Nancy Pelosi crosses the sacred line

Claiming to be an “ardent Catholic,” Pelosi twists Catholic doctrine to cover her political pro-abortion views.

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

On August 24, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, describing herself as an ardent practicing Catholic, misrepresented the official Catholic Church’s teaching about abortion and the beginning of human life on nationwide TV while defending her political pro-abortion view. By so doing, Pelosi, an “ardent Catholic,” has crossed the sacred line between the Catholic Church’s defined teaching on abortion and her bold attempt to falsely use Church teaching to support her own strong political position on abortion.

In their document, Faithful Citizenship, in which the (Please See PELOSI/17)
October: Czech Month

“Remembering the good Czech people who have done so much for the Catholic Church and the wider society down through the ages, I am proclaiming October as Czech Heritage Month for the Catholic Diocese of San Angelo.”

-- Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

Marriage Encounter Weekend

MIDLAND -- A WorldWide Marriage Encounter Weekend will be held at the Midland Downtown Hotel, from 5 p.m., Fri., Oct. 10 until 4:30 p.m., Sun., Oct. 12. Marriage Encounter is designed to give married couples the opportunity to examine their lives together. A time to share their feelings, their hopes, disappointments, joys and frustrations. The emphasis on the weekend is on communications between husband and wife, who will spend a weekend away from the distractions of life to concentrate on each other. A $50 non-refundable registration fee is required. Please contact Valentin and Maria Gomez, at vgomez@wcc.net or 325.835.7044.

CJM Training, Info

A Criminal Justice Ministry (CJM) Information and Training Session will be held in Midland at 7 p.m., Mon., Oct. 20, in Rm. 11 of the parish hall at St. Stephen’s Church, 4601 Neely Ave. In addition, there will be another session in Odessa at 7 p.m., Mon., Oct. 27, in the New Life Activities room at St. Mary’s Church, 612 E 18th Street. These sessions are open to everyone, including both experienced and new volunteers who might have an interest in becoming involved. Opportunities for ministry exist with both the youth and adult incarcerated and in the parish through the New Life Ministry efforts to reach out to the families of the incarcerated, and those returning home from prison. No commitment is required. For more information, contact Deacon Bob Leibbrecht, 432-889-3858.

Fathers for Good Web Site


Dr. Richard Fitzgibbons, a Catholic psychiatrist, explains why fathers must be involved with their wives and children to fulfill their vocation and achieve personal happiness. Also featured is a helpful article, “8 Habits of Highly Effective Fathers.” Visit www.fathersforgood.org today, and tell all your friends about this new Web site sponsored by the Knights of Columbus!

Angelo Catholic Anniversary

The 120th Anniversary and Reunion for Angelo Catholic School in San Angelo will be celebrated November 8 at Sacred Heart Cathedral. The anniversary and reunion will include the schools of Immaculate Conception, St. Peter’s, St. Mary’s Sacred Heart Cathedral, Holy Angels and Angelo Catholic. To complete our alumni directory we are searching for ex-students, faculty and parents who have had an address change in the last 10 years. Please send any information ASAP to Angelo Catholic School, 19 S. Oakes, San Angelo, TX, 76903.

Hahn to speak in Lubbock

Most Rev. Plácido Rodríguez, Bishop of Lubbock invites you to “A BIBLICAL CONFERENCE: Our Lady in Scripture” Feb. 14-15, 2009, City Bank Auditorium, Lubbock, featuring Dr. Scott Hahn with Dr. Brant Pitre and Michael Barber. Tickets are on sale at: FootstepsInFaith.com and Brother John’s Catholic Books & Gifts in Lubbock. For information: 806-698-6400 or 806-438-5253.

Natural Family Planning

Helping couples to deepen conjugal love and achieve responsible parenthood is part of the Church’s total pastoral ministry to Catholic spouses. Fulfillment of this ministry includes both education and pastoral care. This means “instilling conviction and offering practical help to those who wish to live out their parenthood in a truly responsible way” (Pope John Paul II, Familiaris consortio, #35). Below are scheduled seminars (San Angelo) and contact numbers for people who can help you with more information:

SAN ANGELO, Christ the King Retreat Center, (325) 651-5325, 2-4 p.m. 2008 dates: Dec. 14: 2009: March 8, May 17, Sep. 13, Dec. 6. Contact Amy at amd@wcc.net.

MIDLAND-ODESSA, Our Lady of Guadalupe, call Christina Navarrez, (432) 682-2581;
ABILENE, Holy Family Church, call Mrs. Herman Blahak, (325) 892-1820.

Initiation Convocation turns 35

The North American Forum on the Catechumenate will convene its 2008 International Convocation in Christian initiation November 6-8, in Cleveland, Ohio, to coincide with the 35th anniversary of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) and the 25th anniversary of the Forum. Under the theme “Handing on What We Have Received from the Lord,” more than 600 parish and diocesan ministry leaders throughout the U.S. and Canada, as well as leaders from beyond North America, are expected to attend.

From the Bishop’s Desk

Hope and Trust: Respect Life Sunday focuses on dignity of all life

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

The annual Respect Life program begins Sunday, October 5, 2008, and the theme for this year-long program is Hope and Trust in Life. This program focuses on the dignity and sacredness of human life — unborn and born. To celebrate the theme for this year, each parish receives information on the critical issues that are linked to the Church’s teaching on human life, as we strive to create a culture of life that is so much needed in our society today.

There is a great urgency to the pro-life movement today. There are doctors who have been given the gift of compassion and healing who have used their talents to abort babies. There are counselors who have been given the compassion to help those in distress, but have urged people to choose to abort their child. There are parents to whom God has given the power to create life with him, who advise their pregnant daughter to get an abortion. There are care givers for the elderly who refuse to respect their human dignity, and there are men and women in all sectors of society, especially in government and court systems, who refuse to use their talents for the promotion of the Gospel of Life.

In April, Pope Benedict XVI paid his first pastoral visit to the United States of America. He brought with him a message of hope, that is the foundation for this year’s Respect Life program — Hope and Trust in Life. God sent Pope Benedict to us with a message on the sacredness of life and how we need to be people of hope as we promote a culture of life, and put our faith into action.

In his meeting with the U.S. Catholic bishops of
The Visiting Priest

Satan: Our real adversary

Editor’s Note: Our “Visiting Priest” column is written by priests; this month’s column was written by Kyle Clement, a parishioner at Sacred Heart in Abilene, with assistance and editing by his parish priest, Rev. Bob Bush.

By Kyle Clement

The adversary we face today, smarter and stronger than we are, knows the scriptures better than we do, and has had since the beginning of creation to perfect his obsession: the ruin of our eternal heritage. Wise the man who takes the time to know the methods and devices of his adversary, the rules of engagement, and the true nature of his peril for in the ignorance of these lies his defeat. The great adversary, Satan, relies on our denial of his existence and methodology in our lives, our ignorance of the rules of engagement as set forth in God’s law, and our lack of understanding of the peril or eternal consequences of the choices we make.

This article is the first in a series addressing the first point above: Satan’s reliance on our denial or diminution of his existence and methodology. The West Texas Angelus April 2008 article by Bishop Michael Pfeifer entitled “Satan: A Roaring Lion Looking for Someone to Devour” begins with a thorough discussion of this phenomena and leaves no doubt regarding the existence of the adversary. We will seek to go deeper into these concepts in an effort to understand more completely our enemy and his methods.

Anyone familiar with the military or hunting knows the concept of camouflage—the ability to “hide” in plain sight, a person or object for the purpose of accomplishing a task while undetected. The master camouflage agent matches the background pattern and alters any inconsistencies in the background pattern in a gradual way so as to fool the eye of the target into the belief of “background uniformity.” In a similar manner the adversary uses the background of society and culture to hide in plain sight.

Camouflage is the passive element of deception. An active element of deception is the counterfeit, or “lie by object.” For example, when a criminal seeks to manufacture and pass currency, he relies on the inability of the victim to recognize the counterfeit. The adversary has grown quite adept at counterfeiting most every aspect of the Church and those things which would draw us closer to God. The counterfeit relies on some element(s) of truth. For instance, the bill in the example above should be same size, color, and resemble the real object as closely as possible.

People today are searching for more and more ways to be entertained. The adversary capitalizes on this by insinuating that even our worship must be “entertaining” in order to be “meaningful.” He can thus draw us away from authentic worship, which involves the giving of ourselves to God who simply wants our hearts, to what excites us personally (without actually centering on God at all). This is the counterfeit of real worship.

(Please See SATAN/18)

Diocese again in compliance with Charter

The Angelus

The Catholic Diocese of San Angelo recently received good news that the recent safe environment audit finds the Diocese of San Angelo to be in compliance with the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People that was issued by the Bishops in 2002 and has since been revised.

The annual audit was conducted by the independent auditing group of William Gavin, located in Winthrop, Mass. Recently an auditor from The Gavin Group spent almost a week in the Diocese reviewing all the various components that are necessary for the safe environment. It is indicated that the conclusions reached as to the compliance of the Diocese of San Angelo with the Charter are based on the completeness and accurate information that were furnished by the Diocese during the almost week-long audit.

“Of course, I am very pleased with the results of this audit, and this is another way of assuring all of our people that the Diocese is doing every-

thing possible to provide a safe, healthy, and sacred environment for all of our people, especially our children,” said the Bishop Michael Pfeifer. “I am very grateful to the priests, women religious, deacons, and so many other pastoral leaders who are constantly working to provide this safe environment. At the same time, we must continue to work together, and invite other agencies of society, to assist with eliminating the prevalent sexual abuse, especially of children, in our society.”

Del Escritorio del Obispo

Domingo de respetar la vida

Por el Obispo Miguel Pfeifer, OMI

El programa anual de Respetar la Vida comienza el domingo, 5 de octubre de 2008, y el tema para el programa de este año es “¡Tengan Esperanza y Confianza en la Vida!” Este programa enfoca en la dignidad y santidad de cada vida humana—nacida y no-nacida. Para celebrar el tema de este año, cada parroquia recibe información sobre los asuntos críticos que se enlazan a las enseñanzas de la Iglesia de la vida humana, al esforzarnos a crear una cultura de vida que es muy necesitada hoy en nuestra sociedad.

Hay una gran urgencia del movimiento de pro-vida. Existen doctores a quien se le ha dado el don de compasión y curar que han usado sus talentos para abortar bebés. Hay consejeros que se les ha dado el don de compasión para ayudar a los abatidos, pero han urgido a gente para escoger el aborto de sus niños. Hay padres y madres a quienes Dios les ha dado el poder para crear vida con (Mira OBISPO/13)

From the Editor

Maybe it’s time we start making up our own minds

By Jimmy Patterson

There was a moment, a turning point I wish, during John McCain’s speech at the Republican National Convention. It came after pool cameras had turned their lenses on protesters who were causing a ruckus at the convention.

“Don’t be distracted by the ground noise and the static,” he said.

Indeed.

It was the only sound bite of either convention that should be remembered and adhered to.

“Don’t be distracted by the ground noise and the static.”

It wasn’t part of his prepared remarks, but when the senator said it, it occurred to me again that in order for us to proceed with any semblance of dignity, it’s time to turn off all the people that are making politics such a mockery. People who are making the whole process such a bitter horse pill to choke back. Isn’t it time to really cut out the ground noise and the static? One and for all?

The political process today is not so much about our leaders anymore, but about our pundit’s and their collective audacity. There is no dignified conversation. It’s really just about who can out scream the other, out offend the competition, de-humanize the opposing party. Compromise? Do and you’re spineless; someone who doesn’t have what it takes to really believe in what you say you believe in.

After major political speeches, we as a people are always gifted with the all-important network analysis. It’s the American way. And that’s so often where that misguided ball begins to roll down the wrong path. That’s when we begin to let other people start making our decisions for us. When the speeches are picked apart sound bite by sound bite, we can’t see Washington for the fog of Fox and the pollution of Air America.

Our choices are colored for us in the deep hues of red and blue by a former public relations worker for the Kansas City Royals, a one-time Not Ready for Prime Time Player, a former “InsideEdition” reporter and a former sportscaster with a fondness for his voice and the way he cocks his head to the camera unwitnessed on television until now. These are just some of the people we let tell us how and what to think.

These people, and no doubt countless others like them (bloggers included), have taken away our ability to judge for ourselves. They have broken down politics and made it muddier than the Mississippi after Gustav and they have poisoned the river with their often hateful rhetoric. Constructive discourse? Not in 21st century America.

It’s time to turn them off and make our own decisions.

In many ways the screamers and disruptors we hear on our TVs and radios and in our blogs are really no different than the protesters who interrupted McCain’s speech. They just have a different platform, more time, and are less likely to be dragged away by security.

(Please See PATTERSON/19)
**PORNOSPHY degrades and dehumanizes**

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer

Pornography Awareness Week, also known as WRAP (White Ribbon Against Pornography) — is celebrated this year from Oct. 26–Nov. 2. This week focuses on a moral cancer which is eating away at our American society. During this special week—WRAP — aimed at combating this subtle evil, Americans throughout our great nation will participate in various ways to overcome the evil of pornography, especially by displaying White Ribbons as a symbol of the community’s standards of decency and to support the enforcement of obscenity laws. The White Ribbon Against Pornography [WRAP] week is intended to educate the public about the extent of the pornographic problem and what can constitutionally be done about it.

Pornography, however, is a year-round challenge.

Pornography is evil because it degrades the priceless worth and dignity of each human being and the gift of human sexuality given by God who shares His loving, creative power with us.

Pornography now generates more annual income than all three professional sports combined and causes as well the world’s fastest-growing addiction. It is astounding to know that daily there are 68 million search engine requests for porn sights on the Internet, which accounts for 25 percent of all searches. The average age of a child’s first exposure to pornography from the Internet is at age 11. The Internet is awash with hardcore pornographic material that is also available to minors without cost or proof of age.

As we deal with this deadly cancer that is invading more and more of our homes, we need to remember that the Supreme Court has held that enforcement of obscenity does not violate the First Amendment and that legitimate governmental interests are furthered through enforcement of these laws.

Pornography degrades and dehumanizes both female and male participants and presents youth with a false and distorted image of human sexuality, devoid of love, commitment and responsibility. Pornography also features criminal acts that are the core of obesity.
October 26: Celebrating World Priest Day

By Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI

I am very happy to announce to all that on Sunday, October 26, 2008, our diocese will join many other dioceses in the United States in celebrating World Priest Day – Priesthood Sunday. I am very pleased to know that these two events this year will be held on the same Sunday.

As we celebrate World Priest Day and Priesthood Sunday, I remind you that this is a day to celebrate and affirm the men who commit their lives to the Lord and the Church via the Sacrament of Holy Orders. It is an opportunity for all Catholic people to express their love and affirmation for all of our priests.

It is a day for all of our people to do something special to recognize the good service of our priests and to express our gratitude to them for the beautiful service they give to the Body of Christ.

Pray and pray for our priests and please do something special to help them celebrate World Priest Day and Priesthood Sunday.

Feminism and the Sexual Revolution

Are women wearing the ‘Emperors New Clothes?’

Editor’s Note: Melanie Saiz Cordero is a freelance writer and a parishioner at St. Ann’s in Midland.

By Melanie Saiz Cordero

Ah, the proverbial feminist society...screams of EMPOWERMENT, EQUALITY, and the overall EVOLUTION OF WOMAN by way of sexual and reproductive freedom fill the air around them. While the words are cacophonous to the religious right, they sound like music to the words of the independent-thinking woman. The idea that men have kept us "down" with sexual oppression incites the cries of angry picketers and liberated females across this great nation. Visions of Gloria Steinem and the ERA dance in our heads as we envision a country where we can bust through the symbolic chastity belt and "Express Ourselves" Madonna-style! But...what does this really mean? Are we really empowering ourselves, or are we playing into the hands that have caused us this so-called oppression in the first place? Hmmm? What an interestingly unpopular stance to ponder.

The sexual revolution began to really flourish after the introduction of a little thing we all know as "The Pill." The pill was an amazingly innovative new form of contraception that provided women with a better living through chemistry approach to pregnancy prevention. One pill a day keeps the baby away, so to speak. Today the pill has evolved into many different types of hormone induced contraception. While oral contraception is not specifically targeted to the market of promiscuity, it has given members of the so-called "oppressive sex" a reason to lift their own worries about the issue. Instead of becoming empowered, women have taken on the burden of putting their own health at risk in order to avoid an unwanted pregnancy. Isn't that ironic? We fight for reproductive freedom citing "our bodies, our choice," when all along, we have truly been allowing "our bodies" to be put at risk by allowing ourselves to consume synthetic hormones.

How to prevent obesity, save our pocketbooks

Catholic Health Association

As a matter of culture, we Americans have a natural propensity to focus intently on personal success, and resultantlly our health, especially our weight, gets tossed into the backseat. Recently, a popular mainstream radio host proposed the following do-it-yourself assessment during an on-air discussion of our overweight Western society: “If your dog is fat, so are you.” Simple enough, yet the statement hits the mark.

Thanks to daily schedules crowded with commitments and automated everything, we have become a stressed, sedentary, and overweight Texas, with more than 61 percent of adults considered as obese or overweight. Blacks are disproportionally affected, with 70 percent of the population in Texas considered overweight or obese, while 60 percent of whites and 64 percent of Hispanics carry excess weight. As a nation, 32 percent of us are obese, compared with 20% globally. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) define “overweight” as someone with a body-mass index (BMI) of 25 to 29.9, and “obese” as a person with a BMI of 30 or more. BMI is a measurement of weight in relation to height and correlates with body fatness.

Obese and overweight individuals almost always face chronic health issues like heart disease, stroke, diabetes, hypertension (high blood pressure), depression, and even cancer, all of which can cause premature death. Many of these health conditions arise as direct complications of being overweight and inactive; but, they can be prevented and sometimes reversed through surprisingly small, easy steps towards a healthier lifestyle and weight control. By changing the way that we live, we can save ourselves the time, expense, and pain of serious illness caused by excess weight.

Weight control is a simple balancing act of consumption versus expenditure. In order to maintain an appropriate weight, you must burn the calories that you consume each day through exercise and routine activities. To go further and actually shed extra pounds, you must in fact burn more calories than you consume each day. Those calories that you do not burn each day are converted into fat and stored in your body. Most experts agree that reducing your current daily caloric intake by just 50-100 calories can prevent weight gain. To...
Making Sense of Bioethics

Issues 2008: Voting to make a difference

By Fr. Tad Pacholczyk

In the United States, only about half of those who were eligible to vote actually cast ballots during the last national election. I admit I have not always voted in the past. When I am tempted not to vote, however, I think back to a story I once heard about a certain Aunt Katherine who died a few years ago. She was blind during the last months of her life, but she had her daughter read the ballot to her and make sure it was mailed. It was one of the last things she did before she went to the Lord. She believed that voting was important, and it was one way she manifested her concern for others and for the society she was a part of.

We face the daunting task of evaluating many hot-button issues and sorting through various candidates’ positions whenever we vote. We may have to consider energy policy, access to health care, education, social security, the problem of homelessness, taxes, farm subsidies, and inner city violence, to mention just a few. Some issues, however, merit greater attention than others. The life issues - extending from abortion to embryonic stem cell research and euthanasia - are objectively speaking, the most critical issues to weigh in on as we cast our vote, because they address the basic good of life itself.

Even if we strongly approve of a candidate's position on social security and taxation, would that ever allow us to vote for him if we knew that he condoned and promoted human slavery? Even if we strongly agree with a candidate's position on health care and education, would that allow us to vote for him if we knew he supported the genocide of Jewish people? Certain kinds of evils, known as “intrinsic” evils, can never be permitted in a society, and candidates who promote such evils need to be shown the door by our votes, regardless of their positions on other, lesser issues. In the words of Fr. Brian Bransfield, a truthful conscience will wince whenever it "hears a candidate claim that he can fix health care, but still agree that a child in the womb can be killed. Conscience knows that if a candidate favors human embryonic stem cell research, which always includes the killing of a human person, then our neighborhoods can never be free of violence - because we just voted for violence."

When casting our vote, then, we ought to begin from a key and unmovable position - that every human being has a right to life, and that fundamental right makes all other rights possible. Absolute protection for the gift of life is the foundation of all the other goods we hope to promote and enjoy within our society.

While certain kinds of violence like abortion and embryo destruction can never be directly supported under any circumstances, other forms of violence like war and the death penalty may be morally tolerated in very limited circumstances. The difference lies in the fact that human life in the womb is, by definition, completely innocent, while the criminal in the electric chair (or the unjust wartime aggressor threatening a sovereign state) is no longer innocent, but is guilty of serious wrongdoing beyond any reasonable doubt. Inasmuch as an accused criminal or a wartime aggressor is guilty of radical evil, war and the death penalty may at times, and in limited circumstances, represent a legitimate societal response. War and capital punishment, then, cannot be deemed intrinsically immoral. Any direct attack on innocent human life - whether through abortion, embryonic stem cell research, or euthanasia - will always remain intrinsically immoral.

Voting for a candidate who supports war or capital punishment in very limited circumstances is not the moral equivalent of voting for a candidate who supports the killing of innocent human life in the womb or in the research laboratory. Would it ever be morally justifiable to vote for a candidate who supports abortion or other intrinsic evils? Possibly. To vote this way, however, would require a proportionate reason for doing so. We can begin to understand what is meant by a "proportionate reason" if we consider a hypothetical case of two candidates running for president of the United States, one of whom (Please See TAD/20)

‘Nun Run’ introduces young people to vocations

In a time when fewer Catholic women are choosing the religious life, the Vocation Office of the Diocese of San Angelo sponsored a Nun Run on August 16-17. At Vocations BBQs held throughout the Diocese of San Angelo, the young women who attended expressed an interest in visiting convents to experience the religious life. The Nun Run took place as a result of their interest.

Five young women from throughout the Diocese of San Angelo participated in the Nun Run. The young women visited three religious communities in San Antonio: The Congregation of Divine Providence, the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word and the Salesian Sisters.

Participating in the Nun Run were: Lexie Rodriguez from Sacred Heart Church in Abilene, Cassie Reyes from Immaculate Heart of Mary in Sweetwater, and Melissa Tercero, Alexis Cortez and Cristina Aguirre from St. Joseph Church in Odessa. Accompanying the young women were sponsors Debra Loven from Sweetwater, Adele and Larry Cortez from Odessa and Fr. Barry McLean, Director of Vocations for the Diocese of San Angelo.

During the weekend, the young women participated in the various ministries that are a part of the life of each religious community.

They also participated in prayer and other liturgical celebrations with each community.

Melissa wrote about her experience that, “I was able to look deeper into the religious life. I went to San Antonio to visit three orders and learned that, in the religious life, convents is done in love. The sisters we met were very helpful to me. They are just like us; the only difference is they devote their life to Jesus and his people. They taught me how happy you can be when you do the will of God.”

Alexis said that, “going to San Antonio really opened my eyes and answered many of my questions about the Religious Life. All my life, I've always thought that sisters were the Catholic Robots. I believed that they couldn’t have fun, go anywhere or do anything other than pray. Boy, was I wrong! After talking with many sisters, they reassured me that they have fun and are humans. What I realized in San Antonio” she said, “was that it’s...about living your life the way God wants you to, and that includes being open to the "Call."

(Please See NUN RUN/19)
Father Bhaskar: ‘So long, see you later’

ROWENA -- Parishioners of St. Joseph, Rowena; St. Thomas, Miles and St. Boniface, Olfen, hosted a lunch in honor of their pastor, Father Bhaskar, who will soon be returning to India. The event, which included an auction, was held September 14 in St. Joseph Parish Hall. Over 600 meals were served and over 200 items were donated to the auction by parishioners and friends. The variety of articles donated ranged from gift cards, needle work, quilts, afghans, jewelry, home decor and home baked goods to sports equipment, metal art and puppies, one of them named Box Car. One of the more popular auction items was a Home Cooked Indian Meal for 4 to be prepared by Father Bhaskar.

For several weeks, CCD students of the cluster parishes had been selling paper links for a "Chain of Change". By the end of the day, over 1,400 links had been sold and the paper chain stretched entirely around the parish hall.

Parishioners submitted hundreds of pictures taken during Father Bhaskar’s stay. They were included in a power point program put together by Matt Jost.

All proceeds from the benefit go to Father Bhaskar to help him continue his special project, which is the education of less fortunate children in India. While all who know him are very sad to see him go, we know that the Lord will continue to use him in awesome and exciting ways and our thoughts and prayers go with him.

Fr. Bhaskar
Morugudi

CITIZENSHIP: Conscience sees broadly

(From 9)

Responsibility: Using the light of both faith and reason

(From 9)

Conscience is a guide for Catholics as they prepare for the 2008 elections. What does conscience look like? It is that part of me that is bigger than me. Many issues volley for attention: immigration; affordable education; war; neighborhood violence; health care; abortion; the hungry and homeless; the environment; human embryonic stem cell research; the dignity of marriage between one man and one woman, as the most commonly recognized institution in history; economic inequality; gas prices; and the beat goes on.

The common misunderstanding is that conscience amounts to “what I think” on an issue. Conscience is not just “what I think,” but it is “thinking about what is just” and true. It is not a partial appraisal based on the words of a preacher, politician or Passions. The inner moral sense is not built on a sum total of what I think, but is a manifestation linked with truth itself regardless of my preferences.

Conscience does not allow a citizen to forget he is first a person. It tells me I am a person, and, as such, I must look at a quandary according to a certain order: How does this act here and now, in and of itself, fit with being human, and not simply lower prices? Conscience insists that human dilemmas are moral concerns long before they are political points of view. Conscience tells me that to be free I must admit the truth that some acts are inescapably evil and no manner of circumstances or intentions can make them somehow good. Conscience bursts all other bubbles: It tells me the difference between right and wrong, good and evil, based not on the truth of circumstances or best intentions, but first and foremost on the truth of things in themselves.

Conscience must be formed, and, as such, it looks in three directions at once: It looks at me, looks at the moral dilemma at hand, and it sees the truth of both without favor. So often the voter makes appeal to only to the first two categories, me and the dilemma. Mere opinion then substitutes for conscience. To make a decision in conscience is to consult the truth of the nature of things in themselves. Conscience begins “outside-in.” The objective reality summons accountability from me and forms the central coordinate of conscience. Conscience must begin with the true good. This starting point ensures that freedom and truth are not enemies.

There is a faculty deep within that I do not create. It is not programmed. This region is more than super ego or social convention. It is however, formed. The moral sense of conscience must be molded, not developed simply by feelings, opinions, circumstance, intentions or movements, but by the deep moral sense in which we participate by being human and capable of reason. Conscience does not simply decide for happy or sad, but for good or evil. Conscience lines up the quandaries in size order and sees the resemblance. Marriage, racism, the environment, hunger, and abortion are not competing events. They are cousins, if not siblings. Conscience refuses to let one of these become an “issue.”

Conscience winces when it hears a candidate claim that he can fix health care, but still agree that a child in the womb can be killed. Conscience knows that if a candidate favors human embryonic stem cell research, which always includes the killing of a human person, then our neighborhoods can never be free of violence – because we just voted for violence. The moral sense knows that if you treat the environment any way you like, sooner or later you will need treatment because of the environment. Conscience realizes that if you support torture you have just paid the deposit for a war twenty years from now.

Conscience sees broadly. It breaks the bubble, brushes back the curtain, pierce down the lever, and by the leverage of honest truth can not simply change, but can transform, the world.

Father Brian Bransfield is in the Secretariat for Evangelization and Catechesis of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.
Joy: An emotion not to be postponed

By Father John Catoir
Catholic News Service

The antidote is not to have religion just be a generalized bromide but to be premised upon a full understanding of how nothing in life can be truly divorced from God the Creator and his saving plan.

In other words, faith is not an irrelevance. It is life itself. What does that practically mean?

1. Being Catholic requires an interior conversion, a submission to Christ. To "think with the church" is neither to memorize dogma in a superficial way nor pick and choose among Catholic beliefs as if they were a political party platform.

2. While it's always important for a culture to try to have its civil law reflect natural law principles, Catholics for too long have directed their efforts toward changing the membership on the Supreme Court or amending this statute or another as its primary mission.

3. "Much remains to be done, particularly on the level of preaching and catechesis in parishes and schools, if the new evangelization is to bear fruit for the renewal of ecclesial life in America." Yes, yes, yes. Catholic elementary schools still remain the best hope for extending the teaching of the

Catholic Q&A

Should this man receive Holy Communion?

Q. Since becoming Catholic 35 years ago, I've understood that certain conditions should be met when we receive Communion. This young man, a relative, makes no pretense of living a Catholic life. He is married out of the church, seems to have no prayer life, ignores the religious education of his children either at home or in school, and attends Mass only at weddings and funerals or big feasts. On these few occasions he receives Communion. He doesn't see anything wrong, but it's created a serious challenge for our family. I find it impossible to deal with. Do you have any insights that will help? (Illinois)

A. Before answering further, let's be clear that, if you describe the situation correctly, what he is doing is wrong. It seriously violates the reverence due to the sacraments. Neither I nor any other knowledgeable Catholic could condone what is happening.

What can you do? First, he needs to realize that what he is doing is spiritual to his family and terribly confusing to his children and others. If he has any smarts he must know that already; if not, he needs to be told.

Whether that fact means much or little to him will be determined by whatever faith he still possesses. In these painful circumstances, some seem to feel that continuously restating Catholic rules will change what is happening. That is not likely.

It seems clear that, whatever his problem is, it is not lack of knowledge or a need to be "straightened out." It is a problem of faith which somewhere along the way for him has been badly damaged.

That places the problem at a much more spiritual and difficult level to deal with. But this is where any hopeful efforts lie -- in prayer, giving him something to hope for and a genuine experience of unconditional love to which he may someday be attracted to respond.

I urge you to explain the situation this way to your children and family. Sometimes we betray our own weakness of faith by insisting there must always be a quick fix and just shout louder and longer and hope something good will happen.
As a nation, we share many blessings and strengths, including a tradition of religious freedom and political participation. However, as a people, we face serious challenges which are clearly political and also profoundly moral. As we prepare for the upcoming Presidential and other major elections in 2008, serious consideration must be given to political responsibility and faithful citizenship.

We are a nation where the right to life is not fully respected nor protected, including for unborn children, the most vulnerable members of the American family. We are a nation at war, facing questions about the human cost of war and how to wage and end the war in Iraq. We are a country too often divided across the lines of race, ethnicity, and economic inequality, seeking to assure “liberty and justice for all.” We are a nation of immigrants struggling to address the challenges of the many new immigrants in our midst. We are a society built on the strength of our families, called to defend marriage and offer moral and economic support for family life. We are a powerful

(Please See RESPONSIBILITY/7)

Voting by conscience: how we can best exercise faithful citizenship

By Father Brian Bransfield

The only difference between the voting booth and the conscience is we usually have to wait in line to get into one of them. Apart from that, the same thing is supposed to happen in each place as that small cubicle reveals me to myself.

You and I can only vote once in the election this fall. But before we do, hopefully we have repeatedly visited our own conscience. My conscience is what separates the voting machine from a slot machine, and only the human conscience can ensure that the ballot lever is not pulled on a gamble.

The U.S. bishops emphasize the role of conscience

(Please See CITIZENSHIP/7)
Defense

‘Our country’s greatest military asset is the support of those who serve, the families at home. We need to stop treating our troops like second-class citizens. We need to stop treating them like second-class citizens. We need to stop treating them like second-class citizens.’

President George W. Bush has been helpful to the wealthy, and in the current election, he has allowed abortion to the desperately poor, but he has ignored the struggle of middle-class Americans.

[Quote from an article by Chaz Muth, Catholic News Service]

Energy

Energy’s top priority is the war on terrorism. The war on terrorism requires a new priority from the oil companies. They need to start producing more energy here at home instead of trying to profit from our need for energy.

[Quote from an article by Deirdre A. McQuade, USCCB: Abortion and faithful citizenship this election year]

Economy

The economy has affected us in many ways. The economy has affected us in many ways. It has affected us in many ways. It has affected us in many ways. It has affected us in many ways.

[Quote from an article by Carol Zimmermann, National Service]

Healthcare

Healthcare is a key factor in this election. We need a healthcare system that works for all Americans, not just the wealthy.

[Quote from an article by Marie Powell, executive director of the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation]

Immigration

Immigration is a hot topic in this election. We need a immigration system that works for all Americans, not just the wealthy.

[Quote from an article by John B. Anderson, chairman of the board of the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation]

USCCB: Abortion and faithful citizenship this election year

Abortion is the most widespread direct attack on innocent human life in the United States today. In 2006 alone, there were over 1.2 million abortions reported. ‘We must act now to put an end to this evil.’

[Quote from an article by Deirdre A. McQuade, USCCB: Abortion and faithful citizenship this election year]

The Time Has Come

Two candidates mostly show many differences on education platforms

[Quote from an article by By Carol Zimmermann, Catholic News Service]

What McCain Stands For

[Quote from an article by The Angelus]

What Obama Stands For

[Quote from an article by The Angelus]
ECONOMY: Impact economy has on millions is a moral issue facing voters

(From 10)

low-income working mother with few benefits that don’t add up to enough to put gas in her car to get back and forth to work.”

In their 2007 document, “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility,” the U.S. Catholic bishops said, “We are called to bring together our principles and our political choices, our values and our votes, to help build a better world.”

“The bishops urge Catholic voters to focus not on political questions such as ‘Are you better off than you were two or four years ago?’” said Thomas Shellabarger, policy adviser for urban and economic issues in the Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

“Rather, each of us should enter the voting booth focusing on the ethical and moral dimensions of public policies that affect the entire community.”

The impact the economy is having on the family life of the Hughes clan and millions like them in the U.S. is a moral issue and a legitimate concern for voters, Shellabarger said.

“The Catholic Church recognizes the incredible busyness of family life and the demands of work that overwhelm families,” he said. “Many pressing problems confronting family life are due to broad social forces, particularly economic strife. The decision of a man and woman to marry and raise a family is a significant one with many considerations involved. Yet today, without a job that pays a family wage, marriage and starting a family seem impossible.”

Currently the minimum wage is $6.55 an hour or $13,624 a year, but for a family of two the poverty line is $13,167, and for a parent and two children, the poverty line is $16,079.

The annual income needed to pay for a national fair market rent for a studio apartment is $19,320, while $22,360 is needed for a one-bedroom and $26,520 is needed for a two-bedroom, according to a study conducted by the National Low Income Housing Coalition.

The Washington scholarship program, which provides vouchers to almost 2,000 students, many of whom attend Catholic schools, is in its final year and has an uncertain future unless it is reauthorized by Congress.

Obama favors limited school choice that gives students the option of attending a charter school. During a Sept. 9 speech at a public school in Ohio he said he would double the funding for charter schools to $400 million a year.

Charter schools, publicly funded but privately operated, have been unpopular with teachers unions who say these schools take funds and students from public schools. Although national teachers unions have endorsed Obama, he has split with them on this issue and on his proposal of incentive payment for successful teachers, something McCain similarly endorses.

In their 2007 document, “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility,” the U.S. bishops emphasize that parents should be able to choose the best education for their children and that the government, through tax credits and scholarships, “should help provide resources for parents, especially those of modest means.”

Sister Dale McDonald, a Sister of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the director of public policy and educational research for the National Catholic Educational Association, said her office is “not hoping for the (next) president to wave a magic wand” when it comes to school-choice initiatives. In previous years, she said, candidates "promised school choice and it never came to be."

She is slightly more optimistic about educational tax credits where individuals and corporations can donate funds to be used for school tuition or other educational expenses. But with the current state of the economy, she told CNS she also fears tax credits are "not shining brightly on the horizon."

In their higher education proposals, the candidates want to help students better afford college tuition, but they offer different ways to that end. Obama has proposed doubling the federal student loan program and expanding the Peace Corps, AmeriCorps and other national service programs.

McCain supports an increase in Pell grants -- federal scholarships based on family need -- and he also backs expanding low-interest college loans for middle-class families.

Sister McDonald noted that although "education is a small part of both parties' platforms" Catholic school officials want to be "on the radar screen" during the election year. That's why the NCEA submitted statements to the national platform committees of both parties stating their support for school choice and educational reform that helps all students and teachers.

"We are an important part of American education and we want fair treatment for our students and acknowledgement of what we do," said Sister McDonald, stressing the work Catholic schools do with low-income and non-Catholic students.

Powell also said Catholic school officials will continue to promote themselves to political leaders as a reminder of everything that Catholic schools do.

"We’re not just a fringe group," she added.
'Spiritual nourishment' of Bible to be a synod focus, says cardinal

Catholic News Service

SAN FRANCISCO -- A renewed appreciation for the "spiritual nourishment" available in sacred Scripture, a shot in the arm for ecumenical dialogue and enhanced preaching on "the word of God in Scripture" are among hopeful outcomes of the world Synod of Bishops on the Bible, a U.S. cardinal said.

Cardinal William J. Levada, prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, made the comments in an interview in San Francisco with the newspaper of the archdiocese, Catholic San Francisco. The cardinal, who is the former archbishop of San Francisco, was in town to dedicate a replica of St. Francis of Assisi's tiny Porziuncola church that now graces a building adjoining the National Shrine of St. Francis of Assisi. "For all the rekindling of the love for Scripture that the (Second) Vatican Council proposed, I would say that perhaps we have not integrated" the study and appreciation of the Bible into the daily lives of average Catholics as much as the church would hope, he said. Cardinal Levada is one of three delegate presidents who will take turns presiding over the synod's daily sessions Oct. 5-26 at the Vatican.

OBISPO: Domingo de respetar la vida

(Para 3)

Él, que aconsejan a sus hijas a tener un aborto. Hay cuidadores de ancianos que rechazan su dignidad humana, y hay hombres y mujeres en todo sector de sociedad, especialmente en los sistemas gubernamentales y de corte, que rechazan usar sus talentos para la promoción del Evangelio de Vida.

En abril de 2008, el Papa Benedicto XVI hizo su primera visita pastoral a los Estados Unidos de América. Trajo con él un mensaje de esperanza, que es la fundación para el programa de este año de Respetar la Vida--¡Tengan Esperanza y Confianza en la Vida! Dios nos envió el Papa Benedicto con un mensaje tocante la santidad de la vida y como debemos ser gente de esperanza a través de promover una cultura de vida, y poner nuestra fe en acción.

En su reunión con los obispos Católicos de EE.UU., el papa Benedicto afirmó que nuestro país "está marcado por un auténtico espíritu religioso", pero este espíritu con demasiada frecuencia se encuentra restringido a nuestros lugares y momentos de culto.

El Papa Benedicto nos alica a ser gente de esperanza, gente que apoya la vida humana en cada etapa de la vida. Nos alica a que seamos claros en nuestras creencias, a actuar de manera coherente con ellas, y a sentirnos animados en nuestros esfuerzos para transformar nuestra cultura. Su Santidad indicó, "La proclamación de la vida, de la vida abundante, debe ser el centro de la nueva evangelización".

Durante el año, así que vivimos el programa de Respeto a la Vida, animo a todos nuestros feligreses que primeramente recemos que todos tengamos una nueva apreciación de la vida humana desde el momento de concepción hasta su fin natural determinado por Dios. Pido a todo el pueblo que tomen mucha más acción directa al ser más proactivos en promover cada empeño para derrotar el aborto, y trabajar por todos los temas de vida que son presentados por la Iglesia para nuestra consideración. En modo especial, necesitamos examinar cuidadosamente la posición de cada candidato presidencial en cuanto a los temas de vida humana, antes de echar nuestro voto.

OSBORNE: Finding new categories of friends not always easy

(From 15)

Sometimes the memories of the past are the only things people can take along on their individual journeys.

I know that my friend and I definitely wish nothing but good things for one another. That's what friends do, no matter if they talk three times a day or once a year. I know the next time we meet, whenever that is, we'll have a great time talking about the memories.

After all, she taught me how not to be afraid of the dark, to roller-skate, to listen to great music and to swing dance when everyone else is gyrating around.

In the popular song "Graduation (Friends Forever)," artist Vitamin C sings, "As our lives change, come whatever, we will still be friends forever."

That promise hasn't always worked out the way I imagined it would, but that promise hasn't really been completely broken, either. We might not be best friends anymore, but maybe there are new categories of friendship out there to explore, if people still care about each other.

Good friendships never really leave. They linger for a long time after the last words have been said, in deeds and memories and the legacy of kindness.

Maybe my definition of friendship needs to expand. Maybe that's part of growing up, too. Maybe it's my turn to pick up the phone.

ABORTION: Voters deserve to know all candidates positions on pro-life issues

(From 11)

Voters deserve to know all candidates positions on pro-life issues, the bishops say in a document released Oct. 8.

"Voters deserve to know all candidates positions on pro-life issues, the bishops say in a draft document released Oct. 8.

The document, "Faithful Citizenship," says voters deserve to know candidates' positions on abortion and that the united voice of all Catholics will determine the outcome of the upcoming state and federal elections.

"We need a united voice that says no to abortion," the bishops say in the draft document, "and a united voice that speaks to the dignity of every human life from conception to natural death, parents welcome children whether "planned" or "unplanned," and the wounds of abortion have healed. A culture in which abortion is unthinkable is one in which all lives will be honored.

Deirdre A. McQuade is assistant director for Policy and Communications at the Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.
Family

How young parents today name their newborns

By Dan Morris
Catholic News Service

Those of you who know me well (my IRS auditor and my dentist) know I have reservations about how young parents today name their newborns.

I do have tolerance for geography-based names that have flair -- like Dover, Athens, Genoa, Denver, Cabo, Pokipsy.

Sure, those monikers can clink a little when paired with last names like Murphy or Gerber, but that is beside the point.

Honestly, Montana, Tacoma or even Genoa would have gone well with our own family surname "Morris." (Sidenote: There is little truth to the rumor that I nearly gave into the temptation to name our own four kids Doris, Horace, Boris and Norris. But it could have been entertaining to introduce the tribe as Horace, Doris, Boris and Norris Morris. Think what we could have done if we had thrown in middle names like Taurus, Forrest, Dolores and even Morris too! Yes, in times of frustration there have been days I have called my oldest Doris Dolores Morris.)

Speaking of one's own children: One of mine (I will avoid mentioning it was Michael) and his wife (Tanya deserves anonymity) caved into the trend to combine the names of grandparents (or stars of "American Idol") for their newborn. They have named my beautiful newest granddaughter Emma -- a merger of grandmothers' names Emma Jo and Eileen.

I am thankful the grandmothers' names were not Penny and Nancy, which could have led to Penance, or were not Sally and Olivia, which could have morphed into Saliva.

On another baby name front, it is hard to judge the ebb and flow of the trend to pull names out the Bible.

"We certainly have had a decade or two of Joshuas, Lukes, Ruths, Aarons, Adams and Sarahs," pointed out Marlene at our recent Roadkill Theological Roundtable meeting.

"There were a few Zeeks and Esthers out there too," nodded her husband, Bud.

"We will definitely know something is up if names like Epistle, Lamentation or Psalm XVI start showing up," Marlene observed.

That made me curious. Does the church still insist that baptismal names have roots in saints' names or be a virtue like Prudence, Hope or Faith?

From what I could Google, it appears things have indeed changed. The current church teaching is: "Parents, sponsors and the pastor are to take care that a name foreign to Christian sensibilities is not given" (Canon 855).

Clearly the potential rub here is that the Christian sensibilities of my generation and the Christian sensibilities of my children's freewheeling, high-tech, high-speed, hyped-up, oscillating, Internet-addicted world could be different.

Maybe not. But it is possible.

Regardless, young parents seem focused on providing their new living soul-bearers with names as unique as they are. So I guess I can live with names that have entered our lives recently: Fisher, Diver, Hunter, Green and Melody. Welcome. You are beloved.

(Comments are welcome. E-mail Uncle Dan at cnsuncle01@yahoo.com.)

Bill & Monica Dodds

The joy of music -- even if you can't sing

By Bill and Monica Dodds
Catholic News Service

Let's start with a slightly revised quote commonly attributed to St. Augustine: "He who sings prays twice ... even if he who is singing can't carry a tune in a bucket."

The good news -- music to a parent's ears -- is that there are a variety of ways they can help their children develop a true love of music even if the parents' own talents in that area are limited. For example, parents can:

1. Sing those nursery rhymes. Help toddlers and preschoolers learn about the itsy-bitsy spider, Jack and Jill, the cat and fiddle, the wheels on the bus and more. Sing together. With gusto! If you play an instrument, play it with them and for them. Let your child or grandchild strum those guitar strings or tap those piano keys.

2. Pull off the earphones and play your favorite music on a speaker system so the kids (but not the neighbors) hear it too, whatever that favorite might be -- spiritual, pop, rock, folk, blues, jazz, classical, opera. While the children might not grow up liking the same type of music, odds are they'll grow up loving music. (Yes, they may choose a style that makes you shake your head and shudder. Just as your generation did to your own parents. And your parents did to their parents.)

3. Take the family to a concert. Some performances can have high ticket prices but check around and you'll probably find some low-cost or no-cost shows too.

4. Encourage your children to learn to play an instrument. If cost becomes a factor, there are many good how-to videos on the Web these days. (It's true, there's no substitute for being with a teacher, but it can help your child learn more about the instrument and how to play it.)

Then, too, you could take a few lessons that way, couldn't you, since you "always wanted to learn to play the piano." So learn. You'll be setting a great example.

6. Remind the kids that school band and choir are an option too. So are singing or playing an instrument for Mass. (So is starting a garage band, but most kids figure that out on their own.)

A Pitch for Music From a Doctor of the Church

"Music rouses the emotions, it calls the senses to a different quality. ... Music also comforts the mind in the enduring of labors, and singing lightens weariness in solitary tasks. Music also calms overwrought minds. ... Whatever we say or whatever emotions we feel within from the beating of our impulses, it is proven that they are brought into communion with the virtues through the musical rhythms of harmony." -- St. Isidore (560-636), Etymologies, 3, 17.

On the Web: Free Music Appreciation Class

"Sound Reasoning" is available at a site sponsored by Rice University. Read, listen and learn at: cnx.org/content/col10214/1.16.

Bill and Monica Dodds are the founders of the Friends of St. John the Caregiver and editors of My Daily Visitor magazine. Their Web site is www.FSJC.org. They can be contacted at MonicaDodds@YourAgingParent.com.
I still hope she'll call. I still remember playing old-school video games in her living room. We stood in her front yard with a book of constellations in the middle of the night, waking up the neighbors with our cheering when we identified Orion or Cassiopeia. Who could forget the epic snowball fight in the front yard at the post-Christmas bash or the times we'd get ready for dances together, slathering glitter on our eyelids? She was my best friend.

We thought it would never end, but it did. These days, though, she's just a face on my Facebook. The last time we had a long conversation, it was the winter of our freshman year of college. We chatted about the old times over coffee -- we'd never needed before that first semester, both knowing something was missing: We no longer had anything in common except our past.

We felt like we were losing one another. Losing a close friendship is a traumatic experience -- whether the cause can be pinned to rumors, other social circles or just to the passage of time. It happens to everyone.

Even among good friends, people can grow apart because of misunderstandings or lack of communication. For my friend and I, the end came after we no longer had shared experiences. This is normal.

Growing up means moving through constantly changing and shifting social circles. In elementary school, my friends were often dictated by the distance from home or the kids in my class, but rarely can a high school student say such things are their only criteria.

Freshmen arrive, seniors leave. High school is a constantly changing social environment, starting the day a student walks in the door. Everything changes. Knowing this doesn't make the process hurt any less, though. That's why it's comforting to know that good friendships can still work outside the typical framework, when each party helps the other person simply because they want the other to grow and prosper.

Those relationships don't end when the "hanging out" does. By no means was the time I spent with my friend worthless; I learned a lot from her, and I hope that she learned a lot from me.

Sometimes friends grow older together, sharing good times, phone calls, road trips, wedding toasts and yearly retreats.

(Please See OSBORNE/13)
Facing a family member’s incarceration

By Bob & Eva Lopez

Where do we begin? It probably started when our child was in the 6th grade, but we were too naive to know what was going on or didn’t want to believe he could be involved with drugs. And as time progressed and we started going crazy, we looked for ways to help our son but to no avail. We tried to handle our problem as best we could by ourselves because we were too angry to get help ourselves, or to admit that we had a drug abuser in our home. We tried to hide the fact from most people; even today we still have a hard time admitting that our son is in prison for dealing with drugs.

We went to drug abuse programs, rehab centers, and I can’t remember how many times he went to jail. Regardless of what we did we could not make our son understand the hurt he was causing himself or the pain he was putting us through. Countless times we kicked him out of the house only to allow him back in. You see he always had an uncanny ability to play on our emotions. The little boy that cried wolf had nothing on our son. We accepted him back each and every time only to be disappointed one more time! We became so angry, mad, and psychotic that it was almost a relief when our son was sent to prison.

The first time he was sent to jail, my wife had such a bad experience with the way the law enforcement officers treated her and the way they made her feel she never wanted to go see our son again. I just didn’t want to see him in jail again period. We had been hurt so many times for so long that we almost lost all hope. For a very long time we even dreaded having him come out because we knew he would only mess up again. He is now serving a 10 year federal sentence for being involved in the manufacture of an illegal substance.

One evening my wife managed to sit me down long enough to suggest we go to a church function on a Thursday night. She had read an article in the church bulletin about a meeting concerning people with loved ones in jail and wanted to learn more about it. The deacon in our parish was starting a new ministry that had to do with families that had relatives incarcerated. Its intend, as I understood it, was to help people cope with their pain and suffering by sharing one’s experience. I chose to stay home the first time.

My wife came home that evening and I could not believe her attitude. All she could talk about was how nice everyone was and how they had all treated her with so much love and kindness, she couldn’t stop crying. She managed to play on my guilt enough that I went with her the next Thursday night although I was still a little skeptical. I sat, I listened, and I remained silent. It wasn’t until another man shared his experience and opened his heart and I saw tears in his eyes that it finally reached me. You see, he was telling my story! I too have cried, I too have felt the pain others have suffered and by sharing that, it has helped me heal.

We made our first trip to the federal prison this summer. It had been over six long years since we had seen our son. We hugged, we cried, we laughed and we apologized to each other. We became human again.

New Life Ministry – Support Groups

In February 2008, a New Life Ministry (NLM) support group was established in Midland. The group meets every Thursday at 7p.m. in Rooms 1&2 of the parish hall at St. Stephen’s, 4601 Neely Ave., in Midland. The NLM support group is for families with a loved one in prison or jail. Also, those who recently returned home from prison are encouraged to attend so they can be offered love and support which is so desperately needed during the difficult transition period following incarceration. In addition, children are welcome as a separate program is offered for them.

An eight week program which concluding with a healing Mass is the focus with a different topic for reflection presented each week. This is a community wide support group; open to all, Catholic and non-Catholics. There is time devoted to listen to others and share, if one desires. Everything shared will be held in strict confidence.

Prayer will be an important part of our time together, calling on the Holy Spirit for strength, understanding and healing in the midst of our struggles. As a Church, we are to be Christ’s hands and feet, offering love and compassion to others, so that they might experience peace and a renewed sense of hope, a New Life in Christ.

The NLM support group in Midland was just the beginning, as Deacon Bob Leibrecht would like to work with you to help establish a group in your parish; or community, where there are multiple churches. Please call Deacon Leibrecht at 432-889-3858 to offer your help. To show how God is already changing lives by offering renewed hope, several of those that have been attending the Midland support group want to share their stories, and the peace they have found.

Criminal Justice Ministry

Diocesan Justice Office
325-651-7500

www.san-angelo-diocese.org/cjm.html

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

Our Holy Father’s Monthly Intentions 2008

October

Synod of Bishops: That the Synod of Bishops may help all those engaged in the service of the Word of God to transmit the truth of faith courageously in communion with the entire Church.

Participation in the Church’s Universal Mission: That in this month dedicated to missions, every Christian community may feel the need to participate in the universal mission with prayer, sacrifice and concrete help.

November

Love of God and Neighbor. That the testimony of love offered by the saints may fortify Christians in their devotion to God and neighbor, imitating Christ, who came to serve and not to be served.

The Church in Asia. That the Christian communities of Asia, contemplating the face of Christ, may find the most suitable ways to announce him, in full faithfulness to the Gospel.

Daily Offering Prayer

O 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.

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The Angelus OCTOBER 2008  Page 17

PELOSI: Church’s teaching on abortion has been unchanging through the ages

(From 1)

U.S. Catholic Bishops teach about forming good value-based consciences, the Bishops avoid taking political party positions and do not mention the views of specific politicians nor political party affiliation. In that document, as in many other social justice teachings, the bishops address all life issues not just abortion, and point out principles, values and the Church teaching to guide Catholic voters—and others—as they prepare to cast their vote for the new President. But since Nancy Pelosi, while claiming to be an “ardent Catholic,” on national TV presented a false view on Catholic moral teaching on abortion and the beginning of human life, the bishops, as moral teachers, were bound in a public manner to correct her misrepresentation of Catholic teaching, on the beginning of human life and the defined teaching of the Church on abortion.

Representatives of the Conference of U.S. Catholic Bishops and many other individual bishops, responded to correct Pelosi’s twisted understanding of the official Catholic Church. An “ardent Catholic” must accept and practice the defined teaching of the Church even if that person claims to not fully agree with or completely understand the teaching of the Church. In rejecting the teaching of the highest authority of our Catholic Church, Pelosi is putting her personal opinion on a grave moral matter over the official teaching of the Pope and Bishops and is causing a scandal. Pelosi must realize that her first responsibility as an “ardent Catholic” is not to support an immoral human law on abortion but first to uphold the law of God, and the defined teaching of her Catholic Church as she was baptized a Catholic long before she was a politician.

Besides the clear teaching of the Church on the sacredness of the unborn, it is clearly obvious from modern technology of the 21st century that gives us crystal-clear photographs and accurate films of the unborn living reality that the marvelous little ones in their mothers wombs are human beings with inalienable rights to life. This is a right that the Speaker of the House, an “ardent Catholic,” is bound to defend at all costs for the most basic ethical reasons. They are not parts of their mother, and what they are should not depend on the opinion of a politician. It is shocking to learn that a Catholic government leader of the stature of Pelosi, would propose a false misrepresentation of our Catholic faith, to defend the killing of the unborn.

Two committees of the U.S. Catholic Bishops Conference, as well as many other U.S. Bishops, have strongly responded to the immoral position of Nancy Pelosi about the beginning of human life and her support of abortion, which goes against the defined teaching of the Church. In doing so, as moral teachers, the Bishops are clearly pointing out how central the right to life is to Catholic morality, and it is no exaggeration to say that the inviolability and sacredness of human life is to Catholic morality what the belief in the Trinity is to catholic dogma. Being a Catholic presumes the acceptance of a whole string of basic beliefs that have been outlined for all Catholics from the time of Christ until the present moment through the teaching of the Catholic Church. Nancy Pelosi’s position goes directly against a defined teaching of the Catholic Church, and even though she has been corrected about this teaching, she still holds firmly to it. Is this an “ardent Catholic?”

The Church’s official teaching on abortion has been constant down through the ages. The earliest known work of Christian antiquity outside the New Testament is called the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, commonly known as the Didache, dated around the year 90. This catechetical manual clearly points out what it meant and means to be a Catholic Christian. It begins with the strong admonition, “Two Ways there are: one of life and one of death, and there is a great difference between the Two Ways.” And included in the explanation of what it means to love one’s neighbor as part of a way of life, the first Catholic Christians read the words, “Do not kill a fetus by abortion.”

A most disturbing element of Pelosi’s comments was not only her false presentation of the historical teaching of the Catholic Church on abortion, but it was especially in her shocking dismissal of the moral significance of abortion. She said that in the end, it didn’t matter when life begins anyway. She stated, “The point is that when life begins shouldn’t have an impact on a woman’s right to choose.” What she was saying was that a woman’s right trumps a baby’s right, and that this right includes the choice to destroy the child. This is totally irreconcilable with Catholic morality and with the most basic ethical standards. An “ardent Catholic” cannot in good faith hold such a distorted position. Thank God Pelosi has recently accepted the invitation of her local bishop to dialogue about this critical issue which has caused consternation among Catholics.

In their document, Faithful Citizenship, the U.S. Catholic Bishops clearly state that the right to life is the preeminent life issue in the presidential election year. The Bishops are concerned about all human rights issues as they point out in their teaching, but make it clear that the right of rights is the right to life. If this right is taken away, all the other rights are destroyed. In preparing for the presidential election year, the U.S. Bishops ask Catholics to study all life issues, and to base their choice for the new President not primarily on political party or platform, but on the principles and values that underlie all life issues. Representatives of the Conference of U.S. Catholic Bishops recently stated: “As teachers of the faith, we also point out the connectedness between the evil of abortion and political support of abortion.”

Shortly after the U.S. Catholic Bishops clarified the constant teaching against abortion to correct this serious misrepresentation of teaching by the House Speaker, Nancy Pelosi, the Bishops again had to point out in a public manner the Catholic teaching to counteract the views made on national TV of another Catholic politician, Senator Joseph Biden, a candidate for the vice presidency, who made statements as a Catholic that are not in accord with the teaching of the Church. Biden, unlike Pelosi, did not claim that the Catholic teaching allows abortion, and he rightly stated that human life begins “at the moment of conception,” and that Catholics and others should recognize this and should not be required by others to pay for abortion with their taxes.

However, the Senator went on to state that the beginning of human life is a “personal and private” matter of religious faith, “which cannot be imposed on others.” This statement does not reflect the true teaching of the Catholic Church and Biden constantly violates his own belief- “not imposing private belief on others” by often supporting in a public manner, against what he says he holds privately, pro-abortion policies and voting in favor of abortion legislation. There is a serious moral contradiction here. To be honest, at the very least, Biden should abstain from voting on such issues. Biden, who has voted for some limitations on abortion, has remained a supporter of Roe v. Wade and the abortion industry’s view on abortion, especially the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL). Biden has a strong pro-abortion record going back decades. The Church recognizes that the obligation to protect unborn human life rests on the answer to two basic fundamental questions, neither of which is private or specifically religious, as pointed out recently in a public statement to Biden by Cardinal Rigali, head of the U.S. Catholic Bishops’ Pro-Life Committee.

Cardinal Rigali points out that the first is a biological question; when does human life begin? It begins when there is a new living organism of the human species, distinct from the mother and father, and ready to develop and mature in a giving, nurturing environment. The Church not only teaches this, but acknowledges it as a matter of natural objective fact. In replying to Biden, the Church points out that there is a second moral ques-

...
EMPEROR: Confronting the truth about who we are as women

(From 5)

while men sit back and breathe a sigh of relief. Where is the pill for men? The risk, for men, is probably not worth it.

The next step in our journey away from sexual oppression was the all too famous Roe vs. Wade ruling. Pro-choice activists everywhere rant and rave about the incredible feat achieved by this important court ruling. However… if I would venture to bet a lifetime supply of condoms on the notion that most people are misled about what the ruling actually states. Roe vs. Wade has nothing to do with the protection of “our bodies.” In fact, the ruling had more to do with the time a fetus could be considered a viable human being. In essence, abortion has served to dehumanize our most vulnerable members of the human race, while exploiting the women whose vulnerability has ultimately led them to make such a “choice.” The real mantra should be “our bodies, our BURDEN!”

After we have eliminated all means for becoming pregnant, is it time to proclaim autonomy in our quest for gender equality? Once the chains of society have been broken, are we truly on level ground with our male counterparts? I believe that we have fallen into the oxymoronic subculture of promiscuous feminism. Our own “if we can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em” philosophy has done little to change the way men look at women. What it has done, however, is solidify the image of women as sexual objects. We have created this monster on our own! Pornography sales are at an all time high. Should we, as women, jump on this bandwagon as well?

SATAN: Downfall of the adversary based on hatred of mankind

(From 3)

The adversary will counterfeit any gift of God—not only to deceive some people, drawing them into error—but also to confuse other people so that they do not embrace the truth for fear of being duped themselves. Over the ages the adversary has developed more and more subtle and effective counterfeits designed to rob the Christian of his heritage and dignity. Looking at his motivation for, and obsession with, the fall of man will aid us in understanding better his hatred for man.

God, in creating the heavens and the earth, first made angels and then made humanity. He made the angels true spirit-persons or individuals with free will and who are more powerful than man. However in the spirit realm they do not operate as it does in man’s experience. God subjected the angels to a test of free will. This test revolved around the Incarnation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The angels, whose free will was consumed with love for God, the Father, rejoiced at the prospect of loving and adoring God the Son, in whatever form he might take, including that of a lesser being, the human. As the angel hosts embraced the Incarnation, they were admitted to the ever-expanding beatific vision. Once the angels gazed upon the beatific vision, their choice to serve God in ALL his forms and to embrace their femininity by realizing the dignity of the human person, the nation, the sanctity of life, and all those things which would build up the Kingdom of God!

Once you begin to discern the methodology of the adversary, it becomes more and more obvious the effects of his efforts. Throughout the generations, he has used all of the seven capital sins to disrupt humanity. Particularly nefarious is his reliance upon certain sins within certain lines of creation (families, nations, races). For centuries, this adversary has probed the wounds of addiction in all its forms. If a line of creation exhibits vulnerability, why change methods? “Alcoholism has always been in our family,” “well, you know he was abused as a child,” “his grandfather always had a mistress,” “he comes from a long line of gamblers,” “certain cultures accept infidelities,” “well, he cheated on her, she was just getting even,” “well, you know his dad went to prison too.” Every one of these examples does not simply destroy individuals but families, nations, and complete lines of creation. When we make statements like those above, we give substance to and affirm a curse on our families.

Understand that each one of us will come under attack by the adversary at some point in life—at a point of vulnerability or doubt. The adversary wants for one to be far enough away from God, then he can devour the person before he can return to God. Can the answer be that simple: do not stray from the safety of the Church?

(Please See ADVISORY/19)
**KMIEC: Benedict giving us hope**

(From 8)

church as a way of life beyond the liturgy. It is said that without a presence of religious sisters, our parochial schools cannot be sustained, but that overlooks resources both economic and human. The U. S. Supreme Court has long eliminated any constitutional objection to school vouchers.

Where is the nationwide Catholic movement to demand that public resources be allocated to parents directly rather than devoted to the monopoly support of the secularizing public school?

And in terms of human resource, we are an aging population with many of us nearing retirement but still very much wanting to stay in service to our fellow man. How wonderful it would be if Catholic seniors were given multiple opportunities by their parishes to volunteer their time to teach in Catholic schools.

As I see it, this would give us one of the finest faculties in the land and in the process strengthen the intergenerational family.

Thank you, Holy Father, for coming to America, reawakening us to the possibilities -- no, the practical realities -- of a faith-filled hope.

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**ADVERSARY: Susceptibility to Satan on rise**

(From 18)

Imagine the wolf lying on the edge of the meadow, flicking a white-tipped tail; the unschooled lamb or the lamb perhaps a little too far from its mother becomes curious. The first day the lamb has only a thought of leaving his mother to investigate. The next day the wolf comes four paces closer to the sheep herd, for he noticed the lamb looking. The lamb is a day older and a day “wiser,” and approaches the flicking tail. He gets much closer than he imagined before his mother calls him back. He could almost smell the tail. The third day the wolf is 10 paces closer to the sheep herd. The lamb is another day “wiser” and the mother thinks that a lamb should learn and experience some things on its own. The lamb approaches the tail. Today the tail does not seem to flick as urgently; rather it lies still, as if it needs the lamb’s acknowledgement to animate it. The lamb goes to investigate. The discomfort in the ewe’s full udder is the realization that this night the lamb is lost.

The three days above could well represent the last three generations of this nation. We are becoming more and more susceptible to the wiles of the adversary. The next article in this series will deal with the multi-generational aspect and impact of the predation of the adversary upon mankind and the rules of engagement.

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**NUN RUN: Fostering vocations**

(From 6)

Cristina wrote that she was “surprised at how diverse the women religious we met were. They are intelligent, educated women that exuded confidence because of their deep knowledge of Christ’s love for them.” She said that “…this trip helped me see the religious life in a more positive light.”

“This was my first time to experience being in a convent and interacting with sisters and their community,” said Cassie. “It broke down my thoughts and stereotypes of what sisters are ‘supposed’ to be and allowed me to see that they are people too.”

How can you foster vocations to the religious life? The primary reason people don’t consider the religious life is that no one ever asks them to do so. It is up to each one of us to plant that seed. It is important to pray for those who are interested in the religious life. Pray for them to be able to discern God’s call; pray that they have the faith to follow God’s call and pray for them as they are in formation and in the seminary studying. And finally, pray for vocations to the religious life and priesthood. Prayer is vital to promoting vocations and to the life of the Church.

Visits to other convents are anticipated in the future. If you are interested in pursuing a vocation to the religious life, contact the Office of Vocations at (325) 651-7500 or send email to FrBarryMclean@aol.com.

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**CHA**

(From 5)

lose weight, health professionals recommend reducing caloric intake by 500-800 calories per day, either through careful eating alone or a combination of diet and exercise.

Reducing caloric intake by 250 calories per day plus burning 250 calories through moderate to vigorous activity each day constitutes a reduction of 500 calories.

Science has proven that the most effective tool to combat excess weight and chronic disease is exercise, and today, only 1 in 4 Texans are active enough to combat disease. Research shows that a minimum of 30 minutes of moderate activity each day, combined with a balanced diet, will keep us healthy. Moderate exercise includes brisk walking, swimming, yoga, biking, etc. To get an idea of how many calories you burn, visit www.caloriesperhour.com for a list of dozens of activities and exercises with corresponding calories burned. To avoid frustration and increase likelihood for success, choose several moderate activities that you already enjoy and commit to doing one each day, gradually working up to 30 minutes or more at a time. If you suffer from any kind of health condition, consult with your doctor before beginning an exercise plan.

The origins of your caloric intake are also of the utmost importance. In order to satisfy your hunger and get the biggest bang for your caloric buck, eat a diet low in saturated fat and high in fiber. Reduce portions and make your meals as colorful as possible, loaded with a variety of vegetables and whole grains, with smaller portions of lean meat or fish (4 oz or less), and keep other fats like butter and oil to a bare minimum. When snacking, it is best to turn to nutrient-rich foods, such as fruits and nuts that will satiate your hunger and hold you over until the next meal. For healthy, delicious recipes, visit www.cookinglight.com or ask your healthcare provider for information.

Needless to say, we can live happier, healthier, more productive lives as individuals and in our communities if we make a small effort to make a big change for ourselves and for Texas. Dedication and commitment to a lifestyle of healthier eating and exercise are essential to success: remember that the quality and length of your life depend on it.
### San Angelo

**Sentence**: Knight Don Piwonka presents Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI with a generous check in the amount of $9,542.98 which has been donated by the Knights of Columbus State Council of Charities to the Diocese of San Angelo. The proceeds from the check will be utilized for Diocesan Pro-Life efforts, Lay Leaders Support and Development Programs, and for Seminarian Education and Training. Bishop Pfeifer commented that, "I truly appreciate the wonderful service that (the Knights) are giving to the dioceses of Texas through the State Council Charities. This means so much to the bishops and to so many other people".

### TAD: Voting an ‘indispensable duty’

**Sub-Heading**: Voting an ‘indispensable duty’

**Paragraph**: A poll conducted by Harris Interactive in July, 2006 found that 73% of adult Americans think that viewing pornography websites and videos is morally unacceptable. **WRAP**. Week is a time for all of us to express our voices against this deadly cancer, and to do all that we can to eradicate it, beginning in our homes. Parents need to be more cautious about what their children watch, and each community should take a stand against this deadly cancer that is corrupting the moral fabric of our community.

### PORNOGRAPHY: Most Americans say viewing sexual material unacceptable

**Sub-Heading**: Most Americans say viewing sexual material unacceptable

**Paragraph**: A poll conducted by Harris Interactive in July, 2006 found that 73% of adult Americans think that viewing pornography websites and videos is morally unacceptable. **WRAP**. Week is a time for all of us to express our voices against this deadly cancer, and to do all that we can to eradicate it, beginning in our homes. Parents need to be more cautious about what their children watch, and each community should take a stand against this deadly cancer that is corrupting the moral fabric of our community.

### BISHOP: Prayers requested for a ‘new appreciation of human life’

**Sub-Heading**: Prayers requested for a ‘new appreciation of human life’

**Paragraph**: Pope Benedict encouraged us to be people of hope, people who support human life at every stage of life. He encourages us to be clear in our beliefs, to act consistently with them, and be animated in our efforts to transform our culture. His Holiness pointed out, "The proclamation of life, life in abundance, must be the heart of the new evangelization.”

Throughout the year, as we live out the program for Respect Life, I encourage all our people to first pray that we will all have a new appreciation of human life from the moment of conception until its natural end as determined by God. I ask all of our people to take much more direct action and to be more proactive in promoting every effort to overcome abortion, and to work for all the life issues that are presented by the Church for our consideration. In a special way, we need to examine carefully the position of each presidential candidate on the issues of human life, before casting our vote.