Guidelines for Lent

Bishop Pfeifer's annual Guidelines for Lent provide for helpful ways to enrich your Lenten season / Pg. 6

Clergy Changes

Announced priest changes in the Diocese of San Angelo
- Fr. Frank Chavez pastor at San Miguel Parish-Midland, on sabbatical effective Jan. 22, 2012.

More changes: Briefs / 2

High papal honors to be bestowed on 36

Long-serving priests, religious, laity to be honored in Feb. 20 Mass

SAN ANGELO — Pope Benedict XVI, at the recommendation of the Most Rev. Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI, Bishop of the Diocese of San Angelo, has bestowed special Papal Honors on priests, nuns, deacons and lay people serving in the Diocese and beyond. Bishop Pfeifer received official word from Most Rev. Carlo Maria Vigano, Papal Ambassador to the United States, about the unique awards on January 10.

The Papal medals and honors will be bestowed on the priests, deacons, women religious and lay people in ceremonies to be held at Sacred Heart Cathedral, 19 S. Oakes, San Angelo, at 7 p.m., Monday, February 20, during the celebration of Mass. The public is invited to attend the event, to be presided over by Bishop Pfeifer.

Pope Benedict XVI has bestowed the highest Pontifical Medal “Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice”

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

**This Lent, why not try a different approach to fasting?**

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

(received from a friend)

Fasts have a tendency to be oriented toward things like giving up food or television. But there are many other creative ways we can welcome Jesus’ healing touch. Here are suggestions you may want to consider.

1. Fast from anger and hatred. Give your family 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.
6. Fast from spending too much money. Try to reduce your spending by ten percent and give those savings to the poor.

My sisters and brothers in Christ, may this Lenten season be a time to deepen our appreciation for all the suffering that Christ endured for all of us. This is a time to focus on our spiritual life, our relationship with Christ, and to seek His mercy in the Sacrament of Reconciliation—confession. May Lent be a time to live the theme of the annual message of our Holy Father, which is for this year, “Let us be concerned for each other, to stir a response in love and good works.” (Heb. 10:24)

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**DIOCESAN BRIEFS**

**Clergy Changes**

(Continued from Pg. 1)

- **Fr. Yesu Mulakaletti** appointed as sacramental minister of Eden/Eola/Millersville effective January 23. Maintains residence at St. Ann-Midland as Parochial Vicar.
- **Fr. Ricardo Lopez**, OMI appointed Parochial Vicar at St. Ann-Midland effective January 23. His mailing address is P.O. Box 50785., Midland, TX 79710

**Scholar deadline approaching**

SAN ANTONIO — Applications for the 2012 All American Scholar Program, sponsored by Catholic Life Insurance, must be received no later than March 1, 2012. Send your completed application package to: Catholic Life Insurance Communications Department PO Box 659527 San Antonio, TX 78265

The All American Scholar Program awards 35 non-renewable college scholarships in the amount of $1,000 each to graduating high school seniors. Applicants must be Catholic Life Insurance members who will be enrolled in a private or public college, university or trade school for the fall semester. The scholarships are granted to those students whose academic achievements, leadership skills, and community service experiences set them apart from the others.

Application forms may be downloaded from the company website at www.clu.com. For more information, please contact Briana Frantz in the Communications Department at (800) 292-2548 or (210) 828-9921 ext. 141.

**Australian evangelist returns**

SAN ANGELO — Bishop Michael Pfeifer has invited Australian evangelist and healer, Alan Ames to return to West Texas in March. Alan’s schedule is as follows:

Wed., March 7 — San Angelo, St. Mary Church, Mass: 6 p.m.
Thurs., March 8 — Rowena, St. Joseph, Mass: 7 p.m.
Bishop Pfeifer will preside over the March 7 Mass at St. Mary's in San Angelo. Ames’ story and God's message that he delivers are so powerful you won't want to miss his talk to understand how we must live our lives in order to gain eternal salvation. Alan lives a deeply mystical prayer life with a close relationship with The Lord and has been graced with the gift of Healing. There have been many documented healings both physical and spiritual. Some healings occur immediately; others occur over time. Documented healings may be found on Alan’s website: www.alanames.org.

Alan travels throughout the world to evangelize and heal those in need. Alan’s service consists of a Mass, then Alan will speak for about 40 minutes, and then Alan will individually pray over people who come to the altar.

Please invite your family, friends and neighbors to come and listen to his experiences.

Unable to attend? Anyone unable to attend may have another stand in and receive a blessing in their behalf.

**A Letter from Bishop Pfeifer**

My dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

The Catholic Church has a rich history in the United States. Today, we continue to build the Church by the witness of our lives as baptized Catholics.

Soon you will be asked by your parish to participate in the Annual Collection for the Black and Indian Missions. Your contributions support missionaries here in the United States who are evangelizing in the Black and Indigenous Catholic communities. Your monetary sacrifices assist with mission schools, religious education programs, the purchase of Catechetical materials, Bibles and ministry training, to name a few ways you help to continue the mission of Jesus Christ.

Our Theme for the 2012 Collection echoes the recent announcement of Pope Benedict XVI being a special "Year of Faith." The theme is: 'Faith: Anchored in Jesus, Alive in Mission.” Please give generously to this appeal.

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<tr>
<th><strong>Papal Honors-List</strong></th>
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<td>- Oblate Father Eddie de Leon, OMI, Pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, Midland.</td>
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<td>- Sister Mary Grace Eri, O.Carm., Superior of the Carmelite Sisters in Christoval.</td>
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<td>- Sister Regina Javier, OND, Oblates of Notre Dame Sister serving churches of South Odessa.</td>
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<td>- Sister Esperanza Razauro Villareal, ASC, of the churches, South Odessa.</td>
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<td>- Deacon Roy Ibarra and Minnie Ibarra, of St. Mary's Church, San Angelo.</td>
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<td>- Deacon Jesse Guajardo, of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, Midland.</td>
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The following are the lay people receiving the highest Papal honor are:

- Dr. Jim and Mrs. Kathy Webster of Holy Family Parish, Abilene. |
- Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Castillo, of St. Margaret's Parish, San Angelo. |
- Mr. and Mrs. Ken Burgess of Sacred Heart Cathedral, San Angelo. |
- Margaret Matthiasen of Sacred Heart Cathedral, San Angelo. |
- Louis Fohn, Diocesan Attorney and member of St. Ambrose Church, Wall.
- Deborah Michaelwicz, a member of St. Therese Parish, Carlsbad, and a Peace Ambassador. |
- Joy Hoelscher, of Holy Angels Church, San Angelo. |

Those receiving the special Papal award of Knights and Dames of the Order of St. Gregory the Great:

- Eddie and Sylvia Noriega of Sacred Heart Cathedral, San Angelo. |
- Howard and Penny Pope of Holy Family Church, Abilene. |
- Doris Helen Block of Sacred Heart Cathedral, San Angelo. |
- Carol Ann Hunt of St. Ann Church, Midland. |
- Nelly Diaz of St. Vincent Pallotti Church, Abilene. |
- Anita Diaz of Holy Redeemer Church, Odessa. |
- Della Samaniego of St. Ann Church, Sonora. |
- Dolores Gully of St. Ambrose Church, Wall. |

**Others receiving the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifici award are:**

- Oblate Father Louise Loufou, OMI, present Superior General of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.
- Tom and Gayle Benson of New Orleans, La., and San Antonio. |
Defending the faith: Step 1, take deep breath

By Jimmy Patterson

The weekly Catholic newspaper Our Sunday Visitor recently ran a piece entitled, "How to Defend the Faith Without Raising Your Voice." It contained four pages of what to do and how to present answers asked by people who may lack sufficient knowledge about Catholicism, a lack of knowledge, incidentally, that seldom stops people from voicing their disapproval of our beliefs. People not Catholic frequently self-cast themselves into the role of sudden expert.

The OSV article contained several really good points, such as:
- look for the positive intention behind the criticism;
- Shed light, not heat.
- People won’t remember what you said as much as how you made them feel.
- Be positive.
- Show, don’t tell.
- Be compassionate.
- Witnessing not winning.
- It’s not about you.

The article goes on to explore each of these tips and more in greater detail.

The article came in handy recently when I received an email from a man in Odessa, who was less than pleased about several things Catholic.

Here, in part, is what the man wrote:

After seeing that Prolife was sponsoring the annual rally (the bishop’s annual Rosary on the Roe vs. Wade anniversary) on Friday two things came to mind that I was not happy with.

Number one is that why not have the rally on Saturday instead giving more supporters the opportunity to attend. Number two is that a rosary is going to be said at the rally. Being a non-catholic, Baptist, why would I want to sit, or stand, through this long ordeal which idolizes Mary, not Jesus.

I guess my main question here is when did prolife become a catholic organization?

The man’s tone was civil compared to many rants out there who have issues with how we practice our Christian beliefs. In fact, I was just happy the man didn’t bring up that tired old ‘Catholics aren’t Christian” argument.

Still, I was looking forward to (Please See PATTERSON/20)

Del Escritorio del Obispo

Reflexiones de Papa para la Cuaresma

por Obispo Michael D. Pfeifer

Cada año el papa Benedicto XVI nos presenta una carta cuaresmal para ayudarnos y inspirarnos a vivir bien los cuarenta días en preparación para la Pascua, la Resurrección de nuestro Señor Jesucristo. Les presente aquí algunos de las reflexiones de su Santidad para esta cuaresma. “La Cuaresma nos ofrece una vez más la oportunidad de reflexionar sobre el corazón de la vida cristiana: la caridad. En efecto, este es un tiempo propicio para que, con la ayuda de la Palabra de Dios y de los Sacramentos, renovemos nuestro camino de fe, tanto personal como comunitario. Se trata de un itinerario marcado por la oración y el compartir, por el silencio y el ayuno, en espera de vivir la alegría pascual.”

“También hoy resuena con fuerza la voz del Señor que nos llama a cada uno de nosotros a hacernos cargo del otro. Hoy Dios nos sigue pidiendo que seamos “guardianes” de nuestros hermanos (cf.Gn 4,9), que entablamos relaciones caracterizadas por el cuidado recíproco, por la atención al bien del otro y a todo su bien. El gran mandamiento del amor al prójimo exige y urge a tomar conciencia de que tenemos una responsabilidad respecto a quien, como yo, es criatura e hijo de Dios: el hecho de ser hermanos en humanidad y, en muchos casos, también en la fe, debe llevarnos a ver en el otro a un verdadero alter ego, a quien el Señor ama infinitamente.”

“Nunca debemos ser incapaces de «tener misericordia» para con quien sufre: nuestras cosas y nuestros problemas nunca deben absorber nuestro corazón hasta el punto de hacernos sordos al grito del pobre. En cambio, precisamente la humildad de corazón y la experiencia personal del sufrimiento pueden ser la fuente de un despertar interior a la compasión y a la empatía: «El justo reconoce los derechos del pobre, el malvado es incapaz de conocerlos» (Pr 29,7).”

“Los discípulos del Señor, unidos a Cristo mediante la Eucaristía, viven en una comunidad que los vincula los unos a los otros como miembros de un solo cuerpo. Esto significa que el otro me pertenece, su vida, su salvación, tienen que ver con mi vida y mi salvación. Aquí tocamos un elemento muy profundo de la comunión: nuestra existencia está relacionada con la de los demás, tanto en el bien como en el mal; tanto el pecado como las obras de caridad tienen también una dimensión social.”

“Ante un mundo que exige de los cristianos un testimonio renovado de amor y fidelidad al Señor, todos han de sentir la urgencia de ponerse a competir en la caridad, en el servicio y en las buenas obras (cf. Hb 6,10). Esta llamada es especialmente intensa en el tiempo santo de preparación para la Pascua. Con mis mejores deseos de una santa y fecunda Cuaresma, os encomiendo a la intercesión de la Santísima Virgen María y de corazón impartido a todas la Bendición Apostólica.”
39 Years

Clockwise, top left, Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer, second from right, from behind the wrought-iron fence that encloses the Planned Parenthood Clinic in Midland, leads the rosary; a pro-life supporter lifts a sign showing women are not the only ones to suffer from the effects of abortion; Warren Ivey, of the Knights of Columbus, holds up a large painting of Our Lady Of Guadalupe; Midland police patrol near the site of the rosary; Msgr. Bridges and a soloist sing an opening hymn, and Midland parishioner Lalo Camarillo prays during the rosary. Photos by Jimmy Patterson / The Angelus
ABORTION

(From 1)

Increasingly strong in his opposition in recent years on the subject, Bishop Pfeifer used the occasion of the rosary in the three deanery headquarter cities of Midland-Odessa, Abilene and San Angelo, to appeal to Catholics and others for even more action to stop the spread of abortion that has accounted for the taking of more than 56 million lives since it was legalized by the Supreme Court's infamous decision that has changed and divided America.

"I put out many articles and letters to pro-life people in the diocese pleading for you to speak out, to send letters to legislators," Bishop Pfeifer said. "The campaign didn't get much support. What happened? Some of you are very upset with me. I know, but I insist that we must take a very proactive stance for the unborn.

"When we pray at Mass for something, after we pray to God, who tells us that anything we ask will be granted in the name of Jesus, if we walk out and do nothing about it, God says, 'You fools.' You've heard me talk before about God's graces, but we have failed to use God's graces the way we should. I'm not here today to scold but to face facts and to become more involved in the political and legal process. We have to work against evil abortion at every level."

Pfeifer notes that more than 1,000 lives are destroyed at the Midland Planned Parenthood clinic alone every year and called for prayers that government leaders promote laws that promote life. The bishop also asked the assembled to pray for the people who work at the clinic, saying Jesus calls us to love them just as we love others affected by abortion.

Bishop Pfeifer presides over a number of Pro-Life events throughout the diocese. His schedule during the weekend of the Roe v. Wade anniversary took him from Midland to Abilene and San Angelo to celebrate Masses and pray rosaries in remembrance of the unborn.

Texas bishops applaud 5th circuit’s decision to uphold sonogram law

AUSTIN (CNS) -- Texas Catholic bishops applauded the Jan. 11 decision of the U.S. 5th Circuit Court of Appeals allowing the state to enforce a sonogram law requiring abortion providers to offer women the opportunity to view the ultrasound images of their unborn children.

"Providing mothers access to sonograms informs them about the risks and complications associated with abortion," said Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston. "These consultations save lives by educating mothers who may not realize that the child in their womb is exactly that -- a unique, irreplaceable human life."

His remarks came in a statement released the same day in Austin by the Texas Catholic Conference, the public policy arm of the state's bishops.

"It's going to affect this clinic, and women are going to see what the latest medical health research will show the littlest ones in their womb that they come here to destroy through abortion. Research shows this technology has made a difference in saving babies."

Corrections:

CORRECTION: In the January 2012 West Texas Angelus, it was incorrectly stated that the Midland-Odessa Deanery Catholics for Life Committee was the owner of the Choose Life, Midland house at 2500 W. Ohio. The house was actually purchased by the Choose Life, Midland, Inc., a Midland 501 (c)(3) not affiliated with the Diocese of San Angelo. The West Texas Angelus regrets the error.
Guidelines for the Lenten Season

Properly preparing for greatest feast of Christianity essential to our faith

By Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI

With Ash Wednesday, February 22, 2012, we begin the Lenten season, which prepares us to celebrate the greatest feast of Christianity, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ on Easter Sunday, April 8, 2012.

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. 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 on Fridays during Lent.

Under the present law, it is not permissible to eat meat on Fridays during Lent. Those whose work or health impairment excuse from fasting and abstinence. The Church asks that we not eat meat on Fridays during Lent.

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 Penance 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.

On February 17, 1966, Pope Paul VI completely revised the Penitential Discipline of the Church with apostolic constitution Paenitemini, explaining Catholic tradition regarding the practice of penance. At the heart of the apostolic constitution is the integration of the concept of penance with that of metanoia “change of heart, that is to say … the intimate and total change and renewal of the entire man – and of all his opinions, judgements and decisions.” The Holy Father speaks extensively about the relationship between the external acts of penance and inner conversion, prayer, and works of charity.

Listing specific legal prescriptions, Paul VI interprets these as gravely binding as to substance only, and not to particular acts. He then regards differences between people and circumstances and authorizes episcopal conferences to establish particular norms.

On November 18, 1966, the NCCB established the binding norms of fast and abstinence still current in the United States. The norms quote Paenitemini extensively. The bishops state, “… we preserve for our dioceses the tradition of abstinence from meat on each of the Fridays of Lent, confident that no Catholic will lightly hold himself excused from this penitential practice. The bishops state explicitly “We hereby terminate the traditional law of abstinence as binding under pain of sin…”

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

10 easy things you can do this Lent to promote good health

By Maureen Pratt
Catholic News Service

When I was in college, one of my professors, a Jesuit priest, challenged me to look at Lent from a different perspective.

"Instead of giving something up for Lent, why not give something?" he said.

The question has indeed propelled me to engage in actions during Lent that strengthen my faith, increase my discernment and, I hope, lead me to help others.

This year, when so many people around me have been plagued with the flu, pneumonia, pinched nerves and other serious health challenges, I decided to translate "give something up for Lent" into "give health for Lent."

Here are 10 suggestions for positive actions that promote health, respect life, and make a difference to others:

Give blood. There’s always a need for blood, and giving is easy. Contact your local hospital or chapter of the Red Cross (www.redcross.org).

Donate unused athletic equipment. Are those 9-irons gathering dust in your garage? Consider cleaning house and donating athletic equipment to your local high school, youth center or church youth group.

Reach out to the sick. Every person that we pray for in church on Sunday needs comfort and, quite possibly, company. Your visit or telephone call could give someone the extra encouragement needed to overcome the darkness of illness or infirmity.

Volunteer at your local hospital. There are always slots open at hospitals for willing volunteers, and the variety of positions can range from being in contact

(Please See HEALTH/23)
Valuable lessons learned taught in Catholic education

By Audrey Erwin

During my junior year at Midland High School, I was assigned a paper for my English class in which I had to identify my favorite memory from childhood. Most kids wrote about learning to ride a bicycle, favorite family vacations or the first time they ever played baseball or soccer. I however chose a different approach and wrote about my first Holy Communion. Needless to say, when we had to read our papers in front of the class, many people were confused. It is not like I was the only Catholic in my class, but even those people were curious as to why I would have chosen this ceremony instead of over my first trip to Disney World or the time I got to meet the president or something like that. The fact of the matter is, although many people go through this particular sacrament, not everyone understands the importance of it. I understood the meaning of it because I attended St. Ann’s Catholic School.

When people think of Catholic schools, most people think of plaid skirts, strict nuns and angelic looking choir boys. When considering where to send their children to school, many parents call these images to mind. What these parents don’t consider is the outstanding education and superior faith formation that Catholic schools give to children that other schools just can’t offer. I can think of way too many instances during my high school and college career in which I had to defend my faith to others. My nine years at St. Ann’s School prepared me with the knowledge I needed to explain, my faith and reasoning, with ease.

Catholic school teaches its students more than just understanding of their faith, it also instills in them, core values such as family, friendship and community. Families are the center of the Catholic school system. There are always things going on to help families grow together in Christ. The friends that I made at St. Ann’s, which include classmates, teachers and even administrators are ones that I will have forever. I will never be able to forget the bonds that I have from my Catholic school beginnings. One of my favorite things about Catholic school is the feeling of community. I loved going to church on Sundays and seeing people that I know and care about filling the pews. I loved wandering around the St. Ann’s Family Fair and helping out in different booths, cooking fajitas and watching the kid from down the street beat out countless adults at the Lotto Dough booth. I learned many valuable lessons at St. Ann’s, but the most important thing that I took away from my time in Catholic School is my faith, family, friends and community. These lessons I will never forget. I can’t wait to give my children the faith foundation that my parents gave to me by sending me to Catholic School.

Thank you for your continued support.

‘A request for abortion’ contradicts the meaning, spirit of Christmas

By Ernest N. Charlesworth, MD

It is the week before Christmas as I write this, and I am trying to get caught up with reading a backlog of medical journals while rushing out to buy last minute Christmas gifts. It is indeed a busy week as we prepare for the celebration of a special birthday. What would this world be like if the birth of Christ had been ended before it even started?

As I picked up my December 8 issue of the prestigious New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM), I could not help but think of that special birth 2000 years ago. I scanned the scientific articles, glanced over an article on the use of Rifapentine and isoniazid for late tuberculosis, then an article on Norwalk virus and finally a study on the inflammation of brain tissue in multiple myeloma patients. It was the clinical review of that week’s NEJM that riveted my attention: “A Request for Abortion.” I found it sadly ironic that the NEJM would address this topic three weeks before Christmas.

The article describes a case history of a 22-year-old college student who presents to her primary care physician with an unintended pregnancy at 9-weeks gestation, requesting an abortion. The introduction states that she was aware of both medical (drug-induced) and surgical methods of terminating pregnancy and she wanted to know which approach would be recommended. The clinical case history was followed by a challenge to the physician readership: Which would you advise?

The article indicated that there were 1.2 million abortions performed in 2008, noting that one of three women will have an abortion before she reaches menopause. These were cold and sterile statistics defining fetal deaths by abortion in America in a single year. The article outlined the strategies and the (Please See NEJM/23)

Knights’ poll shows many in favor of abortion restrictions

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- A poll taken for the Knights of Columbus and Marist College in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., indicates a strong majority of Americans continue to want restrictions on abortion.

According to the poll, 79 percent of those surveyed said they would not allow abortion after the first three months of pregnancy. And 51 percent said they would allow abortion only in cases of rape, incest or to save the mother’s life -- or not at all.

The poll’s numbers are almost unchanged from a similar poll taken two years ago.

The survey responses were released in Washington Jan. 23, the date of this year’s March for Life.

According to the poll, 84 percent said they believe that laws can protect both the life of the unborn and the health and well-being of women. This is up from 81 percent from the 2010 survey.

“Almost four decades after the Supreme Court’s decisions in Roe v. Wade and Doe v. Bolton, which resulted in the almost totally unrestricted abortion regime of today, these decisions continue to be out of step with the vast majority of Americans,” said a Jan. 23 statement by Carl Anderson, supreme knight of the Knights of Columbus.

“Far from being settled law, the inadequacy of the court’s reasoning on abortion in Roe and Doe is readily apparent to most Americans. Once a survey moves beyond the labels of pro-life and pro-choice, we see a fundamental unity among Americans in favor of significant abortion restrictions,” Anderson said.

The abortion questions were part of a broader survey, the results of which will be released in February.

The telephone survey, conducted Dec. 15-27, was based on the responses of 1,053 adults living in the continental United States.
Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

I write to you concerning an alarming and serious matter that negatively impacts the Church in the United States directly, and that strikes at the fundamental right to religious liberty for all citizens of any faith. The federal government, which claims to be “of, by, and for the people,” has just dealt a heavy blow to almost a quarter of those people—the Catholic population—and to the millions more who are served by the Catholic faithful. All U.S. Bishops are writing a similar letter to all Catholics.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced last week that almost all employers, including Catholic employers, will be forced to offer their employees’ health coverage that includes sterilization, abortion-inducing drugs, and contraception. Almost all health insurers will be forced to include those “services” in the health policies they write. And almost all individuals will be forced to buy that coverage as a part of their policies.

In such a ruling, the Administration has cast aside the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, denying to Catholics our Nation’s first and most fundamental freedom, that of religious liberty. And as a result, unless the rule is overturned, we Catholics will be compelled either to violate our consciences, or to drop health coverage for our employees (and suffer the penalties for doing so). The Administration’s sole concession was to give our institutions one year to comply.

We cannot—we will not—comply with this unjust law. People of faith cannot be made second class citizens. We are already joined by our brothers and sisters of all faiths and many others of good will in this important effort to regain our religious freedom. Our parents and grandparents did not come to these shores to help build America’s cities and towns, its infrastructure and institutions, its enterprise and culture, only to have their posterity stripped of their God given rights. In generations past, the Church has always been able to count on the faithful to stand up and protect her sacred rights and duties. I hope and trust she can count on this generation of Catholics to do the same. Our children and grandchildren deserve nothing less.

And therefore, I would ask of you two things. First, as a community of faith we must commit ourselves to prayer and fasting that wisdom and justice may prevail, and religious liberty may be restored. Without God, we can do nothing; with God, nothing is impossible. Second, I would also recommend that immediately we begin to contact our Congress people about this severe assault on Religious Liberty, and stress that they support legislation that will reverse the Administration’s decision. Included below is a sample letter in English that I encourage you to use for this purpose. You may also visit www.usccb.org/conscience, to learn more about this severe assault on religious liberty. The time to act is now. God’s peace.

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

Dear Senator/Representative:

I write this letter to strongly encourage you to support legislation that would reverse the Presidential Administration decision that would force all Catholic employers to offer their employees health coverage that include sterilization, abortion-inducing drugs and contraception. This ruling by the Administration casts aside the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, denying to Catholics our Nation’s first and most fundamental freedom, that of religious liberty. This ruling would force Catholics either to violate our conscience, or to drop health coverage for our employees—and suffer the penalties for doing so. Please support legislation that reverses this unjust policy. Thank you and God bless you.

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

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DIOCESE OF SAN ANGELO

The Most Rev. Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI, Bishop

Attached to the bottom of this letter is a sample letter that we encourage Catholics to begin sending to all of our Congress people, Senators and Representatives. Thank you for your cooperation with this matter and more than ever, let us double our prayers for the guidance of the Holy Spirit to overcome this ruling. -- Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

I write this letter to strongly encourage you to support legislation that would reverse the Presidential Administration decision that would force all Catholic employers to offer their employees health coverage that include sterilization, abortion-inducing drugs and contraception. This ruling by the Administration casts aside the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, denying to Catholics our Nation’s first and most fundamental freedom, that of religious liberty. This ruling would force Catholics either to violate our conscience, or to drop health coverage for our employees—and suffer the penalties for doing so. Please support legislation that reverses this unjust policy. Thank you and God bless you.

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

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-- U.S. Congressman K. Michael Conaway (District 11 -- San Angelo, Midland-Odessa, Andrews, Stanton, Crane, Rankin, Big Lake, Colorado City, Sterling City, Robert Lee, Bronte, Ballinger, Winters, Miles, Christoval, Eldorado, Junction, Menard, Eden, Melvin, Brady, Coleman, Brownwood, Sonora, McCamey, Mертzon, Sweetwater )

Phone: 202-225-3605
Mailing Address: 511 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515
Web: http://conaway.house.gov/

-- Rep. Randy Neugebauer (District 19 -- Big Spring, Abilene, Clyde)
Phone: 202-225-4005
Mailing Address: 1424 Longworth HOB Washington, DC 20515
Web: http://randy.house.gov/

-- Rep. Francisco Canseco (District 23 -- Fort Stockton, Iraan, Ozona)
Phone: 202-225-4511
Mailing Address: 1339 Longworth HOB Washington, DC 20515
Web: http://canseco.house.gov/

-- U.S. Senator John Cornyn
Phone: 202-224-2934
Mailing Address: 517 Hart Senate Office Bldg., Washington, DC 20510
Web: http://www.cornyn.senate.gov/public/

-- U.S. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison
Phone: 202-224-5922
Mailing Address: 284 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510
Email: http://hutchison.senate.gov/?p=email_kay
Estimados hermanos y hermanas en Cristo,

Les escribo por razón de un asunto serio y alarmante que afecta directa y negativamente a la Iglesia en los Estados Unidos, y que atenta contra el derecho fundamental a la libertad religiosa de todos los ciudadanos de cualquier confesión religiosa. El gobierno federal, que afirma ser “de, por y para el pueblo”, acaba de asentar un duro golpe a casi una cuarta parte de ese pueblo—la población católica—y a millones más de personas a quienes los fieles católicos proporcionan sus servicios.

El Departamento de Salud y Servicios Humanos de los Estados Unidos anunció la semana pasada que la práctica totalidad los empleadores, incluyendo las instituciones católicas, serán obligados a ofrecer a sus empleados cobertura médica y de salud que incluya la esterilización, drogas que inducen abortos y anticonceptivos. Casi todas las entidades que ofrecen seguro médico a sus empleados serán forzados a incluir esos “servicios” en sus pólizas de seguro médico. Y prácticamente todas las personas estarán obligadas a comprar esa cobertura como parte de su póliza.

Con esta decisión, la Administración ha hecho a un lado la Primera Enmienda de la Constitución de los Estados Unidos, denegando a los católicos la primera y más fundamental libertad de nuestra Nación, la libertad religiosa. Como resultado, y a menos que la regulación será anulada, nosotros los católicos nos veremos obligados o a violar nuestra conciencia o a dejar de ofrecer seguro médico y de salud a nuestros empleados (y a sufrir sanciones económicas por ello). La única concesión que hizo la Administración fue dar a nuestras instituciones un año para acatar la orden legislativa.

No podemos—y no lo haremos—cumplir con esta ley injusta. No se puede hacer a las personas de fe ciudadanos de segunda clase. Ya se han unido a nosotros hermanos y hermanas de todas las confesiones religiosas y muchas otras personas de buena voluntad en este importante esfuerzo para reclamar nuestra libertad religiosa. Nuestros padres y abuelos no vinieron a esta orilla para que después de ayudar a construir las ciudades y pueblos de los Estados Unidos, su infraestructura y sus instituciones, sus iniciativas y su cultura, luego se denegara a sus descendientes los derechos que Dios les da. En generaciones pasadas, la Iglesia siempre ha contado con los fieles para alzarse y proteger sus sagrados derechos y obligaciones. Espero y confío que pueda contar con esta generación de católicos para hacer lo mismo. Nuestros hijos y nietos no merecen nada menos.

Y, por tanto, pediría de ustedes dos cosas. La primera, que como comunidad de fe debemos comprometernos a orar y ayunar para que la sabiduría y la justicia prevalezcan, y la libertad religiosa sea restaurada. Sin Dios, nada podemos; con Dios, nada es imposible. En segundo lugar, recomendaría que inmediatamente hagamos una carta al presidente para que el Congreso sobre ese severo asalto a la libertad religiosa, y enfatizar su apoyo a la legislación que revocaría la decisión de la Administración. Adjunto una carta ejemplar en inglés que les animo usar para este propósito. También pueden visitar la página web www.usccb.org/conscience, para informarse mejor sobre este severo asalto a la libertad religiosa. La hora de actuar es hoy. La paz de Dios.

Su servidor en Cristo y María,
Muy Reverendo Miguel D. Pfeifer, OMI
Obispo de San Angelo

HHS mandate will amount to ‘to hell with you,’ bishop says; protests build

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- A week after the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services told individuals and institutions who oppose contraception "to hell with you," as one bishop put it, members of the U.S. Catholic hierarchy were mobilizing their followers to fight.

Bishops across the country -- including Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory of Atlanta, Archbishop Gregory M. Aymond of New Orleans and Bishop Robert N. Lynch of St. Petersburg, Fla. -- were preparing letters to be read at all Masses during the Jan. 28-29 weekend.

But one of the most strongly worded reactions to HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius' Jan. 20 announcement that religious organizations could delay but not opt out of a requirement that all health plans cover contraception and sterilization at no cost came from Bishop David A. Zubik of Pittsburgh, in a column titled "To hell with you."

Sebelius and the Obama administration "have said 'To hell with you' to the Catholic faithful of the United States," Bishop Zubik wrote. "To hell with your religious beliefs. To hell with your religious liberty. To hell with your freedom of conscience. We'll give you a year, they are saying, and then you have to knuckle under."

He called on Catholics in the Pittsburgh Diocese to "do all possible to rescind" the contraceptive mandate by writing to President Barack Obama, Sebelius and their members of Congress about this "unprecedented governmental interference in the right of Catholics to serve their community without violating their fundamental moral beliefs."

Bishop Daniel R. Jenky of Peoria, Ill., enlisted the aid of St. Michael the Archangel in fighting "this unprecedented governmental assault upon the moral convictions of our faith."

In a Jan. 24 letter to Peoria Catholics, he directed that the prayer of St. Michael be recited "for the freedom of the Catholic Church in America" during Sunday Masses at every parish, school, hospital, Newman center and religious house in the diocese.

The prayer reads in part: "Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil" and "cast into hell Satan and all the evil spirits, who roam throughout the world seeking the ruin of souls."
The ethics and logic (or not) behind the premarital sex ‘test drive’

By Father Tad Pacholczyk

During a 2011 roundtable discussion on Fox News, guest commentator Jay Thomas argued that young people should not be too concerned when it comes to pre-marital sex, because nobody would choose to “buy a car without driving it first. You don’t get married, and you don’t learn about sex, by not having it.” Any reasonable person would prefer to avoid someone who might be, in his words, “odd in the sack,” much as any reasonable person would prefer to avoid getting a lemon when purchasing a new car. Mr. Thomas, therefore, could hardly envision anyone’s committing to marriage without first “kicking the tires” a bit, and going for a sex “test drive.”

The test drive analogy comes up short in a number of important ways, and premarital sex is not at all synonymous with a harmless “test drive.” The context in which sex occurs is everything in terms of “getting it right.” Separated from its proper context of marriage, it becomes a quick path to emotional and interpersonal wreckage. Since sex takes on its proper meaning only within marriage, it cannot be properly evaluated outside the marital commitment. It might be analogous to trying to evaluate the performance of a particular car before it has even been assembled or come off the assembly line.

The story is told of a famous but irresponsible race car driver who decided to borrow a friend’s Camaro to take it for a test drive around the race-track. He quickly ran it to the edge of the speedometer, red-lining the engine at over 100 miles per hour. He pushed it hard for several laps around the track, then finally pulled the vehicle off to the side. As he did so, the strained engine overheated, seized violently, and began to pour smoke. He was used to expensive, high performance racing machines, and the Camaro felt sluggish by comparison. He walked away from the vehicle, muttering under his breath, “I wonder what’s the matter with that car?” Sex before marriage is a similar kind of “test drive” — clearly exploitative and harmful.

A sexual “test drive” mentality is essentially exploitative in nature, reducing a potential spouse to someone who is easily replaced by a “better” model. When we take a car for a test drive, and don’t like it, we can just return the keys and move on to the next model. But people are not cars that we can just exploit and cast aside.

The notion of a sexual “test drive” as an entrée to matrimony trivializes and degrades the serious business that marriage really is. What sorts of things would a young man be expecting to discover with a sexual "test-drive" anyway? What kinds of qualities would disqualify someone from becoming his wife? If he had lived in purity himself, and it were his first sexual experience fresh on the heels of his marriage vows, he would automatically suppose his wife to be wonderful, and no “comparisons” should even be necessary.

In the final analysis, who really wants to be sexually “compared” to others anyway? Predictably, partners can feel threatened if they think their spouse might be comparing them with previous partners. This provides a strong incentive to abstain from sex before marriage, to protect the emotional safety that spouses need to feel together in marriage. Every woman prefers to marry a man who has lived chastely. Similarly every man, in his heart of hearts, wants to marry a virgin, rather than someone who has been “test-driven” by scores of other men.

As one happily married woman described it on her internet posting: “I’ve only been with one guy; he was only with one girl - and it wasn’t until our wedding night. Maybe we were both bad in bed. But, you know, neither one of us had any clue, because we’d never been with anyone else. I’ve never seen that as an issue.”

Singer/actress Rebecca St. James, who also participated in the Fox News roundtable, echoed the same sentiments: “Can I just say married sex (and I’ve never been with anyone other than my husband) is wonderful. It’s so cherished and beautiful, and I’m so glad I don’t have any memories with anyone else, and I’m glad my husband doesn’t have anybody to compare me to. We only have each other.”

Dating and marriage are about commitment and sacrificial love for another person, not comparison shopping for the best deal, or test driving the latest vehicle. Sex is a unique gift by which we hand ourselves over to another within marriage, and cement the treasure of marital love in a permanent commitment to one another.

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.
Catholic health care modeled on parable of the Good Samaritan

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

Catholic health care down through the ages has been modeled on the parable of the good Samaritan. The good Samaritan is one to whom no person is a stranger or foreigner. He goes out of his way to reach people in need, lays his hands upon the sick person, sacrifices of his own substance and stays with the sick and afflicted person until the person is healed. The figure of the good Samaritan is the point of reference in health care for a full interpretation of the relationship between justice and charity, to do what is right in a spirit of charity, sensitivity, caring, sharing and solidarity with all concerned.

From its beginning, Catholic health care has been based on the understanding of the healing art, modeled in Christ Himself, that addresses the sick person in every dimension: spiritual, physical, social, and psychological.

Catholic doctors and nurses are bound to take up as a model of their vocation Christus Medicus, Christus Patiens—Christ as the Divine Healer and Christ as the Suffering Servant. Healer and Sufferer, Jesus Christ, is the epitome of both physician and patient. He extends His hand in healing and therapy as He would want others to reach out and do this in a way that he or she would want others to reach out to him or her when they are in sickness and suffering. Jesus taught in His beautiful health parable that when we reach out to the sick, the thirsty, the hungry, the imprisoned, that we are reaching out through the heart of Jesus Himself to the heart of Jesus Himself. The challenge is to see Jesus in each sick person, in each one that is suffering. And, we are told by Jesus in Matthew 25, that when we reach out to help those suffering and sick, that we are doing this to Christ Himself. And when we do not reach out to them, we are rejecting Christ Himself.
Brother to Father

* (Step 1)

Clockwise from photo at left, Brother Martin is shrouded in silhouette in a doorway of the Mount Carmel Hermitage near Christoval on the occasion of his diaconate ordination, January 14. Brother Martin leads a procession of deacons, priests and bishops into the chapel at the hermitage for the ordination Mass. Brother Martin, shown middle, and at far right, above left, and with his brother hermits, Father Fabian, (third from left), and Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer, fourth from right. At far left, Brother Martin distributes the cup to the Carmelite Sisters from Christoval. Middle far left, Bishop Pfeifer introduces the diocese’s newest deacon to the capacity crowd at the hermitage chapel, and top left, Bishop Pfeifer during the ordination. (All photos Alan P. Torre / aptorre.com)
Catholic marriage trends mirror society’s
trend.

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- Like the number of marriages among Americans in general, the number of marriages performed in the Catholic Church has been in decline over the past few decades.

"Since 1972, the number of marriages celebrated in a Catholic church has fallen nearly 60 percent" in the U.S., said Sheila Garcia, associate director of the U.S. bishops' Secretariat for Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth, citing a study conducted for the secretariat by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University and released in 2008.

In 1972, there were 8.6 marriages in the church per 1,000 Catholics, but last year the figure was 2.6 church marriages for every 1,000 Catholics, she said.

That trend is among the reasons that led the bishops to launch their National Pastoral Initiative for Marriage in 2004 and the related "For Your Marriage" website to help people better understand the Catholic viewpoint on marriage and to strengthen the bonds of couples, whether they are Catholic or not, married in the church or not.

"What we have said is that you need three things to support marriage -- a vision, skills and a supportive community," Garcia told Catholic News Service. "The church clearly offers a vision for marriage. We believe you can have a marriage that is faithful, permanent and open to children. We believe with God's grace that can be achieved."

A lifetime of showing someone your love

By Bill and Monica Dodds

"I luh, luh, luh, love you." As St. Valentine’s Day pops up each year, a lot of married couples remember when they reached that exact point in their relationship. Whispering those three small words for the first time was no small feat. Especially if you were the first to say them and there was a seemingly endless pause before you heard a reply.

On the other hand, way back when, there seemed to be no problem showing how you felt. Your thoughtfulness, your concern and your little acts of kindness spoke volumes.

As the years go by, the declaration and reply can become almost automatic and even abbreviated ("Love ya" and "Yeah. Me, too."). and the actions shift, too. Day to day, it isn't candy or flowers that convey the sentiment.

For instance, when the honeymoon is a distant memory and the house has been "invaded" by little people, "I love you" can be:

- Getting up in the middle of the night with the baby when it isn't your turn.
- Not griping about going to parent-teacher conference night alone because your spouse is staying home after barely surviving a long, hard day at work.
- Making a point of sitting next to your honey in a family room that's crowded with ... family. And when those little ones (suddenly!) become teens, "I love you" can include:
  - Presenting a united front when it comes to laying down the law with those adolescents and enforcing the consequences when they break those rules.
  - Volunteering to slide into the passenger seat next to your student driver and help the rookie practice. (An experience one parent we know always referred to as "the white-knuckle flight.")
  - Continuing to set aside a "date night" with each other, no matter how challenging it is to schedule. Then those young adults are off to college or work and the nest is empty. Then "I love you" can be:
  - Letting your spouse make the final decision on how the now-spare bedroom will be used. (Home office vs. huge TV on the far wall and mammoth recliner, for example.)
  - Taking the time, and spending the money, to go on that trip to Europe or the Bahamas or China.
  - Eating sensibly and getting enough exercise (without grumbling about either) because you know it's good for both of you. Later still, when your children have children and there's no denying you're beyond middle age, "I love you" can be:
    - Showing you see beyond the wrinkles, age spots, gray hair (or no hair) and are still dazzled by those familiar eyes, the ones that captivated you decades ago.
    - Fulfilling the pledge you made at your wedding about loving and helping your spouse "in sickness and in health."
    - Holding that familiar hand as one or the other of you prepares to leave this world, to leave each other's side...
    - For a time.

And through all the years, retelling the story, remembering the moment, of that first "I love you" from so long ago. And saying it once again.

"Bill and Monica Dodds are the founders of the Friends of St. John the Caregiver and editors of My Daily Visitor magazine. Their website is www.FSJC.org. Bill's latest books are "How to Write Your Novel in Nine Weeks" & "The World's Funniest Atheist.""

Guest Columnist

St. Valentine: patron of beekeepers, the plague, procrastinating men

By Dan Morris

Catholic News Service

I would rather paint the kitchen ceiling, clean the dryer vent ducting and replace the leaky toilet innards than buy a Valentine's Day card.

It is not at all that I don't agree in theory with much of the sappy, snappy or happy lines that Valentine's Day card creators pour out. It's just that I dislike the idea of hiring someone to tell my wife how much I love her. And make it rhyme. Yech.

Yet, at the same time, a loving husband steeped in American culture (aka me) cannot ignore the mandate to mark the day by specifically and tangibly articulating the love of one's spouse.

Indeed, it is nearing the time of year when many of we men will be in a dead panic (or in some cases a live panic) about what seems such a simple, straightforward tradition -- a day for jewelers, florists, candy makers, greeting card empires and the red construction paper industry to reap magnitudinous (a granddaughter's word) profits.

Women, on the other hand, seem to be unruffled by the day. Even telling them that it's weird to have a celebration of love named after a saint who is the patron of beekeepers and the plague does not help.

They know you know that they know you had better do something nice for them on Valentine's Day.

Certainly part of the male panic phenomenon is that many of us wait until the last second to do anything about Valentine's Day. Too often the "Oh whoa, it's Valentine's Day" bell goes off as we head home from work -- on Valentine's Day.

We have thought about it many times. We just haven't done anything. It's like the recurring dream about the Western Civilization paper put off until the night before it was due.

This happens despite the fact that pharmacies, grocery stores, online advertisers, floral mailing international, jewelry outlets, and radio and television commercials have been blasting away at the world's population about Valentine's Day since about 45 minutes after Christmas clearance sales ended.

So we guys do variations of veering into a 24-hour pharmacy parking lot, snagging a box of chocolates the pharmacy parking lot, snagging a box of chocolates the size of a manhole cover and joining a large crowd of men gathered around a Valentine's Day card display that has three cards left in it.

This year I am tempted to fold a piece of red construction paper in half and cut out a heart like we did in third grade. And write my own poem:

"When I mow the yard, and put on Right Guard / When I paint the ceiling and help with peeling / When I work overtime and sent jokes online / When I try not to snore and refresh the floor / When I do lots of stuff but don't say much / Please know I am still saying, 'I love you.'"

I'm sure I can find some place that sells red construction paper on my way home Feb. 14.
A leper pleads with Jesus to heal him

By Joe Sarnicola

Moses and Aaron were with the Lord when he said to them, “If someone has on the skin (anything) which appears to develop into a scaly infection, the person shall be brought to Aaron, the priest, or to one of the priests among his sons. ...”

“The individual shall cry out, ‘Unclean, unclean!’ ... Being unclean, that individual shall dwell apart, taking up residence outside the camp.”

Many, many years later, a man with leprosy knelt in front of Jesus and pleaded with him. He said, “If you wish, you can make me clean.”

Jesus felt compassion for the sick man. He reached forward, touched the man and said, “I do will it. Be made clean.” As soon as Jesus had spoken those words, the man was healed and made clean.

But Jesus had a request of his own to make of the man he had just healed. “See that you tell no one anything, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses prescribed; that will be proof for them.”

But the man was unable to contain his excitement because he was healed and could live with his people again. He told everyone who would listen. The story of this miracle of Jesus spread so rapidly that Jesus could hardly go anywhere without being recognized.

Even though he tried to stay in less traveled and less populated areas, people would find him and ask him for healing and other miracles.

These were not the only miracles and healings that Jesus had performed. He had healed the mother-in-law of Peter, one of his own apostles. The woman had been very sick with a fever. Jesus restored her to health, and she was able to wait on Jesus and her own apostles. The woman had been very sick with a fever. Jesus restored her to health, and she was able to wait on Jesus and her other guests.

Jesus also spent most of one evening healing people and casting out evil spirits for anyone who came to him. After he had done this, Jesus again sought a place of solitude and privacy. So many people still had requests for Jesus that his apostles had to go looking for him. Peter said to him, “Everyone is looking for you.”

Jesus answered, “Let us go on to the nearby villages that I may preach there also. For this purpose have I come.”

The choice that is abortion: A life given, a life taken away

By Erick Rommel

Catholic News Service


If you think that's enough information to form an opinion, you're wrong. What you know about Jenni is nothing compared to what you should know.

Her story doesn't begin when she learned she was pregnant, or more accurately, when you learned she was pregnant. It doesn't begin when the 17-year-old and her boyfriend decided to have sex. It doesn't begin when they met, or when she started high school.

Like all of us, Jenni's story begins at birth. She's the third of nine siblings. When her parents divorced, she began living with her mother, two brothers and one sister. If you see her in videos, you'll see the piercings in her lip.

In photos, you'll notice the star tattoos on her arms, appropriate since she dreamed of becoming a tattoo artist.

You now know so much, and so little. Jenni's story isn't about premarital sex. It's not about abortion. It's not about statistics. It's about a person, more specifically, a teen girl.

Prior to the point where we pick up Jenni's story, she faced the same challenges experienced by every teenager. The only difference is the extra pressure she faced, namely the knowledge that she'd likely be dead in two years.

Does that change your opinion at all?

In October 2010, doctors diagnosed Jenni with stage three astrocytoma, a type of brain cancer, which in her case painlessly spread.
**Nation**

**Doctors wonder how HHS mandate will affect practice of medicine**

By Nancy Frazier O'Brien
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- Whether they are just starting out or nearing the end of their careers, Catholics who want to practice medicine in conformity with the church's teachings wonder how a new federal regulation requiring health plans to cover contraceptives and sterilization free of charge will affect their work.

Although the requirement will not directly impact physicians, some said it represents a governmental intrusion into health care that could grow in the future.

Dr. Anne Nolte, a family physician with the National Gianna Center for Women's Health and Fertility in New York, thinks the mandate represents "such a dramatic violation of such clearly defined civil rights" that it is bound to be overturned in court.

But, she said, "If Congress failed to pass an act that provides an exemption for the groups affected by this, and the courts in some incomprehensible way allow (the mandate) to stand, then Catholic health care will have to make a decision to practice civil disobedience."

Dr. Kim Hardey, an obstetrician and gynecologist in Lafayette, La., said he hopes the decision by the Department of Health and Human Services and the Obama administration will cause Catholics and other Christians to rise up against "the liberal left" and "misguided feminists" who would like to see abortion also become a required part of every medical practice.

"If we can allow the infringement of any group's beliefs," everyone's beliefs are threatened, he told Catholic News Service in a telephone interview Jan. 31.

The new contraception mandate, with a narrow exemption for religious organizations, is part of implementing the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010, which sets up new preventative health care coverage specifically for women at no cost.

That coverage includes services such as mammograms, prenatal care and cervical cancer screenings. But it also mandates free contraception, sterilizations and drugs (such as ella and "Plan B") considered by the church to be abortifacients -- all of which are contrary to Catholic teaching.

On Jan. 20, Kathleen Sebelius, secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, announced that nonprofit groups that do not provide contraceptive coverage because of their religious beliefs will get an additional year "to adapt to this new rule."

Sarah Smith is not a doctor yet, but she worries that the HHS mandate will further sour an atmosphere in which she already finds some challenges to her pro-life convictions.

"The one safe environment -- Catholic hospitals -- is not even going to be safe anymore" if the contraceptive mandate stands, she said in a telephone interview with CNS from Chicago, where she had just completed the last of "14 or 15" interviews for a residency position in obstetrics and gynecology.

A four-year medical student at Tulane University School of Medicine in New Orleans, Smith made clear on each interview that her Catholic convictions prevent her from involvement in abortion, sterilization or contraception.

She said she has found that "most doctors as individuals respect my beliefs and my conscience; they might not agree with me, but they'll defend my right to practice medicine." Problems are more likely to arise at the institutional level, where medical students and residents are "culturally at the bottom of the totem pole," Smith noted.

"Some Catholic hospitals make it much easier for medical students and residents to live out their faith," she said. But at a secular hospital where "they are doing 400 tubal ligations a year, you might have the choice not to participate, but the work flow makes it harder," she added.

A native of Natick, Mass., and a 2007 graduate of the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, Smith said she enjoys "working with underserved populations" but might not ever be able to work at a federally funded community health center, since the government requires that all family planning options be offered at those centers.

**Komen reverses decision, reinstates grants to Planned Parenthood**

By Catholic News Service

DALLAS (CNS) -- The Feb. 3 decision by Susan G. Komen for the Cure to reinstate grants to Planned Parenthood affiliates for breast cancer screenings was the result of a "vicious attack" on the organization, said a pro-life leader.

Pro-life leaders hailed Komen's announcement Jan. 31 that it would no longer give grants to Planned Parenthood, but it sparked a maelstrom of negative reaction and an online petition asking the group to reverse its decision.

"I am troubled that the Komen foundation has come under such heavy fire for their recent decision to tighten and focus their funding guidelines," said Charmaine Yoest, president and CEO of Americans United for Life.

"This week we have all been witness to highly partisan attacks from pro-abortion advocates and an ugly and disgraceful shakedown that highlights Planned Parenthood's willingness to pursue a scorched-earth strategy to force compliance with their pro-abortion agenda," she said in a statement.

Yoest also noted that Komen donors are "now confused about their association with the nation's largest abortion provider."

A statement from Komen's founder and CEO Nancy Brinker posted on the Dallas-based organization's website Feb. 3 apologized to the American public "for recent decisions that cast doubt upon our commitment to our mission of saving women's lives."

Brinker said the reaction to the decision to discontinue the funding was "deeply unsettling for our supporters, partners and friends and all of us at Susan G. Komen. We have been distressed at the presumptions that the changes made to our funding criteria were done for political reasons or to specifically penalize Planned Parenthood. They were not."

She also noted that Komen had planned to stop funding grant applications made by organizations under investigation but that it will "amend the criteria to make clear that disqualifying investigations must be criminal and conclusive in nature and not political."

Planned Parenthood is currently the focus of an investigation by U.S. Rep. Cliff Stearns, R-Fla., to see whether the organization used federal funds to pay for abortions, which would be illegal.

Stearns is chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations.

Komen raises millions annually for the detection, treatment and research of breast cancer. One of its signature events is the annual Race for the Cure held in communities around the country. Planned Parenthood, which provides abortions, also offers free breast exams and mammograms, considered key to early detection of breast cancer. The Komen foundation over the years has said that it intended its contributions go toward these exams but could not control how funds were allocated at Planned Parenthood.

Leslie Aun, a spokeswoman for...
Our Faith

A change in weekday Communion services

By Father Kenneth Doyle
Catholic News Service

Q. In the area where I live, it used to be that, when a priest was available for a weekday Mass, a deacon or eucharistic minister would distribute holy Communion within the context of a prayer service. But that practice has been discontinued; now instead, when a priest cannot be there for Mass, only a prayer service is offered and Communion is not given out.

We’ve asked several deacons to explain this change, and their answers have varied: One said that Communion should not be regularly separated from the eucharistic sacrifice of the Mass; another felt that this helped to convey the notion that Sunday, the day of Christ’s resurrection, is the special day when Communion is the norm; and a third remarked that the lack of daily Communion might prompt us to pray harder for more priests.

None of these answers satisfies me, as I was raised to believe that receiving this spiritual food every day was the ideal. What is the church's view on this? (Williamsburg, Va.)

A. Your question shows a sincere desire to be united as often as possible to Christ through Communion, and that is praiseworthy. The current thinking of the church, however, is to discourage weekday Communion services, based on the essential link between reception of the Eucharist and the sacrifice of the Mass.

"Redemptionis Sacramentum," issued in 2004 by the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, says of Communion services that "the diocesan bishop ... must not easily grant permission for such celebrations to be held on weekdays, especially in places where it is possible or would be possible to have the celebration of Mass on the preceding or the following Sunday" (No. 166).

In the Mass, which memorializes and makes real the death and resurrection of Jesus, worshippers unite their own sacrifices with that of Christ, and then are drawn into deeper intimacy by receiving in Communion the very gift they had offered, Jesus himself.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on the Liturgy (now called the Committee on Divine Worship) has noted that "every effort must be undertaken to avoid any confusion" between a Communion service and the celebration of the Mass.

Ten or 15 years ago, when daily Communion services were offered widely (on a priest's day off or when he was sick), one would sometimes hear references to "Sister's Mass" or "the Deacon's Mass" when a substitute service would be provided -- which is the precise confusion the church wants to avoid.

The Mass is the source and summit of Christian worship, and nothing can take its place. (It's even more troubling to a priest when the same parishioner comes into church each day 20 minutes after Mass has begun -- just in time to receive Communion and walk directly out of church, as though he had managed to grab a "lucky charm" while he hurried by!)

In the matter at hand, it is easy to sympathize with the questioner's plea, conditioned as he has been by a long and devout practice of daily Communion and the benefit derived from it. In view of that, some dioceses have sought a pastoral "compromise" in this regard, such as Milwaukee, which says in its guidelines that, "if there is no priest available for an extended period of weekdays (three or more), a Communion service may be held."

Peace with God, man: Only 1 resolution should matter

By Father Peter J. Daly
Catholic News Service

Back in 2008, I made detailed New Year’s resolutions. It was a complete list. It had spiritual, financial, professional and personal goals. Things such as saving money and losing weight. I had other bigger goals such as visiting with aging friends and finishing my novel.

I taped it up to my bedroom wall where I would see it, right over the old mantelpiece.

Every time I completed a goal, I would cross it off in red. By the end of 2008, a few goals were completed, but most remained undone. So I crossed out 2008 and wrote 2009. I did the same thing at the end of 2009 and 2010 and 2011.

By New Year’s Eve, 2012, the paper was getting yellow with age. Only about half of the goals were completed. A few of the goals had been amended.

I ripped the paper from the wall. Not in disgust or despair, but in realism. I was never going to complete most of the goals on the paper.

After having open heart surgery in 2011, I realized that it really didn’t matter whether I completed most of the goals anyway. I’ve always said that we are going to die with a few dirty dishes in our sink. Some things will always be undone.

Not that goal-setting is not important. I think it is one of the habits of highly effective people. We should establish goals for ourselves and strive to meet them.

But I realized that having too many goals diffuses our efforts. We look at the long list and get discouraged. We think it is all important and demands all of our attention.

It is better to have a more limited agenda. It is also better to have a style of life that allows us to put people first. Too often, our list-making crowds out our attention to people.

So the list of goals from 2008 went in the trash.

I have decided that I will have few goals but try to develop better habits.

First of all, I want to pay attention to people. When I think of them, especially old friends, I will try to drop them a note or make a phone call. There is some reason why they are popping into my mind.

This is especially true when people are sick and dying. I intend to visit friends who are close to death. I will want someone to visit me when my time comes.

Second, I will try to simplify my life. Having few things makes life more peaceful and simpler. I don’t plan any big housecleaning, but I plan consistently and persistently to give things away.

Third, I want to read and pray more. The stack of books by my bed will give way to only one book. Read that book and then move on to another. The breviary by my chair will stay open more and be the focus of the beginning and the end of my day.

Finally, I want peace.

That really is my only resolution this year. Do what brings the most peace into my life and the lives of the people around me. Too much anxious goal-setting can just raise the tension level.

So I begin this year with only one real resolution: I want peace with God and man.

There it is. That's enough.

Our Holy Father’s 2012 Monthly Intentions

FEBRUARY

General Intention: Access to Water. That all peoples may have access to water and other resources needed for daily life.

Missionary Intention: Health Workers. That the Lord may sustain the efforts of health workers assisting the sick and elderly in the world’s poorest regions.

MARCH

General Intention: Contribution of Women. That the whole world may recognize the contribution of women to the development of society.

Missionary Intention: Persecuted Christians. That the Holy Spirit may grant perseverance to those who suffer discrimination, persecution, or death for the name of Christ, particularly in Asia.

Daily Offering Prayer

Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary I offer you my prayers, works, joys and sufferings of this day in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world. I offer them for all the intentions of Your Sacred Heart: the salvation of souls, reparation for sin and the reunion of all Christians. I offer them for the intentions of our bishops and of all Apostles of Prayer, and in particular for those recommended by our Holy Father this month.

ANSWERS

Answers from Just 4 Kids Quiz, Pg. 15:
Daniel, Revelation, Peter, Habakkuk, Timothy, Galatians, Malachi, Isaiah
Archbishop's musings make one happy to be Catholic


Reviewed by Peggy Weber
Catholic News Service

In the introduction of "A People of Hope," John Allen quotes a woman from Westchester County in New York who was moved to tears after a visit by Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan to her parish.

She said, "I'm a lifelong Catholic, but the last few years, it's been so hard ... with the sex abuse scandals, with bishops who don't seem to listen, with all of it. I came tonight, not knowing what to expect, but this guy ... I don't know, somehow he just makes me feel good about being Catholic."

Her reaction in a parish hall is what readers will probably feel after finishing this interesting and entertaining book. One feels good about being Catholic and knowing the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops is being led by Archbishop Dolan as president. The archbishop will become a cardinal Feb. 19.

Even if one disagrees with Archbishop Dolan, one still has to like him. He is described by Allen at "affirmative orthodoxy on steroids."

Archbishop Dolan will not disagree with the Vatican. (Although he does say that if anyone had asked him about the current Vatican-sponsored visitation of American nuns he would have advised against it.) However, he also will not ostracize or deal meanly with those with whom he and the church disagree.

Archbishop Dolan says, "My hunch is that I'll have more luck trying to nudge them closer to what the church considers to be the truth if I'm in contact, in dialogue than if I'm standing off to the side tossing rhetorical bricks."

Allen does a splendid job of introducing Archbishop Dolan and probing his mind. Allen acknowledges that this book is not a biography. Rather it lets the reader into the thoughts and personality of the archbishop who was profiled on "60 Minutes" and is what one might call a "rising star" in the American Catholic Church.

Allen also gives the readers some "inside baseball" understanding of the topics of each chapter. Yet, he is very careful not to insert himself into the book. It is very clear that this is Archbishop Dolan's book.

Both Allen and the archbishop have a clear and likeable communication style. It might have been a nightmare to edit hours of interviews and appearances but the finished product seems polished and easy.

And the book truly contains many gems by Archbishop Dolan when asked about a variety of topics. For example, in the chapter about "Affirmative Orthodoxy," Archbishop Dolan says, "I worry that we've become a glorified Rotary Club. We're so stumbling over the how of Catholic life that I think we've lost the who, meaning Jesus."

Both authors show a keen sense of humor in their writing and responses. Although one of the best lines is when Archbishop Dolan quotes Hilaire Belloc saying, "I've come to reluctantly accept that the Roman Catholic Church must be divine, because no merely human institution governed by such imbecility could have survived a fortnight."

Although the book does not tell us too much about the life of Archbishop Dolan, it does provide some great insights into what has formed and shaped him -- his home parish, his education and years in Rome, his friendships.

However, Archbishop Dolan provides the most telling statement about his life. "To this day, I think of myself as a priest, not a bishop or archbishop, and there's nothing else I ever wanted to be."

His contentment and joy are apparent in this book. It is infectious and truly does make one feel good about being a Catholic.

Streep performs strong take on Thatcher in ‘The Iron Lady’

By Adam Shaw
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK -- The British market a brand of yeast spread called Marmite. Due to its overwhelmingly strong taste, its label carries the slogan "Love it or Hate it."

As a result of the visceral reactions, both pro and con, stirred by her controversial 1979-1990 tenure in office, former U.K. leader Margaret Thatcher -- now Baroness Thatcher -- has been described as the Marmite of prime ministers.

With critics describing her as nothing less than evil, and supporters naming her the greatest prime minister ever, it seems unlikely, in theory at least, that a fair portrayal of Thatcher's life on screen would even be possible. Yet, with the touching biopic, "The Iron Lady" (Weinstein), director Phyllida Lloyd has overcome the odds to achieve exactly that.

The film shuttles between the present day -- with the elderly Thatcher (Meryl Streep) suffering from a combination of dementia and short-term memory loss -- and a series of flashbacks recounting significant passages in the handbag-wielding ex-leader's life. The latter take in her humble beginnings as a provincial greengrocer's daughter, her romance with future husband Denis (Jim Broadbent) and her eventual expulsion from office at the hands of scheming opponents within her own Conservative Party. They're led by the stealthy Michael Heseltine (Richard E. Grant).

Along the way, Thatcher survives an assassination attempt, reclaims the Falkland Islands, and becomes the longest serving British premier of the 20th century. Events are portrayed in an evenhanded, nonpartisan manner, though some incidents are sensationalized for cinematic effect.

For example, there's the treatment of the tragic death of one of Thatcher's close colleagues, a member of Parliament killed by an Irish Republican Army car bomb. While this murder really took place, the script inaccurately puts Thatcher at the scene, hearing the explosion and desperately running toward the wreckage until restrained by a passer-by.

Viewers of faith will appreciate screenwriter Abi Morgan's sympathetic, dignified -- and, therefore, implicitly pro-life -- depiction of Thatcher's struggle with her current illness. She's presented as more enduringly perceptive, not to mention wily, than her worried relatives imagine.

Additionally, the moving relationship between husband and wife -- Denis Thatcher died in 2003, but is shown to be an enduring presence in his widow's damaged consciousness -- sends an unmistakably pro-family message. This marks a refreshing change from the increasingly common presentation of longtime married couples as bored and unfulfilled.

The emotions of the audience will be heightened also by the glorious performance of Streep, whose ability to step into the metaphorical shoes of the former Miss Roberts is so accurate that it borders on the frightening; it will be no surprise to cinema viewers that her performance has earned her an Academy Award nomination.
Vatican II at 50

Half a century of Vatican II, a year of faith, debate

By Francis X. Rocca
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY -- Fifty years ago this October, Blessed John XXIII and more than 2,500 bishops and heads of religious orders from around the world gathered in St. Peter's Basilica for the opening session of the Second Vatican Council.

Over the following three years, Vatican II would issue 16 major "pronouncements" on such fundamental questions as the authority of the church's hierarchy, the interpretation of Scripture, and the proper roles of clergy and laity. Those documents, and the deliberations that produced them, have transformed how the Catholic Church understands and presents itself within the context of modern secular culture and society.

Because Vatican II was one of the monumental events in modern religious history, its golden anniversary will naturally be the occasion for numerous commemorative events, including liturgical celebrations, publications and academic conferences.

At a Vatican II exhibition at Rome's Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, which opened in late January and will run until November 2013, the displays include original handwritten pages from Pope John's speech at the council's opening session, and a Vatican passport issued at the time to a young Polish bishop named Karol Wojtyla, the future Pope John Paul II.

Yet Vatican II is not merely of historical interest; it is very much a living issue in the church today.

Scholars still debate to what extent the council's achievements, in such areas as interfaith dialogue and liturgical reform, were organic developments in the church's history or radical breaks with the past. And clergy and laity alike differ over how expansively to apply the council's pronouncements, whether sticking closely to the letter of the documents or following a more broadly construed "spirit of Vatican II."

Pope Benedict XVI has rejected what he calls the "hermeneutics of discontinuity and rupture" in the present-day understanding of the council and has called instead for interpreting Vatican II as an instance of "renewal in continuity" with the church's 2,000 years of tradition.

Exploring and promoting that idea will be a major goal of the Year of Faith that begins this Oct. 11, exactly half a century to the day since Vatican II opened.

A relatively small but highly vocal number of Catholics reject the council altogether, charging among other things that subsequent changes to worship have undermined the solemnity of the Mass and that a growing openness to other religious conflicts with the need to proclaim salvation through Jesus Christ alone. The most prominent such group, the Society of St. Pius X, effectively broke with Rome in 1988, when its founder, the late French Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, ordained four bishops without approval from the pope.

Pope Benedict has made reconciliation with the traditionalist society a priority of his pontificate. He lifted restrictions on the traditional Latin Mass, now called the extraordinary form, in 2007. Less than two years later, he removed the excommunications of the four illicitly ordained bishops. And last fall, the Vatican held out the possibility of making the group a personal prelature if a full reconciliation is reached. A prelature is somewhat like a global diocese, a status currently held only by Opus Dei.

As a condition of reconciliation, though, the Vatican has asked the society to give its assent to a summary of certain non-negotiable doctrines. These have not been made public, but they presumably include the major teachings of Vatican II.

Though the ongoing dialogue between the Vatican and the society remains confidential, both sides have recently published documents that give insights into their respective positions.

In early December, L'Osservatore Romano, the Vatican newspaper, published an article by Msgr. Fernando (Please See VATICAN II/21)

Confession: Celebration of mercy, not trial before prosecution

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- Priests hearing confessions need to replace any negative or aggressive attitudes with meekness and mercy toward the penitent, said a Vatican expert on confession.

The sacrament of reconciliation "has led to a unilateral overemphasis on the accusation and listing of sins," said Bishop Gianfranco Girotti, regent of the Apostolic Penitentiary, a Vatican court that handles issues related to the sacrament of penance.

The end result is that "the thing that is absolutely central when listening to sin, that is, the blessed embrace of the merciful Father, is put on the backburner," he said.

The Italian bishop's comments, published Jan. 28 in the Vatican newspaper L'Osservatore Romano, were made in his address to a symposium for confessors held in Loreto, Italy.

"Isn't it true perhaps that at times confession takes on the semblance of a prosecuting tribunal rather than a celebration of forgiveness," and that the conversation takes on "inquisitorial or, in any case, indelicate tones," he asked.

A confessor is first and foremost a father who welcomes, listens and engages in dialogue, he said.

People going to confession "are seeking comfort, advice and forgiveness," he said. Often they are dealing with problems in their personal life or in their relationships; concerns about contraception, separation or divorce; or difficulties between parent and child, he said.

"As confessors we are called to show mercy and hope, to be fathers more than judges, to take on the penitent's pain and listen with much patience," he said.

"All of this has nothing to do with being lax or permissive," he said, "rather it focuses on the inner liberation of the penitent," their feelings of remorse and repentance, and facilitating their reception of judgment, grace and mercy from God.

Bishop Girotti said a confessor "would commit a serious injustice" if he dared let his judgment and advice to the penitent be influenced more by his own personal opinions and viewpoints than by church teaching and doctrine.
addressing his complaints point by point. There were so many opportunities to do so in a civil manner.

I explained Bishop Pfeifer’s schedule and why the Pro-life rosary of January 20 had to be prayed on a Friday. Regarding another concern (one that I did not print here) that the man had regarding the Church’s welcoming of gays and lesbians, I told him that while the Catholic Church doesn’t sanction gay or lesbian groups, neither do we stand guard at the door in order to prevent sinners from entering. If we did, our churches would be empty and no one would be able to participate in the great and wonderful mystery of the Mass and the opportunity to give praise and thanks to God.

The man’s concerns about how Catholics worship or, in his words, idolize, Mary are as old as the Immaculate Conception itself and I explained to the man that if he would consult the Gospel according to St. Luke, he would find the first stanza of the Hail Mary. The remainder is simply a request that the Blessed Mother simply intercede on our behalf. If anyone who has walked this earth has Jesus’ ear in heaven, it should be his own mother.

It has always been easy to explain to others the whole worship Mary notion by saying simply that we don’t worship her, yet we do have a devotion to her and we ask her to pray for us just like you would ask your neighbor or friend or family member to pray for you.

As for the man’s concerns that Catholics have ownership of the Pro-Life movement, I can’t deny that that would likely be a commonly held belief. We can’t and shouldn’t back away from that.

I’m not quite so certain that the Pro-life movement has officially become a Catholic organization (there are people of many denominations involved in the pro-life effort, at least in Midland), I wrote to the man. I would, however, be quick to admit, that Catholics have become much more active in Pro-Life issues, as a Church, than our protestant friends.

There is no judgment or malice intended in that statement, it is simply a matter of what we as Catholics feel called to stand up for. Catholics would be delighted if we could one day wake up and find the Pro-life movement has become as universally embraced in other churches. With a larger voice encompassing Christians of all practices, we would be more unified and much stronger in the fight against this devastating, immoral choice.

My objective was to address the man’s concerns civilly, so as not to belittle him but to simply correct where correction was needed. If he learned a little about us, then that was just gravy.

I never heard back from the man, so I am left only to assume that he was either enlightened with my responses, or further displeased. I really don’t know which.

This episode reminded me of another email I received recently from a good friend of mine, I sent the following response:

When the wedding was finally over and we were leaving the church I leaned over to Bill and said, ‘Bill I can’t believe it, you folks are just like ordinary people.’

Spanish programming
Las estaciones de radio en las tres deaneries de la diócesis de nuevo están transmitiendo programas regulares en español cada fin de semana por las mañanas. Las siguientes son las estaciones y el horario donde usted puede escuchar EWTN y otros esfuerzos de programaciones católicos en español en Abilene, Midland-Odessa y San Angelo:

- Abilene – KKKH (106.3 FM) está transmitiendo La Hora Católica de EWTN en español los domingos a las 10 a.m.
- Midland-Odessa – Padre Gilberto Rodríguez, el Vicario Parroquial de la parroquia San Esteban (St. Stephen’s Church) de Midland, presenta el programa los sábados desde las 5-10 a.m. en KQLM (108 FM) con entrevista cada sábado con el Obispo Miguel Pfeifer, OMI a las 8:45 a.m. Además, La Hora Católica de EWTN se puede escuchar los domingos a las 7 a.m.
- San Ángel – KSJT en San Ángelo está transmitiendo La Hora Católica de EWTN los domingos a las 7 a.m.

EWTN Spanish programming
Radio stations in all three of the deaneries of the diocese are again running regular weekly programming on weekend mornings. The following is the stations and times where you can hear EWTN and other Spanish-programming efforts in Abilene, Midland-Odessa and San Angelo:

- Abilene – KKKH (106.3 FM) is airing EWTN’s Catholic Hour in Spanish, Sundays at 10 a.m.
- Midland-Odessa – Fr. Gilbert Rodriguez, parochial vicar at St. Stephen’s Church in Midland, hosts a Saturday program from 5-10 a.m. on KQLM (108 FM). Additionally, EWTN Catholic programming can be heard Sundays at 7 a.m.
- San Angelo – KSJT in San Angelo is airing EWTN’s Catholic Hour Sundays at 7 a.m.
Ministry of The Third Cross celebrates Christmas Eve Mass at Jackson facility

By Rev. Tom Barley
Ministry of the Third Cross

BROWNWOOD — On Christmas Eve 2011, three members of Ministry of the Third Cross went to the Ron Jackson TJJD girls’ facility in Brownwood to celebrate Christmas Eve with a Mass with the Catholic residents of the facility. Sixteen girls attended the Mass with Fr. Tom Barley, Deacon Andy Gonzalez, and Lupe Gonzalez of MOTC and Deacon William Brady of St. Mary’s Church in Brownwood. At the end of Mass goodbyes were said to those who were being released from the facility soon. The Deacons of St. Mary’s Church offer a Catholic Service each Saturday for the Catholic residents. MOTC will continue to follow up with the releases to mentor the girls back into their communities. Another MOTC Volunteer, Jessica Gallegos, had visited with several residents earlier that morning, but was not able to stay for the Mass. She had said that the girls she had visited were looking forward to the Mass. Afterwards the Team met with five of the residents who are preparing for Baptism to urge them to complete the correspondence baptismal preparation course before Easter 2012.

Homemade cookies and fudge was shared with the girls. Spending time with these girls reminds the MOTC volunteers how simple pleasures can be so important to those who are away from family during the time of celebrating the Nativity of our Savior. The same experience also reminds that when one gives in love, more is received by the giver than can ever be given. During the Advent season all around the Diocese, many other Catholics ministering to the needs of others spent countless hours in various activities giving to others sharing the Reason for the Season from their hearts. Our Bishop’s main ministry is Pro-Life. This is certainly one way to be pro-life, by being pro-dignity of all life. In February the MOTC Women’s Team will return to Ron Jackson for a Reunion with the MOTC girls.

VATICAN II

(From 19)

Ocariz, the second-highest official of Opus Dei and a participant in talks with the Society of St. Pius X.

In the article, Msgr. Ocariz insisted that all the teachings of Vatican II require nothing less than “religious submission of intellect and will,” and that even the council’s apparent innovations in doctrine are properly understood as in continuity with tradition. But he also emphasized that “there remains legitimate room for theological freedom” in interpreting them.

Later the same month, Father Jean-Michel Gleize, a theologian who has represented the society in discussions with the Vatican, published a response to Msgr. Ocariz’s article. Perhaps the most striking part of Father Gleize’s argument was his rejection of the hermeneutic of continuity as overly “subjective” and neglectful of the “unity of the truth” necessary in church teaching. That would seem to suggest an endorsement of the hermeneutic of rupture usually associated with the council’s most progressive champions.

Reading such an exchange, it’s not easy to believe that the Year of Faith will end with anything like a Catholic consensus on the meaning of Vatican II. But as someone well known to think in terms of centuries, Pope Benedict will surely be neither surprised nor discouraged by the continuing debate.

KOMEN

(From 16)

Komen, told The Associated Press Feb. 1 that the organization’s decision to end its relationship with Planned Parenthood was based on a new policy that says grants cannot be given to organizations that are being investigated by government authorities, whether it is at the state, local or federal level.

In the new statement, Brinker said the group’s goal in the grant process “is to support women and families in the fight against breast cancer. Amending our criteria will ensure that politics has no place in our grant process. We will continue to fund existing grants, including those of Planned Parenthood, and preserve their eligibility to apply for future grants, while maintaining the ability of our affiliates to make funding decisions that meet the needs of their communities.”

She also added that the organization hopes everyone involved will be able "to pause, slow down and reflect on how grants can most effectively and directly be administered without controversies that hurt the cause of women. We urge everyone who has participated in this conversation across the country over the last few days to help us move past this issue. We do not want our mission marred or affected by politics -- anyone's politics."

In a letter to Congress last April urging lawmakers to exclude from the federal budget any funding for Planned Parenthood or its affiliates, Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston called the federation "by far the largest provider and promoter of abortions nationwide."

The cardinal, chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities, said that Planned Parenthood also has opposed "any meaningful limits on abortion, including modest measures such as public funding bans, informed consent provisions and parental notice requirements on unemancipated minors."

In recent years, the St. Louis Archdiocese and several other U.S. dioceses have asked Catholic groups to suspend support for Komen, citing its contributions to Planned Parenthood and the fact the foundation does not exclude the possibility of funding research that uses embryonic stem cells.

Annual Diocesan Liturgy Day March 31

The Angelus

MIDLAND — The Annual Diocesan Liturgy Day will be held from 9 a.m.-4 p.m., March 31.

The theme of this year’s Liturgy Day is “The Roman Missal and its implications on ‘liturgical Ministries’ within the Gathered Assembly.”

The workshop will be held at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish and Shrine, 1401 Garden Lane in Midland. This workshop is designed for altar servers, ministers of hospitality, Eucharistic ministers, lectors, choir members, ushers, presiders, deacons, sacristans and priests.

Information on the speaker(s) will follow soon. Cost is $15, which includes lunch.

A registration form for the workshop is printed below, please complete this for each member of the appropriate parish staff and ministries and return to Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish and Shrine, Annual Diocesan Liturgy Day, 1401 E. Garden Lane, Midland, TX, 79701.

If you have any questions please contact Fr. Ed de Leon, OMI at (432) 682-2581 or edlomi@aol.com.
**INDULGENCES**

(From 10)

Furthermore, sin disrupts one’s relationships with God, with the Church, with other people, and with the world as a whole. The communion intended by God is damaged or lost. Those who have received forgiveness for their sins still have an obligation to undergo a difficult and painful process (the temporal penalty for sin) to be purified of the consequences of their sins and to restore the disrupted relationships. The necessary and painful process that brings restoration and purification can take place either in this life or in Purgatory, as whatever part of the process remains unfinished at death must be completed in Purgatory. In this regard, the Church’s teaching on purification and indulgences is based on the biblical belief that no one can enter into eternal life with God until all sin and its effects are removed.

Through an indulgence, God grants the prayer of the Church that the temporal penalty for sin due to someone be reduced (or possibly eliminated). By God’s grace, participation in a prayer or action that has an indulgence attached to it brings about the necessary restoration and reparation without the suffering that would normally accompany it. The granting of an indulgence by the Church is “the expression of the Church’s full confidence of being heard by the Father when – in view of Christ’s merits and, by his gift, those of Our Lady and the Saints – she asks him to mitigate or cancel the painful aspect of punishment by fostering its medicinal aspect through other channels of grace.”

How can indulgences remove some or all of the temporal punishment for sin?

It is because of the communion of saints that this can take place. Although we always have to face the consequences of our sins in the form of the temporal punishment for sin, that is, the painful process of restoration and reparation, as members of the Body of Christ we are never simply on our own. We are linked with Christ and with the martyrs and saints and can benefit from their holiness in such a way as to be freed from at least a portion of the temporal punishment for sin. “In this wonderful exchange, the holiness of one profits others, well beyond the harm that the sin of one could cause others.”

As a result of the communion that exists among all the members of the church, living or dead, and with Christ, the Church has a treasury of spiritual goods that is inexhaustible. The source of these spiritual goods is Christ. Pope Paul VI taught that this treasury of the Church is not to be likened to a centuries-old accumulation of material wealth. It means rather the limitless and inexhaustible value that the expiations and merits offered by Christ have in the eyes of God for the liberation of all humanity from sin and for the creation of communion with the Father. The treasury of the Church is Christ the Redeemer himself: in him the atonement and merit of his redemption exist and are at work.

Through her union with Christ, the Church has the authority to dispense this treasury. When the Church does this, in order to spur people to acts of piety and charity, the Church requires those who seek an indulgence to perform some good work or act of devotion. Furthermore, for reception of a plenary indulgence, granting the remission of all temporal punishment because of sin, in addition to this good work or act of devotion, the Church specifies four conditions: 1) sacramental confession; 2) reception of communion; 3) prayer for the intentions of the Holy Father; and 4) complete detachment from all sin, even venial sin. It must not be thought, however, that such acts of ours are somehow of themselves sufficient to earn the remission of the temporal punishment for sins. The one who receives an indulgence receives much more than he or she gives. It is always God’s grace that is primary, with a power that far exceeds all our efforts.

How can we help the deceased though indulgences?

Just as it is because of the communion of saints in the body of Christ that the Church can grant an indulgence to someone, it is likewise because of the communion of saints that one person can obtain an indulgence for someone who has died in order to reduce his or her temporal punishment in Purgatory. We the living are not separated from the faithful departed by death and can still do things for their benefit. As Pope John Paul II has pointed out, “the truth about the communion of saints which unites believers to Christ and to one another, reveals how much each of us can help others – living or dead – to become ever more intimately united with the Father in heaven.” At the same time, all of us in the communion of saints need to recognize that whatever help we can give each other ultimately comes not from ourselves but from Christ.

**CLM**

(From 4)

Aaron said the name of the office and building is intentional, noting that “Choose Life, Midland” is a proclamation stating fully and clearly the intentions of the occupants and those who use the facility.

The building will in no way serve as competition to other pro-life causes, such as The Life Center.

“This is more of an in-the-trenches, activist side of pro-life,” said Alan Aaron, who has helped his wife Gina and the others make the purchase of the building become a reality.

“We’re sidewalk counseling, we educate in the schools, in public, in marches. This will enable us to do an even better job.”

Gina Aaron said the purchase of the building will also help pro-life volunteers fulfill the wishes of the bishop’s pro-life objectives. Aaron said with the property, volunteers and counselors can get those considering abortion inside, out of the elements, sit them down and talk to them and make them realize they are loved and cared for.

Aaron said since they purchased Choose Life, Midland, in November 2011, workers at Planned Parenthood had called the Midland Police on them three times. Aaron also sent an invitation for the new building’s Christmas Open House to the Planned Parenthood staff. None attended.

“A friend of mine said if we bought it outright, it could become more of an ecumenical thing, something that is separate from the diocese, which is what we wanted,” Msgr. Bridges said.

Not only were enough funds raised to buy the building, but also to gut it and remodel it.

“The building gives the prolife movement a visible foothold in the community against the evil of abortion,” Aaron said. “CLM, Inc. welcomes everyone who is interested in stopping the killing of the unborn and helping those recover from taking part in such a tragedy.”

**HONORS**

(From 1)

(“For service to the Church and Pope”) on one priest and three women religious who are members of religious orders working in the Diocese of San Angelo, and on deacons and lay people of the diocese and others. The medal is given to those who have served the Church and the Pope many years with loyalty and in an exemplary manner.

Bishop Pfeifer nominated all of the recipients for the honors. In his letter of nomination, he asked the Holy Father to bestow the papal medal on the religious order priests, women religious, deacons and lay people for their many years of dedicated service to the Diocese of San Angelo.

Bishop Pfeifer requested the high Papal honors for Very Rev. Louie Lougen, OMI, for his long and outstanding missionary service with the Oblates in Brazil and his great leadership as Provincial of the Oblate community of the USA and now as Superior General in Rome.

Mr. and Mrs. Tom Benson of the New Orleans Saints have been long time friends and great generous benefactors of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, especially in San Antonio, Texas, for more than 50 years.

Bishop Pfeifer points out that he requested the highest Papal honors of Pro Ecclesia et Pontifici for all honorees, but the Vatican limits it to a certain number of people and then bestows other Papal honors.
The Angelus

SONOGRAM

(From 5)

What They’re Saying

"These consultations save lives by educating mothers who may
not realize that the child in their womb is exactly that -- a unique,
irreplaceable human life."

-- Cardinal Daniel DiNardo

Several states require ultrasounds as part of abortion procedures, according to the Guttmacher Institute. Eleven states require verbal counseling or written materials to include information on accessing ultrasound services. Six states (not including Texas) mandate that an abortion provider perform an ultrasound on each woman seeking an abortion, and require the provider to offer the woman the opportunity to view the image.

Texas Gov. Rick Perry signed the Texas Sonogram Law last May as a stronger version of the 2003 Texas Woman’s Right to Know Act.

ROMMEL

(From 15)

to her spine as well.

When she received her diagnosis, she remained calm as she learned she had only a 30 percent chance of surviving two years. It wasn’t until they said the treatment would leave her unable to have children that she became upset.

Jenni began intense radiation therapy and chemotherapy. She started a channel on YouTube to post video updates about her condition. She became an apprentice at a local tattoo parlor. She remained with her boyfriend, who she had just begun dating weeks before her diagnosis.

Doctors saw signs of hope as the tumors shrank, but treatment took a toll. At Jenni’s prom at Pocatello High School in Idaho last May, her long blond hair had disappeared, what remained was barely an inch long.

Around that time, she began throwing up and experienced sharp stomach pains. She went to the emergency room with her boyfriend and learned she was pregnant -- something doctors had said was almost impossible.

Before meeting her oncologist, Jenni, the girl who didn’t get upset when she learned she had cancer but did when she learned she wouldn’t have children, had made her decision. She was going to keep the baby.

That left her doctor with no choice. He stopped her cancer treatments.

As time passed, Jenni became weaker. On Nov. 9, she gave birth to Chad Michael, a strong, healthy boy named after his parents’ fathers.

The next day, doctors gave Jenni and her family the worst news imaginable, the cancer had advanced too far and there was nothing they could do.

Jenni went home be with her baby in the time she had left. Twelve days later, she died. Her last words came as she held Chad in her arms. “I can kind of see him,” she said.

Some people can hear Jenni’s story and debate whether she did the right thing. I’m not one of them and neither was she.

Before the delivery, Jenni told her nurse: “I did what I was supposed to do. My baby is going to get here safe.”

Jenni took a 30 percent chance of life for herself and turned it into a 100 percent chance for her son.

NEJM

(From 7)

evidence for both medical abortion and surgical termination, leaving the physician reader to decide which procedure was the preferable “treatment” for an unwanted pregnancy.

This review in America’s most prestigious medical journal concluded by saying, “The patient described in the vignette, with a pregnancy at 9 weeks of gestation, should be offered the choice of a medical or surgical abortion.” There was no discussion of the moral and the ethical issues involved in the killing of a 9-week old human being. Likewise, there was no discussion of non-lethal options such as adoption following a term pregnancy.

“I’m sorry; I just have trouble understanding where my profession has come since I took the Hippocratic Oath so long ago. After reading this review, I can no longer be part of the silent medical majority. As physicians, we all take the oath that was first administered by the Greek physician Hippocrates in the 5th century before Christ. That oath says, “I will respect every human life from fertilization to natural death and reject abortion that deliberately takes a unique human life.”

In the season of Christmas, we celebrate the birth of Christ. Like the clinical vignette in the NEJM, I am reminded that Christ was once in Mary’s womb, stirring with life. It is sad that we live in a time in which the sanctity of life is no longer held precious, even by the medical profession. In this season of Christmas we are reminded of the preciousness of life.

HEALTH

(From 6)

with patients to assisting with fundraising.

Start a walk group. There’s motivation in numbers! If you have a hard time exercising regularly, consider joining even one other person to walk at a local park, mall or around the block.

Talk about health. If you are a medical professional or advocate for awareness of a particular health cause, contact your local school or church to see if you can offer your expertise by speaking to a group of students or parishioners. Your message could possibly change lives!

Gather all of the important health information pertaining to the people in your family (including yourself) and make it easily accessible in the event of a medical emergency. Besides, taking the mystery out of medications and understanding illness histories can save lives!

Embrace days of abstinence. Meals on the Fridays during Lent don’t have to be dull or tasteless. Engage the whole family in learning new and nutritious ways to cook meatless meals, and apply that knowledge and enthusiasm beyond Lent.

Create beauty where it is sorely needed. This has been an especially hard winter for many people. As spring returns, there will be opportunities to cleanup the debris left behind by winter storms. We can also prepare our neighborhoods for the beauty that is God’s world as it warms and grows.

Spread joy – the joy you have in your faith and in fellowship with others. In a world so fraught with devastation, sorrow and illness, there is a huge place for compassion and positive actions that lift and inspire. So spreading joy is a healing balm that there can never be enough of!
Dioce-Scenes

San Angelo

Bishop Michael Pfeifer, center, is presented a check from Knights of Columbus State Deputy Tony Herrath, right, and Diocesan Deputy Don Piwonka, left, at a meeting of K of C council officers of the diocese January 21, 2012. The check for $9,314 represented 70 percent of diocesan council contributions to the K of C State Charities fund. The bishop has designated the funds to be used for Pro-Life, Seminarian Education & Training, and Lay Leaders Support and Development.

Rowena

Three second grade CCD students representing the Three Kings present the offertory gifts to Father Ariel Lagunilla, pastor, during Christmas Eve Mass at St. Joseph Church in Rowena.

Odessa

Father Mark Woodruff, above left, and at right in photo at right, dedicates and blesses a new collection of handbells at his church, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, in Odessa. Parishioners at St. Elizabeth raised more than $17,000 during the Church's recent “Give-A-Bell” campaign. The set is a 4-octave, high-quality instrument from the world-renowned handbell manufacturer, Malmark. The effort was headed up by St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Music Director Christopher Wilcox, middle in photo at right. (Handbell photos by Alan P. Torre / aptorre.com)