The Resignation of Pope Benedict XVI

Pope Benedict XVI announced his resignation in February, citing his frail health. The decision was historic in the Church (CNS Photo).

Pope asks prayers in these 'unusual' days for Catholic Church

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Calling this an unusual time for him and for the church — but not specifically mentioning his resignation — Pope Benedict XVI thanked people for their affection and asked them to continue their prayers.

A roar of applause rose up from more than 50,000 people gathered in St. Peter's Square Feb. 17 as Pope Benedict came to his studio window to lead the Angelus prayer.

(Please See BENEDICT/21)

Pope’s decision shows courageous love for Church

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

Like the whole world, especially the leaders of our Roman Catholic Church, I was surprised, but not totally, by the sudden decision of Pope Benedict XVI to offer his resignation as Supreme Pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church. While it was rather sudden and not expected at this moment, I had suspected over the past year that one day soon Pope Benedict XVI, because of advancing age and health issues, would relinquish the Petrine ministry, as Pope, for our Catholic Church. I was with Pope Benedict XVI

(Please See RESIGNATION/23)
From the Bishop’s Desk

**The message of the Easter Season remains: ‘He is alive!’**

By Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI

Seven reasons the Easter message is ‘alive’:

1 – “He is alive!” This is the joyful message of Easter. Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, who suffered and gave his life for us on the cross, rose from the dead as he promised and is alive and present in our world today. This is the joyful mystery which the church proclaims to all the world as we celebrate the greatest feast of Christian faith, the resurrection of Jesus Christ on Easter. Jesus has risen from the dead and has conquered our worst enemies, death, sin and Satan who brought about the fall of our first parents. Because of the death of Christ and his resurrection, the right order has been restored in the universe, and we are called to be people of hope, people of life and love.

2 – The good news of Easter is not primarily about a set of teachings. The good news is about a person, who suffered and died and rose again for our salvation—Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

3 – Our religion focuses not primarily on creeds and commands, but our religion focuses on a living person, our Risen Savior, Jesus Christ, who is with us always and assures us that we can overcome every evil if we trust in him. The Risen Christ is not past history; the Risen Christ is alive and with us today. He rose from the dead and will never die again and he invites us to have eternal life with our God in heaven.

4 – The resurrection of Christ is not about a return to life. Rather, it is a transformation of all of life. It is a fulfillment; it is our finally becoming what God first intended us to be. This transformation is possible because Jesus took on our sinful nature and restored us by his victory over death, a victory that he constantly shares with us.

5 – Easter is about celebrating the greatest event of our Christian life. It is about the triumph of love and about celebrating and using the new power of life that Jesus offers us each day. Easter is about light overcoming darkness and can affect every part of our lives if we let it. Easter is all about the need to choose love over fear. It is about

(Please See EASTER/22)

**DIOCESAN BRIEFS**

**Fatima, Lourdes pilgrimage with Msgr. Voity**

Msgr. Maurice Voity, rector of Sacred Heart Cathedral in San Angelo, and veteran pilgrimage leader, is happy to announce a special **YEAR OF FAITH PILGRIMAGE to FATIMA AND LOURDES**, August 5-14, 2013. In addition to the great Marian Shrines at Fatima, Portugal, and Lourdes, France, pilgrims will visit Santiago de Compostela, Leon and Burgos, and the Way of St. James in Spain. This will be an especially spiritual and moving event for all the participants, and we expect to celebrate Mass at a different site each day. Lodging will be in 3 and 4-star hotels with private baths. Departure by coach from San Angelo and Abilene, and flying from DFW. The pilgrimage includes breakfast and supper daily. Current cost is only $3,395 per person in double occupancy (subject to change if air taxes and fuel charges are increased). Space is extremely limited, so make your reservation as soon as possible. For more information, or to receive a booking form, contact Sacred Heart Cathedral at 325-658-6567, or email Msgr. Voity at mvoity@hotmail.com.

**Pope John Paul II exhibit in Lubbock thru May**

LUBBOCK — Lubbock is the first city in the U.S. that has been chosen by the Vatican to host an exhibit honoring one of the world’s most influential leaders, Pope John Paul II. Lubbock will kick off the U.S. tour of “I Have Come to You Again” — a public exhibit of the personal artifacts of His Holiness, Blessed Pope John Paul II. The exhibit will be in Lubbock March 15-May 31, 2013 at The Catholic Renewal Center located at 4620 4th St. The exhibit will feature more than 130 of Pope John Paul II’s personal artifacts and memorabilia. Items on display will come from the Vatican Collections, located in Rome, as well as from the Pope John Paul II Center in Krakow, Poland. These artifacts will include personal belongings from his time as pope — documents, pictures and personal items received while he served as a world leader.

To purchase tickets and view hours of operation, visit www.nationalexhibits.org or www.startickets.com.

**Therapeutic riding classes offered**

SAN ANGELO — Sonrisas Therapeutic Riding has begun its therapeutic horseback riding classes for the spring semester. The classes will run through Thursday, April 25. Classes are held at 9, 10, 11 a.m., and 1 p.m. on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. While riding classes are offered during the daytime hours, many 8-5 workers over the years have used lunch periods to volunteer an hour or so.

Sonrisas (Spanish for ‘smiles’) provides horseback riding therapy to the physically, mentally, and emotionally challenged. The program could not exist without the assistance of volunteers to lead horses, sidewalk our children, and provide audio-visual and administrative support. This is a unique and rewarding volunteer opportunity because it involves helping challenged riders while getting exercise in the outdoors and working with horses. Rewards include seeing our rider’s smile, being inspired by people who are overcoming their challenges, making new friends in a team work environment and a great sense of accomplishment.

No previous experience with horses or working with the physically, mentally or emotionally challenged is necessary, just the desire to help others. The Sonrisas complex, 167 Lakeview Heroes Dr., is on the far Northeast corner of the Fairgrounds (next to the water towers) about 2/10ths of a mile from the intersection of 50th Street and Grape Creek Road in San Angelo. Potential volunteers must be at least sixteen years old. There is no upper age limit. Call 949-4837 for alternate training options.

**EDICTAL SUMMONS**

February 26, 2013
CASE: JIMENEZ -- VIRGEN
NO.: SO 13/06

The Tribunal Office of the Catholic Diocese of San Angelo is seeking Eduardo “Edward” Gauna Virgen. You are hereby summoned to appear before the Tribunal of the Catholic Diocese of San Angelo, at 804 Ford Street, San Angelo, Texas 76905, on or before April 1, 2013, to answer to the Petition of Dorothy Ann Jimenez, now introduced before the Diocesan Tribunal in an action styled, “Dorothy Jimenez and Edward Virgen, Petition for Declaration of Invalidity of Marriage.” Said Petition is identified as Case: JIMENEZ -- VIRGEN; Protocol No.: SO 13/06, on the Tribunal Docket of the Diocese of San Angelo.

You may communicate with the Tribunal in person or by writing. Failure to communicate within the prescribed period of time will be considered your consent for the Tribunal to continue its proceedings in the above-named case.

Given at the Tribunal of the Diocese of San Angelo this the 26th day of February 2013.

Reverend Tom Barley
MSW, MBA, M. Div.,JCL
Judicial Vicar
**MARCH 2013**

---

**From the Editor**

**MLB’s perpetually inescapable problem**

_By Jimmy Patterson_

Twenty-four years ago, A. Bartlett Giamatti, who, because of a fatal heart attack served as baseball’s commissioner for far too short a time, banned Pete Rose for life for betting on baseball games in which he was involved. It was a sin Rose at first denied, and then denied again and again. Years later he would finally admit his wrong when he had exhausted all hope of regaining his stature. Who knew his actions (lying, cheating, etc.) would come to be repeated time and again by any number of modern day sports figures, athletes once held in high esteem but who never had any intentions of entering their chosen sport to become simple, lowly role models.

February again brought the news that another round of banned substance users is about to sully the game of baseball again. Alex Rodriguez’s name is there (again), and there are many others. Texas Ranger Nellie Cruz is on the list and so surprise is no longer a reaction when the subject is banned substances in baseball, does it and who doesn’t. As soon as baseball perceptively frees itself from one scandal, another sad chapter to a once-honorable sport begins.

Don’t be mistaken, the game itself should continue to be honored for all the fine examples on and off the field that have come before. Musial. Clemente. Robinson. Gehrig. The list of fine — even decent, good — characters who were also the greatest at their sport far outnumber the narcissistic ne’er do well who cloud and clog the sports blotter today.

Perhaps we should create a new 21st century version of the phrase: “Hate the sin, love the sinner.” What comes first to mind is “Love the sport, suffer those who will tarnish it at whatever cost for their own selfish motives.” But that’s probably a little wordy, however accurate. Baseball is not an ‘I’ sport, just one attribute of the beloved game that none of those who cheat can ever begin to comprehend. They place no value or have no understanding of playing well with others, for others.

Lance Armstrong can say what he wants about taking banned sub-

(Please See PATTERSON/22)

---

**Del Escritorio del Obispo**

**El mensaje de la pascua es: ‘el esta vivo!’**

_By Bishop Miguel Pfeifer OMI_

1 — “Él está vivo!” Este es el mensaje gozoso de la Pascua. Jesucristo, nuestro Señor y Salvador, quien resucitó de la muerte tal como prometió y está vivo y presente en nuestro mundo hoy. Este es el misterio de regocijo que la Iglesia lo grita a todo el mundo al celebrar la fiesta más grande de la cristianidad, la resurrección de Jesucristo en la Pascua.

Jesucristo ha resucitado de entre los muertos y ha conquistado nuestros peores enemigos, la muerte, el pecado y Satanás quien causó la caída a nuestros primeros padres. Es por la muerte de Cristo y luego Su resurrección, que el orden correcto se ha restaurado en el universo, y somos llamados a ser gente de esperanza, gente de vida y amor.

2 — Las buena nueva de la Pascua no es principalmente de ciertas enseñanzas. La buena nueva es de una persona, quien sufrió y murió y resucitó de nuevo para nuestra salvación — Jesucristo nuestro Señor y Salvador.

3 — Nuestra religión se enfoca no solamente en credos, cultos y manantiales, más bien, nuestra religión se enfoca en una persona viva, nuestro Salvador Resucitado, Jesucristo, quien siempre está con nosotros y nos asegura que podemos vencer cualquier mal si confiamos en Él. El Cristo Resucitado no es de la historia pasada; el Cristo Resucitado está vivo y con nosotros hoy. Él resucitó de entre los muertos y jamás morirá de nuevo y en él nos invita a tener vida eterna con nuestro Dios en el cielo.

4 — La resurrección de Cristo no es de volver a vida. Más bien, es de una total transformación de toda la vida. Es una culminación; llegar por fin a ser lo que Dios quería que fuéramos desde el principio. Esta transformación es posible porque Jesús tomó nuestra naturaleza pecaminosa y nos restauró por medio de su victoria sobre la muerte, una victoria que Él constantemente comparte con nosotros.

5 — La Pascua es para celebrar el evento más grande de nuestra vida cristiana. Se trata del triunfo de amor y de celebrar y usar el nuevo poder de vida que Jesús nos ofrece cada día. La Pascua se trata de la luz venciendo la obscuridad y puede afectar cada parte de nuestras vidas si la dejamos.

La Pascua se trata de la necesidad de escoger el amor sobre el miedo. Se trata del regocijo triunfante verdadero que supera las cosas terrenales y mundanas que no son duraderas.

6 — Es por la resurrección de Cristo que somos gente de la Pascua cada día del año porque nuestro Cristo Resucitado está vivo y con nosotros constantemente invitándonos a compartir en su nueva vida y esperanza, especialmente en la Eucaristía. La resurrección de Jesucristo nos otorga su felicidad, esperanza y sanación, misericordia y paz, y nos llama a abrir nuestros corazones a recibir estos dones maravillosos por medio de aceptar el perdón de Dios y compartir este perdón y misericordia con otros.

7 — En la Fiesta de la Pascua y la temporada de la Pascua, damos alabanza y gracias, y adoramos a Cristo por todo lo que Él hizo para consu-

murar la muerte, el pecado y darnos nueva vida. Cuando hacemos esto, entonces la Pascua se trata de transformación, nueva vida, renacimiento y resurrección. Al hacer esto, estamos manteniendo vivo el significado verdadero de la resurrección de Jesucristo, y trayendo nueva esperanza, fe y animo para hacer un mundo mejor.
Water Day observance stresses precious natural resource, international cooperation

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

The theme of this year’s World Water Day – March 22, 2013 – and of the entire World Water Week is Water Cooperation. Water Cooperation has multiple dimensions including cultural, educational, scientific, religious, ethical, social, political, legal and economic aspects. The multiple dimensions all stress the importance of water for life, how we must work for greater conservation and availability of this gift, and work out a holistic vision and plans of water cooperation at all levels.

World Water Day calls our attention not only to our own local water situation, but also to the importance for all people presently living on our planet earth. Drought caused more deaths during the last century than any other natural disaster, and Asia and Africa rank first among continents in the number of people directly affected. Water scarcity already affects every continent and more than 40% of the people on our planet. By 2025, 1.8 billion people will be living in countries or regions with absolute water scarcity, and two-thirds of the world’s population could be living under water-stressed conditions.

Here in West Texas, because of the constant drought of recent years, we have been visibly made aware of the great need to work together to care for the water God has given us, and to work out plans of sharing this gift with others. Thank God our Texas Legislature is seriously discussing a water infrastructure bank. A State Water Plan must include investment in water capture, treatment and conservation to meet the drought needs and the rapidly growing population.

World Water Day was first observed in 1993 when the United Nations General Assembly declared March 22 as World Day for Water. Because of the tremendous importance of water for all life on planet earth, the importance of this Day has grown significantly ever since, but much more attention needs to be given today in all places and all times about how we can best use the essential life-giving gift of water. This is a time for continued dialogue in all of our communities about ways of preserving and providing the life-giving gift of water for all people now, and into the future. Building a consensus on Water Cooperation is a main focus of many discussions of the International World Water Day.

As we focus on the theme of water cooperation, it is important that all of us at every level cooperate on how to care for the gift of water that we have, provide more water, and how we can share this gift with others.

Editor’s Note: Drought map is from Summer of 2012

Abortion: The violent and brutal taking of an innocent life

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

While there is sadly a law permitting the destruction of the precious unborn at any stage of a pregnancy, this manmade law is in total conflict with the law of God, our Father, who tells us, “You shall not kill.” People who are pro-choice claiming that the choice of a woman supersedes the life of a precious unborn innocent one, want us to overlook the reality of who is destroyed through the brutal procedure of abortion—one of Christ’s innocent little ones made in the very image and likeness of God. To help us understand what truly happens in the barbaric procedure of abortion, I feature here a report from the Pro-life articles:

Witnessing an Abortion

The vast majority of the population has never seen an abortion — but we can gain wisdom from those who have. Abortion is a terrible, violent procedure that takes an innocent life. No amount of sugar-coating or deceptive language can banish that reality.

Our media is full of violent acts, medical procedures etc. Yet it is noteworthy that we never see the reality of abortion.

People who observe abortion procedures or abortion remains invariably come away with no doubt that abortion is killing a human being.

Author Sue Hertz spent a year observing in a busy abortion clinic. She saw the remains of several abortions. Here is her testimony:

"It is easy to shrug off an aborted pregnancy as nothing more than a sack of blood and globs of tissue — as many pro-choice activists did — if one never saw fetal remains, or "products of conception" (POC) as they were known in medical circles. But the nurses, medical assistants, and doctors who worked inside procedure rooms ... knew that an eleven-week-old POC harbored tiny arms and legs and feet with toes. At 12 weeks, those tiny hands had tiny nails. Although the fetal head was too small at this stage to withstand the evacuation machine’s suction, pieces of face - a nose and mouth, or a black eye....were sometimes found in the aftermath. .... Later abortions spawned even more gruesome fetal remains .... the head did not come out whole during the evacuation, but the legs and arms and rib cage made it through intact."

When we read these appalling testimonies (a number from former abortionists and medical staff) we can have no doubt that we are fighting a battle against both the most blatant evil and the most important human rights injustice of our time.

OBITUARY

Deacon Pedro Hernandez Sanchez
1921-2013

Pedro Hernandez Sanchez, 91, of Abilene, passed away on February 2, 2013, at Hendrick Hospice Care. A Rosary was held Tuesday evening at St. Francis Catholic Church. Funeral Mass was February 6 at St. Francis Catholic Church with graveside services following in the Coleman City Cemetery. Services are under the direction of The Hamil Family Funeral Home, 6449 Buffalo Gap Road.

Pedro was born September 19, 1921, to Wenselado and Maximina (Hernandez) Sanchez in Coleman, Texas. He married Guadalupe Cardona on March 5, 1952 in Coleman and in 1959 they moved to Abilene. He worked for the City of Abilene in maintenance at the Abilene Public Library. Pedro was a member of St. Francis Catholic Church where he served as a Deacon from August of 1976 until 2007.

He was preceded in death by his parents and all of his siblings. Pedro is survived by his wife, Lupe Sanchez of Abilene; five sons, Pete Sanchez of Garland, Johnny Sanchez of Houston, Joe Sanchez, Ricky Sanchez and Wally Sanchez all of Abilene; one daughter, Rosie Scott of Mt. Olive, Mississippi; 8 grandchildren; 7 great-grandchildren and numerous nieces and nephews.

Memorials may be made in honor of Pedro to St. Francis Catholic Church, 826 Cottonwood, Abilene, TX 79601.

Pedro was born September 19, 1921, to Wenselado and Maximina (Hernandez) Sanchez in Coleman, Texas. He married Guadalupe Cardona on March 5, 1952 in Coleman and in 1959 they moved to Abilene. He worked for the City of Abilene in maintenance at the Abilene Public Library. Pedro was a member of St. Francis Catholic Church where he served as a Deacon from August of 1976 until 2007.

He was preceded in death by his parents and all of his siblings. Pedro is survived by his wife, Lupe Sanchez of Abilene; five sons, Pete Sanchez of Garland, Johnny Sanchez of Houston, Joe Sanchez, Ricky Sanchez and Wally Sanchez all of Abilene; one daughter, Rosie Scott of Mt. Olive, Mississippi; 8 grandchildren; 7 great-grandchildren and numerous nieces and nephews.

Victor Sanchez, Peter Sanchez, Ricky Sanchez, Jr., Roger Torres, Adrian Rodriguez, Elijah Torres, and Isaac Torres served as pallbearers.

Memorials may be made in honor of Pedro to St. Francis Catholic Church, 826 Cottonwood, Abilene, TX 79601.
Vatican II: Bishops tired after first session

By Fr. Joseph Uecker

The bishops returned home in December of 1962 very tired but hopeful. They realized that by rejecting the schema on the Sources of Revelation which had been presented to them, they were not a rubber stamp council. They had flexed their muscle. They knew that the Council had taken a turn that no one really expected. Besides being hopeful, the bishops were frustrated. They had not even come close to finishing their work. They had to return for another session, but how many more? They did not know. Hearing all the speeches in Latin was exhausting, even for the bishops who understood Latin fairly well, especially when spoken with an unusual accent. They were dismayed by what seemed like power plays behind the scenes. Their frustration and concerns pointed to problems that continued to trouble the Council.

Among the problems were these: First was Pope John’s naming curial cardinals as heads of the Preparatory Commissions, and the second was dealing with the sheer number of documents prepared by those commissions. Pope John had established a Coordinating Commission which helped deal with both problems. This commission was a “super-commission” and it reduced the number of documents from about 70 to 17. The work was done so well that these 17 documents formed the basis of the final 16 documents approved by the Council Fathers and promulgated by Pope Paul. Cardinal Hamleto Cicognani was the head of this super-commission.

March 2013

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

This Year of Faith is a special invitation to us from the Holy Father to experience a conversion-to enter into a deeper relationship with Jesus. Pope Benedict has described this as opening the “door of faith.” As we observe this Lenten season during the Year of Faith, we have special opportunities to deepen our awareness of what it means to be Catholic. Lent and Easter always brings us a little closer to the Holy Land. Since the earliest days of our church, Christians have been drawn to the Holy Land to see and experience where Jesus lived and taught, where He suffered, died and was buried and where He gloriously rose from the dead and then ascended into Heaven with the promise of returning.

I encourage you to participate in the Lenten services at your parish. You will find much that will enrich your spiritual life. I also encourage you this Good Friday, March 29th, to give generously to the annual Good Friday Collection that will be taken up in all of our parishes.

The Good Friday Collection is special. It is requested by the Holy Father to benefit our Christian sisters and brothers in the Holy Land. You know of the problems in the Middle East. Quite literally the Christian presence in the Holy Land is challenged as never before. The Good Friday Collection is used to help Christians in the Holy Land by providing assistance to the poor, schools for children, and support for parishes. The collection also helps to preserve the shrines as living faith communities that welcome pilgrims from our country and throughout the world.

I urge you to be generous as your means allow this year when the Good Friday Collection is taken and to pray constantly for our sisters and brothers in the Holy Land. For centuries, Christians have called the Holy Land home. Today, your financial support will help to keep the door to Christianity in the Holy Land open. Thank you for your past generous support.

Your servant in Christ and Mary,
Most Reverend Michael Pfeifer, OMI
Bishop of San Angelo
Making Sense of Bioethics

The pill as health care?

By Rev. Tad Pacholczyk

Physicians will sometimes prescribe a hormonal regimen (in the form of a hormonal contraceptive like the Pill) to treat certain gynecological problems like heavy menstrual bleeding, dysmenorrhea (painful periods), PMS (pre-menstrual syndrome), endometriosis, or other conditions like severe acne. In these cases, the Pill is used not as a contraceptive, but as a therapy for a medical condition.

This can be morally permissible under the principle of double effect, which allows for the treatment of a serious medical problem (the good effect), while tolerating its unintended consequences, when other less harmful treatments are not available. In this case, the unintended consequences would be the impeding of one's fertility and the potential health risks and side effects of the Pill (the evil effect).

Married couples may sometimes struggle with the question of whether a pathology is serious enough to warrant the therapeutic use of the Pill. The wife of one couple I worked with reflected on the matter and concluded, "Yes, the bleeding is intense, and I'm basically wiped out for at least two or three days each month, but it's not so debilitating that my husband and I can't manage, and we'd really prefer, morally and medically speaking, not to get mixed up with a powerful pharmaceutical like the Pill."

Other treatments beside the Pill may at times be available to remedy these medical conditions without having to impede fertility. Some young women, though, may be content to opt for a treatment that also offers more latitude for sexual activity. Approaching the medical use of the Pill in this way can raise concerns about ambiguous intentions. A friend of mine who dated several young women who were on the Pill for a medical condition described his own experiences and struggles this way:

"Those I know who have done this also tended to be the ones who were sexually active…. I believe it does have an effect on one's psyche and soul. In fact, in the past I've dated two women who were doing this and it made it really, really hard at times to be chaste. When I brought up alternative ways to treat something that doesn't involve the Pill, they got very defensive. So I think it definitely blurs a line even in the minds of the most faithful Catholics who rationalize that this is what the doctor ordered."

Lines can blur not only in the minds of those who may be dating, but also in the minds of medical students, who may be taught to prescribe the Pill almost reflexively for various gynecological issues rather than addressing the root cause of the problem. As Lili Cote de Bejarano, M.D., has noted: "For most of these conditions, the Pill is only treating the woman's symptoms, while her underlying medical problem — the cause of the symptoms — remains unaddressed and undiagnosed."

Lines become further blurred when medical professionals start to insist that the Pill, taken purely to avoid pregnancy, is "health care." It is not, in fact, health care, but a lifestyle decision. This lifestyle decision is frequently made in the midst of a cultural backdrop that encourages "neutered" sex in an endless array of forms, and sanctions the misguided view that "health" means we have the right to practice consensual indiscriminate sex without consequences.

The Pill, when chosen strictly for these contraceptive purposes, fails the test of being healthcare because it does not heal or restore any broken system of the human body. On the contrary, it actually breaks a smoothly working system — the reproductive system — by disrupting the delicate balance of hormonal cycles regulating a woman's reproductive well-being and fecundity.

When taken for lifestyle purposes, the Pill is quite the opposite of health care — being, in fact, detrimental to women's health — in light of its frequent side effects of weight gain, headaches, and depression, as well as its heightened and well-documented risk of thrombotic stroke, myocardial infarction (heart attack), and breast cancer. The International Agency for Research on Cancer, an arm of the World Health Organization, classifies hormonal contraception as a Group 1 carcinogen.

When a married couple has a proportionately serious reason not to become pregnant — for example, when pregnancy itself would seriously threaten the woman's life or health — they can opt for periodic abstinence during part of her cycle by assessing various indicators of fertility. This is sometimes referred to under the general heading of "Fertility Awareness Methods," and offers a morally acceptable, safe and effective approach to spacing children.

To sum up, then, the use of the Pill for medical (non-contraceptive) purposes requires a disciplined approach to the matter. Alternative medical therapies should be seriously considered, the great good of fertility should be respected, and unspoken sexual agendas should not be allowed to trump the duty to exercise moral responsibility and sound medical judgment.

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.ncbccenter.org.
Church changes to adapt to a changed world

By Jimmy Patterson
Editor

There was good news and bad news at the 2013 Diocesan Conference Day, February 9, at the San Angelo Convention Center.

First the bad news: The winter storm that entrapped the northeast like a frozen blanket made its wrath felt a half-continent away February 9 when Sister Maureen Sullivan, OP, the scheduled guest presenter at Diocesan Conference Day, was unable to travel because of the storm.

The good news is that the 369 registered conference attendees were equally receptive to the presentation provided by Dan Mulhall. Mulhall is the Director of Consultant Services for RC Benziger, one of the sponsors of Conference Day and for more than 40 years a supplier of religious education tools, books and materials to dioceses across the country.

Mulhall spoke predominantly of change: the change of our country and the change that was necessitated in the Church because of that secular change.

“The Second Vatican Council did not change the world,” Mulhall noted. “The world had already changed and Pope John XXIII called the council because he recognized that the world was in fact changing tremendously. We as a Church had to understand that the world was changing tremendously.

Pope John XXIII, while not a visionary, Mulhall said, was intelligent and saw the changes wrought by World War II, in which he served. Those changes, the pope knew, were now leading the Church to ask itself: How do we as a Church proclaim the gospel when our traditions and values are no longer assured?

“John believed fundamentally that all Christians should be united and that God would speak to all members who listened to and heard his voice. His question was how could a church so completely entrenched in a model since the 4th century introduce God’s word to a modern world?”

Mulhall’s ideas to help better spread the word today are fourfold. We must:

- become Scripture solid;
- share the faith with others;
- accept the call to do the work of the Lord, and;
- witness to young people.

Mulhall said only 13 percent of parishioners at the average Catholic Church are engaged in their parish, but perhaps Mulhall’s most revelatory point during the session dealt with giving witness to young people:

“A National Study of Youth in Religion shows there is a one on one correlation from adult to young people and whether those young people will have faith themselves. That means if one adult who has faith shares that faith with one young person, that one young person is one times more likely to grow his or her faith. If there are five adults witnessing to one young person, that young person is five times more likely to develop his or her faith.

Twenty adults? Twenty times more likely,” Mulhall said.

Are you grieving the loss of your spouse?

Next Beginning Experience weekend scheduled for April 26-28

By Judy Ford
Beginning Experience Director

Losing someone or something you love or care deeply about is very painful. A death, divorce or separation launches us into uncharted territory. Everything is disrupted: your routine and responsibilities, your home, your relationships with extended family and friends, and even your identity.

The loss brings uncertainty about the future. What will life be like without your mate and best friend? You may experience all kinds of difficult emotions and it may feel like the pain and sadness you’re experiencing will never let up.

When you committed to that spouse, you created many hopes and dreams for your life together. It’s hard to let those dreams go. As you grieve the loss of the future you once envisioned, be encouraged by the fact that new hopes and dreams are possible. Beginning Experience is a weekend retreat designed to help you deal with your loss so you can move on with your life.

Maybe you think you are doing OK with your loss but here is what one person has to say about her weekend experience: My husband left me in late 1998, but our divorce was not finalized until 2000. I did not think I needed this retreat. I was okay. I was attending for a friend who had been a widow for 5 years, she definitely needed this retreat. I realized by Saturday that I did need to be here. The Beginning Experience forever changed my life for the better. I have since grown and blossomed into a more self-assured woman. The weekend is lead by people who have suffered a loss, have attended a weekend and have trained to help others. Just as this lady explained, she thought she was OK. Maybe you think you are OK, but why not come to the weekend for an opportunity to make you even stronger in your new single life?

Our San Angelo team is committed to helping you work through your grief and anger so you can have new hopes and dreams for your life today. It does not matter how long ago you suffered your loss, time does not necessarily heal your hurting heart. If you have been through the loss of a loved one, come join us for the weekend. The Beginning Experience weekend is open to men and women of all faiths and ages who have suffered a loss.

The next weekend will be held on April 26-28 at Christ the King Retreat Center in San Angelo. The weekend begins on Friday at 8 p.m. and concludes Sunday at 4 p.m. The cost for the weekend is $115 which includes your food and lodging. Please call one of the telephone numbers below to obtain a resignation form. If you need financial assistance in order for the weekend, please contact your priest, your minister or one of the team members to explain your situation.

Christ the King Retreat Center: 325-651-5352. Team members: Judy (432) 386-3504; Mary (512) 568-7212; Jennifer (432) 528-6243; Anna (325) 949-8967; Ruby (325) 893-4120 or Kathy (325) 944-4746.

For additional information about the weekend you can visit the website: www.beginningexperience.org.
Lent 2013: The significance of the ashes

By Fr. Ron Rolheiser

We begin the season of lent with ashes on our foreheads. What is symbolized by this smudging? Perhaps the heart understands better than the head why more people go to church on Ash Wednesday than on any other day of the year, including Christmas. The queues to receive the ashes in many churches are endless. Why? Why are the ashes so popular?

Their popularity, I suspect, comes from the fact that, as a symbol, they are blunt, primal, archetypal, and speak the language of the soul. Something inside each of us knows exactly why we take the ashes: "Dust thou art and into dust thou shalt return!" No doctor of metaphysics need explain this. Ashes are dust and dust is soil, humus; humanity and humility come from there. It is no accident that ashes have always been a major symbol within all religions. To put on ashes, to sit in ashes, is to say publicly and to yourself that you are reflective, in a penitential mode, that this is not "ordinary time" for you, that you are mourning, in a penitential mode, that this is a period of silent sitting, had done some important work inside of the person. You sat in the ashes for healing.

We begin the season of lent with ashes on our foreheads. What did he feel? Not given a choice, did he bemoan his misfortune, did he wish he could have some other life? Did he worry about being abandoned, about the burden given his own fatigue? Did he wonder how he could take on this service by the Roman soldiers.

All of this has deep roots. There is something innate to the human soul that knows that, every so often, one must make a journey of descent, be smudged, be humbled, and wait while the ash do their work. All ancient traditions, be they religious or purely mythical, abounds with stories of having to sit in the ashes. We all know, for example, the story of Cinderella. This is a centuries-old, wisdom-tale that speaks about the value of ashes. The name, Cinderella, itself already says most of it. Literally it means: "the young girl who sits in the cinders, the ashes." Moreover, as the tale makes plain, before the glass slipper is placed on her foot, before the beautiful gown, ball, dance, and marriage, there must first be a period of sitting in the cinders, of being smudged, of being humbled, and of waiting while a proper joy and consumption is being prepared. In the story of Cinderella there is a theology of lent.

Native American traditions too have always had an important place for ashes. In some Aboriginal communities there was the concept that occasionally someone would have to spend time in the ashes. Nobody knew why a specific person was called at a particular moment to sit in the ashes, but everyone knew that this was a natural thing, that ashes do an important work in the soul, and that sooner or later that person would return his or her regular life and be better for having spent time in the ashes. To offer one such example: Certain native communities used to live in what they called long-houses. A long-house was the communal building; in effect, the house for the whole community. A long-house was long, rectangular, with large sloping sides, and with the centre of the roof open so that this could function as a natural chimney. Fires were kept burning, both for cooking and for warmth, all along the centre of the long-house. People gathered there, near the fires, to cook, eat, and socialize, but they slept away from the fires, under the roofs that slopped down either side of the open centre. Now, every so often, someone, a man or a woman, for reasons they didn't have to explain, would cease adhering to the normal routine. Instead he or she would, become silent, sit just off the fire in the ashes, eat very sparingly, not socialize, not go outside, not wash, not go to bed with the others, but simply sit in the cinders, like Cinderella. Today we would probably diagnose this as clinical depression and rush that person off for professional help. They, for their part, didn't panic. They saw this as perfectly normal, something everyone was called upon to do at one time or another. They simply let the person sit there, in the ashes, until one day he or she got up, washed the ashes off, and began again to live a regular life. The belief was that the ashes, that period of silent sitting, had done some important, unseen work inside of the person. You sat in the ashes for healing.

The church taps into this deep well of wisdom when it puts ashes on our foreheads at the beginning of lent. Lent is a season for each of us to sit in the ashes, to spend our time, like Cinderella, working and sitting among the cinders of the fire - grieving what we've done wrong, renouncing the dance, refraining from the banquet, refusing to do business as usual, waiting while some silent growth takes place within us, and simply being still so that the ashes can do their work in us.

Ronald Rolheiser, a Roman Catholic priest and member of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, is president of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio. He is a community-builder, lecturer and writer. His books are popular throughout the English-speaking world and his weekly column is carried by more than seventy newspapers worldwide.

Helping others carry their cross helps us, too

By Carolyn Woo

Catholic News Service

As Lent began last month, I recalled the Stations of the Cross, in particular, the station in which Simon helps Jesus carry his cross. It captures my attention. Simon, most likely on a long pilgrimage from Cyrene (in today's Libya) to Jerusalem for Passover, was "compelled" into service by the Roman soldiers.

What did he feel? Not given a choice, did he bemoan his bad luck? Did he wonder how he could take on this burden given his own fatigue? Did he worry about being tainted in the service he was about to render to a "criminal"? Was he moved by compassion for a man beaten, tortured and made a spectacle for the public?

What about Jesus? What did he feel when the weight of the beam on his shoulder was shared? Did the company of another human being with him on this journey of unspeakable suffering offer any comfort?

I identify with this station because Simon and his service happen over and over again in my experience. In the past few weeks, I was made aware of Caritas Serbia's programs and advocacy for the mentally ill; Caritas Lebanon's commitment to shelter the ever-growing number of refugees displaced in the Syrian civil war; Caritas South Korea's coordination of each diocese in its country to give aid to those who suffer starvation in North Korea; Caritas Japan's efforts to assist victims of last year's tsunami; Catholic Relief Service's collaboration with Special Olympics to provide health services and education to intellectually challenged children who are often shunned and exploited in developing countries.

A good friend once asked whether I get depressed over the suffering that we see in our work. The answer is no. I feel deep concern and sadness over what people have to endure, sometimes anger over injustice and cruelty, but not hopelessness.

I encounter great love and compassion from people who see a need, a wrong, and offer their resources and themselves.

I realized that Christ shares with us his power of healing that extends from the miracles in the Gospel to the restoration of the good health of a child who weighs 10 pounds at 20 months old, to the mother who has more options than selling a daughter into prostitution or to a farmer now that the fruits of his labor need not be surrendered for the payment of loans that carry 12 percent interest rate per month.

A precious gift is the bond with those who suffer, a recognition that they are just like us. We all want a good future for our children, need medical attention when in pain, feel a warm glow when people see our worth and let go a flood of tears when we realize we are not forgotten.

Legend has it that Simon of Cyrene became an active member of the early Christian community and that his sons Rufus and Alexander were among the first evangelizers. We do not know what really happened, but we know the tradition of Christian service known as charity (including the Cyrenian movement in the United Kingdom and Ireland) is one of three defining elements of the church, along with the word and the sacraments.

Like Simon, we do not always intentionally go seeking the needy, but we may be curious, we may be drawn, we may look with a different intensity and, due to forces beyond ourselves, we may be "compelled" to help carry a cross.

And when we pick up that cross, we must always remember that it is an encounter with Christ, an act of collaboration with no one less than God. It is another step in our journey to new life -- others' and ours.

Woo is the president and CEO of Catholic Relief Services.
Finding good news in the news: Is it even possible anymore?

By Erick Rommel
Catholic News Service

One of the first questions a news editor asks when hearing a story idea is, "Is it news?"

Generally speaking, if the story is about something ordinary, for instance, "Dog bites man," the answer is often no. If it's uncommon, "Man bites dog," then the story is one step closer to clearing the hurdle of newsworthiness.

Being newsworthiness is no longer enough for a story to become news. As newspapers reduce staff and television networks place greater priority on visual storytelling, editors who make decisions have decided substance is secondary to curiosity.

That's why you've seen countless stories about Lance Armstrong, Manti Te'o and Kim Kardashian, but very few stories about the potential discovery of a vaccine to prevent Alzheimer's disease or a Harvard professor's plan to bring Neanderthal "cave men" back to life.

I was pleased, however, to recently read two stories about three amazing people. I wasn't seeking these stories; I stumbled across them, one right after the other. Both taught me there is still plenty of good news in the world and seeking it out delivers a reward.

The first story involves Ivan Fernandez Anaya, a long-distance runner from Spain. During a December race, he was in second place behind Olympic medalist Abel Mutai. Mutai would have easily won, except he thought the race was over and mistakenly stopped about 30 feet short of the finish line.

Anaya saw what happened and had a choice to make. He could run past Mutai and claim victory, but he knew he didn't deserve to win the race. Instead, he did the right thing. He ran alongside Mutai and told him to keep running.

Actually, "told" is too strong a word. Because Anaya and Mutai speak different languages, Anaya used gestures to indicate that Mutai should run more and quickly before another racer passed them by.

Mutai won the race, with Anaya at his side.

In Tennessee, two racers of a different sort run all their races side by side and wouldn't have it any other way. Conner and Cayden Long are brothers. Conner is 9 years old and Cayden is 7. They compete in kids' triathlons.

During each race, Conner and Cayden swim 100 yards, bike three miles and run half a mile. Actually, that's not true. Conner does each those things while pulling Cayden every stroke, pedal and step of the way.

Conner does that because Cayden can't. Cayden has hypertonic cerebral palsy, meaning he can't walk or talk on his own. What he can do is compete and smile.

When he's in a raft or cart being pulled by Conner, his game face is a smile.

Athletes such as Anaya, Conner and Cayden are inspirations that could help us become better people, if only we knew more of their stories. What they are doing is news because it is inspiring. In a world where many people find it a struggle to get through a day, they provide an example that we can all be more.

If that's not enough to make their accomplishments newsworthy, I'm not sure what is.

National unity can emerge from national difference

By Father William J. Byron, SJ
Catholic News Service

I tend to think of myself as a United Stater. Not that I'm un-American or not proud to be an American, but I think all who share the part of the planet where I live should be mindful of the fact that there are South Americans, Central Americans and some North Americans who, like Canadians, are not United Staters. We U.S. citizens hold no monopoly of ownership on the name "American."

United Stater sounds strange and is unlikely ever to catch on. But those of us who are New Yorkers don't find that designation awkward or unusual. Similarly, by attaching an "n," "an," or "ian" to their home state's name, Floridians, Californians, Iowans, Pennsylvanians, Ohioans, Oregonians, Washingtonians, Texans, Arizonans, Georgians, Dakotans (North and South), Virginians, Coloradans, New Mexicans, Minnesotans and so many others are easily identified under the big tent that is the USA.

It is more difficult for a few -- e.g., citizens of Connecticut (Connecticutters?) -- to self-identify; but all of us, as awkward as it may sound, are United Staters.

Several happenings have stimulated this line of thought in my mind: the election night blue and red divide on our television screens; the political dance up to and around and over the fiscal cliff; political gridlock in Washington and in many state capitals; the national mourning centered on Newtown, Conn., and the subsequent hand-wringing debates about gun control and the management of mental illness in the U.S.

We United Staters have to demonstrate that we are united on crucial public policy issues, especially those that touch upon our local and national health and safety.

We don't need uniform thinking. We do need well-reasoned debate and timely decision-making followed by a coming together of support for decisions made. I agree with the late Speaker of the House of Representatives, Sam Rayburn, who used to say that when two people always agree about everything, it only goes to show that one of them is doing all the thinking.

Eventually, however, after a lot of good thinking has helped to shape the policy, commitment is needed to support the outcome. That shows evidence of unity.

"Let's agree to disagree" is a far better conclusion to an argument than a "my-way-or-the-highway" dismissal of an alternate point of view. Differences are always going to be part of life, and it is not just political life that is part of the picture here. This touches upon family life and religion, too. Just think of how important unity is to family and religious well-being.

The late French Jesuit theologian Father Henri de Lubac said something so well that I want to repeat it here. Note the applicability of his words to achieving national unity on important issues:

"To differ, even deeply, from one another is not to be enemies; it is simply to be. To recognize and accept one's difference is not pride. To recognize and accept the difference of others is not weakness. If union has to be, if union offers any meaning at all, it must be union between different people. And it is above all in the recognition and acceptance of difference that difference is overcome and union achieved."

That kind of thinking could make United Staters of us all.

---

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

Email: wbyron@sju.edu.
Vatican business as usual — almost

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — When Pope Benedict XVI officially left office at 8 p.m. Feb. 28, most of the top-level Vatican officials lost their jobs, but that does not mean the majority of Vatican employees get a vacation.

Although Catholics inside and outside the Vatican love to complain about its unwieldy bureaucracy, coordinating the universal ministry of the church involves a steady flow of paperwork, correspondence and meeting planning. All of that continues even when there is no pope.

However, the publication of documents, the nomination of new bishops and the approval of statutes for Catholic universities and religious orders are suspended. Anything that must be issued in the name of the Vatican or in the name of the pope must be approved by Pope Benedict’s successor.

"The general rule is that all ordinary business continues," the secretary of one Vatican congregation told Catholic News Service during the "interregnum" -- the period between popes -- in 2005. "Like in most bureaucracies, most of our business is ordinary business."

Commissions and subcommittees continue to meet, reports continue to be prepared, letters are answered and Vatican officials try to tidy their desks enough to be able to inform the new pope about exactly where their various projects stand.

Under long-standing church rules, updated by Blessed John Paul II in 1996, the Vatican secretary of state, the prefects of Vatican congregations and the presidents of pontifical councils lose their jobs the minute the papacy is vacant; the offices are run by the congregation and council secretaries during the interregnum.

However, the prefects and presidents don’t pack up their offices before they leave. Sixteen of the 22 prefects and presidents are cardinals who will be participating in the conclave to elect a new pope.

Generally, immediately after the election of a new pope, the prefects and presidents are asked to take up their old jobs again, at least temporarily.

While much of the Vatican's activity takes a pause during the interregnum, Christ’s desire to save people does not rest, Cardinal Stafford said.

Portuguese Cardinal Montiero de Castro's responsibility continues even while he is in the Sistine Chapel voting for a new pope. His aides may send petitions for absolution to him even inside the conclave -- one of the very few exceptions to the rule that the cardinals be out of contact with the outside world.

Engaged Encounter

Reflections from a meaningful, important Encounter weekend

Editor’s Note: Included here are two letters from participants in a recent Engaged Encounter weekend.

What has this weekend meant to me and our relationship?

This weekend has provided us with the opportunity to address our marriage, future concerns and the impact of Christ on our lives. The assignments given have created open dialogue to discuss:

- The role of God in our lives
- The expectations of our partners
- Careers, children and finances
- Marital intimacy

The opportunity to write our thoughts first has allowed an honesty in our communication that helps us address problems. We are both also very thankful for the advice and wisdom you have given us from your previous experiences.

I hope that this weekend will improve not only our communication but our thirst for knowledge about the Catholic Church. This weekend reminded us of the importance of not showing up for mass but also understanding the Church’s teachings. Thank you

Lo que significa para mi este fin semana

Este fin de semana fue muy importante para nuestra relación porque compartimos y discutimos temas que serán parte de nuestras vidas y quizás en el pasado no lo habíamos analizado.

Nos unió más de lo que ya estábamos y mi prometido pudo conocer más a fondo el significado de este sacramento y mi religión. Conocimos temas que son parte de la religión y pudimos comprender el significado de los mismos.

Gracias a Dios por este fin de semana tan especial que nunca olvidaremos y mantendremos muy vivo por el resto de nuestras vidas. Amen
HISTORY!

Church's past may hold clues in divining impact of Pope Benedict XVI's landmark resignation

By Carol Glatz
Catholic News Service

ROME — The halls of history might hold some keys as to what kind of impact Pope Benedict XVI's resignation will have on the church and how to navigate a smooth transition, said a U.S. scholar.

"All these problems surrounding how to treat Benedict, what to call him, how he will be dealt with in his life after the papacy, how his death will be dealt with, all of these are new questions, said Joshua Birk, a fellow at the American Academy in Rome and expert in medieval Mediterranean history.

To find some answers or at least some guidance, "we sort of have to go back to these medieval cases (of papal resignation) because we literally have nothing else to go by," he told Catholic News Service Feb. 15.

There's not much in the annals to sift through, however. Papal resignations are extremely rare with only four in the past 1,100 years, he said. And almost every case involved popes who were pressured to step down.

Only the voluntary resignation of St. Celestine V in 1294, he said, can offer relevant parallels to help the church make sense of the free and willful resignation of Pope Benedict.

The case of Pope Celestine also resulted in some innovative changes that he brought with his decision to resign, he said.

For example, Birk said, the principles behind Pope Celestine's decision to step down and "how Celestine articulated the ability of a pope to resign are incredibly important," as is the papal bull he issued establishing rules for an abdication.

The late 13th-century pope also "established the ground rules for how papal conclaves will operate in selecting the pope," said Birk, who teaches history at Smith College in Northampton, Mass.

The formal process used for centuries to select a new pope, a process that generally follows the death of a pope, is actually the model St. Celestine established for "how to select a pope after a resignation," he said.

Before Pope Celestine, the selection process was "less formalized" and often operated much differently from one papal selection to the next, he said.

"Celestine is the one who really lays down the papal bulls establishing the rights of the conclave and how they'll act under these circumstances" of a vacant see, he said.

Just as Pope Celestine's bold move...
As pope, Benedict worked to promote understanding of Vatican II’s many reforms

By Francis X. Rocca

Catholic News Service

VAUGHN CITY — On Feb. 14, as one of the last public appearances of his pontificate, Pope Benedict XVI spoke to the clergy of Rome about his experiences at the Second Vatican Council, which he had attended as an expert consultant half a millennium before.

The pope praised some of the council’s achievements, including its teaching on the interpretation of Scripture, religious freedom and relations with non-Christian religions. But he also lamented what he described as widespread distortions of the council’s teachings. The news media, he said, had presented the council to most of the world as a political struggle for “popularity” and “millenial traditions, not as a radical break with the past. He went on to devote much of his papacy to promoting this understanding of the council’s teachings.

Under Pope Benedict, the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, which he had headed as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, he had headed for almost 24 years, continued to censure or criticize disobedient whom, often invoking the spirit of but the letter of Vatican II documents, devoted from orthodoxy in areas that included sexual morality, the theory of the incarnation and the possibility of salvation without Christ. The congregation also issued documents asserting that the Catholic Church is the one true “church of Christ” and that ministries have a duty preach the Gospel as well as provide charitable assistance to the needy. Both documents, the Vatican said, were necessary to correct misunderstandings of the teachings of Vatican II.

Pope Benedict presided over two major Vatican investigations of women religious in the United States, responding to diminishing numbers and reported deviations from doctrine and discipline in the decades since the council. One of the investigations, for example, Carolino Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger who had headed the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, intended to ensure the group’s commitment to Catholic teaching in areas including abortion, euthanasia, women’s ordination and homosexuality. The pope also tried to correct what he considered overly expansive notions of ordination and homosexuality. Pope Benedict’s writings possess wonderful suggestions for our Lenten season. Referring to St. Luke in his encyclical “Deus Caritas Est,” he implores us to lose our sense of self if we wish to increase our love — to rid ourselves of selfishness and lust. Unlike ecclesial writers who confine their writings to the theological domain, his writings are expansive. Pope Benedict’s writings possess wonderful suggestions for our Lenten season. Referring to St. Luke in his encyclical “Deus Caritas Est,” he implores us to lose our sense of self if we wish to increase our love — to rid ourselves of selfishness and lust. Unlike ecclesial writers who confine their writings to the theological domain, his writings are expansive.

As pope, Benedict worked to promote understanding of Vatican II’s many reforms

By Francis X. Rocca

Catholic News Service

VAUGHN CITY — On Feb. 14, as one of the last public appearances of his pontificate, Pope Benedict XVI spoke to the clergy of Rome about his experiences at the Second Vatican Council, which he had attended as an expert consultant half a millennium before.

The pope praised some of the council’s achievements, including its teaching on the interpretation of Scripture, religious freedom and relations with non-Christian religions. But he also lamented what he described as widespread distortions of the council’s teachings. The news media, he said, had presented the council to most of the world as a political struggle for “popularity” and “millenial traditions, not as a radical break with the past. He went on to devote much of his papacy to promoting this understanding of the council’s teachings.

Under Pope Benedict, the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, which he had headed as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, he had headed for almost 24 years, continued to censure or criticize disobedient whom, often invoking the spirit of but the letter of Vatican II documents, devoted from orthodoxy in areas that included sexual morality, the theory of the incarnation and the possibility of salvation without Christ. The congregation also issued documents asserting that the Catholic Church is the one true “church of Christ” and that ministries have a duty preach the Gospel as well as provide charitable assistance to the needy. Both documents, the Vatican said, were necessary to correct misunderstandings of the teachings of Vatican II.

Pope Benedict presided over two major Vatican investigations of women religious in the United States, responding to diminishing numbers and reported deviations from doctrine and discipline in the decades since the council. One of the investigations, for example, Carolino Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger who had headed the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, intended to ensure the group’s commitment to Catholic teaching in areas including abortion, euthanasia, women’s ordination and homosexuality. The pope also tried to correct what he considered overly expansive notions of ordination and homosexuality. Pope Benedict’s writings possess wonderful suggestions for our Lenten season. Referring to St. Luke in his encyclical “Deus Caritas Est,” he implores us to lose our sense of self if we wish to increase our love — to rid ourselves of selfishness and lust. Unlike ecclesial writers who confine their writings to the theological domain, his writings are expansive. Pope Benedict’s writings possess wonderful suggestions for our Lenten season. Referring to St. Luke in his encyclical “Deus Caritas Est,” he implores us to lose our sense of self if we wish to increase our love — to rid ourselves of selfishness and lust.

As pope, Benedict worked to promote understanding of Vatican II’s many reforms

By Francis X. Rocca

Catholic News Service

VAUGHN CITY — On Feb. 14, as one of the last public appearances of his pontificate, Pope Benedict XVI spoke to the clergy of Rome about his experiences at the Second Vatican Council, which he had attended as an expert consultant half a millennium before.

The pope praised some of the council’s achievements, including its teaching on the interpretation of Scripture, religious freedom and relations with non-Christian religions. But he also lamented what he described as widespread distortions of the council’s teachings. The news media, he said, had presented the council to most of the world as a political struggle for “popularity” and “millenial traditions, not as a radical break with the past. He went on to devote much of his papacy to promoting this understanding of the council’s teachings.

Under Pope Benedict, the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, which he had headed as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, he had headed for almost 24 years, continued to censure or criticize disobedient whom, often invoking the spirit of but the letter of Vatican II documents, devoted from orthodoxy in areas that included sexual morality, the theory of the incarnation and the possibility of salvation without Christ. The congregation also issued documents asserting that the Catholic Church is the one true “church of Christ” and that ministries have a duty preach the Gospel as well as provide charitable assistance to the needy. Both documents, the Vatican said, were necessary to correct misunderstandings of the teachings of Vatican II.

Pope Benedict presided over two major Vatican investigations of women religious in the United States, responding to diminishing numbers and reported deviations from doctrine and discipline in the decades since the council. One of the investigations, for example, Carolino Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger who had headed the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, intended to ensure the group’s commitment to Catholic teaching in areas including abortion, euthanasia, women’s ordination and homosexuality. The pope also tried to correct what he considered overly expansive notions of ordination and homosexuality. Pope Benedict’s writings possess wonderful suggestions for our Lenten season. Referring to St. Luke in his encyclical “Deus Caritas Est,” he implores us to lose our sense of self if we wish to increase our love — to rid ourselves of selfishness and lust. Unlike ecclesial writers who confine their writings to the theological domain, his writings are expansive. Pope Benedict’s writings possess wonderful suggestions for our Lenten season. Referring to St. Luke in his encyclical “Deus Caritas Est,” he implores us to lose our sense of self if we wish to increase our love — to rid ourselves of selfishness and lust.
By Cindy Wooden and Francis X. Rocca
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Wherever journalists and bookmakers may be getting the names on their lists of top candidates for the next pope, it's not from the cardinals who will actually vote in the election. Both custom and canon law forbid the cardinals to discuss the matter in such detail with outsiders.

Moreover, the true "papabili" -- literally, pope-ables -- are likely to emerge only after all the world's cardinals -- not just the 117 who will be under 80 and eligible to vote -- begin meeting at the Vatican in the coming days.

One thing is already clear, however: because of their experience and the esteem they enjoy among their peers, certain cardinals are likely to serve as trusted advisers to the rest in the discussions and election.

Here, in alphabetical order, are 12 cardinals expected to have a major voice in the deliberations:

▷ Conventional wisdom has long held that the cardinals will never elect an American pope, lest the leadership of the church appear to be linked with the United States' economic and geopolitical dominance. But the extroverted and jocular Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan, 63, charmed and impressed many in the College of Cardinals in February 2012 when he delivered the main presentation at a meeting Pope Benedict XVI had called to discuss the new evangelization. The pope himself praised the New York archbishop's presentation on how to revive the faith in increasingly secular societies as "enthusiastic, joyful and profound."

▷ Although not a familiar name in the press, Hungarian Cardinal Peter Erdo of Esztergom-Budapest, 60, is a major figure among his peers in Europe, the church's traditional heartland and the region of more than half the cardinal electors. He was elected to a second five-year term as president of the Council of European Bishops' Conferences in 2011.

▷ Another religious, a Salesian, Honduran Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga of Tegucigalpa, 70, is president of Caritas Internationalis, the umbrella group of national Catholic charities around the world. As a result, many of his peers have come to know the multilingual cardinal as the person spearheading assistance to the neediest of their people. He aroused controversy in 2002 with remarks about clergy sex abuse that struck some as overly defensive of accused priests and the church's past policies. But he was already widely mentioned as a possible pope before the 2005 conclave that elected Pope Benedict.

▷ Canadian Cardinal Marc Ouellet, 68, is a member of the Society of St. Sulpice, whose members are, strictly speaking, diocesan priests but which is normally considered a religious order. Hence he is one of only 19 members of religious orders among the cardinal electors, who are overwhelmingly diocesan clergy. He is prefect of the Congregation for Bishops, which coordinates the nomination of bishops in Latin-rite dioceses around the world, so his work has brought him into frequent contact with most of his fellow cardinal-electors. As president of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America, he is well acquainted with one of the church's largest and fastest-growing regions. The former archbishop of Quebec, who taught at the John Paul II Institute at Rome's Pontifical Lateran University, is also a well-respected theologian.

▷ Italian Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, 70, president of the Pontifical Council for Culture, was the prelate chosen by Pope Benedict to lead his 2013 Lenten retreat, which will make him a prominent voice at the Vatican in the run-up to the election. The cardinal, a scholar with little direct pastoral experience, has been leading the universal church's efforts to develop a nonconfrontational dialogue with nonbelievers, trying to make Christianity intelligible to the modern mind and build a reason-based consensus on key moral issues.

▷ Argentine Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, 69, was born to parents of Italian descent and has maintained strong ties with both Italy and Argentina. As prefect of the Congregation for Eastern Churches, he is familiar with the challenges facing Eastern Catholics and the pastoral concerns of the church in the Middle East. He has worked in the Vatican for more than a dozen years, and previously served as nuncio to Venezuela and then Mexico. His only experience in a parish was a brief assignment shortly after his ordination as a priest.

▷ Guinean Cardinal Robert Sarah, 67, is president of the Pontifical Council Cor Unum, which promotes Catholic charitable giving. He has used his leadership to emphasize Pope Benedict's teaching that Catholic charitable activity must not be simple philanthropy, but an expression of faith, rooted in prayer and Catholic identity. A scripture scholar and former diocesan bishop, he served nine years as secretary of the Congregation for the
Archbishop backs end to death penalty, says it offers ‘tragic illusion’

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — The Catholic Church’s objection to the death penalty comes from its consistent teaching that life must be protected from conception to natural death, said Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori.

"At the core of all of (the church’s) public witness is an evident consistency that reflects our reasoned belief that every human life is sacred and to be protected, because every life comes from God, and is destined to return to God as our final judge," he said.

Archbishop Lori said that view compels him to advocate against Maryland’s death penalty.

He testified Feb. 14 to support a proposed repeal of Maryland’s death penalty at back-to-back committee hearings in the state’s Senate and House of Delegates.

His testimony followed Gov. Martin J. O’Malley, who also spoke in support of the repeal bill he introduced. Other Maryland officials also testified as part of the governor's panel.

Late Feb. 21, the state Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee voted 6-5 to send the measure to the Senate floor. It was the first time in many years that the committee advanced repeal of the death penalty to a full Senate vote passed the bill and was to be taken up by the full Senate the next week.

The state House of Delegates was to consider the measure in coming weeks.

The death penalty hearings, held by the Senate committee and the House Judiciary Committee, were the first time Archbishop Lori has personally testified before the Maryland Legislature.

The archbishop told lawmakers there are many "worthy arguments" for death penalty repeal, but that the faith community’s perspective "goes beyond these issues."

"While those who have done terrible harm to others deserve punishment, we urge a response that meets evil with a justice worthy of our best nature as human beings, enlightened by faith in the possibility of redemption and forgiveness," he said.

Archbishop Lori told The Catholic Review, newspaper of the Baltimore Archdiocese, that the issue affects him personally, as the wife of a now-deceased cousin was murdered "years ago."

His family did not seek capital punishment because they did not expect it to bring them closure, he said.

The incident has been in his mind as he has pushed for death penalty repeal in the state, he said.

"Once it touches your family, it gives (the issue) a little more impetus," he said. "It’s closer to home."

In his testimony, Archbishop Lori expressed "respect and compassion" for victims’ families, and urged lawmakers to devote more resources to helping them.

"I hope my presence today conveys to you a sense of how important this issue is to the Catholic Church," he said.

Archbishop Lori is aware that not all Catholics agree that the death penalty should be repealed, and he told The Catholic Review that he urges those who disagree "to look at the reasonable position that the church is offering."

"We also have the example of Blessed John Paul II, who many times intervened before the execution of someone on death row. I think that should also speak powerfully to us," he said.

Baltimore Auxiliary Bishop Denis J. Madden also attended the hearings, although he did not testify. He said he hoped his presence also signified his support for repeal.

In 2008, Bishop Madden sat on the Maryland Commission on Capital Punishment, which ultimately recommended death penalty repeal. He said that many of the questions asked by legislators during the hearing were addressed by the panel and included in their final report.

The death penalty, along with gun violence and abortion, topped the issues Maryland Catholics discussed with their state lawmakers Feb. 18 during the Maryland Catholic Conference’s annual Lobby Night.

Archbishop Lori, Bishop Madden and Baltimore Auxiliary Bishops Mitchell T. Rozanski were among the state’s bishops who attended the event.

Eleven congressional Republicans file brief opposing HHS mandate

WASHINGTON — Eleven Republican members of Congress filed a brief supporting conscience provisions in one lawsuit fighting the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ contraceptive mandate.

In their friend-of-the-court brief, filed Feb. 21, the congressmen invoked the Religious Freedom Restoration Act in support of the Hobby Lobby craft store chain in its bid for an exemption from the mandate.

The Religious Freedom Restoration Act was passed 20 years ago -- unanimously in the House, and by a 97-3 vote in the Senate -- to prohibit the federal government from substantially restricting a person's religious freedom, except when it can demonstrate "a compelling government interest" and that the government’s action is "the least restrictive means" of furthering that interest.

All 11 lawmakers filing the brief had voted for the bill, known as RFRA, in 1993; it was signed into law by President Bill Clinton.

The law was passed to counter a 1990 Supreme Court ruling that the religious rights of two American Indians to smoke peyote during a religious ceremony were superseded by an Oregon state law making the hallucinogenic substance illegal.

"One of the primary reasons Congress enacted RFRA in the first place (was) to prevent those charged with implementing the law from picking and choosing whose exercise of religion is protected and whose is not," the lawmakers’ brief says.

"RFRA is a super-statute that protects the free exercise of religion from standard interest-group politics," the brief added, noting the overwhelming majorities in both houses of Congress that passed it.

Under the Affordable Care Act, HHS mandates that most employers, including religious employers, provide insurance coverage of contraceptives, sterilization and some abortion-inducing drugs free of charge, even if the employer is morally opposed to such services.

Much of the protest over the mandate in the past year has come from religious institutions over what they consider a too-narrow definition by HHS of religious entities are exempt: only those that seek to inculcate their religious values, primarily employ people of their own faith and serve people of their own faith. The mandate does not include a conscience clause for employers who object to such coverage on moral grounds.

Dozens of religious entities have sued the federal government, which responded Feb. 1 with new proposed rules that exempts organizations that are nonprofit organization under specific sections of the Internal Revenue Code.

No exemption, however, will be given to "for-profit, secular employers" who, on moral grounds, object to providing the coverage, such as Hobby Lobby.

The proposed revision has left many still unhappy, including the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, because it does not go far enough to include secular employers with moral objections.

The lawmakers’ brief contends that HHS erred in trying to define who constitutes a religious employer.

RFRA was designed "to cut across other federal laws," the brief said, noting its "across-the-board protection for free exercise of religion; and the statute’s provision of a judicial backstop."
Seattle theologian says American youth a ravaged, yet promising mission field

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- In sexual morality, family life and education, the Baby Boom generation ushered in a series of cultural changes that led to an "anthropological crisis" in American society, leaving younger generations yearning acutely for what the Catholic Church has to offer.

That is the assessment of Pia de Solenni, a Seattle-based writer with theology degrees from two Vatican-chartered universities, who now serves as a consultant to the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas. She spoke with Catholic News Service in Rome while participating in the plenary assembly of the Pontifical Council for Culture, which met in early February to address the theme of "emerging youth cultures."

The sexual revolution, promoted by mass media and facilitated by abortion and contraception, led to a breakdown of the family, so that an estimated 40 percent of births in the U.S. today are to single mothers, de Solenni said.

"There is something missing there, in terms of a father for the child, the security of knowing that your mother and father love each other," she said.

Lacking complete or stable families, many raised since the 1970s have failed to develop the capacity for strong and intimate relationships, de Solenni said. They have also failed to receive religious education in the home, which the church teaches should be the primary site of such instruction.

Yet the ethos of promiscuity is losing its luster for the young, de Solenni said, pointing to evidence from popular culture. In the last decade the tele

Your Family

By Bill Dodds
Catholic News Service

Monica is praying for you. You can be sure of that. And she's praying for me. I thank God for that.

As you may have heard or read, my wife Monica, who contributed to this column, passed away on the evening of Jan. 6. She died at home, in our bedroom, of uterine cancer. First diagnosed in late February 2010, she found out in late February 2012 that she had, at most, a year to live. She lasted 10 months and packed an incredible amount of living, and loving, into each one of them.

We knew, the whole family knew, that your prayers and the prayers of so many others made a difference over those 10 months.

There was a gradual decline in her abilities, but until the final eight days she was up and around, going out to lunch, attending Mass, visiting family and making sure we were making as many happy memories as possible.

She completed the main items on her "bucket list," those things she wanted to do before she died. And she enjoyed telling people about her "chuck-it" list. Obligations she no longer had to meet.

(At the top of the list was some dental work scheduled for early March 2012.)

After she died, I came across a number of notes and pieces of writing she had been working on throughout last year. This is from one she titled, "Things I Want to Tell You."

"Rule number one: Pray."

"Pray right here and right now."

"We all have a natural compass guiding us to God."

"He made us because he loves us and takes delight in watching us grow closer to him."

"If in doubt, pray."

"I look forward to resting."

"Life is so much simpler when you make decisions with God. God speaks to each of us in a way we will understand. Life is like a maze. Sometimes we know which way to go, sometimes we hit a wall. God is the 'cheese' we're trying to find. We wish we could jump up high enough to see where we're going. Where do I go next? But we need to trust our instinct because we are made to return to God."

"What's the point of all of this? He said, 'I am.'"

In her work with family caregivers, Monica stressed the idea of the presence of God. Of a caregiver's, of anyone's, ability to talk to God "right here, right now." She would explain that it didn't take away hardships and heartaches, but it helped a person better realize that he or she is never alone in those difficult times.

You aren't alone in your difficult times. My family and I aren't alone in ours. In heaven, or on earth, we remain in the presence of God. Now in his presence, in a new and wondrous way, Monica is praying for you and me. She promised she would. She keeps her word.

Coming of Age

When invisibility is a curse and not a blessing

By Karen Osborne
Catholic News Service

Back when I was a kid, I used to think it would be really cool to be invisible.

Like any kid, my thoughts back then were usually all about how invisibility could benefit me. Invisibility meant that I would be able to goof off as much as I wanted. It meant that I would hear what the other kids were saying about me when they thought I wasn't listening.

Growing up, though, I discovered that invisibility isn't as much fun as it sounds. Our world is full of invisible people: the poor, the homeless, the abused, the quiet and the vulnerable. These people often don't get the support and help they need simply because people forget they exist. Being invisible often means not being treated like a human being. They're forgotten, lost, treated like dirt.

Near my home, there's an invisible man on the corner near a big downtown park. He's there every afternoon, holding a backpack and sleeping bag, caked with dirt and staring at the ground. People hurry past him on their way to their offices or errands, hoping he won't look up. Whether they choose not to see him, or they are really that oblivious) nobody helps him. They've made him invisible.

I remember the invisible boy in my sophomore year math class. I remember that his family didn't have a lot of money, and he was teased relentlessly by the popular kids for wearing his older brother's uncool hand-me-downs. He had no friends. The more he was in the school.

By senior year, we all had forgotten his name, even though he'd been in our classes for four years. We made him invisible.

The poor and the different make us uncomfortable. We make them invisible so we don't have to look at ourselves and realize just how badly we're doing in making this world a just, equal place. It's easy to avert our eyes from the bag lady on the church steps or the nerdy girl who spends all of her time in the computer lab. If they're invisible to us, we can stay focused on our selfish needs.

Our society has a long history of making people invisible. We've even made laws codifying invisibility into legal practice. The Jim Crow laws of the 20th century segregated African-Americans from the white population. This made it much easier for the more
What to know when calculating the 40 days of Lent

By Fr. Kenneth Doyle
Catholic News Service

Q. I always hear about the "40 days of Lent," but the math never seems to work out. When does it start and when does it end, and how do you arrive at 40 days?

(Cherry Hill, N.J.)

A. As often happens, a short and simple question requires a complicated answer. Technically, the Sundays of Lent are not part of this penitential season. Since it is always a "mini-celebration" of Christ's resurrection, a Sunday can never be a day of fast and abstinence.

So when the church decided to set aside a season of prayer and penance in preparation for Easter -- and decided to make it 40 days, to mirror Christ's fast in the desert before his public ministry -- it calculated this way: six full weeks, Monday through Saturday, plus Ash Wednesday and the three days that follow it, for a total of 40 days.

But here's the complication: Although Good Friday and Holy Saturday are clearly part of the penitential season, liturgically they are not a part of Lent. In the church's liturgical calendar, Lent ends just prior to the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday evening, and then the Easter Triduum begins.

Q. A friend of ours who is a Baptist recently invited us to his church for a service. During the service, they had a baptism, and the minister made the following announcement: "This boy is now 9 years old, and after inquiring about his faith, he has decided to become a Christian."

On the way home, my friend and his family kept stressing the importance of being baptized at an age when one is mature enough to understand the basics of the faith and to make one's own choice -- unlike the Catholic practice, they pointed out, where infants are baptized while they have no capability of understanding.

I tried to explain that faith is passed on from parents to their children and that all children need parental guidance on their journey of faith -- even when they've reached the age of 9. Is there anything else I should have said? (Greenville, S.C.)

A. Most Christians belong to denominations that practice infant baptism -- including Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans, Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians and Reformed.

Our Holy Father's 2013 Monthly Intentions

MARCH

Respect for Nature. That respect for nature may grow with the awareness that all creation is God's work entrusted to human responsibility.

Clergy. That bishops, priests, and deacons may be tireless messengers of the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

APRIL

Liturgy, Source of Life. That the public, prayerful celebration of faith may give life to the faithful.

Mission Churches. That mission churches may be signs and instruments of hope and resurrection.

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.

Business needs to consider the common good

By Father John Catoir
Catholic News Service

For me, the concept of spirituality is not restricted to pious devotions. Everything we do reflects our spirituality, including the way we spend our money.

The best economists in the world admit that they do not know exactly what is going to happen next when it comes to the economy. There are signs that the stock market is steadily improving. Nevertheless, unemployment remains at a high level. A recent concern is the widespread use of robotic tools and its potential to reduce the labor force drastically. This may be inevitable, but it's not in the best interest of the economy.

Robots are influencing the cost of production, and even reducing the demand for cheap labor. Foreign labor will no longer have the powerful lure it once had.

Companies in the U.S. will find that they no longer need to leave the country to maintain their profits. This is a good thing, but as robotic tools dominate the workforce more and more, they will end up costing men and women their jobs.

Years ago, robots could not compete with the low cost of foreign labor, but today that is no longer so. As soon as profits reach levels where businesses will benefit financially from leaving places that produce a lot for very little, like China, they will take advantage of tax incentives and transportation savings and return home.

Unfortunately, while the companies themselves will be returning, the old jobs will not return with them. Labor unions will face a whole new set of obstacles. More and more men and women will end up on bread lines. Robotic tools will replace workers. It is that simple.

I've been reading "Einstein on the Road," by Josef Eisinger, which tells the story of how Albert Einstein, the greatest scientist of the 20th century, reacted to the political and economic problems of his generation.

He scolded the businessmen of his time for increasing the use of machinery because it was putting more and more men out of work. The drive to increase profits, which is the norm for business executives, was working against the common good. As a result, millions of unemployed men and women were selling pencils on the street to put food on the table.

Einstein's ideas were thought to be naive, but he didn't back down. He knew that for businesses to survive, they had to keep a sharp eye, not only on their margin of profits, but also on the common good. Einstein predicted that the economic depression of his time would engulf the nation for a long time, and he was right. If he were alive today, I feel certain he would be calling for a gradual slowdown in the use of robotic tools.

Maybe he would demand that an increase in research and development be introduced to improve our economic policies so they would bolster the overall common good, and not jeopardize it. The American experiment is in decline, and we need to think ahead.
History Channel’s ‘The Bible’ compresses much into 10 hours

Although you might get a late start on the five-Sunday series, check for its availability via download or encore presentations on The History Channel.

By John Mulderig
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — Considered strictly as a work of literature, few volumes can rival the Bible for high-stakes drama, intriguing characters, tumultuous action and sheer spectacle.

So it's no surprise that Hollywood turned to the Good Book early on -- director Sidney Olcott's short film "David and Goliath," for example, was released in 1908 -- or that Scripture-based stories remained a big-screen fixture well into the 1960s.

Television has also seen its fair share of Bible adaptations. In fact, Franco Zeffirelli's 1977 mini-series "Jesus of Nazareth" -- co-written primarily with Catholic-reared novelist Anthony Burgess and celebrated Italian screenwriter Suso Cecchi d'Amico -- is arguably superior to any cinematic treatment of its sacred subject. It aired on ITV in Britain and on NBC in the United States.

The latest small-screen offering in the genre is the History cable channel's 10-hour mini-series "The Bible." Created by the husband-and-wife team of Mark Burnett and Roma Downey, and narrated by Keith David -- who has narrated many Ken Burns documentaries -- this survey of salvation history from Genesis to Revelation premiered with back-to-back episodes Sunday, March 3.

Even with such a large canvas to fill, considerable compression is needed to encompass the many centuries that separate the Garden of Eden from St. John's vision of the end times. This becomes obvious right at the start as the story of creation and the fall of Adam and Eve are recounted by Noah to his companions in the already storm-tossed ark.

It's a reasonably deft solution, and sets the brisk pace that will carry the audience, by the end of the second episode screened, through the Exodus and on to Joshua's (Andrew Scarburgh) siege of Jericho.

Among the early passages dramatized, two stand out as highlights: Abraham's (Gary Oliver) interaction with his sons and Moses' (William Houston) parting of the Red Sea. Both Ishmael's exile and the preparations for the sacrifice of Isaac (Hugo Rossi) are poignant, while the computer-generated imagery used to recreate the separation of the waters represents technical wizardry at its best.

Along with the impressive special effects, the script manages to make the Egyptians' pursuit of the escaping Israelites feel like a genuine cliffhanger.

Whether in the interests of family-friendly viewing or political correctness, the goings-on at Sodom are sanitized to make it seem that the locals are macho warriors looking to kill Lot's (Antonio Magro) angelic guests rather than abuse them.

While there's little, overall, of concern in the portrayal of sexuality -- one character does insult a woman by calling her a "whore" -- violence is another matter. A good deal of screen time is devoted to combat and, while much of it is stylized, there is some brutality and gore. Parents will have to assess whether children old enough to benefit from this shortcut to biblical literacy will also be able to take such mayhem in stride.


Reviewed by Rachelle Linner
Catholic News Service

"The Good Pope" is both a well-written and thoughtful biography of Pope John XXIII, and a helpful study of the events, personalities and issues of the Second Vatican Council. This timely book coincides with the 50th anniversary of the opening of the council (1962-65) and serves as an accessible work of church history.

Tobin clearly admires Angelo Roncalli, the son of a large, impoverished Italian farming family who grew up "surrounded by God and church" and, from his childhood, had a clear sense of vocation. "I can't remember a time," he later wrote, "when I did not want to serve God as a priest."

One of the pleasures of this biography is the way Tobin illustrates the growth of that call, the maturation of the man through his education in Bergamo and Rome and the formative 10 years he spent as priest-secretary to Bergamo Bishop Giacomo Maria Radini-Tedeschi. His mentor "taught him that there was a way to apply changes within the church while preserving older traditions."

Father Roncalli's personality, and thus his priesthood, was shaped by prayer, theology and church politics. Equally definitive were lessons he wrested from his immersion in the enormous challenges and sufferings of the first half of the 20th century. He served as a medical orderly and chaplain in the Italian army during World War I and, after the war, was assigned to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith.

In 1925, he was appointed an archbishop and named apostolic visitor to Bulgaria, a largely Orthodox country with a small Catholic population. "Already bearing within his heart the seeds of ecumenism ... (Roncalli) understood that he needed to approach the Orthodox faithful in a spirit of love and respect rather than condemnation."

Ten years later he was appointed apostolic delegate to Turkey and Greece, but "as the world headed toward another great war, with Italy one of the aggressors, suspicions fell harder on the church in Rome and its powerful prelates." These assignments honed Archbishop Roncalli's diplomatic skills, and the war years saw him engaged in heroic charity, particularly in assisting Jewish immigration to Palestine.

His most important diplomatic role was the years (1944-1953) he spent as the apostolic nuncio to France. In 1953 he became the cardinal of Venice, and the five years he spent there were "perhaps the happiest time in his life. ... He was finally able to realize his long-held desire to be, above all, a priest and minister of souls."

Cardinal Roncalli was 76 when he was elected pope Oct. 20, 1958, and, because of his age some regarded him as a transitional pope. But, as Tobin makes clear in the second half of this book, John XXIII "wasted no time" and entered his papacy with a "full agenda."
NY Cardinal Dolan: Happy warrior of the New Evangelization

By Francis X. Rocca
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Popes are elected by members of the College of Cardinals, not by the general Catholic population and certainly not by the media. Yet Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan's presence on practically every journalist's list of potential next popes bespeaks a real and important influence among his peers.

The most obvious reason is the New York archbishop's ebullient, extroverted personality and quick, frequently self-deprecating wit -- traits that forcefully contrast with the formality typically associated with princes of the church, but which visibly charmed other participants at the February 2012 consistory at which Pope Benedict XVI made him a cardinal.

In his introductory speech to a special day of reflection and prayer on the eve of that occasion, Cardinal Dolan achieved the rare feat of making the normally reserved Pope Benedict laugh loud. The cardinal's talk also impressed his listeners as a show of erudition and evangelical zeal, leading the pope himself to praise his words as "enthusiastic, joyful and profound."

No doubt there are churchmen in Rome and elsewhere who find the cardinal's style disconcerting in someone who will help choose the successor of St. Peter -- and who could even assume that role himself. He is almost certainly the first cardinal to downplay expectations of his election as pope by saying that they must have been induced by "smoking marijuana." Yet such quips are no more shocking than Blessed John XXIII's frequent jokes and references to his peasant background were in his time.

Cardinal Dolan has never worked in the Roman Curia, the church's central administration at the Vatican, but he spent seven years as rector of the Pontifical North American College, the American seminary in Rome, when he also taught at two of the city's pontifical universities. His earlier service at the apostolic nunciature in Washington, D.C., exposed him to the Vatican diplomatic corps, the primary channel of communication between local bishops and the Holy See.

Judging by the conventional wisdom, the cardinal's single biggest weakness ought to be his nationality. Americans have long been deemed ineligible for the papacy, lest the leadership of the church appear to be linked with the United States' economic and geopolitical dominance. But there is reason to think that this prejudice has diminished.

For one thing, after more than a decade of waging two costly wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and considering the rise of China, the U.S. is now something of a humbled hegemon. Even more significant is the changed relationship between the Catholic Church and large parts of American society.

As secularization spreads even in their traditionally religious country, U.S. bishops have become an ever stronger source of protest and resistance against what they warn are encroachments on religious liberty. As president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and archbishop in the country's largest media market, Cardinal Dolan is effectively the leader of that resistance, which he has waged with characteristic good humor, so that even his opponents find it hard to cast him as an enemy.

If other cardinals once viewed Americans with a certain wariness, as potential carriers of modernist heresies or Protestant-influenced ecclesiology, they are now more likely to see them as defenders of the faith on one of its consequential battlefields with secularism. As Cardinal Dolan joins those who will choose the next pope, his record in that struggle is probably his most important credential.

Born in St. Louis Feb. 6, 1950, Timothy Dolan attended St. Louis Preparatory Seminary and Cardinal Glennon College, where he earned a bachelor's degree in philosophy. He finished his studies at the Pontifical North American College in Rome and the Pontifical University of St. Thomas, earning a licentiate in sacred theology.

Ordained in 1976, he spent his early years as priest going back and forth from parish ministry in St. Louis and studies and work in Washington, earning a doctorate in American church history from The Catholic University of America and spending five years as secretary at the apostolic nunciature.

He was vice rector of Kenrick-Glennon Seminary in St. Louis for two years and rector of the North American College before being named auxiliary bishop of St. Louis in 2001. One year later he was appointed archbishop of Milwaukee.

He was named archbishop of New York in 2009. One year later he was elected president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and in 2012 he was named a cardinal.

He has served as chairman of the board of Catholic Relief Services and is currently a member of the board of trustees of The Catholic University of America and a member of the pontifical councils for Promoting New Evangelization and for Social Communications.

BIBLE

(From 18)

will "The Bible" serve to awaken or enhance viewers' faith? Devotion to the will of God is certainly the underlying motivation for all the major characters. But, as many of the Scripture-themed features of yesteryear demonstrate, faith is among the more difficult aspects of the human experiences to portray.

The sheer gravity of the test to which Abraham is subjected makes his unlimited trust in God clear. But at other times "The Bible" seems more focused on swords and sandals than on souls. Perhaps the later episodes devoted to the person of Jesus can be expected to shift the emphasis and convey a keener sense of the divine presence.

Back-to-back installments of "The Bible" continue Sundays through Easter, March 31, 8-10 p.m. EDT each night.

Mulderig is on the staff of Catholic News Service. More reviews are available online at www.usccb.org/movies.

@TerzaLoggia set to fly during interregnum

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- The pope's @Pontifex Twitter fans will get two more tweets before the account goes into "hibernation" during the "sede vacante" period starting when Pope Benedict XVI steps down.

Also, while the papal tweets go on hiatus, the Vatican's Secretariat of State will be preparing to launch its first tweet from its new Twitter account @TerzaLoggia.

The new account, which had 2,000 followers and no tweets as of Feb. 26, will offer official news and information, ideally starting during the "interregnum," the period between popes.

While the exact launch date is not known, Greg Burke, media adviser to the Vatican's Secretariat of State, told Catholic News Service: "Stay tuned. It'll be sooner rather than later."

Meanwhile, contrary to some news reports, the @Pontifex account will not be permanently shut down after the pope resigns Feb. 28, but will merely remain inactive for the period of the "sede vacante."

The name "Pontifex," meaning "bridge builder" and "pope," was chosen to refer "to the office more than the person," and highlights the leader of the church and the Catholic faithful, said Msgr. Paul Tighe, secretary of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications.
COUNCIL

(From 12)
criticized at the time. Pope Benedict also added agnostic "seekers of the truth" to the
guest list, further diluting the interreligious
character of the event.
A lifelong teacher, Pope Benedict natur-
ally made Vatican II's continuity with tradi-
tion a recurrent theme in his homilies, cate-
chetical talks, papal documents and even in his personal writings, addressing
the topic in the first of his best-selling "Jesus of Nazareth" books.
This pedagogical project culminated in
the current Year of Faith, which opened
Oct. 11, the 50th anniversary of the coun-
cil.

"The council did not formulate anything new in matters of faith, nor did it wish to
replace what was ancient," the pope told
the congregation at Mass that day in St.
Peter's Square. "Rather, it concerned itself
with seeing that the same faith might con-
tinue to be lived in the present day, that it
might remain a living faith in a world of
change."

For most Catholics, the pope conveyed
this lesson most clearly through worship.
Following the exuberant and colorful cele-
brations that had marked the papacy of
Blessed John Paul, especially at World
Youth Days and on other international
trips, papal Masses under his successor
became more solemn. Pope Benedict
encouraged the use of Gregorian chant and
the practice of eucharistic adoration, one
of the traditional devotions that had fallen
largely out of use in the wake of Vatican II.

Most dramatically, Pope Benedict lifted
most restrictions on the Tridentine Mass,
which had practically disappeared in the
post-conciliar reform of the liturgy. He
explicitly intended the move to promote
reconciliation with the disaffected tradition-
alis of the Society of St. Pius X, whom he
later offered the status of a personal prela-
ture if they would return to full communion
with Rome, an effort that did not bear
fruit in his pontificate. Yet Pope Benedict
also expressed the hope that celebration of
the Tridentine Mass would encourage a
more reverent celebration of the new Mass,
helping to bring out the latter's "sacral-
ity," "spiritual richness" and "theological depth."

If Pope Benedict's service to the liturgical
tradition should emerge as one of his major
legacies as pope, he would no doubt be
content. As he told the priests of Rome
three days after announcing his resignation:
"I find now, looking back, that it was a
very good idea (for Vatican II) to begin
with the liturgy, because in this way the
primacy of God could appear, the primacy
of adoration."

HISTORY

(From 11)
carried with it important and lasting
norms and traditions, so too, may Pope
Benedict's decision usher in a new
approach, the scholar said.

"For a pope that is generally viewed as
incredibly conservative and very tradi-
tionalist, this resignation actually shows a
remarkable innovation on his part," Birk
said.

While the idea of resignation may have
been bandied about with other popes,
only Pope Benedict has really embraced it
with the "modern understandings of
health, illness and the abilities of modern
science to prolong life even in times of
sickness," he said.

"The innovation Benedict has shown in
resigning may give the College of
Cardinals more leeway and may allow
them to be more innovative and perhaps
more forward-thinking in their selec-
tions," he said.

It's difficult to evaluate the problems
carried with it from Pope Celestine's resig-
nation and those caused by his successor,
Pope Boniface VIII, the historian said.

Bonniface imprisoned his predecessor out
of fear his many political enemies might
"use Celestine against him," try to set him
up "as an antipope or even make the argu-
ment that Celestine's resignation is illegit-
imate and that Boniface isn't exactly
pope."

The church will have to grapple with
what having a retired pope in the wings
will mean, he said.

Though there is no danger of any harsh
medieval treatment, the church will have
to simply look at "how this transfer is
negotiated" or handled and Celestine's
case "can be tremendously useful for us
to look at."

Birk said Pope Benedict felt a great
affection for St. Celestine.

He declared a Celestine Year from
August 2009 to August 2010 to commem-
orate the 800th anniversary of the saint's
birth and he visited the saint's relics twice
during his pontificate. During a trip to
L'Aquila in 2009, Pope Benedict placed
the long woolen pallium he received
when he was elected on the saintly pope's
casket and left it there as a gift.

Pope Celestine is mostly remembered
for "his reluctance to take up this sort of
burden of the Apostolic See" and "actual-
ly flees when he hears word he is going to
be made pope," Birk said.

He was plucked at the age of 79 from
his secluded life as a Benedictine monk
and hermit and thrust into the pontificate
after the College of Cardinals broke a
two-year-long deadlock and elected him
in 1294.

While he never fled, Pope Benedict
never kept his reluctance to become pope
a secret.

The then-78-year-old pontiff told a
group of German pilgrims the day after
his installation that he equated the grow-
ing consensus among cardinals to elect
him pope as "an axe" getting ready to fall
on his head. He had been looking forward
to a life of peaceful retirement and said he
felt "inadequate" for a job that demanded
great "dynamism" and strength.

Pope Benedict's coat of arms features a
bear carrying a pack, symbolizing the
weight of the episcopate. Pope Benedict
has said the image gave him the encour-
agement to carry out his ministry like a
beast of burden, but with confidence and
joy.

Editor's Note: A video report on the
pope's audience remarks is available on
the CNS Brightcove viewer on client web
sites like http://www.cny.org/world/ and at
http://www.youtube.com/user/CatholicNewsService.

TWELVE

(From 14)
Evangelization of Peoples.

- Another leading voice of the South
  American church is 63-year-old Brazilian
  Cardinal Odilo Scherer of Sao Paulo,
  Brazil's largest diocese. The son of
  German immigrants, he also has strong
ties to Rome. He studied philosophy and
theology at Rome's Pontifical Brazilian
College and Pontifical Gregorian
University and worked as an official of the
Congregation for Bishops from 1994 to

- Austrian Cardinal Christoph Schonborn, 68, has known Pope
  Benedict for almost 40 years, having
studied under him at the University of
  Regensburg, Germany. Even before his
  former professor became pope, the car-
dinal was well known at the Vatican and in
  wider church circles. He was invited in
  1996 to preach Blessed John Paul II's
  Lenten retreat and was the main editor of
  the Catechism of the Catholic Church,
published in 1992. As the church in
  Austria has struggled with declining
  attendance and calls for change in some
  of its most basic disciplines, Cardinal
  Schonborn's response has received
  increasing attention, with some praising
  his prudence and pastoral sensitivity, and
  others calling for more decisive action.

- Italian Cardinal Angelo Scola, 71, is
  the archbishop of Milan, the archdiocese
  led by both Popes Pius XI and Paul VI
  when they were elected. He previously
  served as patriarch of Venice, once the
  see of Blessed John XXIII. The cardinal,
  a respected academic theologian rather
  than a popular preacher, has longstanding
ties to one of the new church movements,
  Communion and Liberation, which is
  based in his archdiocese.

- Philippine Cardinal Luis Tagle of
  Manila, 55, is one of the youngest and
  newest members of the College of
  Cardinals. Although he did not receive
  his red hat until November 2012, he had
  already made a name for himself at the
  world Synod of Bishops on the Word of
  God in 2008. This leader of one of the
  world's fastest-growing churches is a
  popular speaker with a doctorate in sys-
tematic theology and has served on the
International Theological Commission,
an advisory body to the Congregation for
the Doctrine of the Faith.

- Cardinal Peter Turkson is the 64-
  year-old former archbishop of Cape
  Coast, Ghana, and current president of
  the Pontifical Council for Justice and
  Peace. The cardinal, a biblical scholar
  who was active in ecumenical and inter-
  religious dialogue, has frequently
  appeared on lists of possible popes. He
  aroused controversy in 2011 with a pro-
 posal for a "world central bank" to regu-
  late the global financial industry, and then
  in October 2012 when he showed bishops
  at the Vatican a video warning about the
growth of Muslim populations in Europe.
BENEDICT

From 1

People came to St. Peter's in larger numbers than normal for a Sunday Angelus because it was the first completely public, no-tickets-needed event since the pope announced Feb. 11 that he would be stepping down Feb. 28.

As he does every week, he greeted groups of pilgrims in their native tongues. Addressing Spanish speakers, he said, "My heartfelt thanks ... for your prayers and affection in these days. Continue to pray for me and the next pope."

And he told Polish speakers, "Thank you for your prayerful support and spiritual closeness in these days that are so unusual for the church and for me."

Before leading the Angelus prayer, Pope Benedict commented on the beginning of Lent and the day's Gospel reading about the temptation of Jesus.

He said Lent is a time for Catholics to renew their spiritual lives and turn to God, "renouncing pride and selfishness to live in love."

Making God the center of one's life, he said, requires "spiritual battle" because the devil doesn't want people to be holy and "tries to detour us from the path toward God."

The Gospel account of the temptation of Jesus in the desert, he said, shows just how "subtle" the devil can be: he does not try to trick Jesus directly into evil, but tempts him with "a false good."

When power or material goods, even basic necessities, become the most important priorities, "God becomes secondary," the pope said. "In the final analysis, faith is at stake with temptations because God is at stake. In the decisive moments of our lives, we face a juncture: do we want to follow the ego or God, individual interests or the one who is truly good?"

The good news, the pope said, is that Jesus has defeated the devil for us, "therefore, we are not afraid to take up the battle against evil; what is important is that we do so with him, with Christ, the victor."

For many Roman families, joining the pope for the recitation of the Angelus is a normal part of a Sunday or holiday stroll, and Feb. 17 they were joined by Gianni Alemanno, mayor of Rome, and members of the city council.

With large crowds expected, officers from a variety of Italian and Rome police forces, as well as paramedics and even garbage collectors had deployed along the broad avenue leading to St. Peter's Square and along the square's perimeter by 10 a.m.

An hour before the Angelus, thousands of people were already in the square. The young staked out places by sitting on the cold cobblestones. Others previewed their banners for the press, including some that said: "You are Peter. Stay" and "Thank you, Holy Father. We love you very much."

Pope Benedict ended his remarks by asking for special prayers for himself and his top aides in the Roman Curia as they were about to begin their annual Lenten retreat that evening.

VATICAN II

From 5

duce an alternative to Ottaviani's document on the Church.

Number one on the list of documents to be studied in the second period, 1963, was the document on the Sources of Revelation. In the inter-session, this document was re-worked because in the commission, there was so much fighting about it that it could not be presented to the Council as it was. It did not see the light of day until the third period of the Council in 1964. The next document on the list was the schema On the Church. Once again so much re-working was done on this document that what was presented to the Council in the second period was for all practical purposes a new document. The old document was scholastic in tone whereas the new document was much more pastoral and along the lines of the Fathers of the Church. This new document was to treat, among other things, the relationship between the pope and the bishops. The term used to speak about this is collegiality. This became a lightning rod issue at the Council. One cannot imagine all the work that went on in the eight months between the end of the first period and the beginning of the second. Suffice it to say that Vatican II was now a viable assembly and had taken on the essential shape by which we now know it.

On Holy Thursday of 1963, shortly before his death, John issued his encyclical Pacem in Terris (Peace on Earth), on the problems of world peace, underdeveloped nations, refugees, migrants, and other contemporary issues. One of the main differences between this and other social encyclicals was that this one was sent not only to Catholics, but "to all men and women of good will." Unprecedented among the human rights enunciated by Pope John was the right of being able to worship God in accordance with the right dictates of one's conscience and to profess one's religion both in private and in public. A month earlier, Pope John had received in audience the editor of Izvestia, the Russian communist newspaper, and also the son-in-law of Nikita Khrushchev, the Soviet chairman. Pope John, by word and especially by action, insisted that the Church needed to engage the world.

Pope John XXIII died on June 3, 1963. There was a great outpouring of grief as Pope John was loved by all. People felt like they had lost a personal friend. It would now be up to the next pope to re-convene the Council.

Contrary to his predecessors, Pope John took a hands-off attitude toward Italian politics. So in April of 1963, when the Communist party in Italy gained many seats in Parliament at the expense of the Christian Democrats, his critics blamed him. They and many Italian bishops hoped for a new day with the election of a new pope. Many wanted the new pope to dissolve the Council.

We are not supposed to know anything about what goes on in a conclave. But you know how things are. Things leaked out a bit and it became known that it was a difficult conclave. Eighty cardinals entered the conclave, 29 Italians. One cardinal said: "Hair-raising things happened at this conclave. I will have to ask the pope's permission to speak about them." Either he did not ask or did not receive permission because he said no more. The result of the conclave was that Cardinal Giovanni Battista Montini, archbishop of Milan became Pope Paul VI.

A few days after his election, Paul announced that the Council would resume on September 29. Paul had worked at the Vatican for many years before becoming archbishop of Milan.

There were concerns about him as being indecisive. Perhaps he was, but also possible is the fact that he worked so long in the shadow of Pius XII that he was not in a position to make decisions. Paul spent the time between his election and the beginning of the second period trying to re-work the machinery to make the Council operate more smoothly. One of his decisions was to make the super-commission a permanent fixture. While the commission had done good work, its continued existence confused things quite a bit. Pope John had envisioned that this commission would cease at the beginning of the second period. Another thing was to revise the regulations governing the Council and appoint four moderators. But instead of clearing up the lines of communication among all concerned, there were still problems. No one knew exactly who had authority over what. Were these moderators spokespersons for the pope? Were they delegates of the super-commission? Were they to do little more than direct the traffic of the Council? There seemed to be overlapping responsibilities and the situation under Pope Paul was little if any better than it was under Pope John. The procedural muddle was never really resolved and had serious consequences.

On September 21, one week before the Council's second period opened, Pope Paul addressed the Roman Curia. He needed the Curia for the ordinary running of the Church and he was aware of how the Curia had taken such a beating from the bishops. The calls for reform of the Curia would certainly be heard again when the Council opened. According to many critics, the Curia abused its authority and tried to lord it over bishops. Their behavior during the first period would give great credence to this criticism. The anger and resentment toward the Curia was widespread.

The pope spoke to the whole Curia, not just the department heads, but to a gathering of some 800 people, including all the people who worked in the departments. Pope Paul had worked in the Curia so he knew it well. He praised them for their work and in his soft-spoken way, he made three points: 1) He clearly insinuated that henceforth the Curia would have to accept that residential bishops would have a more active role in the functioning of the departments. 2) In a word of "exhortation," he told them that he expected them to cooperate with the Council. 3) He explained that it was reasonable for the Curia to undergo some changes in its way of operation, some "reforms."
when God became man in the womb of the Virgin at Nazareth is the most inspiring event of history and should also be commemorated, under the title of the “Day of the Unborn Child” especially when prenatal life is under such grave attack.

I am asking that on the celebration of the Feast of the Annunciation, April 8, 2013, that we also celebrate in our Diocese this special day known as the “Day of the Unborn Child.” On this beautiful day when we celebrate the beginning of the life of Jesus Christ and the beginning of each human life, I ask that all the priests of our Diocese celebrate Mass on the transferred Feast day, April 8, first to honor Jesus and Mary on the Feast of the Annunciation, and to thank them for teaching us about the sacredness of this beautiful day when we celebrate in our Diocese of the Feast of the Incarnation for teaching us about the sacredness of all human life, and to offer this Mass also for all the unborn of our Diocese and the world. Also, I encourage all of our priests to especially invite all couples who are expecting a baby to be present to receive a special blessing for each little one waiting to be born. This should also be the occasion to stress the dignity and sacredness of all human life, from its first moment of conception, and to encourage all people to become more involved in the pro-life movement. I ask that this information be published in our bulletins.

Here follows a Prayer to Christ Unborn in English and Spanish. I encourage all to pray each day this prayer, especially in the month of March, as we prepare for the Feast of the Annunciation.

Prayer to Christ Unborn
Dear Lord Jesus in the womb of Blessed Virgin Mary, before your birth You filled the unborn Baptist with the joy of the Holy Spirit. Inspire us to see You in every unborn child. Grant us the perseverance to defend vulnerable human life from abortion, abandonment, experiment, and all violations. Fill us with reverence for the moment of your Incarnation in Nazareth when the Word became flesh.

Oración a nuestro Señor Jesucristo por Nacer
Querido Senor Jesus en el vientre de nuestra bendita Virgen Maria, antes de tu nacimiento llenaste a Juan el Bautista por nacer con el gozo del Espiritu Santo. Inspíranos para que te veamos en cada niño sin nacer. Regálanos la perseverancia para defender la vulnerable vida humana del aborto, abandono, experimentación, y todas las transgresiones. Llénanos de reverencia por el momento de tu Encarnacion en Nazaret, cuando el verbo se hizo carne. Amen.

EASTER

the triumphant true joy over earthly and mundane things that are not lasting.

6 – Because of the resurrection of Christ we are Easter people everyday of the year because our Risen Christ is alive and with us constantly inviting us to share in his new life and hope especially in the Eucharist. The resurrection of Jesus Christ bestows upon us gladness, hope and healing, mercy and peace, and it calls us to open our hearts to receive these wonderful gifts by accepting God’s forgiveness and sharing this forgiveness and mercy with others.

7 – On the Feast of Easter and the Easter season, we give praise, worship and thanksgiving to Christ for all that he did to conquer, death, sin and to give us new life. When we do this, then Easter is about transformation, new life, re-birth and resurrection. As we do this, we are keeping alive the true meaning of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and bringing new hope and faith and encouragement to make a better world.

THEOLOGIAN

vision series "Sex and the City" portrayed a libertine lifestyle as a glamorous option for women, she said, but the current hit "Girls" highlights the anomie and alienation that such behavior produces.

"It's a very gritty, almost depressing portrayal," de Solenni said. "I honestly don't think that's what women want, or what most young women want. I think people do that because they think that's what you're supposed to do."

Younger Americans today are also suffering effects of the ideology of inflated self-esteem that prevailed for decades in their schools, she said, since such education is poor preparation for the harsher tests of adult life.

More recently, Solenni said, advances in technology have made possible what she calls the "iWorld," in which one can adjust one's environment to taste, in every respect from climate control to entertainment, facilitating an increasingly disconnected society of "atomistic selves."

As discouraging a picture as she paints of the American socio-cultural landscape, de Solenni insists that all this represents a momentous opportunity for Catholic evangelization.

Young Americans are hungering for the sorts of relationships, love and intimacy that they can best find in the church, she said, as well as for the personal dignity that Catholic moral teaching ensures.

"One woman in particular told me that it wasn't till she met her husband, who is a Christian, that she had any sense that she could not have sex on a date," de Solenni said. "She thought it was something you were supposed to do."

The church's social teaching is also eminently suited to addressing the nation's current economic woes, she said, which are largely the consequence of the previous generation squandering young Americans' future.

"I think it would be a great opportunity for the church to step up on the side of youth and to talk about injustice, and also to give a plan for going forward, because clearly we need something different," she said.

De Solenni stressed that evangelization must be serious, with an emphasis on authentic doctrine and prayer, to be effective.

She praised the work of college ministries, particularly through the Fellowship of Catholic University Students and various Newman Centers, as well as youth groups in parishes across the country.

"Helping people to experience that on a natural level helps them to understand it on a supernatural level. If we don't understand intimacy and relationships on a natural level, it's almost impossible to understand (them) on a supernatural level."
twice in the past year and a half, and I could see how difficult it was for him to carry out his universal ministry for the worldwide Church. In March 2012, along with the other Bishops of Texas, I spent several days in Rome and had the opportunity for a personal visit with Pope Benedict XVI, and we all could see that his strength was failing. During that visit, he gave me a special pectoral cross that I wear each day and treasure immensely.

Pope Benedict XVI, as he has indicated in his statement of resignation, does this for what he considers to be the best for our Catholic Church at this time. I know this is a very difficult decision for him, as he wants to continue a very demanding ministry, unlike that of any other office in the world. In a spirit of deep humility, and courageously trusting in God’s will for him and what is best for the Church in the present circumstances, Pope Benedict XVI announced his decision that apparently had matured in recent months: “After having repeatedly examined my conscience before God, I have come to the certainty that my strengths, due to an advanced age, are no longer suited to an adequate exercise of the Petrine ministry…In today’s world, subject to so many rapid changes and shaken by questions of deep relevance for the life of faith, in order to govern the bark of St. Peter and proclaim the Gospel, both strength of mind and body are necessary, strength which in the last few months, has deteriorated in me to the extent that I have had to recognize my incapacity to adequately fulfill the ministry entrusted to me.”

Pope Benedict XVI, who accepted the election of the Cardinals to head the papacy already at an age when he could have retired, gave his entire heart and strength as long as he could to lead our Catholic Church during the past eight years. His resignation is a reflection of true humility. It takes great humility and astonishing honesty to do what Pope Benedict is doing. Our Holy Father makes this critical decision in a deep spirit of faith, trusting in what Jesus, our Good Shepherd, wants for His Church during this important moment of history.

Pope Benedict XVI brought the tender heart of a pastor, the incisive mind of a scholar and the confidence of a soul united with his God in all that he did. His resignation is but another sign of his great care and concern for the Church. We are sad that he will be resigning, but grateful for his eight years of selfless leadership as successor of St. Peter.

While elected at an age past retirement, Pope Benedict XVI, as a newly-elected Pope, set out to meet his people—and they were of all faiths—all over the world. He visited the religiously threatened—Jews, Muslims and Christians in the war-torn Middle East, the desperately poor in Africa, and the world’s youth gathered to meet him in Australia, Germany, and Spain. I was with him at two of those huge World Youth gatherings—in Australia and in Spain.

He delighted our beloved United States of America when he visited Washington and New York in 2008. I had the privilege of being with him during that visit to Washington, and especially when he visited the White House when he and President Bush together addressed thousands of people on the South Lawn of the White House. As a spiritual leader he led the Catholic community in prayer at Nationals Park, Yankee Stadium, and St. Patrick’s Cathedral.

He spoke for the world’s poor when he visited them and wrote of equality among nations in his peace messages and encyclicals. He pleaded for a more equitable share of world resources and for a respect for God’s creation in nature. Those who met him, heard him speak and read his clear, profound writings found themselves moved and changed. In all he said and did, he urged people everywhere to know and have a personal encounter with Jesus Christ.

I thank God that I had the privilege as a Bishop of the Roman Catholic Church to serve God’s people under his leadership, and I recall my visits with him even before he became Pope Benedict XVI, when he was known as Cardinal Ratzinger. As he lives out this surely hard-made decision, but what he considers to be the will of God and the best for the Church he has guided, I thank him for the outstanding, gracious, and enlightened leadership that he has provided for the Catholic Church and the whole world. As I have done every day, I will continue to pray for him, and invite all of our people to pray for him.

This is a unique moment in the life of the Catholic Church, as we have not experienced a change in the Papacy through resignation, but rather those that have come about because of the death of a Pope in office. I invite all of our people during this time of transition, and as we prepare for the conclave of Cardinals to elect a new Pope, to more than ever pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. May Jesus, who is the main Shepherd of our Church and all of us, continue to guide us, and may His precious Mother, Mary, continue to intercede for us.
A Final Goodbye

Pope delivers personal, emotional farewell

Benedict will continue to serve church ‘through prayer, dedication to the Lord’

By Francis X. Rocca
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — On his last full day as pope, Pope Benedict XVI delivered an unusually personal and emotional farewell address, thanking the faithful around the world for their support and assuring them that he would remain in their service even in retirement.

"I will continue to accompany the path of the church with prayer and reflection, with that dedication to the Lord and to his bride that I have tried to live every day till now and that I want to live always," the pope told a crowd in St. Peter's Square Feb. 27, the eve of his resignation.

The crowd spilled over into the adjacent Via della Conciliazione, which had been closed to motorized traffic, and the Vatican estimated turnout at 150,000.

Abandoning his usual practice of giving a catechetical talk on a devotional text or theme at public audiences, the pope spoke about his time as pope and his historic decision to resign. He looked tired but composed as he read his speech, and he smiled at the frequent interruptions by applause.

Pope Benedict recalled his almost eight-year pontificate as a time of "joy and light, but also difficult moments."

"The Lord has given us so many days of sun and light breeze, days in which the catch of fish has been abundant," he said, likening himself to St. Peter on the Sea of Galilee.

"There have also been moments in which the waters were turbulent and the wind contrary, as throughout the history of the church, and the Lord seemed to be asleep," he said. "But I have always known that the Lord is in that boat and that the boat of the church is not mine, it is not ours, but it is his and he does not let it sink."

The pope, who announced Feb. 11 that he would step down because his "strengths, due to an advanced age, are no longer suited to an adequate exercise of the Petrine ministry," told the crowd that he had made his decision "in full consciousness of its gravity and also novelty, but with profound serenity of soul."

Although he would be retiring to a life of prayer, meditation and study in a monastery inside Vatican City, he said, he would continue to serve and sacrifice for the church.

"Whoever assumes the Petrine ministry no longer has any privacy," he said. "He belongs always and totally to all, to the whole church."

"My decision to renounce the active exercise of the ministry does not revoke this," he said. "I am not returning to private life, a life of trips, meetings, receptions, conferences, etc. I am not abandoning the cross, but remain in a new way beside the crucified Lord. I no longer carry the power of office for the government of the church, but in the service of prayer I remain, so to speak, within St. Peter’s precincts."