Traditionally in the season of Lent, we have been encouraged to give up some material things like certain food and drink to join us more closely to Christ who suffered and died for us on Good Friday. While I strongly encourage fasting united with prayer, I also ask that we think about how we can give more of ourselves to others by kindness.

A special type of fasting

In what has been described as maybe the worst natural disaster to ever strike the western hemisphere, as many as 100,000 people died January 12 when a massive 7.0 earthquake struck Haiti. The Diocese of San Angelo has responded swiftly and generously with contributions to the ravaged country totaling over $134,000.

Coverage from the earthquake zone from Catholic News Service is on Pages 10-11. At left, this Haitian woman was pulled from the rubble of the Catholic Cathedral in Port Au Prince a week after the earthquake struck.

A few helpful tips as Lenten season begins February 17

By Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI

With Ash Wednesday, February 17, we begin the Lenten season, which prepares us to celebrate the greatest feast of Christianity, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ on Easter Sunday, April 4.

The time of Lent is to be observed by Catholics as a special season of prayer, penance and doing works of charity. I share with you here the pastoral guidelines that hopefully will assist all to live the Lenten season in a more meaningful and prayerful manner.

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.

(Please See GUIDELINES/22)
From the Bishop’s Desk

This year, try a Lenten fast that will touch the heart

“Would that today you might fast so as to make your voice heard on high.” Isaiah 58:1-9

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

Traditionally in the season of Lent, we have been encouraged to give up some material things like certain food and drink to join us more closely to Christ who suffered and died for us on Good Friday. While I strongly encourage fasting united with prayer, I also ask that we think about how we can give more of ourselves to others by kindness, as this also involves a special type of fasting. I propose here for the Lenten season a different approach to fasting which touches the human heart in a profound way:

1. Fast from anger and hatred – Give your family and friends an extra dose of love each day.
2. Fast from judging others – Before making any judgments, recall how Jesus overlooks our faults.
3. Fast from discouragement – Hold on to Jesus’ promise that He has a perfect plan for your life.
4. Fast from complaining – When you find yourself about to complain, close your eyes and recall some of the little moments of joy Jesus has given you.
5. Fast from resentment or bitterness – Work on forgiving those who may have hurt you or reach out to those you may have hurt.
6. Fast from spending too much money – Try to reduce your spending by 10% and give those savings to the poor and needy.

This creative way of fasting welcomes Jesus’ healing touch for our hearts, and helps us to realize the deeper meaning of fasting in our lives.

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Droll scholarship deadline nears

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 the Rev. Msgr. Larry J. Droll Scholarship by February 15. The renewable $2,000 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.

The scholarship is geared towards those who have already obtained their bachelor’s degree and who are either enrolled or wanting to enroll in 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 the company website: www.cliu.com.

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Determined in 1901, Catholic Life Insurance offers life insurance, IRAs and retirement annuities to individuals and businesses living in Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Mississippi.

Marriage Encounter Weekend

A Marriage Encounter Weekend is scheduled for February 26-28 at Circle Six Ranch in Stanton. Worldwide Marriage Encounter’s mission of renewal in the church and change in the world is to assist couples and priests to live fully intimate and responsible relationships by providing them with a Catholic “experience” and ongoing community support for such a lifestyle. The weekend begins at 7:30 p.m., Fri., Feb. 26 and concludes Sunday, Feb. 28 at 5 p.m. Cost is $50. For more information, see the January 2010 Angelus, visit the Marriage Encounter-West Texas web site at www.meweestx.org. Call 697-6604 or email padanimal@sbcglobal.net. If you are unable to make this Marriage Encounter weekend, subsequent encounters are scheduled for June 4-6 at Christ the King Retreat Center in San Angelo, and Sept. 24-26 at Circle Six. An encounter weekend for Abilene-area Catholics is currently being planned.

Scott Hahn in Lubbock

LUBBOCK – The Diocese of Lubbock will host its annual Footsteps in Faith Biblical Conference, Feb. 20-21 at Holy Spirit Catholic Church, 9821 Frankford Ave. This year’s featured presenter is well-known Catholic apologist and author Scott Hahn. For ticket information and pricing, visit www.FootstepsinFaith.com.

Black, Indian Mission Collection Feb. 20-21

The Annual National Collection for Black and Indian Missions will be the weekend of Feb. 20-21. Contributions support missionaries in the United States who are evangelizing in the Black and Indigenous Catholic community. It is only through the constant generosity of Church members that evangelization efforts among Black and Native American, Eskimo and Aleut communities have been possible for more than 125 years. Churches and schools in African American and Indigenous communities depend on the annual evangelization grants to continue their programs and pastoral activities.

Healer, evangelist visits diocese

SAN ANGELO -- Australian evangelist and healer Alan Ames will conduct special healing services March 8-9 in San Angelo and Wall. Ames will appear at 7 p.m., Monday, March 8 at Sacred Heart Cathedral Parish Hall, 19 S. Oak St., and at 7 p.m., Tues., March 9 at St. Ambrose Parish in Wall. For additional information, call 325.658.6567 (San Angelo appearance) or 325.651.7551 (Wall appearance). An internationally known evangelist who has been given the gift of healing, Ames will pray over each individual who attends the healing services. Many miraculous cures have occurred during these services. Ames has the endorsements of many bishops and priests throughout the world, and San Angelo Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI, is happy to welcome Ames to the diocese.

Lenten Life In the Spirit Seminar

February 18 – March 25, 2010 Thursdays 7:00 – 8:45 p.m. Abilene Holy Family Parish Center 5410 Buffalo Gap Rd. Contemporary Praise & Worship

The Life In the Spirit Seminar is an introduction to a life lived in the power and joy of the Holy Spirit. It is designed to deepen our prayer life and bring us into a closer relationship with Jesus and God the Father. Each session gives us greater awareness of the presence and working of the Holy Spirit in our lives—the grace and gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is a beautiful way to honor the Lord’s gift of the Holy Spirit during Lent. Seminar registration fee is $5 per person. For more information or if you need childcare call Mike or Buffy Awtry at 665-8985.

Natl’ choir looking for choral singers

The 2010 National Catholic Youth Choir is currently accepting student applications. Additional Information can be found at CatholicYouthChoir.org. Application forms are online and are due March 8.

Help Wanted-Honduras

SCIENCE AND MATH SPECIALIST needed in Honduras, to work full-time in programs for children and teachers in Activiteca, an educational services center in San Pedro Sula. Strong skills in science and math, minimum Bachelor's degree, complete fluency in Spanish, teaching experience. Will help create programs and learning materials, do teacher workshops and demonstrations, train volunteers. Salary $700/mo., with health plan. (Cost of living in Honduras is ½ of U.S.). Ideal for energetic retired person. Send CV and letter to: Joan Penzenstadler, jpenz@earthlink.net Read about Activiteca on: www.activiteca.org.

Scheduled Executions

The Angelus publishes the execution dates of Texas offenders on death row each month so that the faithful in the Diocese of San Angelo can pray for them. The following offenders face upcoming execution dates. Please pray for them.

Offender/Scheduled Execution Date:

- Henry Skinner/February 24
- Michael Sigala/March 2
- Joshua Maxwell/March 11
- Alex Franklin/March 30

Adoption options in West Texas

Abilene: The Gladney Center (800) 452-3639 http://abilene-tx.adoption.com/

Lubbock: Children’s Connection: 800.456.4862 www.childrensconnections.org

Natural Family Planning

Helping couples to deepen conjugal love and achieve responsible parenthood is part of the Church's total pastoral ministry to Catholic spouses. Fulfillment of this ministry includes both educational and pastoral care. This means instilling conviction and offering practical help to those who wish to live out their parenthood in a truly responsible way. Scheduled seminars (San Angelo) and contact numbers for people who can help you with more information:

SAN ANGELO, Christ the King Retreat Center, (325) 651-5352, 2-4 p.m. 2010 Dates: February 17, March 7, May 23, September 19. Contact Amy at amyqg@wcc.net.

MIDLAND-ODESSA, Our Lady of Guadalupe, call Christina Nevarez, (432) 682-2581;

ABILENE, Holy Family Church, call Mrs. Herman Blahak, (325) 692-1820
Benedict names S. Angelo-ordained priest, Joe Vasquez, Bishop of Austin

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- Pope Benedict XVI has appointed Auxiliary Bishop Joe S. Vasquez (pictured) of Galveston-Houston, 52, to be bishop of Austin, Texas, succeeding Archbishop Gregory M. Aymond, who was named archbishop of New Orleans last June.

The appointment was announced in Washington Jan. 26 by Archbishop Pietro Sambi, apostolic nuncio to the United States.

Bishop Vasquez has been an auxiliary for Galveston-Houston since 2002. At the time of his episcopal ordination, he was the youngest bishop in the United States.

His installation has been set for March 8 at St. William Church in Round Rock, which is just north of Austin.

The eldest of six children, Joe S. Vasquez was born in Stamford, Tex., July 9, 1957. He attended the University of St. Thomas in Houston, where he earned a bachelor's degree in theology, and the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome.

(Please See VASQUEZ/20)

Contraception: Against nature, poses risks

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer

One of the major pamphlets for the Respect Life Program of the U.S. Catholic Bishops for the year 2009-2010 is a very informative and challenging publication entitled, “Contraception: The Fine Print”. This pamphlet outlines the risk of several popular contraceptives which often seem to many, especially teens, as a quick fix but sadly many do not read the fine print or hear about the high stakes and risks involved.

Contraceptives have encouraged many people to engage in sexual relationships that are unfaithful, immoral, selfish, short-term, and altered to be sterile, not life-giving. These uncommitted relationships often lead to other major problems such as abortion and sexually transmitted diseases. Contraception breaks the essential link between life and love which is the essential foundation of marriage.

(Please See IMMORAL/20)

Del Escritorio del Obispo

Un ayuno de cuaresma que toca el corazón

“Un día de ayuno así, no puede lograr que yo escuche sus oraciones.” Isaías 58:1-9

Por el Obispo Miguel Pfeifer, OMI

Tradicionalmente en la jornada de Cuaresma, nos anima la iglesia que renunciemos algunas cosas materiales como ciertas comidas y bebidas para unirnos más a Cristo quien sufrió y murió por nosotros. Mientras que los animo firmemente que ayunen unidos en oración, también les pido que pensemos como podemos dar más de nosotros mismos a otros siendo que esto también envuelve algún tipo de ayuno.

Propongo, aquí, para la jornada de Cuaresma, una manera diferente de cómo participar en un ayuno que toque el corazón humano en una manera profunda.

1. Ayunar de coraje y odio – Dé a su familia y amistades una dosis extra de amor cada día.

2. Ayunar de juzgar a otros – Antes de hacer cualquier juicio, recordemos como Jesús pasó por alto nuestras faltas.

3. Ayunar de desanimarnos – Agárrate a Cristo quien sufrió y murió por nosotros.

4. Ayunar de juzgar a otros – Antes de juzgar a otros, piensa en cuánto has perdido, cuánto has lastimado a los que te han lastimado.

5. Ayunar de envenenarte – (Toma un refresco, un helado, un chocolate) si te aporta alegría, si es que Cristo tiene un plan perfecto para tu vida.

6. Ayunar de gastar mucho dinero – Trata de reducir tus gastos por 10% y dar los ahorrados a los pobres y necesitados.

De esta manera creativa de ayunar recibimos el toque alentador de Cristo para nuestros corazones, y nos hace realizar el significativo más profundo de ayunar en nuestras vidas.
Black History Month: a time to reflect on the suffering of our brothers and sisters in Africa

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

As we are all aware, the news from Africa is not good. Throughout the continent there are several active wars, which each day, claim the lives of hundreds of innocent women and children. Most of the children in Africa do not have access to adequate food, clean water, or any medical care. Very few go to school, and almost every country is burdened with oppressive external debt. On top of all of this is the continual spread of HIV/AIDS, which claims over 3 million lives each year. There are 30 million Africans affected with the disease.

In the midst of this sad environment, the Catholic Church in Africa flourishes as it was affirmed at the recent synod on Africa in Rome. In fact, it is the fastest growing area for the Church in the world. It is impressive to see thousands crowd their parish churches for masses on weekends; vocations are bountiful and most see the Church as the singular ray of hope and solace in the otherwise grim landscape.

The U.S. Catholic Bishops have a deep concern over the suffering that is being experienced by our sisters and brothers in Africa. The bishops are taking more action to actively support the Church in Africa with spiritual solidarity and with more financial assistance.

The African-American Catholic community in the United States dedicates the month of February each year as Black History Month. The National Black Catholic Congress, Inc. encourages all Catholics and people of good will in February to sincere prayer for our suffering brothers and sisters in Africa, to collaborative work and educative study focused on the history and pressing challenges of Africa. I encourage all in our Diocese to support the efforts of the National Black Catholic Congress, and especially to pray for the Church in Africa.

The National Black Catholic Congress has developed a Vision Statement which is a way of forming solidarity with the Church and people of Africa. May we all work together to help live out this vision.

VISION STATEMENT

WE BELIEVE African American Catholics have a special relationship with our Brothers and Sisters in Africa;

WE VALUE Africa and the people of Africa and are willing to work in collaboration with raising the consciousness of our people, and

WE BELIEVE in the principles of solidarity, living with mutual respect and exchange and join with our Brothers and Sisters in Africa to make our world a better place to live.

GOAL

• To encourage support, promote, and coordinate a national strategy during Black History month within predominantly African American parishes and National Black Catholic organizations for African Rising and a Call to Solidarity with Africa.

METHODOLOGY

Through Teach-ins, Workshops, and Presentations provide information and education on the status of Africa, concerns, and challenges to the African American Catholic communities. As follow-up to the initial presentations, invite the development of local parish/organization committees on Africa to serve as a liaison for communicating information.

Day of the Unborn is linked to the Feast of Annunciation

Faithful encouraged to participate in ‘spiritual adoption program’ March 25

Editor’s Note: This letter and information have been sent to all the priests of the diocese. Please join our priests in celebrating The Day of the Unborn and take part in the Spiritual Adoption Program.

Dear brother priests:

The Day of the Unborn, celebrated on the Feast of the Solemnity of the Annunciation of Mary, March 25, is founded on the joyous event of Christ’s Incarnation. As the very name implies, the Day of the Unborn is a time to remember and pray for all unborn children—to remember those whose lives were lost, especially through abortion, and to give thanks for those whose lives were spared, and to ask God’s blessing upon all unborn little ones about to be born.

This special day presents an ideal opportunity to focus on the pro-life principle of the importance of conception. Jesus’ conception by the Holy Spirit at the beginning of the Incarnation is a reminder that human life begins with conception and that all unborn life is sacred, having been stamped with the very image of God.

On this wonderful Day of the Unborn, the Feast of the Annunciation, I ask that each priest of our Diocese offer a Mass for the Unborn, asking God’s blessings on all unborn children and to bring an end to abortion, and invite on that day, expectant mothers with spouses, to come for a very special blessing during

(Please See LETTER/24)

Protecting children from the dark, dangerous side of the Internet

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

Through the beautiful technological blessing we call the Internet, the world and beyond is now instantly accessible. The Internet serves as a way of obtaining instantaneous information, of keeping in touch with family and friends, and helps us to discover the world in a new way. However, the dark and dangerous side of the Internet is that it also provides countless websites of degrading pornographic material that degrades our dignity as human beings and as children of God.

This dark and dangerous side is especially perilous for children. Pornography on the Internet is graphic and virtually unavoidable. Sometimes it is violent. Filters are not working.

One of the latest surveys indicates that one of the largest groups of viewers of Internet pornography is youth from 12 to 17 years of age. Widespread access to the Internet and new delivery devices like cell phones, iPods and Playstations, provide numerous channels for delivery of pornography, sexualized messages and sexual solicitation to millions of viewers. Each day our young people are victimized by those who seek to steal their innocence and corrupt their minds.

Pornography is undermining the moral fabric of our nation and the right of Americans to live in a decent society. Pornography is also linked to a variety of social evils, including teen promiscuity, sexually transmitted diseases, abortion, children born out of wedlock, divorce, sexual exploitation of children, rape, prostitution, and sexual harassment.

Today young people and children are often more technology-literate than their parents and grandparents, and they are inquisitive about sexual matters. Pornographers recognize this combination and millions of them are continually on the offensive, determined to seduce and ensnare young people. Research has revealed that 90% of young people’s first exposure to pornography on the Internet is unintentional; the second exposure rarely is.

Ten years ago, schools were rushing to install computers with Internet access in every classroom to stay abreast of tech-
 Churches working to ensure everyone counted in 2010 US Census

By Nancy Frazier O'Brien
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON -- Churches have a crucial role to play in ensuring that everyone is counted on Census Day 2010, April 1.

That's the message Alejandro Aguilera-Titus and Beverly Carroll of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Secretariat on Cultural Diversity in the Church are delivering as key point people in the USCCB's partnership effort with the U.S. Census Bureau.

The numbers gathered in the 2010 census will determine representation in Congress and the allocation of more than $400 billion in annual federal funding for local schools, roads, parks and other services.

"Historically we know there are three major communities that are difficult to count -- the new immigrant, those who are isolated due to little knowledge of English and the low-income," said Aguilera-Titus, assistant director for Hispanic affairs in the cultural diversity secretariat, in an interview with Catholic News Service Oct. 27.

But with 19,000 parishes and thousands more social service agencies, health care facilities and educational institutions around the country, the Catholic Church is in a unique position to reach many of those people and to convince them that it's important to be counted, said Carroll, assistant director for African-American affairs, in the same interview.

"Our parishes, our centers, our outreach captures the attention and participation of many people, and the church has a particular role in working with communities and being supportive of political activities that supports the needs of our people," she said.

Particularly among communities that are hard to reach and hard to count, "we have a certain credibility, so people would be more apt to be listening," Carroll added.

Aguilera-Titus said the key to a smooth and efficient Census Day is trust. Those who are being counted must trust that their information will not be passed along to other federal agencies or made available to their neighbors.

"Churches can help to generate that level of trust," he said, and can also provide concrete assistance such as help with the census form or with finding language assistance for those who need it.

People also need to know that the census will not be a complicated or time-consuming endeavor for them, Aguilera-Titus said. With only 10 questions, it is one of the shortest questionnaires since the U.S. census was first taken in 1790.

Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of San Antonio, chairman of the USCCB Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church, said the statistics gathered in the census are critical to the church's mission.

"Our parishes, our centers, our outreach captures the attention and participation of many people, and the church has a particular role in working with communities and being supportive of political activities that supports the needs of our people," she said.

Particularly among communities that are hard to reach and hard to count, "we have a certain credibility, so people would be more apt to be listening," Carroll added.

‘Christ in families, hearts and world’ theme of Feb. Conference Day

The annual Conference Day will be February 13, at the San Angelo Convention Center. The theme of the Conference is “CHRIST ... In Our Families ... In Our Hearts ... In Our World.”

The focus of the day will be on family as domestic church and the impact family makes on the church community and the world. The hope is to make us more effective parents, catechists and disciples.

The featured speaker is Greg “Dobie” Moser, the Executive Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry and CYO for the Diocese of Cleveland, Ohio. He has worked in parish and diocesan ministry. Dobie has given keynotes and done training and consultation in over 90 dioceses. He is a writer, trainer, and leader in adolescent catechesis and family faith formation.

Dobie has a MA in Family Systems counseling from Mt. St. Joseph College in Cincinnati, and a D. Ministry from the Graduate Theological Foundation in South Bend with a focus on leadership development and the human family.

Registration begins at 7:45 AM. The opening session is at 9:00 AM. Lunch, included in the registration is at 12:30 PM.

A Sunday Liturgy, with Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI presiding is at 3:00 PM. The day concludes at 4:00 PM. Registration is $25. For more information, contact the Office of Education and Formation at 325-651-7500.

PILGRIMAGE TO IRELAND
August 4-13, 2010

Join Msgr. Maurice Voity of Sacred Heart Cathedral, San Angelo, on a pilgrimage to the “Land of Saints and Scholars.” Masses will be celebrated at several locations, including the Basilica of Our Lady of Knock. We will also be visiting historic and religious sights throughout the Republic of Ireland, including Dublin, Glendalough, Waterford, Blarney Castle, Killamey, the Ring of Kerry, Cliffs of Moher, and Galway, plus many more. Besides our touring, there will be plenty of time for “Irish Fun!” Accommodations in 4-star hotels. Full Irish Breakfast daily. Seven suppers including a Medieval Meal and an Irish Cabaret. Deluxe motorcoach with Irish guide.

$3,195 per person in double occupancy
Round-trip airfare from San Angelo
With flights from Midland and Abilene available at same cost!

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT
MSGR. MAURICE VOITY at Sacred Heart Cathedral
(325) 658-6567 or e-mail at mvvoity@hotmail.com

Bookings close on March 5, 2010.

Loved One in Jail / Prison?
"Let us help you"

Criminal Justice Ministry
Diocesan Office
325-651-7500

www.san-angelo-diocese.org/cjm.html
Year for Priests

All priests have close relationship with Mary, Mother of Priests

By Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI

The celebration of the “Year for Priests” calls every human priest to remember the essential and unique relationship he has to Jesus Christ our eternal High Priest. The priest shares in the gift of priesthood that is born from the priest’s sacramental configuration to Christ. This essential relationship to Christ reminds every human priest of the indispensible and constant call to moral perfection that must dwell in every priestly heart. In proclaiming the “Year for Priests”, Pope Benedict XVI stated that “within and through his own humanity every priest must be well aware that he is bringing to the world Another, God himself.”

The “Year for Priests” also serves as a reminder of the intimate relationship every priest has to the mother of Christ the Priest, who is the mother of every priest. Because of the gift of Mary by the assurance that all was well. It was a refuge. We attended church but I spent extra time there because I knew that’s where she was, busy cooking or helping someone else in some other way. She’s been gone many years now. I wish I had been old enough to really express my love and appreciation directly to her. I am proud to say I am the son of Felix Franco Sr. and Luz Molina. My own mother has shown me what it means to love someone unconditionally. Her needs and desires always took a backseat to her children’s needs (or wants). I’m thankful that she is able to enjoy life a little bit now. A brother of mine died from epilepsy. Seeing him go from an athlete (second to none) to a shell of himself was heartbreaking. Like mom, though, he never complained, never got to enjoy some of the simple pleasures I took for granted. I witnessed his anger give way to acceptance, and then to a love for everyone. He showed me the need and power of forgiveness. My brother had both humility and dignity. He could’ve covered the walls of his bedroom with all the trophies and awards he won. After we buried him, we moved the one thing he did have hanging in his room to the living room. It was a plaque of Psalm 23.....“The Lord is my Shepherd, there is nothing I shall want.......I will dwell in the house of the Lord for years to come”.

I’m really thankful to God that I have grown to see just how great family can be. Being from such a huge family (in the hundreds at our annual reunion), you develop a sense that everyone is different but still important. More than anything, family is where you can love and be loved. I believe Joe’s death changed me, and I’m sure I know him better now than I ever did while he was alive. I started seeing where I had failed, or at least where I had not been really present. At the same time I probably got a little judgmental of others. Thankfully, my desires to see others change has been directed inward.

Such things make you grow up, but can also make you regret parts of your life. Dad has been a hard worker, and from him I’ve learned that I must go on. Today is another day to work. People can form you but it takes God to direct you. I remember Him washing me. I happened to be visiting another church a few years ago as an adult sponsor for a youth weekend. For some reason my tears flowed, yet I wasn’t really crying.

I soon couldn’t get enough of helping at our local parish. Catechism teacher, lector, server, Eucharistic minister, usher, prison ministry, Knights of Columbus, you name it...I did them all but wanted more. I used to immediately banish thoughts of priesthood out of my head. A couple of years ago I made the decision to at least think about it. Within months that’s all I could think about. I started making secret plans to sign up. The thought of seeking a vocation director was foreign to me. I simply showed up at the Diocesan office and requested an application. The few people that knew what I was considering probably found it hard to believe, as I did. But here I am at St. Mary’s Seminary. Looking back it’s easy to believe that God was forming me, giving me the skills and experiences to draw upon. Years of writing are sure coming in handy and so are the Spanish classes I took. It wasn’t an easy decision.

It was gut-wrenching and being here is a challenge, but it’s more pleasing than I ever thought it could be. I miss my family terribly but that too I offer up in prayer. Jesus wants us to give up what we had and follow Him. My calling might be in some other area of service, but I feel like this is home, at least until I’m back in a parish.
US religious leaders pledge renewed commitment to conscience issues

By Carol Zimmermann
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- More than 140 Christian leaders issued a joint declaration Nov. 20 pledging renewed zeal in defending the unborn, defining marriage as a union between a man and a woman and protecting religious freedom.

The 4,700-word statement, called the "Manhattan Declaration: A Call of Christian Conscience," was signed by 14 Catholic bishops, evangelical and Orthodox leaders and other Catholics. The document pledges the group's "obligation to speak and act in defense of these truths" and stressed that "no power on earth, be it cultural or political, will intimidate us into silence or acquiescence."

About 16 religious leaders who signed the document attended the Nov. 20 press conference in Washington to unveil it. Washington Archbishop Donald W. Wuerl, who welcomed the group to Washington, said the document echoed "what needs to be said" today and did so "with a collective voice."

Several speakers pointed out that the issues highlighted in the "Manhattan Declaration" are not new, but there is a new urgency to defend them.

"Justice demands that we not remain silent," said Cardinal Justin Rigali of Philadelphia.

Some speakers mentioned the possibility of civil disobedience, if necessary, to defend their beliefs.

"There are limits to what can be asked or imposed on our consciences," said Robert George, a member of the document's drafting committee and a jurisprudence professor at Princeton University.

George, who is Catholic, said any protests or acts of resistance "would be carried out respectfully" and with nonviolence.

The document states that the signers "will not comply with any edict that purports to compel our institutions to participate in abortions, embryo-destructive research, assisted suicide and euthanasia, or any other anti-life act; nor will we bend to any rule purporting to force us to bless immoral sexual partnerships, treat them as marriages or the equivalent, or refrain from proclaiming the truth, as we know it, about morality and immorality and marriage and the family."

When asked by a reporter about the issue of civil disobedience, Archbishop Wuerl said: "We hope it does not come to that."

Recent news reports have claimed that the Archdiocese of Washington and its social service arm, Catholic Charities, are threatening to stop providing social services if the District of Columbia City Council's proposed same-sex marriage bill pass.

The archdiocese said it will continue providing services if the District of Columbia City Council's proposed same-sex marriage bill pass. Recent news reports have claimed that the Archdiocese of Washington and its social service arm, Catholic Charities, are threatening to stop providing social services if the District of Columbia City Council's proposed same-sex marriage bill pass.

The archdiocese said it will continue its outreach services, but its work would be significantly limited "as the bill offers little protection for religious beliefs and would require Catholic Charities to recognize and promote same-sex marriage in employment policies, and adoption and foster-care policies."

Catholic Charities' homeless shelter, counseling and adoption programs are funded with $20 million in government contracts and about $10 million in funds from the archdiocese.

The Catholic Church also has been vocal in supporting health care reform that does not include coverage of abortion.

When asked by a reporter if it would be a sin for a Catholic legislator to vote for health care coverage that included abortion, Cardinal Rigali emphasized the desperate need for health care reform and simply stated that "abortion was out of the question."

The current health care debate in Congress, and local discussion about same-sex marriage laws, were not as pronounced last summer when the group of religious leaders first met in New York to draft this statement. Some of the signers noted that although the document could have been written years ago or even years from now, it has particular significance right now.

"We see an increase in the threat to human life," said George, noting that the current administration and Congress have supported abortion measures and also embryonic stem-cell research, an action which he said "ups the ante very much so."

On life issues, the declaration urges "all elected officials in our country, elected and appointed, to protect and serve every member of our society, including the most marginalized, voiceless and vulnerable among us."

In its defense of marriage as a union between a man and a woman, it notes a progressive erosion of the culture of marriage due to infidelity, high divorce rates and out-of-wedlock births.

Pope names Austin administrator to succeed Carmody as Bishop of Corpus Christi

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

WASHINGTON—Pope Benedict XVI has named Msgr. W. Michael Mulvey, 60, administrator of the Diocese of Austin, to be bishop of Corpus Christi, and accepted the resignation of Bishop Edmond Carmody, 76, from pastoral governance of the Corpus Christi Diocese, January 18.

The appointment and resignation were publicized in Washington, January 18, by Archbishop Pietro Sambi, apostolic nuncio to the United States.

William Michael Mulvey was born in Houston, August 23, 1949. He earned a Bachelor’s of Arts degree at St. Edward's University, Austin; a Bachelor of Sacred Theology degree from the Angelicum University in Rome, and a Licentiate in Sacred Theology from the Gregorian University, Rome.

He was ordained for the Diocese of Austin in 1975.

Assignments in Texas after ordination included Associate Pastor, St. Mary’s Parish, Taylor; Associate Pastor, St. Louis’ Parish, Austin; temporary administrator, St. Anthony Claret Parish, Kyle; Chaplain, Reicher Catholic High School, Waco; Spiritual Director, St. Mary’s Seminary, Austin; Pastor, St. Thomas Aquinas Parish, College Station; and staff of the Focolari Movement in New York. In Texas, he also served as Pastor of St. Helen’s Parish, Georgetown, and Chancellor, Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia in the Austin Diocese. The diocesan College of Consultants elected him administrator of the diocese after Bishop Gregory Aymond of Austin left the diocese to be installed as Archbishop of New Orleans, August 20, 2009.

Bishop Carmody, a native of Ireland, studied for the priesthood in Ireland and was ordained for the Archdiocese of San Antonio, in 1957. He worked in several parishes in the archdiocese and as a missionary in Peru and Ecuador and was named auxiliary bishop of San Antonio in 1988. He was named Bishop of Tyler, in 1992, and Bishop of Corpus Christi in 2000.

The Diocese of Corpus Christi has 17,000 square miles. It has a population of 565,158 people, with 395,611, or 70 per cent, of them Catholic.
HAITI: The Suffering

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (CNS) -- Sister Maria Sylvita Elie hasn't eaten all day, and the tiredness shows on her face as she pleads with a Brazilian non-governmental organization for some tents for the homeless families who have camped out on the convent patio of her religious order, the Salesian Sisters of St. John Bosco.

Tents are in short supply in the Haitian capital these days, and she has to argue forcefully. Her persistence finally pays off, and she fills her pickup with two loads of tents.

"I'm going to hide them until dark, otherwise people will swarm all over us to get them. After it's dark I'll give them quietly to families that have small children," said Sister Sylvie, as she's known.

A Salesian nun who lives in one of the roughest areas of Port-au-Prince, Sister Sylvie has been sleeping under the stars since the Jan. 12 quake collapsed most of the church sanctuary and other buildings they used for educating neighborhood children.

"We're a center of reference for the community, and people come to us for help in solving their problems. Our job is to find the resources and people to solve those problems," she told Catholic News Service.

That has not been an easy task. With the exception of frequent shipments of medical supplies and food from her congregation's sisters in the neighboring Dominican Republic, few relief supplies have arrived here.

"While the people are dying, the international organizations are passing their time in meetings, in studies and planning. People fly around in helicopters looking at us, making the houses shake once again. But while they're planning, the people are dying. We've now gone more than two weeks with out any help, and they haven't contacted those of us..."
HAITI: The Hope

Pope praises rapid, generous response to quake zone

By Carol Glatz
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY -- Pope Benedict XVI praised the rapid and generous response from the international community toward the people of Haiti and the bravery of all those who engaged in on-the-ground rescue efforts.

He also pledged that the Catholic Church would continue to help those in need build a brighter future.

The pope's comments came in two telegrams sent Jan. 16 in the wake of the magnitude 7 earthquake that hit the Haitian capital, Port-au-Prince, Jan. 12, leaving at least 100,000 dead and an estimated 3 million people injured or homeless. The Vatican published the telegrams Jan. 25.

In a telegram addressed to Archbishop Louis Kebreau of Cap-Haitien, president of the Haitian bishops' conference, the pope praised "the extremely rapid mobilization of the international community" and the church in response to the crisis. The church was going to continue to

(Please See POPE/21)

At Dominican border, parish clinic offers help for injured

By David Agren
Catholic News Service

JIMANI, Dominican Republic -- Dave Innocent Lemuel, a 13-year-old Haitian, managed to crawl out of the rubble of his home, despite suffering two fractures of his left leg during the earthquake.

Finding adequate medical attention near the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince was another matter.

His father, Innocent Lemuel, said at least four hospitals turned his son away due to overwhelming patient volumes. Other facilities, meanwhile, had been destroyed.

"He couldn't see a doctor in Haiti," Lemuel told Catholic News Service. "In many of these clinics, the doctors are dead."

Dominican rescue workers rushed Dave, who speaks with an easy smile, and his parents to Jimani -- a border town on the main road between Port-au-Prince and Santo Domingo -- where he received treatment and is now recovering at a makeshift rehabilitation clinic for children and their families run by the local Catholic parish, St. Joseph's.

Dave was among the many Haitians who crossed the border to receive medical attention after the Jan. 12 earthquake that claimed at least 150,000 lives and left 3 million injured or homeless. He was also among the thousands receiving care from Catholic groups in the Dominican Republic, who immediately sprang into action -- long before foreign aid workers and assistance arrived -- to help displaced and wounded Haitians by providing food and medical attention.

(Please See BORDER/21)
Medicine and the true cost of being in denial

By Rev. Tad Pacholczyk

Back in the early 1800’s, most practicing physicians refused to believe that the simple gesture of washing their hands before examining women or delivering their babies, the mortality rate dropped from 18% to 1.3% in the maternity ward in the hospital in Vienna. Yet most of Dr. Semmelweis’ co-workers thought handwashing was a waste of time, and refused to comply or acknowledge its importance until several more decades had passed.

Meanwhile, year after year, he continued to provide statistical evidence that handwashing saved lives, and, year after year, he was criticized in scientific journals, and ridiculed by leading physicians throughout Europe. Semmelweis was eventually fired from his job at the hospital because of his insistence on handwashing. Those who were supposed to be dedicated to saving lives in the medical establishment of the early 1800’s were instead more concerned about political correctness and committing to preserving their own entrenched academic interests. Best medical practice became subordinated to other pressures and misguided beliefs.

Today’s medical establishment faces a similar temptation of placing various irrational ideologies ahead of a patient’s best interests. As modern medicine subtly morphs into a schizophrenic discipline that at times works to save young human patients in the womb, but at other times works to harm that same patient population through abortion, it becomes but a short next step to downplay or ignore the harmful effects that abortion has on women, as in the case of the abortion-breast cancer link.

More than 28 different studies over a period of 45 years have shown abortion to be a significant risk factor for breast cancer. Not only has the epidemiological evidence been abundant to implicate abortion in this way, but it has also been shown that childbirth to full term for a woman’s first pregnancy, especially at an early age, affords a significant protective effect against breast cancer.

A number of scientists and physicians (especially those with connections to the abortion industry) have been quick to suggest that these research results were “inconsistent” and that they could not really arrive at “definitive conclusions.” As a result, young women today rarely receive sound medical information about these risks from their health care providers. Abortion is aggressively marketed as a “woman’s right” and has become one of the most common and lucrative surgical procedures today. So many within the medical establishment, including various professional associations like the American Medical Association, seem to shy away from serious discussions of abortion’s health risks.

A few years ago, George Lundberg, M.D., former editor of the Journal of the American Medical Association, noted during an interview with Health Affairs magazine how certain topics like abortion and tobacco were “sensitive issues” that had been on the American Medical Association’s “don’t touch” list for many years.

The danger of breast cancer from induced abortion constitutes a serious health risk that women deserve to be fully and properly informed about, and the ethical failure on the part of the medical establishment and by various cancer watchdog groups in this regard is noteworthy and troubling. Until the practice of modern medicine once again includes a repudiation of direct abortion as part of its professional creed in the way it once did when physicians took the Hippocratic Oath, little progress will be made in addressing a number of serious women’s health issues linked to abortion, including breast cancer.

Modern medicine still desperately needs to break free from its steadfast denial and to wash its hands of the unsavory and immoral practice of abortion if it ever hopes to minister in a fully responsible way to the health needs of pregnant women and their children.

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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

(Please See PADRE/23)
Catholic Voices

Fighting terrorism nonviolently only way to succeed

By Tony Magliano
Catholic News Service

The attempted destruction of a Detroit-bound airliner on Christmas Day was a frightening reminder of how very vulnerable we still are.

But is meeting violence with violence an effective moral response to terrorism?

When, at the moment of Jesus' betrayal, St. Peter took a sword and cut off the right ear of the slave of the high priest (Jn 18:10), Jesus replied, "Put your sword back into its sheath, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword" (Mt 26:52).

Commenting on this section of Matthew's Gospel, the Jerome Biblical Commentary states: "The sharp rejection of the use of arms is entirely in accord with the teaching and the practice of Jesus," who "condemns the use of arms as futile."

Don't we yet understand the futility of violence? After all the death and destruction of past and present wars, how can we still fail to see that violent responses to violence only breed the vicious cycle of more violence?

Only the holiest among us refrain from striking back when assaulted. For the vast majority of us, our immediate unholy impulse is to hit back. But that is not the response of those who desire to live within the reign of God.

Instead of fighting fire with fire, Christians are called to fight fire with water -- to move beyond the unholy macho response of hitting back.

Followers of the nonviolent Christ are instructed to soothe the flames of anger and vengeance with the cooling waters of loving kindness, social justice and human solidarity (see Lk 6:27-36).

However, even the holiest of responses will not soften every single hurting, angry heart. Therefore, we also need to dramatically improve global safeguards for the sake of the common good.

But important as it is, providing comprehensive, nonviolent security is not the most essential response to terrorism.

What is most needed is a genuine and diligent desire to discover the root causes of terrorism and to commit ourselves and our government to the holy task of healing the pain and frustration of our hurting world -- including that of our enemies.

Among the root causes of terrorism are: the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and its economic blockade around Gaza, the United States' nearly unconditional support of the Israeli government and the U.S. occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq along with the resulting loss of countless innocent civilians.

The presence of U.S. military forces in predominantly Islamic countries, especially in Saudi Arabia where the Muslim holy cities of Mecca and Medina are located, and U.S. efforts -- sometimes militarily -- to keep Middle East oil flowing westward, are additional factors that cause many Muslims to view Americans as imperialists who disrespect Islam.

Until we commit ourselves to justly addressing these root causes, terrorism, despite our overwhelming military response, will grow and continue to be a deadly threat.

But the most important root cause of terrorism is the tremendous disparity between rich and poor nations.

Recent popes have taught that this grossly unequal possession of the world's resources by the rich not only sadly causes the poor to suffer and die but remains a powerful cause of war and terrorism.

When and if we ever learn to take the astronomical sums of money we spend waging war and dedicate them instead to ending global hunger and poverty, we will discover the human family, and, in the process, world peace!

Social justice and the environment

By Father William J. Byron, SJ
Catholic News Service


This echoed the Jan. 1, 1972, World Peace Day statement of Pope Paul VI: "If you want peace, work for justice."

Pope Paul VI made a related point in his 1967 encyclical, "Populorum Progressio" ("The Progress of Peoples"), when he remarked that "development is the new word for peace."

Papal social teaching says that if we work to protect the environment, we are preparing the way for peace. If we work for justice, peace will eventually follow. Economic development is prerequisite to the attainment of world peace.

This is clear and consistent Catholic social teaching. Pope Benedict's concern for the environment is part of a worldwide concern that marks the confluence of two great social forces -- the social justice movement and the environmental movement.

Recently, I was struck by a comment made by former President Bill Clinton in his eulogy at the funeral of Smith Bagley, who died in early January. Mr. Bagley was a philanthropist, a convert to Catholicism, a Democratic Party fundraiser and supporter of social programs to improve the lot of poor and disadvantaged people.

Mr. Clinton said, "References have been made several times today to the fact that Smith was a convert to Catholicism. I'd say that Smith was a Catholic before he ever became one, because of his social conscience and his commitment to social justice."

And that made me think of something former British Prime Minister Tony Blair said in a talk given to the National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management last June at the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania.

Blair spoke, among other things, of his own conversion to Catholicism and first remarked that you would have to be British to understand why he could never have made that move while still prime minister. But after leaving office he did make the move.

He said, "One of the reasons I was drawn to the church was the work that it does caring for the sick, looking after the elderly and showing compassion for people for whom most people don't show compassion. ... I know the help that our church gives in the work that is done in some of the poorest parts of Africa in pursuit of justice, and indeed life for people who otherwise are going to die as a result of famine or conflict or disease."

Catholics can take pride in this respect for the Catholic commitment to protect the poor and promote social justice. But Catholics have to realize that their great tradition of social justice is at risk if it fails to connect in the policy arena worldwide with the great social issues of our day: climate change, poverty, unemployment, economic development, hunger, disease, life issues, refugee movements, family instability, education and many more.

If we want peace (and who doesn't?)

(Please See BYRON/23)
As the Diocese of San Angelo prepares for its 50th anniversary in October 2011, Odessa photographer and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton parishioner Alan P. Torre will provide photos for much of a commemorative book that will be published to coincide with the celebration. His skill as a photographer is obvious on these two pages.

Capturing Beauty

Philippine native blesses many in diocese with his gift of photography

By Jimmy Patterson
Editor

Hershey’s and James Taylor. Ask Alan Torre why he came to the United States 15 years ago, and that’s the response you’ll get.

Torre admits to having fully indoctrinated himself into American culture which not only explains his choice in chocolate and adult contemporary musicians, but also his dry wit: sometimes it’s hard to tell when Torre is serious and when he is yanking your chain. What remains without question, though, is Torre’s ability with a camera, which is unmistakably top shelf.

The Odessa-based photographer (see some of his best work at aptorre.com), came to West Texas from the Philippines in 1985 when he had a number of family members, all of whom have since moved to Dallas, who were medical professionals in Odessa.

He says in his native land he could have never made money for his photo talent. The economy and lifestyle of Filipinos encourages something more resembling the barter system than free enterprise, and while such a practice can lead to more social interaction between people, it can put a crimp in making a living.

“We are so interdependent upon each other back home,” Torre said of his native Philippines, where he grew up in Manila. “But society bring what it was made us more..."
Pope goes high tech, encourages other priests to do the same

Language lessons: New media test Vatican’s digital fluency

By John Thavis
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- Pope Benedict XVI recently urged the world’s priests to make better use of new media, but in his own backyard the digital revolution is still seen as a mixed blessing.

The Vatican Web site remains largely a repository of printed texts, displayed on pages designed to look like parchment. And despite more than a decade of discussion about making the site interactive, www.vatican.va continues to provide information in one direction only: from them to you.

Some Vatican agencies have embraced the digital possibilities, notably Vatican Radio, which offers online broadcasts, podcasts and RSS feeds along with photos and print versions of major stories. Other departments prefer to fly below the radar. The Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, for example, has posted exactly one new piece of information on its Web page over the last three years.

The impression that the Vatican is slow on the draw when it comes to Internet possibilities was confirmed recently when a "Vatican" Twitter feed turned out to be someone impersonating the Vatican. It was a fairly innocent case of Twitterjacking, but begged the question: Why doesn’t the Vatican have a real Twitter feed?

Among the few Vatican officials willing to tackle these issues head-on is Archbishop Claudio Celli, president of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications. He met with reporters last Christmas, pope2you.net invited people to send personal photo-and-text Christmas greetings to the pope, which were then posted to a linked Flickr account. The response was overwhelming, with messages from believers and nonbelievers all over the world. In January, Archbishop Celli was busy putting together a representative selection in dossier form for the pope.

When the pope released his communications day message urging priests to take advantage of digital media, Archbishop Celli did something that reversed the usual hierarchy of communication in the church: His site encouraged young people, after reading the papal message, to clicking on a link and send it directly to their pastors.

Archbishop Celli, a 68-year-old Italian who has spent his entire career in the Roman Curia, knows that communication novelties are usually introduced very gently at the Vatican. He readily concedes that at his age, when it comes to new media he may be part of the problem.

"We have our own digital divide. I think of myself. I was not born 'digital'. I belong to a certain era that feels more at home with a book," he told reporters. He said, for example, that he was amazed at the Kindle but found it hard to imagine himself "sitting in a chair and watching the pages of a book stream past on a small screen."

The challenge for the church is not to encourage young priests and seminarians to use digital media, because they’re already doing so, he said. The bigger problem is convincing middle-aged and older priests to embrace these possibilities.

Archbishop Celli said his council is also willing to tackle an even more sensitive issue -- in many ways, the core issue -- of Vatican communications: the question of language.

"This is a topic we need to face in an explicit manner. Many times we speak, but in a language that is no longer comprehensible," he said. He said that’s something that may be the focus of an upcoming plenary session of his council.

Benedict goes Green: Dialogue on environment widens

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- Over the last few months, Pope Benedict XVI has opened a wider dialogue on the subject of environmental protection, and in the process put a sharper focus on an issue that’s become central to his pontificate.

It’s increasingly clear that the "green" label slapped onto Pope Benedict after he installed solar panels at the Vatican and joined a reforestation project in Europe was not the whole story. Now the pope is defining which shade of green -- in moral arguments that are not always popular.

The pope began weighing in on environmental themes in 2006. His strong defense of the Amazon’s fragile ecology, his appeals for safe water and his warnings on pollution's burden on the poor all received general acclamation.

When he approved the installation of solar panels on several Vatican buildings and funded tree-planting in Hungary, the Vatican drew praise for trying to become the world’s first carbon-neutral state.

But lately, the pope’s words on ecology have raised eyebrows and even some objections.

In a speech Jan. 11 to the diplomatic corps accredited to the Vatican, the pope extended the discussion of "human ecology" to same-sex marriage.

"Creatures differ from one another and can be protected, or endangered, in different ways, as we know from daily experience. One such attack comes from laws or proposals which, in the name of fighting discrimination, strike at the biological basis of the difference between the sexes," he said.

That prompted protests from homosexual activists, including the head of an Italian gay organization, who said the pope’s linkage of gay marriage and ecological irresponsibility was "almost comical."

Pope Benedict, however, was not trying to score a cheap political point. His argument touched on what might be called the leitmotif of his pontificate: that man is not God, and that man’s actions should correspond to God’s plan -- or, as he phrased it to the diplomats, to "the structure willed by the Creator."
Our Faith

Columnist reflects on 43-year-old piece on sexuality

By Father John Catoir Catholic News Service

The sin of sexuality is not in the pleasure factor. How could it be, since I have ever read in my life. "The article by Father Catoir on sexuality was the most beautiful thing I have ever read in my life.

I have been writing a syndicated column for over 43 years. Recently I came across one that I wrote in 1967 on human sexuality. A woman named Elizabeth Paquette sent a letter to the editor with this comment: "The article by Father Catoir on sexuality was the most beautiful thing I have ever read in my life."

"Great love is a sign of great holiness. In marriage, the desire to give one's self to the delight of the beloved is a sign of Christian holiness.

"Human sexuality is perhaps the most talked about, but least understood subject in the world. There are people frightened to death of their own body, people filled with guilt about the most normal expressions of love and affection.

"Even mature adults can be steeped in shame over something that happened in weakness years ago. All of which points to a heavily negative training in sex, which has lessened the average person's ability to appreciate the true spiritual beauty of human love.

"There is a great need for a deepened respect for the positive aspects human sexuality. Sex is a holy gift, which should be exalted to a maximum of human dignity and delight.

"A great deal can be said about the humdrum reality of marriage in day-to-day life. It would be unrealistic to suggest that the goal of marriage is some kind of fantasy of ecstasy.

"Life is not like that.

"People have to be reconciled to their shortcomings, and often have to practice renunciation instead of possessive greed.

"Our Lord told us that the noblest form of love is to lay down one's life for another. This kind of surrender begins when there is a true marital commitment.

"Sex without a real commitment is dangerous on many levels, which I do not have to elaborate here. However, the marriage act per se is pure; it is intended to be a true act of self-giving. In this context, sensuality is a virtue and a blessing.

"There are many forms of sensual delight, like the ecstasy of a beautiful sunset or the thrill of listening to a great symphony. Such noble emotions contribute to our sense of well-being. Sexual pleasure is one particular form of sensual delight; it is a gift from God to be used in the service of married love.

"The sin of sexuality is not in the pleasure factor. How could it be, since...

(please see Catoir/22)

Want to be happy? Imitate a spiritual master

By Therese J. Borchard Catholic News Service

Not until I read Gretchen Rubin's insightful book, "The Happiness Project," which chronicles her year of test-driving the wisdom of philosophers, psychologists and writers on happiness, did I realize that I have implemented into my life several exercises to be happier.

For example, at one point last year I did exactly what she says about "making room for friends." I scribbled down the names of about five people for whom I needed to carve out some of my time. When these people call, I told myself, I need to return the call. I also need to pencil their birthdays into my calendar, and I need to make my best effort to see them once a year.

I also imitate a spiritual master, another of Gretchen's directives. Not only that, I imitate the same one as Gretchen: St. Therese of Lisieux. And for the same reason!

Gretchen writes: "I started my happiness project to test my hypothesis that I could become happier by making small changes in my ordinary day. I didn't want to reject the natural order of my life -- by moving to Walden Pond or Antarctica, say, or taking a sabbatical from my husband. I wasn't going to give up toilet paper or shopping or experiment with hallucinogens. I'd already switched careers.

"Surely, I'd hoped, I could change my life without changing my life, by finding more happiness in my own kitchen. ... I wanted to take little steps to be happier as I lived my ordinary life, and that was very much in the spirit of St. Therese."

Part of being happy, Gretchen maintains, is knowing who you are. In fact, the first of her 12 commandments is this: "Be Gretchen." Choosing the right spiritual master, then, is one way to define yourself.

I realized after reading Gretchen's chapter on St. Therese that I decided to imitate my name saint after returning from India, where I basically flunked out of missionary school. I wanted so badly to be like Mother Teresa and feed the poorest of the poor. Instead, I was paralyzed by all the need there. I didn't know where to start. I was completely overwhelmed.

Interestingly enough, I met up with an Indian woman who had all of her physical needs met but was suffering emotionally. She found great comfort in our conversation, and it occurred to me that therein lay my ministry.

Gretchen writes: "We expect heroic virtue to look flashy -- moving to Uganda to work with AIDS victims, perhaps, or documenting the plight of homeless people in Detroit. Therese's example shows that ordinary life, too, is full of opportunities for worthy, if inconspicuous, virtue."

So there's a challenge for you. If you want to be happier, check out Gretchen's book and follow her instructions on imitating a spiritual master!
Jeremiah speaks of God’s anger, forgiveness

Jeremiah, who was born into a family of priests, heard the call from God when he was still a young man. The Lord said to him, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you."

Jeremiah, who was modest and insecure, said to the Lord, "Ah, Lord God! ... I know not how to speak; I am too young."

But the Lord told him, "'Say not, 'I am too young.' To whomever I send you, you shall go; whatever I command you, you shall speak. Have no fear before them, because I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord."

Then the Lord reached out his hand, touched Jeremiah's mouth and said, "See, I place my words in your mouth! This day I set you over nations and kingdoms, to root up and to tear down, to destroy and to demolish, to build and to plant."

From that day until the end of his life, Jeremiah spoke the words God gave him, and did whatever God told him to do.

To the people of Judah, he said, "The sin of Judah is written with an iron stylus, engraved with a diamond point upon the tablets of their hearts."

Speaking the words of God, Jeremiah warned the people of a punishment that was to come. "Your wealth and all your treasures I will give as spoil. In recompense for all your sins throughout your borders, you will relinquish your hold on your heritage which I have given you. I will enslave you to your enemies in a land that you know not: For a fire has been kindled by my wrath that will burn forever."

But even when Jeremiah had to speak the words of God's anger, there was also a message of God's love and forgiveness if the people obeyed and repented of their sins.

"Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose hope is the Lord," Jeremiah continued. "He is like a tree planted beside the waters that stretches out its roots to the stream: It fears not the heat when it comes, its leaves stay green; in the year of drought it shows no distress, but still bears fruit."
Family

Paddy, my cat, has died and I miss him terribly

By Father Peter J. Daly
Catholic News Service

Paddy, my cat, died.
I will miss him a lot.
He had been my mother's cat for 16 years. He came to live with me only four years ago when he got busted by Mom's condo association on the way to the veterinarian. No pets were allowed in her building.

At first I didn't really want him, but we grew to be pals. He was an orange tabby, the friendly kind. We called him Paddy because his red hair made him look like an Irishman. Paddy is short for Patrick.

Paddy was 20 when he died, a long life for a cat.
He was completely deaf. It was a little dangerous, because I could surprise him easily, which he didn't like. I worried about him not hearing cars.

In recent years arthritis had set in. He couldn't jump up or down the way he used to.

At night Paddy would sit by my bed and meow until I lifted him up to the bed. Then he would snuggle next to me to get warm.

In the morning he would climb down to the floor via a night stand and the radiator, and then go sit in the bathroom. There he waited for me to lift him up to the toilet so he could drink water. He would brace his paws on the toilet seat and leaning way down to drink. It was a comical pose.

Paddy missed me when I was gone. If I went away for a few days, my secretary, Mrs. Lewnes, would feed him faithfully. He ate better for her than for me.

But when I came home, Paddy would stand in the hallway and howl a loud meow of protest at my absence.

Sometimes Paddy liked to go out. He couldn't hunt birds or mice anymore, but he liked to sit on the porch for hours, just looking at birds and perhaps thinking of his glory days as a hunter.

Paddy seemed to care about my presence. Wherever I went in the house, he was constantly underfoot. He slept in his basket by my computer while I worked.

At night, if I watched television, Paddy would sit on my lap or chest. He had an internal clock. About 11 p.m., he would pat my face with his paw or rub his head on my hand to make me go to bed. He was always up at 6 a.m., meowing for food or water.

Paddy's death was a freakish accident. He got tangled up on the long telephone cord in the kitchen. Evidently, in his panic he spun round and round while the cord just got tighter and tighter around his midsection. I'm sure he screamed loud, but I wasn't there to hear him.

Poor little thing. I guess the cord cut off his blood flow. I found him on the floor, tangled in the wire.

I buried him in the front yard. It was a sad little funeral. Just me and my secretary.

Before I put Paddy in the ground I sat and held him for a minute. He was a furry, cuddly little thing. My soft cat.

I know pets don't have the same value or dignity as a human soul. But I will miss him more than I miss some people. His love was unconditional. His slow decline in old age reminded me of my own aging.

Celibate priests don't have the intimacy of a person. That makes a pet all the more significant.

Poor Paddy. He deserved a better death. His life gave me so much pleasure. I will miss him something awful.

Your Family

Teaching your children the 'facts of love'

By Bill and Monica Dodds
Catholic News Service

Explaining the facts of life to a son or daughter has always been challenging for a mother or father but, in recent times, it's become even tougher.

Bombarded with sexualized messages in advertising and music and on television and the Internet, a child doesn't have a problem realizing there's a physical aspect to all this.

What the child isn't going to absorb from those sources is that there are also emotional, psychological and spiritual aspects too.

In our uncertain world you can be certain of this: Sexual content in the secular media is going to increase because sex sells.

What was considered daring only five or 10 years ago has become, or quickly will be, old hat. Yes, part of that constant push is capitalism's drive to make more money, but certainly another part is plain old evil.

Sometimes the devil doesn't go about like a roaring lion looking to devour us (1 Pt. 5:8). He's more like a multimedia advertising campaign that, with enough repeated images, mentally desensitizes us. The immoral moves from wrong to neutral to good.

So, abandon all hope ye who enter parenthood? No. Thanks be to God.

Here are two hopeful points to consider:

- Even though big business spends billions annually to make sales, you -- yes, you! -- have a greater influence on your child. You and his or her peers do more to shape that little mind, heart and soul than any advertising campaign, no matter how seemingly limitless its budget or increasingly lower its sense of common decency.

Still, as you know, you need to pay attention to what your children watch, play and listen to. And be careful about what you watch, play and listen to when those little ones are around. (A movie, video game or song that may be perfectly appropriate for someone your age can be absolutely inappropriate for someone his or her age.)

- Teaching the facts of love is much more than controlling exposure to the negative. It's emphasizing, it's living the positive. It's showing your children that day in and day out being in love is much more than an emotion. (You also well know that sometimes someone you love deeply can drive you right up the wall. And you may be willing to admit that -- once or twice -- you've done the same to your sweetie.)

The facts of love are more than romance. That's not to say romance dies. It just ... gets tired after a day filled with kids, job and life's hassles. While there may be some gaps between those candlelit dinners, there can always be a kiss goodbye, a hug hello, holding hands, a kind word of encouragement, a term of endearment and a habit of using "please" and "thank you."

Yes, those little things matter to you as a couple but they also do as parents because those little eyes are watching you!

On the Web: "Making Love on a Budget"

That's a great headline, isn't it? You can find the article on http://ForYourMarriage.org, which is sponsored by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Bill and Monica Dodds are the founders of the Friends of St. John the Caregiver and editors of My Daily Visitor magazine. Their Web site is www.FSJIC.org.

ANSWERS

Isaiah
Jeremiah
Ezekiel
Daniel
Hosea
Amos
Jonah
Zechariah.
‘From Paris With Love’: Straightforward, yet violent buddy movie

By John Mulderig
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK -- Though at times it tries to pass itself off as a cautionary tale with serious moral overtones, the espionage thriller "From Paris With Love" (Lionsgate) for the most part registers instead as a straightforward buddy movie, and a gleefully violent one at that.

The initially ill-matched partners at the center of the story are Paris-based American diplomat and low-level CIA agent James Reese (Jonathan Rhys Meyers) and Charlie Wax (John Travolta), a trigger-happy visiting operative Reese has been instructed to escort and assist.

Despite his aspirations to be a real spy, Reese's previous intelligence work has been confined to activities like changing the license plates on agency autos to prevent their being traced. So at first he looks forward to this latest assignment as a chance to break into the big leagues.

But Wax proves far more of a loose cannon than the buttoned-up Reece had bargained for, and Wax's wild pursuit of drug dealers and terrorists sees the pair cutting a bloody swath through the French capital's criminal underworld.

Bewildered as the bullets -- and the bodies -- fly, Reece pauses briefly to wash telltale gore off his face and stare glumly into the mirror, wondering about it all. But the next moment he's off again, one step behind Wax on their renewed rampage.

Reese's prolonged absence from home leads to friction with his live-in Gallic girlfriend Caroline (Kasia Smutniak). Her somewhat surprising depth of devotion has been signaled earlier by a scene in which she proposed to Reese, presenting him with a wedding-band-like ring that, so she explained, had once belonged to her father.

Domestic tranquility suffers a further setback when Caroline, shopping for dress material in a depressed neighborhood she wouldn't normally frequent, spots Reese and Wax getting into an elevator with a streetwalker in tow.

Though Reese ultimately has nothing to do with this shad y lady the newly minted pals have picked up in their travels, Wax and she share an encounter in a bathroom raucous enough to be audible both to Reese and to the audience.

While, as directed by Pierre Morel, the dialogue in Adi Hasak's F-word-heavy script is occasionally amusing, this hardly compensates for the fact that the film -- based on a story by Luc Besson -- glamorizes Wax's utter disregard for the lives of those on either side of the law, unmistakably relishes the mayhem that results and presents that tawdry restroom coupling as just another of Wax's endearing madcap adventures.

The film contains constant, sometimes bloody action violence, off-screen sexual activity with a prostitute, cohabitation, drug use, a couple of profanities and pervasive rough and much crude language. The USCCB Office for Film & Broadcasting classification is O -- morally offensive. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R -- restricted. Under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian.

Mulderig is on the staff of the Office for Film & Broadcasting of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. More reviews are available online at www.usccb.org/movies.

Hahn makes sense of rich traditions of Catholic faith

Meditations bring to life often-forgotten Catholic traditions

Reviewed by Regina Lordan
Catholic News Service

Scott Hahn's book is both an enjoyable and educational read for Catholics interested in a brush up on Catholic traditions and their relevance in today's world. Hahn, author and professor of theology and Scripture at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio, hand-picked 40 Catholic traditions to explore and provided a simple, well-written meditation for each tradition.

The meditations, as Hahn explains in the introduction of the book, are not the complex, overly theological definitions one might expect from a professor of theology. Instead, they are his reflections "borrowed from this saint and that pope." These meditations make alive and make relevant the oftentimes forgotten traditions of Catholicism.

For example, Hahn discusses why Catholics dip their hands in holy water when entering and when leaving church. Many know the act is a blessing, but Hahn reminds readers that the act is a baptismal renewal and a refreshment from evil.

Amid his many meditations about the church calendar, Lent and Easter, Advent and Christmas to name a few, he writes about the biblical tradition of guardian angels. Sometimes in vogue -- and sometimes passe -- depending on pop culture's take at the moment about these mysterious entities, guardian angels guide, protect and assist Catholics throughout church history. Hahn writes that guardian angels are always among Catholics -- as each is assigned a guardian angel -- and they fill the pews at church to peak attendance.

"The angels are there (at Mass), as is evident even in the words of the Mass: 'And so with the choirs of angels we sing: 'Holy, holy, holy ...' The Mass itself cries out for us to be aware of our angels," he writes in the book.

Interestingly, Hahn doesn't discount simple pleas for guardian angels to help find a parking spot or to survive a traffic jam in one piece.

"The angels follow after God's pattern of governance: They sometimes give us what we want so that we'll learn to ask for what we need," he writes.

Hahn also discusses how fasting and mortification are not outdated forms of Catholic expression because "as long as we follow Christ we will have to deny our bodies the things they want." That covers fasting to premarital sex to drinking too much and smoking.

Simply put, Hahn makes sense out the mystical, symbolically rich traditions of the Catholic faith. His book is an easy but informative read, and perfect for the curious Catholic willing to learn.
Ben Stiller, left, and Amy Adams in a scene from "A Night at the Museum 2: Battle of the Smithsonian," out now on DVD.

Video Ratings

By Catholic News Service

NEW YORK (CNS) -- Here is a list of Home video releases of theatrical movies that the Office for Film & Broadcasting of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has rated on the basis of moral suitability. These classifications refer only to the theatrical version of the films below, and do not take into account home video releases' extra content.

The first symbol after each title is the USCCB Office for Film & Broadcasting classification. The second symbol is the rating of the Motion Picture Association of America.

Office for Film & Broadcasting classifications: A-I -- general patronage; A-II -- adults and adolescents; A-III -- adults; L -- limited adult audience, films whose problematic content many adults would find troubling; O -- morally offensive.

MPAA ratings: G -- general audiences. All ages admitted; PG -- parental guidance suggested. Some material may not be suitable for children; PG-13 -- parents strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13; R -- restricted. Under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian; NC-17 -- no one 17 and under admitted.

A
All About Steve, A-III (PG-13)

B
Battle for Terra, A-II (PG)
Bruno, O (R)

C
A Christmas Tale (Un Conte de Noel), L (no rating)

D
Delgo, A-I (PG)
District 9, L (R)
Drag Me to Hell, A-III (PG-13)

E
Fame, A-II (PG)
Fighting, L (PG-13)
Four Christmases, A-III (PG-13)

G
G-Force, A-I (PG)

H
Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince, A-II (PG)
How About You, A-III (no rating)

I
I Love You, Beth Cooper, O (PG-13)
Inglourious Basterds, L (R)

J
Julie & Julia, A-III (PG-13)

K

L
The Last House on the Left, O (R)
Love Happens, A-III (PG-13)

M
Michael Jackson's This Is It, A-II (PG)
My Sister's Keeper, L (PG-13)

N
Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian, A-I (PG)
No Impact Man, A-III (no rating)

O
Orphan, L (R)

P
Pandorum, A-III (R)
Post Grad, A-III (PG-13)
Public Enemies, A-III (R)

Q

R
17 Again, A-III (PG-13)
Shorts, A-II (PG)
Surrogates, A-III (PG-13)

S
The Taking of Pelham 1 2 3, L (R)
Terminator Salvation, L (PG-13)
Tyler Perry's I Can Do Bad All By Myself, A-II (PG-13)

T

U
The Ugly Truth, O (R)
The Unborn, A-III (PG-13)
Up, A-I (PG)

V
Where God Left His Shoes, A-III (no rating)
Whip It, L (PG-13)
Whiteout, L (R)

W

X

Y

Z
Zombieland, L (R)

The Adult Catechism

Dealing with the pain of an abortion

By Most Rev Donald Wuerl
Archbishop of Washington

Abortion has been legally protected in the United States since 1973. In the intervening time, tens of millions of abortions have been performed on an estimated 20 million women, and millions of humans live have ended before they saw the light of day. For too many of the women involved, they are told, "You are free, move on, nothing of consequence happened." Yet, they know this is not true.

Tragically, large numbers of women know all too well the anguish and grief that can follow an abortion decision. These women recognize that what they did was wrong, but mistakenly believe that they have committed an unforgivable sin and have become forever separated from their relationship with God. Thinking that they are unique in experiencing this type of suffering, they all too often silently endure the emotional and physical manifestations of this trauma alone.

As followers of Christ, our response to abortion must be twofold. We must never forget the child whose life is lost to abortion. Each child is valuable and precious in God's eyes and in our hearts. At the same time, we must recognize and address the real need of women to find healing after an abortion experience. The Catholic Church, which never minimizes the grave evil that is abortion, has been at the forefront in offering hope for healing and reconciliation from the pain of abortion. In this archdiocese, we collectively can say, "To all who have had an abortion or who have facilitated one, the Church continues to hold out the loving mercy and forgiveness of Christ."

Pope John Paul II expressed well the desire of the Church to be a vehicle for concern and reconciliation to anyone hurting from an abortion decision. In his encyclical, The Gospel of Life, he reminds women who have had an abortion of God's love and forgiveness. "If you have not already done so, give yourself over with humility and trust to repentance. The Father of Mercies is ready to give you his forgiveness and his peace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation" (Evangelium Vitae, 99).

Forgiveness and healing are found through this beautiful sacrament, which restores and renews our baptismal holiness as we ask for forgiveness for our sins. Once we receive sacramental absolution we are restored again to holiness Ð to an innocence before God. So powerful is the grace of this sacrament that the Rite of Penance reminds us that "this is not a mere ritual repetition or psychological exercise, but a serious striving to perfect the grace of Baptism so that, as we bear in our body the death of Jesus Christ, his life may be seen in us ever more clearly" (Introduction 7).

The Sacrament of Penance is one essential element in the post-abortion healing process. In this sacrament, the penitent is guided by the grace of God in a conversion that leads us back to the Father, overcoming the tragic alienation of sin and restoring harmony.

Another aspect of the post-abortion healing process is Project Rachel. This outreach is a source of healing for those hurting from an abortion experience. All who contact Project Rachel will find a caring and non-judgmental response from someone who understands the issues that lead to the doors of an abortion clinic. This support is available in English and Spanish through a confidential phone helpline (301-853-4565), confidential e-mail ProjectRachel@adw.org (English) or (Please See WUERL/21)
CENSUS: Findings a ‘useful tool for learning about God’s people’

(From 5)

census can serve much more than governmen
tal purposes.

"The U.S. census is a useful tool for learn
ing about God's people, who and where they are, and many other facts that shed light on their lives, possibilities and struggles," the archbishop said in a state
tement.

"A church that seeks to evangelize is characterized by outreach," he added. "The U.S. census gives us important information to do that."

Required once every 10 years by the

U.S. Constitution, the census aims to

count every person residing in the United

States on April 1, 2010. This includes all

50 states, the District of Columbia, Ameri

can Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Nor
	hern Mariana Islands, Guam, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Hundreds of faith-based organizations, community and nonprofit groups, schools, corporations and government agencies have signed up as partners in the census effort, under the theme "It's in our hands."

But some groups had feared that a

move by two Republican senators could
delay the entire census process.

Sens. David Vitter, R-La., and Bob

Bennett, R-Utah, proposed an amendment to the census funding bill that would have blocked all funds unless the census included a question about citizenship and immigration status. With census forms already in the printing process, there was little chance of meeting the April 1 Census Day target if new forms had to be printed.

The proposed amendment has drawn

strong criticism from Hispanic groups.

The National Association of Latino

Elected and Appointed Officials called it

"an unconstitutional and costly effort to suppress Latino participation in the decennial census."

The U.S. Constitution requires that topics to be included in the census be submit
ted to Congress three years before the
census takes place, the association noted.

"By making intrusive inquiries into immigration status, the Vitter-Bennett amendment would raise concerns among all residents -- both native-born and immigrant -- about the confidentiality and privacy of information provided to the Census Bureau," the association added in a statement.

VASQUEZ: Stops included Odessa, San Angelo, Fort Stockton

(From 3)

Rome, where he earned a licentiate in sacred

teology. He was ordained a priest for the

Diocese of San Angelo in 1984.

After his ordination, Bishop Vasquez

served from 1985-87 as associate pastor at

St. Joseph Parish in Odessa and from 1987-97 as pastor at St. Joseph Parish in

Fort Stockton. In 1997, he was named pastor of St. Joseph Parish, San Angelo,

where he served until his appointment as a Galveston-Houston auxiliary.

In 2001, he was named auxiliary bishop

of Galveston-Houston and ordained early the following year. He was the first

bishop of Galveston-Houston and ordained

priest of the Diocese of San Angelo to be

ordained the following year. He was the first

bishop of Galveston-Houston and prepared

to welcome you as the fifth bishop of

Austin Diocese," he told Bishop Vasquez.

Then-Mgr. Mulvey was appointed to

head the Diocese of Corpus Christi,

Texas, Jan. 20. He has administrator in

Austin since then-Bishop Aymond was

appointed New Orleans' archbishop.

Bishop Vasquez thanked Bishop-designate Mulvey, as well as Archbishop Aymond and retired Austin Bishop John E. McCarthy for their faithful service to the Catholic Church of central Texas.

"Serving in this diocese has a special

importance as Austin is the capital of the

Lone Star State and the home of the

Texas Catholic Conference. I ask for your prayers and your patience as I assume the duties and responsibilities given to me as the shepherd of this local church," Bishop Vasquez said.

He said he plans to do "a lot of listen

ing" in the months to come so that he
can learn as much as possible about the

Austin Diocese.

IMMORAL: Contraceptives can lead to more sex at earlier age

(From 3)

riage, and fosters a culture that says sex, marriage and child-bearing have no necessary relationship to each other. This culture distorts the true meaning of sex as intended by God for marriage, and promotes selfishness and the seeking of sexual pleasure without the responsibility that goes with it.

Susan Wills, the assistant director for education and outreach of the U.S. Bishops’ Pro-Life Activities, points out that almost 90% of “sexually active

American women at risk of becoming pregnant are using contraception.” The 2006 report from the Guttmacher Institute, which supports abortion and con

traception, stated that there is no correlation between

better access to contraception and lower abortion rates.

The pamphlet reported the Guttmacher's finding that

17.4% of people that use condoms were pregnant within a year. It added that for teenagers, this number jumps to

23.2%. Among teens that cohabit and are more sexually

active, 71.7% got pregnant within the year. Wills

reported that the condom failure rate and protection against sexually transmitted diseases are even worse. She stated that in the U.S. alone there are 19 million new cases of these diseases each year.

The pamphlet “Contraception: The Fine Print”,

explains that those who mistakenly believe that con

traceptive protects them from pregnancy and diseases are more likely to become sexually active at an earlier age and to engage in riskier activity, such as having more

sexual partners. Rather than protecting girls and young women, contraception risks their physical, emotional and spiritual well-being.

According to the clear teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, contraceptives are immoral as they go against nature, the constant teaching of the church based on scripture, and pose many social and health risks for women. So that our young women can grow up healthy and free of preventable diseases that can last a lifetime, we must reject contraceptive-based approach to reducing unintended pregnancies and abortion and suggest sound abstinance education. Number 2370 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us that contraception is intrinsically evil.
NUN: Sister marvels at continued faith of Haitians

(From 8)

who could be most helpful in organizing the people.
We've got to make the solidarity more concrete. We need fewer studies and plans
while the people suffer and die," she said, beginning to cry.
"I'm sorry," she said after a moment.
"But this is urgent."

Sister Sylvie's complex, now a collection
of jumbled buildings around a patio
filled with makeshift shelters, sits at the
confluence of the Haitian capital's three
most notorious neighborhoods: La
Saline, Cite Soleil, and Belair. Before
the quake, the seven sisters here ran a
primary school and a jobs training pro-
gram for more than 1,000 youths. Their
special passion, however, was a residen-
tial school with 96 young women stu-
dents. Sister Sylvie, who is 62, was in
that building, walking down a hallway,
when the quake struck.

"The building started shaking and I
found a column and hugged it. The bottom
of the column came loose from the floor
and it started dancing around, but I asked
God for mercy and held on. I heard the
cries of the students who were studying.

"The building started to fall on one
sister, and the girls screamed louder, but
the wall stopped before it fell over com-
pletely on the sister, and the girls
dragged her outside, where I found them

POPE: Benedict asks Mary to guide during ‘moment of darkness’

(From 9)

bring emergency relief to those in need
and help "patiently rebuild devastated areas," he wrote.

The telegram also included the pope's
condolences and "deep sadness" for the death of
Archbishop Joseph Serge Miot of Port-au-Prince, who died when the
impact of the quake hurled him from a
balcony.

The pope prayed for all those who lost
their lives, including men and women
religious, priests and seminarians.

He asked that in this "moment of dark-
ness" Mary would guide everyone to
overcome any sense of "isolation and 'ev-
ery man for himself' with solidarity."

In a telegram to Haitian President
Rene Preval, Pope Benedict assured all
those struck by "this frightening catastro-
phe" of his prayers.

He expressed his hopes that the gen-
erosity being shown toward Haiti would
continue and would reach and offer relief
to those in need.

May those affected by the quake "find
comfort in knowing the entire interna-
tional community is concretely taking
care of them," he wrote.

"I deeply appreciate the commitment
by all those, from Haiti and abroad, who
are doing everything possible to look for
and help survivors, sometimes putting
their own lives at risk," the pope wrote.

He assured Preval that the Catholic
Church, through its various organiza-
tions and institutions, "will remain at the side
of the people struck by this adversity"
and will help them rediscover the possi-
ability of a better future.

WUERL: Penance available to all who seek healing and wholeness

(From 19)

ProyectoRaquel@adw.org (Spanish) and a

All of us, not just priests and profes-
sional counselors, are called to respond
with compassion and prayer for all
women and men who are hurting from
abortion, and to bring to light the very
real pain of post-abortion trauma. Often
we may not know the secret that a neigh-
bor, a family member or a fellow parish-
ioner holds; namely, that he or she partic-
ipated in the evil of abortion. Only by
our willingness to understand how some-
one may end up at that point and to love
and want to help the person and by the
Spirit's gentle urging may someone

come forth to share this sin and begin
the road to reconciliation and healing.
For you who may have been involved in
an abortion and who are suffering in
silence, please know that you are not
alone and that compassionate help is
available for you.

The Sacrament of Penance and the
efforts of Project Rachel are available to
all who seek healing and wholeness. The
Church stands ready to be an instrument
of Jesus' compassion. We especially
invite Mary, the Mother of God and our
Mother, to assist us in bearing one
other's burdens. May these words and
our prayers and actions be steps on the
road to reconciliation.
GUIDELINES: Help yourself make Lent more do-able this year

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 Church asks that we not eat meat on Fridays during Lent.

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 are clearly and positively encouraged to receive the Sacrament of Penance during Lent. There are weekly times scheduled for Confessions in each parish as well as special Lenten communal Penitential services throughout the diocese. 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. Of course, Catholics are encouraged to receive communion at every Mass, provided they are properly disposed.

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, Pesebre a maria, etc.)

HOLY SATURDAY
- The entire celebration of the Easter Vigil takes place at night. It should not begin before nighttime; 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.
LIMEX: Graduate level courses offered in religious ed, pastoral studies, more

(From 1)

and J’lynn Wheeler from First Presbyterian Church in Midland earned a Master of Pastoral Studies. Carol Ann Hunt served as facilitator.

The evening featured a gathering of family, friends and diocesan personnel. Each graduate was invited to bring a symbol representing what she had learned or how she had grown as a result of being part of LIMEX. As each graduate shared their experience it was evident how much they had grown and that God’s presence in their lives was recognized.

This was followed with the celebration of the Eucharist with Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI, presiding. Msgr. Larry Droll concelebrated. During the homily, Bishop Pfeifer reminded all present of the call to serve. Each graduate received a towel from Loyola University with the inscription "Do What I Have Done" as a reminder of the call to service and selflessness along with a Holy Spirit medal from Bishop Pfeifer.

Following Eucharist, everyone gathered for a delicious and festive meal. The celebration was truly a witness of the LIMEX community and the support given by Bishop Pfeifer, diocesan personnel, pastors, family and friends. The energy, enthusiasm and spirit of unity that resonated throughout the room truly reflected that we are the Body of Christ.

They are now making plans to participate in the Loyola University of New Orleans graduation in May, 2010. What a wonderful opportunity and gift for the people of God in our diocese.

"The Lord has done great things for us; we are glad indeed." Psalm 126:3

LIMEX is a professionally oriented graduate program sponsored by Loyola University of New Orleans. This program offers a Catholic university graduate program in Religious Education and Pastoral Studies with focus areas in Pastoral Life and Administration, Christian Spirituality for Ministers, Youth Ministry, Small Christian Community Formation, Religion and Ecology, Marketplace Ministry, Hispanic ministry and Religious Education.

This program was initiated in the Catholic Diocese of San Angelo in 1995. Msgr. Larry Droll and S. Joan Markus, SSND (former Director of the Office of Education and Formation) were instrumental in initiating this program in the diocese in response to the need for professionally qualified persons to assist with various ministries in parishes throughout the diocese. Since its beginning, thirty-one graduates from the diocese have completed their studies through LIMEX.

The diocese is in the process of beginning a new LIMEX learning group in the Midland/Odessa and San Angelo area. For more information contact S. Hilda Marotta at 325-651-7500.

More and more LIMEX alumni are now serving in diocesan positions, as national speakers, permanent deacons and parish ministers.

Submitted by S. Hilda Marotta, Office of Education and Formation.

PADRE

(From 10)

El bioético Paul Ramsey lo plantea muy bien al decir que, cuando de ética se trata, cualquier persona de conciencia recta llega inevitablemente a la conclusión de que “Hay cosas que quizá nunca debiésemos hacer. Las cosas buenas que el hombre hace sólo logran su plenitud por las cosas que se niega a hacer”.

Como científicos, negamos a destruir embriones humanos no implica necesariamente estar en contra de la ciencia en sí misma, sino solamente oponernos a la ciencia contra a la ética, aquella ciencia que, como las inversiones financieras y la medicina carentes de ética, daña inevitablemente a la sociedad. La buena ciencia es necesariamente una ciencia ética; jamás debe reducirse a una mera ciencia “eficiente”, dedicada a “resolver problemas” a costa de los demás. Quienes nos esforzamos por salvaguardar la vida humana debemos examinar cuidadosamente nuestras premisas cuando aboguemos por una ciencia ética. Así evitaríamos caer en presuposiciones débiles o cuestionables que podrían quitarle solididad a nuestros argumentos.

El Padre Tadeusz Pacholczyk hizo su doctorado en neurociencias en la Universidad de Yale y su trabajo post-doctoral en la Universidad de Harvard. Es Sacerdote para la Diócesis de Fall River, Massachusetts, y se desempeña como Director de Educación en el Centro Nacional Católico de Bioética en Philadelphia. The National Catholic Bioethics Center. www.ncbcenter.org Traducción: María Elena Rodríguez.

BYRON: ‘Environmental degradation challenges us to examine our lifestyle’

(From 11)

we must deal with all these issues. Pope Benedict seems to think that environmental protection would be a good place to start.

Take an intellectual or practical walk down that path and you will meet all the other issues along the way.

"It is becoming more and more evident," said Pope Benedict in his message, "that the issue of environmental degradation challenges us to examine our lifestyle and the prevailing models of consumption and production. ... We can no longer do without a real change of outlook that will result in new lifestyles."
Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI  
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LETTER: Christ’s incarnation in womb an event to celebrate  
(From 4)

Mass. As you know, the United States Catholic Bishops have approved recently a blessing for the unborn that can be used on this day.

In advance of this day, I ask you to bring this Mass to the attention of our people so that hopefully many expectant mothers with their spouses and family members can be present.

It is important to emphasize that a day honoring Christ’s Incarnation in the womb of the Virgin Mary is something positive for all Christians to celebrate, as we all began as unborn children. For all of us, it is a time to contemplate the virginal conception and prenatal life of Christ and to express gratitude for the mysterious and wondrous gift of the Incarnation, as we also remember the dignity of all unborn life.

Another special way of remembering the Day of the Unborn is to encourage our married couples who can’t have children to think about the option of adoption, and it is a day to promote a spiritual adoption program. Groups, families and individuals can begin a 9-month period of prayer for an endangered unborn child from the March 25th Feast Day until Christmas, December 25th, at which times there might be a closing “baby shower” offering refreshments and collecting donations for a local pro-life pregnancy center. The spiritual adoption program may include general intentions for the child’s safety and a specific monthly intention.

I am enclosing here a model spiritual adoption pledge that you might want to copy and use for our people. I am also featuring here a Prayer to Christ the Unborn.

I am sending this letter to you far in advance of the Day of the Unborn, the feast of the Annunciation of Mary on March 25th so that plans can be made especially for the spiritual adoption program. Please bring all of this to the attention of our people. God’s peace.

Your servant in Christ and Mary,  
Most Rev. Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI  
Bishop of San Angelo

TORRE: Photographer tries to present unique images for viewers  
(From 13)

sociable. I miss borrowing a hammer or a cooker because we are going to have a big feast. Here, we have everything. Everyone is pretty much an island. Sometimes the most I can get out of my neighbor here is a wave. It’s both good and sad at the same time.”

The St. Elizabeth Ann Seton parishioner is married to Annabelle, a nurse at Medical Center Hospital. Their oldest child attends the Art Institute of Houston and a younger child is set to graduate from UT Permian Basin in the spring.

Torre’s thoughts on photography are much like the opinions of many on how news stories are often biased simply because the reporter, invariably human, always has a personal bias as he or she sits down to write.

“Photography is forcing your point of view to the beholder,” Torre said. “I try to show the subject from a different perspective, where people will say, ‘Yeah, I’ve never seen it like that.’ It’s all about the point of view that is forced on the viewer.

“I take photos of things that are meaningful to me. Things about which I am passionate. They may be mundane things to one person but they are special to me. It’s all in the eye of the beholder.”

Torre has been commissioned by the Diocese of San Angelo to be the photographer for the church’s 50th Anniversary history book, which will be published in conjunction with the diocese’s 50th jubilee in October 2011.

Editor’s Note: Pages 12-13 feature a sampling of images taken by Torre around the Diocese of San Angelo.