‘Today in the city of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord’

-- Luke 2:10-11
From the Bishop’s Desk

Advent: A call to hope as we prepare for the coming of Jesus

By Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI

The season of Advent, the four weeks we spend in preparation for the birthday of Christ on Christmas, is a time to prepare for the greatest event of all of human history, our God becoming one of us in Jesus Christ. The true reason for the season is to remember that our God loves us to the point of asking his own son to become one of us, and to show us how to live as children of our Heavenly Father. Hence, Advent is a call to new hope, a hope that goes out to people whose darkness is profound, a hope for people who feel abandoned, a hope for people who feel they need to be saved and rescued.

This group of readings for the beautiful season of Advent reminds us that we have a God who helps those who cannot help themselves. They need and want to be saved and rescued, and God has sent one who can fulfill all of our hopes and our desires in the person of Jesus Christ. As we prepare during Advent to celebrate Christ’s coming among us, we especially need to remember the principal reason why came—to save us.

As we go through the days of the Advent season, we need to cry out to Christ who is our hope and our salvation like the two blind men of the gospel—Jesus, “have pity on us!” We all need God’s pity and mercy, and during Advent we especially need to be God’s agents of mercy and compassion of others. Not everybody can take care of themselves, and whether they are materially poor or trapped in poverty or depression, compulsion, fears or addiction, their voices of need continue to cry out as we approach the birth of the Messiah.

(Please See BISHOP/23)

DIOCESAN BRIEFS

Priest reassignments

- Priest reassignments as announced by the Diocese of San Angelo Chancery in November 2009:
  - Rev. Nilo Nalugon formerly at Holy Redeemer Parish-Odessa has been assigned Parochial Administrator of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish-Ozona along with Good Shepherd Mission-Shields, effective December 1, 2009.

Disaster collection

- In October, Catholics in the Diocese of San Angelo were asked to contribute to a disaster collection that would aid the victims of recent natural disasters such as flooding in the Philippines and earthquakes in Samoa and Indonesia. As of the end of November, gifts collected from throughout the diocese total $46,356.09.
  “Our people, as always, have responded very generously. I am very grateful to them, and we are very happy to help our brothers and sisters in dire need. God’s peace,” said Bishop Michael Pfeifer.

Angel Tree Program

- The living in the Light Ministry, a criminal justice ministry of St. Joseph’s Church, in San Angelo, is preparing to start “The Angel Tree Program,” an annual event to furnish Christmas gifts to the children of parents that are incarcerated be it moms or dads. To help this important ministry or if you have questions, please contact Jeanie Solis at 325.374.3306 or Robert Villescaz at 325.658.1324, or email villescaz@verizon.net.

CJM Day of Reflection

- Come and experience a day of spiritual renewal with fellow criminal justice ministers from the Diocese of San Angelo, January 23, 2010, at Christ the King Retreat Center in San Angelo. The day of retreat offers the opportunity to be attentive to God’s personal concern for you through guided prayer, sacred silence, and presentations designed to affirm your challenging dynamic ministry. It will provide nourishment for both your body and spirit as you deepen your relationship with God! Please contact Sr. Estela Tovar at 432-207-0975 for further details.

Diocesan Conference Day

  Greg "Dobie" Moser, executive director of the Youth and Young Adult Ministry and CYO for the Diocese of Cleveland, will present on "Family."
  Moser has given keynote presentations and done training and consultation in over 90 dioceses, more than 40 states and internationally. He is a writer, trainer and leader in adolescent catechesis and family faith formation.
  Moser has an M.A. in Family Systems Counseling from Mt. St. Joseph College in Cincinnati and a D.Min. from the Graduate Theological Foundation in South Bend, Ind., with a focus on leadership development and the human family.
  Early registration (mailed before Jan. 28, 2010) is $20; Registration mailed after Jan. 28 is $25.
  For more information, contact the Office of Education and Formation, 325.651.7500.

Loyola Institute for Ministry to begin extension program in diocese

- The Diocese of San Angelo is working with Loyola University New Orleans to begin Cycle 4 of the Loyola Institute for Ministry Extension (LIMEX) in Spring 2010. With this program we have the opportunity to offer a Catholic university graduate education program leading to a Master of Religious Education or Master of Pastoral Studies degree with focus areas in Small Christian Community Formation, Pastoral Life and Administration, Religion and Ecology, Marketplace Ministry, Christian Spirituality for Ministers, Youth Ministry and Hispanic Ministry. Learning Groups are now being formed in each of the three deaneries -- San Angelo, Abilene and Midland/Odessa.
  LIMEX is a 4-year graduate program that consists of ten courses which are taken in learning groups at a local site and led by a Loyola-certified facilitator. In addition to the 10 core courses, students choose two additional courses in their focus area.
  Persons who are interested in participating are encouraged to consider participating in this program.
  If you have questions about the LIMEX program, call S. Hilda Marotta at the Diocesan Pastoral Center in San Angelo at 325-651-7500.

SW Liturgical Conference in Houston

- HOUSTON -- You’re invited to join us, January 13-16, 2010, for the 48th annual Southwest Liturgical Conference study week at the George R. Brown Convention Center in Houston.
  Please take a moment to download the brochure at www.swlc.org and then proceed to the registration page to reserve your spot at the conference and your hotel room at the fabulous four-star Hilton of the Americas adjoining the conference center. (Four-star at a two-star price!)
  The keynote address will be delivered by Cardinal DiNardo, Archbishop of Galveston-Houston and you will find the general sessions to be equally thought provoking and informative. The workshop sessions are certain to meet the needs of any liturgical minister.
  Additionally, there are two specialized tracks within the conference:
  - Clergy: Thursday addressing homiletic preaching in a multicultural community. Friday addresses the upcoming revised translation of the Roman Missal.
  - Catechists and Teachers: On Friday, we have incorporated workshops which will benefit catechists and teachers as well as liturgical ministers. (See session 3B, 3E, 3G and 4B, 4C, 4D, 4E)
  The conference Eucharist will be celebrated in the beautiful new Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart whose rose window over the altar serves as the centerpiece of our Conference logo.
  Saturday’s offerings are in Spanish and English. Workshops are planned to meet the needs of experienced and new liturgical ministers.

Holy Land Pilgrimage

- Barbara and Deacon Jerry Schwalb of Holy Family Catholic Church in Abilene are organizing a Pilgrimage to the Holy Land from February 18-27, 2010. Father Michael Rodriguez of Holy Family Catholic Church in Sweetwater, will be the Spiritual Director. Places to be visited on our spiritual journey include: Galilee, Nazareth, Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus, Jerusalem, Cana (couples may renew their wedding vows at Cana), Jesus’s Stations of the Cross (The Via Dolorosa), the Garden of Gethsemane, the Rock of Agony, the church of the Holy Sepulcher, and many other religious shrines. There will be Holy Mass, Liturgy of the Hours, Rosary and Prayer daily.
  Please call Barbara Schwalb at 325-692-0515 or email TXSMARTMOM@AOL.COM

Adoption options in the diocese

- Abilene: The Gladney Center (800) 452-3639 http://abilene-tx.adoption.com/
  - Lubbock: Children’s Connection: 800.456.4862 www.childrensconnections.org

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 practical help to those who wish to live out their parenthood in a loving and healthy way. The Office of Catechesis and Religious Education offers a certification program for ministers.
  Mrs. Sherry Nevarez, (432) 682-2581; TXSMARTMOM@AOL.COM

Additional contacts:

- Rev. Nilo Nalugon at Holy Redeemer Parish-Odessa 325.665.7500
- Rev. Michael Rodriguez at Holy Family Parish-Abilene 325.692-1820

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San Angelo police investigate report of vandalism to statue of Mary at CKRC

San Angelo police are investigating vandalism done to the marble statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which stands on the banks of the Concho River at Christ The King Retreat Center. Police believe the damage was done Nov. 17 or 18. The statue has been the centerpiece of the prayer grotto for over 20 years.

Pfeifer, saddened over news of the act, encouraged anyone with knowledge of the incident to contact San Angelo police.

The vandals responsible for the act broke the hands off of the statue, and damaged lights and a wooden bench along the pathway that commemorates the Stations of the Cross.

Total damage is estimated to be between $7,000-9,000.

Anyone with information about this act is urged to call the Chancellor, Mike Wyse, at the Diocesan Pastoral Center, 651-7500 or San Angelo police.

As of press time November 30, no suspects had been identified.
Baby in a manger: The only way to lasting peace

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

The Gospel of Luke for the midnight Mass of Christmas tells us where we are going to find our salvation and the peace that we all seek globally and at a local level: “and this will be a sign for you: You will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger.” The baby in the manger is the only way to lasting peace that we all seek for our individual lives, for our families, for our community, for our Church and for the world. On Christmas we celebrate the birthday of the Prince of Peace, and Christmas, his birthday, is a reminder of where true peace is found.

As we glance around our world this Christmas, and look at our own community and our families, we see how far we are from finding the peace and harmony the Christ child of Christmas wants to bring to all of us on Christmas.

Two thousand years ago many refused to believe that a tiny baby born in a cold cave in the company of oxen, donkey and a few sheep, could possibly be the Messiah—the Prince of Peace. They could not accept that the cry of a helpless and docile baby boy was the voice of almighty God, who came into our world to show us the path to peace. At the beginning, and still today, we are often blinded and do not recognize that the infant in the manger, the eternal Word of God, is the one who called forth heaven and earth from nothingness. It seemed impossible to the people when Christ was born that the same God who had worked such great wonders in creating the universe, should humble himself, so that in an even greater miracle, the Son of God would become a man, to live like one of us here on earth.

As we once again celebrate the birthday of Christ, it seems that we still refuse to accept the fact that in the small hands of that divine infant is the only place where we will find the secret of peace that we all want and pray for. Only in the outstretched arms of the infant in the manger is where we will find the peace necessary for human beings to live a fulfilling and meaningful life here on earth.

Instead of seeking for the peace that we all want in the infant in the manger, we often search for more modern recipes and ways for peace, which more human than divine, seem to ultimately complicate our lives and make our search ineffective.

Obviously, a world that trusts more in its own great technical accomplishments and intellectual advancements than in God is not able to understand the ways of God, the ways of the infant lying in the manger. God’s ways it seems are much too simple. It is true that two thousand years have gone by since the Prince of Peace came into our world, but even today the entrance to the Bethlehem cave can only be crossed by bowing one’s head. I have personally visited the spot where it is claimed that Christ was born, and the only way you can enter it is by bowing your head to walk through the entrance. On this Christmas, we humbly need to bow our heads and bend our knees before the infant in the manger in whom dwells the fullness of the God head and sincerely admit we need help and that we humbly recognize our total dependence on our loving God whose way is still the best way.

But perhaps we ask what is the peace that the Christ in the manger offers us. It means opening our hearts and minds to Christ. It means working for justice, being people who forgive and reach out in service. Without a doubt, as it seems to be with everything in life, the plans of God are unlike our way of doing things. And for that reason, we do not easily accept God’s plan of peace.

The peace of the Christ child in the manger is a paradox. Instead of imposing himself, Christ simply looks to do the will of the father. He is not satisfied with peace alone, He wants forgiveness as well. Instead of making a public stand he works in silence without looking to draw attention. How different Christ’s way to peace is! It is simpler than our way of thinking but at the same time it is more demanding. The infant lying in the manger, the Prince of Peace, reveals a great secret to all of those who search for peace. He reminds us that peace begins with an “h”, for humility not with “p” which stands for power. The world when it thinks of peace thinks of power.

The secret to truly celebrating Christmas is to become children again in our hearts with Christ, and to go before the infant lying in the manger and to let him enter our hearts.

The divine child born in Bethlehem, lying in a manger brings in his little hands as a gift the key to peace for all human beings. May we let the words of the Angel of Christmas truly enter our hearts so that we can receive the message of the Prince of Peace of Christmas—“I bring good news of great joy which will come to all people: For to you is born this day in the city of David a savior, who is Christ the lord.” (Luke 2:10-11) Christ is our peace! My brothers and sisters of the third millennium, we who hunger for justice and peace accept the message of Christ, which rings out on Christmas throughout the world.—My peace I leave with you, my peace I give you. A blessed and joyful Christmas for all with the Prince of Peace.
Letter from the Bishop

Pfeifer encourages support of ‘Souper Bowl of Caring’ throughout the diocese

December 2009

TO: Priests, pastoral coordinators and youth leaders of the Diocese of San Angelo
FROM: Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

I am happy to lend my name as an advocate of a straightforward youth-oriented movement that I think will be of great interest to you, and especially to our young people. Called the SOUPER BOWL OF CARING, it touches the needy and teaches young people to reach out to our brother and sisters who are in need. How does this program work?

On Super Bowl weekend, February 7, 2010, parishioners who attend Mass are invited to donate $1 each as they depart from Mass. Young people from each church stand at the entrance of the church and receive the donations in large soup pots. Best of all, each group then sends every dollar they collect directly to the soup kitchen, the food bank, St. Vincent de Paul, Catholic Charities, Catholic Outreach, or other charity of their choice. The amount collected should be recorded with the local church, and then be turned over to the agency or agencies that have been selected in advance.

The SOUPER BOWL is the fruit of a single line of a prayer, “Lord, even as we enjoy the Super Bowl football game, help us to be mindful of those who are without a bowl of soup to eat.” From the seed of that prayer grew this beautiful program of help for the poor and needy. Begun in 1993, this national youth effort has already raised more than $20 million.

With roughly 130 million people watching the game, Super Bowl weekend is the largest planned event in the life of our country. Hopefully those viewers would be willing to donate $1 for charity. To be more successful, it is important to announce the SOUPER BOWL several weeks in advance and select youth to participate.

I strongly encourage you to join this effort, and to bring together our youth to discuss this idea as soon as possible and incorporate any ideas that they have into this beautiful program of caring. I would appreciate hearing from you about the SOUPER BOWL OF CARING after Super Bowl Sunday, on February 7, 2010. Celebrate Super Bowl Sunday by sharing in the SOUPER BOWL OF CARING.

God’s peace.

The Most Rev. Michael D. Pfeifer
Bishop of San Angelo

‘Share in the Care’ collect for retired Dec. 13

The Angelus

December 2009

Catholic parishes in the Diocese of San Angelo will conduct the 22nd annual appeal for the Retirement Fund for Religious on 12/13/2009. The collection theme is “Share in the Care.”

In 2008, the Diocese of San Angelo contributed $111,358.53 to this collection. Many women and men religious who serve or have served in the diocese but whose institutes are headquartered elsewhere may benefit from this fund.

The collection is coordinated by the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) in Washington, D.C., and assists thousands of elderly religious and men religious whose communities lack adequate funding for retirement.

“The collection has been the most successful campaign in the history of the Church in the United States, which is testimony to the gratitude many feel for the services they have received from religious orders,” said Sister Janice Bader, a Sister of the Most Precious Blood of O’Fallon, Missouri, and NRRO executive director.

“I am continually heartened by the overwhelming generosity of Catholics to this fund each year,” she said. “Even in these difficult financial times, Catholics across the nation find a way to give back to the women and men religious who sacrificed so much for our Church and our world.”

The 2008 collection drew over $28.2 million. Since 1988, Catholics have donated nearly $589 million to the annual appeal. Approximately 95 percent of these donations are distributed almost immediately to support the care of senior religious.

The 2008 appeal, for example, enabled the National Religious Retirement Office to distribute over $23 million to 483 religious institutes. These funds supplemented the day-to-day care of elderly religious and helped religious institutes implement long-range retirement strategies. The NRRO also distributed close to $3 million in targeted financial assistance to support self-help projects, such as collaborative health care facilities, initiated by religious institutes.

The retirement crisis developed as demographics of religious institutes changed so that now there are more elderly than younger members. The problem has been compounded by skyrocketing health care costs. Today, there are more than 35,000 women and men religious over age 70, and more than 5,500 religious require skilled care. Historically, older religious worked for years for small stipends, with surplus income reinvested in their ministries, such as schools and social service agencies. Retirement was not a priority in the past when there were enough younger members to care for older ones.

Over the next 10 to 15 years, the number of religious age 25 to 74 is expected to decrease sharply and with this decline, the income of religious institutes will drop precipitously.

Midland adopts ‘Communities that Care’ model

By Jimmy Patterson
Angelus Editor

MIDLAND -- After hearing from a consultant based in Houston who shared causative factors as to why young people in Midland County turn to drugs, members of Bishop Pfeifer’s Communitywide Drug Taskforce and the Midland Coalition voted to adopt the Communities That Care model to approach the drug addiction issue from a different angle.

“A risk-focused and evidence-based approach for promoting positive development among youth, Communities That Care works by empowering communities to gather at a grass-roots level in order to both enhance positive youth development and reduce risk factors that are shown to increase the likelihood that youth will be involved in such problem behaviors as delinquency, substance abuse, school dropout, violence and teen pregnan-

Strong relationships with adults who demonstrate healthy beliefs and clear standards and individual characteristics such as positive social orientation, intelligence and a resilient temperament,” Blackburn said.

Bishop Pfeifer, who attended the November 12 meeting at Midland College, was encouraged that the group voted to implement the program in Midland. The Midland CTC core group will meet again each month to continue to develop the model.
Year for Priests

‘To watch God work through you is awesomely inspirational’

(Publisher’s Note: During the Year for Priests, I am featuring letters that I have received from young people about their love and appreciation for their priests. Here follows two reflections that were submitted to me by the Confirmation Class and the 7th grade boys of Holy Family Parish in Abilene. –Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI)

Dear parish priests,

We, the newly confirmed of Holy Family Catholic Church, would like to thank you for dedicating your lives in service to God. You never fail to take the time for your churches and your humble, down to earth discussions and homilies. You have enormous impact on us, as well as our Catholic family. Your examples inspire us to share God’s love with everyone around us, and encourage us to explore God’s plan for us as we head towards a new phase of our lives.

Your commitment towards our faith and your strength in face of the adversity that challenges the Catholic beliefs in today’s world is a wonderful example to the rest of us that seek to become as close to God as possible.

To watch God work through you is awesomely inspirational!

May you forever be blessed with good fortune and may God always keep you in his arms.

Holy Family Class of 2010
P—Passive-Patient-Positive-Passionate
R—Reverent-Realistic-Respectful-Religious
I—Intelligent-Inspiring-Ingredained-Idealist
E—Encouraging-Endeavoring—Enduring-Enlightening-Ethereal
S—Super-Strong-Spiritual-Simple
T—Theological-Timely-Trustworthy-Thoughtful

Holy Family 7th Grade boys’ responses to Bishop’s letter:

We appreciate that Fr. Fred is kind, funny, and greets everybody.

People could also volunteer more to help around the church (altar server, choir, lawn care).

Maybe the priest could allow the youth to be more involved in some church decisions, like which activities are included in a church festival.

The parishioners could show appreciation for our priest by throwing a party for him. Maybe gather money to send him on a vacation.

Honduran priest visits San Angelo, encourages young people

By Jessica Bell
Angelo State University

SAN ANGELO -- The Newman Center was blessed and grateful to welcome visitors from our sister diocese in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, this Fall Semester. Despite the ongoing political situation in Honduras, the Newman Center was thankful that our visitors were able to arrive in San Angelo to collaborate and communicate in one body of Christ.

Father Carlos Felipe was one of the visitors who took special time aside to explain to students about the current crisis occurring in Honduras regarding the incumbent president, Manuel Zelaya. There has been much upheaval and violence in Honduras over whether or not Zelaya will be reinstated as president and when the election scheduled for November will actually be held.

Father remained very open and transparent when he spoke of himself and his parish in Honduras. Newmaneers were able to gain insight about life in an impoverished country suffering from political warfare and turmoil.

Father Carlos said that his main purpose in traveling to Texas was to create a stronger bond with the Diocese of San Angelo. Father was pleased with the visit and was content with progress that was made during the duration of his trip. He wants to see the San Angelo Diocese and San Pedro Sula Diocese relationship grow both spiritually and in pastoral care for the people. Father Carlos envisions people in San Angelo becoming informed about the people living in their sister Diocese in San Pedro Sula. While visiting, Father noted that he really enjoyed the flat and vast landscape San Angelo had to offer. He was also really intrigued by the wind power generators that blanket the West Texas fields.

Father Carlos relished being able to eat the famous West Texas barbeque while staying in the Lone Star state.

His background has been very important in aiding his spiritual path and development. Born in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, in 1971, Fr. Carlos has lived there all of his life and still claims San Pedro Sula as his home. At an early age, Father Carlos decided to become a priest because he had an over

(Please See HONDURAS/21)
Year for Priests

‘We Cry Justice’: Diocesan Youth event features former Brit rocker

By S. Adelina Garcia, OSF

SAN ANGELO -- On October 25, the McNeese Convention Center in San Angelo was filled with enthused young people anxious to hear Sal Solo and see the multi-media presentations on Evange-a-ganza and We Cry Justice! A special treat was an upcoming young artist, Art Caballero (Mosheti Moses). The energy was contagious.

The day began with a Powerpoint prayer on the Faces of Christ and the song, “Open My Eyes.” The day began with a welcome from Bishop Pfeifer and a roll call of the attending parishes. Bishop Pfeifer later presided at the Sunday Liturgy to close the day. The music ministry from St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Odessa provided music for the day, including the liturgy. Participants were invited to bring canned goods to contribute to the Catholic Outreach Center in San Angelo.

Sal Solo, a former British rock star from the ‘80s, traveled the world and saw much suffering. This led him to reflect on how he was living his life and if he was really affecting the world. He went back to school to study theology and youth ministry and reinvented himself to go out and evangelize the Young Church. He shared his life and what he saw on his travels with the audience. The multi-media presentations were powerful and very effective in making everyone aware of the suffering in most of the world. The United States has been blessed with vast wealth and power. “To those who have been given much, much is expected of them.” Sal Solo shared with the audience the many ways we can help make a difference in the world by changing our lifestyle, sharing our wealth, and educating others of the realities in the world.

The “We Cry Justice!” CD was produced in collaboration with Catholic Relief Services, a Catholic agency that works around the globe giving aid to people and educating others on the Catholic Social Teachings.

Both adults and youth expressed how much they enjoyed the day. I also heard later in the week that the internet was busy with people going to the websites Sal had suggested. I invite you to also help make a difference by going to: thehungersite.com, fiftycentsaday.org, and crs.org (foodfast).

It takes so little to make a big difference!

‘Christ Reign’: 22,000 attend national youth event in KC

By S. Adelina Garcia, OSF

KANSAS CITY, Mo. -- Over 22,000 high school youth and adult leaders -- including 102 that traveled from San Angelo by bus -- attended the National Catholic Youth Conference November 19-21, in Kansas City’s Sprint Center. “Christ Reign!” was the theme of the faith celebration and the event proved to be a very positive experience for all involved.

Catholic Relief Services asked two of our youth (Janny Nguyen and Steffi Rogiano) to take part in “The Call to Act With Justice and Peace” workshop. Five others served as ambassadors (leading prayer and introducing speakers at the different workshops). The five were Nik Ruiz, Jessica Payen, Soleda Mendoza (Holy Redeemer—Odessa), Danika Scevers and Nicholas Benoit (Holy Family—Abilene) and they did the Diocese of San Angelo proud!

Over 50 workshops were presented along with music entertainment, liturgical services, roundtable discussions with bishops, and the opportunity to visit the different exhibits and booths at the Reign Forest. Participants were asked to donate used cell phones for recycling, school supplies and toiletries for needy students and family shelters. At the closing liturgy, money was collected for the Catholic Youth Foundation to be used for scholarships and grants for youth initiatives and programs. An anonymous would-be donor offered to match the monies collected if it reached $100,000. We are sure that happened!

Fr. Bernadito Getigan and Bishop Michael Pfeifer also attended the conference. The young people were very excited to have them present and even cheered for Bishop Pfeifer when he processed to the altar at the closing liturgy. Fr. Bernadito said he had grown from the experience and saw the youth in a different light.

God is good all the time.
Bishops approve translations of final 5 sections of Roman Missal

By Patricia Zapor  
Catholic News Service

BALTIMORE -- The U.S. bishops approved the English translation and U.S. adaptations of five final sections of the Roman Missal in voting on the second day of their annual fall general assembly in Baltimore.

With overwhelming majority votes, the bishops approved translations of the proper of the saints, specific prayers to each saint in the universal liturgical calendar; the commons, general prayers for celebrating saints listed in the "Roman Martyrology"; the Roman Missal supplement; the U.S. propers, a collection of orations and formularies for feasts and memorials particular to the U.S. liturgical calendar; and U.S. adaptations to the Roman Missal.

There was some debate on the floor about a separate piece of the translations -- the antiphons -- which has not come to the bishops for consideration, but instead has advanced through the Vatican's approval procedures without the consultation of the English-language bishops' conferences around the world.

But the final five sections of the missal before the bishops passed with minimal discussion and only a handful of proposed amendments to the texts.

Each translation needed to pass by a two-thirds majority of the Latin-Rite bishops. Each of the five pieces received at least 88 percent of the bishops' votes.

It's been nearly six years since the U.S. bishops began considering pieces of a new English translation of the missal. In June they approved four texts, containing prayers and prefaces for various occasions, votive Masses and Masses for the dead; solemn blessings for the end of Mass and prayers over the people and eucharistic prayers for particular occasions.

During the bishops' spring meeting, Bishop Arthur J. Serratelli of Paterson, N.J., chairman of the bishops' Committee on Divine Worship, this summer warned the bishops that if they failed to approve the texts by the end of November, they risked being shut out of the process by the Vatican.

Each of the English-language bishops' conferences has gone through or is going through the same process. Once all the information is received at the Vatican, the Congregation for Divine Worship must grant its "recognitio," or approval, to proceed with the translations.

After the passage of the texts, the bishops returned to a concern raised by Bishop Donald W. Trautman of Erie, Pa., over a shortcut being taken by the Vatican in the process for approving the antiphons section of the missal.

Bishop Trautman pointed out that the body of bishops had never been given the chance to review the translations of the antiphons.

Bishop Serratelli explained that with the Vatican congregation pushing the bishops' conferences to speed up their work on translations, his committee had consulted and agreed to let the Vatican translate the antiphons. Cardinal Francis E. George, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, concurred and signed off on it.

But, Bishop Trautman noted, the shortcut violates the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, the Second Vatican Council's principles on the liturgy.

USCCB OKs marriage, pastoral, ethical directives

BALTIMORE (CNS) -- The U.S. bishops took their final look at the English translation of the Roman Missal and approved documents on marriage, reproductive technologies and medically assisted nutrition and hydration during their Nov. 16-18 fall general assembly in Baltimore.

Members of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops completed their public work at midmorning Nov. 18 and spent the rest of the day in executive session. Bishop Michael J. Hoeppner of Crookston, Minn., was to lead them in a morning of prayer and reflection Nov. 19.

The approximately 300 bishops meeting in Baltimore also heard a preliminary report on the "Causes and Context Study" on clergy sex abuse being conducted by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice and a staunch defense of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development against charges that it funds groups that opposed church social or moral teachings.

They passed a $144.5 million budget for the USCCB in 2010 and approved a 3 percent increase in 2011 in the assessment on dioceses to fund the work of the conference, as well as priorities and plans and an operational strategy for the next two years.

The bishops made their own an earlier statement by Cardinal Francis E. George of Chicago, USCCB president, pledging continued efforts to keep health care legislation abortion-neutral and thanking House members who had supporting those efforts.

With overwhelming majority votes Nov. 17, the bishops approved the final five documents related to the Roman Missal -- translations of the proper of the saints, specific prayers to each saint in the universal liturgical calendar; the commons, general prayers for celebrating saints listed in the "Roman Martyrology"; the Roman Missal supplement; the U.S. propers, a collection of orations and formularies for feasts and memorials particular to the U.S. liturgical calendar; and U.S. adaptations to the Roman Missal. (See above story).

Each section must now go to the Vatican for approval before the missal comes into use in the United States, probably in 2011.

Approval of the pastoral letter "Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan" also came Nov. 17, despite the concern voiced by some bishops about the document's pastoral tone and content.

Nearly 100 changes in two rounds of amendments preceded the 180-45 vote, with three abstentions. Two-thirds of the USCCB membership, or 175 votes, were required for passage of the document. Final approval came after an effort to remand the document to committee failed 56 to 169.

Highlights of 2009 USCCB fall general assembly

BALTIMORE (CNS) -- At the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' fall general assembly in Baltimore Nov. 16-18, the bishops:

> Heard Bishop Roger P. Morin of Biloxi, Miss., dismiss as "outrageous" claims that the Catholic Campaign for Human Development was funding groups that opposed church teaching.
> Overwhelmingly approved, 219-4, revised directives for the withdrawal of medically assisted food and water in Catholic health facilities.
> Made their own a statement by the USCCB president pledging continued efforts to keep abortion out of health reform legislation.
> Approved a heavily amended pastoral letter on marriage, 180-45.
> Gave their OK to English translations and U.S. adaptations of the final five sections of the Roman Missal, which now go to the Vatican.
> Heard a preliminary report on the causes and context of clergy sexual abuse of children.
> Approved, 220-4, a document criticizing reproductive technologies that do not respect the marital bond or the dignity of the child.
Hospitality, welcoming very much needed in today’s Church

( Editor’s Note: The following is a summary of a presentation given to priests in the Diocese of San Angelo by Fr. Ed deLeon. It is reprinted here for parishioners in the diocese at the suggestion of Bishop Michael Pfeifer.)

By Rev. Ed deLeon, OMI
Pastor
Our Lady of Guadalupe-Midland

Our Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI believes that the topic of hospitality is much needed as we welcome people to the greatest prayer that is at the center of our lives as Catholics—the Eucharist—the Mass.

Hospitality and welcoming are so much needed in our Church today not only for the Eucharist, but also as a follow up for other sacramental celebrations. Our Bishop has asked that this be a major topic of discussion by clergy, religious, and the laity of our Diocese. It can be lonely living by oneself in a small town. But one can always go to Wal-Mart and know that you will be met at the door by a smiling employee who will greet you with “Welcome to Wal-Mart” and give you a shopping cart and a flier with today’s specials. If only we could be so lucky at church! How many times have we gone to Sunday Mass and opened the church door to find ourselves in a dark vestibule, greeted only by lost gloves, glasses and a stack of collection baskets. Welcoming one another as ministers of hospitality (or greeters) is a relatively new role for Catholics.

The Introduction to the Order of Mass, published by the U.S. Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy as a pastoral resource to aid in the implementation of the General Instruction, quotes St. Paul’s instruction to the Romans to “welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you” (Rom 15:7). It then assigns to the community the task of “welcoming people at the door, providing them with all necessary books and aids, and helping them find their places and feel welcomed.”

How does one prepare for this ministry of hospitality? Can hospitality be learned? Does one take a course for greeters at Wal-Mart? Obviously, there are certain facts and skills that can be easily learned: when to arrive, what to do if someone becomes ill, where the bulletins are kept and the like.

It is more difficult to develop a sense of this ministry. All the various liturgical ministers must work together for a common goal.

More difficult yet is teaching the deeper issues: Why are we doing this in the first place? What purpose does welcoming serve? Why do we feel we need this ministry now, when we got by for so many years without it? Perhaps one reason Catholics did not feel the need to welcome people coming to Sunday Mass was that we had been taught we “had to go.” Inviting Catholics to Sunday Mass was simply unnecessary—like the U.S. Government “inviting” you to pay income tax; you do it or else! For some, obligation may still be the primary motivation for attending Mass. For others their main reason they go to Mass is “fear of rotting in hell if they don’t!”

Today we have to do more than threaten; we have to invite and welcome. The U.S. bishops, in their Message to Young Adults in 1995, state: “We acknowledge the pain many of you speak of in feeling unwelcome and alone—strangers in the house of God.” The bishops apologize for past failures to extend hospitality and express their hope that in the future, “anyone who enters a Catholic church for Mass, or at any other time, will feel comfortable and welcome.”

Welcoming and hospitality become important whenever we need to do something together. But Mass was something we once did alone. Only recently have we come to understand the Eucharist as a communal act.

( Please See HOSPITALITY/21)

On the study of history and the probability of miracles

Editor’s Note: Rev. Knick Knickerbocker is a sacramental minister at St. Theresa Church in Junction and Sacred Heart Church in Menard.

By Rev. Knick Knickerbocker

In the first chapter of his book, Miracles: A preliminary Study, (Fontana Books, 1960) the British writer, C.S. Lewis, explains that "This book is intended as a preliminary to historical inquiry." (p. 8) As preparation for the study of history, the historian must "have some idea about the possibility or probability of the miraculous." For there to be a miraculous event in history, it must involve the action of the supernatural, something outside of the usual cause and effect sequence seen in the natural interaction of people with each other and people with their environment. In saying this, Lewis raises a question regarding the presuppositions of the academic study of history in the western world. In any history course in our contemporary western culture, the assumption, usually unspoken, is that all historical events are caused by the interaction of people with each other and people with their environment. In other words, the action of the supernatural in history is ruled out methodologically.

In the third chapter of his book, Lewis brings us to the heart of the matter. As he says, "An act of knowing must be determined, in a sense, solely by what is known; we must know it to be thus solely because it is thus." (pp. 21-22) With that statement, Lewis affirms the unchanging truth of the relationship of metaphysics and epistemology, and, by extension, of metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics.

Metaphysics is that branch of philosophy that studies what is; in other words, metaphysics studies reality, especially ultimate reality.

Epistemology is that branch of philosophy that concerns how we know anything, especially how we know ultimate reality.

Ethics is that branch of philosophy that studies the ordinate or proper way of relating to who or what we know. This means that the nature of that which is known is the primary determinant of the way we know that which is known, and what we know of that which is known is the primary determinant of the way we relate in an ordinate way to that which is known.

This may seem like merely a complicated statement in the discipline of philosophy, but it is not. To illustrate, consider the way we know an inanimate object in our natural environment and the way we know another person. If we want to study a particular tree, the initiative in our "knowing" the tree is with us. We must study leaves, fruit, bark, height, circumference and many other things to "know" that particular tree. But, all our study will only help us "know about" that particular tree. Similarly, we can study another person in the same way, asking all kinds of questions in order to know "about" that person. However, to "know" the other person, that person must take the risk of revealing him or herself to us, and we must be "receptive" to that revelation. All the techniques we can use from psychological testing to torture will not let us know another person unless that person wants us to know him or her. As a friend of mine, a psychiatrist, told me one time: "People fool me every week." So, unless you want me to know you, I will never really know you.

As Christians, we believe that we are created in the image of God. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches us that "The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life. It is the mystery of God in himself."

The Catechism goes on to say that "The whole history of salvation is identical with the history of the way and the means by which the one true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit reveals himself to men..." (#234) When speaking about the study of history, as Catholic Christians we believe that we could not know God is a Trinity of Persons who is One God unless God has revealed Himself to us. In other words, God will Himself be known by men. The initiative is with Him. Because we are created as persons in His Image, one person cannot know another person unless that person chooses to reveal who he or she really is.

With regard to events in history, if God (the supernatural) acts in history, it is at His initiative. The One who creates human beings who make history decides how, when, and where He will act in their history. When we are without God’s revelation of Himself as a Trinity of Persons who is One God, human beings are either polytheists or monotheists, believing either that there are many gods and goddesses or that god is one. Our knowledge as Christians that God is a Trinity of..."
Euthanasia – broken memories, broken bonds

By Rev. Thad Pacholczyk

Most people fear the process of dying, which involves radical dependency, a sense of powerlessness, and sometimes significant pain as well. Pain management is a serious, if not central obligation for health care professionals and for all who care for the dying. Although we may never choose directly to cause death by using high doses of pain medication, such medicines may be given to dying persons, even if the successively higher doses required for effective pain remission may indirectly end up shortening their life. Good hospice or palliative care diligently seeks to provide effective, but not excessive, pain medication.

Some individuals, however, when faced with the prospect of pain and disease at the end of life, even while in possession of their faculties, will pursue active euthanasia rather than hospice or palliative care. During the summer of 2009, Sir Edward Downes, regarded as the pre-eminent British conductor of Verdi, and his wife, Joan, made the decision to travel to the Dignitas assisted suicide clinic in Zurich to end their lives. Joan had been diagnosed with terminal cancer; Sir Edward, age 85, had no terminal condition, but found himself dealing with failing eyesight and increasing deafness. At the Dignitas clinic they were able to lie down on a bed in an industrial park building and drink a lethal dose of barbiturates.

Switzerland permits foreigners to come and kill themselves, placing few restrictions on the process. Doctors stand ready to provide a veterinary drug for patients, so that several minutes after drinking a glass of water laced with sodium pentobarbital, they become unconscious, with death following in less than an hour.

Euthanasia, when requested or sought out, may be pointing towards other concerns and fears of the patient. In the words of two hospice physicians, Dr. Teno and Dr. Lynn:

"New patients to hospice often state they want to 'get it over with.' At face value this may seem a request for active euthanasia. However, these requests are often an expression of the patient's concerns regarding pain, suffering, and isolation, and their fears about whether their dying will be prolonged by technology. Furthermore, these requests may be attempts by the patient to see if anyone really cares whether he or she lives. Meeting such a request with ready acceptance could be disastrous for the patient who interprets the response as confirmation of his or her worthlessness."

"Those who are frail or elderly may fear 'being a burden' to others, and a request for euthanasia may be connected to a concern about "imposing" upon family or friends. In the final analysis, of course, each of us has the right to be a burden to others. As infants, children and especially as adolescents, we were "burdens" to our parents. We can appreciate how the very idea of family (including the "human family") is rooted in the notion of a mutual burdensomeness that is shared among all those within the family. We face the very real challenge of building up a stronger familial culture (including a health-care culture) that promotes such mutual support."

Whenever individuals commit suicide, they cut across that grain of familial support and unity. The one who kills himself may suppose that no one will be particularly harmed or affected except for him. Yet the opposite typically occurs. Even when the suicide is linked to mental illness, as is often the case, relatives and family members may still be acutely aware of a kind of violation or betrayal behind the loss of their loved one.

Whenever voluntary euthanasia touches a family, the same sense of violation often occurs. Certain family members not "in on it" may blame themselves for not "seeing it coming" while others struggle to rationalize the occurrence, putting it into the best light they can: "Mom took the matter into her own hands and decided that she was going to call the shots," or "Her friends helped walk her down that long, long road and made it easier for her to say goodbye on her own terms."

In the final analysis, though, euthanasia and assisted suicide are little more than ways of short-circuiting our human interrelatedness and interconnectedness, acts of violence on a basic level that harm rather than help. Such choices cast a long shadow over the life that was ended. To end our lives well, on the other hand, is to be open to receiving loving assistance from others, and to accept the measure of suffering that may come our way, thereby humanizing, rather than demonizing, the frailties of sickness and aging. By reaching out to one another at the end of life, in our moments of fear, loneliness and suffering, we elevate this important journey that each of us must make, with death coming in God's providential time as a completion of His work in us.

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

Embarazo Ectópico: un reto médico y ético

Padre Tad Pacholczyk

Octubre, 2009

(De la serie “Making Sense Out of Bioethics”)

El embarazo humano se inicia en el momento en que un espermatozoide se une a un óvulo dentro del conducto falopiano. Durante los siguientes días, el embrión recién formado tenderá a recorrer este conducto para finalmente implantarse en la pared del útero materno.

En ocasiones muy raras, el embrión no logra llegar hasta el útero y se implanta en el tubo falopiano, muy angosto y no diseñado para resistir el embarazo. Casos así son de alto riesgo pues la elasticidad de la pared del conducto es limitada y se rompe con la presión del feto en crecimiento, pudiendo causar la muerte de la madre además del bebé.

Cuando el embrión se implanta en el lugar equivocado, ya sea en el tubo falopiano o en el abdomen, el embrión recibe el nombre de “ectópico” (fuera de su lugar). El 97 porciento de todos los embarazos ectópicos suceden en el conducto falopiano. Esta es una de las principales causas de enfermedad y muerte materna en Estados Unidos, representando un reto enorme para el médico que se esfuerza por ayudar a la madre y al bebé.

De los tres procedimientos usados más comúnmente para tratar los embarazos ectópicos, dos de ellos presentan problema moral mientras que el tercero es aceptable moralmente.

El primer tratamiento implica el uso de un medicamento llamado metotrexato, que se dirige hacia las células de más rápido crecimiento, especialmente las trofoblásticas (precursoras de la placenta), que son las que adhieren el embrión a la pared del conducto. En ocasiones muy raras, el embrión no logra llegar hasta el útero y se implantará en el tubo falopiano, muy angosto y no diseñado para resistir el embarazo. Hay quienes opinan que es posible que este medicamento se dirija preferentemente a dichas células, distintas del resto del embrión, así que podría...
Catholic Voices

Pro-life success sparks bitter resentment among politicos

By Stephen Kent
Catholic News Service

What did happen is that the U.S. bishops made a most effective use of those tools available to them and to all citizens: the right to petition and to lobby Congress.

The House passed a health care reform bill with continued restrictions on funding of abortions.

The other side is in a high state of dudgeon. From now on, the attacks will be vicious, bordering on the bigoted. Nothing rhetoric of days of yore. Expect ad hominem charges bordering on slander to be leveled at church leaders. Catholics will be portrayed as selfish, narrow-minded people willing to sacrifice a health care reform act for narrow beliefs.

"The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops apparently is running the U.S. government, aided by a cadre of faith-based advocacy groups," the House Democratic leadership, the White House and members of the Senate," wrote Jodi Jacobson on the RH Reality Check Web site. "Do we live in a theocracy?"

Mary: A role model for young mothers everywhere

By Therese Borchard
Catholic News Service

Mary did the job of motherhood about as well as could anyone and she has much to teach us.

-- Therese Borchard

In other words, Mary did the job of motherhood about as well as could anyone and she has much to teach us.

Now I studied theology, but I still have a hard time comprehending the miracle of the Incarnation...the miracle of Christmas. However, Mary helps me to understand it better. She humanizes the manger scene. With her uncomfortable labor in a bed of hay, she helps fill in the picture so that we see much more than a choir of angels singing "Hallelujah."

I imagine Mary holding Jesus as I did my babies and bouncing him on her hip to keep him quiet as she's having a conversation. I picture her shoving mashed up potatoes into his mouth minus the helicopter maneuver...and changing his cloth diapers. I imagine her doing everything I do with my kids...everything except for plugging her ears with her iPod to drown out the noise.

I visualize her as the mom next door. Because in so many ways, that's what she was.

Merton writes in his meditation: "Mary, who was empty of all egotism, free from all sin, as pure as the glass of a very clean window that has no other function than to admit the light of the sun. If we rejoice in that light, we implicitly praise the cleanliness of the window."

I suspect therein is the hardest part of motherhood: to stay pure, to not get caught up in ego and self, so that we can hear the true desires of our children but also those of God. So to the list of great moms like Erma Bombeck, Marian Wright Edelman and Jacqueline Onassis, I add another: Mary, the mother of Jesus.
Thanksfulness for the charity of Christianity

By Father John Catoir
Catholic News Service

This holiday season, I offer my deepest thanks to God for the gift of faith and the gift of the church. Many people are opposed to organized religion because they do not like all the bickering that goes on. The answer to that objection is simple: If they can find a church someplace in the world that is perfect, they should join it immediately. However, it is important to remember that as soon as they join, it will no longer be perfect because of their presence in it.

Churches are made up of people, and all people are sinners. Leaders and followers alike are sinners trying to be better. Jesus gave us the secret of unity when he said, “Love one another.” The spirit of joy is the gigantic secret of the church’s survival. Hidden in the depths of our sacred history is a person who can draw back the sting sheep. The lavish relationships people have with the church is superficial. Downs deep they cling to the God of their understanding like an infant clings to its mother.

We all learn to love the church, slowly and gradually over a long period of time. Church historian Norbertine Father Alfred McBride wrote: “Church history is the final analysis of sacred history – a continuation of the salvation history that began with Abraham. It is a record of a people called to faith and aided by grace, a people who have sinned shamelessly and loved God with abandon.”

I wish you joy in the knowledge of God’s love.

The challenge of Christmas: Uniting the whole world

By Moises Sandoval
Catholic News Service

In 1963 when I was in graduate school at Columbia University, I lived with my wife, Penny, and our three children, aged 7, 3 and 6 months, in a small one-bedroom apartment in the Bronx.

My Ford Foundation fellowship barely paid for my tuition, rent and groceries. As Christmas approached, we realized we did not have the space or the money for a tree. So Penny came up with the idea of pasting our Christmas card on the living room wall in the outline of a tree. The children’s gifts would lie on the floor beneath.

In Albuquerque, where we had lived previously, I had been on the parish council and Penny and I had been active in the Christian Family Movement. We had many friends and a large family from whom we expected mail for Christmas.

But day after day passed and no cards came. We had just about given up when on the last mail day before the holiday we found enough cards in our mailbox to make out the outline of the Christmas tree. It was an apt symbol of what Christmas means.

The celebration of both Jesus links us with friends and family. It is the one time of the year when we can count on hearing from those near and dear to us. Christmas cards can sometimes be the only contact we have with our friends and family members.

The song “I’ll Be Home for Christmas” touches the human heart and acknowledges that for perhaps the majority of us going home is a matter of survival, and going there is a dream.

But home, after all, is not just the geographical place we call but what we carry with us: values, culture, faith, experiences and family history. We need no money, green card or other documents to revisit that home. It is always with us.

Writing about Hispanics in the United States, theologian Fernando Segovia wrote: “We are a people living in two worlds, away from our traditional home, creating and establishing a new home.”

These words sum up the challenge facing Christians every Christmas time comes around again.

Though far from our eternal home, we have to create and sustain that home, a place that began in that stable in Bethlehem in 2,000 years ago to create and establish God’s kingdom of love and justice throughout the world.

Our imagination reveals countless ways to achieve that mission.

Moises Sandoval, a veteran Catholic journalist, was “editor-at-large” at the weekly Catholic magazine Maryknoll and is the founder and editor of Revista Maryknoll.
Bishop says he asked congressman privately not to receive Communion

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (CNS) -- The bishop of Providence said he was "disappointed and really surprised" Rep. Patrick Kennedy, D-R.I., made public a letter he wrote to the congressman almost three years ago about his practice of the Catholic faith and reception of Communion.

"This comes almost two weeks after the congressman indicated to local media that he would no longer comment publicly on his faith or his relationship with the Catholic Church. The congressman's public comments require me to reply," Bishop Thomas J. Tobin said in a Nov. 22 statement.

His remarks came after Kennedy told The Providence Journal daily newspaper that Bishop Tobin "instructed me not to take Communion and said that he has instructed the diocesan priests not to give me Communion."

The newspaper said Kennedy declined to give details on when or how the bishop issued such an instruction. Bishop Tobin said that in a February 2007 letter to Kennedy he stated: "In light of the church's clear teaching, and your consistent actions, therefore, I believe it is inappropriate for you to be receiving holy Communion and I now ask respectfully that you refrain from doing so."

Kennedy supports keeping abortion legal.

Bishop Tobin said he told the congressman he was writing to him "personally and confidentially as a pastor addressing a member of his flock" and had no intention of making the matter public.

What prompted the letter, he said, was a statement approved by the U.S. bishops in late 2006 that outlined the preparation needed to receive Communion worthily and said serious sin is a bar to receiving the Eucharist.

Titled "Happy Are Those Who Are Called to His Supper: On Preparing to Receive Christ Worthily in the Eucharist," the document says that a Catholic who "knowingly and obstinately" rejects "the defined doctrines of the church" or repudiates "her definitive teaching on moral issues" would not be in communion with the church and therefore should not receive Communion.

In his 2007 letter, Bishop Tobin said, he offered to meet with the congressman to discuss the situation.

In a response at the time, Kennedy told the bishop he had the "utmost respect for the work you do on behalf of the Catholic community in Rhode Island."

"I understand your pastoral advice was confidential in nature and given with the best intentions for my personal spiritual welfare," he said.

In his Nov. 22 statement, Bishop Tobin said he was disappointed Kennedy "would make public my pastoral and confidential request of nearly three years ago that sought to provide solely for his spiritual well-being."

He said he did not want to continue public discussion on Kennedy's faith life but "will absolutely respond publicly and strongly whenever he attacks the Catholic Church, misrepresents the teachings of the church or issues inaccurate statements about my pastoral ministry."

Bishop Tobin said his door is always open to Kennedy to discuss such matters with him and he will "continue to pray -- sincerely and fervently -- for his conversion and repentance, and for his personal and spiritual well-being."

The exchange of comments between Bishop Tobin and Kennedy began when Kennedy criticized the U.S. bishops in October for threatening to oppose health care reform unless the legislation banned federal funds to cover abortion.

In an Oct. 22 interview, Kennedy said their stance was "fanning the flames of dissent and discord."

Handbell choir of developmentally disabled adults is 'great blessing'

NASHUA, N.H. (CNS) -- Sean Costello plays guitar, has hosted an MTV music program, works at a local company and has Down syndrome.

On Saturday afternoons, Costello, 43, rehearses with the Special Friends Handbell Choir at St. Christopher Parish in Nashua. It's the only handbell choir exclusively for developmentally disabled adults in the Manchester Diocese.

"It was easy to learn to play the bells," said Costello, who also is an altar server and extraordinary minister of holy Communion. He said his favorite song to play is "Amazing Grace."

Parishioners who hear the group play during Mass are inspired by the joy and enthusiasm of the musicians. "They are a great blessing for the parish," said the pastor, Father Richard Kelley.

For parish music director Jeanne Polcari, the idea to start the handbell choir came naturally. Her 20-year-old niece, Beth Donahue, has Down syndrome and is a member of Special Friends, a local group of 35 developmentally disabled adults, ranging in age from 20 to 71.

"All they needed was a chance," Polcari said, noting that people with special needs still encounter significant prejudice in their daily lives. "With the handbell choir, the group is able to get their music out to the community. People can see how capable they are, when given an opportunity."

When the choir members perform, they receive a warm reception. "Many people are moved to tears," said Barbara Keegan, whose daughter Elizabeth plays in the choir. Keegan started Special Friends in 1964 to help Elizabeth prepare for the sacraments. Parents of other special-needs children asked to be included, and Special Friends was launched.

"In the past, people with handicaps were often hidden away, but we can't let them be forgotten," she said. "They can lead very normal lives and they have much to contribute."

Today, that contribution is often
Our Faith

So, what's the big rush, this holiday season?

By Father Eugene Hemrick
Catholic News Service

It was two weeks before Thanksgiving and the awesome autumn day called for a walk down to the botanical garden. To my dismay, they had already put up their Christmas tree. As beautiful as it was, I couldn't but help ask myself, "What's the big rush?"

No doubt the poor economy has merchants hoping that early sales will help business, and with people out of work, perhaps early marketing means extra jobs. Before we canonize these motives, however, it would be wise to reflect on our rushed, quickened culture and what it is doing to us.

"Ask and you will receive," when she asked through her tears why Jesus said, "Ask and you will receive," when she had asked and he hadn't given. It was a profound question in the evening's sorrow, and it takes a lifetime to struggle into its answer.

The night we found out Aunt Dorothy had died during surgery, my mother couldn't allow her to fly to California to be with her sister as Mom was due to deliver my last baby brother very soon.

The Gospel stories of healing are beautiful, and they frame the discussion of who Jesus was. But they were never meant by the Gospel writers to be just stories of physical healing for their own sake, but rather to point, always, to the deeper question in the evening's sorrow, and it takes a lifetime to struggle into its answer.

Questions like these cause us to stop, think and rethink, and to better align ourselves with the true spirit of the holidays. More important, they slow us down and diminish that rushed feeling.

Modern lessons from the healing of the blind man

By Effie Caldarola
Catholic News Service

When we read the story of the curing of the blind man at Mass as we did one recent weekday, my thoughts invariably go to my mother.

My mother wasn't born blind, but as an elderly person she suffered from macular degeneration, a leading cause of blindness in the old. There's been headway in treating certain forms of this disease since Mom's death, but it remains a cruel adversary.

Blindness took from my mother many of the things which could have comforted her in old age. She was an avid bridge player, and that went away.

Television was useless. She read voraciously, so we found her books on tape, but they just didn't fit her style. She was a visual learner, and she just couldn't become an aural one.

Naturally, my mother prayed -- we all prayed -- for healing for her eyesight. We prayed that it wouldn't get any worse, that someone would be able to help her. God heard all our prayers but didn't answer them the way we hoped.

Both her eyes were affected, and she was virtually blind. She saw shadows and movement, and sometimes she'd surprise us by recognizing someone -- maybe their gait or their voice -- but mostly she lived in a world of increasing isolation.

My daughter returned from France with a little vial of Lourdes water for Mom. Later Mom told me how she would dab some on her eyes in the hope they would get better. I still get a little ache inside of me, a little hurt I can't quite pinpoint, when I think of my mother, alone in her bedroom, putting that water on her eyes and hoping.

Our liturgy tells us that we "wait in joyful hope." Sometimes it has to be enough just to hope and struggle desperately to hang on to the joy.

It was my mother who gave me my first lesson in questioning the efficacy of prayer. I was just a little girl, almost 9 years old. Her sister was having open-heart surgery, and Mom's doctor wouldn't allow her to fly to California to be with her sister as Mom was due to deliver my last baby brother very soon.

The night we found out Aunt Dorothy had died during surgery, my mother asked through her tears why Jesus said, "Ask and you will receive," when she had asked and he hadn't given. It was a profound question in the evening's sorrow, and it takes a lifetime to struggle into its answer.

The Gospel stories of healing are beautiful, and they frame the discussion of who Jesus was. But they were never meant by the Gospel writers to be just stories of physical healing for their own sake, but rather to point, always, to the deeper question of Jesus as the healer of our lives.

(Please See CALDAROLA/21)
JUST 4 KIDS

Bible accent
The Old Testament -- the books about events that took place before the birth of Jesus -- has many references to a Messiah, or a person who would be a special spiritual leader sent from God.

Some of the prophecies said this Messiah would be a descendant of David. The Gospel of Matthew lists the family tree of Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus, and proves that Joseph was a descendant of David.

Many of the people who were waiting for the Messiah to come thought he would be a powerful king and soldier who would conquer all of the oppressors and enemies of Israel. It was probably very difficult for them to accept that their Messiah had not been born in a palace surrounded by servants, but in a manger surrounded by animals.

The Bible tells us of the ministry of Jesus and the miracles he performed, the greatest of those being his resurrection from the dead, so that we might live.

Bible trivia
Which holiday is more important from the church's point of view, Christmas or Easter?
Answer: Easter.

Puzzle
Cross out the one name in each list that does not belong with the other two. A hint has been provided for each list.
1. Visitors to Jesus: shepherds, Wise Men, carpenters
2. Old Testament prophets: Isaiah, Matthew, Ezekiel
4. Disciples of Jesus: Peter, Moses, James
6. The first man and woman: Adam, Elizabeth, Eve
7. Kings of Israel: Tut, Saul, David

Answers Pg. 17

READ MORE ABOUT IT
Luke 2
Q&A

1. Why did Joseph bring Jesus to the temple?
2. Why was Simeon happy to see Jesus?

Baby Jesus presented at the temple

Jesus had been born in Bethlehem, the home of his father, Joseph. Because of the census the town was filled with other people who had also come to be counted. There were no rooms available at the inn, so Joseph and his wife Mary had to sleep in the stable. And that was where their son was born.

Shepherds who had seen an angel in the night sky came to see the baby. The angel told them, "For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Christ and Lord."

The shepherds told Mary and Joseph what they had seen, and they left praising God because they had seen a miraculous child.

When the time had come for Jesus to be purified according to the laws established by Moses, Joseph and Mary brought their son to the temple.

A man named Simeon, who lived in Jerusalem, was a faithful follower of God's commandments. He had seen a vision that he would not die before seeing the promised Messiah. He knew when he saw the baby Jesus that this was the Messiah.

He held Jesus in his arms, looked toward heaven and said, "Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in sight of all the peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel."

Mary was astonished to hear such words spoken by such an important man about her son, even though she knew Jesus was special.

Then Simeon looked at Mary and said, "Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted ... so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

A prophetess named Anna was an old woman who spent most of her time fasting, praying and praising God. She stood close in order to see Jesus, and then she praised God for sending a child who would redeem Israel.

Then, after following all of the laws that applied to the birth of a child, Joseph and Mary returned to their home in Nazareth in Galilee.

Jesus grew up to be a strong, healthy boy who was wise and who was blessed by the favor of God.
Family

This Thanksgiving, I declared myself the top shopping turkey

By Jimmy Patterson
Editor

I have to admit one thing before we begin: For me to be introducing this subject, I have to be fairly confident with who I am.

And so I guess I am.

That said, I can admit it openly: I am a better grocery shopper than my wife. I am. There's really no need to debate it any further.

Karen talked me into going Thanksgiving grocery shopping with her over a recent weekend at our favorite local supermarket, the one where the chip aisle is named in my honor.

Let’s see, how to put this … Karen and I have, umm, different shopping habits. I am a systematic, meticulous grocery buyer. I chart a course, have a plan, and then I carry out that plan in a direct path that takes the least amount of time possible. Karen? She just goes and buys. There is no logic to her pattern, no method to her madness. Going to the grocery store with my wife is like driving bumper cars blind-folded in the dark.

It's not fun.

To make matters worse, she drove the cart Friday and I had to tag along helplessly, looking like I didn't know what I was doing when in fact I was the ONLY one between the two of us with experience in how to shop. It was humiliating for me.

I used to tag along with my mom when I was a kid. I would hunker down on the bottom rack of the grocery cart, back in the time before lawyers, when kids could ride with wild abandon on that bottom rack, when shopping baskets were made so 6 year olds could just have a whole lot of fun. I suppose that is where my ability to shop came from. Lord knows mama had a plan and it worked to perfection. You could set your clock by when mama went grocery shopping every week. (I am not quite THAT exact.)

My ability and even my desire to shop was likely heightened even more so a few years ago when, on occasion, I would run into Ronnie Reeger, the former head football coach at Midland High School who once told me he did all the cooking in the off-season, and John Ed Parchman, the head football coach who took Midland Lee High School to three straight state football championships and who has a building named after him in Midland, for cryin’ out loud.

I figure if these big, tough, respected football guys had the nerve be the designated shoppers in their households, it's OK if am too. And it's OK to talk about openly.

Karen has recently been tagging along with me more frequently and we’ve experienced varying degrees of success. Normally when we go together, we both grab a cart and go our separate ways. I with my list, she with her

(Please See PATTERSON/22)

How to change our most bothersome habits

By Bill and Monica Dodds
Catholic News Service

The challenge of listing seven habits of really annoying people is coming up with a list limited to only seven. Such as:

1. They never have anything positive to say.
2. They always want to top what you say.
3. They remember -- and frequently tell others -- only the most embarrassing stories about you.
4. They are incapable of picking up the check when at a restaurant with you.
5. They think their children are angels, and if there's a spat among members of the youngest generation, your kids -- and you! -- are to blame.
6. They always arrive very late. Or way too early.
7. They make themselves feel bigger by making others feel smaller.
8. They go on and on and then, finally, after that ship has sailed, say, "To make a long story short ..." (Or, another example, they say their list will have only seven items and then they're up to No. 8 and seem to have no intention of stopping. As if whatever they say, or write, is golden. You know, 'taint so!) OK, but just one more:
9. They change the settings on your computer or rearrange one of your kitchen cupboards because that's how they like it.
10. Oh, and speaking of cars, when they borrow yours they never, ever seem to notice they're bringing it back with the fuel gauge on the big E.

Did we mention they just go on and on and on? Man, that's annoying! And what about people who sing or whistle all the time! Or light up a cigarette and then ask, "Mind if I smoke?" Or ...

And, perhaps most annoying of all, they never seem to notice they have these annoying traits, and when you subtly, gently try to tell them, they just don't get it.

No, even worse: They seem to be trying to tell you something about your behavior but they just aren't being clear and who are they to criticize you, right? Just because, come to think of it, you sometimes display some pretty annoying habits, too. We all do.

Those who have researched habits and behavior offer this advice for changing our bothersome behavior:

- Think about it! Make a plan. Write it down. What's the behavior you want to change and how can you go about changing it?
- Think small. Your plan shouldn't be: "I'm going to quit smoking, drop 10 pounds, get up earlier every morning so I won't feel so rushed, and read the Bible for 30 minutes every day." Refine that plan. Set it aside for a few days and then take a second look at it.
- Think about specific details. If you weren't rushed in the morning, life would be easier. But if you got up any earlier you'd be crabbier. The solution? You need to get to bed earlier at night. How much earlier? How about five minutes on each end to start with. For a week. Then another five minutes. Then another. In a couple of months, that's 40 minutes.
- Think about that new behavior until you no longer have to think about it. That means practice, practice, practice until it has become second nature.

On the Web: Cell Phone Etiquette for Kids

Cell phone + middle school student = annoying? A New York Times blogger has suggestions here:
http://tinyurl.com/phonemanners.
Next: How to Successfully Avoid Communicating with Your Spouse

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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.

ANSWERS
1. carpenters
2. Matthew
3. James
4. Moses
5. Lamentations
6. Elizabeth
7. Tut

"Mother's in the kitchen reminding herself that I'm a gift from above." © 2009 CNS
‘The Road’: Relentlessly grim film has one true, shining moment

By John Mulderig
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK -- The theological ambiguity underlying "The Road" (Dimension) is highlighted by a scene set in a ruined church.

As the two main characters in this moving but relentlessly grim post-apocalyptic drama take shelter in the abandoned sanctuary, alert viewers will note that, although its artwork is in shreds and its altar has been displaced, a cross-shaped window shines above the wayfarers with a light virtually absent from every other environment they -- and we with them -- have encountered.

That's about as much hope as this dystopian tale holds out in chronicling the desperate journey through a devastated America of a father, identified only as The Man (a mesmerizing Viggo Mortensen) and his son, called only The Boy (fine newcomer Kodi Smit-McPhee).

Traveling on foot along what's left of the interstate highway system, some years after the unspecified cataclysm that destroyed both the ecology and civilization, the pair encounter marauding cannibals, crafty thieves and a few shell-shocked survivors -- most notably The Old Man (Robert Duvall), an aged, nearly blind prophet figure pondering the meaning or unmeaning of it all -- on their way to what they hope will be a marginally better life along the coast.

Occupying the pitted no-man's-land between a Samuel Beckett play and "The Road Warrior," director John Hillcoat's adaptation of Cormac McCarthy's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel is a stark examination of one man's efforts to preserve, and pass on, humane values -- to "carry the fire," as Joe Penhall's script terms it -- a labor in which he is refreshed only by the instinctive goodness of his youthful companion.

Yet, in the excess of his love, the father indulges in a quasi-idolatrous exultation of the boy that, like the borderline-blasphemous sentiments expressed by other characters, would be completely unacceptable in a less extreme context.

The film contains complex moral and theological issues, grisly images, cannibalism and suicide themes, rear and brief partial nudity, a few uses of profanity and occasional rough and crude language. The USCCB Office for Film & Broadcasting classification is L -- limited adult audience, films whose problematic content many adults would find troubling. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R -- restricted.

Reading the Bible: Academic insights in understandable everyday language

The companion books "Jesus, the Middle Eastern Storyteller" and "The Bible and the Land" use everyday language to provide academic insights into reading the Bible.

Without employing theological terms such as "exegesis" or "culturally conditioned," author Gary M. Burge discusses how to improve interpretation of the Bible by discovering what the words meant to the people they were originally aimed at.

The author convincingly argues, in the common introduction to both books, that this is done through knowledge of the culture, times, languages, traditions, land and history of the Holy Land. Such knowledge leads to new depths in comprehending the essays, poems, short stories, parables and narratives that make up the Old and New Testament.

The books also come with a well-needed caution not to automatically superimpose one's cultural values on biblical texts, especially if one's primary aim is to read for a deepening of the faith.

Burge is a theology professor at Wheaton College in Illinois, which describes itself as an "academically rigorous Christian liberal arts college" dedicated to "Christ and his kingdom."

Reviewed by Agostino Bono
Catholic News Service

The book on the Bible and the land is less insightful and more preachy. It bounces from the sublime to the obvious. He notes that in the Holy Land of biblical times "living water," a term frequently used to describe God's nourishing power, meant water that directly comes from God, such as rain and rivers, in contrast with water that has been stored in cisterns and reservoirs. Yet he preceded this insight by belaboring the obvious in stating that in a desert, water has special importance.

His popularizing of academic insights may sometimes be less profound than intended, but Burge does provide important clues for mining the meaning of the Bible.

From Jesus to Christ: The first Christians’

The Bible and the Land (left) and Jesus, the Middle Eastern Storyteller.

‘From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians’ to air on PBS Dec. 15

"From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians," Dec. 15, PBS

NEW YORK (CNS) -- Looking back 2,000 years to the historical world of Jesus as well as that of his persecuted followers over the next three centuries is the two-part documentary "From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians" to be rerun Tuesdays, Dec. 15 and 22, 9-11 p.m. EST each night on PBS (check local listings).

Ever since the 1947 discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, biblical scholarship has been busy with archaeological digs, comparison of manuscripts and speculation over texts.

These activities have been accompanied by a rush to bring the latest finding, no matter how tentative, to the public by translating the complexities of specialized research into journalistic and, at times, even tabloid prose.

Drawing on the input of 12 New Testament scholars, this four-hour series tries to avoid the oversimplifications and slippery generalizations that have generated controversy in the public arena.

This kind of research is prone to misunderstanding because its results are often provisional rather than definitive, apt to be discarded or refined as new discoveries come to light.

In exploring the historical context of the Gospels, these scholars confine themselves to the archaeological evidence and textual analysis rather than personal religious convictions or lack thereof.

(Please See JESUS/20)
'Blind Side': Tale of solidarity that crosses racial, class lines

NEW YORK (CNS) -- An inscription over the entry gate of the Memphis, Tenn., school where some of the early scenes of the inspirational family drama "The Blind Side" (Warner Bros.) are set reads: "With God all things are possible" (Mt 19:26). That Bible verse aptly characterizes the remarkable series of real-life events first recounted in Michael Lewis' 2006 best-seller "The Blind Side: Evolution of a Game," and here adapted for the screen.

The Christian academy in question is the meeting place of homeless, solitary and emotionally shell-shocked black teen Michael Oher (appealing newcomer Quinton Aaron) and two fellow students -- white children of privilege Collins (Lily Collins) and S.J. (Jae Head) Tuohy -- whose family is destined to transform his life and to be, in turn, transformed by him.

This seemingly unlikely scenario comes about thanks to the impulsive compassion of the Tuohy children's feisty mother, Leigh Anne (Sandra Bullock). Spotting Michael wandering the streets on a winter night dressed only in shorts and a T-shirt, no-nonsense Leigh Anne -- whose motivations throughout are shown to be explicitly religious -- bundles him into the family car and, with the quiet support of admiring hubby Sean (Tim McGraw), offers him the living room couch for the night.

As this arrangement becomes more permanent -- and Michael becomes an increasingly integral part of the Tuohy clan -- socialite Miss Sue (Kathy Bates) to raise his academic skills while also hiring determined tutor coach's (Ray McKinney) perception of his football potential. (As Bullock's opening narration makes clear, Michael has the perfect build to play left tackle, a key position charged with defending a right-handed quarterback from being sacked from his blind side.)

But Michael's education has been so woefully neglected that his grades are far below the requisite average that would allow him to join the team. So his adoptive kin set to work, helping Michael to hone his on-field skills while also hiring determined tutor Miss Sue (Kathy Bates) to raise his academic standing.

Driven by Bullock's field-sweeping performance, writer-director John Lee Hancock's unapologetically Christian tale of human solidarity across racial and class divides -- though restricted to adult and, perhaps, mature teen audiences by the elements listed below -- is funny, shrewd and ultimately uplifting.

Among the "hard" sayings of Jesus, this one has become a particularly challenging one for many people today. Statistics show that as many as one of every two marriages in this country ends in divorce. Perhaps what Jesus was recognizing for all of us was that it is impossible to sustain a loving, permanent relationship through all of the difficulties of life without the firm commitment that the partnership will endure in spite of all of the trials and tribulations. In a society that so lightly sets aside personal commitment, we should not be surprised that marriage is in a state of decline.

It would not be far off the mark to say that our secular society's denial of the intimate connection between sexual activity and the marriage bond is responsible for most of the unraveling of family and, therefore, community life in our time. Once a principle is established that sexual activity is solely for personal satisfaction and has no particular relationship either to a committed bond of partnership or to the education and raising of children, you have what we face today -- an ever-growing number of children who cannot identify in any meaningful sense with their parents, and parents who are not in any realistic sense participants in sustaining, educating and developing their offspring.

The picture of family life painted by the Church with broad strokes includes the personal commitment of the partners in the marriage; openness to the generation of new life if it is God's plan for their marriage; the joyful acceptance of the responsibility and privilege of raising children and helping them to grow in wisdom, age and grace; and finally, the recognition that this action is a graced response to the love of God that elevates married life to the level of sacramental participation in Christ's own redeeming action, allowing parents to participate in the building up of the body of Christ by bringing new life into the world and into the Church.
**HISTORY: Eucharist celebrated for sake of whole world**

(From 9)

Persons is knowledge that we have received by revelation.

The contemporary academic study of history usually proceeds as the study of the social sciences proceeds, depending upon a rational analysis of events in history to learn the truth about those events. However, a fundamental lesson of our capacity to reason is that reason cannot discover all the truth we need to know. Reason always falls short of absolute truth. Reason itself teaches us that human beings are created as receptive creatures who are intended to be open to receiving God's revelation of Himself as a Trinity of Persons. Reason leads us to the receptivity of wisdom.

This does not mean that we can ignore the rational analysis of historical events to determine truth. It does mean, however, that, as rational beings, we are intended by God, in whose image we are created, to be open to His revelation of Himself. We must be open to the intervention in history of God the Holy Trinity as the ultimate cause of historical events. In other words, history itself is sacramental, capable of being an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. That inward grace is often not discernable to ordinary historical inquiry because God usually speaks to an individual person, His word is intended in a unique way for that particular person. As C.S. Lewis has the great lion, Aslan, the Christ-figure in his Narnia Chronicles, say, when one of the children wants to know why Aslan has acted in a particular way in the life of another child, "I am telling you your story, not hers. I tell no-one any story but his own." (The Horse and His Boy, Collier Books, 1976, p. 159) Most of our own individual stories of encounters with God the Holy Trinity are so personal that they will never be discerned by ordinary historical research.

The central act of God in the drama of human history is the incarnation, atoning death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God the Father. The four New Testament Gospels yield information about the life of Jesus, but until we allow the Holy Spirit to open our hearts to receive His revelation of the truth of Jesus to us, we will not be able to understand what God has done, is doing, and will do for us in Jesus Christ. Until we allow Scripture to be a sacrament for us, we will not understand the truth of God's revelation of Himself.

And Scripture is best understood in the context of the Mass. On the road to Emmaus, when Jesus opened the Old Testament to two of His disciples, teaching them how the historical events of the Old Testament are meant to lead them to the truth of His Incarnation, atoning death, and Resurrection, the disciples say that their hearts "burned within" them when He opened the Scriptures. However, they still did not recognize Him until He made Himself known to them in the "breaking of the bread." (Lk. 24:13-35) It is in the celebration of the Eucharist that the intervention of God the Holy Trinity in history ordinarily occurs. This means that we participate in the central act in human history—the Incarnation, atoning death, and Resurrection of Jesus—every time we celebrate the Eucharist, for in that celebration we are taken into that central act in human history. It is here that time is taken into eternity and yet remains itself. At the Eucharist eternity enters time, and time is too small to hold it, so eternity takes time into itself and redeems it. As Lumen Gentium teaches us, the Eucharist is "the source and summit of the Christian life." (#11) In the Eucharist we participate in the decisive event in human history, and all human history is to be understood in relation to that event. When it is so understood, history itself reveals its true nature as a sacrament in which the One God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—has acted, is acting, and will act in creation, redemption, and the consummation of all things in a new creation which will come forth from the old, and human history will become what it was meant to be all the time—that venue for the unimpeded encounter of the Holy Trinity with His people and, through them, with all of His creation.

Meanwhile, the Church is the Body of Christ, the continuation of the Incarnation in human history.

It is in the Church that the Eucharist is celebrated for the sake of the whole world. Therefore, in human history, the history of the Church is the locus of God's redeeming act, always made contemporary by the Holy Spirit. The study of the history of the Church illuminates the study of all human history. It is in the reasoned study of the history of the Church that we are led to the receptivity of wisdom, for it is here that metaphysics (the study of ultimate reality) is clearly seen as the primary determinant of epistemology (how we know ultimate reality), and metaphysics through epistemology is the primary determinant of ethics (how we act based on what we know of ultimate reality).

**JESUS: New insights to be gained for some**

(From 8)

Though some Christian viewers will find this approach unedifying, if not confusing, others may gain new insights which deepen their faith rather than undermine it.

Certainly the first two hours provide a rich introduction to the Jewish world into which Jesus was born, all of which is helpful in reading the Gospel accounts of his life and mission.

What is central in the historical context is the subjection of Judea to Roman rule and the rise of political rebels and messianic sects looking for a new kingdom to replace the old.

The Dec. 22 program examines how the Gospel accounts came to be written, the struggle between differing Christian sects, and the emergence of Rome as the center of the early church.

Produced by Marilyn Mellowes and directed by William Cran, the series presents a secular account of the rise of Christianity without directly taking up the question of Christ's divinity, which is a matter of faith and beyond the scope of series.

The series will, however, antagonize those who take a strictly literal view of the Gospel accounts and surely irritate most historians by using the clunky B.C.E. (Before the Common Era) to replace the common usage and historically correct B.C. (Before Christ).

**HANDBELLS: Ringers say their music 'makes people happy'**

(From 14)

overlooked. Ethicists fear that the Down syndrome population is in danger of "disappearing," because a fetal diagnosis of the syndrome often results in abortion. Some estimate the abortion rate in these circumstances is as high as 90 percent.

When the Keegan family welcomed Elizabeth in 1960, they were daunted by her condition.

"She was gift from God and she has added a great deal to our lives," said Keegan. "From the time she was born, Elizabeth was a star. People are drawn to her. " Elizabeth Keegan, who also is an extraordinary minister of holy Communion, has worked at the same company for 22 years, and is one of the most enthusiastic members of the handbell choir.

"We are one, big, happy family," Elizabeth said of the choir. "Plus, we have a genius, Jeanne, for a teacher," she added.

Polcari's interest in handbells began two years ago when she attended training sessions at a conference in Rhode Island. After launching one parish choir she turned to her second group, the Special Friends. Eight eager musicians signed up, including Polcari's niece Beth.

The impact on the group has been somewhat surprising, even to Polcari, who now serves as the special needs liaison for the American Guild of English Handbell Ringers in New England.

"It has turned out to be very therapeutic," she said, noting that the warm-up exercises and specific movements of the arms and shoulders involved in bell ringing has been beneficial for the choir members, some of whom have physical limitations.

"The action of the bell ringing frees up the body to move in a more coordinated and confident way," she said. "It truly has a healing effect on the body. In addition, the choir members are able to participate in the liturgy of the Mass, which is very important."

Bell ringer Nancy Stocking agrees. "I like to ring the bells," she said. "I feel the prayers in the music."

Choir member Valerie Johnson said she likes "making people happy."

"I enjoy ringing the bells, and I have a lot of gifts to share," she said. "I am God's teacher. I teach people about God, patience, love, and harmony."
HONDURAS: Fr. Carlos encourages young people to educate themselves

(From 6)

whelming call to work with the youth in San Pedro’s gangs, and as a priest, he knew he could fulfill this purpose.

Father Carlos began studying in the seminary at the age of eighteen. He informed us that his parents were very enthused about his choice in ministry and would support him no matter what career path he chose to follow.

Later on down the road, Father Carlos spent some time studying in Colombia learning how to renovate parishes by developing small ecclesiastical communities. By using the Aparecida Document, he was taught how to energize parishes. This document covers such topics as the Kingdom of God, ecology, Christian grassroots communities, and addressing the poor in Latin America.

The parish that Father Carlos ministers at is named “Holy Trinity,” and it encompasses 19 communities with 150,000 parishioners. Father Carlos also serves at “St. Anthony” which is located an hour away in Cortez.

Father encourages young people in Honduras to educate themselves. He reminds his parishioners, to remain true to their most profound values. Many of the young people in Honduras respond in a positive way with much hope and peace in being able to share and understand the love of God.

Father Carlos noted that he would like to show the other side of the world to students in the U.S. He wants students here to be knowledgeable about the people in Honduras and the kind of country Honduras currently is.

Father is concerned that many young people do not have plans for their future paths in life because they only live in the moment. When speaking of this, Father Carlos stated, “Take care of what you have, and want only what you need,” because there are so many people in this world who go without the basic necessities. He said that God will give us what we need by providing different experiences and chances to help others. He reaffirmed this pertinent notion by stating, “One must learn how to share, live and be in solidarity with others.” Love the Lord, your God, and your neighbor and all will fall into place.

HOSPITALITY: Liturgical services are celebrations of entire Church body

(From 9)

“During my elementary years, I went to Mass “to pray.” I said my prayers and the priest said his. I was “talking to God” about my life and my concerns; the priest was “saying Mass.” I prayed quietly in English; the priest prayed in Latin. If there were other people in church at the same time—five or 500—they did not concern me; they said their prayers and I said mine.”

I believe this is still the experience of many Catholics. The Mass is not yet perceived to be something that we do together. A few years ago, during the question period following a presentation I gave on the “new” liturgy, a gentleman asked me: “Father, why do I have to turn and shake hands and give that ‘kiss of peace’ before Holy Communion? It’s a terrible distraction. I don’t know those people. And the ones I know, I don’t even like.”

It has been over 40 years since the Second Vatican Council wrote: “Liturgical services are not private functions, but are celebrations of the Church...liturgical services pertain to the whole body of the Church” (“Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,” No. 26). This was a revolutionary insight. It changes everything. Mass is not a private devotion. We, as church, are doing something together. And the priest is not doing “his thing” up front, far away; he is presiding, coordinating and leading the community.

Changing people’s understanding of Mass from a private prayer to a communal act is made more difficult by the fact that as Americans we tend to think of “religion” as something private and individual.

What can we do to show that the Eucharist is a communal activity? Greeting people at the door is a start. It alerts us to the fact that we are going to do something with others. “Welcome” implies “I am happy that you have come.” The first impression a visitor receives is extremely important. But hospitality is everybody’s ministry. We practice hospitality in choosing where we sit. Do we take the aisle seat and block access to the rest of the pew or chairs? Are those who come after us forced to crawl over us to find a place? What does it say to latecomers when the only open places are way up front? And how do we acknowledge the presence of those who come in and sit next to us? Hospitality is not restricted to the ministers at the church door.

It is also helpful if we think of the first part of the Mass as “gathering rites” rather than “introductory rites” or “entrance rites,” because “gathering” names the purpose of these actions and prayers: “to ensure that the faithful who come together as one establish communion” (G.I.R.M., 46). We exercise the ministry of hospitality when we pick up the music book and sing the gathering hymn. If we are actually doing something together, we should look like it.

We also practice hospitality when we open our minds and hearts to the proclamation of the Scriptures. When we listen to the psalm refrain and repeat it back as best we can, even if the melody is new, we are honing our listening skills and training our ears to hear the word of God. The ministry of hospitality that we exercise at the Eucharist is not simply a sales device. It must be the liturgical enactment of the hospitality that permeates our daily living. Hospitality is not an add-on; for the Christian, it is the bottom line: “Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me’” (Mt 25:34-35).

WUERL: Don’t be surprised when, if met with views that are contrary

(From 20)

We should neither be surprised nor dismayed if those who view life differently than we do and who hold another set of values continue to push contrary views. We need also to be active and engaged in the public debate ourselves if we hope to preserve family life and its importance for our nation, our community, our Church, ourselves and our children.

To help explain more clearly and convincingly the Church’s teaching on marriage, the archdiocese has initiated an educational and pastoral initiative. Much more information about marriage and its importance to a truly healthy society is available at www.MarriageMattersDC.org.

Given the importance of what is at stake, we can always be confident that whatever we say and do that supports wholesome and healthy family life ultimately benefits both our nation and the Church – God’s family among us.

CALDAROLA: Many never see the light

(From 15)

For every blind man healed by the side of the road, there were a multitude more of whose eyes were left shaded but whose hearts were opened.

The hard lesson of Christianity is to learn that prayer is surrender. If I’m sick, of course I will pray, and pray desperately, to get better. But from somewhere deep inside my prayer should proclaim, "Not my will, but yours." Put the blind man aside, go into the garden with Jesus and hear him plead on the night before his death that this cup be taken away from him. It wasn’t.

So Mom was in very good company. Given the importance of what is at stake, we can always be confident that whatever we say and do that supports wholesome and healthy family life ultimately benefits both our nation and the Church – God’s family among us.

"Not my will, but yours."
USCCB: Bishops give continued support to CCHD collection at meeting

(From 8)

The pastoral on marriage offers support to married couples and affirms true marriage can involve only a man and a woman. It is another component in the bishops' National Pastoral Initiative for Marriage, which began in November 2004.

The 15-page document "Life-Giving Love in an Age of Technology" says that although the Catholic Church shares the pain of married couples facing infertility problems, some reproductive technologies "are not morally legitimate ways to solve those problems." It was approved Nov. 17 by a vote of 220-4, with three abstentions.

Cardinal Justin Rigali of Philadelphia, chairman of the USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities, said the new document would "fill a true pastoral need" among U.S. Catholics for a better understanding of "the difference between the Catholic understanding and the secular understanding of human life."

The bishops also overwhelmingly approved a revision to the directives that guide Catholic health care facilities, clarifying that patients with chronic conditions who are not imminently dying should receive food and water by "medically assisted" means if they cannot take them normally.

"As a general rule, there is an obligation to provide patients with food and water, including medically assisted nutrition and hydration for those who cannot take food orally," says the revised text of the "Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services" prepared by the U.S. bishops' Committee on Doctrine.

"This obligation extends to patients in chronic conditions (e.g., the 'persistent vegetative state') who can reasonably be expected to live indefinitely if given such care," the new text adds.

The bishops spent an hour Nov. 17 hearing and discussing a preliminary report on the John Jay study of the causes and context of clergy sexual abuse of minors.

Researchers Karen Terry and Margaret Smith told the bishops that early findings confirm "a steep decline" in sexual abuse cases after 1985. The findings also show diocesan responses to incidents of sex abuse have changed substantially over a 50-year period, with an increase in administrative leave for accused abusers and a decrease in the number accused abusers reinstated.

They also said information they have gathered so far shows no indication that homosexuality increases the chance that a person will be an abuser.

Commissioned by the bishops, the full study is expected to be released in December 2010.

The bishops ended the day Nov. 17 with a report from Bishop Roger P. Morin of Biloxi, Miss., CCHD subcommittee chairman, who responded to an attack from a coalition of Catholic groups promoting a boycott of this year's CCHD collection the weekend of Nov. 21-22. The coalition claims some organizations that receive funding are not in line with church teaching.

Bishop Morin called such claims "outrageous" and pledged "our ongoing efforts to ensure that all CCHD funds are used faithfully, effectively and in accord with Catholic social and moral teaching."

The essential mission of CCHD is "to help the poor overcome poverty," he said. "If any CCHD-funded group violates the conditions of a grant and acts in conflict with Catholic teaching, CCHD funding is immediately terminated."

ROMAN: Bishop says changes in missal are ‘significant doctrinal issue’

(From 8)

Council document that ordered an extensive revision of worship so that people would have a clear sense of their own involvement in the liturgy.

"We are dealing with a significant doctrinal/magisterial issue," Bishop Trautman said. Despite the Vatican's sense of urgency in moving the translations along, "we don't want to send the message that we can bypass" that constitution, he said.

"We need to give our best efforts to the translation of the missal," Bishop Trautman said. "And on the antiphons we have given no effort."

Ultimately the bishops rejected Bishop Trautman's motion to have the USCCB hold off on submitting final approval of the missal translation until they had the chance to review the antiphons.

Instead, they approved a motion suggested by Cardinal Roger M. Mahony of Los Angeles and made by Cincinnati Archbishop Daniel E. Pilarczyk to formally approve the action taken by Cardinal George in agreeing to the Vatican congregation translating the antiphons.

The translations approved Nov. 17 will, like the previously approved sections, be compiled into a new missal for use in English-speaking countries. Bishop Serratelli said while the Vatican approval process moves along, dioceses will begin preparing to use the new missal translation when it is ready.

To help both priests and the laity prepare for the changes, the USCCB has posted catechetical materials at www.usccb.org/romanmissal.

Among the changes people will notice in the new translation is a rephrasing in the Nicene Creed. It will read, in part: "I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible, and in one Lord Jesus Christ, ... begotten not made, con-substantial with the Father."

That section of the Nicene Creed currently reads: "We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, ... begotten not made, one in being with the Father."

In the "Ecce Agnus Dei," ('Behold the Lamb of God') the people will say, "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed."

Currently, they say: "Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed."

PATTERSON: Making a turkey out of myself this season

(From 16)

free-form style. Needless to say, 10 times out of 10, I am finished before her, even though I buy twice as much as she does. Frankly, it's because I know what I'm doing. I start on the east end of the store, picking up the paper goods first, followed by the toiletries and other dry good items before systematically moving up and down the aisles, left to right, in a smooth, nearly effortless, almost formulaic manner. Occasionally, I pass Karen on those times when she is with me, and she will be looking for something. Always looking for something. I, on the other hand, know where everything is. Truthfully, I may not always know the exact aisle its on, but I'll walk you right to it. It's really something I can do that I'm pretty darn proud of.

"What are you doin?" I ask as I pass her, trying to keep covered a sort of quiet arrogance that follows me on these trips.

"Trying to find the hand soap."

"Well then why are you down the V-8 aisle? Hand soap is on 22. Eye level. On your left if you're pushing the cart toward the front of the store. Its really not that hard to find."

I walk away toward the fish market, she walks toward the toiletries.

"I should really do it like Jimmy does it, she is no doubt thinking to herself.

"Sheesh," I say to myself, exasperated, wondering if she'll ever ever ever learn.

It should go without saying the items in my basket are stacked neatly with canned goods on bottom and squishy items on top where they won't get smooshed. Karen usually just sort of tosses her things in her basket almost haphazardly, although oddly she has developed an almost obsessive desire for the checker not to bruise her fruit upon checkout. She will pull the cashier aside and tell him how she won't eat bruised tangelos and can he please be careful.

"Why are you rolling your eyes?" she asks as she turns and looks at me. I watch the checker roll his eyes, too.

As I mentioned earlier, we had no list that night when Karen and I tag-teamed our grocery experience and picked up our Thanksgiving items. It was like a tightrope walker trying to make it to his destination without using a balancing rod. But Karen insisted she's been prepping and cooking Thanksgiving meals for so many years now that she doesn't need a list. She can remember it all, she says.

Needless to say, I will see a lot of you -- at least three or four times -- this week at the store, picking up items forgotten. With my list in hand and my wife at home.
OBISPO

(Parágrafo 3)

encontrarán sin ayuda y sin esperanza.
Advierte es el tiempo de preparación para la celebración esperanzada y gozosa del cumpleaños del niño Jesús en la Navidad. Preparación para el cumpleaños de Cristo es 90% de su celebración. Sin embargo, nuestra Navidad no termina con cenas y festividades en el día de Navidad y en abrir regalos, más bien deberíamos esforzarnos a tomar parte en el nuevo gozo, esperanza y felicidad que se nos ofrecen por nuestro Dios durante toda la temporada de la Navidad. Al concentrar en la razón primaria de la temporada, el nacimiento de Cristo, necesitamos tomar ventaja de este tiempo gozoso con lusos de color, decoraciones, y la música de Advierto y Navidad para realmente celebrar el regalo tan gracieoso de Dios a nosotros.
Advierto es el tiempo para concentrar en la nueva esperanza que Dios nos ofrece en el niño Jesús en la Navidad, y capturar el espíritu de dar y compartir que se demuestran por nuestro Dios. Hay una razón para la temporada, y se encuentra en el proceso de dar, especialmente de nosotros mismos, de nuestro tiempo, nuestros regalos para ayudar a otros, y ayudar el uno a otro para preparar bien para el cumpleaños de la persona más grande que ha vivido. Durante estos días de

BISHOP: Reach out and share gifts, goods with others this season

(From 2)

beg us to be their advocates, to lend a hand to help them. Advent is about receiving new hope for life and sharing this hope with other people who are helpless and hopeless.
Advent is a time of preparation for the beautiful and joyful celebration of the birthday of Christ on Christmas. The Christmas season truly needs to be celebrated during the Christmas time given to us by the Church, we also need to remember that preparation for this day is 90% of its celebration. Our Christmas does not end with the meals and festivities on Christmas day and the unwrapping of gifts, but rather we should strive to take part in new joy, hope and happiness that are being offered to us by our God as we prepare for His birthday. We need to take advantage of this time with colored lights and the music of Advent and Christmas to truly celebrate God’s gracious gift to us.

Advent is a time for us to focus on the new hope that God will offer us in the Christ child on Christmas, and to capture the spirit of giving and sharing that is shown to us by our God. There is a reason for the season, and it is found in the process of giving, especially of our person, of our time, and our gifts to help others, and to help each other prepare well for the birthday of the greatest person who ever lived. During these days of

KENT: Life success sparks resentment

(From 11)

put their own ideology in the national health care plan."
Of course they are.
Not that Planned Parenthood is known
for refraining from forcing its agenda into legislation.
Jon O’Brien of Catholics for Choice warned: "There will be nothing that doesn’t meet the myriad litmus tests prescribed

PADRE THAD

(Parágrafo 10)

considerarse que sólo “indirectamente” termina con la vida del embrión. Otros, sin embargo, han hecho notar que estas células trofoblásticas son de hecho parte del embrión (producidas por el embrión, no por la madre), de manera que el metotrexato en realidad afecta un órgano vital del embrión causándole la muerte. Un considerable número de moralistas católicos sostienen que el metotrexato no es aceptable moralmente pues constituye un ataque directo al bebé en crecimiento y una forma de aborto directo.
Otra técnica moralmente problemática implica hacer un corte a lo largo del conducto falopiano y extraer al bebé ahí anidado, que en breve lapso muere. El conducto se cierra de nuevo con sutura. Esta solución, al igual que el uso de metotrexato, deja el tubo falopiano en gran parte intacto para posibles embarazos futuros, pero también plantea serias objeciones morales pues de igual forma
causa la muerte directa del bebé.
Es interesante notar que normalmente estos dos procedimientos se ofrecen a los pacientes sin mencionar las consideraciones morales, emarcarlos absolutamente como medios para asegurar el menor daño posible al sistema reproductivo de la madre. Muchos médicos admitirán, sin embargo, que estas técnicas generalmente dejan cicatrices en el conducto falopiano, aumentando así las posibilidades de otro embarazo ectópico pues se crean las condiciones para que esto suceda nuevamente.
Casi la mitad de los casos de embarazos fuera de su lugar se resuelven por sí mismos sin necesidad de ninguna intervención, cuando el bebé muere de manera natural. Si esto no sucede, una solución moralmente aceptable implicaría quitar quirúrgicamente el conducto falopiano completo, derecho o izquierdo, donde se encuentra anidado el bebé. Aunque esto significa reducir la fertilidad de la mujer, el conducto que rodea al bebé en desarrollo ya es claramente patológico y constituye un riesgo que aumenta con el tiempo. Este riesgo se elimina con la extirpación del conducto, con el efecto secundario y no intencional de que el bebé muere. En esta situación, la intención del médico se dirige hacia el efecto bueno (quitar el tejido dañado para salvar la vida de la madre), mientras que el efecto malo sólo se tolera (muerte del bebé ectópico). Es importante notar que aquí el médico está eligiendo actuar sobre el conducto (una parte del cuerpo de la madre) y no directamente sobre el bebé. Otro elemento importante es que la muerte del bebé no es el medio que hace posible la cura. Se requeriría al mismo procedimiento curativo si lo que estuviera dentro del conducto falopiano fuese un tumor grande y no un bebé. Lo que cura a la madre es la extirpación del conducto, no la muerte subsecuente del bebé.
Hay quienes consideran que eliminar el conducto falopiano con el bebé dentro es igual que usar metotrexa en ambos casos el bebé muere. Sin embargo, la diferencia crítica está en la forma en que mueren. No es lo mismo matar a alguien directamente que permitir su fallecimiento por causas indirectas. No podemos quitar de forma directa la vida a un ser humano inocente, aunque a veces tenemos que tolerar la muerte que se presenta, de manera indirecta y no intencional, cuando se intenta resolver de la mejor manera una situación médica de vida o muerte.

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El Padre Tadeusz Pacholczyk hizo su doctorado en neurociencias en la Universidad de Yale y su trabajo postdoctoral en la Universidad de Harvard. Es Sacristán 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.
Kansas City, Mo.

Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer and Fr. Bernardito Getigan, center, accompanied over 100 youths from the Diocese of San Angelo who attended the 2009 National Catholic Youth Conference in Kansas City, Mo., in November. Over 22,000 youth and adult sponsors attended the event. (Photo courtesy S. Adelina Garcia, Diocesan Office of Education and Formation).

Odessa

Bishop Michael Pfeifer, above and above right, elevates a monstrance containing the Real Presence of Christ during a Mass commemorating the 16th anniversary of the perpetual adoration chapel at St. Mary’s Church in Odessa, Nov. 11

(Odessa St. Mary photos by Alan P. Torre www.aptorre.com).

San Angelo

WTOS leader Vicki Boudlen of St. Paul Baptist Church lays out Next Steps for the 7 San Angelo Mayoral candidates at a recent accountability session for West Texas Organizing Strategy. WTOS has been on the move in a very public way, and member churches, of which St. Therese in Carlsbad and St. Mary in San Angelo are a part, sponsored the accountability session October 18, where all Angelo mayoral candidates pledged support to the long-standing WTOS agenda.