

A Pastoral Message

Do you not know your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit?

A pastoral message on chastity for young people and for all from Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

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St. Elizabeth Ann Seton hosts annual Conference Day, Feb. 23


Looking at Lent

Special coverage of the Church’s season of Lent, Pgs. 6-7.

The Dodds: Praying through your hectic day

How can you become better at “praying through your day”? A couple of points to consider:

- Remember that prayer is a form of conversation and the best conversationalists are good listeners. See Bill & Monica Dodds, Pg. 14
- Ask God to help you become better at praying!

From the Easy Chair

Tiny cramped loud and messy. Bring it on.

Fifteen years ago, my wife Karen and I bought our first house. A modest, three bedroom, it fit our needs perfectly and we saw it as a great place to raise our young family, which at the time consisted of two young daughters, 7 and 5.

From The Easy Chair/Pg. 14

Web Site: www.san-angelo-diocese.org

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From the Bishop’s Desk

The question of Lent: What is my idol today?

“...They exchanged their glory for the image of a grass-eating bullock. They forgot the God who had saved them, who had done great deeds in Egypt.” Psalm 106:20-21

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

The season of Lent is a time to ask myself seriously—“What is my idol today?” When we hear in Psalm 106 how the ancient Israelites “exchanged their glory for the image of a grass-eating bullock,” we perhaps say how silly, who would worship a cow? Perhaps we might even pride ourselves on saying—I am glad that “I’m not like those people.”

However, the real question for us today is not: do we idolize a cow, or bullock, but “What is my idol today?” An idol is something that we give more time to than we give to God or the things of God. Lent is a time to seriously admit that while we do not perhaps have cows or bullocks as our idols, that we all do have certain idols that draw us away from the one true God.

Some frank questions will help me see what might be my idol today:
Where do I spend more time?—At church, at work, or at some type of entertainment? In prayer, or in front of the television? Sharing time with my family, or pursuing my own desires or hobbies? Doing good works or surfing the internet? Helping the poor and needy, or wasting my time on so many frivolous things of life?
Most of us do not consciously set up idols in our lives to replace the one true God. We all say in word that God is Number One, but very slowly over time, we have the tendency to build into idols those aspects of our lives that we value so much that they replace the one true God. We all say in word that God is Number One, but very slowly over time, we have the tendency to build into idols those aspects of our lives that we value so much that they replace the one true God.

Lent is a time to frankly face the idols of my life; it is a time to make Christ as Number One in my life; it is a time to dedicate myself to more prayer and Bible reading, to more penance, to more works of charity and service.

DIOCESAN BRIEFS

Abilene Holy Family to host parish mission

ABILENE -- "The Wonder of God's Love" will be the theme for Abilene Holy Family’s Parish Mission Feb. 17-20. Fr. Bob Weiss, C.P., will be the presenter. Fr. Bob was raised along the banks of the Mississippi. At an early age he decided to become a priest in the Passionist Congregation and was ordained in 1965. For the last 36 years he has been a full-time preacher of priest retreats and parish missions in 40 states. He is now the rector of St. Paul’s Monastery-Retreat House complex in Detroit, Michigan. Fr. Bob’s powerful message will help all to know God’s love in a deeper way and to know better how to share and respond to the greatest gift of all: Jesus Christ.

Sessions for the Mission last approximately 1 hr. The schedule is:
Sunday, 7 p.m. “The Wonder of God’s Love”
Monday, 10 a.m. Mass with teaching; 7 p.m. “How We Share God’s Love With One Another”
Tuesday, 10 a.m. Mass with teaching; 7 p.m. “Sin, Obstacles, and Forgiveness”
Wednesday, 10 a.m. Mass with teaching; 7 p.m. “Prayer and How to Get In Touch With God”

The Sacrament of Reconciliation will be offered after each session through Wednesday morning. Childcare will be available for all sessions. All are invited!

Flag Day poster contest

SAN ANTONIO - Catholic Life Insurance is sponsoring a poster contest to commemorate the 231st birthday of our nation’s flag. The theme of this year’s contest is: “America – The Land I Love.”

The design of this year’s poster should include a representation (drawing, painting, etc.) of the child’s favorite place in America, and it must include the American flag. The place selected as the subject of the poster can either be a nationally recognized location, such as Washington D.C.; or a place that is personal to the contestant, such as a tree house. Creativity a plus.

Elementary school students in grades K-5 may submit one original poster no larger than 20” x 20.” Judges will evaluate posters based on eye appeal, originality and theme. Winners will receive cash awards.

To receive an entry form and the complete rules for the contest, contact Lorrie Bledsoe in the Communications Department at (800) 292-2548 or (210) 828-9921 ext. 141. Participants in the contest do not have to be Catholic Life members or of the Catholic faith. The deadline to submit entries to the contest is April 10, 2008.

Worldwide Marriage Encounter

Worldwide Marriage Encounters’ weekend is scheduled for the Midtown Hotel (old Ramada Hotel on Wall), in Midland, Feb. 29-March 2, and May 30-June 1 at Christ the King Retreat Center in San Angelo. Both weekends are from 7:30 p.m. Friday until 5 p.m. Sunday.

The emphasis on the marriage encounter weekend is on communication between husband and wife who will spend a weekend together, away from the distractions and tensions of every day life to concentrate on each other. Worldwide Marriage Encounter is for any married couple who desires a richer, fuller life together. Marriage Encounter is designed to deepen and enrich the joys a couple shares together regardless how long they have been married.

For more information, call Valentin and Maria Gomez, 325.835.7044, or email vgomez@wcc.net.

Space is limited so reservations are encouraged quickly.

Cool Communications comes to San Angelo

SAN ANGELO -- Becky Benes with Oneens of Life Productions partners with Korona Formal Wear and Verizon to bring Andrea and Journey Henkart, authors of “Cool Communication: From Conflict to Cooperation” to San Angelo, March 13, 2008. They will be the featured speakers at the Girl Scout Women of Distinction Luncheon and will speak at the San Angelo City Hall from 6:30 to 8 p.m. The evening event will be an hour and half of fun learning of communication skills and will serve as a fundraiser for Angelo Catholic School, Children for a Peaceful World, Girl Scouts of Central Texas, Ft. Concho Elementary PTA, and San Angelo Broadway Academy.

Cool Communications, a program designed to bring about peace in the family, schools and community by developing positive and affirmative communication skills among adults and children. Andrea and Journey, featured on the Oprah Show and several other national venues, travel the country sharing their message. They are beautiful examples of how this type of communication can develop loving and supportive relationships. They are a dynamic and fun duo and will be an inspiration.

To purchase tickets contact the organization of your choice. For information, go to www.onenessoflife.com. If you have, any questions call Becky 949-1450.

Correction

The annual Diocesan Directory published in the January 2008 Angelus incorrectly identified the pastor of St. Mary’s of Odessa. Rev. Francis Frey is the pastor. The Angelus regrets the error.

Help Wanted

FORT WORTH -- St. Andrew Catholic Church, a Fort Worth parish with 3,200 families, seeks candidates for the position of coordinator of ministries with Youth and Young Adults. The coordinator will be directly responsible for coordinating the components of advocacy, community life, evangelization, leadership development, pastoral care, peace/justice, and prayer and worship in the lives of youth and young adults. The coordinator will advise and consult with already existing catechetical programming (religious education, sacramental preparation and the Catholic School). The coordinator will work with the two core groups, one for youth and one for young adults. Each core group is responsible for designing programming, events and providing youth and adult volunteers. The coordinator will support, train, and supervise the adult and youth volunteers. This is a newly created position and aspects of the position are still flexible.

Please send resume by March 1, 2008 to: Search Committee, St. Andrew Catholic Church, 3717 Stadium Drive, Fort Worth, Texas 76109
Diocesan Conference Day in Odessa

ODESSA -- Dominican Sister Lois Paha, Director of Formation for the Diocese of Tucson, Ariz., will keynote this year’s Diocesan Conference Day, from 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Feb. 23, at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, in Odessa.

The program is entitled “Encountering the Living Christ Through the Sacraments,” and features breakout sessions “Graced Moments in our Lives,” “Graced Action in Our Lives,” and “Graced Expressions in Our Lives.”

S. Paha, OP, brings more than 40 years experience in ministry to her present position. She holds a Master of Arts Degree in Theology and a Master of Arts in teaching Religion from St. Michael’s College in Winooksi, Vermont and is in the process of completing a Doctor of Ministry degree from the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio. S. Lois has been a member of the Board of Directors of the Southwest Liturgical Conference since 1989 and is in her second term as president of the Board. S. Lois has given numerous presentations and workshops on the topics of Liturgy, Sacraments and Prayer.

Diocesan Conference Day
February 23, 2008
St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Odessa

Schedule
7:45 a.m. - Exhibits and Registration
9:00 a.m. - Welcome and Prayer
9:30 a.m. - Keynote Presentation I: Graced Moments in our Lives
10:30 a.m. - Break and Visit Exhibits
11:00 a.m. - Presentation II: Graced Action in our Lives
12:15 p.m. - Lunch (included)
1:30 p.m. - Presentation III: Graced Expressions in our Lives
2:30 p.m. - Break and Visit Exhibits
3:00 p.m. - Eucharist with Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI presiding
Conference starts at 9:00 am.
Registration opens at 7:45 am.
Exhibitors from various book publishing companies will be present.
Cost: $20 if registration form is postmarked before February 9 ($22 if registration form is postmarked after February 9.)

For more info: contact the Office of Education & Formation at 325.651.7500

About Each Session:
9:30 - Presentation I: Graced Moments in our Lives
Our Baptism into Christ is our call to live the life of grace in the world.

11:00 am - Presentation II: Graced Action in our Lives
Our Baptism into the community of believers doesn’t stop there! We are sent forth from the Eucharist to bring Christ and to be Christ in the world. This presentation will explore the relationship between our life of prayer and the ways we live the spirit of the liturgy and the sacraments in the world today.

1:30 pm - Presentation III: Graced Expressions in our Lives
Our creedal statements in liturgy and prayer are expressed with rituals of our faith. “We remember, we celebrate, we believe” these words remind us of the heart of our liturgical prayer and the symbols with which we pray. This presentation will invite us to remember the Easter Vigil as we prepare to celebrate what we believe in our lives of faith in the liturgy and in the world.

From the Editor

The Jesus Mission: Love without borders

God shows no partiality. Whatever the nationality, whoever fears him and practices justice is accepted... – Acts 10:34

Folks are fanatic about setting boundaries. They want to distinguish between near and far, ours and theirs; known and foreign. Conditions are created to keep people in their place. Rich is kept away from poor, north separated from south, and black divided from white. We draw lines on a map to distance these from those, mine from yours, and friends from everyone else.

We invent titles, degrees and categories, under the impression that if you manage to climb your way through the labyrinth, you can earn enough prestige to compensate for utter lack of meaning. All in vain, of course. The only passport of any worth before God is the body you received in your mother’s womb. He gave you a permanent visa for the dream of a world made new at the baptismal font.

God has no distinguished guests. He accepts anyone who dares to love him and do the right thing. Your country of origin doesn’t matter. There are no tests, rankings or pedigree in his borderless Kingdom. Image and likeness of the Creator are enough to start. Through the waters, you become an adopted son or daughter of the Father, brother or sister of Jesus. By merit of human dignity, you have what it takes to become a member of his body.

The distinctive Jesus gesture is his inclusion of the excluded. He comes to open the eyes of the blind, bring the captives out of prison, and be the light of the nations, unto the ends of the earth, without exceptions.

The Israelites crossed the river with Joshua, long ago, and came into the Promised Land. Jesus crosses the Jordan from the inside outward. When he gets baptized, he comes across to the other side. The seed planted in Israel has come up to be planted in foreign lands. There it will bear much fruit. When Jesus leaves his homeland, he’s making a promise to foreigners.

This is my beloved Son, we hear the Father say, because he has crossed over, moved by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the Kingdom without borders, where there are no favorites and no preferred customers. If that is true, then let our obsession for dividing and separating be healed. Jesus will make all lands flow with milk and honey. His Spirit will live in your tent, if you dare to take up his cause. His love will conquer you, if you learn to practice justice.

If you have been formed to make alliances, why do you make wars? If he builds bridges, why do you build walls? If he wets his back in the river to save you, why do you persecute those who get wet to feed their families? If he frees the captive, why are there so many in locked up, without recourse to justice?

The Jesus mission is love without borders. He has come, not to demand, but to gather. He has come, not to control, but to rescue. He has come, not to colonize, but to redeem. Let’s go with him. Be baptized in the spirit of his compassion.
**DIOCESAN DATES**

**Bishop's Calendar**

**FEBRUARY**

9 -- IMPERIAL, Our Lady of Lourdes – Rosary at 4:00 p.m. and Mass at 5:30 p.m.
11 -- ANDREWS, Procession and Mass at Our Lady of Lourdes, Andrews at 6:00 p.m.
13 -- SAN ANGELO, Newman Center – Mass at 12:00 noon
15 -- CHRISTOVAL – Election for Carmelite Sisters Superior
16 -- SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral – 5:00 p.m. Mass and Scout Awards
19 -- SAN ANGELO, Liturgy Commission Meeting -10 a.m.
19 -- SAN ANGELO -- Sacred Heart Cathedral – Shroud of Christ the King Retreat Center – Region X Vocation Conference – Mass at 5:15 p.m.
23 -- ODESZA, St. Elizabeth – Diocesan Conference Day
25-29 -- Private Lenten Retreat

**MARCH**

1 -- MIDLAND, Golf Tournament for Schools
2 -- BIG SPRING, Installation of Father Gullu as Pastor, 10:30 a.m., location TBA.
10 -- SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral – Rite of Election
11 -- ANDREWS, Procession and Mass at Our Lady of Lourdes, Andrews at 6:00 p.m.
13 -- SAN ANGELO, Newman Center – Mass at 12:00 noon
15 -- CHRISTOVAL – Election for Carmelite Sisters Superior
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**Answers to concerns about artificial means of nutrition, hydration supply**

**(Responses from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith)**

**By Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI**

Recently the Bishops’ Conference of the United States requested from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, clarification on the teaching of the Church concerning the provision of nutrition and hydration by artificial means to patients in a vegetative state. I submit here the answers given by this Congregation to two major questions:

**FIRST QUESTION:** Is the administration of food and water (whether by natural or artificial means) to a patient in a “vegetative state” morally obligatory except when they cannot be assimilated by the patient’s body or cannot be administered to the patient without causing significant physical discomfort?

**RESPONSE:** Yes. The administration of food and water even by artificial means is, in principle, an ordinary and proportionate means of preserving life. It is therefore obligatory to the extent to which, and for as long as, it is shown to accomplish its proper finality, which is the hydration and nourishment of the patient. In this way suffering and death by starvation and dehydration are prevented.

**SECOND QUESTION:** When nutrition and hydration are being supplied by artificial means to a patient in a “permanent vegetative state”, may they be discontinued when competent physicians judge with moral certainty that the patient will never recover consciousness?

**RESPONSE:** No. A patient in a “permanent vegetative state” is a person with fundamental human dignity and must, therefore, receive ordinary and proportionate care which includes, in principle, the administration of water and food even by artificial means.

The Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI, at the Audience granted to the undersigned Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, approved these Responses, adopted in the Ordinary Session of the Congregation, and ordered their publication.

Rome, from the Offices of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, August 1, 2007.
William Cardinal Levada Prefect
Angelo Amato, S.D.B.
Titular Archbishop of Sila
Secretary

Here follows the official information that I have received which gives more explanation on how these two answers are to be understood:

“Therefore, the Responses now given by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith continue the direction of the documents of the Holy See cited above, and in particular the Address of John Paul II of March 20, 2004. The basic points are two. It is stated, first of all, that the provision of water and food, even by artificial means, is in principle an ordinary and proportionate means of preserving life for patients in a “vegetative state”: “It is therefore obligatory, to the extent to which, and for as long as, it is shown to accomplish its proper finality, which is the hydration and nourishment of the patient”. It is made clear, secondly, that this ordinary means of sustaining life is to be provided also to those in a “permanent vegetative state”, since these are persons with their fundamental human dignity.

When stating that the administration of food and water is morally obligatory in principle, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith does not exclude the possibility that, in very remote places or in situations of extreme poverty, the artificial provision of food and water may be physically impossible, and therefore impossible nemo tenetur. However, the obligation to offer the minimal treatments that are available remains in place, as it is shown to accomplish its proper finality, which is the hydration and nourishment of the patient.

(Please See HYDRATION/17)

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**Padre Nathan Stone**

**Cruzando fronteras**

Dios no hace distinción de personas, sino que acepta al que le toma y practica la justicia, sea de la nación que sea. -- Hechos 10:34

El hombre se afana por fijar fronteras. Quiere distinguir lo lejano de lo cercano, lo propio de lo ajeno, lo conocido de lo extraño. Se inventan condiciones para poner a las personas en su lugar. Se separa al rico del pobre, al norte del sur, y el negro del blanco. Se dibujan líneas en el mapa, para distanciar los unos de los otros, los mios de los tuyos, y los amigos del mentón.

Se idean titulos, grados y categorías bajo la ilusión de que escalando por el laberinto, se pueda alcanzar un prestigio suficiente para compensar la falta de sentido. Todo en vano, pues, el único pasaporte que vale ante Dios es el cuerpo que te dio en el seno materno. Te entregó la visa para el sueño de mundo nuevo en la pila bautismal.

Dios no hace diferencia de personas; acepta a quien lo ame y obre bien, sea de la nación que sea. No hace falta prueba, rango o linaje para el Reino sin fronteras. Basta con la imagen y semejanza del Creador. Por las aguas, eres hijo adoptado del Padre de Jesús. Por la dignidad de ser humano, reúnes las condiciones para ser miembro de su cuerpo. El gesto distintivo de Jesús es su inclusión del excluido. Viene para abrir los ojos de los ciegos, sacar a los cautivos de la prisión, y ser luz de las naciones, hasta los confines de la tierra, sin excepciones.

Cuando llegaron los israelitas de antaño, cruzaron el Jordán con Josué y entraron a la Tierra Prometida. Jesús cruzó desde el interior hacia fuera. Al ser bautizado, sale al otro lado. La semilla sembrada en Israel ha brotado, y ha sido plantado en tier
Black History Month: ‘One single bracelet does not jingle alone’

By Michael D. Pfeifer
Bishop of San Angelo

February, Black History Month, reminds us of the African Family Tree in which all people are rooted. Black History Month is a special moment for "Celebrating the African Family Tree," and to act in solidarity with Africa today, and with those of African descent.

This solidarity calls us to stand with the people of Africa who are working to bring peace in the face of raging conflicts, healing in the midst of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, comfort and welcome to the orphaned and the displaced wanderer, to bring food to the hungry and to celebrate the sacred God-given dignity of each human person.

Africa has been called "the cradle of humanity," because it is there that the oldest fossils of human-like species have been found. Scientists can trace a common human ancestry originating in Africa to be between 5 and 3 million BC. The United States and the world community owe much to the peoples of Africa. One of the United States' worst legacies, slavery, a system fundamentally evil and base, stole from the African continent many of its most precious resources: Men, women, and children. The United States' own responsibility to overcome the legacy of slavery and racism left to Africans and African-Americans should be reflected today in our domestic and international programs and policies.

As we remember our roots in the African Family Tree, we are reminded that we are family to each other, we are guided by the African proverb: "We are fingers of the same hand; that is why we should never ball that hand up into a fist and use it to hurt each other. We are fingers of the same hand."

Like our African ancestors on whose shoulders we stand, may our little lights shine so that others may come to know and love God and the goodness that God has placed in each one to be a shining light of hope and encouragement for each other, and to stretch out hands and hearts in serving each other remembering the old African proverb: "One single bracelet does not jingle alone."

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Bishop’s Taskforce hears efforts that are underway at Midland College health center

By Jimmy Patterson
Editor / The Angelus

MIDLAND — Prominent community members attended the sixth meeting of the bishop’s Communitywide Drug Taskforce in January at Midland College.

Chesley Hurd, development coordinator of Midland College’s ADAC, or Alcohol and Drug Abuse Center, explained to the audience the effectiveness of neurofeedback in treating substance abuse-related illness.

Several members of the gathering offered suggestions on how the group should proceed, including partnering with a taxi company to offer rides to teens unable to attend support group meetings at the local Palmer Drug Abuse Program because of no transportation, and studying the feasibility of advocating for an ordinance that would make it a misdemeanor if children consume alcohol that is in a parent’s house and the alcohol is consumed in the absence of the parent.

The taskforce planning committee will meet in February with the large group scheduled to come together again in April.

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Pope: Youth not being well educated in values of life

By John Thavis
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — In a letter to the faithful of the Diocese of Rome, Pope Benedict XVI said today’s younger generations are not being well educated in the fundamental values of life.

The result is an “educational emergency” that has left many young people unhappy and disoriented, he said. The letter was made public at the Vatican Jan. 23.

The papal text touched on a sensitive issue in Italy, where the school system has been the focus of political battles and student protests in recent years.

“Educating has never been easy, and today it seems to be increasingly difficult. This is well known to parents, teachers, priests and all those who have direct educational responsibilities,” the pope said.

It’s unfair to blame the children, but blaming today’s adults doesn’t tell the whole story either, he said. The problem involves the personal responsibilities of young people and adults, but goes beyond that, he said.

At the root of the problem, he said, is “a widespread atmosphere, a mentality and a form of culture that lead people to doubt the value of the human person, and the very meaning of truth and goodness.”

Values cannot be inherited but must be taught to every new generation, he said, and when such “essential certainties” are ignored, there are bound to be problems.

That’s why parents today are so worried about the future of their children, why some teachers are distressed at the degradation of their schools, and why young students feel anxious when faced with life’s challenges, he said.

He encouraged educators to take heart, however, and said the problems were solvable.

The pope listed some requisites of an authentic education. For one thing, he said, teachers need to recognize that true education must provide more than superficial facts or information. It should provide a sense of empathy and trust that comes from love, he said.
Lent 2008

Why I see Lent as a love story

By Antoinette Bosco
Catholic News Service

Last winter I was asked by Sister Madonna Ratliff of the Daughters of St. Paul, the acquisitions editor at Pauline Books and Media in Boston, to write a book about Lent. I had written a children’s book for them about Easter called "The Jesus Garden, an Easter Fantasy," and she thought I should now focus on how we prepare for the great celebration of the rising of Jesus from his tomb.

I immediately came up with all the reasons I couldn't write another book at this time -- too busy, but mainly too preoccupied with serious illnesses of loved ones, especially my son Sterling, who needed a heart and kidney transplant to survive. Sister Madonna didn't want to accept a no from me.

I talked to Sterling every day and told him about sister's invitation. He was a devout Catholic, devoted husband of Bernadette, loving father of their seven children and proud grandfather of 13. We talked about what Lent meant to us, and to our surprise discovered how our thoughts about this season before Easter had changed as we got older.

Sterling and I could agree on a lot, particularly that Lent was never the season that won a popularity contest. It was thought of as a time of deep purple when Christians focus on uncomfortable sacrifices, remembering that we are made of dust and on and on. It was tolerable, though, because it was in preparation for the wonderful event of Easter.

That very word -- "Easter" -- had a mysterious tone to it. It came from the Germanic "Eostre," meaning the dawn of a new day. It was chosen by the early Christians, who saw the rising light of a new day as a symbol of Jesus rising from the dead.

Sterling commented that the word itself was a tremendous expression of hope. In our talks we began to take a new look at Lent. We talked of Jesus in the desert being tormented and tested by Satan, but clearly seeing his choices. He could say

(Please See LENT/19)

Guidelines for Lent

By Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI

With Ash Wednesday, February 6, 2008, we begin the Lenten season, which prepares us to celebrate the greatest feast of Christianity, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ on Easter Sunday, March 23, 2008.

The time of Lent is to be observed by Catholics as a special season of prayer, penance and works of charity. I share with you here the pastoral guidelines that hopefully will assist us during the season of Lent.

Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, in particular, are the most important penitential days of the liturgical year. They are days of both fast and abstinence. All Fridays in Lent are days of abstinence.

The rule of fasting states that only one full meal may be taken per day. Two small meals, “sufficient to maintain strength,” are allowed but together they should not equal another full meal. Eating between meals breaks the fast but drinking liquids does not. The rule of fasting obliges all Catholics from age 18 through 59.

Abstinence refers to the eating of meat of warm blooded animals (e.g., beef, lamb, chicken, pork). Under the present law, it does not include egg or milk products, meat broth or gravies. The rule of abstinence binds all Catholics 14 years of age or older. On days of abstinence, those who are eating in a school cafeteria may eat meat if it is served to them and there is no other main dish to choose.

The substantial observance of the laws of fast and abstinence is a serious obligation. Those whose work or health impairment make the observance difficult would be excused from fasting and abstinence. The individual conscience can decide if there is a proper cause to excuse. For more pastoral guidance on this point one may contact the local pastor. A more serious reason should be present to excuse from the Ash Wednesday and Good Friday penance.

Self-imposed fasting on the other weekdays of Lent is recommended. Abstinence on all Fridays of the year is also highly recommended. The Peace Pastoral of the American Bishops, stating that prayer is incomplete without penance, urges Friday abstinence as something all American Catholics should offer for the sake of world peace.

Parents and teachers should see to it that even those who are not bound by the laws of the fast and abstinence because of age are brought up in an atmosphere that is conducive to a sense of penance.

The faithful should be clearly and positively encouraged to receive the Sacrament of Penance during Lent. There should be adequate time scheduled for Confessions before Easter. Communal penance services should not be scheduled for the last days of Holy Week.

All the faithful, after they have been initiated into the Most Holy Eucharist, are bound by the obligation of Receiving Communion at least once a year, ordinarily during the Easter Season.

Funeral and Nuptial Masses are not allowed on Holy Thursday, Good Friday or Holy Saturday. The Funeral Rite outside of Mass, however, can be held either in church or at the chapel on those days, with a memorial mass later.

A Special Collection is taken up on Ash Wednesday to aid the Church in Central and Eastern Europe which continues to rebuild after decades of communist domination. Please be generous and offer prayers for these churches.

The liturgical directions of the Sacramentary and the Lectionary must be faithfully observed regarding all the special Holy Week Liturgies

PALM SUNDAY

It is strongly recommended that the Blessing of the Palms with procession be celebrated at least once at the principal Sunday liturgy.

HOLY THURSDAY

The Mass of the Lord’s Supper must be celebrated in the evening with procession to the altar of repose. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament continues until midnight. For pastoral reasons, one other Mass may be celebrated during the day.

GOOD FRIDAY

The Liturgy of the Lord’s Passion should be celebrated around 3:00 p.m. For pastoral reasons, this celebration may be moved to a later time.

Other paraliturgical celebrations are suggested and recommended at the discretion of the pastor (Viacrucis, 7 Palabras, Pesame a maria, etc.)

HOLY SATURDAY

The entire celebration of the Easter Vigil takes place at night. It should not begin before nightfall; it should end before daybreak on Sunday.

According to the rubrics for the Easter Vigil, no Eucharist may be celebrated prior to the Easter Vigil. If a pastor feels that pastoral reasons an additional Mass is needed AFTER the vigil, he may consult the Bishop for permission.
The one question we must ask before Ash Wednesday

By Effie Caldarola
Catholic News Service

Father Craig was the pastor at my parish a few years ago, but I still remember him well for the focused little sermons he gave.

His homilies were among the shortest and best I've ever heard. He didn't waste time in repetition or pious verbiage. He used simple, declarative sentences that got right to the point.

And the point was always a good one -- something I'd often take home and chew on during the week. How many homilies can you honestly say that about?

There's one homily Father Craig gave that I still remember and think about now and then. As Lent approaches, it nags at me with the fundamental question: What am I looking for?

Father Craig's sermons would always begin with a personal vignette, usually humorous, sometimes more sobering. Once he told us that his grandfather was hanging on during a terminal illness, waiting for Father Craig, on loan to us from a Midwestern diocese, to come home.

But the homily I remember best began with Father Craig telling us about the day he and his cousin were out playing basketball. They were teenagers then, and in the course of their game one of the cousin's contact lenses was knocked out of his eye.

Remember the old days of "hard" contact lenses? -- such was said of our Lord Jesus. Praise God that the Word has reached the tube! The love of God, the peace of Christ, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all.

The communications office has received e-mails from Italy, Spain and Australia, among other points around the globe, from people commending the cardinal's debut on YouTube.

"I, too, thank God for this to be on YouTube. May the Lord bless all who see Cardinal Rigali's messages and the cardinal as well, but also those who run YouTube for letting this be on the site!"

"With increased attacks on human life, the pope is urging us all to speak up for the truth. We all need dedicated people like Justin Cardinal Rigali to deepen our faith."

"Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Justin Cardinal Rigali went to the spiritual desert, where the people are. 'This man eats and drinks with sinners' -- such was said of our Lord Jesus. Praise God that the Word has reached the tube! The love of God, the peace of Christ, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all."

The communications office has received e-mails from Italy, Spain and Australia, among other points around the globe, from people commending the cardinal's debut on YouTube.
Our Catholic Faith

The biggest challenge facing the priesthood in 2008

By Father Eugene Hemrick
Catholic News Service

Last year I met with priests from a large diocese to discuss the challenges they face in 2008. We began with the problem of fewer priests, pastors responsible for several parishes, and how to stay healthy in these situations.

Several pointed to the need to cluster priests, allowing them to live together for support while ministering at various parishes. To my surprise, they also said the time has come to let go of "my" pet parish and "my" individual needs -- to think of serving the universal church as a team.

I say "to my surprise" because priests are parochial and normally consider the parish the "be-all" and "end-all" of their life.

Also discussed was the need to understand how best to minister in a multicultural parish. Some priests complained they already had too much on their plate and didn't need all the paperwork that comes from diocesan offices. Others wanted more personal communication with the bishop in addressing future challenges.

Suddenly one priest asked, "What are we really all about? Isn't it about Christ as the center of our work and of our people?"

His question turned the discussion from "What about us?" to "What about who we are supposed to be?"

That priest hit the nail on the head in determining where to begin in responding to the 2008 challenges facing the priesthood: How can the priesthood make Christ better known?

Where does the priesthood start to accomplish this?

Is it not with the liturgy where priests and people come in contact the most? Isn't the priesthood's biggest challenge celebrating liturgies that reflect that God is among us?

We live in a wired, overstimulated, hyperactive age that makes the practice of stillness extremely difficult. Peaceful stillness is at the heart of prayer and union with God. It is also at the heart of wholesome sanity.

Our overstimulated culture, and its need for prayerful stillness, raises major questions:

What more must we priests do to create a sacred hush at Mass that gives the sense of being in a holy temple? When people enter the church, its doors symbolize shutting out the distractions of the world. How might we better celebrate the liturgy so that it is truly other-worldly?

What more needs to be accomplished to create sacred liturgical music that doesn't mimic secular music?

How do we better sanctify the symbols of the Mass -- its processions, gestures and handling of sacred vessels -- so that they are truly symbolic of the divine?

What more needs to be done to the spoken word so that it connotes heartfelt union with God?

What more needs to be accomplished to create a wholesome spirit of being part of a faith community in which we share each other's joys and sorrows?

Whenever we speak of a myriad of challenges, it's always wise to start with the challenge that most speaks to our meaning. For the priesthood, that challenge is sacredly celebrating the liturgy.

St. Marguerite Bourgeois, a truly remarkable woman of the Church

By Antoinette Bosco
Catholic News Service

January 12 was the memorial of St. Marguerite Bourgeois, a remarkable woman who made a difference for God and the Catholic Church in her lifetime. I would guess that very few people in the United States would know her name, let alone her story.

Born in France in 1620, Marguerite had a spiritual experience at a young age that shaped her life. In her own words, then and there she had "chosen God's cause," which brought her to Canada in 1653 to teach children of the colonists and to serve the needs of "God's people" in a strange country then called "New France."

One can only imagine the incredible hardships she faced from illness, bad weather, hunger, Indians and at times even "loss of faith." Yet, on Oct. 31, 1982, she was proclaimed a saint by Pope John Paul II.

In all honesty, back then I was unaware of her until her name became a byword in the town where I lived nearly two years later.

I had moved to Brookfield, Conn., in late 1981 to become the editor of a new secular weekly paper. I belonged, happily, to St. Joseph Parish. But the area was growing rapidly, and almost immediately many of my Catholic neighbors and I were informed that in order to accommodate the many new Catholic families moving into this town, the diocese had decided it was necessary to have two parishes there.

My house was located within the boundary of the new parish, which, we were told, would be named after St. Marguerite Bourgeois. I had actually never heard of this holy woman, but found out very soon that she also had founded a religious order, one that I had at least heard of: the Congregation of Notre Dame.

I wanted more information about St. Marguerite Bourgeois and got it the way editors do: I assigned a story about her to a new reporter.

The Congregation of Notre Dame came to our parish to tell us a bit of the amazing life of her order's foundress.

I was struck by the willingness of the priests and Sister Martha Bowes of the Congregation to share their story with us.

I wanted to learn more. And how best to minister in a multicultural parish.

She worked until her death at age 79. If ever there was a woman of courage, it would be this young French girl, who had such unbelievable bravery and courage to leave her home to bring God to a new world across the sea.

I am proud that my parish is in her very good hands!

Saving Tony Soprano

By Father John Catoir
Catholic News Service

If Tony Soprano, the fictional TV Mafia boss, came to me for help in overcoming his anxiety attacks, I would try to explain that a life of thievery and murder was not very conducive to attaining peace of mind, and he would have to change.

More likely than not, he would be polite, but inwardly scoff at the idea. He once rebuked his wife who was trying to get him to change, saying, "I'm like Popeye the sailor man, I am what I am what I am." His chances for attaining peace and spiritual joy at this point are rather slim. I wouldn't give up right away.

If he stayed around long enough to listen I would tell him, "Tony, God is just. You can't steal and murder and still expect to have a peaceful conscience. There will be a day of reckoning. God is sending you these anxiety attacks to awaken you to the fact that life is short and eternity is forever. He wants you to change your evil ways.

He would then say, "What more needs to be accomplished to create a wholesome spirit of being part of a faith community in which we share each other's joys and sorrows?"

Whenever we speak of a myriad of challenges, it's always wise to start with the challenge that most speaks to our meaning. For the priesthood, that challenge is sacredly celebrating the liturgy.

(Please See Soprano/12)
Making Sense of Bioethics

Feeding our loved ones: Living with brain damage

By Fr. Thad Pacholczyk

Many families are faced with decisions about what to do when their loved ones suffer serious brain injury. When individuals are unlikely to come out of so-called “vegetative states,” should we continue nourishing them by tube feeding? Is there anything wrong with causing patients in compromised states to die from starvation and dehydration under these circumstances? We all lived through such a decision when Terri Schiavo died in 2005 in Florida. Her death raised disturbing ethical questions which continue to reverberate in society today.

I remember discussing her situation with somebody who remarked, “Well, I wouldn’t want to live the way Terri did, with such poor quality of life.” My response was, “Nobody would want to live the way she did - yet we all face deficits and disabilities that we have to live with. The bigger question is whether other people should be taking it upon themselves to remove feeding tubes that are effectively nourishing individuals who are compromised or disabled.”

Oftentimes people fail to grasp several of the key factors regarding Terri’s condition. First, they may mistakenly assume that she was actively dying from something, that she was hanging onto life by a mere thread. But Terri was not dying of any particular disease; she was not even close to being brain dead, and she had significant brain function. This was evident from her ability to initiate movement, her ability to breathe on her own (she was not on a ventilator), and her ability to pass through sleep-wake cycles. Brain dead individuals can never perform these kinds of activities because the organ of the brain has died, and such individuals are, in fact, dead.

A third error that is made in analyzing Terri’s situation is to suppose that tube feeding would be required only if it might improve or cure her vegetative state. Some bioethicists, including sadly some priests, seem to pursue this erroneous line of thought. One of them has written:

“Even though her parents disagreed, her spouse... asked that life support in the form of ANH [artificial nutrition and hydration] be removed. Was it ethical or sound? It seems it was. First of all, he maintained that this was her wish. Moreover, given the history of the case and sound medical opinion, he would be on sound ethical grounds if he requested that ANH be removed because it did not offer her hope of benefit.”

Tube feeding, of course, cannot offer hope of benefit or cure for the vegetative state. Tube feeding is not meant to be a therapy for brain damage. Rather it offers a different kind of benefit, namely, the very real benefit of preventing dehydration and starvation, which nobody ought to die from. Generally speaking, we ought to die from a particular pathology or a sickness, not from a state of dehydration or starvation that could easily be prevented by tube feeding. Thus, tube feeding was very effective for Terri, and did offer her benefit. In fact, it enabled her to be nourished for 15 years before being disconnected on March 18, 2005, resulting in her death nearly two weeks later.

A Commentary issued by the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 2007 describes the benefits of tube feeding in this way:

“It does not involve excessive expense; it is within the capacity of an average health-care system, does not of itself require hospitalization, and is proportionate to accomplishing its purpose, which is to keep the patient from dying of starvation and dehydration. It is not, nor is it meant to be, a treatment that cures the patient, but is rather ordinary care aimed at the preservation of life.”

Sometimes patients suppose that tube feeding can be generically declined, by specifying it beforehand in a living will. It would never be ethical, however, to decline an ordinary or proportionate means that is oriented towards preserving life. We are morally obligated to use all such ordinary means, because we must take care of the life we have received as a gift. It is not ours to dispose of or act against, and we cannot ever ethically engage in suicide or euthanasia, nor specify such actions beforehand in written instruments, like living wills.

(Please See BIOETHICS/17)
Big Spring Catholic parishes become one; to be known as Holy Trinity

By Jimmy Patterson
Editor /
The Angelus

FEBRUARY 2008

Mass Schedule – Big Spring Community

Saturday, 5 p.m.: Sacred Heart, 730 St. Thomas, 185 Immaculate Heart of Mary, 10 St. Joseph (Coahoma)
Sunday, 9:30 a.m.: Sacred Heart, 730 St. Thomas, 185 Immaculate Heart of Mary, 10 St. Joseph (Coahoma)
Sunday, 7:30 a.m.: Sacred Heart, 730 St. Thomas, 185 Immaculate Heart of Mary, 10 St. Joseph (Coahoma)
Sunday, 11:30 a.m.: Sacred Heart, 730 St. Thomas, 185 Immaculate Heart of Mary, 10 St. Joseph (Coahoma)
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CALDAROLA: What am I looking for?

(From 7)

back quite a few bucks. Some people even took out contact lens insurance.

I remember searching the bathroom vinyl for my own lens. Once I even retrieved one from the bathroom drain with a straw covered in nylon and a vacuum hose. Soccer games were even halted while both teams searched for one kid's fallen lens.

So when the cousin's contact fell out, Craig's basketball stopped bouncing and both boys were on the ground, carefully maneuvering their hands and knees as they searched for the tiny lens. At last they gave up and went in the house, where they got something to drink and told Craig's uncle what happened.

"My uncle immediately went outside and started to look for that lens," said Father Craig, "and he kept looking and looking."

And he didn't stop looking until, remarkably, he found the lens.

Why, asked Father Craig, did the uncle find the lens but the teenage boys didn't?

"We didn't find it because we were looking for a lost contact," said the priest, "but my uncle was looking for a hundred dollars."

I'm not sure if the Gospel reading that day was the lost sheep or the lost drachma, but Father Craig made his point: We'll truly search and we'll not stop searching for what we really want to find, for what truly holds value for us.

I see that story as a metaphor for the Lenten journey that lies ahead. I can approach it casually, with the self-help kind of resolution that might net me a five-pound weight loss. I can show up at a few extra Masses or the weekly Stations of the Cross.

But am I doing these things because I'm on a quest for the central value of my life?

What we are searching for motivates how hard we search, how long we stay on our hands and knees until we find it.

The question to ask before Ash Wednesday: What am I looking for, and how will I try to find it?
Midland golf tournament to help raise money for St. Ann’s School

The Angelus

FEBRUARY 2008

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Midland golf tournament to help raise money for St. Ann’s School

The golf tournament enables the schools to acquire curriculum materials, supplement teacher salaries, and upgrade technology in the classrooms.

The Bishop’s Golf Tournament will be held on Saturday, March 1, at Hogan Golf Course in Midland. Players in the four-person scramble will check in at 12 Noon. Prizes for the tournament will be given to the top 3 net teams, closest to the pin, and longest drive. Mulligans and birdies will be sold at check in. After the tournament, a barbecue dinner will be served.

Organizers are reaching out to local businesses in the community for hole sponsorships, donations of product, service, or financial contributions. Sponsorships are still available. Please contact your local representative for further information or go to www.bishopgolf.golfreg.com.

In Midland, call Brad Gibson, (432) 559-3532; in Odessa, call Joe Salmon (432) 638-2883, and in San Angelo, call Raul (325) 223-9422.

We would encourage everyone to come out and participate in what should be an enjoyable afternoon of golf and fellowship.

Deadline nears for Msgr. Larry Droll scholarship

SAN ANTONIO—Catholic laymen and women pursuing a graduate degree in theology or religious studies in order to serve their church in a professional capacity must submit applications for a renewable $2000 scholarship by February 15, 2008.

The Rev. Msgr. Larry J. Droll Scholarship will be awarded to two candidates in need of tuition assistance for additional education who serve or want to serve his or her parish as an Administrator, Youth Minister, Parish Coordinator, or other role.

This is a newly developed scholarship geared towards those who have already obtained their bachelor’s degree and who are either enrolled or wanting to enroll into any Catholic graduate school in Texas, Arizona, Florida, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma or Mississippi. Applicants may also be enrolled in an extension program or in the Catholic University of America School of Canon Law.

Applications may be obtained by contacting the Communications Department at (210) 828-9921 or 1-800-292-2548 or by writing to Catholic Life Insurance, attn: Communications Department, P.O. Box 659527, San Antonio, TX 78265-9527. Also, applications can be downloaded from our website: www.clu.com.

Otteman named Agent of the Year in W. Texas

MIDLAND -- Eric Otteman of Midland has been named 2007 Agent of the Year for Jim Seideman’s West Texas Agency.

Otteman earned the Knight Club honor for Top 75 and the Kinzkie Award for top volume agent in Texas. He was honored as the Agent of the Year and is a 2007 Million Dollar Round Table Aspirant.

Otteman services Knights of Columbus families in councils 3071, 5096, 6204, 8773, 9641, 9701, 10129, 10404 and 12657.

Dear Friend in Christ,

This coming June of 2008, the Church in North America will celebrate a great event for the faith, an event that is being watched with great anticipation.

The Holy Father has given me the privilege of leading this event, the International Eucharistic Congress, in Quebec City.

And I, in turn, have invited the Holy Father to celebrate our final Mass of the Congress.

Would there be a possibility that you and your family and friends might be able to join us in Quebec in June, and even to send us your support today?

The International Eucharistic Congress is a great opportunity for the new evangelization of North America. It is an occasion to rekindle the flame of the Catholic faith in our countries, where in the past there was a deep unity between the culture and the Faith.

Now, the urgency of Faith is obvious for an increasingly secular and materialistic world. It is not too late to regenerate Christian culture.

Each day, catechesis and testimonies will be offered to the thousands of participants—the present and the future leaders of the Church—and a solemn Eucharistic Liturgy will be celebrated. There will also be processions of the Blessed Sacrament, as well as special religious events for young adults and families, and activities to promote brotherhood.

We hope that the International Eucharistic Congress will bring about a greater emphasis on the sacred character of the Eucharistic celebration, a deepened understanding of its sacrificial dimension, and a renewal of Eucharistic adoration, prayer, and good works.

This theme, the Eucharist as “Gift of God for the life of the world,” will begin with Sunday’s invocation of the Holy Spirit, who reminds the Church of all that Jesus did and then left in our care.

Monday will focus on Jesus’ institution of the New Covenant, completed by the offering of His own blood, while the following day concentrates on the sacrificial dimension of the Eucharist. Wednesday invites us to explore the first results of this gift of God, in giving Himself and in being received in the faith of the Church, the Eucharistic Christ founds the Church and opens up the communion of divine persons for the communion of human persons.

The Eucharist gives life to worship, which embraces all of life, prayers and ritual gestures, but also gives life to human relationships, work, joys and sorrows, sufferings and hopes. Thus, Thursday focuses on adoration, as the evening concludes with a public procession with the Blessed Sacrament in the heart of the city.

The theme of Friday is the Eucharist and mission: it emphasizes charity and engagement for peace and justice.

Finally, the week concludes with teaching on “ordinary” holiness at the heart of the world, inspired and nourished by the Eucharist.

At this great gathering, which will be closely watched and reported by the news media around the world, public testimonies for the essential role of the Faith and witness to the centrality of Jesus in our lives will give us an unparalleled opportunity to evangelize millions upon millions of people, and especially those in our troubled countries—for example, perhaps your own neighbors, family and friends!

First, by your fervent prayers to Almighty God that the Congress will reawaken the faith and ecclesial life of the people of Canada, especially the people of Quebec. For many dioceses throughout North America, there is a direct link to Quebec, which gave birth to the Church on our continent.

Second, the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life, as Pope John Paul II, and now Pope Benedict XVI, have repeated so often in their magnificent teachings. We are invited to celebrate this Congress together.

Third, I invite you to help me to make this Eucharistic Congress a possibility, a reality, and a blessing for many people in Latin America and in the Third World who might never have the opportunity to experience the graces and blessings of the International Catholic gathering without your generosity and financial assistance.

There will also be a myriad of other costs associated with an event of this magnitude—yet our budget is modest, and we seek only to cover what is necessary.

Without the support of our brothers and sisters in the Faith from the United States, our effort cannot be called a complete success.

We must not fail, with the eyes of a skeptical secular world and the media upon us. On the contrary, together, united with the Holy Father himself, we must show even the doubters the way to Christ!

I need your assistance, and I thank you in advance for your generosity in helping to make the International Eucharistic Congress accessible to many people.

Yours in the Eucharistic Jesus,

Marc Cardinal Ouellet
Archbishop of Quebec
Primate of Canada
President, 49th International Eucharistic Congress

INTERNATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS 2008 Response/Reservation Form

If you wish a tax-deduction, please send your check and make it payable to our U.S. address:
President, 49th International Eucharistic Congress
Primate of Canada
Archbishop of Quebec
Marc Cardinal Ouellet

Yours in the Eucharistic Jesus,

Marc Cardinal Ouellet
Archbishop of Quebec
Primate of Canada
President, 49th International Eucharistic Congress


For information about attending the International Eucharistic Congress personally or with my parish group

I will also photocopy the Message from Cardinal Ouellet, and it will be distributed to Catholics in my parish.

I have enclosed a donation to help promote the International Eucharistic Congress in the amount of:
$10,000  $1,000  $100  $  

Please charge my VISA  MasterCard  

Phone _________________________________  E-mail___________________________________________

City___________________________________State_____Zip__________
Address_____________________________________________________

Print: __________________________

Signature__________________________________________________  Security Code____________________

If you wish a tax-deduction, please send your check and make it payable to our U.S. address:
President, 49th International Eucharistic Congress
Primate of Canada
Archbishop of Quebec
Marc Cardinal Ouellet

Your donation will be forwarded to the International Eucharistic Congress.
**Family**

**Tiny, cramped, loud and messy. Bring it on**

By Jimmy Patterson

Fifteen years ago, my wife Karen and I bought our first house. A modest, three bedroom, it fit our needs perfectly and we saw it as a great place to raise our young family, which at the time consisted of two young daughters, 7 and 5.

Three months after we signed the contract and moved in, the shower in the master bathroom broke. I unscrewed the fixture, forgetting just how important it was to turn off the water at the curb before attempting any repairs. The water shot out at me, hurling me against the back shower wall, kind of like the flooding surge that once soaked Larry, Moe and Curly, except that on this day there was just the one stooge.

I finally had the presence of mind to walk outside with a wrench and close the stream off at the source. When I returned inside, Karen was sitting on the edge of our bed, crying.

"What?" I said. "It's just a leaky faucet. If I can't fix it -- and I'm pretty sure I can -- we'll just call a plumber. It's nothing to cry about."

"I'M PREGNANT!" she said and we hugged and became emotional and I got her wet and greasy and we shared in the moment and realized our family would soon number five.

In a few short months, our comfortable, warm little home became a tiny, overcrowded house, a place in which we would regularly swear to each other through the years that we would leave in favor of something larger and more accommodating of our needs. Time, schedules, activities, responsibilities all got in the way and, to make a long story short, we remain where we have been for so many years: in that tiny, overcrowded house. Except that as of last week, it is no longer tiny and overcrowded. It has become comfortable and roomy again.

Our second child moved out last month, opting instead for independence and adulthood. I hear it happens to most all of them, but that fact makes it no easier to accept.

Cold hard reality is seldom warm and fuzzy. For 15 years, we led the life millions of other parental teams lead: Busy every day; three children who kept us running at all hours and to all ends and sides of town; kids that remembered they needed mechanical pencils and $40 calculators at 11 at night and 6 in the morning; kids who have sprung on us that it is in fact our turn to drive the car pool five minutes before we need to be wherever it is we need to be; arguments on both sides of a door to a bathroom that somehow met the needs (not always well) of two teenage girls and one poor boy who has heard and seen far more than I had ever hoped.

Forgive my maudlin moment, but I remember clearly snapping a photo of two young girls standing next to a real estate sign with a SOLD sticker slapped across it, both girls smiling at the thought that they had their very own house and would now have their very own rooms. And then The Boy came along, forcing them to share a bedroom for several years. Ultimately we would convert a living area into a bedroom so the children could have their space and their mother and I could have what passed for sanity.

Our oldest moved out about two years ago, headstrong and head smart. I knew from the moment she came home from a Midland College field trip to Austin and told us that she had engaged the Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives in some verbal sparring about the excessiveness of college tuition that she would be just fine on her own, thank you very much. Had I ever developed any doubts about her ability to make it, I knew I could pick up the phone and call Tom Craddick himself just as a reminder. Somehow, because she always seemed so independent and sure of herself I was comfortable with her making it.

But last week, when our second one packed up, it was a different feeling. The feeling in the house is one of emptiness. The Boy is there every day and he remains active as his sisters were combined, but strangely, we lack people. The complete family is no longer there. It is there, scattered, but it is not there, where I want it.

(Please See PATTERSON/19)

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**Praying through your hectic day**

By Bill and Monica Dodds

Catholic News Service

As if your day isn't hectic enough, now some fool columnists want to begin their piece with a pop quiz on prayer!

1. **In the Catholic tradition, there are four kinds of prayer: adoration, contrition, thanksgiving and:**
   a. Supplication.
   b. Non-Catholic.
   c. Sneezy.

2. **Speaking of sneezes, the custom of saying "God bless you" after someone "chooos":**
   a. Dates back to the Middle Ages.
   c. Is better than saying what you're really thinking: "I'm not shaking your hand at the sign of peace after that!"

3. **In Germany, when someone sneezes, a polite response is "Gesundheit." This means:**
   a. "(Good) health."
   b. "Earthquake!"
   c. "Next time you do that, please cover your sundheit."

4. **Hmm. We seem to have veered a little off track here. When it comes to prayer:**
   a. Sometimes it's easy to veer off track.
   b. It's best to go where the Spirit leads you.
   c. Everyone, on occasion, starts saying the Nicene Creed and at some point wanders into the Apostles' Creed.

5. **Scripture says Jesus taught the apostles the Lord's Prayer. It was:**
   a. In response to their asking him to teach them how to pray.
   b. Taught to them in Latin.
   c. Originally called the Hail Mary.
   The correct answers? Always "a" and, in the case of 4, all three answers are true.

So how can you become better at "praying through your day"? A few points to consider:

-- Ask God to help you become better at praying!
-- Remember that prayer is a form of conversation and the best conversationalists are good listeners. What that means is, if you want to pray more throughout your day, it helps to work at developing a greater awareness of the presence of God in your life. Pause, take a breath, and realize you're not in this (whatever "this" happens to be at the moment) alone. Listen.

-- Get in the habit of reading the Bible every day, even if only for a few minutes. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church says, it is "strength for ... faith, food for the soul and a pure and lasting font of spiritual life" (No. 131, quoting the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation).

Start with a Gospel, the Acts of the Apostles or one of Paul's letters. Or examine the readings from the Mass for the day even if you can't get to church. (It can help to use a Bible that includes footnotes, such as the New American Bible, because sometimes what's being taught, said or done can be hard for us to understand.)

-- Use a daily devotional, a periodical that includes a prayer and meditation for each day. (We recommend "My Daily Visitor," but then, we are the editors of it.)

-- Imitate the saints. Check out the life of a saint on the Web. Not surprisingly, saints can have a lot of great advice when it comes to praying, both by what they said and by how they prayed.

-- Make "become better at praying" a Lenten resolution. This year Ash Wednesday is Feb. 6!
Jesus learned that John the Baptist had been arrested, so he left Nazareth and moved to Capernaum, a city on the sea. By doing this, he fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah that said, "Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people who sit in darkness have seen a great light, on those dwelling in a land overshadowed by death light has arisen." From that moment, Jesus knew he had to continue to preach the message of John: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

John said he had been chosen to prepare the way of the Lord. Jesus called his first disciples to be with him while he traveled and taught to prepare them for the ministries he had planned for them in the future. Instead of finding scholars of the law and religious leaders, Jesus called men who worked in a variety of occupations. Among these disciples were apostles Peter and his brother Andrew, who were fishermen, and Matthew, a tax collector. Tax collectors were considered no better than thieves by the average citizen, but Matthew became the author of one of the four Gospels.

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Jesus did not have to plead or beg his followers. He often simply said, "Follow me," and the men left what they were doing to go with Jesus.

The Book of Acts tells us about the ministries of some of the apostles and other Christians after Jesus ascended into heaven.

We can be disciples of Jesus today by following his commandments.

Jesus called out to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Even though fishing was the only way they could support their families, the two brothers immediately left their work and followed Jesus.

As Jesus walked further along the shore with his new friends, they saw two other brothers, James and John, who were fishing from a boat with their father. Jesus called them, and they, too, left their work to follow Jesus.

Having selected the first of his apostles, Jesus traveled throughout the region of Galilee. He preached everywhere he went, spreading the good news of the kingdom of God, and he healed people who were sick with many different kinds of diseases and ailments. People who had been in pain or were paralyzed or tormented by spirits were cured and made whole.

Word of the wonders performed by Jesus spread as far away as Syria, and crowds from Galilee, Jerusalem, Judea and beyond the River Jordan formed around him.

J U S T 4 K I D S

READ MORE ABOUT IT
Matthew 4
Q&A

1. What was the first message Jesus wanted to preach?
2. What did Jesus say when he called Peter and Andrew?

BIBLE ACCENT
Jesus called his first disciples to be with him while he traveled and taught and to prepare them for the ministries he had planned for them in the future. Instead of finding scholars of the law and religious leaders, Jesus called men who worked in a variety of occupations.

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SPOTLIGHT ON SAINTS
St. Eystein Erlandsson

Eystein Erlandsson (d. 1188) was appointed the second archbishop of Nidaros in Norway. He also served as chaplain to King Inge.

Eystein wanted to build a church community in Norway that followed the same guidelines as the churches in the western part of the world. One of the building projects he worked on was the enlargement of the Christ Church cathedral.

Eystein performed the first royal coronation in Norway, established a code of laws of conduct for the church and founded several religious communities.

Eystein was devoted to St. Thomas Beckett, and he wrote a book called "The Passion and Miracles of the Blessed Olaf." We remember him on Jan. 26.

BIBLE TRIVIA
Can you name all 12 of Jesus' apostles?

Answer: Peter (also called Simon), Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, Thaddeus, Simon the Cananean, James, the son of Alphaeus, and Judas Iscariot.

PUZZLE:
Cross out the following letters to find a hidden message:
B N C G H K

B C C F H O H K L K G L O N B W
M B K N H C G C G N H B K E

(Answer Page 14)
**In Short**

"The Bucket List" (Warner Bros.)

Unremarkable, formulaic, only mildly entertaining story of two cancer patients — a wealthy, womanizing tycoon (Jack Nicholson) and a middle-class garage mechanic Carter Chambers (Morgan Freeman).

When, rather uncomfortably sharing a hospital room, they learn they are terminal, these polar opposites decide to hit the road and experience all their wildest dreams in the time they have left, that is, until they "kick the bucket." We've seen all this before, and except for seeing the two stars in standard reliable form, director Rob Reiner's film is predictably routine, though some problematic elements aside, imparting a positive message about finding the joy in life and bringing joy to others.

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**Culture**

‘Bucket List’: Unremarkable, formulaic and only mildly entertaining

By Harry Forbes

Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — “The Bucket List” (Warner Bros.) is an unremarkable, formulaic, only mildly entertaining story about two cancer patients: wealthy, womanizing tycoon Edward Cole (Jack Nicholson) and middle-class garage mechanic Carter Chambers (Morgan Freeman).

When, rather uncomfortably sharing a hospital room, they learn they are terminal, these polar opposites decide to hit the road and experience all their wildest dreams in the year or so they have left, that is, until they “kick the bucket.” A less grandiose version of such a list had been Carter’s brainchild in college, one abandoned when family responsibilities got in the way of his dreams.

Billionaire Edward, of course, has the bucks to make it all happen, and in locales as diverse as Africa, Egypt, France and Hong Kong they get to experience everything from sky diving to race-car driving. These stuntman-based sequences, however, are neither particularly enlightening nor amusing.

On the domestic side, Carter must leave his frustrated wife, Virginia (Beverly Todd), and family behind, much to her understandable incredulity, and though the much-married Edward seemingly has no family ties, we eventually come to learn of an estranged daughter, Emily.

The adventurous codgers are assisted by Edward’s long-suffering flunky, Thomas (Sean Hayes), who gives it as good as he takes it from his autocratic boss.

We’ve seen all this before. The movie’s main pleasure comes in seeing the two stars in standard reliable form, with Nicholson especially shining in some later scenes when his character undergoes a turnaround.

Director Rob Reiner’s film from Justin Zackham’s script is predictably routine, though imparting a positive message about finding the joy in life and bringing joy to others. This theme is sullied, though, by some problematic elements mainly having to do with Edward’s hedonistic lifestyle (there’s an implied encounter with a stewardess and later, in a "well-intentioned" act of generosity, he hires a call girl for Carter, who admirably declines).

Family values ultimately prevail in the film’s sentimental, feel-good wrap-up.

The film contains an instance of the f-word; some crude expletives, crass expressions and scattered profanity; a vulgar gesture; an implied nonmarital sexual encounter; sexual references and innuendo; and domestic discord. The USCBB Office for Film & Broadcasting classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG-13 — parents strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

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Author makes good case for Anglo-Saxon worldview, but doubts linger


Reviewed by John H. Carroll

Catholic News Service

“God and Gold: Britain, America and the Making of the Modern World,” an intriguing study about the continuing influence of the Anglo-Saxon nations on the modern world, stands in contrast to the many recent predictions about the coming decline of the West.

The author, Walter Russell Mead, reminds readers in his introduction that in the past three centuries of warfare the English-speaking nations have been victorious. Naturally the victors have had much to do with the development of the modern world.

Still, some readers may be excused for the reaction that this sounds like a lusty rendition of “Rule Britannia” at a London Proms concert.

However, Mead wisely concedes that the term Anglo-Saxon no longer applies just to the descendants of the invaders of Britannia after the decline and fall of Rome. He notes that WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) “is a state of mind today and most Americans live there.”

Mead, a scholar at the Council of Foreign Relations in New York, then goes on to review the emergence and superiority of the English-speaking nations in the modern world. He attributes much of their success to the English usually could align themselves with weaker European allies to oppose the stronger continental threat, whether it was Spain, France or Germany.

The 20-mile English Channel moat and the Royal Navy saved England during the dynamic struggles of the 18th and 19th centuries. Then the United States came to the aid of the British in two world wars. In the Cold War during the latter part of the 20th century the United States took over as the protector of Europe and the free world.

There also is a serious review of the importance of Judaism, Christianity and Islam in the modern world. Mead also takes into account the growing influence of secular modernism that he describes as “the youngest member of the family of Abraham” in the West.

There may be some dispute in religious circles about the inclusion of secularism in the Abrahamic tradition. Still, the author turns for inspiration to the “intellectual Protestant clergyman,” the Rev. Reinhold Niebuhr, and claims that he “fully and completely articulated and simultaneously critiqued the core elements of the Anglo-American worldview.”

Actually, Mead has presented a good case for the defense of the WASP worldview. He concludes that “these values are leading us westward and upward.” Still, on reflection, a reader may be excused for some lingering doubt.

‘A History of Sin’

Reviewed Catholic News Service

With Lent rapidly approaching, a book called “A History of Sin” would seem to be timely reading.

But the best of this volume by John Portmann may be its opening and concluding chapters. Portmann is an assistant professor in the religious studies department at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. This is his fifth book since 2000, all focused on "bad things" and sin.

He begins by telling us, “God has made a comeback, and with him, inevitably, sin.” Tracing that comeback to 9-11, he says that since then "religious enthusiasts and skeptics alike have warmed to the divine in a way we have not seen for decades.”

He then presents definitions of sin, including what he considers the "most useful definition of sin (coming from St. Basil the Great): misusing the powers God gave us to do good.”

He also offers a brief overview of sin in the Abrahamic traditions, drawing some comparisons among the Jewish, Christian and Islamic views, as well as between them and other traditions.

The outlook for the faithful isn’t good: “Living in the West in the 21st century almost invariably involves scantily clad people and news of corporate tax fraud. ... The entire public sphere has become an occasion of sin, it might seem to traditional Jews, Christians or Muslims, who understandably worry about a corresponding neutralization of sin.”

Unfortunately, throughout much of the book, Portmann seems to equate a theological view of sin with a legal notion of deviance. Some sins seem to take on status similar to archaic laws, such as prohibiting someone from holding office if he has taken part in a duel, or requiring people to notify police before driving a car into a city.
**HISTORY:** Working together, community can achieve more

(From 11)

the future of the parish and about the need to work together, that’s kind of when (consolidation effort) all started. After he came, and after we had our first fight, I realized we could work together.”

The two pastors realized they could better work together and have a common vision if they were able to shared aspects of the faith like common baptism regulations and marriage regulations.

“We were aware that the north side and the south side were not that close,” Plagens said, “but our main concern was the unification of the ministries to make everything more efficient. And then all of a sudden, we were led to conversations that asked, ‘Why not unite into one parish because that’s what it was here in the beginning.’

At a unification Mass at the Big Spring High School Auditorium last year, almost 900 people gathered for the Eucharist. “One of the most telling comments I heard was when the bishop told me that not one person came up and complained,” said Plagens, who has been assigned to St. Ann’s in Midland as a senior priest.

Incoming pastor Fr. Bernard Gully and associate pastor Rev. Ariel Lagunilla, will also soon occupy a central parish office in Big Spring.

Gully, who will become pastor of Holy Trinity effective Feb. 15 and who will celebrate his installation as pastor March 2, said the No. 1 priority will be Sunday Masses.

“That is going to be the biggest challenge; some people won’t have their Mass at their favorite time or at the place they prefer to go.

“It will be a challenge, but I think in time we will see some good fruit. It will take time, but we’ll see it.”

**LENT:** Why the season is a love story

(From 6)

no to what his Father was asking of him -- suffer and die -- and seek personal power for himself; or he could be faithful to his Father’s plan that he teach all how to live as God’s children should, knowing this could, would, get him cruelly executed.

Thus, Lent -- but Easter too -- began in the desert of torture. But Jesus said to Satan “Be gone,” went out to his people and spent the next three years doing nothing but showing them how much he loved them.

Sterling and I concluded I would write the Lenten book, with purple and darkness eliminated. It would be titled "Lent, an Uncommon Love Story."

Sadly, Sterling didn't survive the heart and kidney transplant. We buried him just before Palm Sunday last year. I knew I always would remember how we had concluded that Lent is a love story showing us that, for all our difficulties and sorrows, we are not alone -- we forever are linked to Jesus and with him are ever alive.

Thanks to Sterling, I wrote the book. It offers our vision of Lent as a love story.

I look upon Lent as a time to focus on our own lives and to be surprised, perhaps, to see indeed that Lent, which contains the biography of Our Lord Jesus Christ, can be nothing less than a love story.

**BIOETHICS:** Every life worth living, despite its imperfect qualities

(From 9)

On the other hand, we should not draw the conclusion, that tube feeding will always be required. There will be circumstances and situations where tube feeding may become extraordinary or disproportionate, as when it is no longer effective (the food is not absorbed), when it causes extreme discomfort, pain or serious infection, or when it causes other grave difficulties such as repetitive aspiration (vomiting and breathing the vomit into the lungs, often resulting in pneumonia). Normally, however, tube feeding is not unduly burdensome and is not unduly expensive or difficult, and therefore should be presumed necessary for patients who might need it, unless and until it is shown to no longer provide the benefit of nourishment, or to cause significant complications and harmful side-effects.

Often what lies at the heart of these debates is the view that a life must have a certain amount of “quality” or else it need not be continued. But every life has imperfect qualities, and some have more than others. It is never our place to judge whether another’s life is “worth living.” Our duty is to provide loving care and strong support to those whose “quality of life” may be less than perfect, including those who are sick or those who may be struggling with serious disabilities like those in Terri Schiavo’s situation, rather than targeting them for an early demise through the withholding of food and water.

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

**HYDRATION:** Artificial nourishment may be excessively burdensome

(From 6)

unlike that of obtaining, if possible, the means necessary for an adequate support of life. Nor is the possibility excluded that, due to emerging complications, a patient may be unable to assimilate food and liquids, so that their provision become altogether useless. Finally, the possibility is not absolutely excluded that, in some rare cases, artificial nourishment and hydration may be excessively burdensome for the patient or may cause significant physical discomfort, for example resulting from complications in the use of the means employed.

These exceptional cases, however, take nothing away from the general ethical criterion, according to which the provision of water and food, even by artificial means, always represents a natural means for preserving life, and is not a therapeutic treatment. Its use should therefore be considered ordinary and proportionate, even when the “vegetative state” is prolonged.”

**FRONTERAS**

(Para 4)

ra extraña. Ahí dará su fruto. Al salir de su patria, Jesús se compromete con los pueblos extranjeros.

Éste es mi Hijo amado, dice el Padre, porque sale con el fuerte impulso del Espíritu Santo. En el Reino sin fronteras, no hay preferidos ni favoritos. Si es así, sanemos el afán de dividir y separar. Jesús promete que toda tierra puede manar leche y miel. Su Espíritu habitará en tu tienda, si tú asumes su causa. Su amor te conquistará, si practicas la justicia.

Si te ha formado para hacer alianzas, ¿para qué declaras la guerra? Si él construye puentes, ¿para qué elevas un muro? Si él se moja la espalda en el río para salvar, ¿por qué persigues al que se moja para alimentar a su familia? Si él libera al cautivo, ¿por qué tanto encarcelado, sin recurso a la justicia?

La misión de Jesús esamar sin fronteras. No viene para colonizar, sino para redimir. Vamos con él. Bauticémonos en el espíritu de su compasión.
MESSAGE: Sex intended by God to be life giving and holy

(From 1)

to satisfy their sexual urges.
Reflect often on this profound biblical truth—OUR BODIES ARE TEMPLES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. In an earlier chapter to the Corinthians, Paul also states “You are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you...for the temple of God which you are is holy.” (1 Cor.3:16-17)

GOD LOOKED AT WHAT GOD HAD MADE AND “FOUND IT VERY GOOD.”

After God made the first humans and all creation, as we read in the first chapter of Genesis, God looked at what God had made and “found it very good.” To help us appreciate and respect the beauty and goodness of our bodies with all their members, including the sexual organs, God has given us the virtue of chastity, which comes from a Latin word meaning pure. Chastity is part of what we call the cardinal virtue of temperance, or self-control. It gives us the freedom, dignity and ability to face all the complexities and the pressures and all the blessings that are associated with our human sexuality. It directs our sexuality toward authentic love and away from using persons as objects for selfish pleasure. Chastity helps us to understand the meaning of our sexuality that affects all aspects of the human person in the unity of one’s body and soul. The integration of the gift of sexuality into the total person is to love and respect our bodies and the bodies of others as temples of the Holy Spirit. Chastity is a liberating and a joyful virtue. The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us that “Chastity is a moral virtue. It is also a gift from God, a grace and a fruit of spiritual effort. The Holy Spirit enables one whom the waters of baptism has regenerated to imitate the purity of Christ.” [23]

Chastity is a virtue, a gift, that guides and allows us to do what is right and good and loving in the area of sexuality. Chastity enables the full integration of sexuality within the person, in accord with each one’s state in life—married, single, professed religious or consecrated celibate. Chastity promotes, according to God’s plan, abstention from sex outside of marriage and affirms the sacredness of all relationships, especially within marriage. The chaste person, using God’s grace, strives to maintain the integrity of the powers of love and life to live happy and holy lives. The virtue of chastity does not deny the goodness of genital sex or seek to suppress one’s sexuality but assists us to lovingly and intelligently moderate our sexual behavior and frees us to live joyfully as masters, not slaves of our natural inclinations.

To live the virtue of chastity, we need to constantly call upon the precious and powerful Holy Spirit who lives in us because of our baptism and confirmation. Chastity, modesty, and self-control are fruits of the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, that teach us to respect our bodies as special gifts from God. As human beings “called to be holy as God is holy” (Lv 19:2), we need to be aware of and pray to resist temptation to engage in activities which are violations of our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit and of the virtue of chastity, such as: sexual acts with self or with others, immor-esty in behavior, dress or speech, and misuse of the internet for pornography, or misuse of reading material, movies and T.V. programs that can lead us into sin.

GOD MADE US SEXUAL BEINGS—MADE IN THE VERY IMAGE AND LIKENESS OF GOD

God has made us sexual beings. We are made in the very image and likeness of God. An essential gift that God has given to our bodies is our sexuality, which is designed by God for healthy, holy and loving relationships and for bringing new life into our world. Our sexuality touches our deepest affections and our cares. As images of God, who is love, we are to express our love with our whole being, including our bodies, according to the way Christ teaches us. It is through the mediation of the body with bodily emotions, that other people attract and charm us in their bodily reality and, make us begin to love them. If we are to find the enduring and true love we need, our whole being must learn generous and unselfish love as taught by Christ; that is, we must learn to be chaste, to rule and guide our affections, desires and natural inclinations of our bodies with intelligence, respect, and honest love, as the Holy Spirit directs us.

Sexuality touches our total personhood; body, soul, emotion, intellect and will. Sex was made by God to be a pleasurable and joyful gift and to be used in accord with God’s purpose for life and love with its full expression in marriage. However, sex is far more than passing fun or seeking pleasure for pleasure’s sake. The gift of our sexuality is made to nurture love in us, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and to express a human love that lasts for a lifetime. This gift was made to bring into being children, precious beyond words, and to foster family unity and caring in the homes, which can survive and flourish only in the context of chaste and generous love.

SEX WAS INTENDED BY GOD TO BE LIFE GIVING AND HOLY

Sex was intended by God to be sacred and holy, and life giving. When shared in a loving way in marriage, sex is for Christians a sacrament—making people holy. In marriage, the act of intercourse is a unique holy, beautiful way that husband and wife make the gift of self to each other to bring new life into the world. In marriage, sexual intercourse is an encounter with the loving Christ. Considering sexual intimacy-intercourse—in such a holy and sacred way, can help us understand why Sacred Scripture and the constant teaching of the Church disapprove of premarital sex and homosexual activity, and consider them sinful because they do not fulfill the meaning of sex as determined by God.

Our society is drenched in the misuse of sex. The thoughtless and reckless abuse of sex as promoted by many people has already proven not to be the gateway to paradise as many promised, but a path to infinite pain and sorrow. Few realized how much pain and suffering can come when sex is misused and abused. No one dreamed that when we abandoned self-control, the virtue of chastity, that we would see such tragedies as AIDS, and a host of other sexually transmitted diseases, so many abortions, so many adolescent pregnancies, so many broken homes, broken lives, and broken hearts.

WHAT IS SEX REALLY ABOUT?

Extensive study confirms that teenage sex is not solely about sex at all. Adolescent sexual behavior is often a reflection of non-direct sexual factors and indicators of an attempt to fulfill unmet emotional needs. Two main factors are currently having a profound impact on teen sexual choices—popular culture and personal circumstances. First, contemporary popular culture is engaged in delivering two deceptive messages which continue to barrage our youth: 1) Sex has no consequences, or any potential consequences can easily be avoided; and 2) Sex is the most important thing in life—if you are not engaging in it as often as possible—and usually with as many partners as possible—you are missing out. The terrible consequences of this propaganda and false happiness are evident in real life. Understanding the world of teens makes communication with and caring for them easier. The influence of the entertainment media in particular on youth culture is extraordinary.

Second, as well as influence from popular culture, personal life situations of youth are also prime determinants of sexual choices. Much evidence indicates that the following factors are frequently involved with potentially perilous sexual behavior: parental divorce/separation; overly strict or permissive parenting; being raised in the absence of a loving parent; a history of drug or alcohol use; exposure to regular doses of sexually explicit material; violence or abuse in the home; lacking a relationship with Christ and low level of religious involvement and how it is to be lived; failure of parents to discuss sexuality; early dating and close friends who are sexually active, low self-esteem, and poor school performance.

A faith that addresses the place and meaning of sexuality in our total being and its expression according to norms determined by the inspired word of God, and explained by the Church, is key to a healthy sexual lifestyle. Parents also need to be fully involved in the lives and sexual education of their sons and daughters. This reality is made easier by the fact that most adolescents cite parents as preferred sources of information on issues related to sexuality. It is love and witness not just information, and it is messengers not just messages that best teach us how to live and behave. The use of technology cannot replace the importance of relationships in modeling behavior.

The true way to live happy, holy, and healthy lives is by practicing the virtue of chastity, which teaches us how to respect our bodies, and the gift of sexuality, for the purposes for which God intended. The gift of chastity helps us to understand the true purpose of sex and how sexual pleasure is to be experienced in marriage, and to respect sex as a gift from God and not something evil.

THE VIRTUE OF CHASTITY HELPS US TO APPRECIATE OUR BODIES AS TEMPLES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The virtue of chastity, guided by the Holy Spirit, teaches us that the practice of chastity leads us to happiness, liberation and inner peace. The virtue of chastity as inspired by the Holy Spirit helps us to live our sexuality in a way that is meaningful, enriching, and self-fulfilling. Our Catholic faith has always taught us that chastity is both a human virtue and a divine gift. We cannot practice this gift without constantly asking God for the strength and wisdom to live the virtue of chastity with courage and determination.

Just ponder—our bodies are “temples of
CHASTITY: Fully conscious and willful violations of chastity are sinful

(From 18)

the Holy Spirit.” Would we ever think of desecrating, destroying sacred buildings of worship—our churches, our synagogues? In a similar manner, we should never desecrate, injure, or defile a more sacred temple of God, our bodies, “If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person; for the temple of God, which you are, is holy.” (1 Cor 3:16-17). To help remind us to respect the temple of the Holy Spirit that dwells in each one of us, Christ has given us all the means that we need to live our sexuality in a purposeful, meaningful, and enriching way. We need to study the truths and teachings of our Catholic faith, especially about sexuality, so that we have the knowledge, wisdom and light to live holy, happy and good, moral lives. However, we must realize that information, knowledge, alone is not necessarily effective in changing behavior. What is needed is good formation in the basic principles as given to us by Christ and our Catholic Church about how to live our lives. Where information and knowledge is integrated, it leads to formation and transformation. Values-based sexuality education programs promote and encourage behaviors reflective of these values. It is in the Gospel that Jesus models for us true love and faithfulness, and by following His lifestyle, we will have the grace to discover the meaning and purpose of life. To truly appreciate our marvelous bodies as gifts from God, we need to often reflect on pertinent passages of Sacred Scripture, and we need to pray each day for the gift of chastity, so that we can truly appreciate who we are and what God wants us to do as moved by God’s Holy Spirit. We especially need to be faithful to participating in the Eucharist, receiving Christ often in Holy Communion, and celebrating all the Sacraments, so that we will have the power of Jesus Christ alive in us to live our lives in accord with what Jesus asks us to do. In all circumstances, especially moments of temptation, we need to ask the question: WWJD? –What would Jesus do? Jesus our Good Shepherd will always be there to help us do the right thing.

A WORD ABOUT “SAFE SEX,” BIRTH CONTROL METHODS AND CONDOMS

As regards living chaste lives, many today promote the false concept of “safe sex” which usually means how to have sex without bearing the responsibility and consequences of this sacred act, like avoiding pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases. The surest way to have “safe sex” is not to engage in sexual activity and to reserve sex for marriage. God provided the answer millennia ago about how to live “safe sex” by giving us the 6th Commandment: “You shall not commit adultery.” Flowing from this Commandment has been the constant teaching of the Catholic community that the safest sex is to live according to the principles and values of the 6th Commandment, and the principles of good living as given to us by Jesus. In a moral and spiritual sense there is no “safe sex,” except by abstaining from sex in accord with the Commandments of God. Abstention from sexual activity until marriage is the grace of God that is constantly offered to us and provides the safest way to have a peaceful and content conscience. While birth control devices, including condoms, may seem to provide “a quick fix” to some social problems, these devices lead to much guilt and unhappiness and false solutions about protection from sexually transmitted diseases and sometimes still lead to pregnancies. The “safe-sex” slogan is not the answer to these crises. A sexuality education campaign aimed at fostering loving commitment and social responsibility serves the goal of preventing teen pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, and also serves the health and happiness of persons involved and society at large. Safe sex promoters usually encourage young women who are not married to use different types of birth control, and for young men who are not married to use condoms. Flowing from the teaching of Christ, biblical principles, and the teachings of our beautiful Catholic Church, it needs to be stated clearly that these “safe sex” methods, except abstinence, are sinful and destroy the peace of heart that God wants for us and violate many basic norms of morality and open the door to rampant sexual activity and perverts the meaning of sex and cheapens our self-esteem. The only safe sex is to live one’s life according to God’s plan of love and save sex for marriage. Abstinence is not just a no to sexual activity but a yes to one’s future and to one’s future spouse. It is a yes to one’s potential, to one’s ability to share true love, to health and holiness, to a peaceful conscience,and it is a yes to trust, faithfulness and friendship. Mainly, it is a beautiful yes to God, who as our loving Father, has given us commands and norms to live in a meaningful and loving way the gift of sex.

Fully conscious and willful violations of chastity are sinful. To die in serious sin, without repenting and accepting God’s merciful love, means separation from God forever. The inspired word of God as given by St. Paul in chapter six of 1 Corinthians tells us that neither fornicators nor idolaters or adulterers “will inherit the kingdom of God”, and that “the body however is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body.” No one lives the Christian life in a perfect way, but thank God that we have the beautiful Sacrament of Reconciliation, so that if there are failures, we can humbly receive God’s mercy and forgiveness and the grace to make a new beginning. A wonderful way to maintain respect for our bodies and to live the virtue of chastity is by celebrating often the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the Sacrament of Confession, which not only gives us God’s forgiveness, but gives us the grace and strength to overcome temptation and to live our sexuality in accord with the purpose for which God intended it.

JESUS OUR GOOD SHEPHERD IS ALWAYS GUIDING US

To help us live the beautiful gift of sexuality as given by God in our bodies, Jesus our Good Shepherd is there each day to lead us and guide us, especially when there are temptations or moments when others might tempt us to not appreciate our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit, or who might strive to lead us into sin by using the gift of our sexuality in ways not intended by God. In the moments of temptation, call upon the Holy Spirit who is always there to help us, and also call upon Mary, our Mother, who was the perfect disciple of Christ and teaches us how to live each moment of life in a spirit of faith, in a spirit of courage, and in a spirit of love. Remember, you are temples of the Holy Spirit. Our dignity as temples of the Holy Spirit and children of God requires us to act out in a loving, conscious way our call to be disciples of Christ, and to make free choices, as guided by the Holy Spirit who enables us to always make the choices that will lead us to life and love.

VALUE CHECK

In reference to making right choices and living by the values as given by Christ in reference to our sexuality, I offer you here a little guide called a Value Check.

Try this 4-step exercise to identify your values as regards your sexuality and the standards that you want to guide you in reference to sex:

Reflect on what matters to you most. Ask yourself how you would complete this statement: “What I want to appreciate most as regards to my sexuality is…”

Live your answer through your choices that you make each day and the values on which you base your life and decisions—Do this honestly, responsibly, courageously, and compassionately.

Pray for the guidance and the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to help you always live according to the standards that God has established for our human sexuality and in accord with the light and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Remember—Always as you form relationships and make new friends, “that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit.”

PATTERSON: Give me tiny, loud and mess over warm and comfy any day

(From 14)

I suppose there are advantages. The kids' bathtub will no longer clog up with our daughters' hair. I will no longer have to walk into that same bathroom and see enough bottles of shampoo and body wash that I could play chess with all of the empty. I will no longer have to buy macaroni and cheese several times a week or smell a blow dryer on its last legs or hear the sound of a teenage girl texting her boyfriend during dinner.

No more sweaty palms as we tear open the latest report card and no more busted mom-and-dad imposed curfews and lame excuses about movies that ran late or getting so wrapped up in a video game that they "lost track of time." No more watching "Friends" all day and all night and wondering how come our daughter isn't up at 11 in the morning, only to then see her wake up with a smile that made it impossible to be upset.

I should be -- and I am -- thankful. We have been blessed with a life that has been good beyond measure. But the adjustment to life with grown children, an unstoppable one, is not easy.

My wife and I now have that quiet reading room we've always wanted. And trust me when I say that the wanting of it is much preferable to the having it. Be careful what you wish for.

Tiny, cramped, loud and messy. Bring it on. I'll take that over warm and roomy any day.
Midland-Odessa

Knights of Columbus #3071 held its annual Clergy Appreciation Dinner January 30 at the KC Hall on FM 1788. Almost 30 priests, women religious and deacons were honored at the dinner.

Midland

Catholic recording artist David Kauffman, at piano, sings with the St. Ann’s Church Choir during a January 26 concert in Midland. Kauffman, who has written songs that have ended up in K-LOVE’s Top 10, pens many contemplative-type songs commonly heard on retreats.

Rowena

Children gather at the crib at Christmas Eve Mass to sing Happy Birthday to Jesus during Christmas Mass at St. Joseph’s Church in Rowena.