The season of Advent is upon us

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

The season of Advent consists of the four weeks preceding Christmas, and are given to us by the Church as a time “to prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.” [Mt.3]. What are we preparing for? First, we recall the first coming of our Divine Savior some 2,000 years ago when He was born on Christmas Day, when He took on human flesh and became one of us. Secondly, Advent is a time to remember the final coming of the Lord whenever that might be for each one of us individually, and thirdly for coming at the end of time when Jesus our King will hand over every thing to our eternal Father.

(Please See ADVENT/23)

Archbishop Fiorenza: The Shepherd in Winter

Former San Angelo bishop remembers his years in West Texas, reflects as Archbishop Emeritus of Diocese of Houston-Galveston

By Jimmy Patterson

HOUSTON -- He was involved in many things that set forward the progress of the Diocese of San Angelo: the establishment of Christ the King Retreat Center and the adjacent Chancery; the settlement of many religious orders in the diocese, and the beginnings of two of the diocese’s largest parishes: St. Stephen’s in Midland and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Odessa.

There were other physical accomplishments, to be sure, but in the brief five years he spent as Bishop of the Diocese of San Angelo (1979-84), the Most Rev. Joseph Fiorenza, currently Archbishop Emeritus of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, feels that perhaps his most greatest accomplishment while here was something more intangible.

“I think you would have to ask the priests, but I think the thing I hope I achieved that was most important was to help the people in West Texas feel they were a part of the larger church, a diocesan family; that they were not separate and individual congregations with no relationship with other churches; that they were part of a larger family over which there was a chief shepherd,

(Please See FIORENZA/19)
From the Bishop’s Desk

Texas bishops express solidarity with brother bishops in Mexico

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

Bishop Pfeifer’s Note: Below is a statement of solidarity issued by all the bishops of the State of Texas supporting our brother Catholic bishops in Mexico and the people they serve during this time of crisis caused by violence, killing, and drug trafficking. Recently the Tex-Mex Catholic Bishops met in Mexico to discuss the issues of violence, killing and the evil of drugs. I am a member of that special committee.

The Texas Bishops have issued the following statement regarding the violence in Northern Mexico and along the Texas border:

We, the Catholic bishops in the State of Texas, wish to express our pastoral concern for the families and communities suffering the devastating effects of violence in Northern Mexico, and along the Texas border.

We wish to recall the historic ties of communion that have marked the relations between the bishops of Texas and the bishops of northern Mexico.

Early in the last century, when violence severely afflicted the border regions, the bishops of Texas and northern Mexico worked together to help our families and clergy alleviate the suffering.

In that tradition, and in a spirit of communion and solidarity, we ask our Catholic people and all people of good will to recognize that many innocent people, many struggling families, both Mexican citizens and United States citizens, are being affected by this violence.

Secondly, we wish to call attention to the fact that immigrant families coming from Mexico are increasingly coming to the United States out of a fear for their safety and that of their families; this is exacerbating the dimensions of the humanitarian tragedy that affects immigrant families.

We also wish to thank law enforcement and public safety officials, particularly US Border Patrol, for their work in keeping the violence from spreading further.

We ask Jesus, our Good Shepherd, to lead all through this dark valley of suffering. May the mantle of our Lady of Sorrows protect the lives and well-being of all those touched by the effects of criminal violence; and may we seek the grace to see the face of Her son in the visages of the innocent who suffer.

DIOCESAN BRIEFS

Fall Festival

NOVEMBER 14
ST. JOSEPH--ROWENA
88th Annual St. Joseph Fall Festival
10:30 a.m.--Flag Ceremony-
Balloons Release
11 a.m.-1:30 p.m.--Turkey and Rowena Style German Sausage Dinner with Trimmings served
Adults $8.00, Children - $4.00
Plates to Go $8--Drive Thru/Walk Up
Uncooked sausage for sale.
11:30 a.m.--3:30 p.m.--
Children's Games - Bingo
Country Store opened all day.
1:30 p.m.-- Auction begins
4:30 p.m.-- Sausage Sandwich Supper $3.00 (includes tea)

Pope to offer Mass for unborn

Editor’s Note: The following letter was sent to all the priests of the Diocese of San Angelo as regards a special Mass for the unborn. Please attend this Mass. Thank you.

--Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

My brother priests:

I am enclosing here information I received from Cardinal George, President of the USCCB, and an enclosed letter from two Cardinals announcing a special Mass that will be offered by Pope Benedict XVI on November 27, 2010 at St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome. The Bishops of the world are asked to encourage all of our priests to offer on that day a Mass in our parishes with 125 active participants are the statistics, but the impact of ‘Why Catholic’ on St. Ann’s Parish is not measured in numbers.

The establishment of Small Christian Communities did have a great impact on St. Ann’s in that it built and established new relationships through faith sharing. Those are the kinds of relationships that last forever. When we share about how God touches our lives we share from our soul, and that experience forms bonds that will never be broken.

Many have commented on how much they have learned. How they were so glad to be introduced to the Catechism of the Catholic Church in a most interesting light. They now see the importance of the book and will use it as a reference for questions they might have.

Some groups were established between friends and others were made up of parishioners who knew little of each other. The outcome seemed to be the same -- groups that will be forever grateful for the knowledge and experience.

-- Carol Ann Hunt

The impact of ‘Why Catholic’?

(Editor’s Note: Carol Ann Hunt is Director of Religious Education at St. Ann’s Church in Midland.)

Establishing 12 new Small Christian Communities in our parish with 125 active participants are the statistics, but the impact of ‘Why Catholic’ on St. Ann’s Parish is not measured in numbers.

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-- Carol Ann Hunt

Feast of Our Lady celebration

St. Stephen’s in Midland will host a two-day celebration/observance of the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Fr. Gilbert Rodriguez will celebrate a Mass at 10 a.m., December 11, which will be preceded at 7 p.m. by a “Serenade to Our Holy Mother.” On December 12, Our Lady of Guadalupe Feast Day, at 12:30 p.m. there will be a celebration of the Holy Mass. Q108 FM Radio in Odessa will also broadcast the Mass live.

St. Stephen’s will present the Ballet Folkloric group Tonantzin under the direction of Mrs. Berta Mata, the Matachines of Odessa and also the presentation of local actors with the theatrical play of the apparitions of the Virgin of Guadalupe to Juan Diego at 6:30 p.m., Dec. 12.

For more information on times, please contact St. Stephens in Midland.

Holy Angels Cruise

Holy Angels Parish is hosting an Alaska Sawyer Glacier Cruise on July 1-9, 2011. You’ll cruise through the Inside Passage with its majestic fjords, islands and bays and see the lush greenery of Tongass National Forest, the world’s largest and northernmost temperate coastal rainforest. Alaskan ports of call will include Juneau & Skagway. In addition, you will spend a day in Victoria, British Columbia and a day & night in Seattle, Washington. A brochure can be found on Holy Angel’s website (www.talleyexpress.com/ holyangels/) or you may call Lori Hines at Holy Angels to request one. For more information call Lori at (325)942-8192.

Scheduled Executions

The Angelus publishes the execution dates of Texas offenders on death row each month so that the faithful in the Diocese of San Angelo can pray for them. The following offenders face upcoming execution dates. Please pray for them as well as the victims, families and all who are affected by violence:

Offender/Scheduled Execution Date:
Steven Staley/December 1
Cleve Foster/January 11, 2011

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.” Scheduled seminars (San Angelo) and contact numbers for people who can help you with more information:

SAN ANGELO, Christ the King Retreat Center, (325) 651-5352, 2-4 p.m. Contact Amy at amdg@ wcc.net.

MIDLAND-ODESSA, Our Lady of Guadalupe, call Christina Nevarez, (432) 682-2481.

ABILENE, Holy Family Church, call Mrs. Herman Blahak, (325) 692-1820.

New email address

Angelus editor Jimmy Patterson has changed his email address. Please make note of his new address to send stories, photos and other items each month. The new address is JimmyLeePatterson@gmail.com
From the Editor

**Marriage preparation in the Diocese of San Angelo**

By Mary Ann Lewis
Director of Marriage and Family Life
Diocese of San Angelo

Pope John Paul II points out in his apostolic exhortation, "On the Family," that "the very preparation for Christian marriage is itself a journey of faith. It is a special opportunity for the engaged to rediscover and deepen the faith received in baptism and nourished by their Christian upbringing. In this way they come to recognize and freely accept their vocation to follow Christ and to serve the kingdom of God in the married state."

People prepare for their life-long professions by taking courses and studying, reading books and investing time and energy. Preparing for marriage, which is a life-long commitment, certainly warrants that same energy and focus.

An old adage, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," applies to many things, including preparing for and building a strong marriage. By spending time and energy before a marriage, a couple can lay healthy groundwork to learn to communicate and understand each other. Understanding each others’ expectations helps a couple go into their commitment with their eyes open.

Strong marriages are built on an equal partnership and the first step in that direction is taken before couples ever walk down the aisle. While preparing for marriage, couples need to discuss how each person feels about important things like religion, parenting, where they will live, who will earn the money, how will it be spent, and if one of them will be a full-time parent, and, very possibly in these times, how they will be taking care of aged relatives.

**Engaged Encounter**

One of the ways the Diocese of San Angelo encourages marriage preparation is by sponsoring Catholic Engaged Encounter, which is a weekend retreat away from the regular hustle and bustle of life and wedding preparations. The weekend is spent with other engaged couples and each couple has plenty of private time spent

(Please See FAMILY/23)

**Del Escritorio del Obispo**

**Expresión de solidaridad entre los obispos de Texas con nuestros hermanos obispos de México**

Por el Obispo Miguel D. Pfeifer, OMI

[Adjunto una declaración de solidaridad emitida por todos los obispos del estado de Texas apoyando a nuestros hermanos obispos en México y a la gente a quienes sirven durante este tiempo de crisis causado por la violencia, matanza, y el trafico de drogas. Recientemente los Obispos Católicos Tex-Mex se reunieron para discutir los temas de violencia, matanza y el mal de las drogas. Yo soy un miembro de este comité especial. – Obispo Miguel D. Pfeifer, OMI]

Los obispos de Texas han emitido la siguiente declaración tocante la violencia en el norte de México y a lo largo de la frontera con Texas.

Nosotros, los obispos católicos en el Estado de Texas, deseamos expresar nuestra preocupación pastoral por las familias y comunidades que sufren los efectos devastadores de la violencia en el norte de México y a lo largo de la frontera con Texas.

Deseamos recordar los lazos históricos de comunión que han caracterizado las relaciones entre los obispos de Texas y los obispos del norte de México.

A principios del siglo pasado, cuando la violencia afligió severamente las regiones fronterizas, los obispos de Texas y del norte de México trabajaron juntos para ayudar a nuestras familias y clero a aliviar el sufrimiento.

En esa tradición, y en un espíritu de comunión y solidaridad, les pedimos a nuestros fieles católicos y a todas las personas de buena voluntad que reconozcan que muchas personas inocentes, muchas familias que luchan, tanto ciudadanos de
Practicing the Gospel command to care for the least

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

For 40 years across the United States, the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) has put into practice Catholic teaching on the life and dignity of every human person, the Gospel command to care for “the least of these” (Matthew 25), and the Church’s call to practice “solidarity” in helping poor people help themselves escape poverty. In this article I share with you some of the major points of the recent Review and Renewal of CCHD conducted by the U.S. Catholic Bishops.

The Catholic Campaign for Human Development is the domestic anti-poverty program of the U.S. Catholic Bishops. CCHD works to break the cycle of poverty by helping low-income people participate in decisions that affect their lives, families and communities. CCHD offers a hand up, not a hand out. CCHD has a complimentary mission of educating on poverty and its causes. This dual pastoral strategy of education for justice and helping people who are poor speak and act for themselves reflects the mandate of the Scriptures and the principles of Catholic Social Teaching. CCHD also provides the Catholic faithful with concrete opportunities to live out the love of God and neighbor in ways that express our baptismal call and continuing Eucharistic transformation. Pope Benedict XVI has taught that “restoration of justice, reconciliation and forgiveness” requires determination to transform unjust structures and to restore respect for the dignity of all men and women, created in God’s image and likeness. Through the concrete fulfillment of this responsibility, the Eucharist becomes in life what it signifies in its celebration. (Sacramentum Caritatis, #89, 2007)

CCHD is made possible by the generous support of Catholics in the United States, especially through an annual parish collection. CCHD’s grants to local anti-poverty efforts are screened, awarded and monitored in close partnership with local Catholic dioceses. CCHD grants to groups in a local community require the explicit approval of the bishop of that diocese.

CCHD is a unique and essential part of the Catholic community’s broad commitment to assist low-income people, families and communities. This commitment also includes our Catholic parishes, schools, charities, health ministries, and countless other examples of service to “the least of these.” (Matt. 25) Like many other Catholic ministries, CCHD helps people overcome poverty without regard to their race, ethnicity or religion. As a national initiative of the Bishops’ Conference, CCHD is an essential and complementary part of the Catholic social mission proclaimed by Jesus Christ and taught by His Church. CCHD does not replace, nor can it be replaced by, other expressions of the Church’s essential social mission.

CCHD is one of the most widely supported collections and initiatives of our Bishops’ Conference, raising more than $10 million every year. CCHD helps our Church in the United States practice what we preach about human life and dignity, social and economic justice, solidarity and the common good in local communities across our country.

From its first days, there have been some criticisms about CCHD’s goals, guidelines and grantees. This criticism has become more visible with the wider use of internet communication and as polarization has increased in society and in the Church.

CCHD takes any alleged violation of Catholic principles and CCHD policies very seriously. This past year for example, as a result of monitoring and review of allegations, five groups (out of 270) lost all CCHD funding because they acted in conflict with Catholic teaching. We deeply regret and apologize for the violations of CCHD policies by these groups and for the damage and confusion they have caused. The recent Review and Renewal of the whole CCHD program is putting in place stronger policies and clearer mechanisms to screen and monitor grants and groups to ensure that these past violations, though very limited, are not repeated. CCHD will do all it can to ensure that groups abide by these strengthened requirements and will act immediately and decisively if it is discovered that any group is violating these essential conditions for CCHD support.

Other questions concern CCHD funding for some groups that abide by CCHD policies, but are also part of coalitions focused on worthy issues (e.g. immigration, health or housing) in cases where those coalitions or other members are accused of taking positions contrary to Catholic teaching. CCHD is developing additional structures and guidance to address in greater detail the ethical implications of these relationships and what is morally acceptable and what is not for CCHD funded groups. Among the Catholic and moral foundations that guide the Catholic Campaign for Human Development are Gospel Mission and Catholic Identity.

Gospel Mission: CCHD continues the mission of Jesus and His Church “to bring good news to the poor, liberty to captives, new sight to the blind and set the downtrodden free...” (Luke 4:18)

Catholic Identity: The Catholic Campaign for Human Development is a work of the Catholic Church in the United States. It is a way to live out love of God and neighbor in ways that express our baptismal call and our continuing transformation through the Eucharist. CCHD draws its directions, policies and practices from Catholic social and moral teaching and prohibits funding groups that violate fundamental Catholic teaching.

For 40 years, the Catholic bishops and the Catholic community in the United States have carried out a serious and sustained commitment to help low-income people and poor communities improve their lives and address the causes and costs of poverty. Many things have changed in those four decades…in our country, our Church and in the realities of poverty. One thing has not changed – the Gospel call to hunger and thirst for justice. In fact, Pope Benedict has placed concern for the poor at the very center of the Church’s life. The current economic distress and widespread poverty that comes with it have made the mission and message of CCHD more urgent, timely and important.

Please be generous in giving to the annual Catholic Campaign for Human Development Collection that will be taken on the weekend of November 20-21. Remember, a portion of this national collection remains within our diocese to support many human development projects.

Thank you for your past generous support, and especially offer prayers for the success of this campaign and for the many poor and needy who benefit from your generosity. God bless you.
Suicide: Faith in Christ can make death at own hand preventable

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

The loss of a loved one to suicide is one of the greatest tragedies life can bring. We often react with shock, guilt, anger, and depression. Family members often feel profound guilt and responsibility. Our reaction is why, why, why did this happen? What could we have done better? What did we fail to see? Suicide of a son or daughter can feel like the ultimate failure of parenting.

When someone dies of suicide, the shock and confusion it causes has a severity all its own. Dying by one’s own hands has different implications than dying of natural causes and the grief that follows a suicide is one of the most traumatic experiences in life. The survivors may blame either their loved one or themselves.

It is difficult to know what really went on in the mind and heart of a person before suicide. To generalize is not helpful because each suicide is individual. Some who committed suicide may simply have felt trapped, perceiving themselves as victims in a hopeless situation. They saw death as a way out of unbearable pain.

Amidst grave suffering, there will always be a tendency to want to know why such tragedies occur. If there were a suicide note, it might shed some light on why such tragedies occur. If there were a suicide note, it might shed some light on why such tragedies occur. If there were a suicide note, it might shed some light on why such tragedies occur. If there were a suicide note, it might shed some light on why such tragedies occur.

Influence of mental disorders

Veterans’ suicides account for a fifth of the some 33,000 suicides each year due to the war conflicts they have experienced and the number is increasing. Everyday, roughly 85 people in the United States take their own lives. Mental illness and suicide among youth are serious problems in the United States. According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), half of all cases of mental illness begin by age 14. The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry states that suicide is the third leading cause of death for 15- to 24-year-olds.

Recent studies show that more than 95 percent of young people who took their own lives had been diagnosed with a mental disorder. Severe depression is the most prevalent of these disorders. Other psychological diagnoses that increase the risk of suicide among teens include bipolar disorder and addiction to alcohol and/or drugs. Often, other contributing or precipitating factors are physical illness along with mental illness, disintegrating family relationships, a sense of not belonging, bullying, personal or economic failures, grief over the loss of a loved one, overwhelming social pressures. These conditions often cause people, especially the young, distress, irritability, agitation, hopelessness, and feelings of worthlessness. One just does not wake up one day and want to die. There are events in life that make some people more vulnerable to suicide.

Given the strong correlation between psychological conditions and suicide, it is important to recognize the early symptoms in order to seek professional help that could make a significant impact.

Warning Signs

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry lists the following warning signs for parents concerning the risk for suicide in adolescents:

- Change in eating and sleeping habits.
- Withdrawal from friends, family, and regular activities.
- Violent actions towards self and others.
- Rebellious behavior or running away.
- Drug and alcohol use.
- Unusual neglect of personal appearance.
- Marked personality change.
- Persistent boredom, difficulty concentrating, or a decline in the quality of schoolwork.
- Frequent complaints about physical symptoms such as stomach aches, headaches, or fatigue, often related to emotions.
- Loss of interest in pleasurable activities.
- Not tolerating praise or rewards.
- Complaining of being a bad person or feeling rotten inside.
- Giving verbal hints with statements such as “Nothing matters. It’s no use” or “I won’t see you again.”

It is important to note that most teenagers who killed themselves had been in treatment for these psychological conditions. Even for families who have lived with mental illness, the actual death still comes as a profound shock.

What you can do as a parent, friend

When the above signs are observed, parents or other family members should talk to their children or family members and seek help from their priests, religious, counselors and other trusted professionals to assist their children or any person showing the above signs. Community hotlines offering access to concerned counselors can thwart suicidal plans because caring undermines intent. This is also a time for more prayer and encouraging those who feel hopeless to trust in God’s mercy and love, and to receive

(Please See SUICIDE/21)

Recent student suicides highlight need for bullying programs

By Teri Breguet
Catholic News Service

SOUTH HADLEY, Mass. -- Bullying is just part of growing up. After all, the victim teased in the movies always comes out on top. Not so in real life.

The tragic consequences of bullying have increasingly made headlines, prompting Massachusetts lawmakers to pass legislation in March aimed at curbing bullying at schools and in cyber-space.

During what was an emotional debate over the anti-bullying legislation, lawmakers cited the suicides of 15-year-old Phoebe Prince and Carl J. Walker-Hoover, 11. The two youths, who went to different schools, both hanged themselves allegedly because of peer harassment.

According to Jodee Blanco, author of the New York Times best-seller "Please Stop Laughing at Me," parents and educators need to realize that both the victim and the bully are bleeding emotionally.

"Kids don't bully because they're cruel. Bullying is the desperate need to fit in run amuck. The bully and the victim are flip sides of the same coin. Both are driven by the desperate need to fit in," Blanco told The Catholic Observer, newspaper of the Springfield Diocese.

"Typically, the big schoolyard bully who steals everybody’s lunch money is no threat. It's those mean popular kids that I call elite tormenters, the ones who exclude on purpose. Those are the kind of bullies who do the most danger and are driven by insecurity," she said.

In the case of Prince, who died Jan. 14, three girls accused of bullying her were to be arraigned April 6 on charges of violation of civil rights resulting in bodily injury. Two of the three also faced stalking charges.

The three defendants are among nine students facing charges related to bullying Prince, an Irish immigrant who enrolled at South Hadley High School in

(Please See BULLIES/21)
Odessa parishioners make mission trip to Honduras

ODESSA -- On August 10 a group of eight traveled to Baracoa Honduras to visit our sister parish Exaltacion de la Santa Cruz. The group consisted of four adults, Porfirio Barajas, Luz Gomez, Sister Esperanza and Diana Madero who have visited before and the other four were young adults from our St. Joseph's CYM.

Our journey to Honduras began with opposition, apprehension, and excitement. I say opposition because some of our friends and family were not thrilled at the idea of us going to Honduras because of the potential danger we might encounter. However, the apprehension and excitement came on our part. We were happy to be able to visit a different country, but we were not quite sure what we would be doing while in Honduras. In truth, the first few days we were in Honduras were very difficult for us because we were in a world completely different from our own. Each day, we would visit the different communities of the parish and would listen to the people tell us about their various ministries and projects. It was not at all what we had been expecting from the trip, so it was a struggle to figure out what God wanted from us while we were in Honduras. On our fifth day there, which was a Saturday, we put on a retreat for the local youth. The retreat did not run as smoothly as we had hoped; but even with the language barrier, the heat and humidity, and being completely behind schedule, we managed to break through our cultural differences and began to build friendships with the youth.

The youth in Honduras were very instrumental in helping us figure out why we were there. Through them, we were able to find a greater appreciation for our faith. Many of the people in Honduras struggle to find work, the kids are not always able to go to school, and families struggle to remain intact. I know our own communities struggle with some of these problems as well, but the people of Honduras live with these struggles without complaint. They give everything they have to God. When I think of them, I am reminded of the woman in Mark 12 who gave her two coins. Just like the woman, who gave all she had, the people in Honduras never stop giving. Their spirits are filled with so much joy and happiness.

After visiting Honduras, I find I have a greater appreciation for everything. It is not as hot outside, school does not seem such a burden, I find comfort in having my part-time job, my car is a blessing, and I can eat whatever I want to eat. We are very fortunate to live in a country where we have so much and where we are able to celebrate the sacraments daily. I am happy to say, that although our journey began with opposition, apprehension, and excitement, it ended with joy, self-discovery, and love.

-- Submitted by Diana Madero

Jr. High students gain insight into superheroes (the real, saintly kind)

By Sister Adelina Garcia
Office of Education and Formation
Diocese of San Angelo

ODESSA -- The biennial Jr. High Diocesan Youth Event has held at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton parish hall in Odessa on Sunday, October 17, 2010. The theme of the day was “Who Are Our Heroes? A Look at Catholic Saints.” The presenter was Sister Mary Fagan, SHSp from San Antonio, Texas. She managed to hold the attention of the group throughout the day. The emcees were Superwoman-Nathan Juarez, Batman-Joey Martinez and Wonder Woman- Jessica Richards from St. Elizabeth parish. They were able to show their antics as Sr. Mary gave her presentation on heroes. She spoke on the fact that saints are ordinary people who did extra-ordinary things because they cared. Saints “fall down and get up” and keep on following the footsteps of Jesus. S. Mary spoke on the issue of bullying and how that keeps people “down”. We are called to raise people up.

The music ministry from St. Stephen parish in Midland provided the music for the day including the Eucharistic Liturgy. Mara Garza, harpist, did an outstanding job doing background music. Fr. Berry McLean was the presider and homilist for the Liturgy.

In the afternoon, young people were encouraged to put their faith into action by participating in the Food Fast by Catholic Relief Service, Souper Bowl of Caring, and other outreach programs. Over $200 was collected for CRS at the Liturgy offertory collection. The Young Church has a big heart.
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Brooklyn liturgist, future pastor has unique perspective on new missal

By Nancy Frazier O'Brien
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON -- As the new Roman Missal moves toward its implementation date in 15 months, Msgr. Anthony Sherman's perspective on the process will be a unique one.

Currently director of the U.S. bishops' Secretariat on Divine Worship, Msgr. Sherman has been intimately involved in shepherding the English translation of the "third typical edition" of the missal through the necessary approval process at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Vatican.

In the next months, he will pore over the texts approved by the Vatican to get the document into shape for publication. He'll also oversee the catechetical process through which parish leaders will educate U.S. Catholics about the new missal, which will come into use in the United States on Nov. 27, 2011.

But in the spring of 2011, Msgr. Sherman is scheduled to hand over the reins at the divine worship secretariat to his associate director, Father Richard Hilgartner, and return to his hometown Diocese of Brooklyn, N.Y., where he expects to be named to head a parish.

"It's not always that one gets the opportunity with what's been done on one level to discover how it's being used on another level, but I'm excited about it, and I think it will work quite well," Msgr. Sherman said in an interview in his office shortly before the implementation date was announced by Cardinal Francis E. George of Chicago, USCCB president.

Msgr. Sherman joined the USCCB nine years ago as associate director of what was then called the liturgy secretariat and became director of the office three years ago.

The priest said he hoped his predecessor in the parish "will have done some initial catechesis with the people to prepare them" for the upcoming changes.

The priest said he hoped his predecessor in the parish "will have done some initial catechesis with the people to prepare them" for the upcoming changes.

But Msgr. Sherman expressed confidence that those in his new parish -- as well as Catholics throughout the United States -- will have little trouble adjusting to the new missal, which contains only a small number of changes in wording for the people in comparison to the changes in the wording for priests.

"And one of the things that will be interesting is that if the people have any questions, they will certainly have someone who will be able to give them a little bit of background," he said with a chuckle.

Youth learn social justice

Submitted by Victor Garza (CYM)

On October 16, the youth, along with some of their parents, from St. Stephens Catholic church signed up to prepare a meal for the poor and homeless in Odessa. The groups represented were our Jr. High and Sr. high youth groups along with our FAITH formation class (post Confirmation). We prepared a meal of chicken spaghetti with a couple of side dishes and a dessert. After cooking the meal it was packaged and distributed at the Jesus House Ministries Center. The rest of the meals were loaded up in a truck and taken to several locations and distributed. The experience was well received and several of our students were touched deeply.

"I will be home tonight in my bed, but I will still remember that they will be sleeping in their tents tonight in the middle of the pasture". This comment was made by Clarissa Molina a 9th grade student in our youth group, she stated that she had no idea that there were people living under these conditions. The experience touched all that participated in the event. This is one of the projects we have taken on to teach about social justice and living our faith. Other activities we participate in is to meet every Friday at 7 a.m. to pray the rosary for all those who are coming in to have an abortion at Planned Parenthood, and we are decorating flower vases to take to the nursing homes in our area. The preparing of the meal was very fulfilling and the students have asked to schedule preparing meals again as a group.

Abilene Youth picket Planned Parenthood

The youth of Holy Family Parish in Abilene prayed the rosary in front of Planned Parenthood on Oct. 10.
The good news: Newmans that have blessed our lives

By Stephen Kent
Catholic News Service

Just four days after one man named Newman was raised to the status of "blessed" by Pope Benedict XVI, the death of another Newman, in his own way also a defender of the faith, was announced.

The pope beatified Cardinal John Henry Newman, whose eloquent prose, the pope said, was able to inspire many of his time and subsequent generations.

Although not a candidate for sainthood, the writer Edwin Newman was a defender of the faith. He was one of a triumvirate of journalists who brought defense of the English language into the popular attention. Only weeks separated the deaths of these three journalists.

Edwin Newman died two days prior to James J. Kilpatrick and little more than a month before the last of the trio, William Safire, passed away.


Rules of grammar are considered a bit fuddy-duddy in an era of over-informality.

But grammar, proper language, is not stodgy rule-making. It is vital in civil discourse and even vital in spiritual life.

As one who gave to his first grandchild "Elements of Style," by William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White, a week after his birth, I can't claim to be unbiased.

But horrors such as the despicable term "gone missing" should assault the ear of everyone as much as a slap on the face.

There is a crying need for precision today.

The written and spoken word, wrote Edwin Newman, should be "direct, specific, concrete, vigorous, colorful and imaginative. ... It is something to revel in and enjoy."

Punctuation is important also for understanding. There is a distinction between a six-foot, man-eating shark and a six-foot man, eating shark.

The choice of words is similar to a craftsman using the right tools for the job. One wouldn't think of using a screwdriver as a chisel or pliers as a hammer.

Yet we use words carelessly.

"It is better to use words precisely than to use words sloppily; the meaning we convey by the exact word ordinarily is bound to be clearer than the meaning we convey by an inexact word," Kilpatrick wrote in his classic "The Writers Art."

The proper use of words is necessary to conduct civil business. As Safire said, "To communicate, put your words in order; give them a purpose; use them to persuade, to instruct, to discover, to seduce."

We use words in our spiritual life to express our faith, in prayer and in worship. While God in his infinite mercy may overlook poor grammar in prayers, proper grammar is a goal for which to strive.

Listen to what Edwin Newman said: "If we were more careful about what we say, and how, we might be more critical and less gullible. Those for who words have lost their value are likely to find that ideas have also lost their value."

Safire, who gained fame as a speechwriter with such alliteration as "nattering nabobs of negativity," was also quick with a pun. This one has always been a favorite: "The most successful column is one that causes the reader to throw down the paper in a peak of fit."

RIP, Messrs. Newman, Kilpatrick and Safire. You've done the Lord's work.

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(Kent, retired editor of archdiocesan newspapers in Omaha and Seattle, can be contacted at: Considersk@gmail.com.)

An encouraging reply to a letter writer in distress

By Father John Catoir
Catholic News Service

I received the following letter from the sister of an atheist. She wrote:

"Dear Father:

"I used to pray all the time to the angels and saints and for the deceased. Now, I no longer do.

"I miss believing. Needless to say, I am very sad now.

"I didn't know who else to share these thoughts with. My brother says that the church is very rich in rituals, but what I learned as a child from the church isn't really true.

"Please help me!"

My dear sister in Christ:

Think about these words of Jesus: "By their fruits you will know them" (Mt 7:16).

Your brother has been producing bad fruit ever since he lost his faith. The joy of believing in a loving God is no longer on his radar screen and it all started with his learning that the Adam and Eve story never happened.

The Adam and Eve story may not square logically with the theory of evolution, but it teaches a religious truth nevertheless; namely, that there is a creator; and we are his creatures. We owe him our respect and obedience.

The story is not a lie. It is more properly called a myth.

It is important to know that a myth is like a parable. It has one function; namely, to teach a religious truth.

You might as well call the parable of the good Samaritan a myth because there is no historical evidence that it ever happened.

However, it is certainly not a lie. Jesus used this parable to explain the truth that we are to care about our neighbor.

Jesus also said, "Stay awake." He wants you to resist that spirit of hopelessness your brother has introduced into your life. Hopelessness is nothing more than a tragic form of self-sabotage.

Your brother's exultation of logic over intuition has deprived him of the power to accept mystery. His absolute rejection of the truths of faith because they can't be tested under a microscope is pure folly.

There is a God, whether he believes in him or not. This blind fidelity to logic, which requires empirical evidence for everything we believe in, is causing thousands of people to leave the church. Too many skeptics have already died as hopeless victims of their unchallenged doubts.

You say you are sad now, whereas before you were happy. Please don't carry this doubt too far. It is crippling your mental health!

Your brother needs a greater degree of tolerance for mystery. He also needs a big dose of humility.

We can't know all that we want to know through logic. That kind of nonsense leads to a profound skepticism.

There are many mysteries that we do understand through faith, namely, that God is love, that Jesus is his divine son, that there is a heaven and that we are all called to live joyfully because of the knowledge of God's love.

Blessings always,

Father John Catoir
Moving beyond acts of charity to a pursuit of justice

By Effie Caldarola
Catholic News Service

I think it's easier for most people to write a check for a charitable cause than it is to labor over the issue of justice relating to the same cause.

Brazilian Archbishop Dom Helder Camara said it best: "When I feed the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a communist."

In today's hostile political climate, justice issues, which should call forth prayerful reflection, often bring out the worst in us.

This year, our parish has chosen the theme "Who Is My Neighbor? A Journey of Peace and Justice."

A picture of the Samaritan ministering to a ravaged traveler graces the cover of our ministry handbook. After all, this was the story Jesus told after a scholar of the law asked him, "Who is my neighbor?"

Nothing defines charity in our society better than that phrase "the good Samaritan."

Samaritans are the "outsiders" of Scripture, and Jesus' interlocutor, the scholar of the law, would share a low view of them. So Jesus pointedly uses a Samaritan as the hero who performs this historic act of charity.

The Samaritan bandaged an assaulted man's wounds, carried him to an inn on his own animal and left money for the man's care. And then, probably dirtied and bloodied, he promised to stop on his way home to ensure that needed care was provided.

We recognize this as true charity. But I once read a little twist that transformed the story into a more complex tale of justice.

How often did the Samaritan travel that road? Did the road have a reputation for banditry? Was the environment unsafe? Had that Samaritan previously come upon such a problem?

If he had, would there come a point when the Samaritan would say, "What shall we do about this road?" And at that point, the Samaritan would move from simple charity to the hard work of justice.

If we need to change the system for the common good, we have passed from charity toward the pursuit of justice, a journey fraught with challenges.

Do we raise taxes? Impose a tariff on the road to provide for patrols? Close the road at certain hours of the night? Should the route be changed? Will that be costly?

You can see how justice questions can get more complicated and messy than simple charity.

In our town, we've recently debated the importance of providing housing for chronic inebriates. Housing First, a movement that's sweeping the country, is based on the premise that any of us -- even those mired in alcoholism -- can do better if we first have safe housing, an apartment or a home of our own.

Previously, the standard has been: Solve some of your chronic problems, and we'll find you housing. Housing First turns this concept on its head, and it seems to be working in many communities.

Justice questions popped up everywhere in our town. The old motel chosen as a site for the experiment is near a busy intersection. Will neighborhood inebriates cause traffic issues?

There's a popular hamburger joint across the street. What's the impact on it and its customers?

And of course, there's the inevitable NIMBY crowd ("Not in my backyard"). They're all valid concerns.

Yes, getting out the checkbook and writing a check to a shelter is a lot easier than working with our neighbors in the hard work of justice.

It's ironic that the first thing we need when we approach the difficult task of justice is a sense of charity toward those with whom we will engage in the discussion.

Hidden treasures can be all around us

By Maureen Pratt
Catholic News Service

Living well is often equated with the number of valuable possessions people accumulate over time.

But this past summer, my experience attending a taping of the "Antiques Roadshow" drove home the point that monetary value isn't everything when it comes to identifying and appreciating very precious treasures.

"Antiques Roadshow" features people bringing objects of interest to expert appraisers who assess what, if any, value each has. Tickets are issued in each city to a few thousand people who come armed with their items, many of them hoping their dusty curios will end up being worth thousands of dollars.

When I visited the "Antiques Roadshow" at the San Diego Convention Center, I found that the personal stories were even more interesting than the appraisals.

For example, while standing in line to get the tickets that would indicate which appraisal line I would stand in, I met two sisters. One, who was very studious and serious, had a mid-19th-century science book in excellent condition that her father had purchased. The other, who worked full time in theater, carried a Mickey Mouse tea set that their mother had played with when she was a child and then carefully boxed up and handed down.

The sisters felt that the older, more unique book would trump the tea set. But just the opposite was true. The book wasn't worth anything, while the tea set was valued at $600.

Monetary values fluctuate with the whims of a particular collection's market. Something worth a lot today might not be as valuable a month or a year from now.

Before their appraisals, a rivalry was brewing over which parent gave which sister the more valuable item. But afterward, the rivalry had vanished; bemusement took over, and both agreed that the experience they'd shared that day meant more than what they learned about their "treasures."

Then I met a man carrying a lovely, framed painting of a serene woodland scene. All of us who admired the picture were surprised when he said it had been stored in attics over three generations because no one thought it was worth anything. We wondered about the people who had dismissed it and applauded the person who had rescued it from the attic and brought it to the show.

For appraisal, I brought two rings from one of my great-grandmothers and a beautiful glass comport from a grandmother who had received the piece at her 1925 bridal shower. Their dollar values were modest, but the information about where the objects were made and when were of inestimable worth. They helped put into perspective the times in which these women lived and also their characters.

I came away from my exhilarating and exhausting "Antiques Roadshow" adventure with more than I had when I began. The knowledge that an ancestor preserved certain items for future generations is something that a dollar sign cannot begin to equal.

Two tickets to paradise?
Making Sense of Bioethics

Defending the dignity of those with dementia

By Rev. Thad Pacholczyk

I once heard a remarkable story from a woman named Cecilia sitting next to me on a long flight. She told me how her mother had suffered from dementia for many years, eventually reaching the point that she could no longer recognize any of her children when they would visit at the nursing home. She then changed the tone of the conversation immediately when she added, "But there's always someone in there." When I asked what she meant, she continued:

"I love singing, and as an African-American, I've got a strong voice. I sometimes visit nursing homes near my house just to sing for the patients, to do something different and break up their routine a little. I still remember 12 years ago, I decided I would sing for my Mom. She didn't have a clue who I was, and didn't respond to much of anything, because the dementia was so advanced. She seemed almost catatonic. By chance I had come across one of her old hymnals with the Baptist songs we used to sing in church as kids. She used to know most of them by heart. Well, those old hymns stirred up something inside her, and after I started singing, she suddenly picked up and began to sing along with me! Yup, there's always someone in there." Cecilia's story about her mother runs against a cultural tendency today, which is to dismiss those struggling with dementia as if they were no longer persons. These patients, however, clearly deserve much more from us than the kind of benign neglect (or worse) that they occasionally receive.

Many of us fear a diagnosis of dementia. We worry about "surrendering our core" or "losing our true self" to the disease. Many of us wonder how our loved ones would treat us under such circumstances.

Steven Sabat, writing in The Journal of Clinical Ethics, challenges the reduced expectations for quality care for those with dementia:

"Is his or her personhood recognized and supported, or neglected in favor of the assumption that it barely, if at all, exists...do we assume that the afflicted rarely if ever recognizes the need for company, for stimulation, for the same sort of treatment he or she would seek and be given as a matter of course in earlier, healthier, days?" Sometimes we may view the situation more from our own vantage point, rather than the patient's. In a report on care for the elderly, physicians Bernard Lo and Laurie Dornbrand put it this way: "Family members and health professionals sometimes project their own feelings onto the patient. Life situations that would be intolerable to young healthy people may be [made] acceptable to older debilitated patients."

Sabat notes how this raises the prospect of reducing the patient to a kind of object:

"The dementia sufferer is not treated as a person; that is, as one who is an autonomous center of life. Instead, he or she is treated in some respects as a lump of dead matter, to be measured, pushed around, manipulated, drained, filled, dumped, etc."

The medical profession in particular faces a unique responsibility towards each individual with dementia, a duty to approach each life, especially in its most fragile (and uncooperative) moments, with compassion, patience and attention. When our ability to think rationally or choose freely becomes clouded or even eliminated by dementia, we still remain at root the kind of creature who is rational and free, and the bearer of inalienable human dignity. We never change from one kind of being into another. Parents who have children born with a serious birth defect or behavioral problem would never suggest that their defect or impediment transforms them into another kind of being, into an animal or a pet. It never renders them "subhuman," even though their behaviors, like those of advanced dementia patients, may at times be frustrating and very hard to bear. As Cecilia reminded me on the plane, "there's always someone in there."

Pope John Paul II in a beautiful passage from Evangelium Vitae (On the Gospel of Life) speaks of "the God of life, who has created every individual as a 'wonder.'" We are called to foster an outlook that "does not give in to discouragement when confronted by those who are sick, suffering, outcast or at death's door." Those suffering from dementia challenge us in a particular way towards the beautiful, and at times heroic, response of love, "perceiving in the face of every person a call to encounter, dialogue and solidarity."

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Rev. Tadeusz Pacholczyk, Ph.D. earned his doctorate in neuroscience from Yale and did post-doctoral work at Harvard. He is a priest of the diocese of Fall River, MA, and serves as the Director of Education at The National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia. See www.ncbcenter.org.
Vatican

Science is neither a panacea, nor to be feared, says pope

By Carol Glatz
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY -- Science is never to be feared, yet its discoveries will never be enough to answer all of the world's questions, Pope Benedict XVI told scientists and researchers meeting at the Vatican.

"Scientists do not create the world; they learn about it and attempt to imitate it, following the laws and intelligibility that nature manifests to us," he said in an address to members of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences Oct. 28.

The fact that there is a constant, a law or logic that exists outside of human control "leads us to admit the existence of an all-powerful reason, which is other than that of man, and which sustains the world," he said.

Meeting for a plenary assembly Oct. 28-Nov. 1, academy members were discussing "The Scientific Legacy of the 20th Century."

The pope said that over the last century, many people developed one of two extreme views of what science was all about.

On the one hand, the development and use of nuclear weapons and other disturbing advancements caused some people to fear science and distance themselves from it, he said.

On the other hand, science's many groundbreaking and life-changing discoveries led some people to think science was a "panacea" and that science might be able to "answer all of the questions of man's existence, and even of his aspirations," he said.

"Science represents neither of these extremes; it is "a patient, yet passionate search for the truth about the cosmos, about nature and about the constitution of the human being," Pope Benedict said.

"The church greatly esteems and encourages science, and the pope praised the way many scientists appreciate the role philosophy plays in enriching their work.

"Science can benefit from recognizing the human person's spiritual dimension and the human "quest for ultimate answers" about the world and the meaning of life, he said.

Pope Benedict urged scientists to take on a more "interdisciplinary approach tied with philosophical reflection" and asked that scientific achievements be used to help solve "the great problems of humanity," promote the true good, and foster integral development around the world.

The science academy also hosted a working group Oct. 27-28 on the latest research looking at "Human Neuroplasticity and Education."

Participants discussed how education and the unique capacities of the human brain have expanded the cognitive potential of human beings.

Stanislas Dehaene, a French expert in cognitive neuroscience, told Catholic News Service that the human brain wants to make sense of what it sees and to constantly seek out hidden patterns and rules that govern behavior.

While scientists don't yet know how the brain is able to "extract" these hidden rules, he said the special ability has enabled humans to make huge achievements in culture and science.

Humans have "exploited the cognitive niche -- getting better knowledge of the world," he said. Animals have good spatial knowledge, but they are not able to integrate lots of different data in a special way.

Dehaene said such cognitive abilities were an important tool for human survival because someone who could better understand and interpret animal behavior, for example, would be a much more successful hunter, and discovering the cycle of the seasons and how plants grow and make food means humans were able to "develop a much better feeding system."

Wolf Singer, director of the Max Planck Institute for Brain Research in Frankfurt, Germany, said there are critical windows of opportunity for mastering certain language and motor skills that are open only during the first two decades of life.

Up until 20 or 25 years of age, the human brain is creating and removing neurological connections that allow for all sorts of unique skills, like riding a bicycle or playing a musical instrument, he said.

When the window closes after 20 or 25 years of age, the brain stops developing and no new pathways can be created, only existing connections can be made more efficient, he said, so "you have to get it right" early in life.

For that reason, parents and teachers are enormously important in transmitting a whole host of skills and knowledge to future generations, Singer said.

"If we had no educational system, our children would behave like cave dwelling Stone Age people" because sophisticated human behaviors and abilities are the result of "intentional instruction," he said.

Teachers should be paid well and they along with parents who do a good job teaching children "should have the highest social prestige of all the professional groups, not the bankers," he said.

Pope praises women who give Christian inspiration to their families

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY -- Pope Benedict XVI praised the millions of Catholic women in the world who inspire their husbands and children to live truly Christian lives.

At his weekly general audience Oct. 27, the pope said he wanted to recognize "the many women who, day after day, enlighten their families with their witness of Christian life."

"May the Spirit of the Lord raise up holy Christian spouses today to show the world the beauty of marriage lived according to the Gospel values: love, tenderness, mutual help, fruitfulness in generating and educating children, openness and solidarity with the world, and participation in the life of the church," he said.

The pope's remarks about women in the church and in family life were part of his main audience address about the life and influence of St. Bridget of Sweden, who lived in the 14th century.

Bridget and her husband, Ulf, were the parents of eight children and were models of "an authentic conjugal spirituality," the pope said.

"Often, as happened in the life of St. Bridget and Ulf, it is the woman who, with her religious sensitivity, delicacy and sweetness, is able to make her husband mature in the faith journey," he said.

After Ulf died, Bridget sold her possessions and dedicated her life to prayer and good works, which makes her a model for Christian widows, the pope said.

St. Bridget also received divine revelations, many of which were addressed, "even in the form of harsh admonitions, to believers in her time, including religious and political authorities so that they would correctly live their Christian life," Pope Benedict said.

But, he said, she always shared the revelations "with an attitude of respect and full fidelity to the magisterium of the church, particularly to the successor of the Apostle Peter," Pope Urban V, whom she urged to return to Rome at a time when the papacy was based in Avignon, France.

Pope Benedict said that St. Bridget, founder of the Brigittine Sisters, had hoped to establish a monastic order with branches for both men and women.

"This should not surprise us: In the Middle Ages, there were monastic foundations with a male and female branch that followed the same monastic rule under the direction of an abbess. In fact, the great Christian tradition recognizes that women have their own dignity and -- following the example of Mary, queen of the Apostles -- their own place in the church, which without involving ordained priesthood, is just as important for the spiritual growth of the church," he said.
When in December 1944 I was drafted for military service, the company commander asked each of us what we planned to do in the future. I answered that I wanted to become a Catholic priest. The lieutenant replied: 'Then you ought to look for something else. In the new Germany priests are no longer needed.' I knew that this 'new Germany' was already coming to an end, and that after the enormous devastation which that madness had brought upon the country, priests would be needed more than ever. Today, he said, people see God's presence in the world, he said. 'When people will always have need of God, even in an age marked by technical mastery of the world and globalization: they will always need the priest. Because people always have need of God, even in an age marked by the scientific mastery of the world and globalization: they will always need the priest. Because people always have need of God, even in an age marked by the technical mastery of the world and globalization: they will always need the priest. Because people always have need of God, even in an age marked by the scientific mastery of the world and globalization: they will always need the priest.

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Houston miner in Chile: ‘I firmly believe God drilled that hole’

By Jonah Dycus
Catholic News Service

HOUSTON -- Greg Hall was preparing to serve as an acolyte for Mass at Christ the Redeemer Church when an associate contacted him about a "banging on the pipe."

It was Day 17 after the Chilean mine collapsed on 33 miners. A representative from Drillers Supply International -- a company owned by Hall and his wife, Angelica -- was updating the deacon-in-training on the task assigned to the company's crew: drilling through more than 2,000 feet of rock down into the gold and copper mine.

"At that time, we thought we were just drilling to try to get a video feed to let (the miners') families know they had perished," Greg Hall said. "Then we found out that all 33 of them were alive."

Moments after serving Mass in Houston, Hall headed for the airport and left for the San Jose mine in the Atacama Desert.

Days after the drilling was completed, all of the miners were methodically extracted from the mine Oct. 13.

"I talked to a lot of people, and this was the most challenging drill I have done in 25 years," Hall, now back home, told the Texas Catholic Herald, newspaper of the Galveston-Houston Archdiocese. "Talking to my peers, it was the most technologically challenging hole they ever heard of."

"I firmly believe God drilled that hole," he told the Texas Catholic Herald following the miners' rescue. (CNS photo/courtesy of Angelica Hall)

Owner Greg Hall of Drillers Supply International is pictured at the site of the collapsed San Jose mine in the Atacama Desert near Copiapo, Chile, in October. The Catholic parishioner from the Houston area said faith played a role in his company's successful plan to drill down to reach 33 trapped miners. "I firmly believe God drilled that hole," he told the Texas Catholic Herald following the miners' rescue. (CNS photo/courtesy of Angelica Hall)

It was at that critical moment when Hall realized he wasn't powerless after all.

"I could pray, and I started praying very hard," he said. "Soon after that, we started getting a little leeway and (the drill) started moving again."

Hall had to keep his emotions in check during the drilling operation.

"Those are our brothers that were down there," he said. "But I was afraid if I acted emotionally, that I might make a mistake that could cost those people their lives."

Letter from the Bishop: Supporting the Retirement Fund for Religious

November 2010

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ:

The purpose of this letter is to remind you about the Annual Collection for the Retirement Fund for Religious that will be taken this year on December 12, 2010. This collection is a way of thanking the countless religious, women and men, who have served our Church with much dedication and generosity in the past, and who now are in retirement and many are ill. The good people of our diocese have always been very generous to this collection, and last year you gave over $67,000 for this special collection that goes for the Retirement Fund for Religious.

Religious communities who benefit from this special collection are profoundly grateful for this assistance and continue to be diligent in their efforts to implement retirement strategies to help provide assistance for their own members. However, significant needs remain. There are skyrocketing health-care costs that make it increasingly difficult for religious communities to provide adequate elder care. Escalating the concern is the expected shift in the ratio of wage-earning religious to those who are retired.

I sincerely thank you for your past generosity for this special collection to assist these great and dedicated servants of the Lord who have served so well for countless years. Now we want to repay them by generously giving to this collection, and of course, with our prayers. Pray for all the wonderful women and men religious who have served the Church down through the years, and I encourage you to be generous to this special collection. God's peace.

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

Retirement Fund for Religious

Fondo para la jubilacion de religiosos

Muy estimados hermanas y hermanos en Cristo:

Por medio de esta carta les recuerdo que la colecta anual para el Fondo para la Jubilacion de Religiosos será el 12 de diciembre del 2010, la Fiesta de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe. Esta colecta anual se toma para sostener a los religiosos que nos han servido con mucha dedicación y generosidad a través de los años, y ahora son ancianos y muchos de ellos enfermos. Estos dedicados religiosos ancianos necesitan su ayuda.

El año pasado contribuyeron a esta colecta $67,000.00 para el Fondo para la Jubilacion de Religiosos, y yo con ellos estamos muy agradecidos por su generosidad.

Al recordar a las personas que más contribuyeron a su formación, tal vez recuerden a la hermana que lo preparó para su Primera Comunión o al hermano que entrenó su equipo de baloncesto en la escuela secundaria. Sin nunca contar el costo, estos religiosos compartieron su amor y fe y tuvieron fe en todo su potencial como personas; eligiendo invertir en el futuro de ustedes en vez del propio. Hoy, estas hermanas y hermanos tal vez sean ancianos o estén enfermos. Hoy, es probable que reciban un beneficio promedio del Seguro Social de un poco más de $4,500 anualmente. Hoy, lo necesitan a ustedes. Sean generosos.

De nuevo, les animo para que den con mucha generosidad a esta colecta especial, y también ofrezcan sus oraciones por estas personas quienes nos han servido con mucha dedicación a través de los años. Muchísimas gracias por su cooperación y por el apoyo que siempre brindan a nuestros sacerdotes y religiosos quienes nos han servido, y que siguen sirviéndonos con mucha dedicación.

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

Are we excommunicated after an abortion?

By Father John Dietzen
Catholic News Service

Q. A few years ago I had an abortion. I realize I committed a serious sin, but according to a test performed with our doctor's advice, the baby had a "catastrophic" defect that was fatal. I know now that does not make the abortion any less wrong. I confessed the sin and the priest told me I was forgiven. But I live every day with the pain and guilt over what I did, and I pray for forgiveness.

I just read in the Catechism of the Catholic Church that a person who has an abortion automatically "incurs excommunication latae sententiae" by the very act of committing the offense.

Have I been excommunicated from the Catholic Church all this time, or did the priest have authority to absolve me? Since my confession, I've been receiving Communion every Sunday at least. Is that wrong? (Ohio)

A. No, you're not wrong. There's much involved here that few Catholics would know.

Several times in the documents preparing for and presenting the catechism, it is noted that the catechism is meant primarily as a resource for bishops, priests and other teachers of the faith.

Pope John Paul II says, for example, in his letter introducing the catechism, that it is intended as a reference text, a norm for teaching the faith, "to encourage and assist in the writing of new local catechisms, which take into account various situations and cultures." In other words, to explain and expand on the teachings contained there so people can understand and apply them correctly.

The questions you bring up are good examples of why Pope John Paul said what he did. Some elements of church teaching and law are technically complex, and all of their implications cannot be covered every time an intricate question arises.

Let me explain. The same sentence you quote (in No. 2272) says that excommunication is incurred "subject to the conditions provided by canon law." Those are important words. Canon law places many conditions which must be present before a person incurs such an excommunication. Most Catholics would of course not be aware of these conditions.

The same paragraph contains two other words that you passed over but which are significant for you. It notes that "formal cooperation" in an abortion constitutes a grave sin and can incur excommunication. This space is too short to explain what that means, but it introduces even more conditions before an individual is excommunicated.

To give an idea of what I'm talking about, in order to incur this sanction a person must be of majority age and, more important, must be aware when the act is committed that an excommunication is involved if the act is carried through.

I believe many Catholics like yourself know abortion is wrong, yet do not know that an excommunication follows, if they even know what an excommunication is. Furthermore, if the woman is experiencing terrible fear or confusion, or if she is under severe pressure from family or close friends, there may not be an excommunication.

As the catechism explains, in attaching the penalty of excommunication, the church simply wishes to make clear the gravity of destroying unborn life. It in no way pretends to limit the infinite scope of God's compassion and mercy.

Trust what the priest told you. He knew what he was doing, and he seems to have acted totally in accord with church teaching and law. You don't need to be concerned. Just be happy and grateful for where you are now with God.

Priests and nuns honoring their parents

By Father Peter J. Daly
Catholic News Service

"Honor your father and your mother" is the Fourth Commandment in the Ten Commandments. It is not just a commandment for children.

As the baby boomers age, it is also a commandment for adults caring for an aging parent. Keeping this commandment is particularly a problem for priests and nuns.

A priest friend of mine, Msgr. Jack Myslinski, found himself in this dilemma. His father died two years ago. His mother, Patricia, was in declining health. She lived hundreds of miles away in Massachusetts. She had only a year or so to live. Jack's sister, Donna, was the only one at home with their mother. Donna suffers from rheumatoid arthritis, as did her mother.

Jack decided that after 30 years of ministry in Washington, D.C., his place was with his family. He left Washington and went home to Massachusetts a little more than a year ago. It proved to be the right decision. His mother died a few weeks ago.

Jack said he spent more time with his mother in the last year than he had in the previous 30 years. They reconnected. They laughed a lot and enjoyed each other's company again. When his mother died, there was a sense of peace and fulfillment. At least for the last 14 months of her life, he had been able to fulfill the Fourth Commandment. He appreciated the understanding of Archbishop Donald W. Wuerl, who allowed him to return home.

Some religious orders, such as the Little Sisters of the Poor, recognize this conflict in the priesthood and religious life. They care for the aging parents of priests and nuns so that their children can continue to live their religious vocation. Otherwise, they might have to leave their ministry to honor their parents.

Because priests and nuns are single, we often are called upon to take care of our aging parents. I am in better shape than most priests. My brother and sister are the primary caregivers for my 90-year-old mother. Nevertheless, every six weeks or so, my mom spends about one week at the rectory. It is absolutely necessary. It gives my siblings (and my mom) a break. Caring for an elderly adult can be as exhausting as caring for a young child.

One priest of our archdiocese has his 92-year-old mother stay with him in his rectory about one week per month. His mom lives with his sister in New York. His sister's job requires a lot of travel. She cannot always fly home to be with her mother.

(Please See DALY/23)
The Pharisees were religious leaders during the time of Jesus, along with the Sadducees. The Pharisees were mostly middle-class lawyers and businessmen, but they maintained a strong belief in the very literal understanding of the Old Testament and of the religious traditions that had been established since the time of Moses. They were very critical of Jesus, because they felt he was breaking the laws and the traditions.

Jesus, in turn, was very critical of them, because he said they were following the law so severely that they missed the intent of the law.

Throughout his short ministry, Jesus often told the people of Israel not to be like the Pharisees, but to show compassion and to follow the real law of God, which was to love God and to love each other.

Jesus knew the people who came out to hear him preach loved to hear the stories he told in order to convey a lesson, so he tried to tell one or more whenever he spoke. He stood before the crowd of people that had come out to hear him on one particular day. "Two people went up to the temple area to pray," he said. "One was a Pharisee and the other was a tax collector."

Jesus used these two examples because Pharisees were important leaders in the church while tax collectors took the people's money, so they were not very well-liked, and many of them cheated to take more than what they were owed.

Then he explained that the Pharisee said this prayer: "O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity -- greedy, dishonest, adulterous -- or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes on my whole income."

Then Jesus told the tax collector's prayer: "O God, be merciful to me a sinner."

Jesus said, "I tell you, the latter (meaning the tax collector) went home justified, not the former (the Pharisee); for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

After Jesus had finished preaching, the people would often bring their children so that Jesus would touch them and bless them. The apostles did not want all the children coming around Jesus, so they tried to send them back with their parents.

Jesus stopped them and told the parents to bring the children to him. He said, "Let the children come to me and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Amen, I say to you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it."
Family

A season in heaven: Ranger baseball as an inheritance

By Jimmy Patterson

S
ome families hand down large sums of money or real estate. Others leave heirlooms or jewelry. Some leave letters or written histories of those who came before.

My family left me baseball. Texas Rangers baseball.

I thank my dad and my grandmother for my love of the game and my love of the Rangers and, therefore, my generally positive attitude this year. As you can imagine, these past few weeks have been some of the most memorable I -- or any Ranger fan -- have ever experienced.

In the final years of his life, my dad had largely lost interest in the Major League version of the game. The crowds. The large sums of money involved on both sides of the white lines. The steroids. He may have soured on the sport on its grandest stage, but I still suspect he kept one eye on the Rangers while opting to attend his beloved Grand Prairie Air Hogs minor league games during the last two seasons of his life.

When my dad died July 26, 2009, he did so as only a decorated World War II veteran/baseball fan could: at the conclusion of "God Bless America" as the Rangers were beating the Kansas City Royals on a TV in the Irving hospice room in which he drew his last breaths.

But my dad's close association with the game was far deeper than how he died that Sunday afternoon.

He took me to the first Ranger game ever played in Arlington Stadium. Frank Howard hit a monster home run. We were in the presence of The Greatest Hitter That Ever Lived, the one and only Ted Williams, first manager of the Rangers (who lost 100 games that season and then walked away from the game forever). Dad and I had seats behind home plate. We both agreed that Ranger catcher Jim "Sunny" Sundberg was probably a pretty good guy (and we were right ... with a nickname like Sunny, how can you be anything but?). The Rangers won that game. We were so young. I was 13. Dad was 47. I still have the front page of the Dallas Morning News Sports section that featured coverage of that momentous day. It will forever be one of the best days of my life.

Over the next several years I would attend scores of games at Arlington Stadium and subsequently the Ballpark in Arlington and whatever name it would take on because of sponsorship's millions. I was at least glad they returned it to "Rangers Ballpark at Arlington" before he died.

My dad taught me everything I know about baseball. Neither of us ever amounted to much as athletic specimens and so instead of loving to play, we just loved to watch. He told me stories of his days as a groundskeeper with the St. Louis Cardinals' minor league team in Springfield, Mo. He and my Uncle Bill both tended the water hose, keeping the infield dirt smooth and fresh. Dad was No. 1 on the hose until a big teenage boy came onto

(Please See BASEBALL/20)

Your Family

How – and why – it’s important to listen to others

By Bill and Monica Dodds

Catholic News Service

I
It seems safe to assume that every couple -- and every family -- of every generation has faced obstacles when it comes to talking and listening.

"Did you hear what I just said?" asks the cave woman to the cave man.

"Huh? Sure. Uh ..." he answers.

"You just sit there staring at the fire." "After a long, hard day, I like how it crackles and pops," he defends himself, poking the embers with a stick.

"Our parents had it a lot easier than we do," she says wistfully. "They didn't have fire."

Long pause.

"I said, 'they didn't have fire.'"

Longer pause.

"Huh?" he asks.

In our own time, it can seem newlyweds don't have to worry about listening when the biggest argument they get into is "I love you" or "I love you more."

And new parents don't worry about it either except a concern that they might miss baby's first "mama" or "dada."

No, it's down the road a piece. It's after the honeymoon period has faded that some real arguments can happen. It's after that little bundle of joy has turned into a medium- or large-sized bundle of smart aleck.

Then there can be real arguments or what, perhaps, is even worse: no talking at all.

We all know communicating with a loved one is important. We all know that means not just speaking but listening.

What we all tend to forget is that in an age of instant and near constant communication, listening is harder than it used to be.

Your voice is competing with the television, DVD player, MP3 player with noise-canceling ear buds, cell phone (voice and text), and computer (web surfing, movies and TV shows, and e-mail). Then, too, you must admit -- if you're honest -- many of those might be keeping you from really listening to what a loved one may be saying to you.

One way or another, we're distracted by the 21st-century equivalent of those long-ago "crackles and pops."

What to do about it? You know the answer to that: Quit poking the fire. Enjoy it. Use it. Thank God for it. But don't let it get in the way of what's even more important: that spouse and those children.

How to quit poking? That can be tough. How to encourage your loved one to do the same. Even tougher. And how to do that without nagging them? Seemingly impossible.

A few points to consider:

► There's still no substitute for family dinner at the table with no TV, cell phones and so on. Even a few nights a week makes a big difference.

► Many couples have found a Marriage Encounter weekend a tremendous blessing.

► It's tempting to begin coming up with your response, to begin framing your counterargument, when someone is talking to you, but that's not really listening to what's being said.

We don't all "talk" the same. Some of us start talking, and thinking out loud, to get to where we're going. Others say nothing for a time as they gather their thoughts and then speak. If you and your spouse are one of each, you have a "mixed marriage."

ANSWERS
1. Bethlehem
2. John the Baptist
3. Fisherman
4. 12
5. Zacchaeus
6. Colt
7. Judas
8. Peter

“Your'll love the parishioners. They're just chock-full of sermon material.”

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Culture / Books

'Don't have a cow, man: Homer Simpson's Catholicism

By Mark Pattison
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON -- It's not every day that the Vatican newspaper declares that a fictional character from the world of television is a Catholic -- and a cartoon character at that.

But that's precisely what L'Osservatore Romano did in early October when it asserted that Homer Simpson, the patriarch of the 21-season Fox sitcom "The Simpsons," is a Catholic. Oh, and bratty son Bart, too.

The Vatican's fascination with "The Simpsons" began last December, when L'Osservatore Romano said that "the relationship between man and God" is one of its most important themes and that it often mirrored the "religious and spiritual confusion of our times."

On Oct. 16, La Civilta Catolica, a Jesuit weekly, published an article titled "The Simpsons' and Religion," which said the series "is one of the few television shows for kids in which the Christian faith, religion and questions about God are recurring themes."

"The Simpsons" say grace before meals, and in their way, believe in heaven," said the essay's author, Jesuit Father Francesco Occhetta.

Then came the L'Osservatore Romano opinion piece the next day. "Few people know it, and he does everything he can to hide it, but it is true: Homer J. Simpson is a Catholic," the Vatican newspaper said in the article, headlined "Homer and Bart are Catholic." Father Occhetta later told Catholic News Service in Rome he thought the Vatican newspaper had exaggerated his point but added that the sitcom shows Homer "is open to the question of faith and God."

Faithful followers of the series know Homer and family go to Springfield Community Church, which series executive producer Al Jean says is "presby-lutheran."

Mark Pinsky, former religion writer for the Orlando Sentinel, wrote the book "The Gospel According to the Simpsons" in 2001. As the series has become TV's current prime-time entertainment program marathon winner, he has updated his book as well as a companion guide for leaders of study groups.

Homer being a Catholic is "mostly a case of wishful thinking on the part of L'Osservatore Romano," Pinsky said.

He described the episode which has gotten the TV and the Catholic blogosphere talking.

Bart gets thrown out of Springfield Elementary yet again, so "they try Catholic school. Bart takes to the bloody martyr stories," Pinsky said. "Homer, goaded by Marge, goes to the church to remove Bart from this setting, and he's seduced. Homer being Homer, he's seduced by a pancake dinner and bingo, which he sort of turns around from being very hostile. Then he becomes very curious about it. Then Liam Neeson (the voice of the priest in the episode) explains confession and absolution, which Homer thinks is the best deal in the world. ... The wine's another draw."

Pinsky added, "Homer enrolls with Bart in a sort of RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) course, and of course, he misunderstands parts of it. ... He's attracted to Catholicism for what we might say are all the wrong reasons."

Marge rounds up Reverend Lovejoy and the Simpson's evangelical neighbor, Ned Flaherty, to conduct an intervention.

Pinsky alluded to some spats writers for "The Simpsons" have had with Bill Donohue, head of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights. Donohue, in an Oct. 26 phone interview with CNS in Washington, said the arguments were legitimate, but "I would hardly regard the show as anti-Catholic, if it's been around for 20 years. It would hardly raise my ire. I would have more concern about (talk show hosts) Joy Behar and Bill Maher than 'The Simpsons.'"

Donohue laughed as he was asked whether he would welcome Homer Simpson into the Catholic faith with open arms. "It's really rather silly," he said.

"What this smacks of to me is the craven need on the part of some Catholics for the bouquets that may be bestowed on them by the secular media. This is not the way to improve relations, if my hunch is right." (Please See HOMER/20)

Marriage book offers thoughtful research, helpful tips

"More Perfect Unions: The American Search for Marital Bliss" by Rebecca L. Davis.

Catholic News Service

Each year millions of American couples seek counseling to save their marriages. Their reasons go far beyond a desire for personal fulfillment; they see this institution as the very glue that holds society together. In "More Perfect Unions," an intriguing and thoughtful study, Rebecca L. Davis traces the evolution of Americans' intense commitment to heterosexual marriage.

"Americans care deeply about marriages -- their own and other people's -- because they have made enormous investments of time, money and emotion in trying to improve their own relationships, because they idealize what a good marriage can offer, and because they believe that the stakes extend far beyond their personal decisions about whom to marry or whether to divorce," she writes.

Davis, an assistant professor of history at the University of Delaware, has written a deeply researched and readable work. She demonstrates how, during the 1930s, a small but powerful group of reformers introduced the concept of marriage counseling and guidance. They emphasized strong marriages as the bedrock of individual and societal health.

Consequently, over the course of the 20th century, Americans' attitudes about what makes a successful marriage changed. It wasn't enough simply to avoid the "failure" that divorce represented; now couples aimed to achieve "mutually beneficial emotional, financial and sexual gratification."

Leading in this evolution of attitudes were many religious institutions, including the Catholic Church, which Davis discusses in some detail. Assuming the mission of strengthening their congregants' marriages gave clergy a newfound relevance in the 20th century. For Catholics, of course, marriage is a sacrament, a visible sign of grace. In the 1940s and 1950s, Catholic leaders and theologians devoted increasing attention to the sacramental nature of marriage.

When the first major Catholic marriage counseling center opened in 1952 at The Catholic University of America, it aimed to provide a thoroughly Catholic alternative to more secular marriage guidance that might emphasize, for instance, artificial birth control. In 1953, Davis notes, the center provided guidance to more than 1,000 couples and trained 500 clergy and laypeople as marriage counselors.
USCCB Movie Ratings

NEW YORK (CNS) -- Here is a list of recent films that Catholic News Service has rated on the basis of moral suitability.

The first symbol after each title is the Catholic News Service classification. The second symbol is the rating of the Motion Picture Association of America.CNS classifications: A-I -- general patronage; A-II -- adults and adolescents; A-III -- adults; L -- limited adult audience, films whose problematic content many adults would find troubling; O -- morally offensive. MPAA ratings: G -- general audiences. All ages admitted; PG -- parental guidance suggested. Some material may not be suitable for children; PG-13 -- parents strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13; R -- restricted. Under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian; NC-17 -- no one 17 and under admitted.

A
Alpha and Omega, A-I (PG)
The American, L (R)

C
Cats & Dogs: The Revenge of Kitty Galore, A-I (PG)
Charlie St. Cloud, A-III (PG-13)

D
Despicable Me, A-I (PG)
Devil, A-III (PG-13)
Dinner for Schmucks, L (PG-13)

E
Easy A, O (PG-13)
Eat Pray Love, L (PG-13)
The Expendables, O (R)

F
Flipped, A-III (PG)

G
Going the Distance, O (R)

H
House, A-III (R)

I
Inception, A-III (PG-13)

L
The Last Airbender, A-II (PG)
The Last Exorcism, A-III (PG-13)
Legend of the Guardians: The Owls of Ga'Hoole, A-II (PG)
Let Me In, O (R)
Lottery Ticket, L (PG-13)

N
Nanny McPhee Returns, A-I (PG)

O
Oceans, A-I (G)
The Other Guys, O (PG-13)

P
Piranha 3D, O (R)
Predators, O (R)
A Previous Engagement, O (no rating)

R
Ramona and Beezus, A-I (G)

S
Salt, L (PG-13)
Scott Pilgrim vs. the World, O (PG-13)
Secretariat, A-II (PG)
Sex and the City 2, O (R)
Shrek Forever After, A-II (PG)
The Sorcerer's Apprentice, A-II (PG)
The Switch, O (PG-13)

T
Takers, A-III (PG-13)
Tales From Earthsea, A-II (PG-13)
The Town, O (R)
Troy Story 3, A-I (G)
The Twilight Saga: Eclipse, A-II (PG-13)

V
Vampires Suck, A-III (PG-13)

W
The Waiting City, L (R)
Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps, A-III (PG-13)

Y
You Again, A-II (PG)

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Editors: Letters of the alphabet have been omitted where there are no movies beginning with that letter. This film list is a regular feature that appears around the beginning of every month.

The Adult Catechism

Let your conscience be your guide

By Most Rev. Donald Wuerl
Archbishop of Washington

Conscience is our guide. But a guide without knowledge and formation can lead us astray. The first time I used a global positioning system I marveled at how accurate it could be. Yet, it only functioned well because behind that calm reassuring voice that would say "turn left in two blocks and then stay in the right-hand lane" were well-charted maps and a computerized guidance system that allowed "Sally," as I christened this vehicular guardian angel, to offer informed guidance.

So it is as we make our way through life. Our conscience, to be a truly effective guide, has to have as its backup system an understanding of what are right actions and what are wrong ones. It is not enough simply to say I am doing the right thing. We need to have the information to make sure that we choose truly is right.

This is why Catholics listen to the voice of the Church. Here we find not just comforting words about doing right and avoiding wrong, but clear, exact and faithful guidance about what actually is right and wrong.

Judgments of conscience are the outcome of a person's honest effort to avoid being arbitrary or unresponsive in pursuing true human values. When we are able to set aside our personal prejudices or the biases that may close our hearts to the truth, then the choices we make are right. Then conscience is true and upright, and a person attains what he or she is implicitly or explicitly seeking: the knowledge of God's design and will. That is why St. Paul not only observes the universality and naturalness of the phenomenon of human conscience in all times and places, but also insists on the fact that conscience bears witness to the demands of God's law (cf. Romans 2:15).

Conscience, then, is not a mere device for making exceptions to objective requirements of morality. On the contrary, as the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on Religious Liberty teaches, "through the mediation of conscience man perceives and acknowledges the imperatives of the divine law" (Dignitatis Humane 3; cf. GS 16). This "divine law" is "eternal, objective and universal" and is the "highest norm of human life" (DH 3). Fidelity to conscience is fidelity in the search for truth and insofar as our search is successful we turn aside from blind choice and wishful thinking; we are guided by "objective norms of morality" (GS 16).

Perhaps nothing provides us a better example of the need to form conscience properly than the issue of abortion and embryonic stem cell research. In addressing the moral imperative that we shall not take innocent human life, most people would agree that we should not kill.

However, what begins to cloud the issue when it comes to abortion are issues such as the impact of having a baby on a parent's life, future, career and status. As these and like elements surface they begin to cloud the otherwise clear principle that it is wrong to take another's life. Adding to the confusion may be voices of friends and even family who suggest it really isn't yet a life or point out the "advantages" of such an action. The quiet voice of conscience if not stilled is overwhelmed and guided into a new direction. Recently watching a television infomercial supporting embryonic stem cell research, it was very clear that a concerted effort was being made to blur if not eradicate altogether the distinction between adult stem cell research, which does not harm human life, and embryonic stem cell research, which takes human life.

In making moral decisions we hope to do so based on the truth. As

(Figure 20)
**LIVING**

(From 10)

Would he quit ministry altogether if asked to give someone else a chance to head it? (He'd have a perfect right to, as he should be head of everything, but he doesn't abandon us or our efforts when we foolishly try to take control.)

Attitude may be the key that unlocks the door to a stewardship way of life, but you still need the nuts and bolts. Or maybe a few loose screws.

That's what a curmudgeonly parishioner noticed in the chairs of his trailer church one day. He got down on his knees -- not to pray that "Father" would get them fixed or a generous benefactor would enable the parish to build a real church with pews -- but to tackle all 100 chairs himself!

Stewardship applies to one's personal life too and involves treasure (not just money) and time, as well as talent. And giving of yourself.

There was the person who realized, when taking inventory one winter: "I don't need five sweaters. Or even four."

The Laughlin children knew their lifestyle included no weekday television watching, but family prayer at 8 p.m. no matter who was there. Mrs. Laughlin even handed a Jewish visitor a rosary.

Little Michael Laughlin, whose suffering from severe burns initiated his parents' journey into stewardship, recovered. In high school he would look for and eat with the student sitting alone. He wouldn't make valedictorian or most valuable player, but his 300 classmates elected him the most Christian man in the class. As an adult, he's spent Saturday mornings taking children living in housing projects on nature hikes.

His dad explains it this way:

"Stewardship involves every decision you make. Talking about it isn't as important as living it."

**BASEBALL**

(From 17)

the field one day and knocked him down to the 2 spot. That boy, a prospect signed by the Cardinals, was Joe Garagiola, who would go on to become one of St. Louis' most beloved citizens. He was a broadcaster, a Today Show commentator and generally thought of as an all-around nice guy by anyone who ever met him.

My favorite story about him was the time when, in 1993, my dad wrote Joe a letter, reminding him of their days on the hose in Springfield. Joe wrote my dad back and told him he remembered that time fondly. Joe Garagiola, a devout Catholic, is as classy as they say he is.

I don't know where my family's love of baseball began.

My grandfather died when my dad was just nine years old. My guess is he loved the game, too, because my grandmother continued her love of the game throughout her life. In her final years, she moved in with my parents in their suburban Dallas home. She could no longer see, so she turned on a transistor radio on her bedside table every night and listened to the Rangers as she would fall asleep.

Every morning, she would wake and ask dad who won the game the night before. Grandma always turned her transistor radio off early when a particular young reliever would come in for the Rangers because she always noted that he would often lose the save, and the game, and she had little tolerance for either. And she was right a lot of the time. That young reliever? Kenny Rogers, who may have struggled as a reliever for the Rangers, but would mostly excel as a starter and would go on to record the only perfect game ever thrown by a Ranger pitcher.

My dad died a year before the Rangers' first ever World Series appearance. Grandma died two weeks after the close of the baseball season in 1993. Kenny Rogers' perfect game would come in 1994. People wonder why I get so emotional when the Rangers win this post season.

Now they know.

Baseball has been handed down from one generation to the next in my family. It is a love that has already been handed down with our kids. It is my family's inheritance. And with it, I've learned that money doesn't make you rich as much as love does. Or, in this case, our shared love of the game of baseball.

October brought a good couple of weeks for Texas Ranger baseball fans. So many years of futility was washed away thanks to this group of what appears to be high-character, quality men who come together for each other on and off the field. They are, in fact, a good enough group of guys that if my dad and grandma weren't already in heaven, they'd sure be there this week.

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Jimmy Patterson is editor of the West Texas Angelus.

**WUERL**

(From 19)

our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, tells us in his encyclical letter, Caritas in veritate, "Truth, by enabling men and women to let go of their subjective opinions and impressions, allows them to move beyond cultural and historical limitations and to come together in the assessment of the value and substance of things" (4).

The Catechism goes on to remind us how important our right choices are. While God is sovereign master of his plan for our lives, he makes use of our cooperation. For God, our loving Father, "grants his creatures not only their existence, but also the dignity of acting on their own... and thus of cooperating in the accomplishment of his plan" (306). Is it any wonder that we stand in awe of so great a God who not only brings us into being, but who loves us and plants within us the voice of conscience to see that we remain always faithful to him in our life's journey.

**HOMER**

(From 18)

"The show is so inoffensive to us we don't have it on our regular schedule of taped shows" the league monitors, Donahue said.

But what about for his own personal viewing enjoyment? "Quite frankly, I'm up at 5:30 in the morning to get to work at 7:15. I get to bed early on Sunday night. I don't even stay up late to watch the (New York) Yankees when they're in the playoffs."

Perhaps the Vatican media-watchers will note the "Simpsons" episode from last season in which the Simpsons went to the Holy Land and Homer, ravaged by heat and thirst, imagines himself the Messiah -- as do several others in the tourist party.

Pinsky, in his book, notes that when you're drawing animation cels (short for celluloid), you can be anywhere you want without having to build expensive sets. So a church naturally comes into the Simpsons' world. On the flip side, he told CNS, "because the characters never age, there are only so many situations you can do."

"The Simpsons" has touched upon mainstream Protestantism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Judaism in its long run. "The group that comes in for the most ribbing are the Unitarians, and that's maybe because they (writers) know they won't complain," Pinsky said, noting an episode where Homer is a missionary in the South Pacific and is asked: "What's the one true faith?" He responds, "If it's Unitarians I'll eat my hat."

He also recalled a scene in another of the show's 400 episodes that had a backyard ice cream social. "There's a table for toppings, each one with a denominational name on it. The Unitarians? It's empty, there's nothing there."

Pinsky said "The Simpsons" "is a show that rewards intelligence. The smarter you are, the more funny you will find it."
SUICIDE

Jesus often in the Eucharist.
Those with thoughts of suicide need a person of trust with whom to share. Remind those thinking of suicide to especially entrust themselves to Jesus who loves them and will guide them as a Good Shepherd, and who invites us to come to Him with our burdens and sorrow to receive grace, strength and comfort, and that they have a caring mother in Mary. Parents who see danger signs should not be afraid to ask, “Are you thinking of suicide?” Most teens tell another young person that they are considering suicide, but often that young person does not know what to do with that information. It is important that teens know how to reach adults, and that adults know where to get help. All need to be aware that sadly there are many websites that encourage and describe ways to commit suicide. To counteract this diabolical information, there is a need to stress the sacredness of each human life and that only God is the Master of each and every human being.

Compassion and the decision to live
The Church teaches compassion and mercy towards those who take their own lives and calls us to reach out with love, comfort and service to their family members and friends. No matter the tragic mistakes, no one has the right to condemn those individuals who take their own lives. More importantly, judgment should be left to God. As our faith teaches us, one of God’s attributes is his mercy, so strongly reflected in Jesus’ ministry.
Eventually, our faith helps us to let go of the why and to look for the who. There is Someone who can heal us from the wrenching pain of having lost a loved one, especially a child: Jesus. Every family who has lost a family member is free to make the choice to trust in God’s merciful love and to allow his grace to heal their deep wound. May each, supported by the Church and wider community, have the faith to trust in our Heavenly Father!
For the survivors of suicide victims, memories intensify rather than lessen the pain. Somehow suicide robs them of pleasant memories of the deceased: There were no good-byes and no chance to say, “I am sorry.” Perhaps the most common response to death through suicide is a feeling of guilt. The survivors are obsessed with thoughts about their personal role in precipitating the event. They blame themselves and search for evidence of their failures and omissions.
One of the most agonizing effects of suicide is the sense of disgrace or social embarrassment the survivors experience. Remember mental illness can affect anyone. Suicide can happen to anyone, even in the “best of families” and to the “best of people.”

Survivors, especially parents, must learn to let go of the past, putting it all in the hands of our merciful Savior Jesus Christ, and entrusting their lives and their lost ones to the care of Mary our Mother. They must decide to live. Survivors with the help of trusted friends and professionals must work to come to the awareness that they cannot blame their loved one for their own sadness and unhappiness forever. They need to make a decision to live. They need to discuss their feelings of sorrow and confusion with priests, religious, professionals and other caring people. Survivors, go frequently to Mass to receive in Communion the most merciful of God’s mercy, reconciliation, and at Resurrection. Survivors, join prayer groups and grief groups made up of people suffering similar tragedies.
Once the survivors begin to take care of themselves, to reaffirm their own goodness, they find their way back to hope. Their faith provides the strength to go on living, and friends provide the comfort to go on loving. They do not forget their sorrow or their loved ones, but slowly new experiences and more happy memories emerge to heal the hurt. Survivors especially need to receive often the sacrament of God’s mercy, reconciliation, and at each mass hand over all to Jesus.

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BULLIES

Jesus often in the Eucharist.
Those with thoughts of suicide need a person of trust with whom to share. Remind those thinking of suicide to especially entrust themselves to Jesus who loves them and will guide them as a Good Shepherd, and who invites us to come to Him with our burdens and sorrow to receive grace, strength and comfort, and that they have a caring mother in Mary. Parents who see danger signs should not be afraid to ask, “Are you thinking of suicide?” Most teens tell another young person that they are considering suicide, but often that young person does not know what to do with that information. It is important that teens know how to reach adults, and that adults know where to get help. All need to be aware that sadly there are many websites that encourage and describe ways to commit suicide. To counteract this diabolical information, there is a need to stress the sacredness of each human life and that only God is the Master of each and every human being.

Compassion and the decision to live
The Church teaches compassion and mercy towards those who take their own lives and calls us to reach out with love, comfort and service to their family members and friends. No matter the tragic mistakes, no one has the right to condemn those individuals who take their own lives. More importantly, judgment should be left to God. As our faith teaches us, one of God’s attributes is his mercy, so strongly reflected in Jesus’ ministry.
Eventually, our faith helps us to let go of the why and to look for the who. There is Someone who can heal us from the wrenching pain of having lost a loved one, especially a child: Jesus. Every family who has lost a family member is free to make the choice to trust in God’s merciful love and to allow his grace to heal their deep wound. May each, supported by the Church and wider community, have the faith to trust in our Heavenly Father!
For the survivors of suicide victims, memories intensify rather than lessen the pain. Somehow suicide robs them of pleasant memories of the deceased: There were no good-byes and no chance to say, “I am sorry.” Perhaps the most common response to death through suicide is a feeling of guilt. The survivors are obsessed with thoughts about their personal role in precipitating the event. They blame themselves and search for evidence of their failures and omissions.
One of the most agonizing effects of suicide is the sense of disgrace or social embarrassment the survivors experience. Remember mental illness can affect anyone. Suicide can happen to anyone, even in the “best of families” and to the “best of people.”

Survivors, especially parents, must learn to let go of the past, putting it all in the hands of our merciful Savior Jesus Christ, and entrusting their lives and their lost ones to the care of Mary our Mother. They must decide to live. Survivors with the help of trusted friends and professionals must work to come to the awareness that they cannot blame their loved one for their own sadness and unhappiness forever. They need to make a decision to live. They need to discuss their feelings of sorrow and confusion with priests, religious, professionals and other caring people. Survivors, go frequently to Mass to receive in Communion the most merciful of God’s mercy, reconciliation, and at Resurrection. Survivors, join prayer groups and grief groups made up of people suffering similar tragedies.
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BULLIES

September, when she moved to the area. A letter to parents from school principal Dan Smith said there was reason to believe Prince had been tormented by a clique of girls over dating and relationship issues.
While school personnel immediately intervened, it may not have been enough. "It is what happened after those incidents were over that is cause for significant concern," Smith wrote. "Because of the aforementioned disagreements, some students -- to be confirmed through investigations -- made mean-spirited comments to Phoebe in school and on the way home from school, but also through texting and social networking Web sites. This insidious, harassing behavior knows no bounds."
In April 2009, 11-year-old Carl hanged himself after relentless bullying by classmates at the New Leadership Charter School in Springfield. He was a Boy Scout, football player and church volunteer and known as a student who loved his schoolwork. Blanco, a publicist who resides in Chicago, was the victim of bullying when she was in school. She decided to go public with her story after the Columbine High School massacre in 1999, when two seniors went on a shooting rampage, killing 13 and then committing suicide. "I became enraged because I said, 'What happened at Columbine had nothing to do with the availability of guns!'" she explained.
Blanco, who addressed educators in the Springfield Diocese last fall, has written two books since then and is executive producer of a critically acclaimed anti-bullying program called, "It's NOT Just Joking Around." She also has been called on to intervene in the aftermath of two dozen suicides related to bullying.
Cyprian’s interpretation of the Gospel prayer, “Give us this day our daily bread”, he says among other things that “our” bread – the bread which we receive as Christians in the Church – is the Eucharistic Lord himself. In this petition of the Our Father, then, we pray that he may daily give us “our” bread; and that it may always nourish our lives; that the Risen Christ, who gives himself to us in the Eucharist, may truly shape the whole of our lives by the radiance of his divine love. The proper celebration of the Eucharist involves knowing, understanding and loving the Church’s liturgy in its concrete form. In the liturgy we pray with the faithful of every age – the past, the present and the future are joined in one great chorus of prayer. As I can state from personal experience, it is inspiring to learn how it all developed, what a great experience of faith is reflected in the structure of the Mass, and how it has been shaped by the prayer of many generations.

3. The sacrament of Penance is also important. It teaches me to see myself as God sees me, and it forces me to be honest with myself. It leads me to humility. The Curé of Ars once said: “You think it makes no sense to be absolved today, because you know that tomorrow you will commit the same sins over again.”

“Yet,” he continues, “God instantly forgets tomorrow’s sins in order to give you his grace today.” Even when we have to struggle continually with the same failings, it is important to resist the coarsening of our souls and the indifference which would simply accept that this is the way we are. It is important to keep pressing forward, without scrupulosity, in the grateful awareness that God forgives us ever anew – yet also without the indifference that might lead us to abandon altogether the struggle for holiness and self-improvement. Moreover, by letting myself be forgiven, I learn to forgive others. In recognizing my own weakness, I grow more tolerant and understanding of the failings of my neighbour.

4. I urge you to retain an appreciation for popular piety, which is different in every culture yet always remains very similar, for the human heart is ultimately one and the same. Certainly, popular piety tends towards the irrational, and can at times be somewhat superficial. Yet it would be quite wrong to dismiss it. Through that piety, the faith has entered human hearts and become part of the common patrimony of sentiments and customs, shaping the life and emotions of the community. Popular piety is thus one of the Church’s great treasures. The faith has taken on flesh and blood. Certainly popular piety always needs to be purified and reformed, yet it is worthy of our love and it truly makes us into the “People of God”.

5. Above all, your time in the seminary is also a time of study. The Christian faith has an essentially rational and intellectual dimension. Were it to lack that dimension, it would not be itself. Paul speaks of a “standard of teaching” to which we were entrusted in Baptism (Rom 6:17). All of you know the words of Saint Peter which the medieval theologians saw as the justification for a rational and scientific theology: “Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an ‘accounting’ (logos) for the hope that is in you” (1 Pet 3:15).

Learning how to make such a defence is one of the primary responsibilities of your years in the seminary. I can only plead with you: Be committed to your studies! Take advantage of your years of study! You will not regret it. Certainly, the subjects which you are studying can often seem far removed from the practice of the Christian life and the pastoral ministry. Yet it is completely mistaken to start questioning their practical value by asking: Will this be helpful to me in the future? Will it be practically or pastorally useful? The point is not simply to learn evidently useful things, but to understand and appreciate the internal structure of the faith as a whole, so that it can become a response to people’s questions, which on the surface change from one generation to another yet ultimately remain the same. For this reason it is important to move beyond the changing questions of the moment in order to grasp the real questions, and so to understand how the answers are real answers. It is important to have a thorough knowledge of sacred Scripture as a whole, in its unity as the Old and the New Testaments: the shaping of texts, their literary characteristics, the process by which they came to form the canon of sacred books, their dynamic inner unity, a unity which may not be immediately apparent but which in fact gives the individual texts their full meaning. It is important to be familiar with the Fathers and the great Councils in which the Church appropriated, through faith-filled reflection, the essential statements of Scripture. I could easily go on.

What we call dogmatic theology is the understanding of the individual contents of the faith in their unity, indeed, in their ultimate simplicity: each single element is, in the end, only an unfolding of our faith in the one God who has revealed himself to us and continues to do so. I do not need to point out the importance of knowing the essential issues of moral theology and Catholic social teaching. The importance nowadays of ecumenical theology, and of a knowledge of the different Christian communities, is obvious; as is the need for a basic introduction to the great religions, to say nothing of philosophy: the understanding of that human process of questioning and searching to which faith seeks to respond. But you should also learn to understand and – dare I say it – to love canon law, appreciating how necessary it is and valuing its practical applications: a society without law would be a society without rights. Law is the condition of love. I will not go on with this list, but I simply say once more: love the study of theology and carry it out in the clear realization that theology is anchored in the living community of the Church, which, with her authority, is not the antithesis of theological science but its presupposition. Cut off from the believing Church, theology would cease to be itself and instead it would become a medley of different disciplines lacking inner unity.

6. Your years in the seminary should also be a time of growth towards human maturity. It is important for the priest, who is called to accompany others through the journey of life up to the threshold of death, to have the right balance of heart and mind, reason and feeling, body and soul, and to be humanly integrated. To the theological virtues the Christian tradition has always joined the cardinal virtues derived from human experience and philosophy, and, more generally, from the sound ethical tradition of humanity. Paul makes this point this very clearly to the Philippians: “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things” (4-8). This also involves the integration of sexuality into the whole personality.

Sexuality is a gift of the Creator yet it is also a task which relates to a person’s growth towards human maturity. When it is not integrated within the person, sexuality becomes banal and destructive. Today we can see many examples of this in our society. Recently we have seen with great dismay that some priests disfigured their ministry by sexually abusing children and young people. Instead of guiding people to greater human maturity and setting them an example, their abusive behaviour caused great damage for which we feel profound shame and regret. As a result of all this, many people, perhaps even some of you, might ask whether it is good to become a priest; whether the choice of celibacy makes any sense as a truly human way of life. Yet even the most reprehensible abuse cannot discredit the priestly mission, which remains great and pure. Thank God, all of us know exemplary priests, men shaped by their faith, who bear witness that one can attain to an authentic, pure and mature humanity in this state and specifically in the life of celibacy.

Admittedly, what has happened should make us all the more watchful and attentive, precisely in order to examine ourselves earnestly, before God, as we make our way towards priesthood, so as to understand whether this is his will for me. It is the responsibility of your confessor and your superiors to accompany you and help you along this path of discernment. It is an essential part of your journey to practise the fundamental human virtues, with your gaze fixed on the God who has revealed himself in Christ, and to let yourselves be purified by him ever anew.

7. The origins of a priestly vocation are nowadays more varied and disparate than in the past. Today the decision to become a priest often takes shape after one has already entered upon a secular profession. Often it grows within the Communities, particularly within the Movements, which favour a communal encounter with Christ and his Church, spiritual experiences and joy in the service of the faith. It also matures in very personal encounters with the nobility and the wretchedness of human existence. As a result, candidates for the priesthood often live on very different spiritual continents. It can be difficult to recognize the common elements of one’s future mandate and its spiritual path. For this very reason, the seminary is important as a community which advances above and beyond differences of spirituality. The Movements are a magnificent thing. You know how much I esteem them and love them as a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church. Yet they must be evaluated by their openness to what is truly Catholic, to the life of the whole Church of Christ, which for all her variety still remains one. The seminary is a time when you learn with one another and from one another. In community life, which can at times be difficult, you should learn generosity and tolerance, not only bearing with, but also enriching one another, so that each of you will be able to contribute his own gifts to the whole, even as all serve the same Church, the same Lord. This school of tolerance, indeed, of mutual acceptance and mutual understanding in the unity of Christ’s Body, is an important part of your years in the seminary.

Dear seminarians, with these few lines I have wanted to let you know how often I think of you, especially in these difficult times, and how close I am to you in prayer. Please pray for me, that I may exercise my ministry well, as long as the Lord may wish. I entrust your journey of preparation for priesthood to the maternal protection of Mary Most Holy, whose home was a school of goodness and of grace. May Almighty God bless you all, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

From the Vatican, 18 October 2010, the Feast of Saint Luke the Evangelist.

Yours devotedly in the Lord,

BENEDICTUS PP. XVI
**FAMILY**

(From 3)

Families, society.

family, and their role in the church and their attitudes about money, sex, children, weaknesses, desires, ambitions, goals, and their attitudes about money, sex, children, family, and their role in the church and society.

The Encouraged Encounter weekend begins on Friday evening and lasts until mid-afternoon on Sunday. Couples are asked to attend the entire weekend. During 2011, we have Engaged Encounter weekends scheduled for January 14-16, February 11-13, March 4-6, May 20-22, September 9-11 and October 7-9. There are also Spanish-speaking weekends scheduled for February and June.

For Better & For Ever—Sponsor Couple Program

Another marriage preparation program that is sponsored by our diocese is the Sponsor Couple program. Couples in individual parishes have been trained to lead engaged couples through marriage preparation using the resource, For Better & For Ever, which was developed by Fr. Rob Ruhnke, C.S.S.R. and is used to help guide couples in planning for a Christian marriage.

When using this program, each engaged couple works through For Better & For Ever with their sponsor couple. The same topics listed before and in the Engaged Encounter information are addressed and discussed as they work through the book. Couples are encouraged to read each chapter individually and address the questions for reflection alone; then they dialogue with each other.

**ADVENT**

(From 1)

The immediate significance of Advent is a time to prepare ourselves during the next four weeks for the celebration of the birthday of Jesus Christ. This birthday of the God-man is unique in all of human history and everyone is invited to take part in celebrating the birthday of Christ on Christmas day.

There are many beautiful customs and prayers that we can use during this season of Advent to prepare for the coming of Christ on His birthday. One of the very special ways is for our churches and individual families to set up the Advent wreath. The Advent wreath is blessed on the First Sunday of Advent. On the Advent wreath are four candles to remind us of the four weeks of preparation for the birthday of the Lord. The Advent wreath is an old German tradition, and this sacramental is rich in meaning. It costs very little to prepare this beautiful Advent symbol.

The Advent wreath is a circle of evergreens made in various sizes. It can be suspended from the ceiling or placed on the table. The circular dimension of the wreath reminds us of God's everlasting life to which we are called.

On the Advent are placed four candles, and as I already pointed out, each candle represents four weeks of preparation for the birthday of Christ. Three of these candles are purple, reminding us of the need for penance and to seek forgiveness during this season. The rose or pink candle is for the Third Sunday of Advent, and reminds us of the joy and hope that should be in our hearts as we prepare for the coming of Jesus who wants to fill us with peace and love.

The Advent wreath with the four candles reminds us to set aside time to prepare for the coming of Christ through prayer, reading the Scriptures about His promised coming and birth, to be more frequent in celebration of the Sacraments, especially Reconciliation and Eucharist, and to look at ways of how we can share our gifts with others so that we can all celebrate in a joyful manner the birthday of Christ. Celebrated in this spiritual manner, the wreath gives meaning and purpose to all the material celebrations of Advent and Christmas, and reminds us of the one who is the true reason for the season.

The circle of the Advent wreath is a symbol of eternal life and reminds us of the life of God that is without end and that we are called to share forever in the life with God our Father in Heaven because of all that Jesus did for us by being born, suffering, and dying on the cross and rising from the dead. May your Advent season be filled with new peace and joy.

**SEMINARIANS**

(From 12)

banal and destructive."

"Recently we have seen with great dismay that some priests disfigured their ministry by sexually abusing children and young people. Instead of guiding people to greater human maturity and setting them an example, their abusive behavior caused great damage for which we feel profound shame and regret," he said.

"As a result of all this, many people, perhaps even some of you, might ask whether it is good to become a priest; whether the choice of celibacy makes any sense as a truly human way of life. Yet even the most reprehensible abuse cannot discredit the priestly mission, which remains great and pure," he said.

He expressed gratitude for the many exemplary priests who demonstrate that ordained ministers can live a life of celibacy and give witness to an "authentic, pure and mature humanity." At the same time, he said that in the wake of sex abuse cases, the church must be "all the more watchful and attentive" in evaluating vocations.

Growth in human maturity was one of several elements the pope underlined in priestly formation. The others were:

- Developing a personal relationship with Christ. The priest is first and foremost a "man of God," the pope said, and added: "For us, God is not some abstract hypothesis; he is not some stranger who left the scene after the 'big bang.' God has revealed himself in Jesus Christ."

In that sense, he said, the priest "is not the leader of a sort of association whose membership he tried to maintain and expand. He is God's messenger to his people."

- Dedication to the Eucharist and to knowing and understanding the church's liturgy.
- The importance of the sacrament of penance in their lives, which can help priests resist the "coarsening of our souls" and develop a tolerance toward the failings of others.
- Appreciation for popular piety which, although it tends toward the irrational, cannot be dismissed and is indeed "one of the church's great treasures."

- The seminary as a place of study. The pope said today's priest must be familiar with Scripture, the writings of church fathers, the teachings of the councils, canon law and the various branches of theology.
- The seminary as community. Because priestly vocations today arise in very disparate situations -- after secular professions, in Catholic lay movements, following deep personal conversions -- candidates for the priesthood "often live on very different spiritual continents." It is important that the seminary draw such experiences together, advancing "above and beyond differences of spirituality," he said.

**Daly**

(From 15)

Brother and sister work it out in shared responsibility.

A few years ago, a priest friend of mine in another diocese moved his aged mother into the rectory. At the time, the priest was dying of cancer as well. Both mother and son were approaching their end.

He was told that he could not have her live in the rectory. So he put her in a nursing home. They were both dead within a year. It was a shame they could not have died under the same roof.

Care of our aging and disabled parents is one of the problems of modern clergy and religious. We have not resolved what to do about it. The average age of diocesan priests in the United States is about 60 years old. Many of us have elderly parents in their 80s and 90s.

We have to find a way that priests and nuns can continue to serve the church and still obey God by honoring their father and their mother.
Odessa

Bishop Michael Pfeifer, left in photo near right, blesses the new CCD hall, Oct. 17, at Holy Redeemer Church in Odessa as participants look on (far right).

PHOTOS BY Alan P. Torre (www.aptorre.com)

Odessa

Volunteers work in the kitchen for a brisket/sausage benefit luncheon with proceeds going to the Texas Coalition against the Death Penalty so they can continue to offer resources for the various chapters around the state to end the death penalty Texas.

The Odessa chapter TCADP sponsored the luncheon to do its part in furthering the cause. Odessa TCADP members feel it is part of the "right to life" ministry and is comprised of members from various faith traditions.

Odessa

Bishop Michael Pfeifer, at left, participates in the annual Junior High Youth Event, conducted this year on October 16 in Odessa (far left photo). Story, additional photo, page 6.