow ties into the film. Lasagna with the "Godfather" saga, for example.)

5. For a real hoot, dig out and play those homemade family films, videotapes and DVDs: the recordings shot on vacation, at birthday parties and during the holidays. (Everyone looks so young! And so strangely dressed.)

On the Web: Getting Little Directors Started

It’s easier -- and cheaper! -- than ever for kids to make their own movies. (We’ve dabbled in this ourselves, setting up our JohnTheCaregiver channel on YouTube.) If the family has a computer, Internet access and even a very basic camera, you’re on your way! The camera probably came with some editing software. There’s also Windows Movie Maker (it comes with Windows and can be downloaded, too) and Apple’s iMovie (which comes with a Mac). A great, free audio program is Audacity: audacity.sourceforge.net.

ANSWERS
1. carpenters
2. Matthew
3. James
4. Moses
5. Lamentations
6. Elizabeth
7. Tut

"My New Year’s resolution is to eat more fruits and vegetables."

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Catholic News Service

from spending time with family, most would agree this day is with family, spending time with family and then recovering more than a month of running around preparing to spend time are also doomed to be forgotten by the majority of people.

Likewise, National Static all be forgiven if we overlook Fruitcake Toss Day and Festival all recognize, even if we don't celebrate them.

In truth, every day is important to somebody, even people who are peculiar. In fact, there is a Peculiar People Day (Jan.

Trivia for teens: Knowing those obscure, special days of the year

By Erick Rommel

If you look at a detailed calendar, it seems that every day is a celebration. Some days such as Arbor Day and May Day we all recognize, even if we don't celebrate them. Then there are those that are mostly overlooked. In the aftermath of Christmas and New Year's Day, I'm sure we can all be forgiven if we overlook Fruitcake Toss Day and Festival of Sleep Day; both fall on Jan. 3. Likewise, National Static Electricity Day (Jan. 9) and Penguin Awareness Day (Jan. 20) are also doomed to be forgotten by the majority of people.

What is so unique about these particular days?

The origins of Festival of Sleep Day are unknown. But after more than a month of running around preparing to spend time with family, spending time with family and then recovering from spending time with family, most would agree this day is needed.

The Angelus JANUARY 2009 Page 15

Jesus had been born in Bethlehem, the home of his father, Joseph. Because of the census the town was filled with other people who had also come to be counted. There were no rooms available at the inn, so Joseph and his wife Mary had to sleep in the stable. And that was where their son was born.

Shepherds who had seen an angel in the night sky came to see the baby. The angel told them, "For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Christ and Lord."

The shepherds told Mary and Joseph what they had seen, and they left praising God because they had seen a miraculous child.

When the time had come for Jesus to be purified according to the laws established by Moses, Joseph and Mary brought their son to the temple.

A man named Simeon, who lived in Jerusalem, was a faithful follower of God's commandments. He had seen a vision that he would not die before seeing the promised Messiah. He knew when he saw the baby Jesus that this was the Messiah.

He held Jesus in his arms, looked toward heaven and said, "Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in sight of all the peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel."

Mary was astonished to hear such words spoken by such an important man about her son, even though she knew Jesus was special.

Then Simeon looked at Mary and said, "Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted, so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

A prophetess named Anna was an old woman who spent most of her time fasting, praying and praising God. She stood close in order to see Jesus, and then she praised God for sending a child who would redeem Israel.

Then, after following all of the laws that applied to the birth of a child, Joseph and Mary returned to their home in Nazareth in Galilee.

Jesus grew up to be a strong, healthy boy who was wise and who was blessed by the favor of God.

JUST 4 KIDS

The baby Jesus is presented at the temple

Trivia for teens: Knowing those obscure, special days of the year

1. Why was Jesus brought to the temple?
   a. He was a new baby
   b. His parents were curious
   c. His parents were religious
   d. None of the above

2. Old Testament prophets: Isaiah, Matthew, Ezekiel

3. Disicples of Jesus: Peter, Moses, James


5. First man and woman: Adam, Elizabeth, Eve

6. Kings of Israel: Tut, Saul, David

7. Visitors to Jesus: shepherds, Wise Men, carpenters

BIBLE TRIVIA

Which holiday is more important from the church's point of view, Christmas or Easter?

Answer: Easter.

BIBLE ACCENT

The Old Testament -- the books about events that took place before the birth of Jesus -- has many references to a Messiah, or a person who would be a special spiritual leader sent from God. Some of the prophecies said this Messiah would be a descendant of David. The Gospel of Matthew lists the family tree of Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus, and proves that Joseph was a descendant of David.

Many of the people who were waiting for the Messiah to come thought he would be a powerful king and soldier who would conquer all of the oppressors and enemies of Israel. It was probably very difficult for them to accept that their Messiah had not been born in a palace surrounded by servants, but in a manger surrounded by animals.

The Bible tells us of the ministry of Jesus and the miracles he performed, the greatest of those being his resurrection from the dead, so that we might live.

BIBLE TRIVIA

Which holiday is more important from the church's point of view, Christmas or Easter?

Answer: Easter.

PUZZLE:

Cross out the one name in each list that does not belong with the other two. A hint has been provided for each list.

1. Visitors to Jesus: shepherds, Wise Men, carpenters
2. Old Testament prophets: Isaiah, Matthew, Ezekiel
4. Disciples of Jesus: Peter, Moses, James
6. The first man and woman: Adam, Elizabeth, Eve
7. Kings of Israel: Tut, Saul, David

JUST 4 KIDS

The baby Jesus is presented at the temple

Trivia for teens: Knowing those obscure, special days of the year

10. You may not care about the birthday of someone you don't know or that Jan. 8 is when extremely clean people celebrate Squirrel Appreciation Day (Jan. 21 -- I kid you not!).

Accepting the things that our friends and loved ones find interesting when we don't share the same passion isn't easy, especially when you're a teenager. During the years that you learn how to fit in with those around you, it's hard to admit you're the type of person who secretly celebrates Squirrel Appreciation Day (Jan. 21 -- I kid you not!).

There's another bit of insight many adults forget to share with teens, but I will. It doesn't get any easier as you grow older. You will always be surrounded by people who don't like the same music as you or the same movies or the same books. Some of those people will be your co-workers, others will be your best friends and one may even be your spouse.

Fitting in with those around you doesn't mean learning to share the same likes; it means learning how to communicate and become close -- professionally or personally -- despite different preferences.

If you look hard enough, there is a day out there for every interest you may have. Perhaps you're the type of person who likes to wash down your dessert from Chocolate Cake Day (Jan. 27) with a drink from Milk Day (Jan. 11 -- be sure to check the date on the carton). Maybe you're the type of person who enjoys putting your nose to the grindstone. Your day, then, would be Work Harder Day (Jan. 12).

Regardless of your interests, I hope we can all celebrate the happiness of others in the same way that we celebrate our own.

DiOrio brings healing Mass to Abilene, Midland

The Rev. Ralph DiOrio, a Roman Catholic priest known worldwide for his evangelization and healing ministry, will lead a healing service in Abilene from 7 - 9 p.m. Friday, February 13, at Sacred Heart Church, 837 Jeanette St., and from 1 p.m.- 5 p.m. February 15, at Midland Center, 105 N. Main, Midland.

Hosted by the Catholic Diocese of San Angelo, Sacred Heart Church in Abilene and Our Lady of San Juan Church in Midland, these events are free and open to the public.

Following Fr. DiOrio’s talks, in Midland, Mass will be celebrated at 3 p.m. by Most Rev. Michael Pfeifer, Bishop of the San Angelo Diocese.

DiOrio was ordained to the priesthood in 1957. He is an author, educator, and psychologist who began his healing ministry in 1977.

Known as the Apostolate of Divine Mercy and Healing, DiOrio’s nonprofit ministry is based in Worcester, MA. His ministry has been continuously supervised by the bishops of Worcester and is authorized by Vatican officials.

According to the Web site www.fatherdiorio.org, DiOrio is permitted to lead evangelization and healing services “as long as he preaches and teaches the mercy and love of Jesus Christ.”

DiOrio has healing services scheduled throughout the U.S. in 2009. He has recorded numerous audio cassettes and is the author of eight books.

The Rev. Frank Chavez, pastor of Our Lady of San Juan Church and a coordinator for the February 15 service, said he attended one of DiOrio’s healing services in San Antonio about five years ago.

“He (DiOrio) is a very simple, beautiful person,” Chavez said. “The Diocese is welcoming him back again.

Chavez said people of all religious denominations are welcome to attend the service, during which DiOrio will interact spontaneously with people in attendance. “Ordinary people will come who are looking for healing from their problems.”

Chavez said, “Other people will come hoping for physical healing. They are all trying to find the message of Jesus.”

Bishop Pfeifer calls Rev. Ralph DiOrio, “Truly a Man of God,” and a “Real Brother Priest”.

PADRE TAD

(Para 6)

viviendo en unión libre por muchos años. Ninguno de los dos había pensado seriamente en el matrimonio, pero un día se dan cuenta de que ella está embarazada. El joven, católico, decidió hablar con el sacerdote. Los tres se reunieron una tarde, platicaron largamente y al final decidieron que el aborto no era una opción. Hablaron también sobre la posibilidad de casarse en un futuro próximo.

Más tarde, ese mismo día, los papás de la muchacha visitaron a la pareja. Eran unos padres flexibles y habían aceptado bien la situación de que su hija viviera en unión libre. Durante la cena la joven comentó lo de su embarazo, y con esta revelación las cosas cambiaron. Cuando terminaron de cenar la mamá llevó a la hija aparte y le dijo: “Mira, tienes todo un futuro por delante. No te conviene pasar el resto de tu vida con este muchacho. Querida, tienes que abortar”.

A la mañana siguiente, los dos jóvenes regresaron a ver al sacerdote. El muchacho mencionó la conversación con la mamá de la joven y dijo que estaban reconsiderando la opción de abortar. “Ya habíamos tomado una decisión ayer”, dijo el sacerdote. “Y eso qué importancia tiene?, --contestó el muchacho--, puedo decidir algo el día de hoy y mañana cambiar de opinión". El sacerdote le respondió simplemente: “Para cierto tipo de decisiones no se puede cambiar de opinión. Si te retractas de esa decisión hoy, mañana ya no sabré quién eres...”. Esta respuesta desconcertó al muchacho, pero al reflexionar en ello más tarde, comprendió que el sacerdote tenía razón. Ciertos tipo de decisiones tocan hasta el mismo fondo de nuestro ser. Aceptar o rechazar la tentación a actuar gravemente mal, como lo es el abortar, toca nuestro corazón más profundamente que muchas

(Mira TAD/17)
KNICKERBOCKER: Priestly ordination scheduled for Jan. 28

(From 1)

p.m., at Sacred Heart Cathedral in San Angelo.

“I came to a conviction that the fullness of truth was to be found in the Catholic Church,” Knickerbocker said of his decision. “It’s not that other Christian communions don’t have truth, but I became convinced that the fullness of truth was in the Catholic Church.”

Knickerbocker’s realization was a long routine, starting with his ordination as a Methodist minister in 1966. In 1972 he completed his Ph.D. in Church History at Emory University and in 1973 he began teaching at Memphis Seminary.

Knickerbocker will be the first married man to be ordained a priest for the Diocese of San Angelo. In 1993-94, the Knickerbockers became members of the Roman Catholic Church. After careful review and prayer, Knickerbocker requested to become a Roman Catholic priest in September 2005.

Pfeifer, who has worked for several years to prepare Knickerbocker to become a Catholic priest, said, “I am very happy that finally my good friend can be ordained a deacon and priest of the Roman Catholic Church. It pleases me to know that he and his wife have sought to use the special ‘Pastoral Provision’ of Pope John Paul II to become, not only members of the Roman Catholic Church, but that Knick can become a priest. There is no finer candidate for the diaconate and priesthood than Knick and I ask God’s blessings upon him and his good wife.”

Knickerbocker’s duties will be sacramental in nature; he will not be designated the pastor of a church but will assist in both Junction and Menard.

Although Knickerbocker will be the first resident priest designated in Junction in more than 25 years. With the parish’s pastor, Fr. Michael Udegbumun, who lives in Menard, there will be fewer gaps in the sacramental ministry, which can often occur when a priest is assigned to multiple parishes and lives elsewhere. Junction and Menard will continue to also benefit from the services of Deacon Tim Graham, who will continue to perform baptisms, weddings, funerals and quinceneras, as well as assisting and preaching at the Eucharistic celebrations on Sundays. Graham noted Junction and Menard Catholics should no longer have to resort to the “Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest (SCAP)” as has happened on occasion prior to Knickerbocker’s arrival.

“Weekday masses will be covered better and visits to the sick and homebound will be enhanced a great deal,” Graham said. “Eucharistic Adoration, which we have on first Fridays) will benefit from his availability when I am not in town. Sacred Heart parish in Menard will benefit in much the same way. A concrete example is the fact that between the two parishes we have always had to split midnight mass and the Easter Vigil. We won’t have to do that any longer.

Knickerbocker taught Church History and Christian Spirituality on the faculty of Memphis Theological Seminary, a Cumberland Presbyterian school in Memphis, Tenn., for 32 years. After becoming a Roman Catholic, Sandie Knickerbocker worked for Catholic Charities and then served on the staff of the Seminary in the Doctor of Ministry program. The ordination to the diaconate and priesthood of Knickerbocker is in accord with the 1981 decision by the Holy See to make an exception to the general rule calling only non-married men to priesthood.

The “Pastoral Provision” which was established by Pope John Paul II, was adopted especially for use in the United States and has also been extended to England and other countries where bishops have requested special permission to ordain former married Anglican or Episcopalian ministers to the Roman Catholic Church.

Knickerbocker said that it was teaching Church History, as well as other factors, that led him to the Episcopal Church and, ultimately, the Catholic Church. The decision to allow married Episcopalian clergy to serve as priests in the Roman Catholic Church respects not only the decision of their conscience that requires them to profess a fully Catholic faith in the Catholic Church but also their call to ministry, accepted in good faith, in their tradition that permitted a married priesthood.

In providing this exception to individual married clergymen, the Holy Father and the Bishops of the United States wanted to make sure that everyone understood that celibacy remains the normal tradition for priests in the Western Church.

“While with Dr. Knickerbocker is that he is a former professor of church history and brings with him a marvelous skill in adult educational efforts,” Graham said. “I can’t wait to get him in the saddle. Knick and Sandie, are terrific assets to the entire diocese, and I am excited that they will remain at St. Theresa’s as their assigned parish. As parochial vicar, Knick will certainly be a busy man, working with Fr. Michael and me to build God’s kingdom in the Hill Country.”

Knickerbocker’s diaconate ordination, December 28, occurred on his 70th birthday.

ROUSE: Life issue really a faith issue

(From 1)

of Midland’s Life Center, was working as a model at a country club in Odessa when her change of heart began; the modeling job benefited Planned Parenthood and Rouse said another model came in and adamantly expressed her anger over the presence of picketing pro-life supporters outside. Admitting even today that she didn’t draw much of a distinction about life or choice at the time, Rouse now admits it was at that precise instant that God “put in my fuzzy little brain” that the issue was about more than a decision of life and death.

“It’s about family, and the unraveling of family,” she said. “And as I’ve seen now in what has been 16 years of working at The Life Center, the decision to sustain a life is a faith issue.”

January 2009 marks the 36th anniversary of the landmark Roe v. Wade decision, which made abortion legal. Today, after millions of abortions, Rouse said a woman’s decision to sustain a life or to terminate the life of an infant “is about more than ‘Should I have this child or not?’ “It goes deeper than that,” she said. “The root is ‘Do I believe in God or not?’ If we don’t believe in God, and that He created life, how can we make that choice well? If that is not taught and that is not the understanding then the option is obviously abortion.”

Rouse said the abortion vs. life issue in our culture today has evolved into a faith issue.

“The genesis of the whole original abortion issue to me is that people don’t believe life is sanctified,” Rouse said.

The Life Center in Midland offers education programs throughout West Texas. Visit www.pbwrc.org for more information, or to speak with someone at the center, call 432.683.6072.
BISHOP: Intrinsically evil actions must be always rejected

(From 2)

to pray for all the precious unborn who have been destroyed through abortion since abortion was made legal by the terrible court decision, Roe v. Wade, in 1973. We are to pray for an end of abortion throughout our country and the world, and especially at the terrible death center of Planned Parenthood in Midland, which every Friday destroys precious human life. There are nearly one and a half million abortions reported annually in the United States, and Planned Parenthood performs more abortions than any other agency. And only God knows how many more go unreported. We pray also that all parents, especially women who are contemplating an abortion decision, will have the courage to keep and love that precious unborn life made in the image and likeness of God, or place the little ones up for adoption.

Let me read to you the following statement: “An abortion kills the life of a baby after it has begun. It is dangerous to your life and health.” Who do you think said this? This is a statement that comes from Planned Parenthood in 1963, some 45 years ago. Planned Parenthood knew the truth then, and Planned Parenthood knows the truth today that the unborn is indeed a baby, but refuses to admit this fact that is proven more and more by medical research and that is based on the very word of God that we heard proclaimed for our mass today. Ask Planned Parenthood why they have radically changed their position on the unborn?

Abortion is the most pressing moral issue of our time. Like slavery once did, abortion unjustifiably denies the legal personhood of an entire segment of human society, and again like slavery, abortion is intrinsically evil. Abortion always takes the innocent life of an unborn child and it almost always degrades and demean the life of the mother, long term. Abortion is completely against human nature, particularly against the nurturing nature of most women. Abortion causes many more societal problems. Every human being is created by God and has an inherent right to life.

The U.S. Catholic Bishops, in their document entitled, “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States,” state that “intrinsically evil actions…must always be rejected and opposed and must never be supported or condoned. A prime example is the intentional taking of human life, as in abortion and euthanasia. In our nation, abortion and euthanasia have become pre-eminent threats to the sanctity and dignity of human life, such as human cloning and destructive research on human embryos, are also intrinsically evil. They must always be opposed.”

The bishops’ document refers to the moral framework and gives the principles for Catholic engagement in political life, which anchors the Catholic commitments to defend life, from conception until natural death and the fundamental moral obligation to respect the dignity of every person as a child of God.

Sadly, abortion has been given legal recognition in our country. This human law violates a higher law of God as regards human life and this is why we must never cave in to pressure to support a human law that is immoral and is flawed in this very principle.

In closing, I leave for your reflection what we can do each day to love, defend and promote human life that is a precious gift to be loved and defended in each and every one of its stages. I offer these concrete recommendations hopefully for your implementation:

- Pray every day that our nation will again respect the lives of every human being from the moment of conception to natural death. Pray every day especially that God will show us the ways and means to bring closure to those places where the innocent unborn are destroyed especially closure to the death center of Planned Parenthood in Midland, Texas. I ask that at every Sunday mass, specific prayers be offered for peace, for a new respect for human life and an end to abortion.
- Learn the facts about abortion. Read Catholic magazines and read the West Texas Angelus in which we feature many pro-life articles. Also read the news that comes from Life Insights and other educational materials that are available from the bishops’ secretariat for pro-life activities.
- Communicate with one another. Believing in our hearts that abortion and infanticide are evil and beneath our dignity as people is not enough. We must speak out when we can. It is in speaking with others that we can help them to understand and touch their hearts with a message of respect for human life. We need to speak out through the media about the evil of abortion.
- Let women who have had an abortion know that we welcome them with prayer and support. In the Gospel of Life, Pope John Paul II shares these words of hope. He says, “The wound in your heart may not have healed and certainly what happened was and remains terribly wrong. But do not give into the discouragement and do not lose hope.”

Serve with the gifts that God has given you. Programs that serve pregnant women and children always need extra hands and funds. Offer to help. Help especially our Pro-Life Center in Midland and San Angelo, and others in the diocese. Help for women and men suffering because of abortion require special expertise and we need to help them find it. I encourage also that you offer spiritual assistance, and social and financial assistance, to promote our pro-life cause.

Organize on behalf of life. The most effective vehicle for building a community that respects each and every human life is to build up and make strong the inter-parish Pro-Life Committee that we have in Midland, and I encourage other cities to form similar committees. These committees need much more support from our priests, Knights of Columbus, and other pastoral leaders and more people need to be involved. We need to organize our parishioners and encourage them to pray and to develop educational pro-life activities, and also we need to be more involved in the public arena with the media and with our public officials.

I end by sharing for your reflection the inspired words of God about the unborn from the scriptural readings that we hear proclaimed in our mass:

“Truly you have formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother’s womb.”

“I give you thanks that I am fearfully, wonderfully made; wonderful are your works.”

SICK: We must accept God’s will, following prayer model of Mother Mary

(From 4)

right and just to respect that right. We have stewardship of human life, but not dominion over it.

Christ calls all to sanctification by putting love into action and caring for the sick is a beautiful way of accomplishing this goal and allowing ourselves to become signs of God’s love. Care of the sick also promotes attitudes of healing and protection, rather than eliminating human life. Our caring witness undermines the false assumption that we eliminate suffering by eliminating suffering people. The existence of precious and irrepeable beings, through poor, sick, or vulnerable, is not a “problem”; it is a call to put our faith into loving action and service. Instead of avoiding the suffering of those around us and resenting the inconvenience they present, we are called to turn toward them and bring them the hope of God’s healing and grace.

The sick and those who care for them need not bear these burdens meaninglessly. They can unite their daily struggles with those of Christ as explained by Pope Benedict XVI, “Pain received with faith becomes the door by which to enter the mystery of the redemptive suffering of Jesus and to reach with Him the peace and happiness of His resurrection.” We all owe a big “thank you” to the countless health, medical and spiritual personnel and caregivers who serve with compassion and love the sick and suffering. And, we also assure them of our prayers.

Our Blessed Mother is our prayerful model for acceptance of God’s will. Following her example, we learn to bear suffering and pain with hope, love, and meaning. It is fitting that this 17th World Day of the Sick falls on the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. Just as pilgrims to Lourdes have experienced spiritual and physical healing through Mary’s intercession, may we receive strength from God to embrace the suffering in our lives. Through this and our care for the sick, we become an inspiring witness to God’s precious gift of life.
PATTERSON: God’s grace can explain a lot

It all sounds a lot like three years ago when my mother died. None of us in the family had been through such pain before and losing a mother was, while expected at the time, still very difficult to deal with.

On the day of her funeral as I looked out across those gathered to pay their respects I saw the faces of people I hadn’t seen in 25 years. Old friends who had driven 300 miles or flown 1,200 miles to be there. It was a site and an experience I will never forget; to know that people care so much. People are good deep down. The good on this earth far outweighs the bad.

God’s grace.
All it can be.
OBISPO

(Para 3)

Wade y de deshacerse de las protecciones legales que se han ganado y que han sido puestas en lugar para los niños no nacidos. Hoy mismo nuestros dólares de impuestos federales no son usados para pagar abortos o para fundar abortos en otros países. Hoy, la mayoría de los estados han declarado ilegal el aborto por “nacimiento parcial” y requieren que los padres de menores de edad que buscan aborto sean notificados. Ahora hay leyes en varios estados que protegen la libertad religiosa de las instituciones de salud y la libertad de conciencia de los trabajadores que se oponen al aborto. Todo eso y mas sería borrado con un plumazo si el Congreso aprueba el “Acta de Libertad de Escoger” (Freedom of Choice Act, FOCA) y si nuestro nuevo Presidente lo firma y aprueba como ley. Nadie debería ser forzado a cooperar en el mal del aborto.

Trabajando – como debemos lo estamos haciendo – para eliminar las condiciones sociales que pueden conducir al aborto no nos absorve de trabajar por la protección legal del no nacido. No es una u otra. Tenemos que hacer ambas. El bienestar común de nuestro país es bien servido solo cuando la vida de cada niño no nacido sea protegida legalmente.

En este asunto, la protección legal del no nacido, los obispos son de una mente con los católicos y otros de buena fe. También son pastores que han escuchado a mujeres quienes sus vidas han disminuido porque creían que no tenían otra opción más que de abortar el niño. El aborto es un procedimiento médico que mata, y las consecuencias sicológicas y espirituales están escritas en la tristeza y depresión de muchos hombres y mujeres. Los obispos son de una mente en este asunto porque son, primeramente, de un corazón.

Miramos hacia los que elegimos para guardar y proteger el derecho humano de todos dado por Dios. Estamos listos para apoyar y asistirlos en este esfuerzo. Matando un niño no nacido por medio del aborto o por la investigación destructiva del embrión es intrínsecamente malo y nunca podría ser justificado. El fallar en proteger las vidas de los inocentes y los miembros más indefensos de nuestra sociedad es un pecado grave contra la justicia. Los que formulan la ley tienen una obligación de conciencia de trabajar y tratar de corregir leyes injustas. De otra manera, son culpables de cooperate con lo malo y están pecando en contra el buen común. El hecho es, el apoyo político para el aborto respalda el mal del aborto. Y el mal del aborto es conocido por razón, ciencia y simple observación. Esta misma verdad humana también es reconocida por las enseñanzas de la Iglesia.

Urgimos a los oficiales Católicos que abrasen su obligación moral para asegurar protección legal para los derechos de los niños no nacidos. Les damos las gracias a los que continúan estar de pie con nosotros en esta larga batalla. Pedimos a los líderes políticos Católicos cuya posición del aborto y la investigación que destruye la...
Midland

The Student Council at St. Ann’s School in Midland, below, recently held a toy drive to benefit children at Midland Fair Havens and Safe Place.

Abilene

Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer with the 2008 confirmation class from Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Abilene. Confirmation at Sacred Heart was celebrated in October.

Abilene

On Dec. 8, 2008, active members of Legion of Mary – Our Lady, Queen of Peace Praesidium of Sacred Heart Abilene renewed their Legionary promise in front of their congregation during the Feast of Immaculate Conception. They promised to serve their apostolic work under the patroness of Mother Mary and be faithful servants to Her.

Seated, Pat Johnson, Kim Nguyen, Juanita Gomez. Standing: Jim & Vicci King, Lucia De Hoyos, Mary Lou Sipe.

Rowena

Members of the Confirmation Class of St. Joseph, Rowena, are shown with a small portion of the food items which they sorted and delivered to the needy of the community for Thanksgiving. Parishioners of St. Joseph donated non-perishable food items during the Thanksgiving season. Cash donations were used to purchase fresh vegetable and fruits. The confirmation students delivered food items to the needy again during the Christmas season. Confirmation teachers are Norma Multer and Jana Halfmann.