

West Texas

ANGELUS

Serving the Diocese of San Angelo, Texas
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PO BOX 1829
SAN ANGELO TX 76902-1829
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From the Bishop's Desk

No room in the inn: Savior of the world born in manger



Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

The Gospel for the Midnight Christmas Mass as told to us by St. Luke tells us that when it came time for Mary to give birth to the greatest person who ever lived, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, that there was no room for them in the inn of Bethlehem. And we are told that his dear mother, Mary, and foster father, Joseph, accommodated to the situation, by laying the newborn Jesus in a manger — the place where the animals would feed.

In that same Gospel, we are told that the angel of the Lord announced to the shepherds — and to all of us today — the long-awaited and hoped for message that the whole world had longed for centuries, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 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 wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.”

In the few words of that beautiful Gospel, we are

told about the birth of Jesus Christ, who is the very Son of the eternal Father, and who became one of us by taking flesh from the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He was born like we are, He lived our life, and as we know, He gave His life for all of us, dying on the cross like a criminal. From the crib to the cross Jesus was saving all people of all time. When it came time for the birth of Christ as we hear in the gospel, there was no room in the inn of Bethlehem.

(Please See BISHOP/19)

DIOCESAN BRIEFS

Diocese nears half million in relief to Ike victims

Bishop Michael Pfeifer has announced the total amount contributed by parishioners throughout the Diocese of San Angelo for victims along the Texas coast of Hurricane Ike is \$456,324.65.

The bishop thanks all for their overwhelming show of generosity.

The Diocese of Beaumont was just one recipient of the generosity of the people of the diocese. Most Rev. Curtis Guillory, Bishop of the Diocese of Beaumont, wrote to our diocese saying:

“In his letter to the Philippians, Paul, while in prison, tells them “I can do all things through the One who strengthens me. Still it was kind of you to share in my distress.” Paul was in distress because he was being persecuted for preaching the Gospel. The prayers and love of the Philippians gave him hope and encouragement. In the spirit of Paul, I thank you and the faithful of your diocese for your recent gifts to our diocese to be used to assist victims of Hurricane Ike.

“We received seven checks from your diocese in October totaling \$12,871.32. There are a great many needs so your gifts will be used well.

“Thousands of homes, especially those in Bridge City, Sabine Pass and Oak Island are now only rubble, others are unlivable. FEMA trailers are sparse and some of our people are living in tents.

“The generosity of our brothers and sisters, including those in the Diocese of San Angelo, encourage me. Your gifts and God's grace will sustain us. Thank you for being in solidarity with us during this time of great challenge. You and the good people of your diocese remain in my prayers.”

Religious Retirement Fund appeal set for December 14

Catholic parishes in the Diocese of San Angelo will conduct the 21st annual appeal for the Retirement Fund for Religious on December 14.

Religious institutes that are well known and revered for their ministry in the diocese but are headquartered elsewhere benefit through grants that are directed to the institutes' motherhouses.

The Diocese of San Angelo contributed \$68,450.78 in 2007, an eight percent increase over 2006 donations of \$63,319.16.

In 2007, this appeal, which is conducted by the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in Washington, DC, distributed \$23 million in Basic Grants that benefited 482 of the nation's Catholic religious institutes of women and men.

Catholic Families in 2011

Catholic families should be the first priority of the Diocese of San Angelo, according to Bishop Michael Pfeifer, who has charged a committee with developing a vision statement for the year 2011, the 50th anniversary of the Diocese of San Angelo.

The 2011 Committee has been meeting for two years already, looking at many different aspects of diocesan life and ministry. Following the remarks of Pope Benedict XVI in Washington in April and the concerns of Bishop Pfeifer, the main priority has become to enhance and support family life and marriage.

The 2011 Committee will be meeting with focus groups of families, to hear about the situation of family life and marriage in our own diocese. In addition, to give an opportunity to anyone who wishes to comment on this topic, the 2011 Committee invites responses to the following questions:

1. What concerns do we have about families in our community?
2. What does Christ call us to be as families, through the bible and the Church?
3. What are ways that we Catholics can enhance family life, as well as what can our parish and diocese offer?

Send your comments to Msgr. Larry Droll, 1906 W. Texas Ave., Midland, TX, 79701. You may e-mail them to him at ljdro1@aol.com, indicating “Family Life and Marriage” in the subject line. Comments will be received through January 31, 2009.

Choosing a Path That's Right for You

“Act Justly, Love Tenderly, Walk Humbly with your God.”

Is God Calling you to Religious Life?

The Dominican Sisters invite you to explore this call during a weekend retreat. Women 18 to 40 are welcome to attend, January 23-25, 2009. The retreat begins at 5 p.m. Friday and concludes Sunday at 11 a.m.

The retreat includes: exploring the discernment process; quiet time for reflection; Group discussion and prayer, including Mass Sunday

Register online at www.sinsinawa.org (Click on “News and Events” then click on “Choosing a Path,” complete the form, and click “submit”) or by getting in touch with the area contact person.

Deadline to register: January 14. Cost: \$35
Area contact: Sister Marie Malachy Griffin, O.P.
newman@wcc.net 325-949-8033.

Fr. DiOrio brings healing ministry back to diocese

Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI, invites everyone to join him in welcoming back his good friend Fr. Ralph DiOrio, who returns to Abilene and Midland to share his healing ministry in our diocese. Fr. DiOrio will be in Abilene, **February 13, 2009**, and

in Midland, **February 15, 2009**. Further information will be forthcoming in the January and February editions of the West Texas Angelus, or call Our Lady of San Juan in Midland, at 432-570-0952.

(At right, Fr. DiOrio, left, and Bishop Pfeifer).



Scholarships for Catholic laity now available

SAN ANTONIO-- Catholic Life Insurance is currently accepting applications for the Rev. Msgr. Larry J. Droll Scholarship from Catholic laymen and women pursuing graduate education in theology and church-related professions.

“Today many dedicated Catholics who are not ordained clergy or women religious, serve parishes as parish coordinators or administrators, as pastoral associates, directors of religious education, youth ministers, liturgists, and many other roles,” said Msgr. Droll. “This scholarship can help provide the funds to earn the advanced educational degree in theology or religious studies that is often required for these positions.”

The scholarship is open to students who are currently enrolled in Catholic graduate schools of theology or religious studies and who have already completed a bachelor's degree. The applicant, who does not have to be a Catholic Life member, must be a practicing Roman Catholic and must reside in one of the states in which Catholic Life operates which are Texas, Arizona, Florida, Louisiana, Oklahoma, New Mexico, or Mississippi. The scholarship funds are paid directly to the school where the student is enrolled. All applications must be received by Catholic Life no later than February 16, 2009.

To obtain an application and an outlined list of eligibility requirements, please call Catholic Life Insurance at (210) 828-9921 or 1-800-292-2548 or write to Catholic Life Insurance, attn: Communications Department, P.O. Box 659527, San Antonio, TX 78265-9527. Applications may also be downloaded from the company website at www.clui.com. Winners will be announced in June 2009.

Scheduled Executions

The Angelus will publish execution dates of Texas offenders on death row published 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:

Offender/Execution Dates
Curtis Moore, Jan. 14, 2009
Jose Garcia Briseno, Jan. 15, 2009

Natural Family Planning

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

SAN ANGELO, Christ the King Retreat Center, (325) 651-5352, 2-4 p.m. **2008 dates:** Dec. 14; **2009:** March 8, May 17, Sep. 13, Dec. 6. Contact Amy at amd@wcc.net.

MIDLAND-ODESSA, Our Lady of Guadalupe, call Christina Nevarez, (432) 682-2581;

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

Ordination for permanent deacons Dec. 13 in San Angelo

By Deacon Tim Graham

Thirty men admitted to the formal ministries of Lector and Acolyte on December 13, are all in preparation for ordination as permanent deacons. This major step toward ordination was marked by a mass at Sacred Heart Cathedral on December 13, with Bishop Pfeifer presiding. At the Mass the bishop installed the men into the ministries for the Diocese of San Angelo.

To better understand this installation, it is better to note that many men and women serve as readers at Mass and as extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist. Many young people serve at the altar as servers, or acolytes. So, what is different about this formal installation?

To begin with, the ministries into which these men were installed were formerly considered a part of minor orders. The Sacrament of Holy Orders used to begin at the level of the major order of subdeacon. The minor orders of lector, acolyte, porter and exorcist were positions that were expected to be filled by those aspiring to the Sacrament of Holy Orders. The Order of Subdeacon and all the minor orders were abolished by Pope Paul VI right after Vatican II. That was also the point at which the permanent diaconate was revived. With all these changes (and more) there was also the recognition that men preparing for Holy Orders should serve in formal

Deacon Candidates

We should pray earnestly for our current class of candidates. The formation work is long and difficult, and the ministry they are preparing for is only hinted at by the celebration on December 13th and their exercise of the ancient ministries of Lector and Acolyte. The men come from parishes all over the diocese. The men, and their parishes, are:

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| Frank Aguirre Cathedral, San Angelo | Michael Lopez St. Mary's, San Angelo | St. Vincent, Abilene |
| Carlos Benavides Our Lady of Lourdes, Andrews | Marc P. Main St. Francis, Abilene | Gary Rhodes Holy Family, Abilene |
| Alfred Camarillo St. Mary's, Odessa | Luis Mata Our Lady of Guadalupe, Midland | Claudio Sanchez St. Joseph's, San Angelo |
| Andy Gonzalez St. Margaret, San Angelo | Marco Mata St. Mary's, San Angelo | Robert Selvera St. Patrick's, Brady |
| Walter Hammons Holy Angels, San Angelo | Freddy Medina Holy Angels, San Angelo | Dan Shannahan St. Ambrose, Wall |
| Leonard Hendon St. Stephen's, Midland | Hector Mendez St. Mary's, Odessa | Ricardo Torres Our Lady of Guadalupe, Midland |
| Dwain Hennessey Sacred Heart, Abilene | Robert Moreno Our Lady of Guadalupe, Midland | Jesse Vasquez Sacred Heart, Abilene |
| Danny Holguin St. Joseph's, Ft. Stockton | Jesus Napoles Our Lady of Guadalupe, Midland | Daniel Vaughan Holy Family, Abilene |
| Allan Lange St. Ambrose, Wall | Ray Nunez Sacred Heart, Coleman | Luis Villarreal St. Agnes, Ft. Stockton |
| Stanley Lange St. Thomas, Miles | Victor Ramirez | David Workman St. Mary's, Ballinger |
| | | Steve Zimmerman Cathedral, San Angelo |

ministries prior to ordination as a deacon. The expectation that the functions of Acolyte and Lector would be exercised by such men for a suitable length of time prior to ordination is now observed and the celebration for the installation into the ministries is what the bishop presided over on December 13.

The most significant difference with an instituted lector and acolyte and other lay people serving in some of those roles is that the institution is performed by the bishop, for the good of

the diocese and the duties and responsibilities, though not carried out under the promise of obedience, represent a permanent assignment, taking precedence over those temporarily installed at the parish level. For those instituted into the ministry of Lector, their duty, on a permanent basis, is to proclaim the Word of God in liturgical assemblies, teach children and adults in the faith, prepare the faithful to receive the sacraments and to be evangelists, spreading the Word to those who have

(Please See **DEACONS/9**)

From the Editor

Gaining 33 brothers in one weekend impossible? Not at all

By Jimmy Patterson

If I were to tell you that during a recent weekend I gained 33 new brothers, anyone educated in the biological or reproductive sciences would figure that I was plain nuts. However anyone with a spiritual streak worth anything would most definitely know my meaning.

I recently returned from an ACTS retreat, the second such retreat I have been blessed to attend. It was quite likely the most spiritually meaningful event of my life, even more so than the first of my ACTS experiences a year ago.

ACTS -- which stands for Adoration, Community, Theology and Service -- is a powerful and growing movement within the Catholic Church. Introduced in a parish in the Hill Country, it has now grown and is experienced by men and women in parishes not only across Texas but in other states and even in other countries. Some say it might provide a significant boon to Church growth in the coming years.

Yes, it is that powerful in its message and scope.

ACTS is a three-day getaway where men or women grow in their faith and common, shared experiences. Intense, long-lasting bonds are often formed through what the retreatants share, and men and women often go back to their parishes eager to build on those friendships forged. What is perhaps even more valuable is that the men and women who complete ACTS often return to their parish excited about serving their church in a number of new capacities -- through mission work, eucharistic ministers, lectors, catechists and any number of opportunities they maybe have been hesitant to step forward in before.

The effects of ACTS can be and often are long-lasting and the sharing that goes on during the three-day retreat is real and often life-changing. Two concerns that may exist in some ACTS parishes: a feeling of being left out by those who haven't experienced the retreat, and the 'over-selling' of the ACTS experience. Often those two experiences can go hand in hand.

ACTS retreatants and team members return with such zeal and vigor that it's easy for those who have not yet experienced the retreat to feel a disconnect. The homecoming Mass held when retreatants and team members return is designed to celebrate the experience, yet those who haven't had that experience may not feel that same zeal. When those who have gone through the retreat put a sell job on those who haven't experienced the retreat, they can easily over do it.

To those who feel pressured or out of the loop, don't. No harm is intended by ACTS members who talk up the weekend. It is only the fervent hope of the retreatant that you will one day experience the same feeling of the Holy Spirit at work. I have known several men who swore they would never benefit from such a weekend, and they are now some of the best walking commercials for ACTS that the community has. If you haven't been on an ACTS retreat, consider giving it a shot. Your world may likely never be the same.



Patterson

Del Escritorio del Obispo

No hubo lugar en la posada

Por el Obispo Miguel Pfeifer

El Evangelio para la Misa Navideña de Gallo relatada a nosotros según San Lucas, nos dice que cuando llegó el tiempo que María diera a luz a la persona más grande que ha vivido, nuestro Señor y Salvador Jesucristo, no había posada para ellos en Belén. Y se nos ha dicho que su querida madre, María, y su padre adoptivo, José, se acomodaron a la situación, por medio de recostar el recién nacido, Jesús, en un pesebre—donde los animales comían.

En el mismo Evangelio, se nos dice que el ángel del Señor

anunció a los pastores—y a todos nosotros hoy día—el mensaje anhelado y esperanzado que todo el mundo ansiaba por muchos siglos, “No teman. Les traigo una buena noticia, que causará gran alegría a todo el pueblo; 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.”

En las pocas palabras de ese hermoso evangelio, se nos habla acerca del nacimiento de Jesucristo, quien es el mero hijo del padre eterno, y quien se hizo uno de nosotros al tomar carne

de las entrañas de María, la Virgen Bendita. Él nació como nosotros, Él vivió nuestra vida, y como sabemos, Él dio Su vida por todos nosotros, muriendo en la cruz como criminal. De la cuna a la cruz, Jesús salvaba toda la gente de todo el tiempo. Cuando llegó tiempo para el nacimiento de Cristo, como se nos dice en el evangelio, no había posada en Belén.

Al reflejar en este hermoso evangelio para la navidad, la pregunta para nosotros hoy día es: ¿Cuándo celebramos Su cumpleaños el 25 de diciembre,

(Mira **OBISPO/18**)



Obispo
Miguel Pfeifer
OMI

DIOCESAN DATES

Bishop's Calendar

DECEMBER

12 -- SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral – Our Lady of Guadalupe – Mass at 6:30 p.m.
13 -- SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral – Diaconal Ministries at 10:30 a.m. –
13 -- SAN ANGELO, Santa Fe Historical Depot- Read Christmas Stories at 7:00 p.m.
14 -- SANDERSON, St. James – Mass at 3:00 p.m.
15 -- EDEN- Mass at Eden Detention Center at 1:30 p.m.
16 -- ABILENE, Holy Family – Advent Night of Prayer for Abilene Deanery Priests, Sisters and Deacons at 6:30 p.m.
17 -- SAN ANGELO, Bishop's Residence – Staff Christmas Dinner at 6 p.m.
18 -- SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center – 11:00 a.m. Meeting of Presbyteral Council and Diocesan Finance Council
18 -- SAN ANGELO, Christ the King Retreat Center – 5:30 p.m. Christmas Party for Priests, Sisters, Deacons and Wives
19 -- SAN ANGELO, Angelo Catholic School – Christmas Mass at 8:30 a.m. at Sacred Heart
19 -- Baptist Memorial – Mass at 2:00 p.m.
20 -- CARLSBAD – Carlsbad State School - Christmas Prayer Service at 3:30 p.m.
20 -- SAN ANGELO, Dinner with Seminarians at 6:00 p.m.
21 -- BROWNWOOD, St. Mary – Mass at 11:00 a.m. and Meet with Pastoral Council after Mass
24 -- SAN ANGELO, Masses at Tom Green County Jail at 9:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m.
24 -- SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral –Midnight Christmas Mass
25 -- SAN ANGELO, Goodfellow AFB- Christmas Day Mass at 11:45 a.m.
26-28 Rest and Prayer

JANUARY

1 -- SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral – Mass for Mary, Mother of God and World Day of Peace at 10:00 a.m.
5-9 -- SAN ANTONIO, Bishops of Region X Annual Retreat
10 -- MIDLAND, St. Ann – Catholic Schools Commission Meeting at 9:00 a.m.
12 -- SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center – Staff Mass at 8:30 a.m., Meeting, 11 a.m.
13-15 -- Rest and Prayer
17-18 -- MIDLAND, St. Stephen – Youth 2000
19 -- SAN ANGELO, Sacred

Heart Cathedral – Martin Luther King Ecumenical Prayer Service at 12:00 noon

21 -- SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center – Personnel Board Meeting at 10:30 a.m.
22 -- SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral – Pro Life Mass at 12:00 noon
23-24 -- SAN JUAN, Border Bishops' Meeting
27 -- SAN ANGELO, Visitors Center – Santa Angela Ecumenical Prayer Service at 5:30 p.m.
31 -- SAN ANGELO – Meet with Cursillo Secretariat at 9 am

Christ the King Retreat Center

DECEMBER

20-21 Seminarian Gathering
 22 -- Heart of Mercy Prayer Grp
 23 Office Closed – ½ Day – Christmas Holiday
 24-25 Office Closed – Christmas Holiday
 29 -- Heart of Mercy Prayer Grp
 30 -- Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, 5-6 pm
 31 -- Office Closed – ½ Day – New Year's Holiday

JANUARY 2009

1 -- Office Closed – New Years Day
 5 --Heart of Mercy Prayer Group
 5-9 -- Boy Scouts of America – Buffalo Trail Council
 6 -- Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament 5-6 pm
 9-11 -- Deacons Training Program
 12 -- Heart of Mercy Prayer Grp
 13 -- Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament 5-6 pm
 16-18 -- Engaged Encounter
 19 -- Heart of Mercy Prayer Grp
 20 -- Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament 5-6 pm
 22-25 -- Women's Walk to Emmaus
 26 -- Heart of Mercy Prayer Grp
 27 -- Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament 5-6 pm
 30-31 Crestview Baptist Church

NECROLOGY JANUARY

10 -- Rev. Francis Beazley, OMI (1992)
13 -- Rev. Joseph Walter (1989)
16 -- Rev. Cyril Lange (1971)
16 -- Msgr. Timothy Murphy (2004)
18 -- Rev. Patrick Ryan, OMI (1975)
19 -- Fr. Robert Kelly (1999)
26 -- Deacon D.J. Goetz (2003)
26 -- Deacon Jack Peterson (1987)

Planned Parenthood: the single largest abortion provider in the United States

– Organization does this with the help of over \$336 million in taxpayer funding

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer

Planned Parenthood is a business, and a major part of this business is the killing of unborn children. The Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA) is the single largest abortion provider in the United States. In 2005 its affiliates performed 264,943 surgical and “medical” (i.e., RU-486) abortions—a new record, and about 10,000 more abortions than in 2004, at a time when abortions are declining overall. In 2007, Planned Parenthood’s record of 290,000 abortions amounts to almost 1 out of every 4 abortions committed in the U.S.

While PPFA claims to serve women’s “choices,” it reports providing prenatal care to just 12,548 women in 2005, and infertility services to only 248. Together these are one-twentieth the number of abortions it performs. For 2005 it reported no adoption referrals (compared to 1,414 the previous year). To carry out its mission, Planned Parenthood receives \$336 million in taxpayer funding.

Planned Parenthood Centers in West Texas

In the counties that make up the

Diocese of San Angelo, there are four known Planned Parenthood facilities. Planned Parenthood in Midland does surgical abortion every Friday. I am deeply grateful for all those who gather in prayer in front of this death center each Friday morning when surgical abortions are performed, pleading to Christ through Mary for the precious unborn that are destroyed there. Recently I offered a Pro-Life Mass on the side of this death clinic, asking Jesus our Good Shepherd to bring an end to the killing of the unborn at this center an end to abortion throughout our country. Of the other Planned Parenthood facilities in our diocesan territory, I have acquired the following information:

▶ Odessa: From the information I received, the center is not directly involved in abortion services. An unanswered question is whether this center counsels where abortions might be acquired?

▶ Abilene: Like for Odessa, from the information I received, the center is not directly involved in abortion services. An unanswered question is whether this center counsels where abortions might be acquired?
 ▶ In San Angelo, information acquired from Planned Parenthood indicates that “medication abortions” are performed in Midland and San Angelo. Planned Parenthood’s information says the

following: “Medication Abortion (Midland and San Angelo). Medical abortion is a way to end pregnancy without surgery. It’s done with medicine *up to 9 weeks gestation*. –Your clinician will give you medication in tablet form to be taken orally. –you are required to return to the clinic for a follow up visit. If the medication abortion does not work, a surgical abortion must be done.” The public needs to know that the Planned Parenthood facility in San Angelo promotes in its material “medical abortion” and other information obtained indicates this is caused by the controversial RU-486 drug. I have learned of this information only recently, and by way of this article and other information, I want our people to know about the deadly process that happens at this facility. I ask the priests and people of the parishes of the city of San Angelo, especially our local Knights of Columbus, to inform our people about the “medical abortions” taking place at this center and expressing our disgust for this deadly procedure.

Planned Parenthood uses the dangerous abortion drug RU-486

PPFA strongly supports the dangerous abortion drug RU-

(Please See **PLANNED/17**)

The earthly liturgy of the church and its relationship to the heavenly liturgy

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer

During his recent Apostolic Journey to France, Pope Benedict XVI reflected on the connection between the earthly Liturgy of the Church and its relationship to the heavenly liturgy. The Liturgy, as Vatican II has pointed out, is the source and summit of our spiritual life, and the primary work of the Church is to celebrate the Liturgy together with all the members of the Body of Christ.

To better understand the connection between the earthly Liturgy of

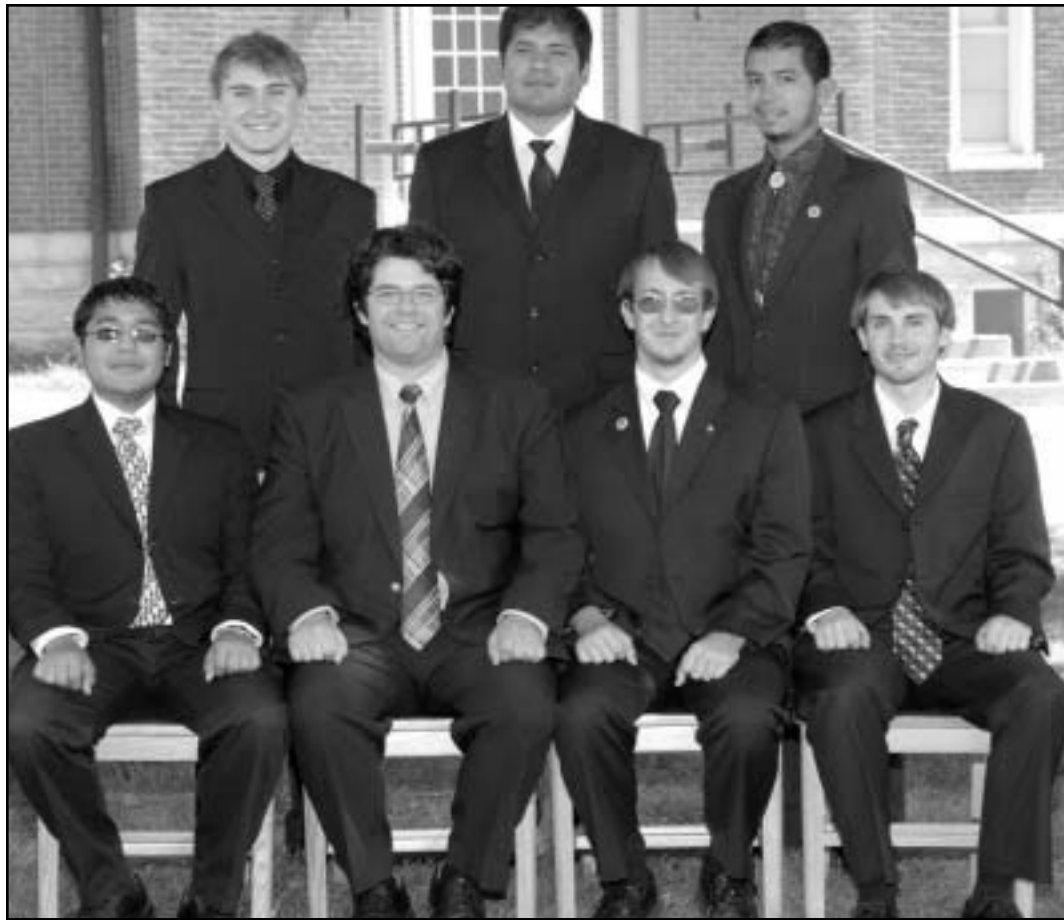
the Church and its relation to heavenly liturgy, I present here the words of Pope Benedict XVI:

“The Son of God took flesh in the womb of a woman, a virgin. Your cathedral is a living hymn of stone and light in praise of that act, unique in the annals of human history: the eternal Word of God entering our history in the fullness of time to redeem us by his self-offering in the sacrifice of the Cross. Our earthly liturgies, entirely ordered to the celebration of this unique act within history, will never fully express its infinite

meaning. Certainly, the beauty of our celebrations can never be sufficiently cultivated, fostered and refined, for nothing can be too beautiful for God, who is himself infinite Beauty. Yet our earthly liturgies will never be more than a pale reflection of the liturgy celebrated in the Jerusalem on high, the goal of our pilgrimage on earth. May our own celebrations nonetheless resemble that liturgy as closely as possible and grant us a foretaste of it!”

Conception Seminary: Forming young men into vibrant servants of the Church

By Jarod Thorne
Conception Seminary



Seminarians from the Diocese of San Angelo at Conception Seminary are top row, left to right, Remigiusz Kiwior, Francisco Carrillo Jr., Alejandro Moreno, and bottom row, left to right, Michael Lopez, Thomas Shows, Adam Droll, Charles Scammel.

Even though they're different concepts, the economy and the economy of salvation do share some common characteristics. Over the years, for example, we see and feel the effects of business cycles and the peaks and troughs of expansion and recession—"good times" and "hard times". With the collapse of the housing market, many people have had to face foreclosure on their homes. Now the economy as a whole is feeling the spillover effects of crumbling financial institutions that had invested heavily in securities backed by these sub-prime mortgages. Similarly, even the economy of salvation—as perceived by those of us constrained by space and time—has its ups and downs. To see this, we need only pick up the Bible or a Church history book and start reading cover to cover. In doing so, one can read about creation, the fall from grace, the patriarchs, the Israelites' journey in the desert, the prophets, the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ and on and on up to today where a decline in vocations in recent decades has unfortunately resulted in the closures or consolidation of parishes and some religious orders. There are spillover effects in this too. In this case, the luxury of daily Mass or Catholic schools might not be as available in as many areas as they once were. But just as no recession in the economy lasts forever, there is hope on the horizon for the Church. That hope is evident at Conception.

I feel it's necessary to clarify here that the economy of salvation operates in time, but it is not constrained by it—it's a divine plan that we participate in. In this way it's different from the economy, even if we feel at times as if the economy is a mysterious force controlled by a not-so-benevolent "higher power"! At any rate, in an effort to mitigate the negative effects of a low spot in the economy, our country has recourse to the tools of fiscal and monetary policy. What, though, do we faithful have as tools to combat the "hard times" along the road to heaven? For one, we have the power of prayer and the assurance that the Church is guided by the Holy Spirit. Add to that the words of Christ himself, "I am with you always, to the close of the age!" and what else do we need?

This is something Conception Seminary College has done time and time again over the course of its history, as evidenced through initiatives such as the Deacon Formation Program; the Pre-Theology Program; the Language, Culture, and Church Program; and recently, the summer

Language, Culture, and Church for International Priests Program.

Here is a brief overview of some of the things Conception Seminary College has done in recent years to better serve its seminarians and the wider Church.

A Diverse Campus

The Church in the United States has always been a Church "on the move." With more and more vocations coming from minority populations, today is no exception. Conception has taken several steps in response to this trend. Attending to a growing Hispanic population, the seminary has started utilizing bilingual priests to serve as spiritual directors and is now actively seeking a bilingual Hispanic priest to serve as a chaplain—not necessarily to serve Hispanic seminarians exclusively, but so that the chaplains' group can better appreciate cultural variations amongst the students. Additionally, the services of a Spanish speaking counselor are available when needed.

Responding to the formation needs of seminarians from various cultural backgrounds is nothing new however. In 1998, Conception Seminary College inaugurated the Language, Culture, and Church (LCC)

Program for this very reason. The program focuses on the intensive study of English as a second language and the adaptation to American culture and the Church of the United States. From the 1998-99 academic year to the 2007-08 academic year, there have been 68 LCC students. In this amount of time, 10 LCC students have been ordained to the priesthood and one was ordained a deacon last May. Since LCC formation is usually a prerequisite to any further priestly formation (normally lasting 8 years) the fruits of this program will become even more evident in the coming years.

The Program Grows

The LCC Program has been a great success in preparing seminarians from other countries to minister in the United States. To further this success, Conception Seminary College has developed an extension of the program. This summer marked the first session of the Language, Culture, and Church Program for International Priests (LCCIP). The main goal of the LCCIP program is ideologically congruent with that of the regular LCC Program—the major difference being that the participants of the LCCIP Program are already ordained. We are seeing today an influx of

missionary priests to the U.S. from other countries; the LCCIP Program offers them a stepping stone in bridging the cultural gap that arises as they take up their new roles of ministry.

Buildings and Grounds

As previously mentioned, the renovation of the main seminary classroom and administration building was completed in 2005. Not only did this make more efficient use of classroom space, but it also updated the facilities with newer technology and science labs, bringing the classrooms up to modern educational standards.

Other recent building improvements include new and more efficient heating systems for the residence halls, new seminary dining room furniture, and increased accessibility measures including automated doors, a handicapped accessible student room, and a new chair lift.

To read the continuation of this article, log on to www.sanangelodiocese.org.

PRAYER SHARING

In Luke 21:36, Jesus admonishes us to pray specifically (to God the Father) that we may have the "strength to escape the imminent tribulations" and to "stand before the Son of Man."

I memorized the King James version many, many years ago (it's beautifully poetic and easy). This has become my frequent prayer; and I do get Our Almighty Father's blessings, in part, because of it.

I really love that word "escape". It is the same word in both translations.

In Christ,
Carol, Good Shepherd Parish
Crane, TX

Send in your most cherished prayers or prayer practices to JimmyLPatterson@grandecom.net.

Making Sense of Bioethics

Making Truthful Choices of Conscience

By Rev. Tad Pacholczyk

One recurrent theme in bioethical discussions is the idea that each of us possesses a basic awareness of the moral law. This distinctly human faculty, which Western culture has referred to as "conscience," helps us to choose correctly when confronted with basic moral decisions. Even children, when taught about right and wrong, instinctively seem to recognize a law higher than themselves. Deep within his conscience man discovers that law which he has not laid upon himself but which he must obey. Conscience has been aptly described as man's most secret core and his sanctuary.

As creatures of conscience, then, we are moved to pursue good and to avoid evil. Yet, in our fallen nature, we are also drawn, mysteriously, towards wrong and harmful choices. The dictates of conscience may become muted or drowned out by other voices around us. As we grow older we may even acquire a certain finesse in justifying personal choices that are not good, choices strongly contrary to the law of our own being. The inner sanctuary of conscience is delicate and easily transgressed, requiring great attentiveness on our part if we are to remain faithful to it.

I recall a powerful story about conscience involving a young couple who cohabitated for many years. Neither of them were thinking much about marriage, and one day the fellow learned that his girlfriend was pregnant. Being Catholic, he approached his priest. All three of them met one afternoon, had

rather lengthy discussions, and finally reached a decision together. They decided that abortion was not an option. They talked about the possibility of marriage at some time in the near future.

Later the same day, the parents of the young woman came by the couple's house. They had been fairly open and accepting of this 'live-in' situation. Over dinner it came out that she was pregnant. Things changed as a result of this revelation. After the meal, the mother pulled her daughter aside saying, "Look, you've got a life to live. You don't want to spend the rest of your life with this guy. C'mon, dear, you've got to get an abortion."

The next day, the young man and the young woman ran into the priest again. The fellow brought up the discussion with the mother and said they were reconsidering the abortion option. The priest replied, "We reached a decision on that already." The young man quickly answered, "What do you mean? If I make a decision today, I can change it tomorrow." The priest responded simply, "For certain kinds of decisions, you can't change your mind. If you go back on your decision now, *I won't know who you are anymore...*"

The young man was shaken by this answer, but when he reflected on it later, he understood that the priest was right. Certain kinds of personal choices touch us at the very core of our being. Accepting or rejecting a temptation to serious wrongdoing like abortion involves our hearts in a far deeper way than many of the lesser decisions we have to make each day, so that in the end, it is our moral choices that define who we are and what we become. By acting against an upright conscience, we violate and disfigure who we are, and become less human. That's why the

priest told the young man that he would not know *who he was* anymore.

I recall another true story about the gentle proddings of conscience that involved a mom with three children. When she found out she was pregnant yet again, she became fearful and began telling herself she couldn't support the burden of another child. She finally decided it would be necessary to have an abortion. She arrived at her decision just before going in for her next checkup. The doctor, unaware of her plans, began a routine ultrasound to find out how the pregnancy was progressing. She had brought along her three children, and they were busy playing together on the floor of the examination room. As the doctor ran the scanner over her belly, her little son glanced up from his toy airplanes, pointed to the screen and said, "Look, Mommy — a baby!" She left the doctor's office that afternoon with a new awareness that she couldn't end the growing life within her.

Through the eyes and heart of a child we are often reminded of what a pure and upright conscience ought to look like. To form our conscience as adults means to learn virtue, by repetitively and determinately choosing what is good, true and moral. Doing so brings order to our lives and engenders peace in our hearts. Ultimately, we discover how to be fully human only to the extent that we faithfully follow that delicate voice of a properly-formed conscience.

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

Ciencia y Religión: ¿Enemigos?

Padre Tad Pacholczyk

Octubre, 2008

(De la serie "Making Sense out of Bioethics")

El aparente conflicto entre la ciencia y la religión es un tema al que tarde o temprano llego cuando platico entre amigos y conocidos. Muchas personas piensan que estas dos poderosas fuerzas en nuestra sociedad son incompatibles entre sí. Inclusive hay quienes afirman que existe un "conflicto inherente" entre las dos.

La reacción de la gente al enterarse de que soy científico y sacerdote católico, comúnmente es de sorpresa, con la consiguiente pregunta: ¿cómo le hace? Aunque al observador común puede parecerle que la ciencia y la religión hacen afirmaciones opuestas respecto a una misma cuestión, en realidad no es así.

Ya desde el siglo XVI un reconocido hombre de la Iglesia, el Cardenal Baronio, hacía notar que la religión nos enseña "cómo llegar al cielo, no cómo funciona el cielo". La ciencia, efectivamente, se ocupa del mundo físico y de "cómo funciona el cielo". Esta simple pero importante distinción, incorporada más tarde a los escritos de Galileo, nos recuerda que la ciencia y la religión no son objetivamente contrarios entre sí puesto que sus dominios son independientes y muy particulares.

No obstante, el que se desenvuelvan en territorios diferentes no les impide dialogar entre sí, y de hecho deben hacerlo. Albert Einstein ya consideraba esto cuando hizo aquella observación ahora famosa: "La ciencia sin religión es coja; la religión sin ciencia es ciega". La ciencia y la religión se necesitan mutuamente y deben trabajar juntas. El Papa Juan Pablo II hizo esta misma afirmación fundamental al establecer que "La ciencia puede purificar a la religión del error y la superstición. La religión puede purificar a la

(Please See PADRE/13)

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Angelo Catholic School celebrates 120 years

Capacity crowds at a Mass and dinner helped the faithful celebrate the 120th anniversary of Angelo Catholic School, Nov. 8 at the school's gymnasium.

"It's a privilege to be able to praise and adore our God in our Catholic schools," Bishop Michael Pfeifer told the crowd. "Catholic Schools teach the truth, and the truth is getting battered around quite a bit today.

The amalgamation of Sacred Heart and Holy Angels schools took place in 1976, to form Angelo Catholic. Predecessors also included Immaculate Conception School (1888-1953), St. Peter's (1922-1938), St. Mary's Parochial School (1938-1960), Sacred Heart School (1953-1976), New St. Mary's School (1960-1970) and Holy Angels (1962-1976).

Ten sisters from Sisters of Charity of Incarnate Word who staffed the schools in the 1960-1980's attended the special anniversary celebration.

The Sisters of Incarnate Word arrived in San Angelo in 1887 and in 1888 the first Catholic school, Immaculate Conception Academy, opened its doors, becoming the first Catholic school in San Angelo.

"I am even more challenged in my faith, in the sports I play and in how to be a leader because of Angelo Catholic School. Angelo Catholic taught me how to be a leader and everyone who attended ACS is a leader in what they do today because of having attended Angelo Catholic School," said Barry Norriega, a presenter at the celebration and a 2002 graduate of ACS. "My parents placed me in a great, loving environment where I experienced spiritual growth, good morals, and was challenged intellectually not to mention a place to pray and celebrate Mass. Now it is up to us to continue promoting Catholic education not only to our children but to all children who believe in Jesus and want to expand their



Above, Bishop Michael Pfeifer and event Emcee Ray Zapata; at right, Incarnate Word Sisters (top row from left) S. Mary Carmel Smith, S. Eilish Ryan, S. Annella Conway, S. Francine Keane, S. Mary Dolores Doyle, S. Kathleen Reynolds, S. Elizabeth Riebschlaeger.; bottom, left to right, S. Consuelo Urrutia, Agnes Maloney and S. Catherine Bruen. Below right, the crowd is entertained by members of the Angelo Catholic School Eagle Choristers. Below, grad Barry Norriega.



growth spiritually."

Emcee Ray Zapata pointed out that ACS graduates have continued their educations from Harvard to Pepperdine and their post-high school educational travels from Alaska to South America to Europe.



Catholics and their Bibles: You have one, you might as well read it

Part 2 of a two-part series

By Jimmy Patterson
Editor

Now that we have established that Catholics, contrary to some people's popular perceptions, often do have and even read their Bibles, what's the best way to partake in Holy Scripture in a holy way?

Deacon Tim Graham, of Junction, has a few suggestions.

"After finding a quiet place and time

(turn off the cell phone), I always begin with prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit to be with me as I read and reflect, and reminding myself that when the scriptures are opened, it is an opening of myself as well," Graham said.

One of the best approaches to daily scripture readings, Graham said, is to employ a technique known as *Lectio Divina*, which entails finding a quiet time and place, asking the Lord to make one aware of the presence of God in His Word, then reading the selection.

"After reading, take time to allow what is offered to 'sink in,' chewing it over a bit, perhaps focusing on one point or idea that strikes one. Then, slowly, re-read the same passage. Again, taking some time to reflect and pray with what comes from that second reading, a third or even fourth reading using that same format can prove to be very fruitful. Those who are in the habit of journaling can use the scriptures in conjunction with this method to unearth a treasure of insight. At the conclusion, an act of thanksgiving is appropriate."

Graham says serious students of the scriptures will need to employ other approaches that emphasize the particular purposes of the study -- a historical overview, or thematic examination of the readings. There are many reading guides available from Catholic publishers.

"For Catholics, the use of scripture is always, however, from the perspective of one who believes ... the perspective of viewing the Bible with the eyes of faith," Graham said.

Catholic Voices

Giving: It's the Christmas gift of example

By Dan Morris

Christmas season does not pass that does not stir memories of the late Bishop Bernard J. Topel, former bishop of Spokane, Wash. He gave me and a whole slew of others -- Catholics and non-Catholics alike -- one of the best Christmas presents we could ever want: his example.

You might recall Bishop Topel. He drew the attention of Time magazine and other national media in the 1970s when he sold his episcopal mansion (as mansions go, it was modest, but it was still quite an elegant place), as well as his jewel-encrusted crozier, and gave the money as seed projects



Morris

for the poor.

There were critics who claimed he was grandstanding, playing to the media. There were critics who felt he snubbed wealthy patrons of the diocese when he declined sumptuous galas or high-end events. There were critics who said he was inappropriately rolling the dice with his health because he ate what he grew in his own weedy garden or what people might give him.

There were even critics who felt his driving an aged Chevy Nova bruised the dignity of his office and risked potential road incidents. There were critics who leveled similar charges about his \$4,000 house in a low-income neighborhood.

He clearly made his critics uncomfortable. And criticize as they might, they still nearly universally respected the man.

Bishop Topel preached Gospel poverty and put flesh and blood on it -- his own. His

poverty was not defined by economic paucity, although his example and his writings called the rich to evaluate their lifestyles; the middle class to question a focus on fashion, multiple televisions and keeping up with the Joneses; and the working class and the poor to offer up their prayers and time generously.

I suspect he also made his fellow bishops a bit self-conscious. Yet he in no way tried to embarrass them or call them to task for their incredibly comfortable ways of life. I even asked him once when I worked at this diocesan newspaper why he did not say anything about Gospel poverty at the national bishops' meetings. He smiled and said it was not his role to do that.

More than a few of his episcopal friends, however, were quite aware that Bishop Topel did not stay at the Hyatt Regency or the Waterfront Marriott or the other not-

inexpensive sites for national bishops' gatherings. He would call a local parish in a poor area and ask if he might use a guest room.

Bishop Topel would have been proud of the world's bishops -- or at least the 250 or so of them who gathered for a world synod on the role of bishop in 2001. They clearly and prophetically called on bishops of the world to "be poor in the face of our brothers and sisters, marked by a style of life which draws people to Jesus the Lord. The bishop is the father and the brother of the poor."

Actually, we are all called to kinship with the poor very clearly by the one whose birthday we will soon celebrate. We owe our thanks to witnesses like Bishop Bernard Topel, who preach that message by example. That is a royal gift.

(Comments are welcome. E-mail Uncle Dan at cnsuncl01@yahoo.com.)

An issue that lives on long after the elections

By Effie Caldarola

The election is over and most of us, except those political junkies weeping on their blogs, are relieved.

Admit it, weren't there certain political ads that tempted you to throw your shoe at the TV? The booby prize here in Anchorage goes to a local race whose ads featured "Seamus the Truth Leprechaun." With an irritatingly fake Irish accent, Seamus threatened to return to Dublin if his candidate's opponent wouldn't tell the truth.

"Please, Seamus, please go back to Dublin," I begged one day as I raced to turn off the radio.

But just because the ads are over doesn't mean the issues are gone. Here's an issue that lives on -- our national commitment to justice for the poor.

Almost as annoying to me as Seamus was the propaganda railing against "income redistribution" and "socialism."

Essentially, income redistribution is just a fancy way of describing taxes. Every time we tax we take somebody's income and distribute it for the common good. That good might be a highway or fire trucks or higher pay for the military or an increase in funding for

food stamps or low-income housing.

Being Catholics, of course, we should commit to distributing some to helping the poorest among us.

There was endless discussion in the presidential campaign about taxes. Everyone agrees we should tax, and McCain's and Obama's proposals weren't that far apart when the experts sat down and figured it out, although Obama's proposals were admittedly a little tougher on the richest folks and corporations.

Certain right-wring pundits went apoplectic, describing this as socialistic despite the fact that Obama's proposals would take us back to pre-2001 tax rates, hardly a period of socialist revolution.

Meanwhile, McClatchy Newspapers reports "the gap between the rich and poor in America has grown bigger in recent years than any time since the 1920s."

The nation's top 1 percent of earners, said the paper, had a 22.9 percent share of all pretax income in 2006. Compare that to the 1950s through the 1970s, when the top 1 percent had about 9-10 percent of this income.

Wow. When you belong to a faith that is committed to the common good, to "a preferential option for the poor," alluded to by the Second Vatican Council and reinforced by Pope John Paul II, how can you not look at those statistics and think, "Hmmm, some-

thing doesn't look right here."

Yet some fretted that someone might take a little of my income -- horrors! -- and use it to bolster the safety net or increase medical insurance for the poorest.

Could I, as a Catholic, argue with that? We just want to make sure it's done efficiently, honestly, effectively -- and that's a whole other challenge. We want to do it in such a way that people still can "make it" in America, can work hard and create wealth that creates jobs.

But come on, we know that greed is a sin; yet there are those among us who think it's a virtue. We can have a healthy capitalism and still regulate and tax in such a way that we don't forget our duty to the common good.

Capitalism needs oversight, which is obvious after this year's economic catastrophe.

You know the saying, "In America, we have capitalism for the poor and socialism for the rich." McClatchy reported that the bailout, poorly constructed and poorly administered, may be broadened to help more failing businesses and enabled one bank to buy out a rival. Meanwhile, corporate execs escape crumbling corporations, using golden parachutes paid for by the taxpayer.

Now that's income redistribution we should complain about!

Supporting and challenging the president-elect

By Tony Magliano
Catholic News Service

With the U.S. and the world in so much trouble, a lot is riding on President-elect Barack Obama.

And with inauguration day less than two months away, Obama's agenda is quickly solidifying. Before it is set in stone, millions of U.S. Catholics need to forcefully weigh in on the numerous moral issues facing humanity.

Many of Obama's positions reflect Catholic social doctrine and deserve our support.

For instance, his desire to provide affordable, comprehensive health care for the nation's uninsured -- including almost nine million children -- is in line with the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

His plan to annually increase the minimum wage supports church teaching concerning each worker's right to fair compensation.

Obama's commitment to diplomacy in the Middle East, and to ending America's combat role in Iraq, is a major step in the direction of the Gospel's teaching on reconciliation and peace.

However, the president-elect needs to develop a similar diplomatic and exit strategy for Afghanistan. Sending additional troops there is a mistaken continuation of the "Bush Doctrine." Instead, creative, peaceful ideas are needed.

Obama's goal to have Russian and American nuclear missiles removed from "hair trigger" alert, and to eventually elim-

(Please See **MAGLIANO/20**)

Nation

Bishop responds to priest advising confession for Obama voters

Catholic News Service

STOCKTON, Calif. -- A Modesto pastor urged his parishioners to receive the sacrament of penance if they voted for President-elect Barack Obama, who supports legalized abortion, but Bishop Stephen E. Blaire of Stockton said the sacrament was not obligatory for Catholics who supported Obama. "Requiring all Catholics who voted for a candidate with a pro-abortion record to go to confession is not in accord with the moral guidelines set out in 'Faithful Citizenship,'" said the bishop, referring to the U.S. bishops' 2007 document on political responsibility.

Bishop Blaire, in a statement released Dec. 1, said that "determining the moral culpability of an individual Catholic who votes for a candidate with a pro-abortion record is a very complicated matter."

He said that if a Catholic voted for a candidate "with a pro-abortion record with the motivation of supporting that abortion stance, then that is a grave moral matter."

The bishop's statement came in response to a Nov. 21 letter sent to parishioners by Father Joseph Illo, pastor of St. Joseph

Catholic Church in Modesto, that urged parishioners to "go to confession before receiving Communion" if they were among "the 54 percent of Catholics who voted for a pro-abortion candidate" and had a clear understanding of the candidate's abortion stance.

According to exit polls, 54 percent of Catholics across the country voted for Obama.

The priest said he could not say if parishioners should refrain from receiving Communion, because he didn't know what they were thinking when they voted, but he stressed that "voting for a candidate who promises 'abortion rights' ... is voting for abortion. It is a grave mistake and probably a grave sin."

The priest's letter, available on the parish Web site -- www.stjmod.com -- gained attention beyond the parish after it was reported in The Modesto Bee daily newspaper Nov. 29 and picked up by other media outlets.

Since then the parish has added a special link to its Web site to enable people to e-mail their comments on the letter.

The priest also clarified the meaning of the letter in a Dec. 1 homily, stating that he never meant that simply voting for

Obama made it necessary to go to confession. Instead, he stressed that parishioners risked a "state of grace" if they voted for Obama while fully aware of his position on abortion.

Father Illo said the president-elect has publicly supported the Freedom of Choice Act. The latest version of the legislation, introduced in 2007, would establish federal protection of abortion as a "fundamental right" throughout the nine months of pregnancy, regardless of existing state laws to restrict it. However, it is not clear it will even be reintroduced into the new Congress.

The California newspaper reported that Father Illo had a long line of parishioners greeting him after Mass Dec. 1 offering their support. The priest told the paper that he never "condemned Barack Obama." Instead, he said, "we must condemn a policy that eliminates the rights of a whole class of people."

In his letter, the priest said he knew that many people were "confused about the issues. It is a difficult time for us all, and we are facing new social and cultural issues." But despite such confusion, he said, "one thing is clear and certain: We can never vote for a candidate who promises to promote abortion."



An Israeli mourner attends the funeral for Rabbi Gavriel Holtzberg and his wife, Rivka Holtzberg in Kfar Chabad near Tel Aviv, Israel, Dec. 2. Rabbi Holtzberg and his wife were among six hostages killed at the Jewish center in Mumbai, India, during coordinated attacks by Islamic militants on luxury hotels and other sites. At least 172 people were killed in the attacks. (CNS photo/Yannis Behrakis, Reuters)

Pope condemns terrorist attacks in India

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- Pope Benedict XVI condemned the wave of terrorist attacks in India as acts of "cruel and senseless violence," and led prayers for the more than 170 people who died and the hundreds injured in the bloodshed.

A Vatican spokesman, meanwhile, warned that if extremists continue to exploit the ethnic and religious tensions of southern Asia the results could be even more tragic.

Speaking at his noon blessing Nov. 30, the pope asked for prayers for the victims of the attacks in

Mumbai, the Indian financial capital, where suspected Islamic militants assaulted at least 10 targets in a three-day siege that began Nov. 26.

The pope also expressed concern for the clashes between rival ethnic and religious groups in Jos, Nigeria, where at least 200 people were killed Nov. 28-29. Churches and mosques were burned in the rioting.

"The causes and circumstances of these tragic events are different, but there should be a common sense of horror and condemnation for the explosion of such cruel and sense-

less violence," the pope told pilgrims from his apartment window overlooking St. Peter's Square.

"Let us ask the Lord to touch the hearts of those who delude themselves by thinking that this is the way to resolve local or international problems," he said.

The morning after gunmen attacked the targets in Mumbai, including the luxury Taj Mahal hotel, the pope deplored the brutality of the violence in a telegram sent to Cardinal Oswald Gracias of Mumbai.

DEACONS: Candidates intend to 'change lives forever' for Christ

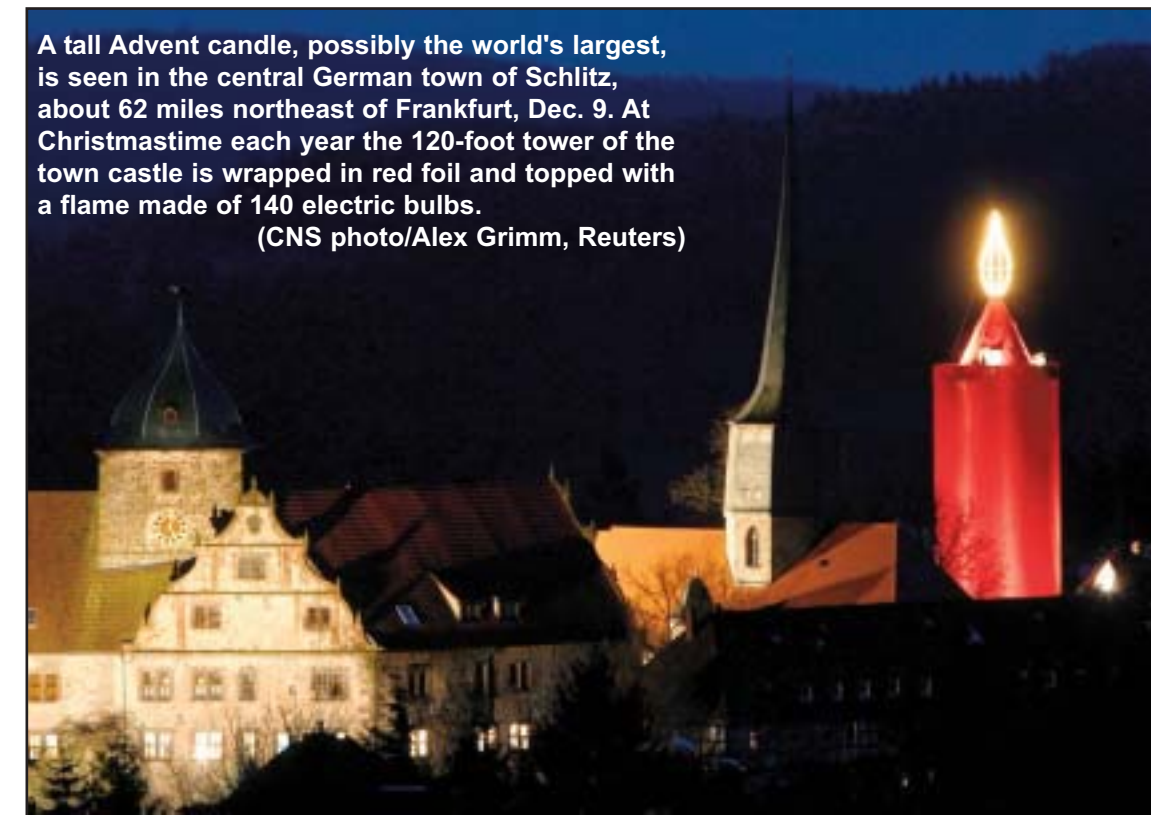
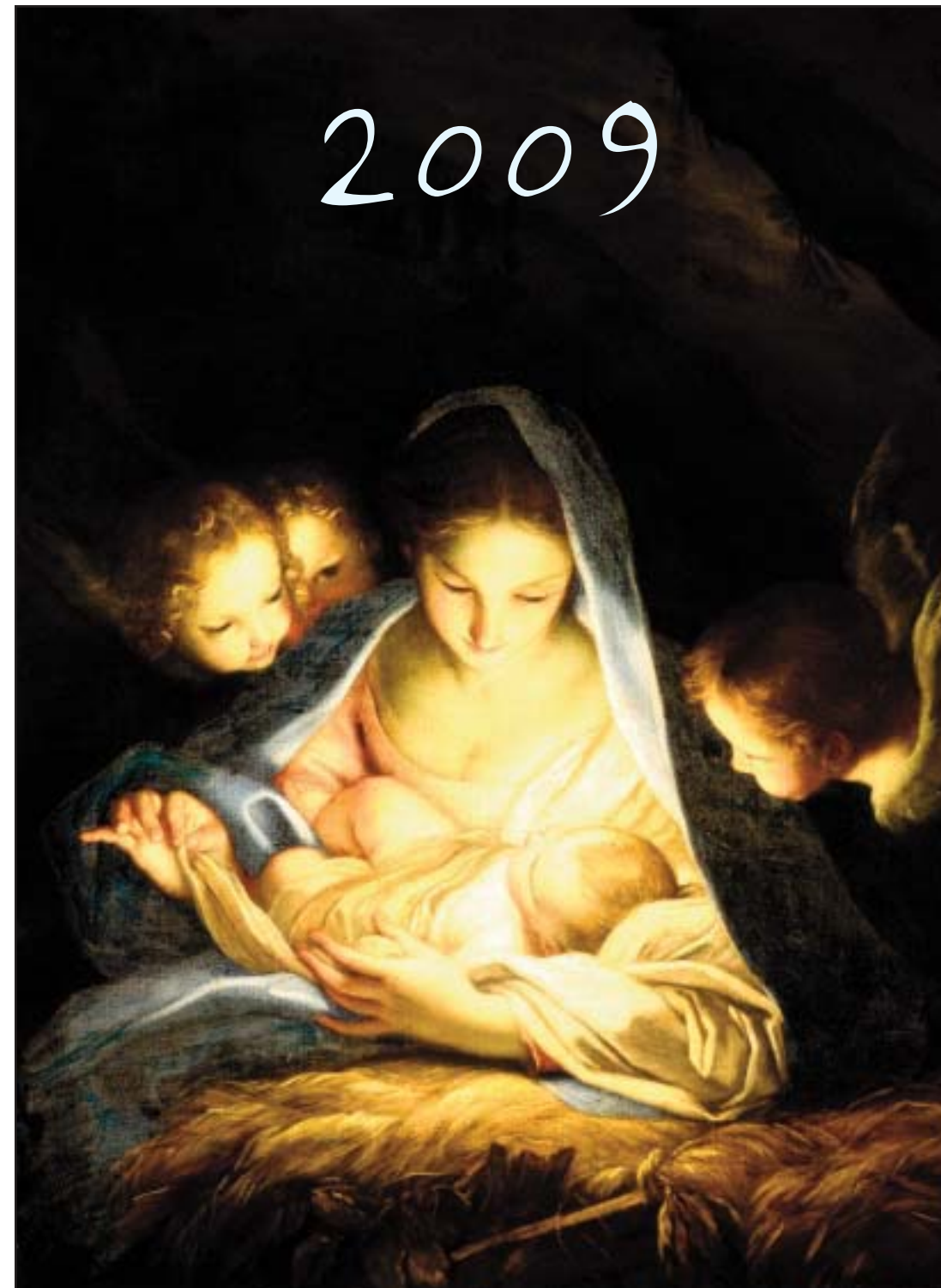
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yet to receive it. The instituted Acolyte assists the priest and the deacon at liturgical functions. They are special ministers of the Eucharist at liturgies and particularly in taking communion to the sick and homebound. As a part of his duties to assist in the care of liturgical articles, an instituted Acolyte is the only person other than a priest or deacon who may conduct the ritual purification of the sacred vessels after mass. While local readers and altar servers are usually commissioned with a ceremony at the parish, the instituted Lector and Acolyte are installed into the ministries by decree of the bishop. All of the services performed by the lector and acolyte require training and thorough preparation. The men who were recently installed have been in formation for more than three years studying theology, pastoral care, church history, scripture and many other subjects. They are also involved in supervised ministry, spiritual direction, mentorship and teaching in their parishes. The five-year formation to become ordained a deacon represents a huge commitment from the men and their wives, who are also required to attend all the classes.

The installation into the ministries represents a public statement of their intent to continue in formation, and their willingness to change their lives forever in service to Christ and the People of God in our diocese. Their service in the area of lector and acolyte is a precursor their active ministry after ordination. Deacons serve alongside priests in many aspects of our liturgical and parish life, but, and possibly more important than the liturgical roles, deacons represent the Church and Christ in places where the Church would otherwise be absent. Most deacons are married and have full time secular jobs. That means that for the past forty years the Church has been placing Catholic clergy in the midst of the secular world...in feed stores, government offices, professional services and private enterprise. They are also present in the neighborhoods, at PTA meetings and football games on Friday night. As we all know, the graces of the priesthood are awesome. What we are learning as the diaconate matures is that the graces of the diaconate are still literally immeasurable.

Advent / Christmas

A family lights an Advent candle in their New York home. Advent, which began Nov. 30, is a joyful period during which Christians prepare for the commemoration of Christ's birth. The wreath is a main symbol of the season, with a new candle lit each Sunday before Christmas. (CNS file photo/Mike Crupi, Catholic Courier)



A tall Advent candle, possibly the world's largest, is seen in the central German town of Schlitz, about 62 miles northeast of Frankfurt, Dec. 9. At Christmastime each year the 120-foot tower of the town castle is wrapped in red foil and topped with a flame made of 140 electric bulbs.
(CNS photo/Alex Grimm, Reuters)

Advent: Our joyful, hopeful journey to celebrate Christmas

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer

The church gives us four weeks of Advent to prepare to celebrate the wonderful mystery of the incarnation—God became human to bring us out of darkness and to bring us into God's eternal light. First and foremost, we need to thank our generous God for giving us Jesus who was born of Mary, to teach us about God's great love for us and to show us how to live our life on planet Earth as we travel with him to God's eternal kingdom.

We can say that Advent is the dawn, and Christmas is the sunrise. The important thing in the Advent season is to remember the one who is indeed the reason for the season—"Jesus is the reason for the season", and in all of our celebrations and preparations for Christmas, Jesus must be at the center—otherwise we lose the meaning of what this season is all about. Yes, God wants us to be happy and joyful during this season, to decorate, to hang our lights, to prepare our family gatherings with good food, but first and foremost, God wants us to center on the greatest gift God has given

to humanity—the gift of God's own son in the person of Jesus Christ. Advent is primarily a time to shop with Mary for the gift we want to give Jesus on his birthday—Christmas day.

As we walk through the Advent season, we need to capture the spirit of hope and joy that Jesus wants us to have as we anticipate his birthday. Jesus especially invites us to not be overcome by fear, but to trust him and to be faithful to his teaching. Our hope in Jesus helps us to face the many fears that surrounds in life, but we constantly need to listen to the biblical words—"Be not afraid" which are repeated 365 times in the Bible. Our prayer during Advent should be—"Dear Lord, Help me not to be afraid; Teach me to be more trusting because you are always with me."

As we prepare for the birthday of Christ, we need to remember to focus our attention primarily on Jesus who is our light and our strength. In Him we place all our hope and trust, as he guides our way even in the darkest times. Jesus asked us to have faith and to be faithful. Advent is a time to ask our-

(Please See **ADVENT/18**)

Upcoming Dates in the 2009 Church Year

Dec. 8 -- Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary
Dec. 12 -- Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe
Dec. 14 -- **Third Sunday of Advent**
Dec. 21 -- **Fourth Sunday of Advent**
Dec. 25 -- **Christmas**
Jan. 1, 2009 -- **Mary, Mother of God, Octave Day of Christmas**
Jan. 4 -- **Epiphany**
Feb. 25 -- Ash Wednesday
March 1 -- **First Sunday of Lent**
March 25 -- The Annunciation
April 5 -- **Palm Sunday**
April 9 -- **Holy Thursday**
April 10 -- Good Friday
April 11 -- Holy Saturday
April 12 -- **Easter Sunday**
May 21 -- **Ascension of the Lord**
May 31 -- **Pentecost Sunday**
Aug. 15 -- **Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary**
Nov. 1 -- **All Saints Day**
Nov. 2 -- All Souls Day
Nov. 22 -- **Christ The King**
Nov. 29 -- **First Sunday of Advent**

(**Bold face dates** are Holy Days of Obligation; all Sundays are considered Holy Days of Obligation)

[My sisters and brothers—Joseph and Mary asked me to please share their invitation with all of you. RSVP to Heaven Garden as soon as possible. They take calls day and night.—Bishop Mike]

An Invitation to the Greatest of all Birthdays

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and the reception thereafter in your

HEARTS

You are requested, as you come together with your family, to invite the poor, the oppressed, the needy, and especially children, and to celebrate this day in a spirit of peace and joy

In your own House At your own expense And at your convenience
We wish you a very happy and meaningful

CHRISTMAS

Heaven Garden,
Date: 25 Dec.2008

With best compliments from: *All Saints, Heavenly Ministers, Earthly Friends.*

Yours sincerely
Joseph & Mary

My Name is Not Fetus My Name is Amy

(Dedicated to the 46 million babies aborted each year)

(Editor's Note: This poem, by Waller Mueller of Abilene's Holy Family Parish, was published incorrectly in the November Angelus. It is republished here in its entirety and correct sequence. The Angelus regrets the error.)

My mother and I visited Planned Parenthood today,
she was anxious and my apprehension was very real.
I am not yet born, I am not human, so some say,
can you please tell me if I have the right of appeal?

Mother, I don't understand. Why are we here?
Why do they call me Fetus and not by my name?
Why do you not want me, mother? Are you ashamed?
What is evacuation and aspiration? Are they the same?

Mother, can we go home now, I am becoming afraid.
You said you came here to talk about another option.
I don't like what I'm hearing; it's all terrible for me.
Mother, did they not tell you about adoption?

I have no rights they say. What about my right to life?
Mother, don't do this. I have done nothing wrong.
The doctor said you have nothing to worry about,
It's practically painless and it won't take very long.

Mother, I know what you are planning, but why?
Am I the result of rape, incest or just illicit pleasure?
Do I have a congenital defect or am I inconvenient?
What were you told to coerce this drastic measure?

You say it is your body to do with as you please,
a growth within your womb is how you refer to me.
Must I die so as not to hinder your social activities?
Why, mother, can't you just live and let my life be?

Everybody else has civil rights, why not tiny me?
Roe v. Wade said it was all right to take my life away.
Didn't they know it's a sin according to God's law?
I'm not viable, so it's not murder, Roe supporters say.

You say tomorrow will be my last day on earth,
do I have a grandmother? Wouldn't she want me?
What about my other relatives, aunts or uncles,
do I have sisters or brothers who I will never see?

I don't know why we have to get up so early?
Is there really any rush? Do we really have to go?
The doctor said you will be sedated and feel no pain,
but, what about me? I will be conscious, I will know.

It's done! It's over! No one heard my silent scream,
at first I didn't know if I was dead or just sleeping.
Mary, Mother of God, pressed me close to her breast,
I know the sorrow Christ felt, as I saw Him weeping.

Mother, you didn't tell me our family was so large,
many of the children here are called Fetus, too.
What now, mother? Will you go back to church?
I didn't know abortions were something Christians do.

God Himself held me in the palm of His hand today.
"Amy, you are early, deviating from My divine plan.
It was preordained that you should find a cure for cancer,
I planned this since the first instance time began."

"Lord," I asked, "Can't you choose another for this task?"
"Not for a century or two, it's not written in the Book.
I gave mankind free will, now thoroughly to my disgust,
when I get time, I may just have to take another look."

Mother, I wanted you to know God loves me,
will you put Fetus on my tombstone, or not?
I wish you would write, "Amy, my beloved little girl,"
or am I just another throw away child the world forgot?

Feeling the grateful love of all God's Children

Submitted by S. Malachy Griffin

The San Angelo and Tyler diocesan partnership teams visited our sisters and brothers in San Pedro Sula, Honduras in late October. Evaluating our efforts and planning for the future occupied part of each day but there was also time to travel to parishes, missions and to the minor seminary. We delivered non-perishable food and other supplies to refugees forced from their homes by steady, daily, and unusually heavy rains which caused rivers to overflow their banks. We also spent time at a Catholic grade school and a home for abandoned children.

For me, a former elementary teacher and principal, who has always had a special love for children, spending time at La Escuela de San Diego Alcalá was delightful. This three year old school is a little gem with red-tile-roof classrooms surrounding an open-air yard. The school has an enrollment of 240 students. Classes at San Diego are mornings only. When the students are dismissed at 12:30, the teachers rush to the public school where they teach afternoons. Children go to school in either the afternoon or the morning.

When we arrived, the students were seated around the yard's perimeter. The guests were welcomed by the school's director, Juana Lícida Chinchilla and by the pastor, Father Richard Frank, M.M., a Maryknoll missionary. Costumed first and second graders entertained us with a traditional Honduran dance. They were followed by fifth and sixth graders whose dances were more intricate and a bit more polished. Between acts, we were served a homemade treat by third and fourth graders. Lastly, four kindergarten girls stood two feet in front of us and shared a poem with us. When the dismissal bell rang, EACH of the children hugged us and thanked us for coming. One little boy even came through the hug-line twice. He doubled over in laughter when he was "caught returning for seconds." These students were bright-eyed, poised, and friendly. They were loved and challenged "to be all they can be."

A short time later and not many miles distant, we visited a home for children established by Las Hermanas de Jesus el Buen Samaritano. The Sisters were all young and their Congregation, a relatively new one, was founded to meet a growing need. Grinding poverty in Honduras makes it immensely difficult for parents to raise healthy children and impossible for them to care for mentally and physi-



Children performing for their classmates and guests at San Diego de Alcalá School.

cally challenged sons and daughters. When this home opened the women religious attended to 15 abandoned and fragile kids. Today they have 60. Some of the children are ambulatory, some are not. Most were unable to speak, even to the bilingual visitors. These girls and boys were loved and cared for but there were no dancing brown eyes or magnificent smiles. The visitors were deeply moved by all they saw.

The lasting picture I brought home with me is of John Fadely, a dad, a deacon and a member of the Tyler team. He had his arm around the shoulder of a boy about 12 years old, who was in a wheelchair. The youth was leaning sideways against John and looking up at him with eyes of gratitude. This refuge was difficult to visit and difficult to leave behind. These, too, are all God's children.

Partnership at Seven Years

Despite rains and flooding, the Diocesan Partnership Teams of the Dioceses of San Pedro Sula, Tyler and San Angelo met in Honduras in late October to discuss the future of the Hermanamiento that began in 2001. Sister Malachy Griffin, OP, Sister Hilda Marotta, OSF, and Msgr. Larry Droll represented the Diocese of San Angelo. The event was held at Monte Horeb Retreat Center in La Lima.

The Partnership attempts to create relationships between dioceses, parishes, schools and university students in the three dioceses. St. Joseph and St. Anthony Parishes in Odessa have a very active partnership with Holy Cross Parish in Baracoa. The Diocesan Teams toured the flooded areas of this parish.

St. Ann's Parish in Midland is

beginning a new partnership with Holy Trinity Parish in Chamelecón. Members of St. Ann's are already familiar with the neighborhood from previous mission trips. Msgr. Droll met with Father Carlos Felipe Rodriguez, the pastor of Holy Trinity, and discussed possibilities for the relationship, including mutual prayer, learning from one another, and working in solidarity with one another.

The Diocesan Teams also enjoyed visits to the diocesan minor seminary and an elementary school, San Diego de Alcalá.

The San Angelo Team is planning to share more information with the parishioners of the Diocese of San Angelo about the Hermanamiento, to develop new energy for the partnership. The three Diocesan Teams will meet in San Angelo in late August, 2009.

*Satan The Adversary (Pt. 3)***Enticement that can lead to Satanic possession**

By Kyle Clement

In our final installment of the 3 part series, *Satan the Adversary*, we will discuss various methods and strategies and time-tested remedies which may be utilized to great effect in our battle with the adversary. The military analogy enlightens the discussion of our conflict as children of God against Satan. To be successful in their campaign against evil, both in their life and in their world we must dwell on, perfect, practice and adapt the fundamentals of Christianity. Effective and victorious military leaders, coaches or any successful person know that they must have a firm and instinctual grasp of the fundamentals of their discipline to be successful; likewise in spiritual warfare.

We must go beyond avoiding sin to pursue holiness in Christ to avoid being hamstrung in our attempts to “be good Christians.” God promises to bless us “to the thousandth generation”, but Satan seeks to rob us. Receiving God’s blessing requires that we embrace God’s commandments perfected in the beatitudes of Christ—a fundamental principle of Catholicism. To be holy requires more than avoidance of hell, but that one pur-

sue proximity to God. The avoidance of hell is merely a benefit. Scripture states that nothing unclean may enter heaven—that is sins, attachments to sin, or hurts coming as a result of our sin or others’ sins. This concept of common sense theology leads us to conclude that the beatific vision does not exist without Purgatory, a place of final purification, a bridge between the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant, a segment of the journey, bypassed only by holiness achieved through martyrdom or a saintly life. This same concept of holiness and sanctification has led us to the belief that Blessed Virgin Mary, the ark of the new covenant, *is* the Immaculate Conception, conceived absent original sin. That she carried the son of the living God to term inside her and clothed him with flesh in her womb bears cosmic and irrefutable affirmation of her immaculate status. Had she been with the slightest stain or spot, had she been anything less than full of grace, the presence of the living God inside her would have destroyed her. Her unparalleled conception, life, and assumption, which results among other things her status as Queen of the Universe, makes her our most

powerful human ally in our battle against the adversary.

Satan, the epitome of hatred and vengefulness against man, often entices a human being into a relationship that may lead to demonic possession; such a person becomes a caricature of the very sin which consumes his life. Likewise we will be defined by those activities and roles which mean the most to us. We will spend eternity doing what we have done on earth—a sobering yet liberating concept. St. Michael the archangel, a name which means “who can compare to God” had to react to Satan’s declaration “I shall not serve [God].” Michael, just as David would do on the battlefield at Gath, rushes headlong at an enemy bigger, more powerful, and fiercer than himself. Both these warriors knew they could not defeat their enemy alone. St. Michael, in the name of God, and acting in the angelic realm for God, cast Satan down from heaven. Michael, because of his purity, righteousness and holiness, defeats a greater and more powerful being, Satan, in his sinfulness and hatred. If hatred, rebellion, pride, and sinfulness can make a being such as Satan vulnerable to one less than him, will those principles not operate the same in our life? If holi-

ness, righteousness and pursuing God’s will empowered St. Michael and David beyond their natural capabilities, will we not also be empowered beyond our natural capabilities?

In our baptismal vows, affirmed at Confirmation, the first three solemn vows taken in the presence of God and before witnesses consist of a rejection. Quite simply, this renunciation of Satan and his activities result in a “house being swept clean.” St. Luke documents Jesus’ teaching on this principle in the 11th chapter, verse 24-26. A house swept clean, “freed of evil spirits,” produces a period of vulnerability as the house stands unoccupied. The house in this instance is our life, our soul, perhaps our families or marriage. When we rid a portion of our life of evil, ridding it of evil creates a vacuum, a vacuum. Nature abhors a vacuum or vacancy, which will be filled. We have developed the filling of our lives to an art-form in this society: our busyness and our activities. These occupy in an unfulfilling way the place Christ desires in our hearts. The second part of our baptismal vows address

(Pleas See **SATAN/18**)**PADRE**

(Para 6)

ciencia de la idolatría y de los falsos absolutos”.

Sin embargo, esta tarea de colaboración y purificación no es fácil en un ambiente de mutua desconfianza, sospecha y hostilidad. Una explicación a estas asperezas es que la forma en que la religión purifica a la ciencia es haciendo insistencia en la primacía de la ética. Pero muchos científicos se niegan a admitir que los intereses de la humanidad se cumplen auténticamente sólo si el conocimiento científico va acompañado de una conciencia recta, y que el filtro de la ética modera la actividad científica. De hecho, el afamado conflicto

entre religión y ciencia resulta ser realmente entre hombres de ciencia y hombres de religión, y no entre la ciencia y la religión mismas. Algunos científicos se sienten incómodos al ver que la ciencia no puede explicar adecuadamente las cuestiones de valor, o dar respuesta a las preguntas que la religión sí responde. De igual forma, algunos hombres de fe se incomodan cuando tienen que aceptar que la Biblia no es, de hecho, un libro de texto científico.

Otra explicación a la desconfianza entre científicos y gente de fe puede ser la mala voluntad generada por las opiniones de una minoría de científicos que insinúan que la religión tiene “una influencia

debilitante en el cerebro”, o que los hombres y mujeres de fe que viven de acuerdo al dogma religioso y apegados a principios éticos invariables “no tienen el problema de pensar”. En realidad es de todo lo contrario. La verdadera religión, como la buena ciencia, promueve una racionalidad más mesurada y un razonamiento más ordenado al momento de reflexionar sobre el mundo creado del cual todos somos parte. Los dogmas religiosos y los principios éticos firmes no reprimen el pensamiento del estudiante más de lo que lo reprimen las definiciones absolutas y los postulados inalterables de la geometría. Estas reglas de la geometría no “nos evitan el problema de pensar” sino

al contrario, nos ayudan a pensar de una manera estructurada, dándonos las categorías precisas y necesarias para adentrarnos más a fondo en esta rama de las matemáticas. De modo similar, el dogma religioso y las sólidas enseñanzas éticas nos proporcionan los fundamentos esenciales que necesitamos para entrar adecuadamente en una argumentación sobre las cuestiones últimas que toda persona enfrenta, cuestiones de propósito, moralidad y destino humano. La religión, en palabras de G. K. Chesterton, “no es un freno al pensamiento, sino una base fértil y una provocación constante del pensamiento”.

(Mira **BIOETHICS/16**)**ARE YOU QUALIFIED?***Are you...*

- ▶ Unhappy with your current job (underpaid, overworked, blocked from promotion)?
- ▶ Currently looking for a new career (sending out resumes, asking about opportunities, unemployed)?
- ▶ Facing an uncertain future (downsizing, involved in a family business, in an appointed position)?
- ▶ Being paid less than your worth (maxed out in pay, subject to pay limits, can't go any higher)?
- ▶ A member of the Knights of Columbus (or eligible to join)?
- ▶ Personable and outgoing?
- ▶ Anxious to earn an income equal to your worth?
- ▶ Seeking independence and control of your own destiny?

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Family

Don't touch anything. Don't sit anywhere. And Happy Holidays

By Jimmy Patterson

So, Karen, my bride, decided to stay home from work for the entirety of Thanksgiving week with hopes of re-doing a couple of rooms in time for holiday company. Only problem is we were less than a day away from Turkey Day and she was still painting and, I might add, in a world of hurt. The two don't add up to the makings of an enjoyable holiday. I, of course, decided to help her in the best way I knew how: I stayed at work. Out of the way, leaving her to the manual labor and the painting that I would have never done right in the first place anyway. Manual labor? Fix 'er uppers? That's why God gave us phone books.

Thursday, our house smelled like a combination of turkey and latex semi-gloss (carmel brown) in what made for a memorable Thanksgiving feast in more ways than one. With the sleepy-inducing L-tryptophan that turkeys give off combined with paint fumes, we almost didn't wake up in time for work the next Monday (throw into that mix the consciousness inhibitor known as the UT-A&M game, which surely played a significant role in our holiday slumber.)



Patterson

I had to laugh earlier in the week when Karen showed me her to-do list, or as she calls it, her "Accomplish List." I prefer to call mine a "to-do" list. It doesn't take as long to write, it's not as hard to spell and I don't seem like such a failure when I don't 'do' something rather than when I fail to accomplish something.

"What is this?" I asked Karen when she gave me her list.

"It's my list of things I am going to accomplish. See ... paint, buy new furniture, hang curtains."

"Yeah, yeah, I know THAT. Why is that there?" I pointed to the word at the top of her list. "Accomplish."

"It's my accomplish list."

"Yeah, I know, but do you really have to write the word 'accomplish' at the top of your accomplish list? I mean, would you not know that you need to paint, to buy new furniture and to hang new curtains if you didn't have the word 'accomplish' at the top of the page? For that matter, that's just three items. You should really be able to remember those three things."

"You?" she said. "YOU are telling ME how to write a to-do list?"

"It's not a to-do list, it's your accomplish list. There's a difference."

"I'll say," she said. "Who but *you* would ever write 'nap' on

his to-do list? It's not like you're gonna forget to do that, I guarantee it."

She continued, pointed out my list-making foibles, including how if I forget to include something on my to-do list, but then do it, I write it on my list anyway, after the fact, and then immediately scratch it off. It's always made me feel even better if I can work on extra projects while having the more formal to-do list.

"You do it your way, I'll do it mine," I said. "Just leave me alone on the nap thing. A man has to have his rest. Especially a man who lives in this house. Especially a man who lives in this house this WEEK. This place is kind of a mess, y'know. Do you realize we might not be able to find the turkey Thursday? We might have actually thrown it out when we rolled up the old carpeting and tossed it in the dumpster Monday night. And how do we know if we'll be eating turkey gravy Thursday? We could pour used carmel brown semi-gloss over our stuffing. This is NOT the best week to re-do the house, my dear."

"Well, it's been a pretty good week for me what with you having to work and all. Why don't you just go take a nap ... scratch something off of your to-do list."

Bill & Monica Dodds

Tips for a festive but frugal Christmas celebration

By Bill and Monica Dodds
Catholic News Service

We're not going to say the recent economic turmoil has a silver lining for families. (If it did have one, many families would have grabbed it and sold it by now.) But it does offer some opportunities to help you do what you've wanted to do -- or at least have talked about doing -- for several Christmases past.

And that is: spend less.

So here's the good news. This year, you probably will spend less. The not-so-good news?

You'll do that because you have less to spend or you have a well-founded concern (or fear) that all too soon that will be the case.

Here are some tips and reminders for those who in the not-so-distant past may have been "frugally challenged."

1. Decide on a realistic budget and stick to it.

2. Tell the kids that this year, when it comes to gifts, simple (read "not expensive") is "in." (Or, to paraphrase a popular expression, "Twenty dollars is the new 50 dollars.")

3. Stick to your guns! There's no better way to help your sons and daughters learn that:

a. You stick to your guns! and

b. It's possible to have a wonderful Christmas without spending a wad of money and ringing up more credit card debt.

This January can be the first year in a long time that begins without a visit from the terrifying Ghost of Christmas Just Passed (i.e., a big, fat credit card bill in the mail).

And speaking of things to watch out for ...

4. Avoid choosing to give a homemade gift that ends up costing more than something store-bought. As every craftsperson and hobbyist knows, that can easily happen.

5. Don't re-gift an item to someone unless you're sure he or she didn't first give it to you. (And neither did anyone else in the circle of family or friends at that particular gathering where this latest gift exchange is taking place.)

6. Never give an item to senior family members without seriously considering:

a. Will she just see this as one more object that has to be dusted once a week?

b. Is he just going to toss this into the sock drawer with so many other gifts from so many other years?

If either seems likely, give the gift of yourself: A pledge that you'll call or visit on a regular basis. (Keep that promise!)

And speaking of gifts and visits ...

7. Remember that at that first Christmas the initial celebration was low-budget. No, we aren't referring to the stable. We mean the angels sang and the shepherds came by to say hello. It was only later that the wise men showed up with packages.

And, while the Gospels don't tell us, it seems possible that Mary and Joseph later returned those presents to raise some money for what the Holy Family really needed: a way to cover expenses for the flight into Egypt.

On the Web: Free Computer Video Games

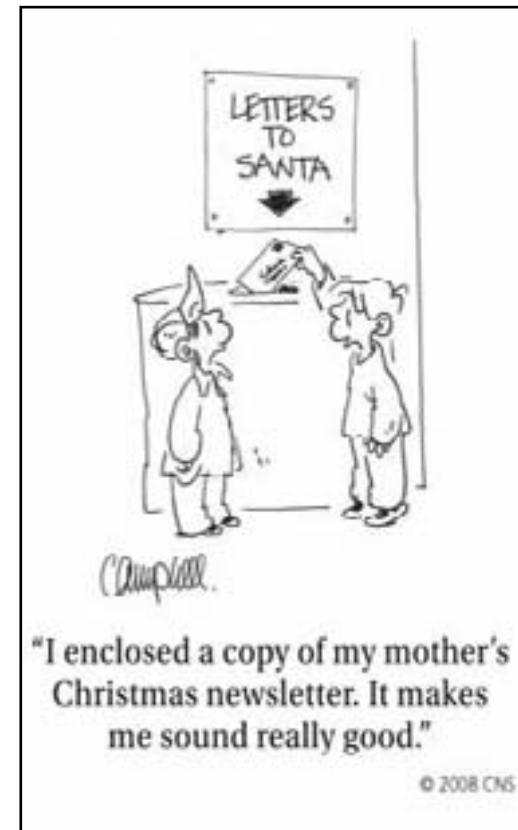
Game Giveaway of the Day offers free games every Saturday and Sunday. The catch? A particular game is available only that day and will work only on the computer onto which it is downloaded. (But you can download the same game on more than one computer on that day.) The choices are hit and miss, but the hits are fun. And the price can't be beat.

Go to: game.giveawayoftheday.com.

Bill and Monica Dodds are the founders of the Friends of St. John the Caregiver and editors of My Daily Visitor magazine. Their Web site is www.FSJC.org. They can be contacted at MonicaDodds@YourAgingParent.com.



Monica and Bill Dodds



ANSWERS

Answers: 1. Herod, 2. priest, 3. Mary, 4. Joseph, 5. John, 6. Bethlehem, 7. shepherds.



READ MORE ABOUT IT

Luke 2 Q&A

1. What did the shepherds see in the bright light?
2. What did the shepherds do as they returned home?

BIBLE ACCENT

There were no factories when Jesus lived on the earth. Farming provided most of the food for people to eat. Instead of a tractor, oxen and bulls pulled the plows through the fields. Planting, weeding and harvesting were performed by hand.

Shepherds had to care for and feed their sheep. They had to watch out for wild animals that might try to eat some of their flocks. Sheep and goats provided wool and hair for clothing, plus milk and meat. Fishing had become an important part of the culture, especially in the Sea of Galilee.

Many trades developed, including tanning

and leatherwork, pottery-making to store liquids and to keep grains dry, stone cutting, tent-making and baking. A drought or a severe storm could ruin a year's worth of work and cause a shortage of food.

BIBLE TRIVIA

Who was the man who baptized Jesus?
Answer: John the Baptist.

PUZZLE

Circle the name or word that will make the following true, based on Luke 1 & 2.

1. (Herod, Homer) was king of Judea.
 2. Zechariah was a (carpenter, priest).
 3. The angel Gabriel appeared before (Mary, Sarah).
 4. Mary was engaged to (Jeremiah, Joseph).
 5. (John, Jeremiah) was Elizabeth's son.
 6. Jesus was born in (Bethlehem, Jerusalem).
 7. (Fishermen, shepherds) visited baby Jesus.
- (Answers, Pg. 14)

JUST 4 KIDS

Angels tell shepherds of Jesus Christ'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 descendent 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.

A teen's prayer during the family's holiday meal

By Erick Rommel / Catholic News Service

In some families, teens are encouraged to give a blessing before the Thanksgiving meal. For those who would rather do more than mumble a few words about how great the turkey looks, I recommend these special words:

"As we prepare for our feast, I'd like to honor this holiday and those who celebrate it by giving thanks in the truest sense of those words.

"We give thanks for the family that surrounds us and comes together in celebration on this and other holidays.

"Many call Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter special occasions, but we know in our hearts that the truly special occasion occurs whenever we come together. We're also thankful that while we don't always like each other, we do always love each other; and that's far more important.

"Those who can't be with us today due to distance or health, high gas prices or low cash reserves are in our prayers and our hearts; we are thankful for all they bring to our family.

"If there are any not with us today because our imperfect lives

■ Coming of Age

have led to what appears to be an insurmountable rift, I express hope that we can overcome our obstacles and learn the ties that bind us are far stronger than those that tear us apart.

"For those new to our family -- whether it's by birth or marriage, or simply an opening of hearts, we embrace you with love and joy and look forward to our celebrations for many years to come.

"I pray that good health continues for each of us. We thank God for our aches and pains too, because if we didn't notice them it would be because pains far worse would be taking our attention.

"For those whose health isn't what it once was, we pray for your speedy recovery. If that is not to be possible, we pray that you find the strength to endure -- and that we find the compassion to embrace you in your time of need.

"We also remember those no longer with us and the joyous times when they were at this table.

"Regardless of our finances, we give thanks for all we do have.

While we talk about economic hardships while eating a bounty greater than many will see this entire week, we remember that we still receive blessings great and small, from roofs over our heads to plasma TVs on our walls.

"We thank God that we live in a society where we can thank God. Just as important, we are thankful that we have faith, for without that our lives would be much less.

"To those who lead us, we are thankful that you make decisions with our best interests at heart rather than your own. We respectfully acknowledge differences of opinion as long as they never degenerate into differences of respect.

"We offer a special thanks to the Detroit Lions. We may or may not be fans of their team, but they along with their gridiron compatriots give us something to do after we finish this food. Today may be for family, but sometimes family needs time where giving thanks doesn't include conversation.

"In the spirit of the holiday season, we're thankful we don't have to judge our gifts by the price on the tag or the size of the box, but rather on the size of the heart that gives it, which is priceless. Amen!"

The right place at the right time

By Anonymous

I came to the support group by way of my boss who saw the notice in his church bulletin and thought of me. I have attended a support group in the past for another issue and knew that it could be beneficial.

When I arrived at the group, I was the only person there that was not Catholic. This has not been a problem. I have been included, supported, encouraged and prayed for, as much as I have supported, encouraged and prayed for others.

The group has provided a safe environment in which I could process my feelings and emotions regarding the incarceration

► Criminal Justice Ministry

of my son. I am single so I don't have a partner to share these burdens or the feelings with. Although, as I have learned, even if I had a husband sometimes there is so much pain we don't want to burden our partner with any more so we don't share.

When I arrived, I did not realize that God was placing me here so that I could receive support while my son was facing surgery and possible cancer. As it turns out, after surgery his results from the pathology report were benign. Praise God, what a blessing.

However, watching your offspring deal with such life issues when they and you are totally not in control of any decision making, scheduling, or selecting of the doctor is, at best, gut wrenching.

Receiving support from the group helped me give support to him each of the 10 weeks I traveled to see him, as he waited first for his test, then a doctor's appointment, then surgery, and last but not least his results. It was a blessing to now look back, and see that God was with me all along. He has a plan to carry us through those difficult times if we are willing to listen and follow His direction.

New Life Ministry Support Group

Many families with a loved one in jail or prison feel great shame and don't want to tell others about their personal struggles, but only through sharing their burdens can healing begin. New Life Ministry (NLM) is a community support group that offers love, understanding and acceptance. Everything shared is held in strict confidence and no one is there to judge your actions, only to support you in these difficult times. It is very important to remember that if a spouse or child commits a crime, they had a free will to make these poor choices. You shouldn't carry that guilt, but you do need to find it in your heart to forgive. In Matthew 18:20-22, "Peter said, "Lord, how often shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me, up to seven times?" Jesus said in reply, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven." Unforgiveness can lead one to cut off communications with the person incarcerated, and this is the worst thing that could happen. It is essential to maintain communication during the incarceration period of a loved one through letters, photos,

phone calls and most importantly personal visits. If this communication is not there, a loved one may feel abandoned and this could lead to depression, and even thoughts of suicide. As such, continual contact is a key contributor to increase the chances of a loved one not returning to prison.

At present, there are 2.5 million children, in the US, under the age of 18 years old that have at least one parent in prison. Many of these children and families live in poverty conditions, and this environment leads to more than 50% becoming future prisoners themselves. The NLM support group not only has a program for the adults, but can help children deal with the difficulties in their lives.

Each parish in our diocese has families and children that come to Mass and sit in the pews as a "hidden population" suffering in silence. They are afraid to share their struggles so they carry their burdens alone. The main goal of NLM support group is found in Matthew 11:28, where Jesus says, "Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. God hears the cries of those suf-

fering, and He calls us to be His hands and feet reaching out to them. Through our efforts, we listen to their struggles, comfort them and plant seeds that can lead to reconciliation. In this way, we assist in opening the door for them to experience a New Life in Christ where we have found peace and joy in our relationship with Him. If we truly love our neighbor as ourselves, we will respond to this great need.

God is already changing lives by offering renewed hope. Several of those that have been attending the Midland support group have been sharing their stories, and the peace they have found. The last in a series of articles is entitled, "Right Place at Right Time". It is our continued hope that these testimonies will inspire others through the Holy Spirit to want to get involved and establish a NLM support group in their area. GOD IS CALLING!

New Life Ministry (NLM) support groups are underway in Midland, and recently in San Angelo. Which city in the diocese will be next? Please contact Deacon Bob Leibrecht at 432-889-3858 for more details.



Our Holy Father's Monthly Intentions 2008

December

Culture of Life. That, faced with the growing expansion of the culture of violence and death, the Church may courageously promote the culture of life through all her apostolic and missionary activities.

Fraternal Witness. That, especially in mission countries, Christians may show through gestures of kindness that the Child born in Bethlehem is the hope of the world.

January 2009

Family: That the family may become more and more a place of training in charity, personal growth and transmission of the faith.

Unity: That the different Christian confessions, aware of the need for a new evangelization in this period of profound transformations, may be committed to announcing the Good News and moving towards the full unity of all Christians in order to offer a more credible testimony of the Gospel.

Daily Offering Prayer

O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary I offer you my prayers, works, joys and sufferings of this day in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world. I offer them for all the intentions of Your Sacred Heart: the salvation of souls, reparation for sin and the reunion of all Christians.

I offer them for the intentions of our bishops and of all Apostles of Prayer, and in particular for those recommended by our Holy Father this month.

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

Criminal Justice Ministry
Diocesan Office
325-651-7500

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



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mysticalrosefloral@hotmail.com



PLANNED PARENTHOOD: Foundation comes from anti-Christian founder

(From 4)

486 for medical abortions, and promoted its approval by the FDA, and volunteered to conduct early U.S. drug trials. In one trial the patient nearly bled to death, but the PPFa affiliate did not report this as an “adverse event.” Young Californians Holly Patterson and Vivian Tran died from toxic poisoning after Planned Parenthood’s RU-486 abortions. PPFa’s promotion of RU-486 continues, despite a medical finding that the risk of death after such abortions, from infection alone, is ten times the risk of death from all causes in surgical abortions at the same state of pregnancy.

It is very sad and troubling to know that the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) in approving RU-486 has, for the first time in its history, approved a drug that is designed to kill. The FDA is charged with approving only those drugs which would improve health or assist in overcoming some pathology and which carry minimal or no risk to those who would use them. The FDA’s approval of RU-486 does none of the above, and this “abortion pill” does not improve the health of the woman taking the pill, since pregnancy is not a disease. Plaintiff-patients have said that they have been misled about the severity of the side effects of RU-486 which include excessive bleeding, severed headaches, nausea, dizziness, mood swings, and depression. One study showed twenty percent of women who underwent RU-486 misoprostol abortion suffered prolonged bleeding for 35 to 42 days.

Many have misleadingly promoted RU-486 as a panacea. In reality, chemical or medical abortion is an intense, three to fifteen day regimen involving multiple office visits and a combination of drugs with the possibility of life-threatening complications. Over 660 “adverse events” reports were recorded by the FDA describing problems which arose in the course of RU-486 abortions over four years ending October 2004.

Supporters of RU-486 also claim it is

“effective.” The truth is, this depends on what you mean by “effective.” What a terrible distortion of medicine’s highest goal—to provide health and well-being—to say a drug is “effective” in destroying human life. What failure rate is acceptable in a completely voluntary drug like RU-486 that has no health benefit and substantial risk to the user? One might tolerate fairly high risk of failure and harm in a drug that might cure cancer, because the alternative is probable death. RU-486 is blatantly immoral as its sole purpose is to kill the unborn.

Planned Parenthood Political Efforts

Planned Parenthood (PPFA) has been making news lately on several fronts. In fiscal year 2007, the nation’s premier abortion provider topped \$1 Billion in revenues (with the help of over \$336 million in taxpayer funding). “Flush with cash”—as the *Wall Street Journal* describes it—Planned Parenthood has embarked on two spending sprees. Its Action Fund offered to pump \$10 million into this year’s political campaigns to elect pro-abortion candidates. The election funding should go a long way to ensuring that PPFa continues to get hundreds of millions annually in government handouts.

Planned Parenthood and Teens

Parents need to be aware of Planned Parenthood’s degrading position on pornography featured on “Teenwire: “There is no indication that using pornography causes problems as long as it does not interfere with other aspects of a person’s life.” How different this is from the position of our Catholic Church, and most Christians, that pornography degrades and dehumanizes both female and male participants and present youth with a false and distorted image of human sexuality, devoid of love, commitment, and responsibility. Planned Parenthood also entices hundreds of thousands of teenagers to believe that condoms and pills guarantee consequences. Planned Parenthood propagates myths among youth that condoms and birth control pills are

“effective” in preventing pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. Planned Parenthood continues to mislead teens that there is no substantial risk of becoming pregnant or acquiring an STD while using condoms or the Pill. However, last March, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that one in four teens had at least one sexually transmitted disease.

It has been pointed out by the *Weekly Standard*, 10/22/07, that about 60% of the government funding PPFa received in the fiscal ending June 30, 2005, came from state and local governments. Planned Parenthood has consistently fought recent pro-abortion limits—

▶ Right to know laws ensuring women know about abortion’s physical, psychological risks, fetal development, and alternatives to abortion.

▶ Waiting periods that give women opportunity to reflect on their abortion decision.

▶ Parental involvement laws allowing parents to be informed if their minor daughter is undergoing an abortion. While Planned Parenthood encourages more abortions, a recent poll conducted by Marist College Institute of public opinion between September 24 and October 3rd shows that almost all Americans think abortion should be restricted. The poll indicated that even among those who describe themselves as pro-choice, 71% favored restricting abortion.

Planned Parenthood bases its anti-Christian philosophy on its Founder

Americans need to know that Planned Parenthood still bases its philosophy and principles on its founder, Margaret Sanger, who called Christianity “parasitic,” and looked forward to the day when humanity would be freed from its tyranny. She labeled the holy Sacrament of Marriage a decadent institution, and the masthead of her magazine proudly declared her motto—“No Gods, no Masters.” Planned Parenthood bases its direction on Margaret

Sanger, its founder, who championed limiting the births of groups she deemed undesirable. Her aim was one of “refining the population along preferred ethnic lines.” All Americans need to know that Margaret Sanger founded the “Negro project” to reduce black reproduction in the United States. Margaret Sanger was an eugenicist and racist, and her agenda is being carried out today in Planned Parenthood clinics in minority neighborhoods, which are abortuaries that destroy the unborn. A major question needs to be answered by Planned Parenthood. All need to know that at least until 1963, Planned Parenthood recognized that the unborn was a baby when it stated: “An abortion kills the life of a baby after it has begun. It is dangerous to your life and health.” When and why did Planned Parenthood stop considering the unborn to be a baby?

Support Pro-life Legislation

There is an important legislation that is before Congress [S.351], that would amend the Public Health Service Act to prohibit family planning grants from being awarded to “any entity that performs abortions,” which would immediately cut off of Planned Parenthood’s \$336 million taxpayer funding. Now is the time to act to support this legislation, and to take a stance for the precious unborn who are being destroyed at many Planned Parenthood clinics. Please write your local officials and media about your displeasure with the programs of Planned Parenthood, and write our Congress people to support Bill S.351. I have pleaded with the Knights of Columbus of our Diocese to support this bill. Brother Knights, you have to be more pro-active—the unborn depend on you. Most of all, let us pray for the guidance and assistance of the Holy Spirit. I close by asking that we pray the short, powerful prayer of Pope John Paul II: “Give us the grace—when the sacredness of life before birth is attacked, to stand up and proclaim that no one ever has the authority to destroy unborn life.”

BIOETHICS

(Para 13)

Dejar atrás la desconfianza mutua que se ha generado entre científicos y hombres de fe es, por lo tanto, el primer paso para comprender que la ciencia y la religión no son enemigos en lo absoluto. Ambas son capaces no sólo de coexistir en paz sino que, al interior del científico mismo, la religión y la ciencia pueden interconectarse

y fortalecerse mutuamente. Quizá quien mejor lo ha expresado fue Johannes Kepler, pionero en astronomía, matemático y primero en calcular las órbitas elípticas de los planetas: “El objetivo principal de todas las investigaciones sobre el mundo exterior debe ser descubrir el orden racional y la armonía que Dios le impuso, y que Él nos reveló en el lenguaje de las matemáticas”.

Esa fuente de racionalidad, que es Dios mismo, debe ser en cada uno de nosotros la fuente que nos llene de asombro continuamente, así como lo fue para Einstein al darse cuenta de que “Lo más incomprensible del universo es que es comprensible”.

El Padre Tadeusz Pacholczyk hizo su doctorado en neurociencias en la

*Universidad de Yale y su trabajo postdoctoral en la Universidad de Harvard. Es Sacerdote para la Diócesis de Fall River, Massachusetts, y se desempeña como Director de Educación en el Centro Nacional Católico de Bioética en Philadelphia. The National Catholic Bioethics Center: www.ncbcenter.org
Traducción: María Elena Rodríguez*

ADVENT: Preparing for God's great gift

(From 10)

selves: What is my level of faith and trust, and how am I expressing my faith in action? How am I being faithful to Christ's teachings given to me in the church he established?

Christmas is about God's great gift to us, and about giving. Hence, to really prepare well for the great gift of Christmas, we need to live the days of Advent with generous hearts and hands that especially reach out to family members who are in need, and to look at ways of how we can help the poor and needy who surround us.

To help us capture the Advent's spirit, I recommend that each home have an Advent wreath, and also acquire or design as a family an Advent calendar. The Advent calendar can serve like a window to open each day leading us to the great celebration of Christmas. The Advent calendar especially should focus on special scriptural readings that the family can share together, each day, or at least once or twice a week. Prepare for Christ's birthday especially by praying and sharing with family members. Let us open our hearts to God's mercy in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and receive Him often in Holy Communion.

May your Advent journey be filled with new hope, peace and joy. To help us truly live this season, let us turn to the mother of Jesus, and our mother, and try to capture in our hearts her spirit of preparation for that first Christmas when Jesus took flesh from her body and became one of us. Like Mary, we are called to accept God's will by surrendering our lives to God's will. And, like Mary, we can bring Jesus into the world by sharing Him and His message of love, justice, peace and truth with others.

SATAN: Spiritual survival dependent on knowledge

(From 13)

themselves to the infilling of the Holy Spirit into the place made vacant by the renunciation in the first three vows. Daily recitation of our baptismal vows affirms this infilling of the Holy Spirit. We cannot pursue holiness or be an instrument of God without the animating force of the Holy Spirit. By this principle, we make ourselves available to the action of the Holy Spirit in our life.

The fourth fundamental, being readied for battle, involves our spiritual health. No soldier goes to war without basic training, which centers on physical fitness. Constant pursuit of spiritual fitness maintains readiness. The adversary will come in times of weakness, stress. As an opportunistic predator with no concept of honor or fairness, he will strike at the most vulner-

able of times. Thomas Jefferson said, "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty." This quote could well apply to our life in Christ. Where constant scrutiny, daily self examination of conscience and activities, identifying and ridding ourselves of evil influences or practices by name, devotions and prayers work to keep us spiritually fit for battle. The effective warrior not only saves his own life but saves the lives of his comrades and increases the kingdom for his Lord. Constant communication and intimacy with his Lord gives the warrior the ability to react and follow the most subtle of instructions and share in the beatific vision with God. Through prayer we find our weaknesses, receive healing, become refreshed, inspired, and are able to breathe spiritually. Readiness for battle also includes the example and exercise of the virtues to and for

those around us.

The fundamentals of answering the call to holiness, willingness to be an instrument of God, offering ourselves as a conduit to the Holy Spirit to work in our life and the lives of others, and readiness to serve by constant prayer and self examination, all combine to make a spiritual warrior. Many recognize a coming time of great spiritual conflict and spiritual warfare for our church, and indeed the world. Knowledge of the adversary and the subjects which these three articles have briefly examined will be necessary for our spiritual survival. Spiritual peacetime produces few saints.

To learn more about spiritual warfare by having Kyle Clement and Father Bob Bush speak at your parish on this subject, please contact Sacred Heart Church in Abilene (325-677-7951).

OBISPO

(Para 3)

cuando renace de una manera nueva en nuestro mundo, hay posada de nuestros corazones? ¿Hay algo que impida el renacimiento de nuestro Cristo en cada uno de nosotros, en nuestra sociedad y nuestro mundo? Sabemos que el Niño Cristo de la Navidad es el mismo niño de quien se hablaba por el gran profeta Isaías en la primera lectura para la Misa de Gallo donde leemos: "Un niño nos ha nacido, un hijo se nos ha dado; lleva sobre sus hombros el signo del imperio." A ese niño, entonces, se le ha dado títulos increíbles y maravillosos que aplican al Niño Cristo que descansa en el pesebre en Belén. Él ciertamente es—"Consejero-Admirable, Dios Todopoderoso, Padre Sempiterno, Príncipe de la Paz."

El niño de Navidad recostado en el pesebre es nuestro Príncipe de Paz. ¿Ha escuchado y vivido verdaderamente nuestro mundo el mensaje del Príncipe de Paz de cómo la paz verdadera se logrará en nuestro mundo? ¿Hemos realmente tomado a pecho ese mensaje? Si así fuera, entonces no habría el conflicto, la violencia y la guerra que existe hoy día en nuestro mundo. El niño recostado en el pesebre en el establo de Belén nos dirá después, en su misión de

adulto, una de las ocho maneras como seremos bendecidos en las Bienaventuranzas. Él nos dice, "Dichosos los que trabajan por la paz, porque Dios los llamará hijos suyos." Interesantemente, Jesús no dijo benditos son ellos que piensan o sueñan, o hasta rezan por la paz—aunque, por cierto, necesitamos orar por la paz. Pero dijo esos que hacen la paz, que ellos mismos que se han cometido a laborar por la paz, son los que serán llamados Hijos de Dios. Al celebrar el cumpleaños del Príncipe de Paz, debemos preguntarnos: ¿Hay algo que impide recibir, en la posada de nuestros corazones, el mensaje verdadero de paz?

Últimamente, la Navidad es una celebración de un cumpleaños—el cumpleaños de la persona más grande que ha vivido. Tristemente, para muchos, la temporada de la Navidad es más acerca de cosas, en vez de la persona quien es la razón de la temporada. Esa persona es Jesucristo, el Salvador anhelado. En la Navidad, celebramos un nacimiento que cambió la historia y reclamó nuestro destino como gente de Dios. Eso, por cierto, es algo que debemos celebrar—en oración, en leer las Escrituras, en nuestras celebraciones familiares y por medio de vivir nuestras vidas en amor y servicio en

estos días. Si excluimos a Jesús y su mensaje, entonces todos los villancicos, los adornos, las lucecitas, y las compras de regalos buenos de Navidad, pierden su significado. Sin Jesús, este festivo siempre será hueco y vacío.

Al celebrar la Navidad, se pregunta: ¿Cómo llegamos del nacimiento de Cristo a la celebración de la Navidad el 25 de diciembre? La palabra, Navidad, (*Christmas en el idioma inglés*) entró al lenguaje inglés alrededor de 1050 como una frase del inglés pasado—Christes maesse—que significa "Christ's Mass (*Misa de Cristo*)". Aunque el día exacto del nacimiento de Jesús no se sabe, la Navidad misma, históricamente, comenzó alrededor del cuarto siglo como una manera de dar un espíritu cristiano a la celebración del solsticio invernal.

Antes de ese tiempo, cada año, comenzando el 17 de diciembre, los romanos honraban a Saturno, su dios de agricultura, en una celebración que duraba siete días e incluía el solsticio invernal, generalmente tomando lugar alrededor del 25 de diciembre en el calendario Julián antiguo. Durante ese tiempo de festividad, los romanos festejaban, posponían negocios y guerras, compartían regalos, y temporalmente libraban a sus esclavos.

Al pasar los siguientes 1,000 años, la observancia de la Navidad el 25 de diciembre siguió la expansión de la Cristiandad por todo el mundo. Recordamos que fue San Francisco quien nos dio la crèche, la cuna. Creencias Cristianas combinaron con fiestas y ritos existentes para crear tradiciones, como el intercambio de regalos y tarjetas, y adornos especiales, incluso el árbol siempre verde, el árbol navideño. Cualquier cosa que los Cristianos hagan para marcar este día santo, todo debe centrar en Jesús—en nuestros corazones, hogares y vecindades.

Al celebrar el día de nacimiento de Cristo, individualmente y como familias necesitamos pasar un tiempo en frente de la cuna y reflexionar en el misterio del niño recostado en el pesebre. Ese niño es el verdadero Hijo de Dios. Él es del cual Pablo nos dice, "En él Dios creó todo lo que hay en el cielo y la tierra. Todo fue creado por medio de él y para él, y por él todo se mantiene en orden." (Col. 1:16-17) Durante esta temporada de la Navidad, especialmente antes del año nuevo, al reunirnos como familias, necesitamos, de nuevo, leer la historia Navideña. Leer acerca del nacimiento de Cristo en el

(Mira **NAVIDAD/19**)

BISHOP: Little child in a manger becomes our Prince of Peace

(From 2)

As we reflect on this beautiful Gospel for Christmas, the question for us today is: When we celebrate His birthday on December 25, when He is reborn in a new way in our world, is there room for Him in the inn of our hearts today? Is there something perhaps that is blocking the rebirth of our Christ in each of us, in our society and in our world? We know that the Christ Child of Christmas is that same little child spoken of by the great Prophet Isaiah in the First Reading for the Midnight Mass for Christmas where we read: “A child is born to us, a son is given to us; upon his shoulder dominion rests.” That little child is then given by the great Prophet Isaiah wonderful and unbelievable titles that apply to the Christ Child lying in a manger in Bethlehem. He is indeed – “wonder-counselor, God-hero, Father-forever, Prince of Peace.”

The little child of Christmas lying in a manger is our Prince of Peace. Has our world truly heard and lived the message of the Prince of Peace of how true peace will be achieved in our world? Have we truly taken that message to heart? If so, then there would not be the conflict, the violence and the war that we find in our world today. The child lying in the manger in the stable in Bethlehem will later on tell us in His adult mission about one of the eight ways that we will be blessed in the Beatitudes. He says, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.” Interestingly, Jesus did not say, Blessed are those who think or dream, or even pray about peace—though we indeed need to pray for peace. But he said, those who make peace, who commit themselves to working for peace, are the ones who are

going to be called the Children of God. As we celebrate the birthday of the Prince of Peace, we need to ask ourselves: Is there something blocking the message in the inn of our hearts, to receive the true message of peace?

Ultimately, Christmas is a celebration of a birthday—the birthday of the greatest person who ever lived. Sadly for many, Christmas time is more about things than the person who is the reason for the season. That person is Jesus Christ, the long-awaited Savior. At Christmas, we celebrate a birth that changed history and reclaimed our destiny as people of God. That is indeed something we need to celebrate – in prayer, in reading the Scriptures, and by the way we live our lives in love and service in these days. If we leave out Jesus and His message, then all the carols, the decorations, the lights, the shopping for even good gifts of Christmas lose their meaning. Without Jesus, the holiday will always seem hollow and empty.

As we celebrate Christmas, the question is asked: How do we get from the birth of Christ to the celebration of Christmas on December 25? The word, Christmas, entered the English language around 1050 as an old English phrase – *Christes maesse* – meaning “Christ’s Mass.” Although the exact date of the birth of Jesus is not known, Christmas itself historically started somewhere in the 4th century as a way to bring a Christian focus to the celebration of the Winter Solstice.

Before that time, each year, beginning on December 17, Romans honored Saturn, their god of agriculture, in a celebration that lasted seven days and that included the Winter Solstice, usually taking place around December 25 on the ancient Julian calendar. During that time of festivity, Romans feasted, postponed business and warfare,

exchanged gifts, and temporarily freed their slaves.

Over the next 1,000 years, the observance of December 25 as Christmas followed the expansion of Christianity throughout the world. We remember that it was St. Francis who gave us the crèche, the crib. Christian beliefs combined with existing feasts and rituals to create traditions, like the exchange of gifts and cards, and special decorations, included the evergreen tree. Whatever Christians do to mark this holy day, the focus needs to be Jesus—in our hearts, homes, and neighborhoods.

As we celebrate the birthday of Christ, individually and as families we need to spend some time in front of the crib and ponder the mystery of the little child lying in the manger. That child is the very Son of God. He is the One as Paul tells us “For in him were created all things in heaven and on earth...all things were created through him and for him...and in him all things hold together” (Col.1:16-17) During this season of Christmas, especially before the new year, as we come together as families, we need to read over the Christmas story. Read about the birth of Christ in St. Luke’s Gospel, Ch. 2, in Matthew’s Gospel, Ch. 1 and 2. When we sit down to a meal, invite family members to discuss the meaning of Christmas and how each one has lived like Jesus during this Christmas season.

The angel told us that the sign of Christmas is the infant, “lying in a manger.” That little infant in the manger who is the God-man has come to bring salvation and God’s love for all people of all times. In taking on our humanity, Jesus Christ began His life as a baby among us and identified Himself with every man and woman who will ever live, especially with each baby in the womb waiting to be born, and every little child in the arms of mothers and fathers.

Where do we find Jesus today? In a particular way, Jesus our Savior who was born in poverty, is found in the least of our brothers and sisters. He is found in the forgotten ones, the ones who suffer, the ones who are alone, the ones who are poor or whose lives are cut short even before they leave the womb. Jesus was born poor and in poverty to make all of us rich, and He also willed to be born poor to be especially close to little ones, the forgotten, the abandoned ones of this earth. This fact challenges us to remember that we cannot be indifferent or oblivious to the situation and plight of each human being with whom we come in contact. The infant in the manger would one day remind us as an adult in one of His most powerful and challenging stories that we must make every effort to recognize Him in the hungry, in the thirsty, in the imprisoned, in the sick, in the needy, in the abandoned. And He constantly tells us that each time that we do something to help one of these least, we are helping Him.

To truly celebrate Christmas then, we must look for the sign of Christmas mentioned by the angel—“the infant lying in the manger.” We are invited to go with Mary and Joseph before that infant and to adore our God as the Christ Child. We are invited to embrace with tender love, heartfelt gratitude, and prepare our hearts to receive Him in a new way each day, especially in the celebration of the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Just think of this: Each time when we go to Mass and receive the Eucharist, the infant Jesus, our Risen Savior, is reborn in our world and in each one of us, and so we can say that Christmas is truly happening not only on December 25, but on January 25 and February 25, and on every day of the year.

NAVIDAD

(Para 3)

Evangelio de San Lucas, Capitulo 2, en el Evangelio de Mateo, Capitulo 1 y 2. Al sentarnos a una comida, inviten a miembros de la familia a discutir el significado de la Navidad y como cada uno ha vivido como Jesús durante este tiempo Navideño.

El ángel nos dijo que la señal de la Navidad sería el niño, “Recostado en el pesebre.” Ese pequeño infante en el pesebre quien es el Hombre-Dios ha venido a traer salvación y amor de Dios para toda la gente por todo el tiempo. Al tomar nuestra humanidad como nosotros, Cristo Jesús comenzó Su vida como un niño entre nosotros y se identificó con cada hombre y mujer por toda la historia,

especialmente con cada niño en las entrañas esperando nacer, y cada niño pequeño en los brazos de sus madres y padres.

¿Dónde encontramos a Jesús hoy? En una manera particular, Jesús nuestro Salvador quien nació en pobreza, se encuentra en nuestros hermanos y hermanas más insignificantes. Él se encuentra en los olvidados, los que sufren, los que están solos, los que son pobres o en los nonatos quienes se destruyen en las entrañas maternas antes de nacer. Jesús nació pobre y en su pobreza nos hace ricos. Él también tomó a libre albedrío de nacer pobre para poder estar especialmente cerca de los pequeños, los olvidados, los abandonados de este mundo. Este hecho nos reta a recordar en el tiempo

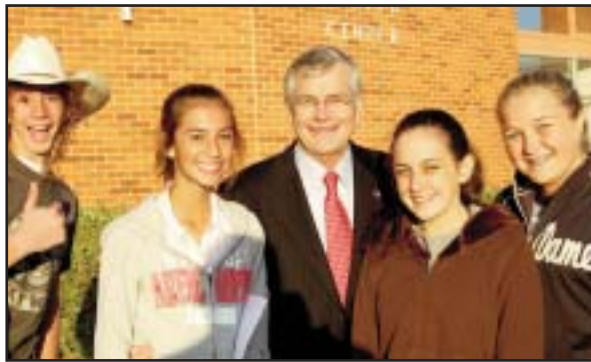
navideño que no podemos ser indiferentes o inconscientes de la situación o condición difícil de cada ser humano con quien nos ponemos en contacto. El niño en el pesebre, algún día nos recordaría, como adulto, en una de sus más poderosas y desafiantes historias, que siempre debemos hacer todo esfuerzo para reconocerlo en el hambriento, en el sediento, en el encarcelado, en el enfermo, en el necesitado, en el abandonado. Y Él constantemente nos recuerda que cada vez que hacemos algo para ayudar a uno de estos insignificantes, le estamos ayudando a Él.

Entonces, para realmente celebrar la Navidad, debemos buscar la señal de la Navidad mencionada por el ángel—“el niño recostado en el pesebre.” Estamos invitados a

ir con María y José ante ese niño y adorar nuestro Dios como el Niño Cristo. Estamos invitados abrazar con amor tierno, gratitud sincera, y preparar nuestros corazones para recibir a Él de una manera nueva cada día, especialmente en la celebración de la Eucaristía y el Sacramento de Reconciliación. Piensen seriamente en esto: Cada vez que vamos a Misa y recibimos la Eucaristía, el niño Jesús, nuestro Salvador Resucitado, es renacido en nuestro mundo y en cada uno de nosotros, y podemos decir que realmente la Navidad está sucediendo no solamente el 25 de diciembre, sino también el 25 de enero y el 25 de febrero y en cada día del año.

Diocese-Scenes

Midland



Texas Speaker of the House Tom Craddick, center, meets with students at St. Ann's School during Red Ribbon Week in early November. Craddick is a graduate of St. Ann's and recently won reelection to his 82nd District representative seat in the Texas Legislature.

Abilene



Rev. Msgr. Fred Nawarskas, left, pastor of Holy Family Catholic Parish in Abilene, and San Angelo Bishop Michael Pfeifer, right, with Sister Helen Louise Rivas, C.D.P. Sister Rivas was celebrating her 60th anniversary of the Profession of her Religious Vows, August 24, 2008, in Abilene.

Sonora



Students at St. Ann's in Sonora celebrated All Saints Day by researching a patron saint and dressing up as one. The little ones dressed up as Angels. The Presentations were made during the 6 pm Saturday Mass on November 1.

Fort Stockton



On Nov. 7, Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer dedicated these 10 Commandments Monuments, top photo, at St. Agnes Catholic Church in Fort Stockton. The monuments were donated to the parish from an unknown benefactor. Several people helped complete the landscaping and we would like to thank James and Dorothy Moore for their help with the mortar work. The rocks were donated by an anonymous ranching family. A generous local businessman also supplied a pickup, trailer and the white Texas rock during the construction. Bottom photo, clockwise from lower left, Carolina Flores, parish secretary; Rev. Thomas Manimala, pastor; Rev. Felix Okeke, assistant pastor; Bishop Pfeifer, and Rev. William DuBuisson, OMI, Judicial Vicar for the Diocese, help in dedication ceremonies.

MAGLIANO: Doubling foreign assistance a start, columnist says

(From 8)

inate all nuclear weapons, powerfully reflects Catholic teaching. But his determination to rely on nuclear deterrence in the interim does not.

The president-elect's proposal of doubling foreign assistance to the world's poor is an improvement, but not as generous as it may sound.

According to the Christian anti-poverty organization Bread for the World, the United States in 2007 gave a total of \$14 billion for poverty-focused development assistance -- which is only 0.5 percent of our federal budget.

Pope John Paul II warned America not to be content to give just the

crumbs from our feast to the poor.

According to the World Bank, 1.4 billion human beings live in extreme poverty -- struggling to survive on less than \$1.25 a day. Even during these difficult economic times, we can allocate much more than a 0.5 percent budgetary increase to help our suffering brothers and sister. Christ expects better from us!

We need to challenge ourselves and President-elect Obama to share far more of our wealth with the world's poor.

Very troubling is Obama's strong pro-abortion stance.

He hopes to sign into law the Freedom of Choice Act. If passed by Congress, this legislation would

cancel even modest abortion restraints like parental notification laws. It would forbid banning partial-birth abortions and would even deny legal protection for an infant born alive after a failed abortion!

During their recent meeting in Baltimore, the U.S. Catholic bishops unanimously agreed to mobilize the resources of the Catholic community to prevent the passage of the Freedom of Choice Act.

One easy step we can take immediately is to call President-elect Obama (202-540-3000 and press 2) or, preferably, contact him at www.change.gov and go to "American Moment" at the top of the page. Click "Share Your Vision."

In the comment section please explain why you object to Obama's support of abortion and the Freedom of Choice Act. Urge him to agree to dialogue with the pro-life community.

Also request that he pursue diplomacy in Afghanistan and abandon his intentions to deepen our military involvement there. And ask him to triple poverty-focused assistance to the world's poor in 2009.

Now is the best time to help President-elect Obama understand the moral concerns of America's Catholic community!

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Jimmy Patterson
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Editor

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