Diocesan Conference Day to focus on Vatican II

Annual Conference Day is scheduled for Saturday, February 9, in San Angelo.

West Texas Angelus

SAN ANGELO — The annual Diocesan Conference Day will be held on February 9, 2013, at the San Angelo McNease Convention Center. The theme will be Memory and Reform: Vatican II – Fifty Years Later. The keynote speaker will be Sister Maureen Sullivan, OP (pictured at left). Breakout sessions will focus on Vatican II and the New Evangelization; Year of Faith and Christian Initiation. This day will challenge us to keep the spirit of (Please See CONFERENCE/22)

Tragedy in America

Newtown, CT, December 14, 2012

Pope expresses grief, calls for peace

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — After 20 children and six adults were shot dead in Connecticut, Pope Benedict XVI offered his condolences and prayers, urging all to dedicate themselves to acts of peace in the face of such "senseless violence."

After reciting the Angelus Dec. 17, the pope, speaking in English, said he was "deeply saddened" by the Dec. 14 shooting at an elementary school in Newtown, Conn. In addition to the students and staff killed, the gunman took his own life.

"I assure the families of the victims, especially those who lost a child, of my closeness in prayer," he said. "May the God of consolation touch their hearts and ease their pain."

Just before blessing the Nativity-scene statues of the baby Jesus that Italian children brought to the square, Pope Benedict urged people to use the rest of

Bishop’s statement on Newtown tragedy

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

As I have already expressed my sorrowful reflections to you, the people of the Diocese of San Angelo, through a letter I sent to all the priests of the diocese about the shooting tragedy at the school in Newtown, Conn., I add these words of condolence and plead that we all continue to offer prayers for all those who have been affected by this horrible massacre of innocent children:

(Please See NEWTOWN/22)
55 million unborn children have lost their lives through abortion

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

January 22, 2013 marks the 40th anniversary of the most deadly decision of the highest Court of our land, the Supreme Court, that has given mere humans the legal permission to kill the precious unborn at any stage of their development. Since the Roe v. Wade decision, 55 million unborn children in our country have lost their lives, and nearly always for the sake of the convenience of their parents, families, and communities. For accepting, condoning and participating in these deaths, countless people have been wounded by the part they have played, and society as a whole suffers from a general cheapening of human life that we see played out in so many areas.

Since that deadly decision 40 years ago, we have been descending as a country progressively and imperceptibly into a culture of death. But while we contemplate the great loss of human life over the past 40 years, we must never forget God’s great mercy and God’s promise of hope for the future. And we must remember that as people of God and as brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, we must constantly pray, work, and use every effort to overturn this deadly decision made by mere human beings which directly violates a Commandment of God: Thou shall not kill.

From everything we read in the Bible, it is our solid and constant belief that each human being, from the very beginning, from the moment of conception, is made in the image and likeness of God. This is the starting point for our pro-life ministry. Many biblical quotations could be offered to support our belief, but I call to your minds what we hear the Prophet Isaiah say, “The Lord called me from birth, from my mother’s womb He gave me my name.” Hence, all humans have an inviolable right to life from the moment of conception until natural death.

(Please See BISHOP/20)
America’s pornography of violence

By Jimmy Patterson

In the midst of the fervor of the angry and saddened, whose voices rang out in the wake of the shootings that took 26 lives in Newtown, Conn., it was Mike Huckabee who got it right.

His quote wasn’t necessarily original, nor unanimously agreed with: How can we ask where God was that day, when we have spent the last several decades finding new ways to keep him out of the public square?

"Maybe we ought to let God in on the front end and we wouldn’t have to call him to show up when it’s all said and done at the back end," Huckabee said.

His sentiments were immediately disputed by atheists and mainstream journalists, perhaps simply out of a need to disagree and challenge. Those who took exception to his words likened Huckabee’s God to “a monster”; a God that would not help in times of greatest need simply because he had been turned away. Others said Huckabee blamed God for turning his back on us since we have largely turned our backs on him.

As a good friend eloquently stated, "God does not need us in order to be God. Yet, you and I need God in order to become the responsible adult He desires us to become."

Those who would dispute Huckabee just don’t get it. The God you and I worship does not allow such evil. Yet when he is systematically removed from our daily consciousness and from the lives of shooters who kill simply for the sake of killing, be they deranged or sane, these horrors will continue. The only way God can prevent these violent rages is if He is in the hearts and minds of His people. Only then will we have a chance — perhaps with the next generation or the one after — to return to a time where we live daily in a culture of life instead of the culture of death Pope John Paul II pegged us as being in the midst of in 1993.

Not knowing if there is an answer to the question that will prove a be-all and end-all to violence, Huckabee at least addressed what seems to be the one answer to why this happened and why it very well could happen again: Until we change the very way we look at life, we cannot prevent it because, he said, the shooters responsible for these travesties literally place no value in life.

Huckabee, the former governor of Arkansas, is now a commentator for FOX. It was obvious he, like all of us, was deeply moved and saddened by the senselessness of the murders. Huckabee did not spend much time trying to pin the blame on gun laws or mental illness, though it seems clear there is mental illness involved here.

I asked a family member who is in law enforcement how a person can continue to kill people and not have something click in his mind that "... this is wrong. I can no longer do this." Such behavior is incomprehensible to most people.

"It is unless you’ve been spending your days in a room playing video games where you kill people all day long without consequence," he said.

If you are immersed even slightly in our culture, you cannot escape the ever-present violent images. Turn on a television for even a moment and you will see any number of examples, from physical assaults, to bravado, macho posturing, verbal abuse and untold other examples. It is a new pornography for a society that sees no harm in the undoing of others, no matter the cost.

This imagery is everywhere, and until we trade in secularism and humanism for faith in a God who is love, instances that break our hearts and cause us to question His presence and even His existence will continue.

Del Escriptorio del Obispo

La justicia economica mana de la llamada de Jesus a ver su rostro en los mas abandonados

[Lo que hicieron con el mas pequeno de mis hermanos, lo hicieron conmigo. – Jesus]

Obispo Miguel Pfeifer, OMI

A todos mis estimados hermanos y hermanas en Cristo:
Al darnos cuenta, de estos tiempos de dureza economica para todos, tanto a nivel nacional y estatal, nuestra economia dañada, impacta especialmente la vida de nuestra gente que sufre de pobreza, vulnerabilidad, y recibe una mínima asistencia de parte del gobierno. En conjunto con otros representantes de las iglesias locales, quiero asegurarles que estoy enterado de esta situación tan critica, y que me comprometo para trabajar en conjunto con los dirigentes del Gobierno, Iglesias y Agencias Sociales, para asistir a sus familias que sufren en estos tiempos dificiles.

Primero me quiero asegurar de mis oraciones continuas, pidiéndole a Jesus nuestro Buen Pastor, que nos guie con un nuevo espíritu de seguridad y confianza al trabajar en conjunto para obtener una solución a la situación económica que oprime a muchos. Este es el tiempo de comprometeros de ser fieles a estar presentes en la Eucaristia, la Misa, donde escuchamos sobre las muchas enseñanzas de la Iglesia Católica sobre la justicia y el cuidado de los pobres, los que pasan hambre, los sedientos, los enfermos, y recibir a Jesucristo que nos de fuerza y luz para trabajar por un cambio social, poniendo más atención a los necesitados y olvidados. Al emprender esta labor, siguiendo las enseñanzas de Jesus, veo en sus rostros de sufrimiento el mismo rostro de Jesus. Estoy enterado del gran sacrificio que ustedes, los pobres y vulnerables hacen por el bienestar de sus familias, muchos de ustedes realizan trabajos muy dificiles, y reciben salarios miserables.

(Mira OBISPO/21)
Now is the time to support life as much as Nellie Gray did

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

As we mark the 40th anniversary of the deadly Roe v. Wade decision, Bishop Michael Pfeifer of the Diocese of San Angelo, calls it the Nellie Gray Pro-Life Ministry of the Diocese of San Angelo.

Nellie Gray, a simple but courageous and daring woman from Big Spring and baptized in Stanton, took up the cause of the unborn, proclaiming the sinfulness and evil of abortion by beginning the huge March For Life that is held every year on the date of the decision of the Supreme Court. To remember Nellie Gray, I will be at that big March For Life in Washington this year and also celebrate the huge Pro-Life Mass that will be offered at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception on the Vigil of the March For Life.

For her outstanding service and dedication to the March For Life, Boston’s Cardinal Sean O’Malley stated that Nellie Gray is “…the Martin Luther King, Jr. of the Pro-Life civil movement.” He also proclaimed that “She is the Joan of Arc of the Gospel of Life.”

My brothers and sisters in Christ, and especially my brother Knights of Columbus and members of our Diocesan Pro-Life Committee, what a great model and heroine we have in the person, and her outstanding service for protecting the unborn, in Nellie Gray. She should inspire all of us in this Year of Faith to put our faith into action, especially our belief in the sacredness and dignity of all human life beginning at conception and every stage of human life.

As we prepare for the 40th anniversary of the terrible decision of our Supreme Court, may we, like Nellie Gray, not only pray during Mass and individually for an end to abortion, but put our faith in action by writing letters and columns to our newspapers and government leaders, by using the electronic media to send messages, by speaking out more in public against the evil of abortion, by marching, and by continuing our prayers in front of the Planned Parenthood centers. May Nellie Gray be the inspiration for all of us to show much more public witness for the cause of life. And may she inspire us to reach out with love, with compassion, understanding, with medical, emotional, financial and spiritual help to all women who are struggling with a pregnancy decision.

Deadly Anniversary

January 22 is the 40th anniversary of the Roe v. Wade decision. Bishop Michael Pfeifer’s Schedule in observance of the decision is as follows:

SAN ANGELO
Tuesday, January 22, 12 Noon — Pro-Life Mass, Cathedral of the Sacred Heart

MIDLAND
Wednesday, January 23, 12 Noon — Rosary with the Bishop. Meet at St. Ann’s Commons and walk to Planned Parenthood.

WASHINGTON
January 24-25 — March for Life

Economic justice stems from Jesus’ call to see face in most abandoned

‘Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.’ — Jesus

By Most Rev. Michael D. Pfeifer
Bishop of San Angelo

As we realize, these are tough economic times for all, both at a national and state level, and our wounded economy especially impacts the lives of you, our people who are already poor, vulnerable, and receive little government assistance. I, along with other Church leaders, want to assure you that I am aware of this critical situation, and that I pledge myself to work with all government leaders, Church and social agencies, to assist you and your families who suffer the most in these trying times.

I first want to assure you of my constant prayers, asking Jesus, our Good Shepherd, to guide all of us with a new spirit of confidence, trust, and courage as we work together to bring solutions to the economic situations that oppress so many. This is a time to recommit ourselves to be faithful to being present at the Eucharist, the Mass, where we hear about the Catholic Church’s many teachings on justice and care for the poor, the hungry, the thirsty, the sick, and receive Jesus Himself who gives us the strength, the light and courage to work to change our society, giving more attention to the needy and forgotten. As we go about this task, following the teaching of Christ, I see in your suffering faces the very face of Jesus Himself. I am well aware of the great sacrifices that you, the poor and vulnerable make for your family’s well being. Many of you perform very difficult jobs, and receive miserable salaries and little or no health insurance or social security. I am aware of the pain suffered by you as you search for decent housing, medical care, food and education for your families. I pledge myself to encourage government and Church leaders to assist you with the means available. Your situation indeed cries out to God for a worthy and human solution, and I invite all of you to work together to find these solutions.

I remind you in a brief manner of the critical economic situation at a national level, as we focus on the needs of the poor right here in Texas. Our President and Congress must reset the national discussion, to focus on the common good, by breaking the legislative loglock that has the greatest negative impact on the poor, on families and on children. More than ever, the social safety net of Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid must be strengthened so that the vulnerable will not be abandoned and the priority of jobs, and the huge national deficit and debt must be addressed.

As Americans, of course, we are all concerned about the precarious national scene, but our primary focus must be to work with state government leaders at all levels, and Church and social agencies to help the poor and vulnerable of our dioceses in the state of Texas. So it is in a spirit of solidarity with the you, the poor, that I and other religious leaders, want to work to find solutions to the poverty situation in Texas. To know how and where to respond with Christ’s love and compassion and service to assist the poorest and abandoned, let me review the current situation in Texas. The Bishops of Texas will be actively working with the legislature on these particular issues:

Poverty: Nearly one in five Texans lives below the poverty line (18.5%), according to the most recent U.S. Census data estimates. One in four of those living in poverty are children.

Three-point-five million Texas families received Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funding monthly.

Health Care: Eligibility to the Texas Medicaid program is narrowly limited to children, those with disabilities, and the poorest in our state. Children comprise the largest percentage of the program’s clients. Over 3 million Texas children are enrolled in Medicaid, the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and CHIP Perinatal in Texas.

Uninsured: Texas has the highest rate of uninsured people in the entire United States. Twenty-five percent of Texans did not have health insurance last year, a total of 5.8 million people. Sixty-one percent of those uninsured were employed and 64 percent are native born United States citizens. These high numbers demonstrate that the current system of providing health care is inadequate and issues regarding access and quality must be addressed.

Unemployment: While the Texas unemployment rate of 6.8 percent continues to be lower than the national unemployment rate, leaders must continue to ensure that unemployed and underemployed workers are offered support, assistance, just and decent working conditions, as job creation efforts are pursued. The effects of long-term
The Year of Faith: Second Vatican Council

The nuts and bolts of Vatican II

By Rev. Joe Uecker, C.PP.S.

So what is an ecumenical council? An ecumenical council is a meeting, principally of bishops, that, in Christ’s name, makes decisions binding on the whole Church.

- A council is more than a gathering. There is a specific purpose and business for the gathering and decisions are made.
- The meeting is composed principally of bishops. The first eight councils were not called by the pope, but by the emperor or empress. At Vatican II, there were many theologians and observers present.
- A council makes decisions about faith.
- In Christ’s name: Jesus promised to always be with the Church till the end of time.
- These decisions are binding. If decisions regarding belief and morals are made in Christ’s name, they are binding. They may be explained more carefully or clarified, but not rescinded.

In the aspects described above, all councils are the same, but in other aspects, Vatican II stands out as a special council. Let’s see how.

On an average day during the Council, there were some 2,400 in attendance. So how does this compare with Vatican I in 1869? About 750 attended. The Council of Trent, in 1545, opened with just 29 bishops and the greatest number was about 200. The Church had never seen such a large gathering of churchmen as at Vatican II.

Where did they come from at Vatican II? Thirty-six percent from Europe, 34 percent from the Americas, 20 percent from Asia and Oceania and 10% from Africa.

The meetings were held in the central nave of St. Peter’s Basilica and it was crowded. Besides the bishops, there were periti or theological experts. Probably the best known (now) of these periti was Fr. Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI. As I was writing this, I stopped to think that he is one of the few people still alive who participated in the Council. He was 35 when the Council began and he’s now 85. He is in a unique position because he can say: “I know what went on; I was there.”

How much did all this cost and who paid for all of it? The sound system, restrooms, coffee bars, furnishings, seating arrangements and much more probably cost around a million dollars. Think back to 1960 when you could buy a gallon of gas for less than 20¢ and you get some kind of an idea as to how much that would be in today’s money. And that does not include the travel to and from the Council, the room and board for the bishops and others. Those expenses were paid for by each diocese. But many dioceses could not afford those things, so the Vatican picked up the tab for much of this. The Church in Germany and the Church in the United States both contributed generously to cover the expenses. During the Council, the question of cost was never raised as a reason for curtailting the agenda or for speeding up the discussions. Nonetheless, Vatican II was a tremendous strain on the finances of the Holy See, a fact that surely strengthened Pope Paul’s resolve to close the Council after the fourth period.

Lo Ordinario del Vaticano II

By Rev. Joe Uecker, C.PP.S.

Entonces, ¿qué es un concilio ecuménico? Un concilio ecuménico es una reunión, principalmente de obispos, que en el nombre de Cristo, hace decisiones para toda la Iglesia.

- Un concilio es más que una reunión. Hay un propósito especial y asuntos especiales para la reunión y se hacen decisiones.
- La reunión se compone principalmente de obispos. Los primeros ocho concilios no fueron convocados por el papa, sino por el emperador o emperatriz. En el Vaticano II, hubo presentes muchos teólogos y observadores.
- Un concilio hace decisiones tocante la fe.
- En el nombre de Cristo: Jesús prometió estar siempre con la Iglesia hasta el fin del mundo.
- Estas decisiones son obligatorias. Si las decisiones tocante la fe y la moral se hacen en nombre de Cristo, son obligatorias. Pueden ser explicadas más cuidadosamente o clarificadas, pero no negadas.

En los aspectos descritos arriba, todos los Concilios son iguales, pero en otros aspectos, Vaticano II destaca como un concilio especial. Veamos cómo.

(Please See VATICANO/23)

Pope John XXII declares the Second Vatican Council open

El Concilio Comienza

By Rev. Joe Uecker, C.PP.S.

El mes pasado vimos la composición del Concilio Segundo Vaticano. Ahora es el momento de juntarnos con la procesión solemne de obispos y otros al abrirse solemnemente el Concilio. A las 8:30 de la mañana del 11 de octubre de 1962, la procesión de obispos comenzó a cruzar la gran plaza, llenísima de gente, aplaudiendo y aclamando. No solamente los miles de personas en la plaza de San Pedro, sino también millones más eran testigos de este evento por medio de la tv. ¡Qué reunión! Más de 2,500 Padres del Concilio seguidos por el Papa Juan XXIII con gran sonrisa, llevado en una silla especial que se usaba para estas ocasiones. Habiendo entrado en la basílica, el Papa Juan bajó de la silla, se puso de rodillas y comenzó el himno Veni.

(Please See CONCILIO/18)
Educational Counseling

The gift of Professional Learning Communities

By Judy Knight
JKLM Educational Consulting

Learning is the gift that keeps on giving. The teachers at Angelo Catholic School recognize that fact and look for ways to ensure ALL their students achieve at high levels. In fact, these teachers model lifelong learning for their community. The teachers at ACS embarked on an incredible learning journey when they attended a Professional Learning Community (PLC) training in August of 2012. They learned about the three big ideas of PLCs: focus on learning, collaborative culture, and focus on results.

A PLC sometimes consists of grade level teachers meeting together to share ideas and focus on what students need to know, what to do if students already know it and what to do if students need more time to attain the goal. ACS, however, with two campuses and one class per grade, has improvised the PLC “model.” ACS has two PLCs, one for the Primary Campus (PC), which houses the three year olds through first grade classes, and one for the Elementary Campus (EC), which houses second through sixth grade.

At the first training, the teachers decided to focus on reading this year. The PLC members had an article to read for their first PLC meeting. The article helped them understand better what the PLC should accomplish. Texas Tech Curriculum and Instruction (C&I) Ph.D. students Judy Knight and Twyla Tasker were available to the teachers and guided them through the process. Minutes of each meeting were emailed to Principal Lucy Thomas, Knight, and Tasker.

Follow-up training sessions were held using the school’s early release days to continue and build on the learning process. In September, the teachers participated in a follow-up session to find out how their teams were “stacking up professionally” by doing a fun, interactive cup stacking game. Team building was a major focus of this session. The October trainings included an educational outing at a local public school where the ACS teachers got to see a demonstration of a “live” PLC meeting in progress. The teachers also visited many classrooms during their visit and walked away with a plethora of ideas to take back and use in their classrooms. The ACS teachers also noted likenesses and differences in what is taught and how it is taught at the public schools and at ACS. The teachers on each campus have weekly PLC meetings where they discuss best practices and ways to improve their teaching for the ultimate benefit of their students. As the PLCs continue, teachers go into each others’ classrooms to observe and help each other with feedback concerning best practices and techniques.

As with all learning, the ACS teachers are not finished; the meetings continue, and they discover in the PLC room, there is an amazing amount of knowledge. When the teachers share their knowledge with each other, instead of going into their classrooms and closing the door, the students are the ones to benefit. Not only are the teachers growing professionally, they are modeling for their students that learning is a lifelong process, and we learn more when we work together.

The coming of Christ in silence

By Adam Droll
Seminarian / Diocese of San Angelo

One of the most formative experiences of my seminary career thus far undoubtedly has been a 10-week summer program held at Creighton University in Omaha, Neb., called the Institute of Priestly Formation (IPF). At IPF, seminarians from across the country and even internationally come and participate in a program focused on the spirituality of priesthood and are trained in the prayer methods of St. Ignatius of Loyola which includes an eight-day silent retreat based on his spiritual exercises. Of the abundant graces I received over the two and a half months spent at IPF and the many things I learned and am now trying to incorporate into my daily life still months after the end of this experience, one line has stood out to me as a beacon amidst the darkness of boredom and complacency which can sometimes settle in when one has been in school for awhile. Deacon James Keating, Ph.D., one of my teachers during the IPF program said almost daily, “Suffer the coming of Christ in silence in your life now.”

These words and some like them have brought me much to think about. What did Deacon Keating mean that I need to suffer Christ’s coming? Isn’t Christ coming into my life a good thing? Before we answer these questions, I think it is important for me to start with some of my experiences of Christ growing up. I grew up going through the public school system of San Angelo where faith unsurprisingly was not emphasized. On various occasions through my life, I participated in retreat programs like Search, Youth 2000, and Lock-in retreats. To varying degrees, I experienced the love of Christ for me at these retreats and occasionally this invoked in me a desire to devote myself to pray a daily rosary or read from the scriptures every night before going to bed. There was a problem, though, in that I would have this great experience of God and within a month’s time at most, I would have already fallen back into my old habits of daily living. What was the deal? Why was I unable to keep focused on Christ, to abandon everything and follow him?

In what can only be explained as a moment of grace, I started at Conception Seminary College the fall after my senior year of high school. It was there that I was forced to do some of the most difficult things I have ever done in my life, and number one was that I had to talk to a priest that I barely knew (one who I saw on a daily basis and was keeping tabs on me and what I was doing) every other week about any difficulties I was having and any issues I thought that I needed to address in my character. On top of that, I also had to meet every other week with another priest and tell him about my prayer life and any blessings or difficulties I was experiencing with that. Believe it or not, talking to someone who I barely know about what I am feeling and bad habits that I have picked up along the way is far from appealing. Putting my life out there in front of other people to analyze has to have been the most painful experience of my life, and yet I imagine it will prove to be the most important.

One of the biggest challenges that I have been faced with in this process is discerning how I should best use my time, and if playing video games has any place in my life. I’ve been a gamer since about ten years old and have enjoyed literally hundreds of hours of game play. Within the last several years, I have taken a serious look at this habit in the light of the gospel passage of the rich young man (Mt 19:16-30) and have wondered if Jesus has been telling me, “If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me (Mt 19:21).” Arguments have run through my head over and over again about this issue like, “I’m studying to become your priest! I’m giving up a wife, a fam-

(Please See SILENCE/19)

Culture change must begin within families

By Praveen Lakkisetti
Seminarian / Diocese of San Angelo

The entire world looks at America as powerful, highly developed and donor to the needy nations. People across the globe wish to come to America at least once in a lifetime. The huge geographical extension, wide range of networks, sophisticated lifestyle, and attractive job offers and payments have taken a serious look at this habit in the light of the gospel passage of the rich young man (Mt 19:16-30) and have wondered if Jesus has been telling me, “If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me (Mt 19:21).” Arguments have run through my head over and over again about this issue like, “I’m studying to become your priest! I’m giving up a wife, a fam-

(Please See PRAVEEN/18)
By S. Adelina Garcia, OSF

San Angelo experienced being “Shaken by the Spirit” during the weekend of November 16-18, 2012. Over 1,400 participants from Oklahoma, Arkansas and Texas came to celebrate their faith as Catholics. This biennial high school conference is an opportunity for youth to learn more about their faith, experience the larger Church and meet new people. Woven throughout the weekend was the focus on evangelization.

This was the first time the Diocese of San Angelo had been chosen to host RCYC. The event took two years to plan. The youth of the diocese were involved from the very beginning and spent considerable time in choosing the name of the theme and assuming the role of animators. Animators assumed a leadership role in preparing the Friday evening opening where they displayed the energy and enthusiasm for all to be Shaken by the Spirit. They also had leadership roles in their participation in the Liturgy, Morning Prayer, and other aspects of the weekend. Adult volunteers gave of their time, talent and energy to assist the animators in their role. Watching the youth be so involved and assuming their responsibilities with confidence and enthusiasm was real confirmation that so much can be done when direction, support and affirmation is given to our young people in the Church.

Friday night opened with a Pep Rally and a half-time show by the Lakeview High School Band. The bleachers of Lakeview High School Stadium were filled with students singing, dancing, clapping and allowing themselves to be Shaken by the Spirit! At the conclusion of the pep rally, the Lakeview Band led the participants into the Coliseum and were greeted by Sacred Sounds, the house band for the weekend. Nora and Edward Hernandez, Jesse Ramirez, Danny Ramirez, Maria Arocha, and Isabel and Victor Garza were the members of Sacred Sounds and had the Coliseum resounding with Christian rock and over 1,400 voices singing and giving praise to God.

Vendors were available in the Coliseum selling assorted Christian items to those interested. The Newman Center made over 150 bracelets and sold out.

Keynote speakers were Fr. Tony Ricard from New Orleans and Doug Tooke from Helena, Mont. Both of them held the attention of the audience and while they were entertaining in their presentations, more importantly, they challenged the young people to live lives that are authentic and that reflect the Gospel.

Workshops were offered on various topics such as Sharing Faith With Your Family, Scripture in Daily Life, Discernment, Social Media, Depending On God, and Living Your Faith Out Loud. The workshops were held at the McNease Convention Center and prior to the beginning of the workshops, the young people had the opportunity to visit various booths set up by Vocation Directors from religious congregations of women and men.

Saturday evening was spent at historic Fort Concho and the participants enjoyed a delicious Mexican meal prepared by McGowan’s Catering.

At the Coliseum, a sacred space was available for different types of prayer opportunities which included a labyrinth, a hall of young saints whose portraits were painted by young adults from the diocese, and a meditation chapel with the Blessed Sacrament. The opportunity for celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation was also available. Thanks to the priests from the diocese who made themselves available for the celebration of this sacrament. The celebration of the Eucharistic Liturgy on Sunday was the closing of the weekend. Presiding with Bishop Michael Pfeifer were Bishop James Tamayo from the Diocese of Laredo (Episcopal Liaison for Region 10 Youth Ministry), Bishop Oscar Cantu from the Archdiocese of San Antonio, and Bishop Placido Rodriguez from the Diocese of Lubbock.

Bishop Pfeifer, in his homily, reaffirmed the challenge made by the keynote speakers for the young people to live their lives in close relationship with Jesus and to witness to the Gospel at all times.

In his closing remarks at the end of the Eucharistic Liturgy, Randy Adams, chair of the RCYC planning committee presented Bishop Pfeifer with a crystal cross in recognition for his faithful attendance to every Region 10 Youth Conference over the years and expressed his gratitude to all from the Diocese of San Angelo for the gracious hospitality extended to all and for all that was done to make the RCYC such a success.

The Office of Education and Formation is deeply grateful to the many individuals who traveled from near and far, to their adult leaders, and all other adults who did whatever was necessary to make the conference a success. It was an excellent example of collaboration by the City of San Angelo, the San Angelo ISD, the Chamber of Commerce and members of the Diocese of San Angelo as well as the local hotels and restaurants who offered West Texas warmth and hospitality. Special thanks is given to Foster Coliseum, McNease Convention Center, and Ft. Concho for opening their doors to the RCYC and for all that was done at each place to make the weekend events safe and enriching.

The weekend was definitely a celebration of Church – the Body of Christ – alive and willing to be Shaken by the Spirit.

Midland’s St. Stephen’s to host Youth 2000 event, Jan. 25-27

Hundreds expected to attend spirit-filled youth weekend.

By Steven Zimmerman
Deacon / Diocese of San Angelo

The Diocese of San Angelo will be hosting a YOUTH 2000 Retreat on the weekend of January 25 – 27, 2013 at St. Stephen’s Catholic Church in Midland. For more information, or to request registration forms, please call St. Stephen’s Parish, (432) 520-7394.

In January 2000, San Angelo hosted its first YOUTH 2000 Retreat with an attendance of 650 youth and chaperones. Six other retreats have been held since, with the latest in 2011 having an attendance of over 800 youth and chaperones. YOUTH 2000 responds to the Holy Father’s call. YOUTH 2000 organizes and promotes retreats with catechism on the true presence of Jesus in the Eucharist as the central part of the retreat. This focus of the Blessed Sacrament demonstrates to young people that Christ must be the center of their lives. Through the Sacraments, Adoration, prayer, talks, meditation and music, young people are drawn into a closer relationship with God. Young people are given the opportunity during the retreat to grow in their understanding of the Catholic Faith and to deepen their commitment to the service of the Church and others. In this way, YOUTH 2000 also responds to the U.S. Bishop’s directives as stated in “Renewing the Vision,” to draw young people into a relationship with Jesus Christ and to encourage young people to become active in their parishes and in the programs in their Diocese.

YOUTH 2000 is an international initiative founded by Ernest Williams, a citizen of the United Kingdom. The first YOUTH 2000 Retreat was held in former Yugoslavia in the summer of 1990 and was attended by over 6,000 young people from all over the world. YOUTH 2000 has since spread to England, Germany, Ireland, Scotland, Mexico, the Caribbean, Canada, Australia, and the United States. The first YOUTH 2000 in the U.S., of which Bishop Michael Pfeifer O.M.I. presided, was held in Dallas in June of 1992. Since that time, hundreds of YOUTH 2000 Retreats have been held all over the country, with many retreats scheduled every year.

Recently, in October 2011, the directors of YOUTH 2000 were invited by Archbishop Rino Fisichella, president of the new Pontifical Council for the New Evangelization, to their first meeting. At this meeting, YOUTH 2000 made a presentation on how the weekend retreats have brought so many youth to the Eucharistic Jesus through these retreats all over the world. Archbishop Fisichella recently invited them back to Rome to help plan the gathering of movements on the eve of Pentecost. YOUTH 2000 will be part of the Catholic movements, both old and new, that will be meeting in St. Peter’s Square on May 18th.

In 1989 at World Youth Day in Santiago de Compostella, Spain, Pope John Paul II declared to the young people, “It is to you young people that the first falls of bearing witness to the faith and bringing into the third millennium the Gospel of Christ, who is the Way, the Truth, the Life.”
Worldly evils again force us into a test of our faith

By Fr. Ron Rolheiser

American novelist, James T. Farrell, once wrote: “I’d like to see God. I’d like to tell him a few things! I’d like to say, ‘God why do you create men and make them suffer and fight in vain, and live brief unhappy lives like pigs, and make them die disgustingly and rot?’ “God, why do beautiful girls you create become whores, and grow old and toothless, and die, and have their bodies rot so that they are a stench to human nostrils?”

“God, why do you permit thousands and millions of your creatures, made in your image and likeness, to live like crowded dogs in slums and tenements, while an exploiting few profit from the sweat of their toil, produce nothing, and live in kingly mansions?”

“God, why do you permit people to starve, hunger, die from syphilis, cancer, consumption? God why do you not raise one little finger to save us from all the sufferings on this human planet?”

“That’s what I would say to God, that’s exactly what I would say to him if I could find him. But God’s a wise guy. He stays in hiding.” (Studs Lonigan, Page 360)

“It’s not easy to believe in God. Faith is never certitude and the evidence for God’s existence is ambiguous. It is ambiguous because life is. The world is full of beauty, virtue, love, selflessness, artistic achievement, humor and celebration. It is, at the same time, full of evil, moral and physical — selfishness, murder, rape, exploitation, insensitivity, stupidity, and death-producing phenomena, parasites, cancer, and natural disasters which inflict death, pain, disease, and destruction randomly and senselessly.

One can look at the world, as countless believers have always done, and conclude from the presence of beauty and love that there exists an all-loving and all-beautiful God who created this all out of love. One can also look at the world, as many sincere atheists (e.g. Gordon Sinclair, Albert Camus, Richard Rubenstein, Simone de Beauvoir) have, and conclude from the presence of suffering and evil that no God exists or, if one does, s/he is either malicious, quixotic or incompetent. Millions of persons have trouble believing in God, or being at peace with their belief, because they see an inconsistency between faith in an all-good God and the presence of suffering and evil in the world. As Albert Camus once put it: “If there is a God, then he is the eternal bystander with his back turned on a suffering world.”

What underlies these criticisms which often come from very sincere persons? What underlies them is a confusion, however sincere, between faith and understanding. Simply put, whenever we try to think God we get into trouble. Why? Because mind, imagination, and thought cannot be stretched far enough to adequately understand God. For this reason, when we do try to figure out how there can be a God and how everything can still be imagined consistently, we end up with the unfounded conclusion that God does not exist.

Let me illustrate with just one example of what happens when we try to image God’s existence.

The very immensity of our universe defies imagination: There are perhaps hundreds of millions of galaxies with billions of light years separating them. On each of these planets within these galaxies there are hundreds of trillions of phenomena happening every second (and through billions of years). Can we really believe that somewhere there is a person and a heart so supreme and omniscient that it created all of this and that, right now, it knows minutely and intimately every detail and happening and that it is passionately concerned with every one of these happenings? To expiate further with just one small example: our planet earth. This is just one of millions of planets.

Yet, just on it, during every second there are hundreds of persons being born, hundreds of persons are being conceived, hundreds are dying, millions are sinning, millions are doing virtuous acts, millions are suffering, millions are celebrating, millions are hoping, millions are praying, many are despairing... and all of this has been happening for hundreds of thousands of years. Can we really imagine that a God exists who intimately knows all of this, in every detail, cares passionately about each individual and every detail, and is, somehow, Lord over all of this so that “no sparrow falls from the sky or hair from a human head” without God knowing and caring deeply? Can we really imagine this?

The answer quite simply is that we can’t. Our minds and imaginations simply won’t stretch that far. But that is the precise point. The biggest religious mistake we can make is to try to imagine God. God is infinite, our minds are finite. It makes for a bad equation. When we make God fit the categories of what we can think and imagine we end up in trouble. When God asked Moses to take his shoes off before the burning bush, God was asking for space — space within which to be God. Our belief in God can only be strong if we respect the mystery that is God and not try to figure out God or make God fit into the limits of our own imaginations.

When we do this, and it is the perennial temptation, when we try to make God consistent with our imaginations, then God ceases being God, ceases being worth believing in, and we soon stop believing.

Msgr. Robert Weiss: There, in the face of unspeakable tragedy

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

He was there.

Msgr. Robert Weiss, pastor of St. Rose of Lima Parish in Newtown, Connecticut, went quickly to the scene of the Dec. 14 school massacre. There were the bodies of 20 little children, six staff and the 20-year-old perpetra-tor who killed them and then himself.

And from that moment on and for days to come, Msgr. Weiss became the face of compassion to victims’ families, to parishioners, townspeople, and, through the media, the entire world. He and other clergy said nothing had prepared them to deal with such a situation, but they may be wrong.

Msgr. Weiss knew that by right of baptism and later ordination, he must bring Christ’s presence to the world, especially in troubled times. He had to eschew anger for caring, point to hope amidst near despair, and give a reason to live to some who felt their reason for living lay dead. Often he had to do so without words.

As God’s representative, Msgr. Weiss came from the only world that offered consolation. People attended Mass in search of comfort. For coronal and funeral Masses, Scripture guided him.

When it comes to the human encountering the divine, nothing matches a Catholic funeral. It stands out at the final commendation of the deceased.

“May the angels lead you into Paradise,” the Church prays. “May the martyrs greet you at your arrival and lead you into the holy city, Jerusalem....” The teaching that “life is not ended but changed” lets children, par-
A better understanding of others is just a tweet away

By Erick Rommel
Catholic News Service

Everyone has goals. Some people have big goals. They want to be president of a company or feed undernourished children. Others have simple goals that are just as meaningful. They want to graduate from college or raise a family.

Goals can be extremely public or very private. You may learn of someone's goal, but unless you also know why they want to achieve it, you really don't know much at all.

Vanessa Riddle had one of those goals. She is an 11-year-old from Scotland. Her goal earlier this year was to reach 100,000 Twitter followers.

Some would scoff. They'd say she should use her energy for something else. Others would question why a preteen wants or needs that much attention.

Those people would be making assumptions without knowing why Vanessa set her goal in the first place.

Vanessa is raising awareness of neuroblastoma, a rare and aggressive form of childhood cancer. She is more than just an advocate. She's a patient.

An 11-year-old raising awareness about a disease that she's also valiantly fighting seems a little more acceptable, doesn't it?

Acceptance is one lesson we should learn from Vanessa. We also should learn to avoid leaping to conclusions. We don't know those around us as much as we think we do. Why must we always assume the worst until someone shows their best?

Vanessa is teaching something else.

Her Twitter crusade teaches us that we can all find something in common.

Consider this: Donald Trump, Sarah Palin, Susan Sarandon, William Shatner, Carrie Underwood, Justin Bieber and Channing Tatum all follow Vanessa on Twitter. They often leave comments of support. If you locked those celebrities in a room, no matter how nice they are as individuals, they would probably have disagreements. But they are united on at least one issue: wanting the best for Vanessa.

How universal is the support Vanessa receives? Lord Voldemort, the fictional character in the Harry Potter series, follows Vanessa on Twitter. When the most evil villain in all of magical Britain has your back, you must be doing something right.

Admittedly, many of Vanessa's followers, famous and not, won't do anything beyond follow her. They'll see her tweets, remember that she's that girl with cancer and then move on.

There's nothing wrong with that.

If you're willing to give a little, it's likely you're willing to give more, if needed. If you help a stranger, no matter how small your effort, you'll likely have the backs of the people you know.

That's why it's so important to help those in need. When giving becomes automatic, you don't have to try to be a better person; you already are a better person.

Vanessa reached her goal of 100,000 followers in early December. Her followers now number 165,000. By early 2013, I wouldn't be surprised if that number surpasses a quarter of a million.

If you're not part of that group, you should think of joining it. Vanessa's Twitter handle is @vanessariddle. From there, you can also find her website and Facebook page and learn more about the disease she's fighting.

As her popularity grows, Vanessa is making the transition from being excited by celebrity attention to being a celebrity. On Dec. 8, Kathleen Canfield, an American with fewer than 200 followers, tweeted, "The sweetest thing happened today @vanessariddle follows me! I'm so honored!"

Vanessa and Kathleen are two people on two continents who made a connection. If we could make that connection with others around us, who knows what we can accomplish? Let's start by curing cancer.

Putting social media to work for the church

By Father William J. Byron, SJ
Catholic News Service

There was a little-noticed engine of progress at work in President Barack Obama's successful re-election campaign.

Quietly and effectively at work under the overall supervision of Jim Messina, the campaign manager, were a "digital director," a "chief digital strategist," a "chief technology officer," a "deputy digital director," a "chief analytics officer," a "director of front-end development," a "director of digital products," a "digital analytics director" and a "web developer."

What Bloomberg Business Week described as the Obama team's "maniacal focus on personal data yielded millions of voters." It also, in the words of Obama for America digital director Teddy Goff, "raised more money online this time than last time, had more donors, more volunteers, registered more people to vote online, and did all kinds of revolutionary stuff through Facebook and Twitter."

Corporations and ordinary businesses certainly took notice. The day after the election, they were swooping in to hire these digital magicians for commercial, not political, purposes.

I can't help but wonder whether the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops or any of the dioceses that face declining Sunday Mass attendance and empty seats in Catholic schools are asking if there is a lesson waiting to be learned by a church that is not doing well at all in the numbers game.

Introduction of the so-called "social media" into the national political campaign made a world of difference. "Once all the votes are counted," reported Bloomberg Business Week in November, "about 1.25 million more young people will have supported Obama in 2012 than in 2008, when his ability to turn out 18- to 24-year-olds was hailed as revolutionary."

The success of the Catholic Church with that same age group is anything but impressive. It is time for managers of diocesan and parish affairs to be talking to the techies in search of answers to the question of how to reach not only the young but also the not-so-young who are no longer showing up on Sundays. This is a crisis that must be met in new and creative ways.

Is anyone thinking about setting up data centers in seminaries where computer-savvy young men are receiving classical preparation to serve congregations that may or may not be there by the time today's seminarians are ordained? Are computer-literate laymen and laywomen being encouraged to bring the new media into chancery offices and pastoral centers?

This all points to something distinctive—new that might be incorporated into the new evangelization that is struggling to emerge during this Year of Faith.

My faith is in God, of course, but also in the young who, I believe, God would want us to welcome into diocesan decision-making circles. They can bring to the table knowledge of social media and suggestions as to how those tools can be put to work for the revitalization of the Catholic faith community.

Businesses are doing this right now. This is another page that the church should be lifting from the business playbook.

Jesuit Father William J. Byron is university professor of business and society at St. Joseph's University, Philadelphia.
Making Sense of Bioethics

‘Tattoo regret’ often follows decision to get inked

By Fr. Tad Pacholczyk

On TV these days, we’re seeing more and more programs about "body art" and tattoo design. Despite the apparent widespread acceptance of the practice, there are several problems with tattooing that go beyond the sanitary issues, disease transmission and unclean inking needles that can be found in second-rate tattoo parlors. Tattoos, as some who have gotten them have recognized, have negative associations. An article in the Dallas Morning News a few years ago chronicled the story of a young man named Jesus Mendoza, who was "going to great lengths to remove the six tattoos that hint at his erstwhile gang involvement.... He feels branded. 'It's the stereotyping,' he said. 'The question is: What do you think when you see a young Hispanic male with tattoos? You're going to think gangs. And I think that, too, now.'"

Similar branding concerns were raised in a recent column by David Whitley about San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick, whose arms and back are full of tattoos. "NFL quarterback is the ultimate position of influence and responsibility," he wrote. "He is the CEO of a high-profile organization, and you don’t want your CEO to look like he just got paroled."

That branding communicates a message that can make life more difficult for those who have tattoos. It should come as no surprise that employers often associate tattooed workers with "reduced productivity" and may show a preference for untattooed employees in hiring or promotions.

Even for the vast majority of tattoo recipients who have no connection with gangs or an indolent lifestyle, a psychological issue is raised by the way they seem to serve as marks of vanity. Placing tattoos in positions where they can hardly be missed — on the neck, the forearm, or even the face — can play into a disordered desire to be flamboyant, disruptive and self-seeking with our bodily image. One young woman, tattooed with the image of a fairy having "stylized butterfly wings, in a spray of pussy willow" expressed her sentiments this way: "I am a shameless exhibitionist and truly love having unique marks on my body."

These questions about vanity lead to similar concerns about modesty. Modesty in its essential meaning involves the decision to not draw undue attention to ourselves. Tattoos and body piercings most definitely draw attention, and often may be desired for precisely these immodest reasons. We ought to dress modestly, and in fact, adequately covered. Placing tattoos in unusual positions on the body may tempt us to dress immodestly so as to assure that the tattoo is visible and exposed for general viewing, in the same way that elective breast augmentation may tempt some women to lower their necklines.

Tattoos, chosen as a permanent change to one's own body, may also suggest issues with psychological self-acceptance. One young woman wanting to get a tattoo expressed her desire to look "edgier," after concluding that she was just too "squeaky-clean" looking.

The simple beauty of the human body constitutes a real good and that basic goodness ought to be reasonably safeguarded. Permanent, radical changes to the human body can indeed signal an unwillingness to accept its fundamental goodness, and in certain cases of very radical tattooing and body piercing, one can even discern a subtle form of self-rejection and self-mutilation.

There is a spiritual dimension involved as well. Russell Grigaitis, who now regrets getting several tattoos in his 20's, argues in a National Catholic Register interview, "God created the body. A tattoo is like putting graffiti on a work of art." He compares it with trying to improve a painting by Michelangelo.

Some argue that there can be good spiritual reasons for getting tattoos. For example, people have gotten Crosses or an image of Jesus tattooed as a sign of permanent commitment to Christ, or a ring or a spouse's name tattooed as a sign of their marital commitment. Yet isn't a personal commitment to Christ or to one's spouse more effectively manifested through the realities of inner virtue and a life of outward generosity than by a tattoo?

It’s unsurprising that many who got tattoos in their younger days have grown to regret it later. Pop musician Robbie Williams remarked: "I wish it was like an Etch-a-Sketch where I can wipe them all out: it would be nice to have a pure, clean body again." The American Academy of Dermatology reported in 2007 that "tattoo regret" is now quite common in the United States. Tattoo removal is a costly and difficult procedure, and can leave translucent areas on the skin that never go away. The most effective remedy, of course, is to not seek tattoos in the first place.

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

What to do with fetal remains

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

A frequently asked question is: What to do with fetal remains of babies miscarried at less than twenty weeks’ gestation. We, as Catholics, believe that all human life from the moment of conception is sacred, made in the very image and likeness of God. Hence, the remains of babies who are miscarried deserve our highest respect and must be disposed of in a proper Christian manner. To guide many people who ask about what to do with the fetal remains, I have acquired permission from the National Catholic Bioethics Center on health care and life science, to feature an article about this matter from the latest edition of Ethics and Medics for May 2012. I strongly encourage all of our priests, deacons, chaplains and parents who deal with this critical situation to follow the guidelines that are indicated in the article that follows and to follow the sample policy for the disposition of fetal remains. Here follows the article from Ethics and Medics entitled “Developing a Policy on Fetal Remains,” and attached to this article is a sample policy for the disposition of fetal remains.

Developing a Policy on Fetal Remains

This is the story of one Catholic hospital’s efforts to find a way to respectfully lay to rest the remains of babies miscarried at less than twenty weeks’ gestation. I tell our story in the hope that it might in some way ease the way for other hospitals and health care professionals who want to do what is right.

Our journey began in Spring 2010 when a grandmother called the director of the maternity unit to ask where her grandchild was buried. Her grandchild died at eighteen weeks’ gestation when the mother was injured in a car accident. Although this had happened ten years before, the pain of the loss of the child was still felt in the family.

Developing a Policy

As the manager of the pastoral care department, I was asked about the hospital’s policy regarding disposition of fetal remains. At the time, the policy did not provide for burial. The grandmother’s question launched our efforts to develop a policy that would ensure burial of a baby’s remains following miscarriage. We formed an interdisciplinary team to look into the matter. The team consisted of representatives from virtually all hospital departments: maternity, nursing, pastoral care, ethics, surgery, emergency care, laboratory, administration, social work, risk management, and security (who are in charge of the morgue). We also consulted with our Catholic cemetery association and a local funeral director.

Of great help was an article written by Marie Hilliard of The National Catholic Bioethics Center, titled “Care of Fetal Remains: A Pastoral Matter.” The article discussed respectfully disposing of fetal remains in a way consistent with the Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services and with canon law.2 I spoke to Dr. Hilliard on the phone, and she was an immense help and support.

What we were facing was the challenge of changing the old protocol and creating new consent forms. First, we contacted several other Catholic hospitals in our area and requested copies of their (Please See REMAINS/19)
Talking to children about violence: Tips for parents, teachers

By Daniel Conway

The Angelus
Archdiocese of Indianapolis

"When Herod realized that he had been deceived by the Magi, he became furious. He ordered the massacre of all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity 2 years old and under, in accordance with the time he had ascertained from the Magi. Then was fulfilled what had been said through Jeremiah. A voice was heard in Ramah, sobbing and loud lamentation; Rachel weeping for her children, and she would not be consoled, since they were no more." (Mt 2:16-18)

Sobbing and loud lamentation have been heard once again, this time in Newtown, Conn., following the massacre of 26 people at an elementary school -- mostly children under the age of 7.

This latest manifestation of the "culture of death" shakes all people of good will to their very foundations. How could the actions of a single "deranged gunman" cause so much horror and death, especially for so many innocent children? How does a good God permit such evil? What is it about our society that allows the death and destruction of children to become a regular occurrence?

Pope Benedict XVI expressed his "heartfelt grief" over this "senseless violence in Newtown." He said, "I assure the families of the victims, especially those who lost a child, of my closeness in prayer. The pope when on to say that he prayed God will "sustain the entire community with spiritual strength which triumphs over violence by the power of forgiveness, hope and reconciling love.""

There is no alternative in the face of senseless violence, but to pray for spiritual strength. From the very first biblical account of man's inhumanity to man -- Cain's murder of his brother Abel, no satisfactory explanation has ever been given for the evil that human beings are capable of committing. No consolation is possible -- humbly speaking -- in the face of such acts.

Deranged persons -- whether individuals such as the Connecticut killer or groups such as the Nazis in World War II or modern-day suicide bombers -- defy reason.

The Newtown Tragedy

Undated photos from various memorial websites show the victims of the Dec. 14 Sandy Hook Elementary School shootings in Newton, Conn. Pictured, starting on the top row, from left to right, are Ana Marquez-Greene, Caroline Previdi; Jessica Rekos, Emilie Parker and Noah Pozner; Jesse Lewis, Olivia Engel, Josephine Gay, Charlotte Bacon and Chase Kowalski; Daniel Barden, Jack Pinto, Catherine Hubbard, Dylan Hockley and Benjamin Wheeler; Grace McDonnell, James Mattioli, Avielle Richman, Rachel Davino and Anne Marie Murphy; Lauren Rousseau, Mary Sherlach, Victoria Soto, Dawn Hochsprung and Nancy Lanza. (CNS photo/Reuters)
Church agencies bring relief during year’s storms, drought, typhoon

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Amid that year’s hotter-than-average temperatures and extreme weather-related events including floods, droughts, storms, wildfires and a recent typhoon, church agencies in the U.S. and around the world mobilized to provide short and long-term relief.

The year ended with a typhoon hitting southern Philippines in December, lashing the island with torrential rains caused more than a quarter million people to evacuate their homes in the capital of Manila. The previous month, massive flooding in India left 126 people dead, and affected nearly 3 million people.

Teams of Catholic Relief Services workers in both areas immediately assessed damages and provided medical aid, food and water. While churches provided temporary shelter, The United States also was particularly hard hit with weather disasters this year prompting aid from Catholic Charities USA, local Catholic Charities agencies and parishes.

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Strong families lead to healthy societies

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — In promoting and defending the traditional family as good for society and the world, the Catholic Church sees it as "the first roadblock" against the "dictatorship of individualism," said the president of the Pontifical Council for the Family.

Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, council president, said, "an individualistic civilization leads to each person putting him- or herself before all else. The family is the first roadblock because it is the first 'we.'"

Catholic teaching about marriage and family life is based on the biblical vision of all creation and on human beings' place in creation, he said in an interview Dec. 21 with Catholic News Service.

"When the the Book of Genesis says, 'It's not good for the man to be alone,' it's not a superficial or simply cultural affirmation. It's speaking about the very essence of the human person and the need for a family that is written in the heart of every person," he said.

The truth of the statement is seen in the fact that in every person of every culture, he said, "people are afraid of being alone."

The church's religious teaching about marriage as a sacrament between one man and one woman committed to each other for life and open to having children coincides with the truth taught by human nature itself, the archbishop said.

The Catholic Church, he said, feels an obligation to promote and defend the traditional family from attempts to "pick away at it -- sometimes using a jackhammer" -- because of both its religious significance and its importance for individuals and societies.

In every culture, Archbishop Paglia said, the family is the first and most important place for educating good citizens because it is the place people learn "to live collectively, to care for one another, love others, generate and produce life, create relationships between those who are different, forgive others, help others and dream about the future."

Seeing our goodness without too much pride

By Bill and Monica Dodds
Catholic News Service

Children aren't the only ones confused when they learn they're supposed to take pride in their work but then find out that pride is a sin. Adults have the same problem.

How can a virtue be a sin? And not just a sin, but No. 1 on the list of deadly sins.

We see the slogans, "The Few. The Proud. The Marines," and "pride goeth before a fall."

Part of the confusion is that English uses the same word for both ideas: recognizing one has done a job well and having a "me, me, me" attitude.

Looking up the meaning of the word pride in the dictionary adds to the confusion. Pride is described as "the quality or state of being proud: an inordinate self-esteem (conceit)" or "a reasonable or justifiable self-respect" or "delight or elation arising from some act, possession or relationship (such as parental pride)."

But wait, there's more.

It also is described in the dictionary as "proud or disdainful behavior or treatment, or ostentatious display." It seems the dictionary isn't much help at all. Pride is one word and many contradictory definitions.

In the glossary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church we're told that pride is one of the seven capital sins. And pride is "undue self-esteem or self-love, which seeks attention and honor and sets oneself in competition with God."

What does the same source say about humility? That's the virtue by which a Christian acknowledges that God is the author of all good.

Humility "avoids inordinate ambition or pride, and provides the foundation for turning to God in prayer. It also says, "Voluntary humility can be described as 'poverty of spirit.'"

How to interpret all that for yourself? How to help your children learn it? Harder still, how does a person come to live it?

We want our children, no matter what their age, to have a healthy and holy pride. They were created by God and everything God has made is good. At the same time, we want them to have an honest humility even when they're very talented and develop and use those talents as God intended.

Perhaps the key is honesty. We can honestly recognize we are good and can do good things. To honestly recognize that doesn't mean we're better, or more virtuous, than others. Yes, we may be better at doing this or that, but it could be that we've been given talents in that area and are using them.

A healthy pride and honest humility mean we recognize that those talents, large or small, are a God-given gift and when we use them as our Creator intended, we, too, are his beloved children, in whom he is well-pleased.

Put away calls, texts, and all that distracts from the road, driving

By Karen Osborne
Catholic News Service

My mom, who works as a religious education director, was locking up after a youth group at her parish not long ago when she heard a girl crying in the hallway. The girl had been text messaging with her best friend Deanna, who was riding home with her boyfriend and two other friends after watching a college basketball game. Everything was normal. It had been a typical Saturday night.

Suddenly, though, the texts stopped.

Then she heard the news: A car had rear-ended her friends' SUV on the freeway. New York State Police later said the SUV rolled multiple times and hit a tree, killing her friend.

I can't stop thinking of this girl's story, mostly because I understand what she's going through. I was in a craft store, picking up things to make a scrapbook for my best friend Tovah's wedding. My phone rang. It was Tovah's mother, telling me that Tovah had been killed in a car accident. I couldn't walk. I couldn't talk. I sank to the floor right in the middle of the store, sobbing.

I remembered that moment when I heard about the girl's story. Two people died on that freeway that night: Deanna Rivers and Chris Stewart, high-school seniors with bright futures. They had been planning to go to college. They had just celebrated their anniversary with mozzarella sticks and ice cream. There would have been other basketball games, other anniversaries, other parties, celebrations, graduations, happiness, sadness and sunny days.

It makes me sad to think that's all over now.

Tragedies like this hit home with me. When I get in my car, my mind isn't always on the road. My mind wanders. I start thinking about something else entirely. Sometimes, I forget I'm not supposed to text while driving and sneak one in. Sometimes I end up late for work, and I start speeding, rationalizing my actions.

"It can't hurt," I say. "I'll do it just this once. Right?"

Wrong.

The driver of the vehicle that hit Chris Stewart's SUV took a breathalyzer test. It showed he'd had alcohol in his system, but not enough to qualify for a charge of driving while intoxicated. Police are investigating what happened that night.

We may never know. The driver could have been distracted, was texting, or tired.

Reading about Chris and Deanna reminded me that getting behind the wheel of a car is more than just a rite of passage. It's a huge responsibility. It's a responsibility that kicks in every time you put the keys in the ignition.
SANDY
(From 12)

became a super storm, wreaked havoc on the Eastern United States in late October, killing 125 people in the U.S. after causing more than 70 deaths in the Caribbean. According to a report from The Associated Press, the storm caused about $62 billion in damage and other losses in the U.S. -- primarily in New York and New Jersey -- making it the second-costliest storm in U.S. history after Hurricane Katrina in 2005 which caused $128 billion in damage.

The United States also experienced the worst drought in decades in the south-central U.S. this past summer. Drought or near-drought conditions had repercussions for more than just farmers as crop shortages caused food prices to increase. In June, there were severe wildfires in Colorado, prompting evacuations and in March tornadoes ripped through parts of Indiana.

A United Nations report issued in late November described 2012 as unusually hot with extreme weather events and record-shattering sea ice melt. The report, released by the World Meteorological Organization during U.N. climate talks in Qatar, examined temperatures, precipitation, amounts of snow and ice, and extreme events such as floods and wildfires.

A scientist on the U.N. panel said that although it was difficult to link a single weather event to climate change, Sandy was "probably not a coincidence" but an example of the extreme weather events that are likely to strike more often as the world gets warmer.

The National Oceano graphical and Atmospheric Administration reported July as the hottest month since records were first kept more than 140 years ago.

"What has been clear is that the scientists for many, many years now have said that the extremes -- droughts, floods, more severe weather -- are going to become more common," said Dan Mische, head of the Catholic Coalition on Climate Change, "not only in the U.S. but around the world."

"All these things are indications that we're entering a period of these extremes, and I think that most scientists will say that when this becomes more of a pattern they will be able to attribute it more to climate change," he told Catholic News Service in an interview this summer.

BUDGET
(From 12)

poor and most vulnerable in society," Bishop Stephen E. Blaire of Stockton, Calif., chairman of the bishops' Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, told Catholic News Service Dec. 6. "We cannot neglect them as we seek to stabilize our political economy."

"While it is certainly a good to be accomplished in terms of creating a more stable economy with a balanced budget, it would not be beneficial to have such efforts result in a wider gap between those who are rich and those who are poor. The common good requires that the people who are hurting the most will not be hurting even more as a result of efforts that are being taken to improve the economy," he said.

Meanwhile, Bishop Richard E. Pates of Des Moines, Iowa, chairman of the bishops' Committee on International Justice and Peace, called for continued funding of poverty-focused international assistance, which encompasses programs such as HIV/AIDS treatment, disaster aid, refugee services, health care, support for small farmers and aid to orphaned children.

Such spending -- totaling $20.2 billion in fiscal year 2012, comprising about 0.6 percent of the federal budget -- helps promote human development and builds peace among nations, he said.

"It's also to keep people alive," Bishop Pates told CNS Dec. 6. "We're able to provide some of the (programs) that have long-lasting impact. It shows the American heart is really attached to this."

At the same time, Father Larry Snyder, president of Catholic Charities USA, focused his agency's message to Congress during the budget negotiations on preventing drastic cuts in funding for social service programs as well as protecting the charitable tax deduction that has existed since 1917.

2012 IN REVIEW

Same-sex marriage major issue for voters, lawmakers in US

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- After a string of 32 straight referendum successes in states in defining marriage as the union of one man and one woman since 1998, supporters of the traditional definition of marriage saw defeat in three states at the polls this November.

On Election Day Nov. 6, voters in Maryland, Maine and Washington -- albeit by slender margins -- approved of allowing same-sex marriage.

In Minnesota, a referendum bid to define marriage as that between one man and one woman also failed. Voters' action does not make same-sex marriage legal, but they cleared the way for the Legislature or courts to move to permit such marriages.

Maryland and Washington voters upheld a law passed earlier in the year, and Maine voters reversed the results of a statewide referendum in 2009. The votes bring the number of states permitting same-sex marriage to nine, plus the District of Columbia.

Supporters of traditional marriage said they were heavily outspent by backers of same-sex marriage in each state.

In response to the referendum outcome, Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone of San Francisco, chairman of the U.S. bishops' Subcommittee for the Promotion and Defense of Marriage, said it was a disappointing day for marriage and called for renewed efforts to strengthen and protect traditional marriage and family life.

"The meaning of marriage ... cannot be redefined because it lies within our very nature," he said.

Catholic teaching says that same-sex unions violate the authentic Christian understanding of marriage of being between one man and one woman.

The legal definition of marriage in the nation's most populous state, California, remained unsettled. A 2-1 majority of a three-member federal appeals court panel ruled in February that Proposition 8, a ban on same-sex marriages approved by voters in 2008, was unconstitutional because it violated the 14th Amendment guarantee of equal protection under law. In upholding a lower court ruling, the panel said a right once given -- as the state had prior to the vote -- could not be taken away.

A majority of the full 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals denied a petition for a rehearing by the full court but stayed the ruling pending an appeal. Backers of Proposition 8 in July asked the U.S. Supreme Court to review the case.

Besides the California law, the U.S. Supreme Court has before it multiple petitions of lower court rulings related to same-sex marriage, including a challenge to aspects of the federal Defense of Marriage Act. On Dec. 7, the high court announced that in the spring it will take up two of those cases.
Summary of Audited Financials

Diocese of San Angelo

Fiscal Year 2012 (ended June 30, 2012)

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Because I do see the face of Christ in you, who society might call the most insignificant, I, as a Bishop, along with other Church leaders will continue to pray for you and invite you to pray with us for a solution to these economic difficulties. Together we need to address these problems. I invite all to work with me, Church and government leaders to bring a new spirit of justice and fairness to our wounded economy that must be concerned about the common good. I assure the poor that our Catholic charity agencies, our immigration offices and parishes are willing and ready to assist you. In a particular way, I point out that the Pregnancy Help Centers that we support are there to provide health assistance for women. We continue to proclaim our powerful witness on behalf of the sacred dignity of all of you, and especially by showing our concern for the unborn, the poor, the dying, the prisoners, the abandoned, the undocumented. We especially want to open doors so that you will have a voice and decision in the solutions to these painful economic situations. We will actively search for ways to communicate the basics of this witness effectively to all the people we serve and to the wider society.
**Our Faith**

**Clearing the confusion over Holy Days of Obligation**

By Father Kenneth Doyle  
Catholic News Service

Q. There was considerable confusion among my friends over the recent feast of the Immaculate Conception (Saturday, Dec. 8). My own parish announced it as a holy day of obligation, but the church in the next town over simply called it a "holy day."

Both parishes had only one Mass on that Saturday morning, whereas in times past, churches used to have two or three morning Masses on a holy day of obligation and perhaps another one in the evening.

But this time on Saturday evening, churches had only the vigil Mass for Sunday, and some people thought that by attending that they were covering both obligations. I thought that any holy day pertaining to the Blessed Mother was never done away with. Can you clear this up for us? (Somerset, N.J.)

A. As often as it is explained to them, Catholics in our country are still uncertain as to the holy days of obligation, but let's lay it out once more. In the U.S., there are six holy days of obligation, i.e., feast days on which Catholics must attend Mass.

They are: the Mary Mother of God, Jan. 1; Ascension (of the Lord) 40 days after Easter; Assumption (of the Blessed Virgin Mary), Aug. 15; All Saints' Day, Nov. 1; Immaculate Conception (of the Blessed Virgin Mary), Dec. 8; and Christmas, Dec. 25.

Now comes the confusing part. In most areas of the country, the celebration of the Ascension has been transferred to the following Sunday, so there is no obligation in those dioceses to attend Mass on that Thursday.

On three of the feasts -- Jan. 1, Aug. 15 and Nov. 1 -- when the feast day occurs on a Saturday or a Monday, you get "two for one." That is, the obligation to attend the feast day Mass is lifted and attendance at a weekend Mass covers you both for the feast and for Sunday.

But (and this seems the hardest part for people to grasp) during two feasts, Catholics are still obliged to go to Mass no matter what day they occur. Those feasts are Christmas (because of its centrality as the birthday of Christ) and the Immaculate Conception (in part, at least, because it is the patronal feast of the United States.)

For those two feasts, you can't get "double credit" by attending one Mass as some people thought in the question you posed. (Since I've now reviewed the rules in the simplest and shortest way I can and it's still taken more than 200 words, confusion should come as no surprise.)

**Resolve to start the New Year open to revelation**

By Effie Caldarola  
Catholic News Service

I love words, as any writer should, and "epiphany" is a favorite word of mine.

In a Christian sense, it names a great January liturgical feast, namely the Scripture story about three mysterious men bearing gifts, appearing from the East, looking for the baby Jesus to worship him. It arrives on the Twelfth Day of Christmas, and it culminates our celebration.

The church uses it as the occasion to remind us that Christ came for all, not just for his fellow Jews, but for the gentiles, and by extension all of us throughout history. It was an epiphany, an awakening, for all humankind.

"Epiphany" in its secular, dictionary definition, complements the religious meaning, and always seems like a thrilling word. Here's one definition: A sudden realization about the nature or meaning of something.

To realize the meaning of something -- my life, my gifts, an illness, a death, an ordinary day -- that's huge. It's a delicious word, this revelation about the very nature of something.

We celebrate the feast of Epiphany Jan. 6, and whether you've already experienced it as you read this matters little. "Epiphany" is a good reminder, a good word, a good experience to carry us through January and into the new year.

How many epiphanies do we really experience in life? There are times in life when we feel we know quite a bit and aren't necessarily open to the world-shattering nature of epiphany. This certainty strikes different people at different times. The late teenage years affect some that way. We've got it all figured out, until we start college and all the new information blows away all our certainty. I've known others who reach this know-it-all stage in later life.

"I've seen that." "I know all about that." "I've been there once, and I don't need to go again."

I've known a few older folks who simply aren't looking for any more epiphanies. Been there, done that. Ho hum.

All of us are susceptible, at any age, to getting in a rut and not keeping our eyes open to the epiphany that may surprise us around the next corner. All of us can be reluctant, and sometimes with reason, to saddle up our camels and follow some distant star. I mean, really, isn't that a little romantic, a little quixotic? It sounds risky, and besides I know all about that already.

January brings with it a cascade of New Year's resolutions, including "I'm going to lose 10 pounds," "I will start exercising," "I will remember to call my grandmother more often," "I will never leave the house with my bed unmade" ... yada, yada, yada.

How about just resolving to keep our eyes open for the next epiphany God sends? Do you think those storied Magi were expecting to find a poor baby at the end of their journey? What an epiphany for them, the meaning of which they probably spent the rest of their lives trying to figure out. Don't "expect," just pay attention.

Franciscan Father Richard Rohr tells about an epiphany the great St. Francis of Assisi had. Like many saints, Francis was a party animal as a youth. Perhaps he thought he knew it all.

"One night, he left the party and looked up at the stars above Assisi," writes Father Rohr. "He stood there for a long, long time. He was truly in awe of what he saw. He said, 'If these are the creatures, what must the Creator be like?'"

Let me live this year awakening each day to ask God for the courage to be open to continuing revelation, epiphanies great and small that God offers in my life.

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**Our Holy Father’s 2013 Monthly Intentions**

**JANUARY 2013**

**The Faith of Christians.** That in this Year of Faith Christians may deepen their knowledge of the mystery of Christ and witness joyfully to the gift of faith in him.

**Missionary Intention:** Middle Eastern Christians. That the Christian communities of the Middle East, often discriminated against, may receive from the Holy Spirit the strength of fidelity and perseverance.

**FEBRUARY**

**Migrant Families.** That migrant families, especially the mothers, may be supported and accompanied in their difficulties.

**Peace.** That the peoples at war and in conflict may lead the way in building a peaceful future.

**Daily Offering Prayer**

Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary I offer you my prayers, works, joys and sufferings of this day in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world. I offer them for all the intentions of Your Sacred Heart: the salvation of souls, reparation for sin and the reunion of all Christians. I offer them for the intentions of our bishops and of all Apostles of Prayer, and in particular for those recommended by our Holy Father this month.
to wake from the slumber of ‘gun culture’ and remedy the situation before it engulfs the life of many. Whatever happens in America, it has a global effect, including the tragic incidents like Connecticut. What is it that Americans and the world expect from America? Is it mere material comfort or the safety of life?

Within the span of a week, America suffered three gunshot killings ending with the massacre in Connecticut. While moaning the loss of life of innocent victims, Connecticut calls America to wake to the reality of threat for life on its soil. During my Christmas vacation, prior to the incident at Connecticut, I had a chance to see a rifle for the first time in my life when I went to dinner with a family. I held the rifle in my hand and saw the bullets myself. The serial gunshot killings frightened me to a certain extent as all happened in public places like malls and schools. Who is to be blamed? Is it something that can be tolerated? Who can console the grieving parents and relatives of the victims? Can there be a change all of a sudden in the law concerning gun license? While the entire nation condemns the massacre, what is the way out for an end to these treacherous incidents?

Serious thinking needs to be done to call for an action to end such massacres.

Life is precious. What would have been the dreams of those kids? Even in their remotest dreams they would have never thought of facing such tragic death. What is life with all material comforts when life itself is threatened? Life is filled with contingencies. But no one prefers to face contingencies that would leave a permanent scar in life. Apart from all that America offers to its citizens and the world, the top priority needs to create a safe ambience for life. History repeats itself because no one learns a lesson from it. It holds the same even with the gunshot killings. It is high time to call for an end to all dehumanizing activities and crush the seed of violence in its initial stages.


The task is big. It needs to begin in the families. Love needs to be nurtured between the parents and the children.

Respect for life and society is to be embraced by all we must strive to eliminate all forms of threats that hinder life and its progress. America, the ‘super power’ in the world ought to manifest itself as a super power in the protection and safety of life too. While we moan the tragic loss of life, let us commit ourselves to promote a culture of respect for life at all costs. May God grant eternal rest to the souls of the victims.

Praveen Lakkisetti, a seminarian for the Diocese of San Angelo, is originally from India. He arrived in the U.S. six months ago and is studying at Assumption Seminary in San Antonio.

Creaciónes énticas. El Concilio se había comenzado.

Aunque la procesión fue el evento más solemne e impresionante en los primeros días del Concilio, otros eventos fueron mejores indicadores de cómo el Concilio iba a progresar. Algunos pensaban que los obispos no habían venido solamente a “rociar con agua bendita” la situación actual, pero otros creían que eso era el propósito. El Concilio iba a tomar unas decisiones difíciles, y eso significaba que no iban a agradar a todos.

En su discurso esa mañana, el Papa Juan dijo que el Concilio haría oportunum aggiornamenti, que en Italiano significa “apropiadamente poner al día.” Usada así en su discurso, la frase implicó que se necesitaba “corrección” en la vida de la Iglesia. Sugerirá una reforma de la Iglesia misma y no solamente reforma de sus miembros. Ningún aggiornamento de nada había sido aprobado oficialmente como esto, porque el Concilio de Trento en el siglo 16 había terminado con toda esfuerzo de este tipo.

El Papa Juan les dijo a los Padres del Concilio que deban ser positivos, mirar en frente, que no tuvieran miedo de hacer cambios apropiados en la Iglesia. Es cierto que la idea de aggiornamento les dio terror y alarma a los conservadores y miembros de la Curia Romana, pero fue señal a los progresivos que procedieran adelante con una agenda de reforma en este Concilio.

(El resultado en el Concilio fue que los conservativos eran una minoría definitiva. Los votos indican esto. Por eso, para evitar palabras políticamente electrificadas –liberales o progresivos y conservativos, voy a usar las palabras mayoría y minoría. Esto se puede probar con los números.)

El Papa Juan puso distancia entre si mismo y el Concilio, y una actitud de sospecha y regaño “al mundo.” El recuerdo de los votos del Concilio es que la idea de aggiornamento les dio una minoría definitiva. Los votos indican esto. Por eso, para evitar palabras políticamente electrificadas –liberales o progresivos y conservativos, voy a usar las palabras mayoría y minoría. Esto se puede probar con los números.)

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**SILENCE**

*(From 6)*

ily, any chance at a high paying job, and you’re going to take away my one source of enjoyment?"

But I think this is the point this wise Deacon of the Church was trying to make. Growing closer to Christ has involved a lot of suffering between opening my life up in front of other people to be critiqued, to letting go of the married life, to now struggling with complete detachment from video games. This has been a part of my own struggle with striving for holiness. Christ says, “No one can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon (Mt 6:24).” He wants us to be completely devoted to him and no one else. No other thing can get in the way of this relationship and we can never be truly at peace until we have been able to let go of anything that gets in the way of our clinging more firmly to Christ. That is the suffering that has to be endured today. Maybe many of you are thinking, “Yeah, that’s a nice thought and all, but it’s impossible for me to live without this or that.” I know that’s what I used to think. I know I still find myself thinking that from time to time. Simply put, that is a lie. Every one of us is made for eternal life and we can start working on that in our lives this very day. Not tomorrow, not yesterday, but today. The Second Vatican Council has this to say: “Therefore all the faithful are invited and obliged to try to achieve holiness and the perfection of their own state of life. Accordingly, all of them must ensure that they keep emotions under proper control, lest they be hindered in their pursuit of perfect love by the use of worldly goods and by an attachment to riches which is contrary to the spirit of evangelical poverty, following the apostle’s advice: Let those who use this world not fix their abode in it, for the form of this world is passing away (1 Cor 7:31).” (Lumen Gentium #42)

So what does “suffering the coming of Christ in silence in your life now” look like? For me lately, it has taken the form of this clever adage: Love is a choice. I am called to holiness by Christ, the bridegroom of my soul and even though my heart is so strongly pulled to the things of the world, I choose him. This choosing him is very simple, very lackluster, and at times very boring. This choosing him involves spending time every single day in silence listening to whatever he wants to tell you, even if that means you weren’t able to hear him say anything to you. It is about letting go of all of the things I want to use to comfort myself in moments of distress or, more frequently, boredom, and running instead to be held in his embrace in utter silence in front of the tabernacle. Loving Christ, loving anyone for that matter, is not about having a warm fuzzy feeling about them all the time. If you love someone, these fuzzies will come on occasion. But true love is choosing to be with the beloved even when everything in you is screaming, “But he is so boring right now!” The reason I was unable to abandon everything and follow Christ was because I was not willing to let go of the things that I was so attached to: all of the distractions that could very easily keep me from thinking about him. As I continue to suffer the coming of Christ in silence into my own life, continue to pray for me. May your own journey toward greater love of Christ and growth in holiness be full of blessings.

**REMAINS**

*(From 10)*

policies and consent forms. Then the interdisciplinary team met and drafted an updated policy that established a process for burial of babies miscarried at less than 20 weeks’ gestation. The hospital would arrange for common burial; parents would also be given the option for private burial. If there were a need for burial in a non-Catholic cemetery, the hospital would work with the family and the funeral home to accommodate this need as well.

Creating a Consent Form

We then moved to the consent form, which provoked much discussion. We change it many times because of the many disciplines involved, and we had input from the medical records committee to consider as well. The Catholic cemetery association staff clarified what the consent form needed to say. They pointed out that both the doctor and the parents needed to sign the form. It was also important to obtain the information needed by the municipality for the burial permits and by the office of vital statistics. After months of back and forth and four drafts, we finally settled on a workable form with which everyone felt comfortable.

We also met with the staff in the laboratory to work out a procedure for storing the remains until burial. And with the help of the funeral director, we made sure that the burial containers would serve their proper function. We also arranged for the lab staff to keep the central log of the fetal remains, with medical record number, mother’s name, and other important information.

The Catholic cemetery association found a space in one of their cemeteries for the common burial site. The hospital’s pastoral care department donated the headstone, which is pink granite and inscribed with an angel and the words “In loving memory of our littlest angels.”

We printed a card that is given to each mother who has a miscarriage, offering our condolences. In the card is information about our burial and interfaith memorial services, which will be held twice a year, with the name and address of the cemetery where their baby will be buried. The phone number for the pastoral care department is included, as is bereavement counseling information.

We then instructed physicians and hospital staff on the updated policy. Although some initially objected to additional paperwork, all are now committed to following the new protocol.

Laying to Rest

Finally, on a chilly November afternoon almost two years after we began this journey, twelve people gathered in a circle around a small casket that held thirty-eight tiny babies. We cried, and prayed, and blessed the little ones. We sang to them. They would finally be laid to rest, as will those who follow.

It was a long and difficult journey through politics, practicality, personalities, and pressures, but we finally did the right thing for our youngest and most vulnerable patients and their grieving parents. If another parent or grandparent were to call, we would not be able to tell them where their baby is buried.

Gerlany Abbott
(Geralyn Abbott, MA, LPC, BCC, is the manager of pastoral care at Saint Mary’s Hospital in Waterbury, Connecticut.


Sample Policy for the Disposition of Fetal Remains

The purpose of this policy is to establish a process for burial of a fetus or fetal remains resulting from a loss of pregnancy at less than twenty weeks’ gestation. This policy adheres to the Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services.

1. An informed consent for authorization for disposition of fetal remains will be completed. A copy will be sent to the pastoral care department for burial purposes.

2. A death certificate (if issuable in the state of the fetal death) will be completed for private burial purposes only.

3. Catholic parents who intended to have their baby baptized will be informed to contact the diocesan chancellor if they wish to have a funeral Mass.

4. A fetus or fetal remains for private burial will be sent to the morgue by Women, Infants, and Children or by the lab.

5. A fetus or fetal remains for common burial shall be placed in a specimen container labeled with the name and medical record number. A pathology slip will also be completed. The remains shall be sent to the laboratory.

Laboratory protocol

1. The pathologist will examine the specimen to determine if there is fetal tissue.

2. If fetal tissue is present, the laboratory will place the tissue in a separate container for disposition.

3. If fetal tissue is not present, the specimen will be disposed of per laboratory protocol.

4. Remains for common burial will be kept in the laboratory until the burial occurs.

5. The laboratory will be responsible for recording all pertinent information per laboratory policy.

Pastoral Care Protocol

1. A representative from the pastoral care department will be available to offer a blessing at the time of fetal death and to offer family support throughout the hospitalization and time of burial.

2. At least once yearly, there will be a common burial consistent with diocesan and liturgical guidelines.

3. Burial records will be maintained at the hospital.

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In dealing with the tragedy of abortion, with any unwanted pregnancy, our society has abandoned our sense of mercy. Whatever the circumstances, the unborn baby is always the innocent one, not one deserving of death. Sadly, in our willingness to play God with human life, we have forgotten that in offering mercy to the unborn, we become most like God. When a woman rejects the culture’s call to exact the cruelty of abortion on her unborn baby, but instead shows mercy, she proves that she is the mighty one—like God. Regardless of the circumstances of how a baby is conceived, a woman needs to remember that she is a mother, called to bring forth new life into our world. While many may encourage her to have abortion, she needs to remember that in her mercy shown to the precious unborn, she becomes like God. Twice blessed is the mother who allows her baby to live. Even if she chooses to give up her child for adoption, she is blessed in knowing that she showed mercy to a precious little one. She is blessed in showing that her child is blessed, as that little one bears the image and likeness of God. God lives in those touched by His mercy shown.

Joseph Cardinal Mindszenty many years ago stated, “The most important person on earth is a mother. She cannot claim the honor of having built Notre Dame Cathedral. She need not. She has built something more magnificent than any cathedral—a dwelling for an immortal soul—the tiny perfection of her baby’s body.” Cardinal Mindszenty adds, “Mothers are closer to God, the Creator, than any other creature. God joins forces with mothers in performing this act of creating human beings. The angels have not been blessed with such a grace. Only a mother is.”

Every human being, whether willing or by accident as some would claim, at every stage and condition is willed and loved by God. For this reason, every human life is sacred. To deprive someone of life is a grave wrong and a grave dishonor to God. Because we are created in the image of God, who is love, our identity and our vocation is to love. Pope Benedict XVI has called this “the key to our entire existence.” We do not begin life as free and autonomous individuals. We are entirely dependent on others for our very existence. We are born into families—the schools of love—where over time we learn to forego the immediate satisfaction of every self-centered desire and we find true, lasting joy in bringing good and happiness to others.

As we sadly remember the 40th anniversary of the death of Roe v. Wade by our Supreme Court, this is a time for all of us to pledge ourselves to pray and work even more to protect all human life, especially the life of the unborn, and to proclaim that this life is sacred, that it is a new person, and deserves respect throughout this person’s life. It is a time for us to be much more pro-active by our writing, by our speaking, by our public stance, as we continue to pray. A special way of doing this is by continuing to pray but speaking out in a louder and clearer voice about the evil that is performed by Planned Parenthood at the two death centers that they still have in our Diocese—one in San Angelo and one in Midland. “Thank God, on November 9, the death center of Planned Parenthood in Abilene closed its doors. And, as we take a more pro-active stance for the unborn and all human life, we also must pledge ourselves to show much more concern for all women who deal with a pregnancy decision. We need to increase our support for the Pregnancy Health Centers that we have in our Diocese, and to let all women know, who struggle with a pregnancy decision, that we are there to help them with open hearts and hands financially, spiritually, medically and emotionally, letting them know that they are our sisters and we will not let them down. We also want to tell all women who have had an abortion about the great mercy of our God, who is always willing to forgive, when we humbly admit our mistakes and strive to make a new beginning.

As we deal with the critical issue of abortion, we need models, people who can show us by the way they lived and acted to address the evil of abortion. It is my joy to propose to all of you as a model of how to be pro-life, is to follow the example of Nellie Gray, the great pro-life hero who passed away in August of 2012. When Nellie Gray died in August, I learned that she was originally a member of the Diocese of San Angelo, being born in Big Spring and baptized in Stanton. This courageous West Texas girl, who did not have much theological or philosophical training, stepped forward when the door of opportunity opened for someone to protest in a clear, loud, public way the evil decision of our Supreme Court in 1973. Nellie Gray, who was living in Washington at the time and worked in the State Department, decided she would do something about this matter, and with a few other people, she began the biggest Pro-Life March in the history of our country or the world. In 1974 Nellie Gray organized the first March For Life in Washington that began with some 20,000 people and now includes hundreds and hundreds of thousands of people. When Nellie Gray began her pro-life work, she turned to many government leaders and politicians in Washington where she was living to be part of the March For Life and speak at the March. Not a single one accepted her invitation. So Nellie Gray, this determined, courageous, West Texas girl said she would lead the March and she would speak. And she spoke, she wrote, she prayed, and she led and marched for 40 years. Nellie Gray, who is from our Diocese, is a model of how we should walk through the many doors of opportunity given to us, using the gifts we have, which may not seem great, but especially opening our hearts and minds to accept the power and grace of the Holy Spirit who is always there to assist us when we offer our lives and service to the protecting of human life. Nellie Gray is indeed a model for all of us, and is remembered for her passionate stance that every life, born and pre-born, aged and young, must be cherished and protected. Her motto was: “no exception, no compromise.” Until the very last moment of her life, Nellie pressed for the unity in the pro-life movement. She firmly believed that not a single pro-born life should be sacrificed for any reason, and urged all pro-life organizations to adopt the March For Life signature statement, the Life Principle as the guiding light for all participants in the noble cause to which she devoted her life. Nellie Gray has been a giant in the pro-life movement. As we approach the anniversary of Roe v. Wade, we honor the memory of this great woman by doing everything possible to protect every pre-born human being and to bring an end to the scourge of abortion in the United States. To honor and recognize this daring and courageous pioneer in the pro-life movement, I have renamed our diocesan pro-life ministry after her: The Nellie Gray Pro-Life ministry for the Diocese of San Angelo, especially for the unborn.

Nellie Gray has been called the Martin Luther King, Jr. of the Pro-Life Movement in the United States. Nellie Gray has also been called by Cardinal Sean O’Malley of Boston as the “Joan of Arc of the Pro-Life Movement.” My brothers and sisters in Christ, this simple, but deeply courageous and committed West Texas girl is a model for all of us. She didn’t have exceptional gifts, but she opened her heart to use the gifts she was given, knowing that by cooperating with God’s grace, the wonderful power of the Holy Spirit, wonderful and miraculous things would happen. She is a model for all of us, especially for all our brother Knights of Columbus.

In the Gospel of Luke, we hear about the visit Mary made to her cousin, Elizabeth. And during that visit of these two courageous, faithful believers in God, we hear about the encounter of the precious unborn in their wombs—one being John the Baptist, and the other the very Son of God, Jesus Christ, in the womb of Mary. Elizabeth, inspired by the Holy Spirit proclaimed to Mary during that visit, “Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.” The one who can help us the most after Christ and the Holy Spirit is Mary, the Mother of the eternal Word of God who is still with us. Yes, we must imitate the openness and surrender of Nellie Gray, but especially the openness and surrender of that young girl from Nazareth who gave her life totally to God and gave us the God-man, Jesus Christ. With her cousin, Mary says about every precious unborn waiting to be born in a mother’s womb, “Blessed is the fruit of your womb.”
CHILDREN

(From 11)

comments that might be misunderstood.

7. Maintain a normal routine. Keeping to a regular schedule can be reassuring and promote physical health. Ensure that children get plenty of sleep, regular meals, and exercise. Encourage them to keep up with their schoolwork and extracurricular activities but don’t push them if they seem overwhelmed.

Suggested Points to Emphasize When Talking to Children
• Schools are safe places. School staff work with parents and public safety providers (local police and fire departments, emergency responders, hospitals, etc.) to keep you safe.

• The school building is safe because ...
  (cite specific school procedures).
• We all play a role in the school safety. Be observant and let an adult know if you see or hear something that makes you feel uncomfortable, nervous or frightened.
• There is a difference between reporting, tattling and gossiping. You can provide important information that may prevent harm either directly or anonymously by telling a trusted adult what you know or hear.
• Don’t dwell on the worst possibilities. Although there is no absolute guarantee that something bad will never happen, it is important to understand the difference between the possibility of something happening and the probability that it will affect our school.
• Senseless violence is hard for everyone to understand. Doing things that you enjoy, sticking to your normal routine, and being with friends and family help make us feel better and keep us from worrying about the event.
• Sometimes people do bad things that hurt others. They may be unable to handle their anger, under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or suffering from mental illness. Adults (parents, teachers, police officers, doctors, faith leaders) work very hard to get those people help and keep them from hurting others. It is important for all of us to know how to get help if we feel really upset or angry and to stay away from drugs and alcohol.
• Stay away from guns and other weapons. Tell an adult if you know someone has a gun. Access to guns is one of the leading risk factors for deadly violence.
• Violence is never a solution to personal problems. Students can be part of the positive solution by participating in anti-violence programs at school, learning conflict mediation skills, and seeking help from an adult if they or a peer is struggling with anger, depression, or other emotions they cannot control.

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OBISPO

(Para 3)

ables y un seguro nulo de salud o seguro social. Estoy enterado del dolor que sufren en su búsqueda de mejor vivienda y cuidado médico, alimento y educación para sus familias. Me comprometo en alentar a líderes del Gobierno e Iglesias para asistirlos con los medios disponibles. Su situación clama a Dios por una justa y decente condición de vida.

Les recuerdo de una manera breve de la situación crítica y económica a nivel nacional, pero debemos enfocarnos a las necesidades de los pobres aquí en Tejas. Nuestro Presidente y el Congreso han de reincidir la discusión nacional a enfocarse en el bien común, rompiendo con los canudos de avaricia legislativa que tiene el más grande impacto negativo en los pobres, en familias y en los niños. Más que nunca, la red segura del Seguro Social. Medicare y Medicaid debe ser fortalecida para que los más vulnerables no sean abandonados y la prioridad de trabajos, el gran déficit y deuda deben de ser abordados como mayor prioridad. Como americanos debemos de estar preocupados con el precario escenario de la nación, pero nuestra atención primordial debe de ser la de trabajar en unidad con nuestros líderes Gubernamentales y estatales en todos los niveles, e Iglesias y Agencias Sociales para ayudar a los más pobres y vulnerables de nuestra diócesis en el estado de Tejas. Con Espíritu de Solidaridad con ustedes, los pobres, líderes religiosos, queremos trabajar para encontrar una solución a esta situación de pobreza en Tejas. Para saber como y cuanto responder con el amor y compasión de Cristo a servir a los más pobres y abandonados, permitanme revisar la situación actual en Tejas. Los obispos de Tejas trabajaremos activamente con la Legislatura en estos puntos particulares:

Pobreza: Aproximadamente uno de cada cinco Tejanos vive bajo la línea de pobreza (18.5%) de acuerdo con la más reciente información del censo de los EUA. Estima que uno de cada cuatro de estos que viven en pobreza, son niños. 3.5 millones de Tejanos reciben asistencia mensual de parte del Programa de Asistencia Nutricional Suplemental (SNAP) que se le conoce antes como estampillas para comer. Aproximadamente 100,000 familias Tejanas recibieron ayuda mensual por medio del programa Ayuda Temporal a Familias Necesitadas (TANF).

Cuidado de salud: La elegibilidad para el Programa de Medicaid del estado de Tejas es exclusivamente para niños, aquellos con alguna discapacidad, y a los más pobres de nuestro estado. Los niños forman el mayor número de clientes del programa. Más de 3 millones de niños Tejanos están inscritos al programa de Medicaid, Programa de Seguro de Salud para Niños (CHIP) y el Programa Prenatal (CHIP) en Tejas.

Sin Seguro: Tejas posee el mayor número de personas sin seguro de salud en todos los Estados Unidos. El año pasado el 25% de Tejanos no contaban con seguro de salud, un total de 5.8 millones de personas. 61% de estas personas sin seguro cuentan con un empleo y el 64% son ciudadanos nacidos en los Estados Unidos. Este gran número demuestra que el presente sistema que provee cuidado de salud es altamente inadecuado y da un claro mensaje que cuestiones sobre el acceso y la calidad deben ser dirigidas.

Desempleo: A pesar que la tasa de desempleo de Tejas es 6.8%, continua siendo la más baja que la tasa de desempleo nacional, los líderes deben continuar asegurando que los trabajadores empleados y desempleados se les ofrezca apoyo, asistencia y una justa y decente condición de trabajo; así mismo, como reforzar la creación de nuevos trabajos. Los efectos de un largo tiempo de desempleo deben de incluir acceso a consejería y cuidado de salud mental, asistencia de vivienda para las familias que han pasado por un proceso de reposición de hogar y oportunidades para poder reconstruir sus créditos de una manera segura y digna.

Inmigrantes: A nivel nacional y estatal los obispos católicos seguimos abogando por una completa y comprensiva reforma de inmigración que se centre en la dignidad de cada persona y mantenga las familias unidas, y provea un camino justo y reconocimiento legal. Tejas está enriqueciendo que provee asistencia de salud para la mujer. Continuamos proclamando el mensaje de la sagrada dignidad de todos ustedes, especialmente demostrando nuestra preocupación por los no nacidos, los pobres, los moribundos, los encarcelados, los abandonados, y los indocumentados. Especialmente nosotros queremos abrir puertas para que puedan tener una voz y decisión para la solución de esta dolorosa situación económica. Activamente buscamos las maneras básicas para comunicar efectivamente el mensaje a todas las personas que servimos y a la sociedad entera.
the trade and crafting his own distinctive pastoral style.

Seminaries are intense, a fish bowl-like experience in a close-knit community, where praying, studying and eating together taught him about the human condition. Spiritual directors and formation directors pushed and pulled him to articulate his inner life, called him to greater accountability and comforted him when he struggled.

Seminary and the first years of priestly ministry are a steep immersion into the depths of one’s own humanity followed by an immersion into the depths of others. And it is always filtered through the lens of faith. Seminarians face questions about how they feel at the death of someone dear? How has the grieving process been? How do they feel when a friend leaves the seminary? How do they deal with the loss? And how do Christ and the seminarian’s faith help him with each of those? This is the undertow of seminary life, where acedia training is but a part.

And then it happens, an unconscionable act of violence. Perhaps he remembered from his training in visiting hospitals and nursing homes: the ministry of presence, where sometimes the most soothing ministry is just being there. Sometimes words can get in the way and people just need to know that everything has not evaporated, that there is still someone to lean on, that even if they don’t see the working of faith in this moment, then perhaps another does.

Sometimes a priest can draw on the words of Christ and sometimes he simply stands as a presence to show God is not absent.

Msgr. Weiss, whatever his previously experience with grief and struggle, and whether or not he had been tested in the fire of faith, at Newtown stood as a presence and image of that faith for others.

Perhaps it was grace, or training, or both that let Msgr. Weiss touch souls across the nation this week. For right from the start, like Jesus, he was there.

Note: Contributing to this was Father Daniel Merz, associate director of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Secretariat for Divine Worship.

Advent to dedicate themselves more "to prayer and to acts of peace."

Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, Vatican secretary of state, sent a message Dec. 14 to the Diocese of Bridgeport, which includes Newtown, saying the pope had asked the cardinal "to convey his heartfelt grief" and his prayers to the victims, their families and "all affected by the shocking event."

"In the aftermath of this senseless tragedy, he asks God our father to console all those who mourn and to sustain the entire community with the spiritual strength which triumphs over violence by the power of forgiveness, hope and reconciling love," the cardinal wrote.

A front-page article Dec. 15 in L’Osservatore Romano, the Vatican newspaper, said the people of the United States must look at ways to "stem the violence that strikes them from within, heinous violence that is increased by easy access to increasingly lethal weapons and this time struck children in an elementary school."

"The Newtown massacre is destined to reopen the debate about the free circulation of guns," it said. While many individuals and groups called for more stringent gun-control measures in the immediate aftermath of the shooting, "the National Rifle Association, on the other hand, entrenched itself behind an embarrassing silence," the Vatican newspaper article said.

"In a pure coincidence, the massacre of the Connecticut children occurred on the eve of the anniversary of the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which guarantees the right to have weapons. It was ratified Dec. 15, 1791, and was made to measure for the United States as it was 221 years ago," the article said.

Before reciting the Angelus Dec. 17, Gaudate (rejoice) Sunday, Pope Benedict celebrated a morning Mass at the parish of St. Patrick in Colle Prenestino, a suburb on the eastern outskirts of Rome, and met with parents of babies baptized in the past year.

In his homily at the Mass, Pope Benedict said the Prophet Zephaniah's exhortation to 'shout for joy' and "be glad and exult with all your heart" is a proclamation of good news.

"The prophet wants to tell us that there is no reason for mistrust, discouragement, sadness, no matter what situation we face, because we are certain of the presence of the Lord, which alone is enough to cheer us and give joy to our hearts," the pope said.

Returning to the Vatican to recite the Angelus with visitors in St. Peter's Square and to bless the baby Jesus statues that will be the center of Nativity scenes in homes, schools and hospitals throughout Rome, Pope Benedict prayed that people would embrace the call to conversion, honesty, respect for others and love for neighbor.

As the pope spoke from his apartment window high over St. Peter's Square, two small groups of protesters held up signs. The handful of protesters inside St. Peter's Square had black and white signs in English, Italian and Spanish; one said, "Gay marriages do not harm peace. Weapons do." The group outside the square held up colored hearts with messages in Italian such as "Love your neighbor" and "Marriage for all."

The groups were protesting a section of Pope Benedict's World Day of Peace message, which affirmed Catholic teaching on marriage as the lifelong bond of a man and a woman. The message said attempts to redefine marriage "harm and help to destabilize marriage, obscuring its specific nature and its indispensable role in society."

As we prepare for the birthday of the Prince of Peace at Christmas, we need to pray and speak out against the culture of violence that is infecting our country more and more, and even entering into sacred and safe places like our schools. All of us are called, as followers of Christ, to work for peace in our homes, our streets and our world more than ever. This is a time to redouble our prayers for peace throughout the world, especially in the land, and in nearby lands, where our Savior, the Prince of Peace was born.

In the shadow of this tragic shooting, may we know that God's sacrificial and compassionate love sustains us and may those pained so deeply by this tragedy experience God's fatherly comfort and care in their own hearts. Their pain is our pain, their sorrow is our sorrow, their suffering is our suffering, and our hope gives them hope, our compassion inspires in them comfort and our helping hands helps them to raise their hands to make a new beginning, and our love strengthens their weary and broken hearts.
OPENING
(From 18)

of the minority were first and foremost Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani, the head of the Supreme Congregation of the Holy Office, which is the watchdog for those who stray from Church teaching. (Today this is called the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, but is still the watchdog. They are the ones who have been “in dialogue” with the U.S. women religious in recent months.) The name of Marcel Lefebvre might be familiar as he was the one who broke away from the Church and started his own community. Theologian Yves Congar reported: “All that was heard in the corridors of the Curia were bitter complaints that ‘this accursed Council is ruining the Church.’”

Of the majority side there were as well. The first of these was Cardinal Augustin Bea, a German Jesuit who was made cardinal by Pope John. He was very influential in shepherding through the Council the document on the Jews, on Religious Liberty and on Ecumenism. The most visible figure at the Council was Cardinal Leon-Joseph Suenens, a symbol of the influence of the Belgians at the Council and Archbishop Giacomo Lercaro of Bologna and Patriarch Maximos IV Saigh, of the Melkite rite, very outspoken and reminding the Latin rite bishops that they were not the only fish in the pond, that the Catholic Church is more than just the Latin rite. The Council Fathers were about to face some very difficult times.


VATICANO
(Para 5)

En un día normal durante el concilio, hubo unos 2,400 asistentes. ¿Cómo es esto en comparación con Vaticano I en 1869? Unos 750 asistieron. El Concilio de Trento en 1545 abrió con no más 29 obispos y el número más grande fue unos 200. La Iglesia nunca había visto una reunión de personajes eclesiales tan grande como en Vaticano II.

¿De dónde llegaron en Vaticano II? 36% de Europa, 34% de las Américas, 20% de Asia y Oceanía y 10% de África.

Las reuniones fueron en la nave central de la Basílica de San Pedro y estaba llena. Además de los obispos, hubo periti o expertos teológicos. Probablemente el más conocido (ahora) de estos periti fue el P. José Ratzinger, ahora el Papa Benedicto XVI. Cuando estaba escribiendo esto, pensé que él es uno de los pocos todavía vivos que participaron en el concilio. Está en una posición única porque él puede decir: “Yo sé lo que pasó; estuve allí.”

¿Cuánto costó todo esto y quién lo pagó? El sistema de sonido, los servicios, las barras de café, muebles, arreglos para los asientos y mucho más probablemente costaron como un millón de dólares. Piensen en el año 1960 cuando uno pudo comprar un galón de gasolina por menos de 20c y entiendan cuánto esto sería en el dinero de hoy. Y esto no incluye el viaje, el cuarto para los obispos y otros. Esos gastos fueron pagados por cada diócesis. Pero muchas diócesis no pudieron pagarlos. Por eso el Vaticano pagó mucho de esto. La Iglesia en Alemania y la Iglesia en los EE.UU. eran muy generosas para pagar estos gastos. Durante el Concilio, la cuestión de dinero nunca se levantó como razón por cortar la agenda o por acelerar las discusiones. Sin embargo Vaticano II era muy difícil para las finanzas del Vaticano. Y esto ciertamente fortaleció la determinación del Papa Pablo de cerrar el Concilio después del cuarto período.

INNOCENTS
(From 11)

They kill out of madness or a deeply misguided sense of mission, and they always end badly -- either dying at their own hands or being overcome -- finally and often at great cost -- by the forces of good.

Still, we can’t help but ask “why?” How could this happen -- again?

There is no answer. The prophet Jeremiah cites Rachel’s weeping for her children and her inability to be consoled “since they were no more” (Jer 31:15). All we can do is weep -- and pray -- that the day will come when all violence and all tears will be ended forever.

Until then, as Pope Benedict tells us, we must rely on the “spiritual strength which triumphs over violence.” We must place our trust in God who “triumphs over violence by the power of forgiveness, hope and reconciling love.”

Isn’t this what Advent is all about? This holy season reminds us that without Christ all of us, and the world we live in, are in a very bad way. Unless guided by God’s Word, human freedom brings with it the capacity for unspeakable evil. Unless grounded in Christ’s reconciling love, there can be no real hope or forgiveness. Things will continue as they are -- unredeemed by the power of self-sacrificing love -- unless the Messiah comes to save us from the power of sin and death.

We Christians believe that this Savior has in fact come. That he has overcome the power of evil and will come again to reconcile us all to himself on the Day of Judgment.

Until then, we wait in hope. We endure suffering and senseless violence -- often with Rachel’s bitter tears -- confident that God’s love will triumph over sin and death and restore us to the peace and consolation of our heavenly home.

While we wait, we must pray -- and weep -- for all who suffer from the effects of unspeakable evil. Our sisters and brothers in Connecticut deserve our heartfelt grief. They also deserve our fervent prayer for the Lord’s coming again this Christmas and at the end of time.

Come, Lord Jesus. Free us from the culture of death, and bring us all safely into your kingdom where you “will wipe every tear from our eyes, and there will be no more death or mourning, crying or pain” (Rev 21:4).

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Dioce-Scenes

Odessa

Scenes from the girls’ basketball game between St. Mary’s Catholic School and St Ann’s, played at St. Mary’s gym. (Photos by Alan P. Torre / aptorre.com)

Midland

Twenty-six parishioners at St. Stephen’s Church in Midland recently completed the “33 Days to Morning Glory Bible Study: A Consecration to Mary.” Pictured are Fr. Prem S. Thumma and 18 of those who completed the course, including: Ann Carrillo, JoAnn Sulak, Art and Kat Nunez, Horencia Carrasco, Rachel DelaCerda, Mary Louise Hunt, Gloria May, Terri Evans, Marilyn Siruta, Thilde Rubio, Corine Martinez, Yolanda Ponce, Carol Kowalski, Laura Rodriguez, Becky Sotelo, Marquerite Miller, Sylvia Aguirre. Using “33 Days to Morning Glory,” Hearts Afire Parish-based Programs is being tested in pilot settings around the country. Hearts Afire will officially be introduced on the live broadcast on EWTN of the Divine Mercy Sunday celebration on April 15.

FREY

(From 2)

boy and as a teenager. His mother treated him harshly and he soon became very slow and absentminded. He had a temper so that he was not very popular. He tried to join the Capuchins but they soon asked him to leave. He just could not do anything right. Finally he was to care for the horses accepted as a servant at a Franciscan monastery. He began to change. He became more humble and was finally allowed to join the order and to become a priest, even though he had a hard time with his studies. God began to work miracles through him and often he was elevated from the ground during his prayers. He was finally sent to Assisi because he was causing such a stir with his miracles. He enjoyed the quiet time there and in 1663 finally went to the Lord. He was proclaimed a saint by Pope Clement the 13th in 1767.

In 1453 the Turks captured Constantinople. Juan Capistrano was a highly educated, governor of Perugia. He was put into prison by enemies of the city. It was there that he found God in the loneliness of 6 years in the prison. Once released he gave up his part-time there and in 1663 finally

TEXTING

(From 14)

ignition. You don't have to pass the driving test once. You have to pass the driving test each time you get in a car, for your sake and for the sake of others on the road.

Driving while drunk kills. Driving while exhausted kills. Texting while driving kills.

I know it's hard to remember this when you're a teenager, especially when you've first felt the freedom that a learning permit promises.

But the next time you get behind the wheel of a car, remember Chris and Deanna. Put away the phone. Texts and calls can wait. Give the keys to someone else if you're overly tired, or if you've had just a swallow of alcohol. Don't speed. Ever. If your friends are distracting you while you're driving, tell them to stop or pull over until they shut up.

I don't want anyone else to have to get that phone call.