Oblates end decades of service to West Texas

By Jimmy Patterson / Editor

MIDLAND — When the “Peace be with you” is extended at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church the afternoon of Sunday, June 30, it will carry with it added significance.

Because of the continuing priest shortage, and the need for more missionary priests to, as founder St. Eugene de Mazenod said, “reach out and serve those most in need,” the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate will exit the Diocese of San Angelo after more than 80 years of service here.

(Please See OMI/18)

Oblates' Final Mass

Sunday June 30, 2013
1:30 p.m.
Our Lady of Guadalupe
1401 Garden Lane, Midland

Pictured: Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, Midland

Four Ordained on June 8

Assumption Seminary graduates and brothers in Christ, from left, Deacon Innocent Eziefule, Deacon Lorenzo Hatch, Deacon Francis Onyekozuru and Deacon Sam Matthiesen all eagerly await their ordination to the priesthood, Saturday June 8, at Sacred Heart Cathedral in San Angelo. Profiles, comments from the four on Pg. 4. (Courtesy photo)

St. Lawrence to host this year's Seed & Soil Rural Life Mass

The Angelus

ST. LAWRENCE — San Angelo Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI, will be the main celebrant at the annual Farm and Rural Life Mass, at 6:30 p.m., Wednesday, June 19, 2013. The Mass will be celebrated at 2255 County Rd 150, Garden City, the farm of David and Belinda Weishuhn.

“All of us are involved in some form of agricultural or rural life as we depend on our farmers and ranchers to provide the animals, the growing of the food, packaging and handling, and the transportation of these products that we all need to sustain us,” said Dcn. Charlie Evans, Rural Life Coordinator for the Diocese of San Angelo. “God has given humans a special responsibility to care for his creation.”

During the Mass, Bishop Pfeifer will pray for farmers, ranchers and others as well as bless items such as baskets of grain, fresh produce, cotton, home canned fruit or vegetables brought by people who attend the Mass.

“Our Creator has given us the gift of creation: the air we breathe, the water that sustains life, the fruits of the land that nourish us, and the entire web of life without which human life cannot flourish. All of this God created and found ‘very good,’” Evans said.

Bishop Pfeifer will be assisted at the Mass by Rev. Arockiaraj Gali, pastor at St. Lawrence.
**From the Bishop’s Desk**

**An oft-asked question: What does it mean to believe?**

**By Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI**

As we live out the Year of Faith that was proclaimed by Pope Benedict XVI in October, 2012, we are called to reflect on our Christian faith and its meaning. The goal is to deepen our faith life with Christ, so that we can proclaim in word and action with confidence, clarity and love — based on deeds — the truth that has set us free, and that the world so much needs to see and hear today.

In his joyful statement on the Year of Faith, *Porta Fidei*, Pope Benedict states that “Faith grows when it is lived as an experience of love received and when it is communicated as an experience of grace and joy.” This communication happens especially by the witness we give to what we say we believe.

What does it mean to believe? What does it mean to have faith — to profess faith, to live faith and to share faith? Our belief includes doctrines and teachings of our Catholic faith, which implies that we make an effort in the Year of Faith to better understand what we believe and why we believe.

However our belief is not limited to just knowing and understanding our faith, but more importantly to be in relationship with the One who is the source of our faith and the One who invites us to live our faith in a fully active manner. Our belief indeed deals with the content of faith, what we believe, but for our faith to be fully alive, we must foster a deeper relationship with our God, the whom of which we believe, and reflects our relationship with Jesus Christ. The what of faith and the whom of faith are about naming our experience of God in our life.

In giving us the Year of Faith, Pope Benedict affirms that the Catechism of the Catholic Church presents the content of faith, but also presents: “an encounter with a person who lives within the Church. The profession of faith is followed by an account of sacramental life, in which Christ is present, operative, and continues to build His Church. Without the liturgy and the sacraments, the profession of faith would lack efficacy, because it would...”

(Please See BISHOP/20)

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**DIOCESAN BRIEFS**

**Clergy Changes**

Lorenzo Hatch effective June 8, 2013, day of priestly ordination, assigned to St. Joseph/St. Anthony/St. Martin in Odessa.

Sam Matthiasen effective June 8, 2013, day of priestly ordination, assigned to Holy Family Church in Abilene.

Innocent Eziefule effective June 8, 2013, day of priestly ordination, assigned to Sacred Heart in Abilene.

Fr. Francis Njoku on sabbatical June 3-Aug. 9, 2013.

Fr. Patrick Apanbangon assigned as parochial vicar to St. Mary’s Parish in Brownwood effective June 1, 2013, to fill in for Fr. Francis Njoku.

Fr. Albert Ezanya assigned as parochial administrator of the parishes of Sacred Heart in Menard and St. Theresa in Junction effective June 1, 2013. He will live at the rectory in Menard.

Fr. Maria Godavarthi left diocese effective May 7, 2013.

Holy Family and Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Sweetwater with the mission of St. Albert in Roscoe are consolidated into one new parish to be known as Holy Spirit Parish effective June 15, 2013.

**Retreat center fountain dedication**

SAN ANGELO — Bishop Michael Pfeifer will dedicate the Tom Berscheidt Memorial Fountain at 11:30 a.m., Wednesday, June 19, at Christ the King Retreat Center, 802 W. Ford.

Berscheidt, a devout Catholic who dedicated his life to serving God, family and friends, died February 11, 2011, of complications from cancer. Prior to his death, Berscheidt asked a friend, Layne Turner, a lawyer in San Angelo, to raise funds for a fountain at Christ the King Retreat Center. Those who helped and supported Berscheidt and his request that a fountain be constructed, will see that vision become reality with the bishop’s dedication.

“Through the generosity of many, this fountain will serve as a lasting memory of a great man of faith,” said Tom Burke, director of the retreat center. “For years to come, Tom Berscheidt’s desired fountain will contribute to the spiritual experiences of all who come here to encounter Christ, our King. May God continue to bless those who contributed to this fountain and its completion.”

**Papal audience on tap for Cathedral pilgrims**

Msgr. Maurice Voity has announced the dates for the annual Papal Audience with His Holiness, Pope Francis, to be held at the Vatican on Jan. 8, 2014.

The group will spend two nights in Assisi, two nights in Florence, and four nights in Rome. All accommodations are in first-class hotels with private baths in double occupancy. Msgr. Voity will celebrate Masses for the group at the Tomb of St. Francis in Assisi, and also at St. Catherine’s Chapel, the Church of Santa Maria Novella in Florence, and on the Altar/Tomb of Blessed John Paul II in St. Peter’s Basilica.

The cost includes daily breakfast, and most dinners. A festive meal and entertainment will be held one evening in the Tuscan countryside outside of Florence.

Cost for the pilgrimage in double-occupancy is $3,229 per person from San Angelo or Abilene, and $3,129 per person from DFW.

For more information, or to receive a flyer/booking slip, contact Sacred Heart Cathedral in San Angelo at 325-658-6567, or email Msgr. Voity at mvoity@hotmail.com.

All reservations are first-come, first-served.

**Midlander receives Catholic laity scholarship**

SAN ANTONIO — Audrey Curry of Midland was selected to receive the 2013 Rev. Msgr. Larry J. Droll Scholarship for Catholic Laity sponsored by Catholic Life Insurance, the nation’s eighth largest fraternal life insurer. This $2,000 scholarship is for Catholic laymen and women pursuing a graduate degree in theology or religious studies, in order to serve their church in a professional capacity.

Curry, currently working on a Master’s degree in Religious Education through the Loyola Institute for Ministry Extension Program, would like to use her degree to qualify for work in full-time ministry in a Midland parish.

The scholarship fund was established by Msgr. Droll, who serves as the Vicar General of the Diocese of San Angelo. This renewable scholarship is awarded to two candidates each year who serve or want to serve his or her parish as an Administrator, Youth Minister, Parish Coordinator or other similar role. To apply for the 2014 Rev. Msgr. Larry J. Droll Scholarship for Catholic Laity, please view the criteria online at www.cliu.com or contact the Communications Dept’ at (800) 292-2548. The deadline for the upcoming academic year is February 15, 2014.

**Catholic scholarship deadline approaching**

The deadline is quickly approaching for two seminarian scholarships offered by Catholic Life Insurance to college graduates enrolled or who will enroll in the fall in a Catholic Seminary. The Henkes and Stuebben Scholarship programs are accepting applications until June 15, 2013.


Rev. Msgr. Henkes Scholarship Fund. Any seminarian studying for a diocese located in Texas, Arizona, Florida, Louisiana, Oklahoma, New Mexico or Mississippi may apply for the Rev. Msgr. Albert George Henkes Seminarian Scholarship. Scholarships in the total amount of close to $175,000 have been awarded through this non-profit fund since its establishment 26 years ago.

A list of criteria and application for both of these scholarships can be found on our website at www.cliu.com under “Community Involvement.” You may also submit your questions via email to branch@cliu.com.

**Letter from Bishop Vasquez**

Dear Bishop Michael:

Thank you for your generous gifts totaling $34,595.37 in support of the families in West, Texas, who suffered such a great loss in the fertilizer plant explosion last month. I am very grateful to you and the people of the Diocese of San Angelo for the concern you have shown through your gifts of financial and prayerful support.

The outpouring of prayer and support for the affected families has been truly inspirational. The many acts of solidarity and self-sacrifice we have witnessed as a result of this tragic event are reflections of the compassion of God.

Please continue to hold the people of West in your prayers as they begin to rebuild their community.

Most Reverend Joe S. Vasquez,
Bishop of Austin
**Bishop’s Calendar**

**JUNE**
- 8 — SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Priestly Ordinations, 10 a.m.
- 10-14 — SAN DIEGO, Meeting of the USCCB
- 15 — SWEETWATER, Immaculate Heart - Install Father Charles Okonkwo – at 5:00 p.m.
- 16 — COLORADO CITY, St. Ann – Confirmation at 10:30 a.m.
- 17 — SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center – Staff Mass at 8:30 am. and Staff Meeting at 11:00 a.m.
- 18 — SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center – Presbyteral Council Meeting at 11:00 a.m.
- 19 — ST. LAWRENCE, Rural Life Mass at 6:30 p.m.
- 20 — SAN ANGELO, Concho River –Mass for Lady in Blue at 9:30 a.m.
- 23 — SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedra – Marriage Jubilee Mass at 2:00 p.m.
- 28-30 — KNOXVILLE, TENN., Baptism

**JULY**
- 1 — Heart of Mercy Prayer Group
- 2 — Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
- 4 — Independence Day Office
- 8 — Heart of Mercy Prayer Group
- 9 — Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
- 10-14 — Teen ACTS Retreat
- 15 — Heart of Mercy Prayer Group
- 16 — Deacon Quarterly Meeting
- 18-21 — Boy’s Chrysalis Flight
- 22 — Heart of Mercy Prayer Group
- 23 — Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
- 27 — Deacon Quarterly Meeting

**AUGUST**
- 1-4 — Girls Chrysalis Flight
- 5 — Heart of Mercy Prayer Group
- 12 — Heart of Mercy Prayer Group
- 13 — Adoration
- 15-18 — Billings Ovation Method Association Training Session
- 17-18 — Knights of Columbus Council #12798
- 19 — Heart of Mercy Prayer Group
- 20 — Adoration
- 22-25 — Men’s Walk to Emmaus
- 26 — Heart of Mercy Prayer Group
- 27 — Adoration
- 30-31 — First United Methodist Church

**NECROLOGY**

**JULY**
- 2—Deacon Floyd Frankson (1992)
- 4—Rev. Msgr. Charles Dvorak (1963)
- 10—Rev. Emil J. Gerlich (1969)
- 22—Bishop Thomas J. Drury (1992)
- 26—Deacon Jose Rosales (2000)
- 26—Deacon Abel Campos (2002)

**SAN ANGELO — Angelo Catholic School alumni and students move library books to the consolidated campus on A&M Blvd. In photo, from left: Kaleigh Albarado, Hallee Carlson, Nathan Macias, Del Velasquez, Julius Aguilar, Gus Clemens, Eric Rios; at computer stations: Hailey Dodson, Jonah Minjarez.**

When the new school year begins in August, all ACS students will attend the Holy Angels campus, although the school will remain strongly committed to being a community-wide school, mainly supported by Sacred Heart Cathedral and Holy Angels Church with assistance from St. Joseph’s and St. Mary’s.

Clemens said, “This hall may be old, but it holds my childhood.”

Velasquez added, “I can still see the sisters walking down the hall. There are a lot of memories in this old building, but the consolidation move and the campus renovation is a good thing.”

( Courtesy Photo)

**ACS, Holy Angels consolidate campuses**

**Del Escritorio del Obispo**

¿Qué significa creer?

Este es una pregunta básica que debe ser contestada por cada uno de nosotros durante el Ano de Fe

Por el Obispo Miguel Pfeifer

Al seguir viviendo el Año de Fe que fue proclamado por el Papa Benedicto XVI en octubre del 2012, somos llamados a reflexionar en nuestra fe cristiana y su significado. La meta es la de poder profundizar en palabra y acción con confianza, claridad y amor—basada en hechos—la verdad que nos ha librado, y la cual el mundo tanto desea verla y escucharla hoy día.

En su gozosa declaración sobre el Año de Fe, Porta Fidei, el Papa Benedicto declara que “La fe, en efecto, crece cuando se vive como experiencia de un amor que se recibe y se comunica como experiencia de gracia y gozo.” Esta comunicación sucede especialmente por el testimonio que damos tocante a lo que decimos que creemos.

¿Qué significa creer? ¿Qué significa tener fe—profesar la fe, vivir la fe y compartir la fe? Nuestras creencias incluyen doctrinas y enseñanzas de nuestra fe católica, la cual implica que hagamos el esfuerzo en el Año de Fe de entender aún mejor lo que creemos y porque creemos.

Sin embargo, nuestra creencia no está limitada solamente a conocer y entender nuestra fe, pero más importante estar en una relación con el Único que es la fuente de nuestra fe y el Único quien nos invita a vivir nuestra fe en una manera de plena actividad. Nuestra creencia por cierto se trata del contenido de fe, lo que creemos, pero para que nuestra fe esté completamente viva, debemos fomentar una relación más profunda con nuestro Dios, el quien, de que creemos y refleja nuestra relación con Jesucristo. El cual de la fe y el quien de la fe se trata de nombrar nuestra experiencia de Dios en nuestra vida.

Al darnos el Año de Fe, Papa Benedicto afirma que el Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica presenta el contenido de fe, pero también presenta: “el encuentro con una Persona que vive en la Iglesia. A la profesión de fe, de hecho, sigue la explicación de la vida sacramental, en la que Cristo está presente y actúa, y con ella la construcción de su Iglesia. Sin la liturgia y los sacramentos, la profesión de fe no tendría eficacia, pues carecería de la gracia que sostiene el testimonio de los cristianos. Del mismo modo, la enseñanza del Catecismo sobre la vida moral adquiere su pleno sentido cuando se pone en relación con la fe, la liturgia y la oración.” (Porta Fidei, no. 11)

Mientras el contenido de fe es pasado por testimonio humano en una forma objetiva y articulada, el hecho de creer es más que un juicio natural humano. El objetivo de nuestra fe no es solamente por fin la verdad de un mensaje. El objetivo es el carácter, la persona, de Dios mismo quien nos habla por medio de la proclamación del Evangelio, proclamando que Cristo es el Hijo de Dios verdadero y quien vino a nuestro mundo para salvarnos y enseñarnos acerca del amor de Dios para nosotros y como debemos amarlos el uno al otro. Nuestra creencia descansa en la veracidad de Dios mismo.

Al corazón de nuestra fe cristiana está la relación personal que uno tiene con Cristo, quien ha resucitado, está vivo y activo en cada uno de nosotros por medio de nuestro bautismo, por la gracia de los sacramentos, especialmente en la Eucaristía, en la cual recibimos el mismo Cuerpo y la Sangre —la Persona de Cristo Mismo.”
**Who are our four new priests?**

**In Deacon Eziefule’s own words:**

“I graduated with a Master of Divinity degree from Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas. It was not easy to leave my family behind for five years without visiting. I do really miss home, especially my family and friends but I think I am happy with my life here. I am happy for the good opportunity I now have to serve the good people of San Angelo diocese as a priest.

It is in a spirit of thanksgiving that I think back over the past 16 years of my priestly formation. As a priest, God has called me to be a servant of the Word, a man of the Sacrament, a servant of Christ and His church, a pastor of souls, a sign and instrument of holiness and salvation to all around me, a witness to what I preach, a living Bible, a living tool to Jesus Christ who lends his hands to be Christ’s hands, his voice to be Christ’s voice, his thoughts to be Christ’s thought. I thank our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Eternal High Priest, for granting me the immeasurable gift of sharing in His ministerial priesthood, and for all the graces lavished on me throughout my time of formation and ministry.”

Eziefule has been assigned to St. Stephen’s in Midland.

**Lorenzo Hatch**

Deacon Hatch was born in 1984. Raised in Dumas, he graduated from high school in 2002. Following graduation, he attended Amarillo College studying Paramedicine. In 2004, he moved to San Angelo to join his family and began working at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart playing piano for the Spanish liturgies. In 2005, he joined the Society of Divine Vocations, a religious congregation founded by Blessed Justin M. Russolillo in 1920 in Pianura, Italy.

He became a postulant and was looking forward to novitiate when he stayed at the society’s parish in inner-city Newark, NJ. It was there that his love of the parish deepened and the realization that parish ministry is the heart of the diocesan priesthood.

Lorenzo graduated from Conception Seminary College in 2008 earning a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy.

On May 10, 2013, Lorenzo walked the stage of graduation earning a Master of Divinity, a Master of Arts in Theology, and a Pontifical Degree from the University of St. Paul, the Baccalaureate of Sacred Theology.

Hatch has been assigned as Associate Pastor of the Catholic Churches of South Odessa.

**Sam Matthiesen**

In Deacon Matthiesen’s own words:

“I grew up in Olen, I am the youngest of five children. In Olen we produce farmers and priests. Religious vocations were not too rare in my family. I had a great aunt who was a Benedictine Nun and two great uncles who were priests, one of whom was Bishop of Amarillo. Throughout my childhood I always felt like God could possibly be calling me to the priesthood. I also felt like this is something that maybe I would like to do as well. My parents were my inspiration, they had a great love for people especially those who were in need of help. So with all this on my mind and heart I decided to enter the seminary in the fall of 2004, right after I graduated from high school.

Seminary was a great place of growth and discernment for me. Just last year I was ordained a deacon and now I am very excited about my ordination to the priesthood, and even more excited about my priestly ministry. I look forward to becoming a ‘bridge to Christ’ for the people of the Diocese of San Angelo. The Holy Spirit has been so good to me! I ask for your prayers to the Holy Spirit that I may be a good and holy priest!”

Matthiesen has been assigned to Holy Family Church in Abilene.

**Francis Onyekozuru**

After high school, Deacon Francis, or “Uche” as he is often known, was retained in the seminary for his one year prefectship due to his achievements and qualities (2001-2002). At the completion of this, he was sent to St. Mary’s Propaedeutic Seminary Azumini-Ndoki for one year spiritual program in preparation for major seminary (2002-2003). He was next sent to Seat of Wisdom Seminary, Owerri (2003-2007), an affiliate of Urban University Rome (Italy) and Imo State University Owerri (Nigeria). There, he obtained his degrees in philosophy (B. Phil & B.A). He also obtained a Higher Diploma in Journalism at the Int’l Institute of Journalism, Owerri Zonal Campus (2005-2007) and was awarded for his academic achievements. An avid soccer fan as well as athlete, some felt he would one day become a professional soccer player. Uche also has the gift of song. His other interests include writing, swimming and table tennis.

Most recently, Uche graduated from Assumption Seminary in San Antonio, along with his three classmates from the Diocese of San Angelo.

Deacon Uche has been assigned to Sacred heat Church in Abilene.

**Catholic Charities of Odessa names new executive director**

**The Angelus**

In January 2013, Catholic Charities Director, Faye Rodriguez, had retired after serving the Odessa Community for 20 years. During that time, the organization has grown to offer household sustainable assistance, food, clothing, housewares, GED preparation and tutoring, work force training skills, immigration assistance and free income tax preparation.

Rodriguez has graciously offered her assistance by helping to train and mentor new director Valerie Longoria Bueno. She comes to Catholic Charities from Medical Center Hospital with a degree in Leadership Studies and has goals to create more community involvement and awareness of the need in Odessa, while maintaining the great work and integrity that Faye has instilled within the organization.

“I am very thankful and fortunate that Faye has given up her time to plan and train for a smooth transition. It’s rare that you see or hear of a past director willing to stay in an organization a little while longer to make sure that all information is transferred to the new member,” Longoria Bueno said. “She has been a great inspiration and has provided me with her expertise, knowledge, and necessary tools to continue the success of Catholic Charities.”
Synod of Bishops created at Vatican II

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

Without going into detail about the discussions, and they were very complicated – indicating the depth of the problem in the minds of the bishops – nothing was done at the Council. But rather Pope Paul created the Synod of Bishops which meets with the pope every two or three years on average. There have also been many special synods, whose purpose is to advise the pope on various matters. The synod for 2012 was on Evangelization.

Cardinal Frings delivered a bombshell of an attack on the Holy Office and the whole centralizing tendency in the Church. This was getting to the heart of the question: The minority felt that the Holy See was the source of all authority in the Church, whereas the majority felt that such authority basically came from ordination as a bishop. In Frings’ opinion, the Holy Office and the minority had things backwards. With the tendency toward centralization again today, God only knows what Cardinal Frings would say today.

Cardinal Ottaviani shot back defending the Holy Office and the press got a hold of this. And this dramatized the central issue at stake: How the Church was to operate in the future: continue its highly centralized mode of operation, with its top-down style of management and apodictic mode of communication, or somehow change its style by broader consultation and sharing of responsibility. For a few years it seemed that there was a greater openness and more collegiality shown. But in the later years of Pope John Paul II, things became more and more centralized in the Church.

A week later, the pope decided to expand all the commissions by five

(Please See VATICAN/19)

Junio de 2013: Vaticano II: El Segundo Período (1963) parte 4

Fr. Joseph Uecker, C.PP.S.

Sin entrar en una discusión detallada, y en verdad eran complicadas – y esto indica la importancia del problema en la mente de los obispos – no se hizo nada en el Concilio tocante la colegialidad. Pero el Papa Pablo creó el Sínodo de Obispos que se reúne con el Papa cada dos o tres años, más o menos. También ha habido síondos especiales para darle consejos al papa en varios asuntos. El sínodo de 2012 trató de la evangelización.

El Cardenal Frings atacó muy fuertemente al Santo Oficio y la tendencia completa de centralización en la Iglesia. Esto era el corazón de la cuestión. La minoridad creía que la Santa Sede era fuente de toda autoridad en la Iglesia, y la mayoría creía que tal autoridad salía de la ordenación como obispo. En la opinión del Cardenal Frings, el Santo Oficio y la minoría tenían las cosas al revés. Con la tendencia hacia la centralización de nuevo hoy, solo Dios sabe qué diría el Cardenal Frings.

El Cardenal Ottaviani respondió defendiendo al Santo Oficio y la prensa oyó de esto. Esto puso en público el asunto central: Cómo le Iglesia iba a operar en el futuro: Continuar su modo muy centralizado de operación, de arriba para abajo, o de alguna manera cambiar su estilo por medio de más consulta y compartimiento de responsabilidad. Por unos pocos años parecía que había más apertura y más colegialidad. Pero en los últimos años del Papa Juan Pablo II, las cosas se hicieron aún más centralizadas en la Iglesia.

Una semana más tarde el Papa decidió engendrar todas las comisiones por cinco miembros, cuatro elegidos por la asamblea y uno apuntado por sí mismo, un atento de hacer las comisiones más responsivas a la voluntad de los obispos. Miembros fueron añadidos pero no quitados. En enero de 1964, la comisión engrandecida sobre los Obispos comenzó a trabajar, pero no revisó el esquema original, sino que compuso uno nuevo.

El tiempo se estaba acabando. La Constitución Sobre la Liturgia había sido aprobado abrumadoramente: 2.147 a 4. El Decreto Sobre los Medios de la Comunicación Social también fue aprobado: 1.960 a 164, pero este esquema no tocó la gente profundamente. El próximo esquema que iba a tratarse fue Ecumenismo.

Todos parecían reconocer la importancia histórica de este esquema. ¿Quién habría creído, aún cinco años antes, que un concilio ecuménico se dirigiría a tal asunto, y además, con una actitud positiva? Nadie puede haber previsto cómo el ecumenismo tendría una importancia central en la agenda católica. Este esquema estaba en las manos de la Secretaría para la Unidad Cristiana. Dentro del esquema había capítulos sobre los no-Cristianos, especialmente los Judíos, y sobre la libertad religiosa. La versión final del documento recordaba que el restablecimiento de la unidad entre los Cristianos era una de las preocupaciones fundamentales del Concilio. El documento presentó principios para guiar a los católicos hacia ese fin. 1) Debemos recordar que un cambio de corazón y santidad de vida junto con la oración pública y privada para la unidad es central en el movimiento ecuménico. 2) También debemos admitir las faltas cometidas por los católicos en el pasado que contribuyan a la situación presente. A veces el culto en común está favorecido, a veces no. 3) Recordar que en las enseñanzas hay una jerarquía de verdades. Algunas verdades son más fundamentales que otras. 4) Finalmente, cooperación entre Cristianos expresa la unión que ya existe y fortalece esa unión. Es importante notar que no se usa la palabra “volver.” Es una maravilla que estos tres capítulos pasaron por el Concilio tan fácilmente como lo hicieron. Los capítulos cuatro y cinco ciertamente no lo hicieron. El Cardenal Bea, presentando el capítulo sobre la relación con los Judíos, recordaron a los obispos que la Iglesia nació de Israel y con Israel compartió el mismo texto sagrado. ¿Por qué es la relación de la Iglesia con los Judíos un asunto importante hoy? Especialmente por el aumento tan flagrante de anti-Semitismo en el mundo moderno que culminó con la Alemania de los Nazis. Recuerden que esto fue 1962, solo 17 años después del fin de la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Dio mucho énfasis en que esto fue un texto religioso y no tocaba en la cuestión política de la relación del Estado de Israel con los Estados de los Arabes.

El Obispo DeSmedt presentó el capítulo cinco que trataba de la libertad religiosa. Su trabajo era difícil porque había muchos que pensaban que este texto era definitivamente un cambio de lo que la Iglesia siempre enseñaba. El Obispo DeSmedt trataba de enseñar cómo había un desarrollo de doctrina. No todos estaban convencidos. De ninguna manera. Este es un cambio y es incorrecto. Sin embargo, la intervención de DeSmedt trajo palabras como progreso y
Making Sense of Bioethics

The morality and wisdom of incremental legislation

By Fr. Tad Pacholczyk

People with strong pro-life, pro-family convictions will sometimes disagree among themselves about whether they should support a particular piece of legislation being debated in the halls of their state legislature or in Congress. Their disagreement will often center on whether it is morally permissible and politically prudent to support a bill that is a step in the right direction, but that still permits other objectionable practices. Is it good and wise to take an "incremental" approach to reversing an unjust law, confronting the offensive practices "piece by piece," rather than all at once?

In general, when it is not feasible to push back an unjust law in its entirety (for example, when insufficient votes exist to overturn an unjust law), it can be morally acceptable for a lawmaker to support a piece of legislation that aims to lessen a portion of the evils or harmful effects of that standing unjust law.

The pro-life community in recent years has seen various divisions and fractures over this question. For example, some have argued that since abortion is a grave evil, a Catholic lawmaker can never vote for a piece of legislation that allows for any abortions to occur. Thus, if a vote were being taken on a proposal that allowed abortions in cases of rape and incest but enacted new restrictions against abortion in many other situations, some take a hard line and insist the lawmaker could not morally support the legislation, but could vote only for a law that outlawed all abortions, in every situation.

Blessed John Paul II, however, in a well-known passage from his beautiful encyclical "On the Gospel of Life" (Evangelium Vitae), reminds us of the wisdom and morality of supporting incremental legislation in certain circumstances:

"A particular problem of conscience can arise," he noted, "in cases where a legislative vote would be decisive for the passage of a more restrictive law, aimed at limiting the number of authorized abortions, in place of a more permissive law already passed or ready to be voted on. Such cases are not infrequent. It is a fact that while in some parts of the world there continue to be campaigns to introduce laws favoring abortion, often supported by powerful international organizations, in other nations — particularly those which have already experienced the bitter fruits of such permissive legislation — there are growing signs of a rethinking in this matter. In a case like the one just mentioned, when it is not possible to overturn or completely abrogate a pro-abortion law, an elected official, whose absolute personal opposition to procured abortion was well known, could licitly support proposals aimed at limiting the harm done by such a law and at lessening its negative consequences at the level of general opinion and public morality. This does not in fact represent an illicit cooperation with an unjust law, but rather a legitimate and proper attempt to limit its evil aspects."

Many commentators have observed how dramatic progress has occurred in changing public opinion on abortion in the United States in recent years because of this incremental approach: eliminating partial-birth and late-term abortions, establishing waiting periods, mandating ultrasounds, regulating abortion facilities, and the like.

Incremental legislation may likewise be needed to respond to certain unethical practices regarding end of life care. In Texas, for example, the law allows a physician to unilaterally establish Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) orders for a patient, with no process for review or appeal, when the physician is convinced that resuscitation attempts for that patient would be futile. This means that even in the absence of a patient's or family's consent or even input, a doctor can decree a DNR order for that patient.

Because this practice has become accepted in Texas, and because stronger corrective legislation was judged unable to garner sufficient votes, the Texas Catholic Conference crafted a form of incremental legislation in 2013 to address this obviously unethical circumstance that violates a patient's right to consent.

The proposed legislation seeks to assure that patients and their families receive written notice of their rights regarding DNR orders. It also requires hospitals to assign a liaison to work with the patient to provide clear and compassionate communication about their rights once a conflict between the doctor and the patient/family has been identified. It works out important details regarding ethics committee reviews to assure that appropriate medical judgments are applied to the case, and it establishes an expanded timeframe for hospital transfers in more complex situations of disagreement between the doctor and the patient or the family.

Passing incremental legislation often represents the most sensible approach to dealing with poorly crafted or morally problematic pieces of legislation. In the absence of needed votes to overturn harmful legislation altogether, it is still possible to make significant progress in limiting the damage that these laws can do through the patient spadework of incremental legislative revision. This is done with an eye towards one day being able to rescind or abrogate the unjust law altogether.

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.
Msgr. Larry Droll Reflects on 40 Years in the Priesthood

‘My inspiration for the priesthood came through the family’

Editor’s Note: Msgr. Larry Droll, pastor at St. Ann’s Church in Midland, vicar general of the Diocese of San Angelo, and native of Rowena, answered a few questions about his priesthood on the occasion of his 40th anniversary, June 15, 2013.)

1. How were you led to the priesthood?
As I look back on it, I believe the inspiration came through the family. In my own family, there was always prayer together, involvement in the parish and great respect for religious vocations. In the extended family, there were many cousins and aunts who were priests and sisters. Of course, going to Catholic School (St. Joseph’s in Rowena), this vocation was often suggested by the priests and sisters.

2. Were there any particular moments that stand out as encouraging your vocation?
When I was in middle school, Pre-Seminary Weeks were held in Amarillo. We were part of that diocese at the time. A bus load of youth attended from the Rowena area. We had a seminary-like schedule and many activities. I also made some friends from other parts of the diocese. I returned, wanting to enter seminary.

3. When did you enter the seminary?
I entered in the 11th grade, attending St. John’s Minor Seminary in San Antonio. It was like a Catholic boarding school, with classes, sports, prayers and other activities. A very poignant moment occurred the first November, when we witnessed the motorcade of President John Kennedy as he visited San Antonio and the next day he was tragically assassinated. In my senior year, I was Student Council President.

4. What about your college days?
I lived at Assumption Seminary in San Antonio, where we had our religious formation for priesthood and community life. We seminarians attended St. Mary’s University, where I completed the Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology in 1969. I learned to play the guitar and enjoyed a lot of performing in those days, as well as introducing guitar-based music in the liturgy. One formative moment came in the summer of 1968, when I was serving at St. Joseph’s parish in Odessa; I came over to Midland to a new prayer group of the Catholic Charismatic Movement. It was a life changing experience of Christ and the Holy Spirit in a new and more powerful way. That has influenced my priesthood ever since.

5. And major seminary?
I attended St. John’s Seminary in Collegeville, Minnesota for post-graduate training, what we call “theology.” Moving there really expanded my horizons, not the least of which was learning to drive in ice and snow! It was at St. John’s that I received what in those days were called the “tonsure and the minor orders”; then ours was the last class to be ordained as “sub-deacons.” These were changed afterwards, as a result of the Second Vatican Council liturgical reforms. I did some practical training at St. Mary’s Parish in Odessa as a deacon.

6. What did you think of seminary life?
I loved the seminary community; I still have good friends from those days. We keep up with each other and have reunions occasionally. We also had opportunities to develop friendships with people from the schools and parishes we attended. The seminary is a good place both to test whether you have a vocation to priesthood and to prepare for it at the same time.

7. When were you ordained?
I was ordained as a deacon on June 2, 1972 and as a priest on June 15, 1973, by Bishop Stephen Leven, at St. Joseph’s Church in Rowena. These were moments of great joy and inspiration.

8. How has your ministry developed?
Most of my ministry has been as a parish priest, which is what I truly love. I have truly enjoyed the ministry in all the parishes in which I have served. The People of God are wonderful everywhere. I have also been called to serve in diocesan ministries and administration. I became Vocation Director a year after I was ordained and served that ministry for quite a while. Bishop Joseph Fiorenza called me to be Chancellor in February, 1980 and I served in that position until I became Vicar General in 2004, a position I still hold. As part of being Chancellor, I studied Canon Law for a couple of years at The Catholic University of America in Washington, DC.

9. Do you have any special interests?
I have been drawn to evangelization since my college days. Along the line I have participated in the charismatic renewal, SEARCH (a program for teens), and ACTS. These add great enthusiasm to the parish life.

Since 2001, I have been involved with the Partnership with the Diocese of San Pedro Sula (Honduras) and Tyler (Texas). I have taken many mission groups to Honduras and developed many friendships there. We have hosted quite a few Hondurans here in our parish and diocese, too. This partnership helps us to be part of the universal church.

I have participated in ecumenical groups throughout my priesthood. Most recently I have enjoyed helping plan the Midland version of the National Prayer Breakfast and the prayer group that has arisen from that. I treasure the friendships made through these ecumenical efforts.

10. What’s next?
I encourage young men to pray about becoming the next generation of priests for the Church. Then as I start to slow down a bit, I can focus more intently on parish ministry.

PHOTOS by Karen J. Patterson Top, Msgr. Larry Droll with his father, Harvey. Below, Msgr. Droll acknowledged a crowded St. Ann’s Church, assembled for his 40th anniversary celebration.
The continuing difficulty of people learning to trust

By Rev. Ron Rolheiser

Perhaps the most important thing we ever need to learn is this: It is safe to love.

It is safe to love. Yes, it is safe to be vulnerable because we are in loving hands. It is safe to surrender because we fall into light, not darkness. It is safe to be weak because the strength we need is found when we give up on our own power. It is safe to give ourselves over without fear because, as faith teaches, in the end, all will be well. And it is safe to live our lives with daring because God, as Julian Norwich assures us, sits in heaven, smiling, completely relaxed, his face looking like a marvellous symphony. The world is ultimately safe. It is safe to love.

But it's not easy to believe that. Perhaps if we had all been loved perfectly, had perfect confidence, and had never been wounded, disappointed, betrayed, or made to cry tears of regret, we would find it easier to believe that it is safe, that we can trust, that we have no need to protect ourselves, and that we do not need to be forever anxious about how we are measuring up, how we are being perceived, how we are being understood, and whether we are worthy of love.

Most of the time we find it hard to trust because we find ourselves wounded, lacking confidence, anxious about many things, feeling the need to protect ourselves. It is hard to trust and especially it is hard to show weakness and to be vulnerable. In the air we breathe everywhere (sometimes even in our most intimate relationships) we inhale a distrust that makes us want to show a superior strength, attractiveness, talent, intelligence, self-reliance, and cool detachment. Distrust and self-protection are everywhere. It's hard to let ourselves be vulnerable, to trust that it is safe to love.

And yet, deep down, vulnerability and surrender are what we most deeply want. At every level, we need and want surrender. Morally and religiously, the entire gospel can be put into one word: Surrender. Emotionally, psychologically, and sexually the deepest imperative inside of us is simply: Surrender. And, deeper than all of our anxieties and our need to protect ourselves, lies a truth we know at the core of our being, namely, that in the end we cannot take care of ourselves, we cannot make ourselves whole, and we cannot hide our weaknesses from each other. We need to surrender, to trust, to let ourselves fall into stronger and safer hands than our own.

But in order to do this we need to trust; trust that it is safe to love, to let go, to reveal whom we really are, to show weakness, to not have to pretend that we are whole and self-reliant. This, as we know, is not easy to do. Indeed, on any given day and at any given moment, it is existentially impossible for us to feel safe, to give ourselves over, to be vulnerable. And so we generally risk the cold misery of detachment rather than risk being misunderstood, rejected, shamed, or seen as needy.

How do we move towards trust? How do we, as Henri Nouwen puts it, move from the house of fear to the house of love?

There is no easy way, no simple formula, no magic bullet, and simply realizing where we need to go is not enough to get us there. Awhile back, at a workshop, a woman came up to me at the break and said: "I agree with what you, trust is everything, but ... I can't get there!" She speaks for almost all of us.

By Rev. Ron 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.

A study on baseball stats for Catholic fans of the sport

By Dan Morris

Catholic News Service

As a Catholic, you probably have the same burning question about Major League Baseball that I do. Yes, more profound than: "What would it be like to be paid more than the gross national product of a small nation to play a kids' game?"

Nor am I talking about other frequent Catholic questions such as: Is it wrong to laugh when you see headlines such as "Angels club Devil Rays" or "Padres spank Cardinals"? Or, why haven't the Knights of Columbus purchased a controlling interest in a team? (They might get a heck of a deal on the Houston Astros right now.)

No, the burning Catholic question concerns the very beating heart of baseball itself: numbers.

Baseball is all about statistics. Batting average, on base percentage, earned run average, first-pitch strike ability, and on it goes.

And for almost every statistic, there are two versions -- left-handed and right-handed. Then almost all of those are subdivided into each of the nine fielding positions. Of course there are fun stats, too, like viewing players by their nation of birth, or by their college, or by their age, or by how well they can spit.

Does it really matter what the hitting percentage is of a left-handed right fielder with two strikes on him when runners are in scoring position after the fifth inning in a day game at Wrigley Field against right-handed pitchers in the month of May during a leap year? Absolutely.

So, you might be as deeply disappointed as I was when I noticed one horrendous, glaring statistical void: Why is there not one piece of data on what can be witnessed in almost every game -- often several times?

We know it as the sign of the cross. It is almost always related to hitting. Making the sign of the cross as a line drive zings toward your teeth would be dicey.

Some players make the sign in the on-deck circle. Some make it as they walk toward the plate. Some make it before every pitch. Some wait until they get a hit and make the sign when they reach base safely (sometimes before taking off their batting gloves, sometimes after). Some make it while they are making a home run trot around the bases. Some mix and match.

This is a statistical gold mine. Are makers of the sign on average better hitters than those who do not? By how many points? Do non-Catholics who employ the sign of the cross do as well as Catholics who do? Is it more efficacious to bless yourself before you swing or after you get a hit?

Some players make the sign of the cross twice quickly. Some make the sign while in the batter's box and then raise their hands to heaven when they get a hit. If one team has only one sign maker, and the other has two or three or more, who wins more often?

How do these differences stat out? Yes, "stat" is a verb in baseball.

Maybe the Knights of Columbus could fund a major study, eh? And even if making the sign of the cross by multimillionaire baseball players might seem on the verge of superstition at times, it is not a bad thing to see a tangible reminder of the hero of the cross.
How to keep faith and hope in a tough job market

By Maureen Pratt
Catholic News Service

When I was in high school, Esther "Eppie" Lederer, known as Ann Landers, author of the wildly popular advice column, spoke at a luncheon hosted for aspiring journalists from local high schools in Ohio. At the time, I already knew I wanted to be a writer, although I was not sure what kind of writer, and I was eager to hear her words of wisdom.

After the talk, I went up to Ms. Lederer and said, "I know that there aren't many jobs for journalists, and they're very hard to get. What advice do you have for me?"

Ann Landers reached across the table and grabbed my forearm (she had quite a strong grip) and said firmly, "Yes, it's true. They are hard to get. But someone has to get them."

Blunt. Powerful. True. Someone has to get them.

The job market for today's workers, especially new graduates, is frightfully challenging, with many adults so discouraged that they have given up looking for work. Even those with multiple degrees often find multiple applicants for only a few (or one) position, and the application process itself can seem like yet another college course of tests, assessments, interviews and "hands-on" trials.

Geographically, job-seeking can be even more harsh; some small towns offer little to no opportunities, and larger cities such as Los Angeles, where I live, are so expensive to live in that a job within the city boundaries almost always necessitates extreme lifestyle changes, such as lengthy commutes or high housing costs.

And, yet, I keep thinking of the advice Ann Landers gave to me years ago, and I believe it holds up mighty well today.

Yes, it's challenging to look for jobs. Yes, they are hard to get. But someone has to get them. Why not you? Or your son? Or daughter? Or neighbor? You and they are "someone," too. When the hard work of finding work is regarded in this light, it becomes easier to have an identity and a purpose.

You or your loved one seeking employment are not merely standing outside the window of a business looking in or floating a resume atop a multistoried stack of other resumes, anonymous and generic.

You are someone looking for work that you love, a career that you have dreamed of and a person with skills and talents and drive to fit with the work you wish to do.

Ann Landers gave me this advice years ago, and I quote it often. I pray you'll give it a place in your life, too.

God has a plan and a place for each of us, if you keep at it and keep faith. Someone else will. But at some point, sooner or later, you will be that "someone," if you keep at it and keep faith.

By grabbing my forearm as tightly as she did, I think Ann Landers was putting a personal punctuation on her advice to me. She was emphasizing that I had to dig deep, and keep trying, never doubting that there is a place, there is a job for me.

And, eventually, yes, there was a job for me.

Having an idea of who we are, acknowledging the gifts and talents we possess, a willingness to keep trying and a faith that God has a plan and a place for each of us, this is the stuff of job-seekers at any age.

Yes, there aren't many jobs, and they are hard to get. But someone has to get them.

Social movements and swimming against the tide

By Stephen Kent
Catholic News Service

Same-sex marriage is one of the most successful social movements in American history.

Writing in Commonweal, Andrew Koppelman said "its claims were outside the realm of political possibility as recently as the early 1990s. "Now its victory is probably inevitable," wrote Koppelman, a law professor at Northwestern University.

Based on current evidence, it is difficult to argue with Koppelman's opinion. The pressure to enact same-sex marriage laws in the states as well as at the federal level is moving as an avalanche roaring over obstacles in its way -- including the Catholic Church. In May, Delaware became the 11th state to legalize same-sex marriage.

A social issue such as same-sex marriage gains more support than the moral issues of abortion, capital punishment, immigration rights.

Same-sex marriage proponents rely heavily on arguments of justice to gain support for their cause. But if justice can be seen as convincing in a social question, why isn't justice convincing in moral issues involving the protection of human life such as capital punishment and abortion?

Some progress is being made against capital punishment, but it is taking centuries to accomplish.

In early May, Maryland became the 18th state to repeal the death penalty. The first state to repeal it -- Michigan -- did so in 1846.

"This has been a long hard push for us since 1987 when we succeeded in winning legislation prohibiting the execution of juveniles, and two years later banning the execution of persons with mental retardation," said Richard Dowling, former director of the Maryland Catholic Conference.

In the 40 years since the U.S. Supreme Court legalized abortion, those who oppose it have been working for a Constitutional amendment based on the belief that life begins at conception.

At the other end of the spectrum, from conception to natural death, is "death with dignity" or physician-assisted suicide. Only two states, Washington and Oregon, have it but efforts are underway in other states.

Koppelman believes the same-sex marriage success is due to many opponents being inarticulate and failing to pass their views on to their children. Koppelman notes that a Gallup poll shows 53 percent of Americans favor same-sex marriage. Its support has doubled in 15 years, he says.

A 2013 Wall Street Journal/NBC poll found that a majority of Americans believe in legal abortion, and seven out of 10 oppose efforts to overturn Roe v. Wade.

Culture is encapsulated within and carried forward by religion throughout history. Sociologists from the University of California, Berkeley and Duke University found in a recent study that the number of people who do not consider themselves part of an organized religion, called the "nones" for their lack of affiliation, has jumped dramatically in recent years.

In the 1930s and 1940s, the number of "nones" hovered around 5 percent, one of the researchers who conducted the study said. Since then, the number of people who don't consider themselves part of a religion has increased to 30 percent, according to The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life.

"The liberal conception of religion being allowed only in places of worship, and the elimination of religion outside it, is not convincing," said then-Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, now Pope Francis, in 2010.

More recently, the pope offered words of encouragement.

"Listen carefully, young people, swim against the tide; it's good for the heart, but it takes courage," Pope Francis said at Mass April 28 in St. Peter's Square. "We Christians weren't chosen by the Lord to do little things."

"Let's not get discouraged," he said. "We have the strength of the Holy Spirit to conquer these tribulations."
San Angelo Diocese expands immigration services

The Angelus

Three years ago, Bishop Pfeifer, on the recommendation of the Presbyteral Council, established the Diocese of San Angelo Immigration Services Program. Initially, volunteers were trained and offices set up in each deanery to provide immigration to those seeking assistance completing forms and processing such things as Naturalization and Citizenship Applications, Alien Relative Petitions, Adjustment of Status, Immigration Benefit Applications, Temporary Protective Status, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (Dream Act), Waiver of Disability, and Work Permits.

Since beginning our program the demand for immigration services has steadily increased. Last year we lost the San Angelo office volunteer and recently, one of the Abilene volunteers. As a result, our remaining Abilene volunteer has been unable to absorb the additional demand for immigration services. To meet this need, we are happy to announce that beginning July 1, 2013 the Diocese will have a full-time employee to work out of our San Angelo and Abilene Immigration Offices.

Nelly Diaz, who has been one of our Abilene volunteers since our program started, will spend three days a week working in the Abilene office and two days a week in the San Angelo office. In Abilene, she will continue to work from the office she maintains in the Abilene Independent School District building located at 1929 S. 11th Street in Abilene. In San Angelo, Nelly will maintain an Immigration Services Office in the Franciscan Resource Center, located at 133 W. Concho, Suite 708 in San Angelo, assisted by our newest volunteer, Noraemilia Moreno. In Odessa Dora Valdemar will continue to assist with immigration services out of the Catholic Charities office. Dora may be reached at (432) 332-1387. Beginning July 1, Nelly Diaz in San Angelo and Abilene, may be reached at (325) 212-6192. Hours of operation, beginning July 1, for San Angelo and Abilene will be published in the local parish bulletins and West Texas Angelus.

Committee approval moves immigration bill on to full Senate

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Advocates for comprehensive immigration reform expressed optimism and hope for a law to pass this summer after the Senate Judiciary Committee May 21 finished wading through 300 proposed amendments -- accepting about a third of them -- and passed the massive bill on to the full Senate.

Comments lauding the committee's effort came from faith groups, young adults who would benefit from the DREAM Act, which is included in the bill, and even from a Catholic bishop in Ireland.

A statement from the chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Migration May 23 lauded the bill's progress and encouraged legislators to broaden the potential number of participants in its legalization provisions and to rethink those that would eliminate some categories of family reunification immigration.

National ‘Fortnight for Freedom’ events set for June 21-July 4

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

Last year, in the statement, Our First, Most Cherished Liberty (April 2012), the USCCB’s Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty announced the first Fortnight for Freedom – a call to fourteen days of prayer, action, and ecumenical and interfaith participation. Since beginning our program the demand for national freedom in the United States and abroad.

The Fortnight took place from June 21 — the vigil of the Feasts of St. John Fisher and St. Thomas More—to July 4, Independence Day. We saw a great diversity of events promoting religious freedom across the country, including rallies, interfaith prayer services, special Masses, televised town hall meetings, conferences, and other public events where speakers highlighted the various threats to religious liberty, especially the HHS mandate. Approximately 80% of Catholic dioceses participated in the Fortnight for Freedom last year.

Recognizing that we still face many challenges to religious liberty, in December 2012, the U.S. bishops announced that they would be promoting another Fortnight for Freedom in 2013.

This year, the Fortnight for Freedom has great importance due to the following:

First, the Supreme Court’s rulings on same sex marriage, which could have grave implications for religious freedom, will almost certainly issue right around the Fortnight.

Second, by the time of the Fortnight, the effective date of the HHS mandate—August 1, 2013—will be scarcely a month away, and the Administration’s decision on the shape of a final rule will likely be imminent. And unfortunately, as we now know after extensive study and analysis of the latest proposal, we are still far from receiving the relief we need through the regulatory process.

Third, the success of a second Fortnight is essential to perpetuating a new movement for religious freedom, highlighting the full range of ongoing religious freedom issues, here and abroad, and in so many other areas of law, such as immigration, adoption, and disaster relief.

During this Fortnight of Prayer for Freedom I ask all of our priests to offer a specific mass for this intention between June 21 and July 4, 2013, and to bring this mass to the attention of our people. I also encourage our parishes to have a Eucharistic Holy Hour for Life, Marriage, and Religious Liberty. At Sunday and daily Masses, I encourage that the Prayers of the Faithful include specific intentions for respect for all human life from conception to natural death, the strengthening of marriage and family life, and the preservation of religious liberty at all levels of government, both at home and abroad. Families and individuals are encouraged to pray a Daily Rosary, especially for the preservation of Life, Marriage, and Religious Liberty in the nation.

Ecumenical and interfaith participation in 2012 included an open letter organized by the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod entitled Free Exercise of Religion: Putting Beliefs into Practice, which was signed by approximately two dozen religious leaders of various faiths. This year, the bishops would like to continue to promote ecumenical and interfaith participation in the Fortnight. Perhaps you can organize some ecumenical service for this purpose.

Through prayer, study, and public action during the Fortnight for Freedom, we will promote the importance of preserving the fundamental right of religious freedom, for now and the future, for Catholics and for those of all faiths.
As we celebrate Father’s Day, let us reflect on God’s Fatherhood

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

As we celebrate Father’s Day on Sunday, June 16, 2013, I first congratulate all the fathers of our diocese and assure them of my prayers. Thank you for being a good father for your children and a faithful husband for your wife.

As we honor our earthly fathers, we first honor God who is the Father of us all. We are his children. Father’s Day is then a splendid opportunity to reflect on the Fatherhood of God and how all fathers are to imitate our Heavenly Father. For this occasion, I share with you some recent reflections from Pope Benedict XVI on Fatherhood and God as our Father.

God the Father Reveals Himself as “Infinitely Greater, More Faithful, More Total” Than Human Love

Benedict XVI admits that in today’s problematic world, it is not always easy to envision God as Father. But the revelation found in Scripture helps overcome these difficulties, he says. The Pope said the "fundamental definition of God that the Creed gives us: He is Father."

"It is not always easy today to talk about fatherhood," the Holy Father observed. "Especially in the West, the broken families, the increasingly absorbing work commitments, the worries and often the effort to balance the family budget, the distracting invasion of the media into daily life, are some of the many factors that can prevent a peaceful and constructive relationship between fathers and their children. Communication becomes difficult at times, trust is weakened and the relationship with the father figure can become problematic; and thus it also becomes difficult to imagine God as a father, not having adequate models of reference."

He said that those who have had an authoritarian, inflexible father, or those with a father who is indifferent and lacking affection, find it difficult to think of God as a Father and "surrender to Him with confidence." "But," the Pope stated, "biblical revelation helps to overcome these difficulties, telling us about a God who shows us what it means to truly be 'father.'"

The reference to God as Father, he continued, "helps to understand something of the love of God which however remains infinitely greater, more faithful, more total than that of any man."

The Pope went on to draw from Scripture multitude references to the characteristics of God as Father. "God is a Father who never abandons his children, a loving Father who supports, helps, welcomes, forgives, saves, with a fidelity that immensely surpasses that of men, opening onto the dimensions of eternity. The love of God the Father never fails. He never tires of us; He is love that gives to the extreme, even to the sacrifice of His Son. Faith gives us this certainty, which becomes a secure rock in constructing our lives: We can face all the moments of difficulty and danger, the experience of the darkness of crisis and of times of pain, supported by our faith that God does not leave us alone and is always near, to save us and bring us to eternal life." Pope Benedict described God’s fatherhood as “infinite love, tenderness that stoops over us — weak children — in need of everything.”

Searchers for Hailey Dunn were selfless

Publisher’s Note: Hailey Dunn, a 13-year old middle school student and cheerleader, was reported missing in Colorado City, part of the Diocese of San Angelo, on December 28, 2010, by her mother, Billie Jean Dunn. This sudden and unexplainable disappearance prompted a massive search by hundreds of volunteers and attracted national news attention. Sadly, more than two years later on March 16, 2013, human remains were found near Lake J.B.Thomas in Scurry County about 20 miles from Colorado City. Law enforcement officers announced that the remains had been positively identified as Hailey. At my request, a memorial Mass was offered for Hailey, and praying for her family members, at St. Ann’s Church in Colorado City on May 8, 2013 and a memorial service for Hailey Dunn was offered on May 19, 2013 at the Colorado City Middle School gym. Soon after Dear Hailey was reported missing, search groups were formed to hopefully find her alive. I feature here a story about a particular search group that was formed in Colorado.

By Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer

December 28, 2010 is the day that Hailey Dunn went missing. Here is how our journey began: Our searches were everyday, no matter what the weather or terrain: wind, rain, heat, snow, mud, mesquite, cactus with risks of running into rattlesnakes or wild hogs, but not one complaint from anyone who searched. At the end of each day, no matter how exhausted, the words on everyone’s lips were ‘when do we search again?’ As time passed the number of searches and searchers decreased. Everyone had families and worked. When we all wanted to quit, God kept us going. Kristy Turner: My mom and I were in Abilene when we heard Hailey was missing. We started looking for Hailey on December 28, 2010. I had a family, worked full time, and was a full time student; I did not always have the strength to continue. We have endured such negatives. However, every time the words “I’m done” almost came out of my mouth, God would send me an Angel and remind me my work was not done.

Stephanie: When I first heard about Hailey missing; I was hanging out with a friend and knew I had to do something. So January 7, 2011, I conducted the first search. The search was successful but still no signs of Hailey. We have the strength to continue. We have endured such negatives. However, every time the words “I’m done” almost came out of my mouth, God would send me an Angel and remind me my work was not done.

Christopher: When they found Hailey Dunn, I was out of state. When I heard she was found, I was so happy. I just knew she was alive. I feature here a story about a particular search group that was formed in Colorado.

Confirmation candidates reflect on virtue of chastity

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

In preparation for Confirmation, I send a letter to the young people of each parish who are being confirmed inviting their reflections on the meaning of this beautiful Sacrament and identifying the new coming of the Holy Spirit in their lives. I also share with them a pastoral letter I have written on the virtue of chastity—“Your Body is a Temple of the Holy Spirit.” I then ask the Confirmation candidates to send me a letter with their reflections on this Sacrament and inviting their comments on my letter on chastity. I am always very impressed by the reflections the young people send me about the Sacrament of Confirmation, the Holy Spirit and their commitment to live their sexuality in accord with God’s plan, as they strive to live in their lives the virtue of chastity. In this article, I am sharing the reflections of many of our Confirmation candidates on their understanding of the gift of sexuality and the virtue of chastity.

We do not want to put the Body and Blood of Jesus in an unclean temple.

Holy Redeemer Parish, Odessa

We had really never thought of our bodies as being the temple of the Holy Spirit. However, after reading your letter, we have begun to look at ourselves in a new light...the light of Jesus. We, as young people, are bombarded with sex via the media. We are led to believe that if it feels good, do it. They would have us believe that if you are not permissive toward sex, you are missing out. What they don’t tell us, is that for every act there is a consequence. Some of those consequences are: that it is a mortal sin and unless we confess and receive forgiveness we could go to hell; they don’t talk about pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases; and they don’t tell us that the act of pleasure may result in a lifetime of hurt and pain, both mentally and physical-
Fr. Vathalloor, C.M.I., celebrates 50th anniversary of his vows

ELDORADO — Fr. Joseph Vathalloor, C.M.I., celebrated his 50th anniversary of profession of vows on May 6 at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Eldorado, where he is pastor. He is a priest from the Congregation of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (C.M.I.) in India. Father Joseph is also the pastor of two mission churches, Immaculate Conception in Knickerbocker and St. Peter’s in Mertzon.

Father Joseph belongs to the St. Thomas Christians of Kerala. St. Thomas the Apostle came to Kerala in 52 A.D. and evangelized our ancestors. He himself established 7 churches during this period. He was martyred at Mylapore, near Madras. The main Catholic community in the state of Kerala is known as Syro Malabar.

Father Joseph said “I belong to a Congregation which is, an indigenous one founded by Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara. He is well known as a man of God and a pioneer in evangelization process in the state of Kerala. “Vibrant community for renewed humanity” Is the thrust of the Congregation. The Congregation has over 3,000 members, including 7 bishops, 1,349 priests, 4 permanent deacons, 43 brothers and 1,400 brothers in formation in India. They have 200 of their priests working in 20 countries around the world. Two of them are in the Diocese of San Angelo.

Father Joseph was born and raised in the state of Kerala, at the southernmost part of India. The state of Kerala is known as “God’s own country” because of the tropical climate and many rivers, backwaters and hills. Due to the 6 months of heavy monsoon season, this area of India is lush green and beautiful. There are basically two seasons... the rainy season and summer.

Father Joseph comes from a large family of eight members, which included five males and three females. His father is deceased and his mother is 95 years old and lives in Kerala. Vocations to the priesthood and religious life are a common thread in his family as his eldest brother is also a priest in the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate Congregation and his three sisters are nuns. His other brothers are married and have children.

He remembers that “my parents gave me good examples of prayer and sacramental life. I used to attend Mass whenever it was possible.” After he finished school, he joined the seminary of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate Congregation. Along with seminary degrees in theology and philosophy, he also has degrees in English literature, sociology and psychology, as well as a teaching license. After ordination, Father Joseph taught at one of his Congregation’s Catholic schools for 14 years and later became principal of the Higher Secondary School for 13 years. During that time, he did pastoral work in the parish that was with the Congregation’s monastery.

Father Joseph arrived in the Diocese of San Angelo in 2000, where he was Sacramental Minister at St. Margaret of Scotland Catholic Church in San Angelo under the guidance of the former pastor of St. Joseph’s Church in San Angelo, now Bishop Joe S. Vasquez of the Diocese of Austin.

In 2003, he was appointed pastor of the three churches where he presently services in Eldorado, Knickerbocker and Mertzon. During his guidance as pastor in the three communities, the churches in Eldorado and Knickerbocker underwent major remodeling projects and a new church in Mertzon was constructed.
Abstinence: Value-based education the most effective method in reducing teen sex

By Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer

The Standard-Times’ recent Guest Editorial “Abstinence-only classes fail,” falsely claims “study after study found that just say no teaching had no effect on adolescents.” I ask the columnist, please tell us which “studies.”

I present here a value-based educational method in reducing teen sex, and works better than both “comprehensive sex education” and “safe sex” programs. This research was widely covered by every major media outlet, including the Washington Post, The New York Times, and USA Today. Even those who have been hesitant to acknowledge the value of abstinence education in the past have applauded this study a “game changer.” This study signifies rigorous research demonstrating effectiveness of abstinence-centered education and joins 17 other abstinence studies with positive behavioral impact included in the National Abstinence Educational Association [NAEA] “Abstinence Works 2010.”

These evidence-based findings showing a 50% decrease in sexual activity among teens enrolled in these abstinence programs should encourage our president and Congress to reconsider the previous decision to eliminate all abstinence funding.

Eliminating funds for effective behavioral abstinence education programs is a great disservice to all of our young people, especially young women. The evidence clearly shows that these programs do decrease sexually transmitted diseases and teen pregnancies.
Archbishop: Gosnell's conviction shows ugliness of abortion

In a May 14 statement, the Philadelphia archbishop said, "Gosnell is not an exception. Others just like him run abortion mills throughout our country."

A Philadelphia jury May 13 found Gosnell guilty of murder in the deaths of three babies born alive during abortions and acquitted him of a fourth similar charge. He also was convicted of involuntary manslaughter in the death by a drug overdose of a patient who had an abortion.

Gosnell, 72, was charged with snipping the spines of babies born alive during illegal late-term abortions. Pennsylvania law prohibits abortions after 24 weeks of gestation.

"We need to stop cloaking the ugliness of abortion with misnomers like 'proper medical coverage' or 'choice,'" Archbishop Chaput said in his statement. "It's violence of the most intimate sort, and it needs to end."

A few weeks earlier in the six-week trial, after the prosecution had rested its case, Judge Jeffrey Minehart of the Common Pleas Court, dismissed three other murder charges against Gosnell, saying they lacked evidence.

Full effect of ‘redefining marriage’ felt for years

ST. PAUL, Minn. (CNS) -- The "full social and legal effects" of state lawmakers' decision to legalize same-sex marriage "will begin to manifest themselves in the years ahead," said the Minnesota Catholic Conference.

"Today the Minnesota Senate voted to redefine marriage in Minnesota. The outcome, though expected, is no less disappointing," the conference said in a statement.

The state Senate in a 37-30 vote gave final approval May 13 to a same-sex marriage bill. The state House passed the measure May 9. Minnesota Gov. Mark Dayton said he would sign it May 14.

The law is to take effect Aug. 1, making Minnesota the 12th state to allow same-sex couples to marry. Earlier in May, Rhode Island and Delaware became the 10th and 11th states, respectively, to legalize same-sex marriage.

"The church, for its part, will continue to work to rebuild a healthy culture of marriage and family life, as well as defend the rights of Minnesotans to live out their faith in everyday life and speak the truth in love," said the Minnesota Catholic Conference, the public policy arm of the state's bishops.

In November, Minnesota voters rejected a ballot measure to amend the state constitution to define marriage as only a union between a man and woman, while 36 states have laws banning such marriages. (Updated with passage of Minnesota law allowing same-sex marriage.)

Women religious unite in nationwide effort to end human trafficking

By Dennis Sadowski
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Human trafficking is so widespread that congregations of women religious are uniting in a nationwide effort to limit its reach.

The effort will focus on broader education about sex and labor trafficking, legislative advocacy for stricter laws and penalties for traffickers and wider support for victims through much-needed social services and employment.

"It's a stronger voice," said Mercy Sister Jeanne Christensen, justice advocate for the Sisters of Mercy West Midwest Community in Kansas City, Mo. "Coming together in one group helps to concentrate the voice and the power in a good sense."

The collaborative campaign was formalized during a three-day meeting of representatives of a dozen congregations active in anti-trafficking programs in local communities and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious in mid-April in Washington.

The meeting coincided with the release of a report by the presidential Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships offering 10 recommendations to President Barack Obama's administration aimed at eradicating human trafficking.

For years individual congregations, such as the Sisters of the Humility of Mary of Villa Maria, Pa., have run human trafficking awareness programs regionally. Sister Margaret Nacke, a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia, Kan., who helped convene the gathering, told Catholic News Service it is time for the congregations to come together to better make use of the anti-trafficking resources and programs they had developed.

"Some met for first time. Others knew each other from working together," Sister Margaret said.

Congregations from California, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, New Jersey, New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania were represented.

PHILADELPHIA (CNS) -- Dr. Kermit Gosnell may have been convicted May 13 of murder at his Philadelphia abortion clinic, but "nothing can bring back the innocent children he killed, or make up for the vulnerable women he exploited," said Archbishop Charles J. Chaput.

And, he added, "the repugnance of his clinic conditions" must be remembered.
With blogs, moms share faith digitally

Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — One of Mary's titles is "Christ's First Disciple," and some of Christ's earliest followers were women, two of whom he appeared to first after his resurrection.

Now, some 2,000 years later, another special group of women, specifically Catholic moms who blog on the Internet about their faith, the Catholic Church, as well as the joys and challenges of parenthood and everyday family life, can be considered among Christ's newest evangelizers or "digital disciples."

"Part of our vocation as mothers is to be within our home and do our work with love, and (as Catholic bloggers) we can also do work that draws people closer to Christ and his church," said Lisa Hendey, a Catholic wife and mom blogger from Fresno, Calif.

Mom Blogs

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- The following is a list of some popular blogs written by or for Catholic mothers:

- Lisa Hendey's "Catholic Mom" features 150 contributors, writing on all aspects of the Catholic faith and in accordance with church teaching: http://catholicmom.com.
- Mary DeTurris Poust's "Not Strictly Spiritual" chronicles her Catholic faith, family life and other topics: www.notstrictlyspiritual.com.
- Rebecca Tel's "Coffee Talk" at the Catholic Digest online can be found under recent blog posts and is an open forum for readers to discuss family, education, marriage, natural family planning, parenting and other related issues: www.catholicdigest.com.
- Katrina Fernandez's "The Crescat" is a blog about life as a faithful Catholic and a single mom: patheos.com/blogs/thecrescat/about.

By Karen Osborne
Catholic News Service

In my favorite photo from college, my friend Cara and I are standing next to each other at a party, making funny faces. We could be any other teen best friends in the world, except for what we're wearing: Cara's in a typical blue Abercrombie & Fitch babydoll sports shirt, while I'm in black eyeliner, black nail polish and a black shirt emblazoned with the word "Anticrombie."

We couldn't look more different. The really funny thing about it is that people didn't understand that we were friends. We liked hanging out with each other. We cared about each other. We went to parties together, laughed together and worked through bad breakups together.

They blink at the picture. They tilt their head. They just don't get it. All they see is the goth and the prep in a picture that our culture tells them shouldn't exist. All they see are the clothes, not the people.

One of the toughest things about being a teen is figuring out what to wear in the morning. I'm serious. When I was 14, a common pastime for the bullies at my high school was to stop the uncool kids in the hallway, yank their shirts back and check the label to make sure you were "coo enough." Didn't shop at The Gap? Nerd. Didn't wear Abercrombie? Dork. Are your clothes from Kmart? Get ready for a long, lonely school year.

In high school, it's common for people around you to confuse clothing for personality. I liked to wear black clothing and clunky gothic jewelry because it was slimming and made me feel confident. A lot of people expected me to be moody, angry and sad.

When they found out I was a happy, positive, devout Catholic, I really threw them for a loop. When they blinked at the picture, they just didn't get it. They just don't get it. All they see is the goth and the prep in a picture that our culture tells them shouldn't exist. All they see are the clothes, not the people.

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When they found out I was a happy, positive, devout Catholic, I really threw them for a loop.

They saw the clothes. They didn't see me.

The same thing happened to Cara. People expected Cara to be the typical Abercrombie girl in the advertisements -- skinny, carefree and happy. It's tough to live up to that unrealistic expectation when, like all of us, she was going through tough times and sad moments. I'm sure she found it frustrating when all people saw were the clothes.

A few days ago, I related this story to a friend who grew up in a different part of town. In his neighborhood, he told me, wearing Abercrombie & Fitch would get you beaten up and make you unpopular.

It all goes to show that you can't really figure out who someone is by the clothes they wear. You have to get to know them.
Tithing differences; RCIA and cohabitation

By Father Kenneth Doyle
Catholic News Service

Q. I grew up in a Protestant church but converted to Catholicism. Sometimes it seems to me that Catholics give a lot less money to their churches than Protestants do. (The Sunday collections reported in our parish bulletin would, I think, be dwarfed by some Protestants parishes much smaller than our own.)

On the other hand, Catholics do seem to give a lot to charities overall. (Just in our own town, there is a Catholic hospital, several Catholic schools and many programs of human service supported by Catholic Charities). I'm wondering what the Catholic Church's view is on tithing and whether money given to Catholic, non-parochial institutions can count as tithing. (Illinois)

A. Your question brings to mind a comment I once heard from a Catholic pastor. He said: "If a Catholic couple has $50, they go out to dinner: $20, they go see a movie: $10, they get fast food. But if they have $1, they go to church."

There is some truth behind the complaint. A national study in 2003 showed that Protestants typically give 2.6 percent of their income to their local churches, while Catholics give 1.2 percent. Some analysts speculate that, because an average Catholic parish in America numbers 3,100 people while Protestant congregations are usually one-tenth that size, Catholics have a diminished sense of personal responsibility.

As your question suggests, however, the percentages given above are only part of the story. Catholics also support the nation's largest network of private health care institutions and social service agencies. And while the thousands of dollars paid by parents for Catholic school tuitions are technically not charitable donations, they do in fact contribute to the overall religious mission of the church.

Many Catholic dioceses recommend that their members contribute 5 percent of their take-home pay to their parish and an additional 5 percent to other charities. There is, though, no strict obligation for Catholics to tithe. Tithing is based on several Old Testament passages, such as Leviticus 27:32, which says: "The tithes of the herd and the flock, every tenth animal that passes under the herdsman's rod, shall be sacred to the Lord."

Among Christian believers, Mormons are the most strict in carrying that prescription forward. A recent study by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life showed that 79 percent of Mormons tithe to their church. The Catholic obligation is more general: As the Catechism of the Catholic Church expresses in No. 2043, "The faithful ... have the duty of providing for the material needs of the church, each according to his abilities."

Q. I'm aware of an upcoming wedding in a local Catholic parish. The bride and groom have been living together for some time, although not yet married. The bride was also enrolled in a parish Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults program, although I'm not sure whether she has been received yet into the church.

I know that we're not supposed to judge, but all this puzzles me: How can she want to become a Catholic when she rejects the church's teaching by cohabiting, and how can she now get married with the Catholic Church's blessing? (Wichita, Kan.)

A. The teaching of the church on cohabitation is clear. The Catechism of the Catholic Church expresses this way in No. 2350: "Those who are engaged to marry are obligated to avoid forming a stable union before marriage. (Please See DOYLE/23)

Are you a doubting Thomas? I doubt it

By Father John Catoir
Catholic News Service

Don't be too quick to label yourself a true doubter until all the facts are in. There is a distinction to be made between real doubting, and the discomfort we feel when pondering theological mysteries. All intellectual mysteries baffle us, but we accept them because Jesus revealed them and we trust him.

For instance, I feel intellectual discomfort when I study the doctrine of the incarnation: Jesus Christ is true God and true man. Despite my discomfort, the Lord's miracles and both reason and grace have persuaded me to trust his word.

We do not accept supernatural mysteries because we comprehend them. We accept them because that's precisely what faith is: the acceptance of mystery.

Back to the original question, Are you a "doubting Thomas"? I doubt it.

When Thomas said he would not accept the idea that Jesus rose from the dead, I think he was more in shock than anything else. It was something like Peter trying to walk on the water.

My friend, Jesuit Father Bill O'Malley put it this way. Remember that while the greathearted Peter stoutly tried to dissuade Jesus from facing the dangers in Jerusalem, it was doubting Thomas who said, 'All right! Let's go up to the city and die with him.'

Father O'Malley rightly concludes that Thomas' all-in attitude is evidence enough to show that a critical mind doesn't preclude a stout heart.

Perhaps your occasional hesitancy in faith may be more a sign of your natural sales resistance than any loss of faith. Be patient with yourself. If someone should say they doubt that there is an afterlife, and then goes on to explain the reason is that they can't imagine what it would be like, maybe it's time to consider that this may be more an imagination problem than a doubting problem.

A thing is true whether you can imagine it or not. Can you imagine a subatomic particle? Doubt is a refusal to assent to a proposition unless hard evidence can verify it to be true. Our hard evidence is this: Jesus told us it is true.

Catholics believe in the mystery of the incarnation, not because they have scientific evidence to prove it but because they have made a decision to trust the words of Jesus. They accept all of his teachings because they know through faith that he is telling the truth.

Faith will pull you through and enable you to trust the Lord. You believe in order to understand the truth: You don't refuse to believe until you understand the mystery.

Our Holy Father's 2013 Monthly Intentions

JUNE

Mutual Respect. That a culture of dialogue, listening, and mutual respect may prevail among peoples.

New Evangelization. That where secularization is strongest, Christian communities may effectively promote a new evangelization.

JULY

World Youth Day. That World Youth Day in Brazil may encourage all young Christians to become disciples and missionaries of the Gospel.

Asia. That throughout Asia doors may be open to messengers of the Gospel.

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.
OMI

Our Lady of Guadalupe pastor Fr. Marek Stroba, OMI, and associate pastor, Fr. Lawrence Mariasoosai, OMI, remain the only oblate priests in fulltime service to parishes in the diocese. Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI, who announced his retirement in May 2012, is awaiting word on the Vatican’s acceptance of that retirement. Fr. Cornelius Scanlan, OMI, is on reduced active ministry in residence at Christ the King Retreat Center and is the diocese’s ACTS liaison. Rev. Scanlan is the founding director of Christ the King Retreat Center. Fr. Rick Lopez, associate at Midland’s St. Ann’s, is also currently considered an oblate.

“July 1, 2013 indeed will be a sad day for all the people of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Midland, because on that day, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate will officially give up staffing this beautiful parish that they established and have served so well since its very beginning until now,” said Bishop Pfeifer.

Theoblates have served several parishes in different capacities in the diocese, but none for so long or for as many years continuously as Our Lady of Guadalupe, their work first began in 1933, although their history goes back as far as 1906, with Fr. Isidore Tresch, OMI. Fr. Tresch was the first Oblate that worked in Midland and although he was never officially assigned here he did plant a small seed of Christianity in Midland.

On July 8, 1933, Bishop R.A. Gerken, of Amarillo, established a parish under the patronage of St. Ann. That same year, the first resident pastor was oblate priest, Fr. Edward Harrison.

The Oblates built two churches in Midland: St. Ann and Our Lady of Guadalupe. In 1950 St. Ann’s Catholic School was opened. The Shrine dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe is also the result of the hard work and dedication of the Oblate priests.

Effective in July, Fr. Stroba will report to a parish in Tijuana, Mexico, while Fr. Mariasoosai has been assigned to Eagle Pass, along the Texas-Mexico border.

“This parish has become very much self-supporting,” Fr. Stroba said. “When it formed, we were very much needed here because our mission is to serve the poor and marginalized.”

Fr. Stroba noted the ranks of the missionary oblates have aged, another contributing factor to the exiting of the order in the diocese.

“As a member of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, I have many good remembrances of so many dear dedicated Oblates who served at this Parish, so as an Oblate Bishop, I am especially saddened about this change,” Bishop Pfeifer said. “However, I do understand the reason why the oblates are leaving, which is due to the reduced number of oblates available for active ministry.”

“Father Bill Antone, OMI, the Provincial of the Oblates in the USA, was very saddened to give me the news that the Oblates could not continue to staff the parish.”

Rev. Art Flores, OMI, regional superior for the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, is schedule to concelebrate the farewell Mass.

Fr. David Herrera, currently serving at Midland’s St. Stephen’s, has been assigned pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe effective July.
members, four elected by the assembly and one appointed by himself, an attempt to make the commissions more responsive to the will of the bishops. Members were added but none removed. In January, 1964, the enlarged commission on Bishops went to work, but did not revise the original schema. Rather it composed a new one.

Time was running out. The Constitution on the Liturgy had been approved overwhelmingly: 2,147 to 4. The Decree on the Media of Social Communications was also approved: 1,960 to 164, but this never really caught on. The next schema to be discussed was Ecumenism.

Everyone seemed to recognize the historic importance of this schema. Who would have thought, even five years earlier, that an ecumenical council would address such an issue, and moreover, with a positive attitude? Nobody could have foreseen how ecumenism would jump to such a central role in the Catholic agenda. This schema was in the hands of the Secretariat for Christian Unity. Included in the schema were chapters on non-Christians, especially the Jews and on religious liberty. The final version of the document recalled that the restoration of unity among Christians was one of the fundamental concerns of the Council. The document laid down principles to guide Catholics toward that end. 1) We should remember that change of heart and holiness of life along with public and private prayer for the unity of Christians is at the heart of the ecumenical movement. 2) We should also acknowledge the faults committed by Catholics in the past that contributed to the present situation. Sometimes common worship is to be commended; sometimes not. 3) Remember that in Catholic teachings there is a hierarchy of truths. Some teachings are more fundamental than others. 4) Finally, cooperation among Christians expressed the bond that already exists and strengthens that bond. It is important to note that the word “return” is not used.

It is remarkable that these three chapters made their way through the Council as easily as they did. Chapters four and five certainly did not. Cardinal Bea, presenting the chapter on the relationship with the Jews, reminded the bishops that the Church was born out of Israel and with Israel shared the same sacred text. Why is the Church’s relationship with the Jews an important issue today? Especially because of the vicious outburst of anti-Semitism in the modern world that culminated with the Nazis in Germany. Recall that this was 1962, only 17 years after the end of World War II. He was emphatic that this was a religious text and did not touch on the political question of the relationship of the State of Israel with the Arab states.

Bishop DeSmedt presented chapter five dealing with religious liberty. His was a difficult task because there were many who thought that this text was a definite turnaround from what the Church had consistently taught. Bishop DeSmedt tried to show how there was consistent development or progression of doctrine. Not all were convinced. Here we go again: development of doctrine, my foot! This is change and it is wrong! However, DeSmedt’s intervention brought words like progress and evolution into the official vocabulary of the Council.

Many bishops began to feel that these two chapters just did not belong in the schema on Ecumenism, whereas the first three chapters formed a cohesive unit. After four days of discussion, these chapters were accepted as a base for further discussion. The Council then moved to the individual chapters.

Cardinal Ruffini spoke against the document and made five points which were traditionally taught: 1) Christ founded only one Church, the Roman Catholic Church. 2) Faults cannot be attributed to the Church as such but only to its members. 3) To leave the Church because of its sinful members is itself a sin. 4) The one true Church fervently hopes for the return of the Protestants. 5) Dialogue with non-Catholics is good only if done according to the guidelines the Holy See will publish.

By December 2, time had run out, before the Council could address chapters four and five, to the relief of some and the dismay of others. The bishops of the United States wanted further discussion on religious liberty, but certainly understood the position of the others. It was a complex issue, to say the least. Fr. John Courtney Murray, the American Jesuit theologian who was now an official peritus (advisor) at the Council, let the American bishops know that the document was quite fault. He was the guiding light behind bringing the schema to a point where it was acceptable.

The final day of the second period was December 4. Pope Paul solemnly promulgated the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy and the Decree on the Media. In his closing address, Pope Paul recalled these achievements and laid out the tasks that lay ahead. In doing so, he assiduously avoided mentioning the hot issues that had troubled this period. Without saying so, he suggested that the next would be the final period. Good news at last! Good news that was not to become reality.

The bishops needed an injection of optimism. This had been a trying time. Not only had this second period been difficult. More difficult issues lay ahead. Just as the bishops thought that Pope Paul was about to finish his address, he dropped a bomb. In January, he was about to pay a visit to the Holy Land. After a moment of stunned silence, prolonged applause broke out in the basilica. With only a couple exceptions, no pope had left Italy except as a prisoner of a foreign power in more than five hundred years. No pope had left the confines of the Vatican since 1870 until 1962 when Pope John went to Assisi and Loreto, a hundred or so miles from Rome. We are so accustomed to popes trotting around the globe that it doesn’t even make news any more. So it is hard to appreciate what this announcement meant. The era of the “Prisoner of the Vatican” was definitely over.

Reaction to the announcement was enthusiastic. This was aggiornamento in action. As such it was taken as an endorsement of the direction taken by the Council. Once it became known that during the trip the pope would meet with the Greek Orthodox patriarch Athenagoras, the trip seemed to be a ratification of the new ecumenism and a foretaste of full reconciliation among the churches that the Council pointed to. Yet some noted that the trip focused attention on the pope and the papal office at the very moment an ecumenical council was in session, and they wondered what, if any, significance should be attached to that aspect of Paul’s dramatic gesture.
continued the searches with over 100 people from all over helping.

April Wehba: I lived 3 hours away. I was in bed watching KTAB 10 o'clock news when I saw Hailey for the first time. I thought "I sure hope she comes home soon." Something told me that I needed to go search for this little girl. So I got up, went to my mom's house (Terrye Newcomb), who lives a block away. For months we searched every weekend well into the summer months. Eventually the search was taking a toll on my family life not spending time with them on weekends. So we decided to schedule the searches once a month. Even then we felt like we needed to be there. It was like when I was not there searching I didn't feel right. All I could think about was being in Colorado City searching for this precious girl. Throughout all this time spending so much time with the other searchers we became a family. Hailey's search family.

Terrye Newcomb: I was sitting on the couch watching Nancy Grace for the first time. This is where I met Hailey. I thought how sad and I heard a voice that told me "my child is lost and you must help find her." While deep in thought, I said "the Lord has brought me through two cancers and let me live, so I can do what he asked." When April came through the door and said "mom we have to help." At one time when I was thinking really hard about giving up, I said' give me a sign if I am to continue'. That is when I was in the parking lot talking to a man and saw something shiny that he was about to run over. I told him to wait. I picked it up, it was a heart with diamond like crystals all over it and in the middle HOPE is written. Tears just started falling, I knew I wasn't supposed to give up, I had to keep going. There is HOPE! God doesn't give up on us, we May 16, 2013 felt that he is not always there, but he is when you need him. I wasn't going to give up searching, she was loved; she is one of God's children. She needed a voice and we became her voice. We couldn't give up, it wasn't an option. We walked by faith, not by sight.

Dolores: when I first heard of Hailey going missing from C-City my first thought was omg that is so close to home! My kids are around her age. The first search that Stephanie gathered together I took two of my kids with me and as we searched. I about Hailey the more I knew she needed to be found.

Glenda Turner: One time when I was feeling especially frustrated, not knowing where to search or what to do, I went outside for a little fresh air and quiet time with God. It was this past winter but the temperature was mild. I was asking God for guidance in what to do in this search, how to lead the others who want to search or was it time to stop? After all, in other cases the searches stopped after only 4-5 months and here we were well into 2 years of searching. Was it time to stop? I was asking God for some sign, some answer... I was feeling so lost. I turned to come back into the house and there was my sign. In the middle of winter there was a pink rose blooming on a vine that had no green leaves. Something that seemed impossible...God was showing me how to endure. It was my answer. Nothing is impossible with God.

A special note: We lost a very special team member in a motorcycle accident, Jenie Bell. She led us in prayer before each search. And her prayers were so uplifting and inspiring, letting us know God wasn't giving up on us. And we have missed her dearly.

I am deeply grateful to these loving, dedicated; searchers who never gave up. They have deeply touched the lives of hundreds of other people who searched for dear Hailey and now mourn her loss. We pray for God's blessings upon these searchers and Hailey's mother and family members and ask that our loving Heavenly Father give beautiful Hailey a special place in His Eternal Kingdom. We also pray that divine justice be done to the one or ones responsible for Hailey's death. –Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI]
remind us that we are consuming the Body and Blood of Jesus and therefore we wouldn’t want to put Him in an unclean temple. Penance, to remind us that we are human and will surely sin, but through penance, we can receive God’s forgiveness if we are truly sorry for our sins. Matrimony will remind us that this beautiful gift of sex is expressed in love between a baptized man and woman to bring children into this world to become followers of Jesus.

To live the virtue of chastity, we need to call upon the Holy Spirit. He will teach us to respect our bodies, how we are to dress, and guide our words correctly. We need to have a prayer life because having a strong prayer life is the strongest way to be chaste.

**Chaste**

*(From 11)*

Chastity is a virtue that will lead us to true happiness and inner peace. 

*Confirmation Class, St. Thomas, Miles*

As we read and discussed your letter on chastity, we came to understand more firmly that “our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit.” We should respect our bodies because they are special gifts from God. As such, why would anyone want to ruin a temple of God?

There are temptations out there, but we owe God so much that we should respect our bodies and those of others. Chastity is pureness inside which helps us use our bodies in a right manner. Abuse of this leads to low self-esteem, abortion, and broken lives. We are grateful to the Holy Spirit, who dwells in us to give us freedom to love and respect our bodies as temples.

**Audit**

*(From 6)*

The report goes on to state that “dioceses and eparchies continue to do a tremendous job of creating safe environments by offering safe environment training and evaluating the backgrounds of its clerics, employees, and volunteers who work with children.” Over 99 percent of clerics and over 96 percent of employees and volunteers were trained, and over 4.6 million children have received safe environment training. In addition 97 percent of all clerics, religious, employees, and volunteers have completed background checks as of the time of the report.

In addition to the StoneBridge audits, the USCCB also commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) to collect information from over 350 dioceses and religious institutes on new allegations of sexual abuse of minors and the clergy against whom these allegations were made, and information on the amount of money the dioceses and eparchies have expended as a result of allegations as well as the amount they have paid for child protection efforts. This is the tenth year that CARA has collected such information for the USCCB. This information is vital to the National Review Board in developing its Annual Report.

A complete copy of the 10th Annual Report may be viewed on the web at www.usccb.org.

**Trafficking**

*(From 15)*

"In our dialogue with government, non-government organizations and church officials, we sisters got a better sense of their focus and their thrust in regard to modern day slavery. And they got a better idea of what we sisters are doing," Sister Margaret said.

The call for greater collaboration stems from Sister Margaret’s research into the trafficking work of religious congregations. Her findings led to the development of the Bakhita Initiative, an Internet-based listing of anti-trafficking programs and resources available from congregations nationwide.

The initiative is named for St. Josephine Bakhita, a Sudanese slave who became a nun after her release. Born in 1869, she was kidnapped at age 7 and sold into slavery. Her kidnappers gave her the name Bakhita, which translated means “fortunate one.” She eventually was freed and was inspired to join religious life. Pope John Paul II canonized her in 2000.

Sister Margaret envisions the online initiative as being a storehouse of human trafficking resources for religious congregations as well as the general public.

During the three days the sisters not only got to know each other, but heard from White House staff, Department of Health and Human Services officials and representatives of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Migration and Refugee Services involved in outreach to trafficking victims.

"We come to this ministry with our own gifts and talents. With this ministry, we sisters don’t do it alone," said Franciscan Sister Geraldine Nowak, who works in her order’s Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Office in Sylvania, Ohio, a suburb of Toledo.

Eleven congregations of women religious in the Toledo Diocese formed Stop Trafficking of Persons, STOP, in 2006. Toledo, a major crossroads between Cleveland, Chicago, Detroit and points south, ranks fourth in the country in the number of arrests, investigations and rescues of children involved in sex trafficking, a 2010 report from the Ohio Trafficking in Persons Study Commission found.

An estimated 100,000 to 300,000 minors are victims of sex trafficking at any given time, according to the Justice Department. Worldwide, about 21 million people are trafficked in an industry that nets traffickers $32 billion annually, the State Department’s 2012 Trafficking in Persons report said.

"This is a crucial point to come together (nationally) because we really want to go about this in terms of best practices," Sister Geraldine explained. "We want to use both heart and head. It’s important to collaborate and network."

*Editor’s Note: More information about the Bakhita Initiative can be found online at bakhitin Initiative.com.*
MARRIAGE

(From 15)

"This action is an injustice that tears at the fabric of society and will be remembered as such well into the future," it said. The Catholic conference said the bill posed "a serious threat to the religious liberty and conscience rights of Minnesotans."

It includes legal protections for clergy and religious groups that don't want to marry same-sex couples, but the conference said lawmakers failed "to protect the people in the pew -- individuals, non-religious nonprofits, and small business owners who maintain the time-honored belief that marriage is a union of one man and one woman."

According to the conference, lawyers on both sides of the issue have stated that no accommodations for "the deeply held beliefs of a majority of Minnesotans will result in numerous conflicts that will have to be adjudicated by our courts."

In a separate statement issued after the House vote, Duluth Bishop Paul D. Sirba said the church "will continue to uphold and propose to the world what we know, through sound reason and through divine revelation, to be the authentic nature of marriage: a permanent union between one man and one woman, uniting a mother and a father with any children produced by their union."

No civil authority, he said, "has the authority or competence to redefine marriage. Civil authorities have the obligation to protect and defend true marriage for the sake of justice and the common good."

Bishop Sirba acknowledged that many disagree with the church's stand on the issue and expressed dismay over the negative tone the debate over same-sex marriage has taken toward the church.

"We are particularly mindful of our brothers and sisters who have same-sex attractions," he said. "Our hearts break that this debate has often been used as an occasion to sow mistrust and doubt, as if followers of the God who is love, and whose love for all people we proclaim each day as the body of Christ, are acting instead out of some sort of ill will."

"To all those with same-sex attraction, we continue to extend our unconditional love and respect. For those who have heard God's call and respond in faith, hope and love, striving to walk in his ways, we also offer our pastoral support," the bishop added.

In Rhode Island May 2, Gov. Lincoln Chafee signed into law a bill to legalize same-sex marriage in that state. Bishop Thomas J. Tobin of Providence expressed "profound disappointment" that the measure to "legitimize same-sex marriage" passed the Legislature.

In an open letter to the state's Catholics, he said the Catholic Church has fought very hard to "oppose this immoral and unnecessary proposition," and that God would be the final arbiter of people's actions.

Same-sex marriage became legal in Delaware May 7; the law goes into effect July 1.

In an April 15 letter to Delaware legislators, Bishop W. Francis Malooly of Wilmington said marriage "is a unique relationship between a man and a woman" and it's not the government's place to "define or redefine" it.

In separate statements, Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone of San Francisco, chairman of the U.S. bishops' Subcommittee for the Promotion and Defense of Marriage, described the Rhode Island and Delaware laws as a "serious injustice."

"The meaning of marriage cannot be redefined, because its meaning lies in our very nature. Therefore, regardless of what law is enacted, marriage remains the union of one man and one woman -- by the very design of nature, it cannot be otherwise," he said.

READING

(From 18)

until later in life. His personal acceptance of God's love for him changed dramatically in 1976 as he went from a person who knew about Christ to someone who had a personal relationship with Christ.

He points to models of faith-sharing from characters in the Scriptures. The account in St. John's Gospel of the man "blind from birth" who received his sight back is highlighted. The blind man simply was made aware of Jesus, recognizes Jesus in a new way and begins to follow Jesus. Deacon Libersat challenges the reader to identify "your own personal experience with God's saving love and the stories of other people you know are the essential and foundational messages that will bring people to Christ."

This book is an excellent tool for Catholics and especially useful for grandparents who have been faithful Catholics throughout the years yet may find it difficult to articulate who Jesus is to them to family and friends.

Patrick Madrid, one of the country's premier Catholic apologists, takes a look back over his many years defending and explaining the Catholic position to various people on a myriad of topics in "Envoy for Christ: 25 Years as a Catholic Apologist." He begins by tracing the roots of his entrance into the field of Catholic apologetics early in 1988 when Karl Keating transitioned from "doing apologetics as a part-time hobby to a full-time enterprise."

This book takes excerpts from Madrid's radio, magazine and personal encounters with those who call into question and even outright attack the Catholic Church and gives you an insider view of the nature of the questions and the Catholic response. One naturally becomes emboldened about the church and its fidelity to Christ through Madrid's clear explanation of Catholic teaching as he also dispels the misinformation so many believe about the church and Catholic teachings.

Most Catholics lack the depth of knowledge Madrid has accrued over the years and this book provides insight to the strength and reason of the Catholic Church and the authority of the Catholic Church, which he makes accessible to the average person in the pew or those who no longer enter the pew.

As a defender of the Catholic faith for 25 years, Madrid exhibits courage by wading into hostile waters and witnessing to other Catholics that they have reasons to believe which are founded solidly in Scripture, tradition and reason.

The personal way he writes makes this book much more than a resource for disputed questions focusing on Catholic belief and practice.

"Yours Is the Church: How Catholicism Shapes Our World," by Mike Aquilina, focuses on the role the Catholic Church has played in culture, history and society and how the church has been a positive agent for change over the centuries.

In his introduction he makes the bold claim that "everything about our modern world we think is good is there because of the church." He continues to support that thesis by giving examples of how the Catholic Church nurtured modern science, made music great, inspired great works of art and literature, made women and children people and elevated human dignity.

In one of his more moving chapters, Aquilina speaks about how the Christian concept of philanthropy and charity was revolutionary because while others in society have been charitable, the focus was on themselves so charity's intention was not to raise the poor but themselves. "Roman philanthropy was really a matter of directing attention to the philanthropist. It was not a response to the needs of the poor; in fact, the more gaudy and useless the display, the more effective it was at producing the proper impression of lavish generosity."

While Aquilina doesn't go too in depth with each topic he does provides the reader with enough information to make a valid point.

At a time when the contribution of the Catholics is written out of history and the voice of the church seems to be viewed as irrelevant, this book renews a sense of honor to the way Catholics have promoted advances in the arts and sciences and restored the dignity to the human person which comes from God.

This book would be an ideal gift for younger readers who have little or no idea of the church's contribution in forming society and giving them information to help them challenge those who may disregard the Catholic Church or attack it.

Wright is academic dean for evangelization in the Diocese of Paterson, N.J., and the author of several books, most recently "Jesus the Evangelist: A Gospel Guide to the New Evangelization."

OSBORNE

(From 16)

The old saying "you can't judge a book by its cover" applies to people, too, especially in high school. Everybody is trying to figure out who they are. Sometimes, the people who seem to have it all figured out are just as confused as the rest.

There's a temptation in high school to define yourself and others by the clothing you wear, the stores where you shop and the company you keep. In doing so, you miss out on meeting amazing people who will challenge you, support you and, most importantly, be your friend.

I can't imagine those four years without Cara. What could you be missing? Look behind the labels. You might find amazing friendships and experiences.
DOYLE

(From 17)

called to live chastity in continence. They should see in this time of testing a discovery of mutual respect, an apprenticeship in fidelity. ... They should reserve for marriage the expressions of affection that belong to married love."

Since every priest is acutely aware that many Catholic couples are already living together as husband and wife before being married in the church, some have seen the need to express this teaching even more forcefully.

Archbishop Michael J. Sheehan of Santa Fe, N.M., did so in 2011. In a statement entitled "Pastoral Care of Couples who are Cohabitating," he said that those who cohabit... are objectively living in a state of mortal sin and may not receive holy Communion. They are in great spiritual danger. ... They should marry in the church or separate."

He also said that such couples may not be commissioned as extraordinary ministers of holy Communion nor allowed to be sponsors for baptism or confirmation.

As applied to the RCIA, the Diocese of Colorado Springs, Colo., states concisely in its published guidelines: "No one in a situation of cohabitation may be admitted to the order of catechumens or as a candidate until that sinful situation is ended."

This takes on added importance since candidates and catechumens are typically welcomed by a parish in a public rite of acceptance and the possibility of scandal is multiplied. All of this should be explained to couples with sensitivity and kindness, but without sacrificing honesty.

Questions may be sent to Father Kenneth Doyle at askfatherdoyle@gmail.com and 40 Hopewell St., Albany, NY 12208.

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MOMS

(From 16)

In between carpool, dinner and homework duties, a growing number of Catholic moms have turned to Internet blogging as a newfound outlet to enrich their own Catholic faith, as well as the faith journeys of their regular readers, with whom they form a sort of spiritual camaraderie.

"We try to be supportive to parents in the trenches of the domestic church," said Hendey, a mom of two sons ages 18 and 21. She also is the author of "A Book of Saints for Catholic Moms" and "The Handbook for Catholic Moms."


Nowadays, she has about 150 regular contributors, mostly moms, a few dads -- all volunteers -- who are writing on various topics such as daily prayer, church's liturgical seasons, marriage, family finances, books and movies. Hendey stressed that although the blog's content covers a multitude of Catholic-related subjects, all essays must be in accordance with church teaching and doctrine.

A blog is a website on which an individual or group of users record and share opinions and information on a regular basis. There are more than 150 million blogs on the Internet, with nearly 3,000 of them designated as Catholic blogs.

There are no stats on the number of blogs operated by Catholic moms, but it is a growing "ministry" in this era of the new evangelization, said Hendey.

"It allows us to put information and thoughts out there and invite readers into dialogue," she told the Catholic Standard, newspaper of the Washington Archdiocese.

"There are comments, more voices and a real sense of being a part of a community," she said, describing the difference between a website and a blog. "You're not just reading something. It's much more interactive."

Mary DeTurris Poust is a Catholic mom blogger from the Diocese of Albany, N.Y., whose blog, www.notstrictlyspiritual.com, began about five years ago as a sort of "spiritual journal online."

A former Catholic journalist and currently a monthly columnist for Catholic New York, the newspaper of the New York Archdiocese, Poust said she started her blog as a way to write about things she couldn't always cover as a Catholic reporter.

"It's a blend of all areas of my life," said Poust, a wife and mother to three kids -- ages 16, 13 and 7.

When readers respond positively to one of Poust's blogs, maybe one she based on a personal life struggle, she said, "It really affirms what I'm doing -- using social media tools to reach people who aren't necessarily in the pews or churches," she said.

"They'll email or comment and say they are going through the same thing and feeling alone on the journey," said Poust, who also is the author of several books on the Catholic faith.

Rebecca Teti, a member of St. Jerome Parish in Hyattsville, Md., is the moderator of the blog Coffee Talk, which can be found at www.Catholicdigest.com and was launched more than one year ago.

It is an open forum for readers to discuss, ask a question, share a story or offer advice.

Daily topics include parenting, natural family planning, education, marriage or the different issues facing members of "sandwich generation" -- those raising children and also caring for aging parents.

Readers are invited to "raise a question, tell a funny anecdote, share an interesting article, ask for advice or prayer," with a few ground rules to keep in mind: "Keep it clean, keep it kind, and keep it 'kosher.'"

An example of a recent Coffee Talk blog post came from a reader expressing her dismay over her 14-year-old son's reluctance to receive the sacrament of confirmation. Several readers chimed in with suggestions about the importance of keeping the lines of communication open between parents and children, advice on the best catechetical resources, as well as promise of prayers for the woman and her son.

"Many Catholics don't have the advantage of like-minded Catholics being nearby in their neighborhood who support and pray for each other," Teti said, adding that the blog offers that notion in an online community.

"The whole idea is to create the idea of girlfriends talking over coffee in a living room."

Teti, a wife, a mom of four children ranging in ages from 9 to 16 and a Catholic convert, said there are downsides to the blogosphere, even among Catholics blogs.

She recommends setting strict limits on time spent online. "It can suck you in. Set objective limits of not spending more than one hour," she said. "Real relationships can suffer."

Her own faith, Teti said, has grown, through her work, which allows her to see how many Catholics take their faith seriously in a holy way. "It's easy to believe you are isolated," she said, noting that the Catholic blogs sites she's visited give her a real sense "Catholicism is rich, lively and important, and that is heartening."
CONFIRMATION

(From 21)

I want to live by God's standards

By Brittany Ruiz
Candidate from Holy Family, Mereta

My thoughts on chastity is that it's a gift from God; a virtue, which tell me that God knows me so well that he wants me to be safe from harm, that is why I should respect and honor myself, my body. Even though society tells me differently, I should go by God's standards which are to abstain from sex, until I can understand that it is a gift from God to be shared by two people that love each other forever, and not a one-time event, or for pleasure. I understand that I know possess the gifts of the Holy Spirit to help me make the right choices in life, respecting myself and others, because God counts on me and I in Him.

Our society says that to be a cool kid you have to have sex

Confirmation Class, St. Boniface, Olfen

We always need something in our life to hold on to. In this society of modern America, with all the pressures of being the "cool kid," the "popular kid," and not wanting to be left out, we often are pressured to abandon beliefs. We are influenced to think we need to have sex. We don't though. In this time, our chastity is a blessing, something we have to help ourselves, and it is not selfish to not share it. It is a gift from God, which people frequently discard. This gift is one of the things we can keep for as long as we desire. We discussed in class that sex is not so much the error, it is the self-control. We can control ourselves and make good decisions. We can ignore society's influence on us. God gave us free will, free will to make the great decisions He wants us to make.

Chastity is a beauty that sparkles in each individual and in the lives of others

Confirmation class,
Our Lady of San Juan, Odessa

God's Holy Spirit will help us to live in chastity, a challenge we all face that is made even more difficult by the "anything goes" mentality of the world we live in, but we know and we understand that our bodies are holy.... are made by God for God's purpose and glory. Chastity is a beauty that so many people in the world don't see. The world sees individual freedom as good, but fails to see the great destruction in the abuse that such freedom causes families, our own bodies, and especially children. Millions of babies have been, are being aborted and thousands of others go hungry; have one parent or no parents to care for them because of someone's personal freedom. Chastity is a powerful freedom that lights up the world because it shows respect for God's beautiful creation of humanity. It expresses a beauty that sparkles in each individual and in their lives.

When each of us meets the person we love and chooses to marry for the rest our lives, we want to be able to look into that person's eyes and say, "I waited for you. No one has desecrated my temple. I have kept myself pure for you."

God's Holy Spirit will help each of us to remain chaste. He will help us become more active in our faith, in our church and will be with us always.