Holiday Needs
Catholic Charities agencies who need...

21% more toys
25% more volunteers
30% food donations
99% financial contributions

Source: Catholic Charities USA

Work, prayer to be done
It is the busy time of year at the Mt. Carmel Hermitage, a quiet peaceful place about 25 miles southwest of San Angelo, near Christoval. There are prayers to be said, work to be done, fudge to be made and a new bakery to be built. Stories/Pgs. 8-9

Youth 2000 Retreat coming
The Youth 2000 Retreat will be Jan. 26-28 at St. Stephen's in Midland. All youth and young adults, ages 13 to 30, are welcome. Enjoy a weekend of lively music, inspiring talks, Eucharistic adoration, group workshops, personal testimonies, and faith sharing. For details, contact drobson@st.wtxcoxmail.com or call (432) 520-7394 or (432) 978-6570.

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... unto us this day,
a child is born
**Online Angelus – a tool for WT Catholics**

The Diocese of San Angelo Department of Communications is proud to unveil its new online product: The Online Angelus. Located at [http://theonlineangelus.wordpress.com/](http://theonlineangelus.wordpress.com/), the website uses an online host commonly used by bloggers. Although comments are welcome, The Online Angelus is not a blog; posts are made by the editor for the general information of Catholic readers.

“The we have been working on this for a number of months now,” said Director of Communications Jimmy Patterson. “More specifically, we’ve given a lot of thought to the need for ongoing communications with the 80,000 plus Catholics in the diocese and we feel this is a great way to get that effort started.”

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**DIOCESAN BRIEFS**

**Sanderson Centennial**

St. James Catholic Church in Sanderson will be celebrating its centennial on December 9, 2006. The little adobe church, known as the Immaculate Conception Church, was blessed by Bishop Forest in 1906 and some 37 years later this little church became too small for a larger congregation. The present church building was then built. The theme of the celebration will be “100 Years of Existence, 100 Years of Blessings.”

Activities planned throughout the day include: an Open House and Exhibits at 10 am in the CCE Building, followed by a parade at 11 am. We are asking all former kings, queens, and princesses to prepare a float for this parade. The parade will end at the parish hall where a meal will be served at Noon. Mariachis will entertain during dinner.

The Most Reverend Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer and current pastor Father Flora Hinaracay will celebrate the Centennial Mass at 3 p.m., along with any former priests able to attend. The music for the Mass will be provided by the mariachi. For more information, please contact Parish Council Secretary Gina Garza at g_m_garza@yahoo.com.

**Retirement Fund**

On December 9-10, you will have the opportunity to participate in the 2006 Retirement Fund for Religious. Annual appeal in this Diocese of San Angelo. Please support this collection as generously as you have in the past. Know that many of the retired religious spend hours each day in front of the Blessed Sacrament offering prayers of gratitude for those who “Share in Their Care.”

On behalf of all in vocations, I thank you for your contributions to the 2005 Retirement Fund for Religious. Your generosity is astounding and deeply appreciated by our retired women and men religious and by all of us who are also working untiringly to care for those who have gone before us. The monetary range of our Diocesan giving was from $20,000 (1989) to $61,000 (2001) until this past December when your gift to the fray, elderly religious was $68,000. Please be aware that more than 37,000 Catholic religious are now with us. Of these, 11,000 are either skilled nursing care or assisted living which in 2005 alone cost almost $500,000,000. These types of care in the U.S. typically cost $169 per day but religious have kept the cost at $135 per day. Additionally, the average Social Security benefit for religious is approximately one-third that paid to the average U.S. beneficiary.

Thank you again, and God Bless.

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**Are you being called to a vowed religious life?**

Come and spend a weekend with Dominican Sisters and other women, ages 18-40, who are listening to God’s call. The weekend of January 26-28, 2007, will provide time for praying, conversing, questioning, exploring, and listening to God’s personal invitation. Jesus invites you to “Come and See.”

Registration information and other details may be obtained by e-mailing dominionwoc.net or by calling Marie Malachy Griffin, O.P. at 325-949-8033.

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**MUCHAS GRACIAS**

A special collection was taken up in the parishes of the Diocese of San Angelo on the first weekend of November. It was for the Diocese of San Pedro Sula, our partner diocese in Honduras. Thank you—to all who so generously contributed to this collection. The funds will soon be sent to our partners there. The collection is a sign of our solidarity with the Catholics of Central America. The funds are used for religious purposes in the parishes and diocese of San Pedro Sula. Several parishes, schools, and ministries of the Diocese of San Angelo have partners in Honduras as well. Mission trips and various forms of communication express this concern for one another. Everyone is invited to pray for our brothers and sisters in Honduras.

*— Msgr. Larry Droll, St. Ann’s, Midland*

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**Annual Christmas Dance**

Holy Family Catholic Church Singles Ministry, will host a Catholic Divorced Ministry for Region 10 December 9, 8 p.m.–12 midnight. Cost is $6.00, event is at the Holy Family Church Family Life Center, 6150 Pershing Ave., Fort Worth. Please bring a dish to share! Call Monica Molina at 817-737-6768 to RSVP.

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**Rowena Centennial**

St. Joseph’s Church in Rowena is planning a Centennial Celebration on September 1 & 2, 2007. As a part of this celebration they are collecting wedding photographs of all couples that were married in St. Joseph’s Church. These will be used for a book. If you would like to submit a photo of your wedding picture, please send an 8x10 copy. This photo will not be returned. Photos should be labeled with the couple’s name (including maiden name) and wedding date. They can be mailed to: St. Joseph’s Church Att: Centennial Comm. P.O. Box 96 Rowena, TX 76875. Please send the photos by Dec. 31st to assure that they will be included in the book.

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**Audit: Parishes work hard to maintain safety**

By Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer
Diocese of San Angelo

In 2002 the U.S. Catholic Bishops created a Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People in response to the reports of child sexual abuse by Catholic Clergy. At the same time they also created the Office for the Protection of Children and Young People (OCYP) to help them monitor compliance with the Charter by all dioceses in the United States. During the past three years the Diocese of San Angelo has been audited by the OCYP and has been shown to be in complete compliance with all requirements of the Bishop’s Charter each year.

For 2006 the OCYP decided there would be no audits for each diocese as preparations are being made for a major audit of all Catholic parishes in 2007.

In the absence of a required audit this year, I have commissioned a self-audit of parishes within the San Angelo Diocese, which encompasses 29 West Texas counties. During October and November, 14 parishes were selected at random and audited for compliance with the Bishop’s Charter. Parishes were audited to insure that employees and volunteers who work with children and youth have completed Criminal Background Checks and attended the diocesan Ethics and Integrity in Ministry Workshop. Parishes were also audited to insure that they have been conducting workshops for parents and children on the prevention of child sexual abuse, as well as having displays of information on hand for those who may...
God turned the world upside down

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

The inspired writer, Luke, gives us the essence and meaning of the mystery of Christmas that we are celebrating in his gospel (2:1-14), when he tells us "for today in the city of David, a Savior has been born for you who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant-baby-wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger."

Christmas is about the birth of a baby, the most unique baby that was ever born in the history of human kind. The baby of Christmas has changed the world and continues to invite us to change the world of our lives, of our families, of our community, of our state, of our nation, and the world. In the name of this beautiful baby of Christmas-Jesus Christ-our Lord and Savior-1 wish all of you, your families, and all those near and dear to you a blessed and joyful Christmas as we celebrate the birthday of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

To fully understand the wonderful mystery of Christmas, we must come before the crib and spend time before the infant, the baby, who is "lying in a manger." This infant in the manger is the greatest person who was ever born. This infant brings us salvation. This infant is the way to peace that our world so much needs today. This infant is the greatest teacher who ever lived. I tell young parents who are waiting for their first child that babies are the greatest teachers. Parents read books and go to classes to prepare for the birth of a child — as they should — but when that child arrives, that little one does not necessarily follow a book or a plan. That little one just lives and teaches the parents — and all of us— many mysteries about what human life is all about.

The eternal Word of God, by coming to us in the flesh as a baby, turned the world upside down. Of all the ways God might have entered our world, the divine choice was to come as a newborn human — as a baby. The baby of Christmas is full of promises. The baby of Christmas — the infant lying in a manger — is full of promise, of hope, and is our way to salvation.

On Christmas we come together to remember and relive all that Christ has done for us. Jesus, who began his life on earth as a baby, totally dependent on his parents, especially his dear mother, Mary, remains with us today, a

(Please See BISHOP/11)

From the Bishop’s Desk

Dios volteo el mundo al reves en venir como niño

por el Obispo Miguel Pfeifer

El escritor inspirado, San Lucas, nos da la esencia y el significado del misterio de Navidad que estamos celebrando en su evangelio (Lc 2:1-14), cuando el nos dice "Hoy les ha nacido, en la ciudad de David un salvador que es el Mesías, el Señor. Esto les servirá de señal: encontrarán al niño envuelto en pañales y recostado en un pesebre”. La Navidad es el nacimiento de un bebé, el bebé más único que ha nacido en la historia de la humanidad. El bebé de Navidad ha cambiado el mundo y continúa a invitarnos a cambiar el mundo de nuestras vidas, de nuestras familias, de nuestra comunidad, de nuestro estado, de nuestra nación, y del mundo. En el nombre de este bebé bello de Navidad, Jesucristo-nuestro Señor y Salvador—les deseo a todos ustedes, sus familias, y todas las personas queridas en sus vidas, una Navidad bendita y feliz mientras celebramos el

para escritorio del obispo

Pope visits Muslim world of Turkey

ISTANBUL, Turkey (CNS) -- Closing out a four-day pilgrimage of dialogue in Turkey, Pope Benedict XVI celebrated Mass with the tiny Christian community in Istanbul and encouraged it to live in harmony with the Muslim majority.

"Brothers and sisters, your communities walk the humble path of daily companionship with those who do not share our faith, yet profess to hold the faith of Abraham, and together with us adore the one, merciful God," the pope said in a sermon.

"You know well that the church wishes to impose nothing on anyone, and that she merely asks to live in freedom, in order to reveal the one whom she cannot hide, Christ Jesus," he said.

About 300 people packed into the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit for the Dec. 1 Mass. Several hundred more stood in the cathedral's inner plaza and in the courtyard of a nearby church, following the liturgy on a TV screen.

Turkey has only 32,000 Catholics in a population of 72 million. Most of them live in Istanbul, which has for centuries been a bridge to the West.

The pope, wearing red vestments to mark the work of the Holy Spirit, processed into the small church and listened as Armenian Catholics chanted the entrance song. A Chaldean choir of youths, dressed in blue tunics, sang a hymn in Aramaic.

"The seven languages used in the liturgy were meant to express the diversity of the Catholic community in Turkey.

The pope paid tribute to this rich variety, asking Turkish Catholics to continue to live the faith in a humble manner with a sense of service to others.

"To live by the Spirit is not to live for oneself alone, but to let oneself be conformed to Christ Jesus by becoming, like him, the servant of his brothers and sisters," he said.

As a minority in a Muslim country, he said, Catholics should be attentive to all those who seek justice, peace and dignity.
Advent: A time to prepare for the way of the Lord

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

"Prepare the way of the Lord" [Luke 3:4]. These words from John the Baptist echo throughout the season of Advent with which we begin a new liturgical year. John's words serve as a wake-up call, as they remind us to step up our efforts at making our lives and the world ready for Christmas so that Jesus can once again be born in each one of us, and so that we will be prepared to greet him when he comes in glory. As Advent prepares us for the celebration of the beautiful birthday of Christ on Christmas, and also reminds us to prepare for Christ's second coming at the end of time, it is thus a time of joyful and spiritual expectation.

The first observance of Advent can be traced to around the 5th century. The prophets of Advent spoke of the Messiah who is to come, and a people desperate for the justice that the Messiah will establish—a justice we must continue to establish in the name of Jesus.

Advent's larger-than-life character is John the Baptist, who took center stage in the unfolding drama of salvation history to prepare for the long-awaited Messiah. John's message was simple but direct, and went to the heart—"Prepare the way of the Lord and repent." His powerful message challenges us today to focus on the real meaning of the season, and to prepare in an individual, family, and community way for the One who is the Son of justice, who is truly the Light of the World, and who enlightens our path to happiness in this life and to eternal happiness.

"Prepare the way of the Lord." We know that in the four weeks of Advent, we have much to do to prepare for in our hearts and in our homes for the celebration of the birthday of Christ. Jesus came to focus our attention on how to build up the Kingdom of God by our service, prayer, self-sacrifice, and striving for peace and justice. Advent brings out the best in us and helps us to look at the world with fresh eyes and search out ways to help those we see who are in need.

In Advent we prepare for the beautiful feast of Christmas and we prepare for the second coming of Jesus Christ, who "came not to be served, but to serve." [Mt.20:28] Advent is a time for us individually and in our families to open our hearts to the light and love of the Holy Spirit so that we can truly be the kind of servants that Christ wants us to be for one another. Mary, the Mother of Jesus and our Mother, who proclaimed herself simply as the servant, the handmaid of the Lord, is a wonderful Advent model and teacher of service, and how to live with the Spirit.

May we all open our minds and hearts to let Mary and the great prophet of Advent, John the Baptist, show us how today in our contemporary world we can best prepare in a spirit of service, love, and generosity for the birthday of our Messiah, Lord and Savior—Jesus Christ.

Collection for Church in Latin America set for January 27, ’07 weekend

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Each year there is a national Collection for the Church in Latin America, and this year’s collection will be held in parishes of our Diocese and across the country on the weekend of January 27-28, 2007. Proceeds from the collection are distributed to dioceses, parishes, religious congregations, seminaries, and other Catholic institutions throughout Latin America and the Caribbean to assist in the formation of priests, religious, lay ministers, missionaries, pastoral workers, catechists, and youth ministers. Thus, fellow Catholics in Latin America and the Caribbean—who are rich in faith but lacking in material resources—are not only able to participate more fully in the life of the Church, but are enabled to share it with others as well.

When we contribute to this national Collection, we are actively living out our call to stewardship and participating in a work of solidarity with our brothers and sisters throughout the American hemisphere.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on the Church in Latin America uses the collection funds to support its pastoral grants program in 22 countries and to support the work of the Department of Social Development and World Peace on behalf of the Church in Latin America. Further information on the Committee’s work can be found at www.usccb.org/latinamerica.

I ask you to generously contribute to this Collection, and I am grateful for your past generosity. Together, let us ask the Lord to continue to bless the works of the Church in Latin America.

Sincerely yours in Christ,
Bishop Michael Pfeifer, Diocese of San Angelo

Welcoming Christ in the migrant

(Editor’s Note: National Migration Week is January 7-13, 2007)

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

I invite all the people of our Diocese to join through prayer and study in the remembrance of the 26th annual observance of National Migration Week which is celebrated from January 7-13, 2007. The theme for 2007 is Welcoming Christ in the Migrant, which is at once an invitation and a challenge to provide welcome for the migrants, immigrants, refugees, human trafficking victims, and other people on the move who come to our land seeking justice and peace. Our theme reminds us of Jesus’ scriptural admonition to us:

‘Lord, when did we see you a stranger…and not minister to your needs?’ [He [the Lord] will answer them, ‘Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.’]

This reminder is particularly timely as our citizens and leaders grapple with the complexities and many dimensions of the migration experience. Our nation’s legitimate security concerns have been distorted by some who would foment anxiety, fear, and a distrust of migrants. The present immigration reform debate has lost much of its reason and is often being fueled by raw emotions. Scriptures and Catholic Social Teaching call upon all of us to examine the issues and respond to the strangers among us as we would to Jesus Himself. The Holy Family found safety and new lives in Egypt during their time of great need.

Many migrants today follow similar paths as they embark on their journey of hope. We live in an age when strangers in our midst have become a source of suspicion and fear. Jesus’ command for us to welcome these strangers as we would welcome him is at odds with much of the prevailing sentiment expressed today. Debates over whether and how to address the migration phenomenon fills not only the halls of government but even community and parish halls. The historically generous American spirit has been replaced in some quarters with calls for isolation and restriction.

During this week dedicated to migrants, I invite all of our parish communities to welcome Christ in the migrant through prayer, education, and parish outreach. To assist you in this expression of faith, a wide variety of resources for parishes and schools has been developed and are available on the USCCB/MRS National Migration Week web site at www.usccb.org/mrs.nmw.shtml.

When we reach out to aid and comfort the newcomers to our land, we are indeed offering ourselves and our gifts in service to the Lord. This is not only our Christian duty but a privilege, knowing that we too have been adopted into God’s family. Therefore may you be richly blessed by your faithful acts of hospitality in Christ’s name.
Youths gather, learn more about their faith

Young people from throughout the diocese gathered on Oct. 21 to learn about Catholic faith traditions and living out our commitment in significant ways. Scott Lawson, youth ministry presenter from Arlington spoke on what is meant by faith and how one lives it out. His sense of humor and activities kept everyone’s attention throughout the day.

The day opened with music and activities led by Margie Schillo and the Sacred Heart Cathedral youth choir. Lydia Martinez, a student at Angelo State University was the emcee for the day. She kept everyone on schedule and involved.

Rev. Rodney White, diocesan vocation director, had a booth at the event and he addressed the group on being open to the call to the priesthood and religious life. A video presentation on Souper Bowl of Caring was also shown in the afternoon. This is a project for parishes to collect money for the hungry on Super Bowl Sunday and donate the proceeds to a charity of their choice.

Bishop Pfeifer welcomed the participants, recited the traditional roll call of all the parishes in attendance and later in the afternoon presided at the Eucharistic Liturgy.

The day ended with a dance.

Acogiendo a Cristo en el migrante

por el Obispo Miguel Pfeifer

Invito a todos los feligreses de nuestra Diócesis que se unan mediante la oración y el estudio para recordar la 26 observancia anual de la Semana Nacional de la Migración que se celebra durante los días 7-13, 2007 de enero. El tema para 2007 es Acogiendo a Cristo en el Migrante, que es, desde luego, una invitación y reto a las iglesias y a la ciudadanía para acoger y velar por los migrantes de distintas razas, culturas y países.

En el Movimiento de la Migración, Cielo y Tierra, según el Obispo Antonio Maestri, se enfatiza que los migrantes son, ante todo, personas, hijos de Dios. Es por ello que nuestros deberes, como hijos de Dios, consisten en acoger, promover sus derechos y velar por su dignidad.

El Obispo Pfeifer invita a todos los feligreses a que acuerden un día de oración para recordar a los migrantes. Va a continuar con esta tradición el próximo año.

(Mira MIGRANTE/14)
**TRAVEL:** St. Mark’s known for its altar, which is covered with more than 3,000 precious stones

(From 11)

States. Long ago the Venetians adopted the apostle Mark as their patron saint, represented by a winged lion. This creature came to symbolize Venetian power and stood as a reminder of the ever-watchful eye and presence of Venice over its conquered territories.

The Basilica of St. Mark the Evangelist is the cathedral church of the city and seat of the Patriarch of Venice and has been since 1807, when it took the place of the former cathedral of San Pietro di Castello, and it is a living testimony of Christian faith. In particular the medieval mosaics, depicting stories and episodes from the Old and New Testaments are not only biblical meditation, but also - like the icons of the Eastern Church - a sign of God's presence in the world. The present Basilica is the third church to be built on the site, following the one commissioned by doge Giustiniano Partecipazio to celebrate the arrival of the body of St. Mark in Venice in 828. Doge Pietro Orseolo I ordered the 10th century reconstruction after a fire in 976. In the second half of the 11th century, doge Domenico Contarini had the church entirely rebuilt on a much larger scale, though using much of the ancient foundations and masonry. The church was consecrated in 1904.

Known the world over for its mosaics, St. Mark's Basilica is also well known for the Pala d'Oro, one of the richest and most precious altar screens in the world. It is covered with more than 3000 precious stones and enamel icons inlaid in gold. You may then choose to see many of the other treasures pillaged from Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade. As you sit with a coffee, on the piazza, please keep in mind the piazza floods almost every winter with as much as three feet of water. This takes a terrible toll on the Basilica and other buildings, and the Venetians are constantly seeking ways of holding the sea back.

**ROSARY:** Praying the Rosary gives the faithful amazing responsibility for others

(From 5)

too -- the four of us coming from different directions, but finding the means to arrive at her side for her last few hours. In those last few moments, Mom painlessly and peacefully slipped away from this life and into an everlasting life. Was her gentle, beautiful death a testament to the power of the rosary? The Irish Rosary Family members believe that with all our hearts.

If that weren’t convincing enough, the rosary’s power was evident again just a few months ago as my mother-in-law’s 85 years on earth came to an end. She, too, was a devout Catholic who prayed the daily rosary. Her health failed so suddenly that those of us who live 1,000 miles away were challenged to reach her before she lost consciousness. My husband and I got tickets on the last connecting flight out of Midland, rented the last available car in Omaha, which was hosting the College World Series and had rented every car and room in town, and got to her bedside near midnight. Her eyes were closed, her breathing shallow, but her solid grip on the Holy Land olivewood rosary we had mailed her several weeks earlier was unmistakable. Surrounding her bedside were her other children and their spouses. We joined them and prayed aloud one last rosary for her as she quietly slipped into heaven shortly after our arrival.

Were these women always convinced their powerful daily prayer would assist them at the hour of death, just the way they had requested 53 times a day for decades? Of course they were, and their example leaves no doubt for those of us who try and repeatedly fail at our commitment to a daily rosary. I intend to keep trying, and in an effort to help me focus I’ve designated each bead’s prayer for someone special in my life.

In addition to the 53 Hail Mary’s, there are Our Father’s, Glory Be’s, O My Jesus’ and other prayers I say for a total of 70 friends, family members, priests and nuns I pray for on each rosary. My husband is always the first Our Father bead, my nephew Andy is the third bead on the fourth decade, and so on as I pray my 70 prayers each day. That’s a lot of power in my hands and an amazing responsibility that I gladly accept. If only we could all keep trying to spend 20 minutes a day saying the daily rosary and affecting the lives of our 70 most-loved people. No doubt our grade school nuns would be proud of our efforts and our mothers in heaven would smile.
Bodies in plastic on display throughout the country

By Rev. Thad Pacholczyk

In an exhibit called "Body Worlds" is currently touring the United States and generating some animated discussion in its wake. It puts the human body on public display in various poses after the body has been filled with a kind of plastic preservative. The bodies are posed, for example, as a rider on a horse, where the body of the horse is also plasticized. By removing skin and various layers of musculature to expose internal organs, it is possible to literally look inside the body and see its inner structure. In one exhibit, an expectant mother has been cross-sectioned to reveal her unborn child, while in another, a man has been peeled down to his musculature, and he carries his skin on his arm like an old raincoat. The exhibit is billed as an educational exhibit, teaching people about the internal structure and organization of their own bodies. As the director of the exhibit phrased it, "My aim is to illuminate and educate through the beautiful arrangement" of bodies. Yet some people find the exhibit "edgy", causing more than a tinge of discomfort, and they wonder whether there aren't ethical concerns associated with putting the human body on display in this way.

One potential problem associated with such a display involves consent. In general, consent is very important, and should be sought for organ or bodily donation. Informed consent seems to be a recurrent theme in regards to this exhibition, since some of the bodies which have been on display in the past may not have had convincing documentation of informed consent. Several of the bodies may have originated from natural disasters in which the victims could not be identified.

Hence, one can inquire whether all of the subjects really approved of their new "show business careers", or as one commentator, half tongue-in-cheek, mused about the matter: "Dear World: Please don't let them pump plastic into me and exhibit me naked, without half my skin, playing tennis. I hate tennis." Other issues regarding consent are worthy of consideration as well. Obtaining valid informed consent may not really be possible when children or infants in utero are put on display, even though it is true that medical schools and museums have a rather long history of preserving human fetuses and embryos in formaldehyde for teaching and educational purposes.

Obtaining consent from adults, on the other hand, is not necessarily a difficult proposition. The organizer of the Body Worlds exhibit claims that more than 6000 people have already signed the dotted line for their own future "plastination." Many individuals are happy to donate their bodies to science. I recall doing dissections as an undergraduate student in an anatomy and physiology class, using a cadaver from an elderly lady who had donated her body to science. Such donations are not morally problematic, and in fact are similar to organ donation. Such organ donation is not only permissible, but can be seen as a very generous act. As Pope John Paul II once put it: "A particularly praiseworthy example... is the donation of organs, performed in an ethically acceptable manner, with a view to offering a chance of health and even of life itself to the sick who sometimes have no other hope."

But what about the display of bodies where consent cannot be obtained? When dealing with situations like museums displaying ancient Egyptian mummies, or tourists observing the remains of believers in the catacombs under Rome, or archaeologist examining skeletal remains exhumed from digs, such consent can probably be presumed, assuming that certain conditions are met:

1. Their remains are not being used in a disrespectful manner;
2. There is an educational, spiritual or inspirational end being realized by the use of the remains;
3. There was no indication left by the individuals or their relatives explicitly stating that they did not want the remains to be used in this public service;
4. The death of the individual was not fandom. (See Please BIOETHICS/14)

OBISPO

(Para 3)

jóvenes que esperan su primer hijo que los bebes son los mejores maestros. Padres de familia lean libros y van a clases para prepararse para el nacimiento de su bebé—como deben—pero cuando llegue ese bebé, el pequeño no necesariamente sigue un libro o un plan. Ese pequeño solamente vive y les enseña a los padres—y todos de nosotros—los muchos misterios de la vida humana.

La Palabra eterna de Dios, al venir a nosotros en carne como bebé, volvió el mundo al revés. De todas las maneras que Dios pudiera venir a nuestro mundo, la selección divina fue venir como recién nacido—como un bebé. El bebé de Navidad está lleno de maravillas. El bebé de Navidad—el niño acostado en el pesebre. Muchos tienen la tendencia de a veces acostarlo en la cama el 26 de Diciembre, o poco después, y olvidarse de la vida, el misterio, y las enseñanzas y obras de este bebé durante el resto de su vida en la Tierra.

Hay mucho más que el nacimiento de un bebé en la historia de la vida de Cristo. Hay más en la historia de Cristo que el final de su drama terrenal que comemos en la Pascua—la gran resurrección. Este bebé crecerá y será el hombre quien es Nuestro Señor y Salvador, Jesucristo, y el desafiado es vivir en amor y fidelidad su Evangelio. A todos nosotros nos gusta la "N" y la "P" parte de la vida de Cristo. Es decir, que nos gusta la Navidad, y nos gusta la Pascua, pero entre la Navidad y la Pascua hay un Jesús crecido que vivió un amor radical que volvió las vidas de las personas al revés y de arriba abajo.

El desafío para nosotros hoy en día es no solamente vivir la "N" y la "P"—la alegría de la Navidad y la Pascua—la resurrección de Cristo—pero también vivir todas las letras del alfabeto de Cristo. Quizás a veces, las otras letras de su vida no sean tan atractivas. Por ejemplo, quizás no nos guste o no relacionemos muy bien con la letra "F" de su vida—la estación de cada día con confianza y confidencia, incluso cuando no podemos ver o completamente entendemos. Y frecuentemente nos repite la letra "S" de su vida—la alfabetización—la formación—y su invitación a entregar nuestras vidas totalmente a él. Y, la "M" de su vida también no es muy atractiva—la madera de la cruz y la "L"—la vida de los pies. Y quizás a veces batallamos ser fieles a la "O" de su vida—ser fieles a la oración y la "P"—penitencia y pacificador. Todos decimos que queremos ser pacificadores, pero ¿estamos listos ser pacificadores según a la manera que Él nos invitó a vivir la paz, trabajando por la justicia? ¿Qué diría Él de nuestros esfuerzos ahora para la paz?

¿Qué diría sobre como debemos traer la paz a los conflictos de nuestro mundo—conociendo donde vivimos?

Hay otra "S" de la vida del Dios-hombre, Jesús, que constantemente suena en nuestros oídos—quizás en momentos, nos asombrada y nos asusta. ¿Qué es esa "S"?—Sigue me. Esta fue la invitación constante de Cristo cuando el camino por esta Tierra. "Sigue me"—es lo que el Jesús crecido les dijo a otras personas que él encontró en su camino, y luego les enseñó a vivir una vida radical auténtica y de integridad. Desde el principio al final, el Jesús crecido modeló lo esencial de hablar y caminar.

"Sigue me."—El hombre Jesús invitó a gente a seguirlo, y luego les enseñó como satisfacer las necesidades más profundas de seres humanos, sanando sus heridas y transformando la oscuridad a la luz. Cuando nuestro mundo, nuestro país, nuestras familias, y nuestras vidas, necesitan esa luz hoy en día. El Jesús crecido enfrentó los casos más difíciles, y valientemente tocó a los marginados, los heridos con su poder curativo.

"Sigue me" es lo Jesús les dijo a sus amigos, mientras les enseñó otra letra importante "P"—perdonar en lugar de vengarse. Cuando sus seguidores querían limpiar el perdonar a solamente unas veces, el le dijo debemos de perdonar setenta veces siete. El les enseñó a sus seguidores—y nos continua demostrando—como dar en lugar de acumular. Y el nos daña y a nosotros a vivir y tomar pasos valientes para pro mover la paz que verdaderamente durará. En un mundo donde se dice—"Cuidar a Numero 1", el modelo servicio, misericordia, compasión, dar de sí mismo y sacrificarse, hasta el fin de su vida. El nos dice que somos más como el cuando imitamos su espíritu de servicio, cuando vivimos la "M" de su vida, uniendo nuestras vidas a la de Él en la madera de la cruz, y la "L", en lavar los pies de otros. --"Sigue me"—el Jesús crecido dijo, y nos

(Mira OBISPO/14)
By Jimmy Patterson

November, December also the time of year hermits sell their Christmas fudge and bread to raise the major portion of their operating expenses for the next year.

The men forsake material possessions in favor of prayer, meditation, Bible reading and physical labor. With no place to call home, they do not own a TV, clock, watch or phone. Later in the day, a tractor overseeing construction of the hermitage's new bakery while Fr. Fabian talks to laborers.

Hermits at the Mount Carmel Hermitage are out of bed every morning by 3 or 3:30 a.m. They’re in the choir room, where they chant and pray for the first hour of the day, from 4-5 a.m. This is a discipline: even when they’re not praying, that’s what you’ll be making in the hermitage bakery all day (the fudge, by the way, is irresistible). The work is not for the weak of heart. Want to try it? Give it a shot one of these upcoming weekends.

If someone donates, say, a turkey to the hermitage, Fr. Fabian especially gives thanks, as does every other hermit, because the donations play a huge role in enabling them to continue to pray and serve God. And thanks to God for all they have. And by the measure of most men, all that they have would amount to little or nothing.

The serenity of the hermitage’s new bakery while Fr. Fabian talks to laborers.

Online Editor

By Jimmy Patterson

The serenity of the hermitage’s new bakery while Fr. Fabian talks to laborers.

The busy time

November and December are full months for the hermits. Their annual operating budget is derived from their annual fundraising efforts. Thanksgiving, Christmas are feast days for holy monks at Mt. Carmel Hermitage.
Deconstructing voter choices: Catholics differ little from others

By Patricia Zapor
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Much ado has been made of the supposed shift of “religious” voters to Democrats in the midterm election.

Exit polls showed that more Catholics and more frequent churchgoers in general voted for Democrats in the 2006 election than voted for Democrats in the 2004 election. News stories and press releases in the first few days after the election touted “Catholic voters abandon Republicans” and “God gap narrows.”

But when compared to how voters as a whole cast their ballots this year, the much-vaunted statistics that supposedly show dramatic shifts by Catholics and regular worshippers of any faith lose their distinctiveness.

Catholics and regular churchgoers pretty much voted like the overall majority of the country in supporting more Democratic candidates, said John Green, senior fellow in religion and American politics at the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life.

Enough voters shifted their support to Democrats this year to swing majority power to the party in both the House and the Senate for the first time in 12 years.

When talking with the contractors, Fr. Fabian jokes with them. It is not what they expect, he said. “We have to talk to them and joke with them. It is not what they expect, and it makes them look at us differently.”

The beards are all the contractors will see when dealing with Fr. Fabian and his brothers. Glum, long faces are not in their nature either when alone or when mixing with others. They are holy men, but they are friendly, helpful and filled with a spirituality that most people long for. At one point during a verbal exchange, Brother John David, who formerly lived and worked in Midland-Odessa, jumped on the side of a tractor and issued a few orders. The working men loved it.

The Marine-Hermit link

Brother Elias is busy stirring the fudge in the hermitage’s original bakery, a tiny room that was outgrown years ago. Elias has been at Mount Carmel for just over a year. He left the Marines and immediately joined the monastic life, first as a Marist where he said there was too much contact with the outside world, and finally with the Carmelites in Christoval. He seems inspired. They all say they are in it for all the days their lives are consecrated to Jesus Christ and they will serve him until the end of their days.

For 365 days a year, these men wake and pray for three hours before most of us are even out of bed. They retire at 8 in the evening and get up and do the same thing the next day. And the next. And the next.

The five men who live at the hermitage — Father Fabian, and brothers John David, Martin, Elias and Paul — are remarkable men with a commitment to God that is truly inspiring. They all say they are in it for all the days their lives are consecrated to Jesus Christ and they will serve him until the end of their days.

For 365 days a year, these men wake and pray for three hours before most of us are even out of bed. They retire at 8 in the evening and get up and do the same thing the next day. And the next. And the next.

They seem uninterested in worldly goings on. Father Fabian passes along important news events such as the recent midterm elections and, of course, the events of Sept. 11. Other items he withholds, such as when there is a Catholic priest involved in a sex scandal.

“There’s no need to disrupt the peace of the brothers,” Father Fabian said.

EDITOR: Hermits at Mt. Carmel seem to already have foot in heaven’s door

In a way, what a beautiful life, to be sequestered from the troubles of the world, isolated from all that is bad. Some say it is a naïve way of existence; others say it would not be possible to live in such a manner.

But it is possible. Life without the complications, a life spent giving total, uninterrupted devotion to God is more the way God hoped it would turn out anyway.

I tip my hat to these five men and how they are able to set aside everything in life that is unimportant in exchange for a lifelong introductory meeting or preparatory session with their Maker.

Their life’s work has given them a foot in heaven’s door, and that’s one foot more than I have.

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to these holy men paving their pathway home. Offering a “God Bless” is not necessary from a simple soul of the world such as I. After a visit to Mount Carmel, it is quite obvious God is hard at work, bestowing his blessings on them already.
baby no longer. As he was totally dependent on his parents when he was born, he is still dependent on us to care for the world in which he dwelt and for which he gave his life.

We all love babies. Babies bring out the best in us—love, care, and compassion. The birth of a baby is a reason for joy, celebration and festivity. That is why we love the season of Christmas with its pageants and plays, its decorations, its songs and music and carols, cookies and good food—the glitter and the gifts all to honor the greatest baby ever born—Jesus.

But our commitment and attention on the baby must not end with the baby of Christmas, with the Christ Child, the infant lying in the manger. Many have a tendency to sometimes put him to bed on December 25, or shortly thereafter, and forget about the life, the mystery, the teachings and works of this baby during the rest of his life on earth. There is so much more to the story in the history of the life of Christ than the birth of a baby. There is more to the story than the end of his earthly drama that we commemorate at Easter—his great resurrection. This baby would grow into the man who is our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and the challenge is to live in love and fidelity his Gospel. We all live like the "C" and "E" part of the life of Christ. That is, we like Christmas, and we like Easter; however, between Christmas and Easter, there is a grown up Jesus who lived a radical love that turned people's lives upside down and inside out.

The challenge for us today is to not only live the "C" and the "E"—the joy of Christmas and Easter—the resurrection of Christ—but also live with all the letters of the alphabet of Christ. Perhaps at times, the other letters of his life are not as appealing. For example, perhaps we do not like or relate too well to the letter "F" of his life—faith-living each day with trust and confidence, even when we can't see or fully understand. And, often we are repelled by the "S" of his alphabetical life—his suffering and his invitation to surrender our lives totally to him. And, the "W" of his life is also not very attractive at times—the wood of the cross and the washing of the feet. And, perhaps at times we struggle to be faithful to the "P" of his life—being faithful to prayer and penance, and to be peacemakers. We all say we want to be peacemakers, but are we ready to be peacemakers according to the way he invites us to live peace by working for justice? What would he say about our peace efforts today? What would he say about how we are to bring peace to the troubled spots of our world?

There is another "F" of the life of the God-man, Jesus, that constantly rings in our ears—perhaps at times, haunts us and challenges us. What is that "F"? —"Follow me" and "Forgive." That was a constant invitation of Christ when he walked this earth. "Follow me" is what the grown Jesus said to other people he met along the way, and then he showed them what it meant to live a life of radical authenticity and integrity. From the beginning to the end, the grown up Jesus modeled the ultimate match-up of the talk and the walk.

"Follow me." the man Jesus invited folks to follow him, and then he showed them how to meet the deepest needs of human beings, by healing their hurts and transforming darkness into light. How our world, our country, our families, and our lives, needs that light today. The grown up Jesus walked right into the middle of the hardest and most difficult cases, and boldly touched the outcast, the broken and the lame with his healing power.

"Follow me" is what Jesus told his friends, as he taught them about another very important "F"—about how to forgive instead of how to get even. When his followers wanted to limit his forgiveness to a few times, he said we must forgive seventy times seven. He showed his followers—and he continues to show us—how to give instead of hoard. And he challenged them and us to live and take courageous steps to promote peace that will truly last. In a world that said—"Take care of No. 1," he modeled service and mercy, compassion, self-giving and self-sacrifice, all the way to the end of his life. He tells us that we are most like him when we imitate his spirit of service, when we live out the "W" of his life, by uniting our lives to his on the wood of the cross, and by washing the feet of others.

"Follow me"—the grown up Jesus said, and continues to say to us, and for those who followed him, he taught them about a new way of living and loving—"Love one another as I have loved you." And how did Jesus love us? He loved us to the point of giving his life on the wood of the cross. This example of the revolutionary love of Jesus Christ is the way that people could be set free from whatever chains of fear and darkness had entrapped their hearts and minds.

Let us go and find that baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger, and let us look at the "L" of his life. His great commandment was "Love one another as I have loved you." He would tell us that the true and surest sign that we are his followers is: "by the way you love each other." He gave this message to his friends, and we are his friends. We are truly identified as his followers when we reach out in love and service and care and compassion for one another and when we stoop down, as he did, and wash the feet of our sisters and brothers. The child in the manger would become the radical, grown up Jesus who tells us that others will recognize us by the way we love one another and work for peace.

"The word became flesh and made his dwelling among us," [John 1:14] On Christmas the world received the greatest gift that God the Father could ever give. How can we ever thank the Lord? We can thank the Lord by humbling ourselves before the baby in the manger, and by recommitting ourselves to follow Jesus every day of our lives and by submitting ourselves totally to God as Mary did. Then we can say that we are truly celebrating not just the birth of Christ, but his entire life. The baby Jesus of Christmas is one thing. But that grown up Jesus who turned our world upside down is really something else.

Journey of a pilgrim: St. Ann’s parishioner takes pilgrimage to Italy

By Alexandra Morris

After an early breakfast one might walk to the other sites in Ravenna, previously missed, or to re-visit favorites. Then you may begin the journey to Padua, where you will spend the next two nights. Depending on the time of arrival, you may first stop at the Botanical Gardens, (UNESCO 1997 World Heritage Site), created in 1545 and said to be the oldest continuously growing garden in Europe.

Padua is a pilgrimage city. Millions of pilgrims come here every year to visit the "Basilica di Sant’Antonio", where the grave of "Sant’Antonio" is located. In the United States he is known as "Saint Anthony", protector of children, and saint of "lost items". The other reason to visit this city is Giotto.

Menabuoi in 1375-78, covering biblical highlights from the Creation of the World to the Resurrection of Jesus. Above the four pillars supporting the main cupola are large frescoes depicting the Four Evangelists, seated and writing the Gospels, along with smaller medallions containing their traditional symbols.

Among the smaller altars in the apse are 43 frescoes depicting various scenes from the Book of Revelation. The highlight of your visit maybe the Scrovegni Chapel/Arena Chapel with its 14th century fresco cycle by Giotto and his assistants. (They were restored in 2002). Some art historians consider these the greatest of his work: even greater than those in the St. Francis Basilica. These frescoes date from 1305, as that was the year the chapel was finished.

Giotto was 40 years old at the time. There are three cycles of the frescoes: scenes from the life of St. Joachim, scenes from the life of the Virgin, and scenes from the life of Jesus. A significant innovation in this "Arena Chapel" is the dado painted to look like marble. Between the faux marble panels are small, circular monochrome frescos with the Seven Virtues and the Seven Vices. "The feigned monochrome relief gives rise to a different kind of fresco decoration that was to flourish in the 15th and 16th centuries". All of these scenes make wonderful subjects for contemplation and great scenes to re-visit.

Then you may continue on your journey to Venice. Depending on when you leave Padua, you may go directly to the Isola di Murano. Venetian glassware has been world famous since the 13th century. Most of the glass is made at the Murano glass factory, which you can visit on the Isola di Murano. Watch the ancient tradition of glass blowing, and see the artisans using practically the same methods and tools their ancestors used hundreds of years ago.

The Museum Vetroia displays the finest examples of Murano glasswork. Murano glass is found all over Venice and makes a perfect piece of memorabilia. After lunch you will take the "water bus" over to Venice for the afternoon.

The Grand Canal with its bobbing gondolas winds itself around the city making a triumphant appearance at the unforgettable sight of Piazza San Marco, which boasts its campanile, the Gothic Doges' Palace, Byzantine St. Marks Basilica, and the ever elegant, pigeon-filled piazza. It's described as one of the most picturesque places to sit in all of Europe. Piazza San Marco is the result of a multitude of creative, artistic and engineering feats. In this spot is an equal amount of history.

A great winged lion on a clock tower guards St. Mark's Square with a stern and fierce countenance. Winged lions make more than cameo appearances all over the city of Venice in various reliefs, sculptures and paintings. The lion is to Venice what the bald eagle is to the United States he is known as “Saint Anthony”, protector of Padua. This Basilica, also known as the Santo’s extensive series of frescoes painted by Giusto de’ Menabuoi in 1375-78, covering biblical highlights from the Creation of the World to the Resurrection of Jesus. Above the four pillars supporting the main cupola are large frescoes depicting the Four Evangelists, seated and writing the Gospels, along with smaller medallions containing their traditional symbols.

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What we can all learn from the Amish people

By Antoinette Bosco
Catholic News Service

It will be hard to forget the horror that happened the first week of October to the peaceful, God-loving Amish community of Nickel Mines, Pa. That a disturbed man could invade the school where Amish children respectfully and peacefully were learning their lessons, intending to sexually molest and kill young girls, will forever sear our memories.

But beyond the headlines about this horrific crime was another one, as expressed in my daily paper: "Amish Urge Forgiveness for Shooter." Reporters kept asking about "revenge and hatred," but the Amish parents, relatives and friends spoke of forgiveness.

For so many onlookers, this willingness to seek forgiveness rather than vengeance was so out of the norm that they sought an explanation. One researcher, Gertrude Huntington, identified also as an "expert on children in Amish society," explained: "They know their children are going to heaven. They know their children are innocent and they know they will join them in death." Then she said something everyone should latch on to: "The hurt is very great, but they don't balance the hurt with hate."

Yet, when you are seared by such horrible loss and pain, how can you fight the hate that overtakes you? I know that place. I was thrown into that hell when I lost a son and a daughter-in-law at the hands of a murderer. Then, in the space of a phone call, I had to struggle with whether forgiveness was possible, whether it ever made sense and even whether it was the right thing.

I would break out in a sweat thinking of the violence, the sin that happened that night when an 18-year old slid through a basement window into their home, stealthily went up the stairs to the bedroom where they were sleeping and shot them to death with his 9 mm semiautomatic gun. The word "forgiveness" never crossed my mind, and if it had at that moment I would have written it off as nonsensical.

But I soon realized there was only one path that could help me survive -- to put my life solidly in the hands of my God. My children helped me, as we struggled together to find our souls, so damaged by this horror.

We always had been opposed to the death penalty, and healing first began when we wrote to the judge, asking that the young man not be executed. Then it was another mother, who had moved beyond hatred and revenge after the murder of her daughter, who unknowingly helped me.

She began writing to the murderer, saying honestly, "This does not mean that I think you are innocent or that you are blameless for what happened." It was what she then said that made an imprint in my heart: "What I learned is this: You are a divine child of God. You carry the Christ-consciousness within you. You are surrounded by God's love even as you sit in your cell. The Christ in me sends blessings to the Christ in you."

I cried my eyes out. She made me understand in a new way what Jesus meant by forgiveness and why it must be a way of life, a way to live continuously. Now I could see that the minute we say "no" to forgiveness, we are gouging Christ out of our life, and from that resulting emptiness of soul we have nothing to give another.

This is what the Amish community knows. From their tragedy, they're sharing this knowledge with all of us!

AUDIT: Parishes working hard to maintain bishops’ charter

(From 2)

have been victims of sexual abuse by Church Personnel.

I would like to take this opportunity to report that 13 of the 14 audited parishes are in compliance with Background Check and Ethics Workshop requirements, and that we are working to bring the one parish that was not in compliance up to standards. I am also able to report that 13 of 14 parishes have conducted parent and children’s workshops during the past year, and that all have workshops scheduled during the present school year. Lastly, all parishes have information brochures readily available for those who may be victims of sexual abuse by Church personnel.

We will continue to conduct parish audits through May of next year. From these audits, I can already see that our parishes are working hard to fulfill the spirit and requirements of the Bishops’ Charter. I find this very encouraging.

AGE: Taking the road less traveled often best

(From 13)

something you take for granted, for instance, your height. No matter how closely you watch, you never see yourself grow taller. The change happens in such small increments that it can’t be noticed on a daily basis. But if you measure yourself once a month, the cumulative changes that occurred over time will become immediately apparent.

Relationship change occurs in the same way, only instead of measuring height, you’re measuring time. This is why it often is recommended that we occasionally distance ourselves from those we are close to, even family and best friends, especially those with whom we have disagreements.

If you spend every day with someone who drives you crazy, you never will notice the steps both of you take to improve the relationship. If those changes are made when you’re apart, they will be far more noticeable when you reunite, precisely because you didn’t witness the modifications as they were occurring.

Change, like distance, is measured from here to there, from inch to inch, from cow pasture to shopping center. It’s a reality I face every time I return to Bel Air. I can’t comprehend what currently is without remembering what used to be.

Gone is the unique, character-filled community where, growing up, I spent many hours with my friends. In its place is a suburb interchangeable with many others -- a place where I no longer feel a personal connection.

People who lived in Bel Air during this transformation probably don’t understand my perspective. They didn’t notice the shift because they were there when it happened. I noticed because I wasn’t.

Sometimes, you just have to disagree with conventional wisdom. Robert Frost claimed that taking the road less traveled made a difference. Maybe a difference can be found on the road we’ve traveled thousands of times before. We just have to know where to look.

Answers

1. Herod
2. priest
3. Mary
4. Joseph
5. John
6. Bethlehem
7. shepherds
Angels tell shepherds of Christ child’s birth

On a night that seemed as normal as any other, shepherds were keeping watch over their sheep. The wind was calm; the only noises came from the sheep.

There did not appear to be any danger from wolves who may have wanted to attack the sheep. Suddenly a light as bright as the glory of the Lord shined on the men, and an angel appeared in front of them. The shepherds knelt down, shivering in fright.

"Do not be afraid," said the angel, "for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all people. For today in the city of David a Savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: You will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."

Immediately the sky was filled with angels who sang, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

Then they returned to heaven.

The shepherds tried to recover from the fright they had experienced. They now felt peaceful. They knew they had seen and heard something wonderful, something miraculous. They said to one another, "Let us go, then, to Bethlehem to see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us."

They left their fields and headed for Bethlehem, the birthplace of David, the second king of Israel. They searched everywhere in the village until they found Mary and Joseph. The child, who was Jesus, was just as the angel had said he would be. He was in a manger, a feeding trough for animals, which was being used as a crib.

Since Caesar Augustus had ordered a census, all men had to return to the places where they had been born to be counted. Joseph was a descendant of David, and he had been born in Bethlehem. By the time he got there with Mary, all of the rooms had been rented out. They had to stay with the animals. It was there that Jesus was born.

The shepherds told Mary and Joseph about the message the angel had given to them. Their story amazed everyone present. Mary promised herself silently that she would never forget this marvelous event. Then the shepherds returned to their homes. They praised God, because everything the angel said had come true.

Making changes along a ‘road less traveled’

By Erick Rommel
Catholic News Service

Taking direction from conventional wisdom inspired by Robert Frost, I recently drove down a road I hadn't traveled for several months. The changes were subtle, but jarring.

Buildings that had been boarded closed were now open; intersections once bottlenecked were no longer so; areas I always felt were dark and foreboding were bright and vibrant.

These aren't one-time observations. We frequently discover similar changes when revisiting a "less-traveled" road, but never think about why they're noticeable.

I remember attending John Carroll High School in what was the small community of Bel Air, Md. The town was, and still is, known for its mall, the only one in the county. What I remember more is the field across the street. Four lanes removed from the mall's anchor stores was a large field. On it lived one cow.

One day, unexpectedly, the cow disappeared. A few days later, the fence marking the property also was removed. Soon after, the field was replaced by a shopping plaza. You could buy milk there, but you could no longer see the cow for free.

This transformation shocked those who did not witness it firsthand. While they were gone, the town remained unchanged in their minds; when they returned, reality did not meet that expectation.

That is the same shock I felt driving along that road. Changes I never would have noticed if I'd witnessed them gradually appear took on greater importance because I only discovered them after completion.

The same is true in our lives. Think about
HERMITS: Elias googles ‘hermitage,’ finds new life

(From 10)

uncomfortable speaking, painfully shy even.

“When I was in the service, I had a conversion back to my faith and that came about because of the Marines,” Elias said. “They pursue virtues such as honor, integrity and justice, and in seeking those, I got a taste for God. And along with that were the events in the world that were unsettling and disturbing, and those things combined to lead me back to the faith. From there, Mother Teresa’s writings inspired me toward the religious life as well.”

And so Brother Elias found his way to Christoval where he says he has no plans to leave.

When the brothers aren’t praying they are working. But prayer is what these men do best. Giving God their all. When they are not praying as a group, they are praying afternoon and evening prayers in their hermitages, or individual cells. And were it not for the work that is necessary to keep the hermitage afloat, the men would likely not object to praying without cease. “People are hungry for God,” Fr. Fabian said. “Our Mass, our liturgy is a monastic Mass. It is more contemplative. People feel touched by God, by the silence.”

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MIGRANTE

(para 5)

parroquias. El espíritu esta dounidense históricamente gen eroso ha sido reemplazado en algunos sectores con llamados al aislamiento y la restricción.

Durante esta semana dedicada a los migrantes, invito a todas las comunidades de nuestras parroquias a acoger a Cristo en el migrante mediante la oración, la educación, y en programas de servicio directo en nuestras parroquias. Para asistirlos en esta expresión de fe, una gran variedad de recursos han sido creadas para las parroquias y las escuelas, y son disponibles en el sitio de la red de la USCCB/MRS Semana Nacional de Migracion en: www.usccb.org/mrs.mnw.shtml.

Cuando extendemos ayuda y consuelo a los recién venidos a nuestra tierra, definitivamente estamos ofreciéndonos nosotros mismos y nuestros dones en el servicio al Señor. No es solamente nuestro deber cristiano, pero es un privilegio, sabiendo que nosotros, también, hemos sido adoptados entre la familia de Dios. Que sean ricamente fieles de hospitalidad en el nombre de Cristo.

BIOETHICS: Traveling cadaver exhibit draws 18 million

(From 7)

intentionally caused in order to procure the body or the tissues.

Whether the use of human bodies in Body Worlds will be acceptable will largely depend on intense discussion surrounding the first and second conditions. Are the bodies being posed provocatively or being made to engage in immoral activities while on display, or are they set up in respectable, fundamentally decent poses? Since it is a public display, are the actions represented appropriate for public viewing, including children? These are some of the further questions we may need to consider when trying to decide about the moral acceptability of such an exhibition. There may also need to be assurance that the bodies on display, or parts from those bodies that were removed during their preparation, will ultimately be properly disposed of either through burial or through cremation, as a sign of our respect for the remains of the dead.

The fact that the traveling cadaver exhibit has already drawn more than 18 million visitors worldwide indicates a deep-seated fascination with understanding our own bodies. One might even argue that such an exhibit could prompt some soul searching and further discussion of human frailty and the meaning of our own mortality. Along the same lines, an exhibit which reveals the human child in utero by a simple cutaway can serve to powerfully remind visitors about the reality of the pro-life message, namely that children in the womb are not “blobs of protoplasm” but are rather our brothers and sisters at an earlier developmental stage. In the words of one astute observer: “If young women had windows on their stomachs, so they could see into their own wombs, the number of abortions would decline drastically.” The Body Worlds exhibit does seem to afford a unique opportunity to open a window onto the inner workings of the human body in a way that straddles the line between enlightening and edgy.

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

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Dear sisters and brothers in Christ:

I am happy to present to you in an abbreviated form the Diocese of San Angelo’s financial report for the most recent year ending June 30, 2006 as prepared by our outside auditors, Carneiro, Chumney & Co., LC. This audit has been carefully studied by the Presbyteral Council, the Diocesan Finance Council, the Diocesan Finance Officer and myself.

I want to express my sincere appreciation for the generous support upon which our church ministries depend. Your material generosity continues to keep a spirit of hope alive in the diocese.

I invite any of you who would like to receive the full audited financials to contact our Diocesan Finance Officer, Les Maiman, who will be happy to provide a copy to you.

Your servant in Christ and Mary,

Most Rev. Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI
Bishop of San Angelo
Finally ... Hollywood gets it right

From the opening moments of “The Nativity Story,” you know you’re in for a good thing

By David DiCerto
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — In an effort to reach as wide a market as possible, most Christmas-themed movies come gift-wrapped in a secular brand of sentimentality that completely misses the true meaning of the holiday. But Hollywood finally gets it right with “The Nativity Story” (New Line).

From the opening strains of the soundtrack — hints of the Advent hymn “O Come, O Come Emmanuel” — you know you’re in good hands.

A composite of the birth narrative accounts in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, embroidered with apocryphal traditions as well as the imaginative inspiration of the filmmaker, the Bible story gets prestigious treatment in director Catherine Hardwicke’s artful, reverent and deeply affecting retelling. The film has an excellent international cast and impressive production design similar to that of “The Passion of the Christ,” the financial success of which no doubt paved the way for this movie. (Without the blood and controversy, however, “The Nativity Story” should appeal to an even wider audience.)

Filmed in Matera — the ancient Italian town where Mel Gibson shot “The Passion” — and Morocco, it opens with prophecy-paranoid King Herod (Ciaran Hinds) plotting to kill all the male babies in Bethlehem.

Flashing back a year, Zechariah (Stanley Townsend) is told by an angelic voice that his wife Elizabeth (Shohreh Aghdashloo), though advanced in age, will bear a son.

In Nazareth, her young cousin, Mary (Keisha Castle-Hughes), an upright carpenter a few years her senior. Troubled over her betrothal to “a man I hardly know, a man I do not love,” Mary withdraws to a nearby grove where the Annunciation, nicely handled, takes place, with Alexander Siddig personifying the angel Gabriel who reveals she will give birth to Jesus.

Meanwhile in Persia, the three Magi set out to follow the star westward (explained here as a rare convergence of Venus, Jupiter and an astral body). What is described with only a few lines in Luke’s Gospel becomes the meat of the film, as Joseph and Mary undertake the arduous journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, battling sandstorms, treacherous terrain, hunger and, while passing through Jerusalem, thieves.

Along the way, Hardwicke, raised Presbyterian, weaves in references that foreshadow events in Christ’s life: Mary washing Joseph’s feet; Joseph expressing anger over merchants in the Temple courtyard; a roadside crucifixion. In a more symbolic allusion, during a river crossing, Mary is imperiled by a snake, echoing the serpent of Eden.

Though the New Testament is sparse on details about the birth of Jesus, it’s all there: the shepherds, the Wise Men, etc. Despite some greeting-card gloss, cloying sentimentality is avoided. Throughout the film, Hardwicke never waters down the religious elements to make the story more palatable for nonbelievers, most clearly demonstrated when she has one of the Magi proclaim the radical truth of the Incarnation by declaring that the infant is “God made into flesh.”

In a poignant moment that inextricably links the manger to the cross, his fellow traveler — after his companions have presented their gifts of gold and frankincense — tearfully offers the Christ Child myrrh “for his sacrifice,” pondering Jesus’ atoning death.

Astute eyes will catch the shot of one of Herod’s minions scouring the abandoned cavelike stable after the holy family has fled to Egypt and finding a swaddling cloth draped over the vacant manger, presaging the empty tomb.

Though placed differently from Luke’s Gospel, Mary’s “Magnificat” is incorporated by Hardwicke in a way that’s most effective.

Amid the Christmas pageant elements, there are a few brief images (the slaughter of the innocents, for example) that may upset very young children. Both Mary’s and Elizabeth’s painful labor are vividly depicted.

The film’s hopeful message should resonate beyond Christian audiences to a world still groaning for peace and good will.

The film contains some violent images. The USCCB Office for Film & Broadcasting classification is A-I — general patronage. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG — parental guidance suggested. Some material may not be suitable for children.

‘Bobby’ is not run-of-mill biopic, but a touching tribute to RFK

By Harry Forbes
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — A conventional biography of presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy, whose life ended abruptly with an assassin’s bullet in 1968, “Bobby” (MGM/Weinstein) is not.

But director-writer Emilio Estevez has instead fashioned a deft intertwining of fact and fiction that pays touching homage to a fallen hero. Using multiple stories and disparate characters whose lives will eventually intertwine and find redemption, Estevez focuses on the fictitious guests and workers at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles, leading up to Kennedy’s brutal shooting in the hotel’s kitchen after he delivered a rousing campaign speech following the California primary.

Kennedy is only seen sporadically in newsreel footage (well-restored for the big screen) but Estevez’s characters — despite conflicts — ultimately come to reflect the noble ideals of brotherhood and forgiveness expressed in some of Kennedy’s stirring campaign speeches.

Miriam, for instance, discovers her husband’s affair with switchboard operator Angela (Heather Graham), but the ultimate confrontation is not the expected screaming match, but a speech of profound regret tinged with caring. At another point, the scene is set for a no-holds-barred confrontation between Miriam and Virginia, but the conversation is instead suffused with empathy.

Though this approach sometimes results in oversentimentality as when Jose selflessly hands over his Dodgers tickets to Edward without asking for payment, prompting the latter to praise him effusively for his kingly nature (with reference to John F. Kennedy’s favorite book, “The Once and Future King”), such missteps are few.