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Bringing the Good News to the Diocese of Fort Worth

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*Behold, I proclaim to you
good news of great joy
that will be for
all people*

**Inside:
Advent,
Christmas,
and Epiphany
center on the
infant Jesus,
God come
to dwell
among us**

"The Nativity" by French painter Noel Coypel features Mary, Joseph, and angels in adoration of the Christ Child. The Christmas season begins with the Dec. 24 evening vigil commemorating the birth of Christ and ends with the feast of the Baptism of the Lord Jan. 9. (CNS/courtesy of Art Resource)

Our Shepherd Speaks

The Christmas season is the perfect time to share the light and gift of Christ

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were struck with great fear. The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."

(Luke 2:8-12)



Bishop Kevin Vann

The angels' revelation to the shepherds in the fields outside Bethlehem is the fulfillment of God's promise of salvation that was announced centuries before, after the fall of Adam and Eve. The scene of the nativity, the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, born of the Blessed Virgin Mary, is the birth of the savior, the one who will strike the head of Satan and sin, but even more amazingly, this tiny infant is God become man, Emmanuel, God truly with us. The sign of the Christ-child, born in Bethlehem, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger is already foreshadowing the Paschal mystery of Christ's death and Resurrection. The wrapping in swaddling clothes prefigures the burial clothes and shroud of the tomb foretelling his passion and death. Bethlehem means in Hebrew "house of bread" and the baby Jesus who is laid in a manger, a feeding trough, points to the Eucharist and Jesus being the bread that comes down from heaven and that those who eat his flesh and drink his blood will share in his Resurrection and life. As we sing in the traditional Christmas hymn *What Child is This*:

*Why lies He in such mean estate,
Where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christians, fear, for sinners here
The silent Word is pleading.
Nails, spear shall pierce Him through,
The cross be borne for me, for you.
Hail, hail the Word made flesh,
The Babe, the Son of Mary.*

This holy scene, upon which the shepherds gazed in amazement on that cold winter night in Bethlehem, is when God once again walks among us, and reveals the great merciful and redeeming love of the Father now fully made manifest to all humanity in the Christ-child.

On this blessed Christmas night, we recall and celebrate the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, the profound mystery that God the Son, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, out of great and merciful love for us, through the power of the Holy Spirit, and the faith and obedience of the Blessed Virgin Mary, assumed a human nature and became like one of us in all things but sin. The tiny infant Jesus, by taking on our human nature, not only fully redeems our humanity, but by becoming one of us, intimately unites himself with each and every person. God and humanity are now forever joined in intimate communion in the Person of Jesus Christ. As the Second Vatican Council teaches:

The truth is that only in the mystery of the Incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. For Adam, the first man, was a type of him who was to come (Rom 5:14), Christ the Lord. Christ the new Adam, in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling. He who is "the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15), is himself the perfect man who has restored in the children of Adam that likeness to God which had been disfigured ever since the first sin. Human nature, by the very fact that it was assumed, not absorbed, in him, has been raised in us also to a dignity beyond compare. For, by his Incarnation, he, the son of God, in a certain way united himself with each man. He worked with human hands, he thought with a human mind. He acted with a human Will, and with a human heart he loved. Born of the Virgin Mary, he has truly been made one of us, like to us in all things except sin.
— *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Gaudium et Spes, 22*

The Good News of Christmas night is that God's love and mercy has shattered the darkness of sin and death, that this love is greater than any sin, and that God the Father is faithful in his love for us by sending his only Son to reveal his mercy and to accomplish our redemption. Blessed Pope John Paul II reflects upon this great love revealed in the Incarnation:

The God of creation is revealed as the God of redemption, as the God who is "faithful to himself;" and faithful to his love for man and the world, which he revealed on the day of creation. His is a love that does not draw back before anything that justice requires in him. Therefore "for our sake (God) made him (the Son) to be sin who knew no sin." If he "made to be sin" him who was without any sin whatever, it was to reveal the love that is always greater than the whole of creation, the love that is he himself; since "God is love"... This revelation of love is also described as mercy, and in man's history this revelation of love and mercy has taken a form and a name: that of Jesus Christ.

— *The Redeemer of Man, 9*

The Incarnation of Jesus Christ revealed at Christmas is also the revelation of the great dignity of each and every person, that God endowed each of us with when he became one of us and intimately united himself with each and every person. Christmas, then, is when the Church celebrates and rejoices in God's merciful love revealed in Christ, but Christmas is the great feast of human dignity. The infant Jesus wrapped in swaddling clothes is the sign that forever shows how precious is the human person that God himself assumes our nature, and in time will pour out his precious Blood for our redemption. Pope St. Leo the Great in one of his sermons on the Nativity so profoundly illustrates this point and reminds us of our dignity and destiny as Christians that the Nativity of our Lord calls all of us to:

Christian, remember your dignity, and now that you share in God's own nature, do not return by sin to your former base condition. Bear in mind who is your head and of whose body you are a member. Do not forget that you have been rescued from the power of darkness and brought into the light of God's kingdom. Through the sacrament of baptism you have become a temple of the Holy Spirit. Do not drive away so great a guest by evil conduct and become again a slave to the devil, for your liberty was bought by the blood of Christ.

It is also important to remember that we don't just celebrate the Incarnation only on Christmas Day, but that the Church celebrates the Incarnation of Christ throughout the Christmas Season which extends from Christmas Day through the solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord on January 8, ending January 9 with the feast of the Baptism of the Lord. This liturgical season offers many other feasts and celebrations that even more fully reveal the mystery of the Incarnation. The week after Christmas, the Church celebrates the Octave of Christmas in which we are called to continue to rest and reflect upon the gift of the Incarnation.

This year on the Sunday after Christmas, we celebrate the feast of Mary, Mother of God that is celebrated on January 1st. This feast speaks directly to the truth and reality of the Incarnation, through which the one person, Jesus Christ is both fully human and fully divine without confusion or division. In other words, since Jesus is really and truly God, the second Person of the Trinity made flesh, then Mary as the Mother of Jesus is truly the Mother of God. Not only is this feast honoring Mary and her role in salvation history, but it also continues to celebrate the mystery of the Incarnation.

On January 6 or twelve days after Christmas, the Church had traditionally celebrated the feast of the Epiphany, but this feast recently has been transferred to the second Sunday after Christmas, this year, January 8. The feast of the Epiphany is one of the most ancient Christian feasts and the word Epiphany from the Greek means "to reveal" because the feast is centered on God being revealed to man in Christ. The Epiphany was first celebrated in the East and originally celebrated four "epiphany" or revealing events in the life of Christ: the Baptism of Jesus, the first miracle of Christ at the Wedding Feast of Cana, the Nativity of Christ, and the visit of the Magi. All of these events in some way reveal Christ's divinity, that he is truly the Son of God. It is important to note that the Epiphany was the original celebration of Christmas or the birth of Christ. Eventually in the West, the celebration of the Nativity was separated to Christmas on December 25th, but the feast of the Epiphany remained as the celebration of the other three events as the end of the Christmas season. As time continued on, the other feasts were gradually separated, and today we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord the Sunday after the Epiphany and the Wedding Feast of Cana is celebrated the next Sunday.

The Epiphany for us today is the celebration of the visit of the Magi from the



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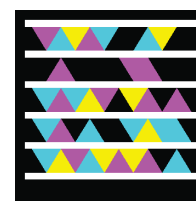
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Jesus comes to bring us light

Maybe that's what's behind the sometimes calming, sometimes gaudy, sometimes glorious displays of Christmas lighting. Maybe it's about bringing the joy of the season into the darkness of winter. When I took a walk between much appreciated rainstorms two evenings ago, I was really impressed by the multi-colored LED lights. They cut through the damp, dense air like static fireworks.

And if we really contemplate what took place in Jesus' leap from heaven to earth, we'll know a wonder far beyond the OOHs and AAHs we involuntarily cry out when we view the moving, flashing kind of fireworks, we see at New Year's.

Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, and the Baptism of the Lord, all give us different insights into what happened when Jesus came to be among us. Bishop Vann and Lucas Pollice both offer the Church's insight into the significance of the coming of

the baby Jesus into our world on **Pages 2 and 9**. The Christmas package on **Pages 15-18** carries us from the Mary's reaction to Gabriel's announcement all the way through Christmas and the arrival of the shepherds and the Magi, to Simeon and Anna's prophetic reactions to the baptism of the Babe of Bethlehem.

Details of how the raging fire of conversion swept through Mexico and the Americas following Mary's appearance as a pregnant, young Aztec woman, and our local celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe begin on **Page 13**.

And, as always, you can find out what's going on behind the scenes at the **Bishop's Blog** at www.fwdioc.org. And catch us on facebook: "North Texas Catholic Newspaper" or at fwdioc.org/NTC for fresh news.

Jeff Hensley
Editor

East who, following the star of Bethlehem, beheld the Christ-child and his glory. The Epiphany is when Christ is revealed to the world as the Messiah, the Son of God. In many parts of the world, such as Europe, the Epiphany is considered to be at least as important as Christmas and is sometimes called "Little Christmas" and in many cultures, following the examples of the Magi offering their gifts to Christ, is when the exchange of "Christmas" gifts takes place.

The Epiphany is also a reminder to all of us that we are all called to be an "epiphany" of Christ in the daily witness of our lives. Through ongoing conversion and holiness of life, we should be a radiating sign of Christ's presence in the world that bring others to Christ and the love and fullness of life that is offered through Him. This is key to the "new evangelization" that the Church is being called to at the beginning of the Third Millennium. The Christmas season is a perfect time to share the light and gift of Christ with others, especially those Catholics who, for whatever reason, have left the Church or are no longer practicing their faith.

For many, the Christmas season is a reminder of their faith, of the Church home and family, and so a gentle invitation to come with you to Mass or a simple witness of your own faith might become the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to bring someone

back to the Church. I would like to extend an invitation to anyone who has left the faith for whatever reasons -- whatever hurt or circumstance of life -- to come home to the Catholic Church this Christmas. For more information, please see the diocesan website at www.fwdioc.org to help you in coming home this Christmas.

Finally, I would like to wish each and every one of you and your families a very blessed Christmas, and I pray that the peace and joy of the Incarnation of Christ will be with you as we celebrate the Christmas season. Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year to you all!

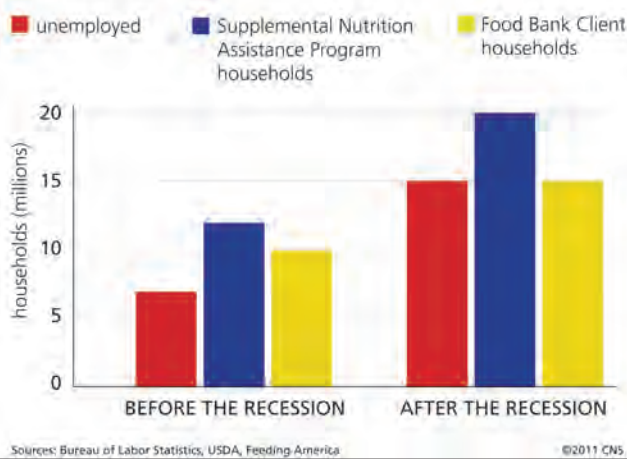
Kevin W. Vann

+ BISHOP KEVIN W. VANN, JCD, DD
DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH



Hardship in the US

The number of people at risk of hunger increased from 36.2 million in 2007 to 48.8 million in 2010. Charities and food assistance programs are feeling the strain with these increased numbers.



Poverty in the midst of plenty: Hunger persists in the U.S.

WASHINGTON (CNS) — As U.S. nutritionists cringe over the prospect of an overweight nation indulging in a two-month binge of “season’s eatings” there are millions of Americans who aren’t sure they’re going to get enough to eat this day or the next.

The problem is made worse by lack of access to nutritious food, as residents of America’s poorest cities and neighborhoods have little choice but to make do with fast food or convenience stores that don’t stock fresh produce.

And even if they were the food-savviest consumers in the country, the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program — the new name for food stamps — doesn’t stretch far enough to let each member in the household eat a healthy meal three times a day, seven days a week. Earlier this year, SNAP benefits were cut to pay for a boost in school lunch programs.

Hunger isn’t the only issue. A Catholic Charities USA third-quarter “snapshot” of its member agencies issued Nov. 22 found that 88 percent of the agencies either had to turn away people or maintain a waiting list for at least one service, 64 percent couldn’t meet the need for emergency financial assistance, and 56 percent couldn’t meet requests for utility assistance — including 67 percent in Southern states dogged by heat waves and an extended drought.

What’s more, requests for help by the working poor were up 80 percent over the second quarter, requests by families were up 66 percent, by the homeless up 60 percent — and by the middle class up 59 percent.

“In the House’s agricultural appropriations bill for 2012, it voted to take away nutrition assistance from 600,000 young children and their mothers who now participate in the WIC (Women,

Infants and Children) program and to eliminate food aid rations for 14 million of the most desperate people in the world,” said the Rev. David Beckmann.

The Lutheran minister, who is president of Bread for the World, a Christian anti-hunger lobby, made the comments in a preface to the organization’s 22nd annual hunger report, titled this year “Rebalancing Act: Updating U.S. Food and Farm Policies.”

The report is peppered with indictments of current U.S. food policy. “Today, the United States does not even produce enough fruits and vegetables for Americans to meet the recommended daily allowances of vitamins and minerals.”

At a Nov. 21 news conference to introduce the “Rebalancing Act” report, Rev. Beckmann said a new farm bill should get rid of agricultural subsidies in favor of revenue insurance, thus freeing up more funds for nutrition assistance in a country where federal statistics show that close to 46 million people are living in poverty.

“What farmers really need is some risk management,” Rev. Beckmann said.

Tianna Gaines-Turner, mother of three children and stepmother to another three, is a member of Witnesses to Hunger, founded in Philadelphia by a Drexel University professor so hungry people could document what their lives are like continuously living hand-to-mouth. After two years of volunteering, she got a job with Witnesses to Hunger last year and is helping set up new chapters in Boston, Baltimore, Omaha, Nebraska, and Martha’s Vineyard, Massachusetts — not the first place one associates with hunger and poverty.

Gaines-Hunter told Catholic News Service at the time of her interview that she planned to spend Thanksgiving “thankful that I have an adequate meal” and a safe, secure place to live for herself and her family.

and strive to see all things in light of his mysterious plan of love,” he said during his weekly general audience Dec. 14.

In his catechesis to nearly 6,000 people in the Vatican audience hall, Pope Benedict continued a series of talks on prayer.

Everyone should seek to understand that when asking something of God in prayer, “we mustn’t expect the

Briefly

Church, National, & International

The voice of Vatican Christmas Mass is silenced
Cardinal Foley remembered as humble, witty believer — and friend to the Catholic press

PHILADELPHIA (CNS) — U.S. Cardinal John P. Foley, longtime Catholic journalist and advocate of Catholic communication, was being fondly remembered after his Dec. 11 death as a friend to the Catholic press around the world.

The cardinal, a Philadelphia native, was residing at Villa St. Joseph in Darby, the home for retired Philadelphia archdiocesan priests, when he died of leukemia at age 76.

Cardinal Foley was known for his many different roles: editor of Philadelphia’s archdiocesan newspaper, *The Catholic Standard & Times*, 1970–1984; head of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, 1984 to 2007; and most recently, grand master of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre, a chivalric organization dedicated to supporting the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem and to responding to the needs of Catholics in the Holy Land.

To many, he was known as the Vatican’s “Voice of Christmas” in his role as English-language commentator for the pope’s midnight Mass for 25 years.

New York Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan, president of the U.S. bishops’ conference, in a Dec. 15 statement, said in all his roles related to communications over the years, Cardinal Foley “embodied the best of what it means to be a communicator, a priest, and a believer.”

“He urged the church to be transparent and saw media as vital to society and worthy of respect. He was the mastermind behind the coverage of the funeral of Pope John Paul II, recognizing the need to facilitate media efforts at the passing of a church and world figure like no other in the modern age,” the archbishop said. “Such foresight united the world in prayer.”

Greg Erlandson, president of the Catholic Press Association, described the cardinal as a “bright, witty, humble man who served his church faithfully and well in many capacities.”

immediate fulfillment of what we are asking for, of our will, but rather trust in the will of the Father,” the pope said.

Requests, praise and thanks must be included in every prayer. “even when it seems to us that God is not living up to our real expectations,” he said.

Prayer is a dialogue with God and entails “abandoning oneself to God’s



Cardinal John P. Foley, Nov. 26, 2007. CNS file photo (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

He said the cardinal was an “indefatigable supporter of the Catholic press” who always “remained a journalist at heart, and he believed strongly in the importance of this professional vocation for the life of the church.”

Erlandson, president and publisher of *Our Sunday Visitor*, praised Cardinal Foley’s work as president of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, saying he “not only encouraged the Catholic press around the world, but he also spearheaded an effort to make the values and teachings of the Catholic Church relevant in the burgeoning fields of public relations, advertising, and digital media.”

But he noted that the cardinal should be most remembered “for his strong and abiding witness to the Lord in all that he did. In his innate dignity and good will, he was a genuine prince of the church, and he will be sorely missed.”

The cardinal received numerous honorary degrees and awards, including the Catholic Press Association’s highest prize, the St. Francis de Sales Award. Just this past June he received a Gabriel Award for lifetime achievement from the Catholic Academy of Communication Arts Professionals in Pittsburgh where the academy and the CPA were holding their joint Catholic Media Convention.

love,” he said.

The most important thing to discover, the pope said, is that the one who answers humanity’s prayers is more important than the actual prayers answered.

Jesus showed that before grace is received, one must “adhere to the giver” of that grace, that is, align oneself and comply with God, the pope said.



(CNS photo/Sovereign Throne)

Father Romauld Jakub Wexler-Waszkinel is the focus of the documentary “Torn.” The film tells the story of the Polish priest, who was born a Jew during the Holocaust, adopted by Polish parents who did not tell him about his birth parents’ religion until he was in his 30s and of his pilgrimage to Israel to reclaim his Jewish heritage.

Documentary tells story of Polish priest born a Jew during Holocaust

WASHINGTON (CNS) — If someone were to make a movie about a Polish priest who was born a Jew during the Holocaust, adopted by Polish parents who didn’t tell him until he was in his 30s of his parentage, his pilgrimage to Israel to reclaim his Jewish heritage, and his stubborn insistence to Israeli authorities that he be considered simultaneously both a Jew and a Catholic, “Torn” would be the perfect title.

Ronit Kertsner is on the film festival circuit with her documentary, which examines the life of Father Romauld Jakub Wexler-Waszkinel.

The Wexler surname comes from his Jewish parents, who gave him up for adoption March 25, 1943. “I must have been eight days old, I’m not sure,” he said in a 1993 interview. The Waszkinel surname comes from the Polish couple who adopted him before the rest of the Wexler family perished at the hands of the Nazis.

Kertsner said she first ran across Father Wexler-Waszkinel in the late 1990s when she was making a documentary called “The Secrets,” about Catholics in Poland who found out they had been born Jewish.

“When I started making ‘Torn,’ I was finding out what had happened to these people” 10 years after “The Secrets” had been released, Kertsner told Catholic News Service in a telephone interview from New York, where “Torn” had been screened at a festival.

“When I got to Warsaw, I got a message: ‘The good news is you don’t have to go to Lublin’ to film the priest, she recalled, since he was bound for Israel the next day to line up living arrangements for a possible move.

Instead, Kertsner’s reaction was “we have to get a car and go immediately” to Lublin to film him before he left the country, she said. In Lublin, Father Wexler-Waszkinel served as the priest for a convent of Ursuline nuns.

“The priest had the strongest story” in “The Secrets,” Kertsner said. “I mean, being a priest, his religion was his whole life. That’s what he was. What he believed in, who his parents were, this was everything (to him). So this is very, very strong. ... He felt it was something bigger than him.”

Kertsner herself was born to Polish Jews, and adopted by French Jews who settled in Israel after World War II but who never told her about her adoption until she stumbled upon the facts as an adult.

She filmed Father Wexler-Waszkinel’s journey at age 67 to Israel, where he lived on a kibbutz. Kertsner said no Catholic monastery in Israel would accept him because he was a Jew, and no kibbutz would allow him to leave for a couple of hours on Sundays to celebrate Mass.

Kertsner said Father Wexler-Waszkinel now works at a Holocaust museum researching documents in his native Polish. His quest for Israeli citizenship has been stymied by Israel’s “right of return” law which states that someone who was born Jewish but practices another religion cannot be granted citizenship. He has, though, been granted permanent residency.

“He believes he has the right (to citizenship). I believe the same,” Kertsner told CNS. “Who are we to judge him? He’s a victim of the Holocaust. He got into this situation not by choice, but by the circumstances of the Holocaust. He is so unique. It’s not like there are going to be thousands of people (under similar circumstances) coming over to Israel. He’s a very unique case, and we should accept him as he is.”

She added, “When I gave him the name of the film, he was completely against it: ‘I don’t feel torn. I feel whole.’ ‘You may feel whole, but everyone else looks at you like you’re torn.’ Then he calls me some time later, and he says to me, ‘Maybe I am a bit torn.’”

Pope says prayer should include our praise and gratitude to God, not focus simply on our needs

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Prayer should not center just on asking God to fulfill one’s hopes and desires, but must include praise, thanks and trust in God’s plan which may not match one’s own, Pope Benedict XVI said.

The way Jesus prayed to his Father “teaches us that in our own prayers, we must always trust in the Father’s will

Having God in one’s life, his friendship, his presence, his love are all more important than any concrete thing that he could give in return, he said.

Jesus “is the most precious treasure to ask for and always safeguard,” he said.

Because prayer guides people to see beyond their own needs and wants, it also helps open their heart to others and offer

them compassion, hope, and the light that comes from Christ, the pope said.

At the end of the audience, the pope prayed a few moments before a traditional Mexican Nativity scene decorating the Paul VI audience hall. The large painted ceramic figures were handcrafted by artisans and were a gift from the Mexican state of Puebla.

TOR Franciscans install new minister provincial, leadership team

Editor's Note: This story was adapted from a press release submitted by Franciscan University of Steubenville.

STEUBENVILLE, Ohio — Father Nicholas Polichnowski, TOR, was installed as minister provincial for the Franciscan Friars, TOR, Province of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, which has members serving in the Diocese of Fort Worth, along with members of the Provincial Council at a ceremony held in Loretto, Pennsylvania, Dec. 15. The Most Rev. Michael Higgins, TOR, minister general of the Third Order Regular presided.

Fr. Polichnowski, who had served as assistant professor of nursing at Franciscan University of Steubenville, was elected minister provincial for the province Oct. 11. Five Franciscan priests were also elected to the Provincial Council on Nov. 9, including Father James Morman, TOR, local minister of St. Francis Friary in Loretto, and former associate pastor of St. Maria Goretti Parish in Arlington as fourth counselor.

"We're looking forward to the new council," said Father Tom Stabile, TOR, local minister for the province's Fort Worth Region. "Our minister hopes to visit the friars in Texas."

Fr. Stabile, who also serves as pastor of St. Andrew Church in Fort Worth, and as dean of the Diocese of Fort Worth's West Central Deanery, said the province is one of several Franciscan provinces with members serving in the diocese, and has had a presence in Fort Worth for more than 30 years.

Currently, members of the Third Order Regular Province of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus have 10 members serving at St. Andrew, St. Maria Goretti, Good Shepherd Parish in Colleyville, St. Mary Parish in Windthorst, St. Boniface Parish in Scotland, and at the College of St. Thomas More in Fort Worth.

As minister provincial, Fr.

Polichnowski will oversee the 139-member community, the largest TOR province in the United States, whose priests and brothers serve in parishes, schools, and other charitable ministries. His four-year term begins in January 2012, and as one of his responsibilities, Fr. Polichnowski will become chairman of Franciscan University's Board of Trustees.

"Franciscan University will keep Father Nicholas in our prayers as he assumes this important pastoral responsibility for the Sacred Heart Province," said Father Terence Henry, TOR, president of Franciscan University. "I especially look forward to working with him in his new role as chairman of our Board of Trustees. Father Nicholas' years here as professor and head of our TOR vocation discernment program have made him a strong supporter of Franciscan University's mission. Both experiences will be an asset to him and a blessing to us as he leads our board."

Fr. Polichnowski succeeds Father Christian Oravec, TOR, who served two terms as minister provincial beginning in 2004.

In addition to Frs. Polichnowski and Morman, the Franciscans also elected Father Richard Davis, TOR, vice president of Community Relations at Franciscan University and local minister of Holy Spirit Friary, to his second term on the Provincial Council, this time as the vicar provincial. The Provincial Council also includes Franciscan University trustees; Father Malachi Van Tassel, TOR, '93, treasurer of the province and a part-time faculty member at St. Francis University in Loretto as first counselor; Father Sean Sheridan, TOR, assistant professor of canon law at The Catholic University of America, as second counselor; and Father Christopher Dobson, TOR, director of campus ministry at St. Francis University as third counselor.

Briefly

Local & State

Diocese welcomes visiting Coadjutor Bishop Joseph Bonello of Juticalpa, Honduras, Fort Worth's sister diocese



Photo by Kathy Cribari Hamer / North Texas Catholic

Coadjutor Bishop Joseph Bonello of Juticalpa, Honduras, concelebrates the noon daily Mass at the diocesan Catholic Center with Bishop Kevin Vann on Thursday, Nov. 10.

By Kathy Cribari Hamer
Correspondent

It is nearing a decade and a half since Bishops Joseph Delaney and Mauro Muldoon began connecting the Dioceses of Fort Worth and Juticalpa, Honduras.

Their actions were in response to the devastation of 1998's Hurricane Mitch, and the request of Pope John Paul II that bishops develop bonds of communion, information, and fraternity among local churches.

In November the successors to the founders of that fraternal bond, Bishop Kevin Vann and Juticalpa's Coadjutor Bishop Joseph Bonello, recalled the successes of the past 13 years, and planned for the future.

At a noon Mass in the diocesan Catholic Center Nov. 10, the feast of Saint Leo the Great, Bishop Vann's homily brought back his own childhood recollections of a stained-glass window in his Springfield, Illinois, diocesan cathedral.

The window depicting St. Leo the Great standing up to the challenge of Attila the Hun always made an impression on him, he said. And later when he was ordained there, he said, he thought of what the window represented.

"The feast of Leo the Great is a chance to remind us of our faith," the bishop said. "Leo stood up and stood strong in difficult times, and it is our challenge as well this day..."

After Mass, lunch was shared among the concelebrants: Father Steve Berg, Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia; Father Tom Craig, chair of the diocese's Mission Council, and pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Arlington; Father Richard Eldridge, TOR, pastor of Good Shepherd Parish in Colleyville; Father Publius Xuereb, pastor of Holy Redeemer in Aledo; and Father Michael Kmietek, CFR,

representing the local community of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal.

Fr. Craig, who has recently been named diocesan director of the Propagation of the Faith, and Fr. Eldridge, have been in mission work for many years, with Fr. Eldridge having first been active while he was pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Seymour. They expressed their parishes' enthusiasm for their work — St. Vincent de Paul working in electrical repairs and cabinetry work at a parish in Gualaco, and Good Shepherd investing in education in Campamento.

"When I was in Seymour we helped with the water purification," Fr. Eldridge said. "It was a big project." Now, he said, they were working with the school's equipment, including computers, and paying some of the teachers' salaries. They are also helping with the expansion of the school, he said. "We will continue to do that, every year; we are committed to it."

Holy Redeemer's pastor, Fr. Publius Xuereb, followed the late Father Robert Wilson, Holy Redeemer's founding pastor, who was very devoted to the missions, and founded the diocese's Mission Council.

"At our parish we support your mission very much," Fr. Xuereb told Bishop Bonello, a Franciscan originally from Malta, "especially since you and I are from the same country — we stick together!"

Fr. Craig explained the perspective of his own parishioners. "When they come back from Juticalpa I find that is the easiest way for them to understand."

Bishop Bonello said his own quiet thanks to the group of friends and supporters. "It is a great joy," he said. "I want to be a voice to express our gratefulness... not only for the material projects, but that we are brothers."

Diocese encourages Catholics to rediscover richness of the Mass during Lent 2012

The Diocese of Fort Worth is on a mission this Lent with this goal in mind: to help Catholics rediscover the richness of the Mass.

"There is a real hunger among Catholics for an authentic spirituality and for truth," explains Lucas Pollice, the diocesan director of Catechesis. "The Mass, through which we encounter Christ Himself, provides us with the answer to this spiritual hunger. The Mass is absolutely essential to what it means to be a Catholic, and is the source and power behind the New Evangelization."

The recent introduction of the new translation of the Mass has created more awareness about the Mass than perhaps any time since the Second Vatican Council, according to Pollice, offering an excellent opportunity for catechesis. He explains, "Now that the faithful of the diocese are experiencing the changes, and hearing the new and rich translation of the Mass, there is going to be an even greater desire to know more about the Mass. This is the focus of the Lenten outreach."

Pollice believes that developing a rich understanding and love for the Mass is a crucial part of catechesis, as the Church teaches that the celebration of the Eucharist is "the source and summit of the Christian life" and that the Mass makes present God's ultimate act of love for us, the Sacrifice of Christ of Calvary. "In turn, we as the People of God offer ourselves as a living sacrifice to the Father through Christ. Through the Mass we are all nourished and

sanctified by Christ so that we can be sent out into the world to continue the mission of Christ," Pollice says.

The Diocese of Fort Worth is encouraging parishes to offer *A Biblical Walk Through the Mass* faith formation program as part of the Lenten mission. The *Biblical Walk* program provides a unique tour of the timeless Liturgy. It explores the biblical roots of the words and gestures we experience in Mass and explains their profound significance.

"Participants in this study will come to know and understand the Mass like never before," explains Matthew Pinto, president of Ascension Press, publisher of the program. "They will see, perhaps for the first time, why they say what they say, and do what they do every week at Mass. The words and gestures will be seen in a new light, leading them to a richer, more fruitful worship experience."

A Biblical Walk Through the Mass is "an ideal and easy way for parishes to provide an excellent catechesis not only on the Mass, as a whole, but in the process, the laity will also come to see the sublime richness of the new translation," says Pollice. "It is a real opportunity for Catholics to rediscover and fall in love again with the great gift of the Mass."

For more information about *The Diocese of Fort Worth's Lenten Mass Outreach*, please visit www.fwdioc.org or contact Lucas Pollice, director of Catechesis, at (817) 560-2452, ext. 260, or lpollice@fwdioc.org.

Father Kyle Walterscheid appears as guest on EWTN's *Life on the Rock*



Photo courtesy of EWTN

Life on the Rock hosts Father Mark Mary, MFVA, (left), and Doug Barry (right), interview Fort Worth Vocations Director Father Kyle Walterscheid on their episode aired Oct. 20.

IRONDALE, Alabama — Father Kyle Walterscheid, Vocations director for the Diocese of Fort Worth, appeared as a guest on EWTN's *Life on the Rock* Oct. 20.

On the show, he discussed how the U.S. is no longer a missionary territory, and should be able to produce its own priests. Fr. Kyle added that college campuses are mission fields.

"If we feed our young men and young women... at the university level, they're going to get engaged and reach out to others at the university."

Fr. Kyle emphasized the importance of young adult ministry to help people transition from college into active roles in the parish.

He also said that catechists shouldn't be afraid to discuss deep theological topics, such as the papal

encyclicals, because when students are challenged to learn more about their faith, they begin to consider vocations.

Fr. Kyle then shared about specific vocations programs in the diocese, such as the monthly discernment groups for men and women, building fraternity among seminarians, and placing them in parishes during the summers.

He concluded by advising those considering a vocation to have a relationship with their pastor, have a spiritual director, pray the Liturgy of the Hours, pray the Rosary, serve in the parish, and attend Eucharistic Adoration.

"You don't have to wait to enter the seminary before you can do something," he said. "You can do something right now in the parish."

Locally-based Catholic musicians and youth ministers perform Christmas concert at Fort Worth men's prison



Youth and music ministry professionals gathered Dec. 12 to offer their annual Christmas concert at the Federal Correctional Institution in Fort Worth, a minimum security prison for male offenders. Internationally recognized Catholic songwriters and musicians Jesse Manibusan (front left) and Steve Angrisano (front right), of Grapevine and Coppell, respectively, were joined by (left to right, back row) high school youth minister Gabe Gutiérrez of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Keller; former Spanish music minister Manuel Bravo of St. John the Apostle Parish in Fort Worth; diocesan Director of Youth, Young Adult, and Campus Ministry Kevin Prevou; and associate youth minister Vicente Lujan of Mary Immaculate Parish in Farmers Branch.

Diocese

Sixteen awarded papal honors at Dec. 13 Vespers Service



Bishop Vann presents the honor to Patricia and Art Dickerson.



Bishop Vann poses with Sr. Devota (LEFT) and presents the honor to Sr. Juliana (RIGHT).



After the Vespers service, Bishop Vann poses with the honorees. In the front row (from left to right) are Michael Barks, Deacon Popo and Lupe Gonzalez, Sr. Juliana Tran, CSFN; Sr. Devota Sweeney, SSMN; Ann Smith, and Patricia and Art Dickerson. In the back row (from left to right) are Lucas Pollice, Daniel Shine, Ann Healey, Peter Flynn, Br. Al Kuntemeier, SM; Heather Reynolds, and Br. Paul McMullen, TOR. Seated in the wheelchair is Jean Riley.



Bishop Vann presents the BENEMERENTI medal to Lucas Pollice (LEFT) and Michael Barks (RIGHT).



Jean Riley poses with Dan Luby (LEFT) and Heather Reynolds poses with her husband, John (RIGHT), after being presented the BENEMERENTI medals.



Bishop Vann presents the BENEMERENTI medal to Ann Smith (LEFT) and Ann Healey (RIGHT).



By John Henry / Correspondent
Photos by Donna Ryckaert

Multitudes of the faithful of the Diocese of Fort Worth gathered at St. Patrick Cathedral Dec. 13 for solemn Vespers to celebrate high honors handed down by Pope Benedict XVI.

Sixteen members of the diocese were honored in recognition of distinguished service to the Church and their communities at the evening prayer service.

Those honored, Bishop Kevin Vann said, “have been channels of the light of Christ in so many ways.” Their hard work and devotion over the years “weave together the strands of life in our local Church.”

Presented during the Dec. 13 service were the Pontifical Equestrian Order of St. Gregory the Great, the *Pro-Ecclesia et Pontifice* Cross and the *Benemerenti* Medal.

Art Dickerson, who is involved in a range of activities at the cathedral, including heading committees overseeing renovation of the cathedral and the construction of the pastoral center (see related article on Pages 22-23), was honored. So was his wife, Patricia, who was recognized for promoting devotional life at St. Patrick.

The Dickersons were each awarded the Pontifical Equestrian Order of St. Gregory the Great, presented since 1831 to men and women in recognition of services to the Holy See and the Church.

Of his work, Art Dickerson said: “I kept reminding [his committee colleagues] and myself that the real reason we’re doing it is not for any award or acclamation. We’re doing it to further the Kingdom of God on Earth. That is the biggest reward.”

‘Why did I join? Because God asked’

Brother Al Kuntemeier, SM, said he is often asked why he decided to take on a vocation with the Marianists at 17 years of age in 1947.

It was the rational thing to do as a young man, he said, carrying with it quite a bit of security.

But, ultimately, and after much soul-searching over a career now spanning 60 years ...

“I love God, and God loves me, and He’s my friend and He asked me. Why did I join? Because God asked.”

Br. Al’s career has distinguished itself well beyond working with the football team on punt returns, as he did in his first year teaching in 1951 at Eugene Coyle High School in St. Louis.

Since 1980, he has been a guidance counselor and tennis coach at Nolan Catholic High School. At 81, he is “semi-retired,” having reduced his counseling caseload and given up the accounting class he taught until the middle part of the last decade.

Br. Al and three others were awarded the *Pro-Ecclesia et Pontifice* Cross, established in 1888 by Pope Leo XIII to recognize distinguished service to the Church by laity and clergy.

Sister M. Devota Sweeney, SSMN, former provincial superior for the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur Western Province; Brother Paul McMullen, TOR, former pastoral administrator of St. Bartholomew Parish in Fort Worth;

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and Sister Juliana Tran, CSFN, a former catechist at Vietnamese Martyrs Parish in Arlington, the largest Vietnamese parish in the diocese, were also honored with the award.

Br. Al, who took his temporary vows in 1947, earned a bachelor's in education from the University of Dayton in Ohio, a Master of Business Administration from Marquette University, and a Master of Arts from the University of Notre Dame.

"It's very encouraging to our students to recognize their relationship with God and to seek out the gifts He has given them and to put them to the service of others," said Father Richard Villa, SM, Nolan's president.

"Al certainly models that for them."

'As long as I'm here ...'

Michael Barks, 60, leads by living his advocacy. Catholic education is an avenue for African-American children to overcome barriers, he believes.

"As long as I'm here," said Barks, chairman of the Our Mother of Mercy School advisory council, "I'll be doing something for Mercy."

Barks, a retired colonel in the U.S. Army, joined nine others as recipients of the *Benemerenti* Medal, created by Pope Pius VI in the late 1700s. In 1832, Pope Gregory XVI instituted the medal to recognize individuals who have exhibited long and exceptional service to the Catholic Church, their families and communities.

Also recognized were Peter Flynn, diocesan vice chancellor for administrative services; Deacon Popo and Lupe Gonzalez, leaders in the Hispanic community in Denton; Ann Healey, former diocesan director of Deacon Formation; Lucas Pollice, diocesan director of Catechesis; Heather Reynolds, president and CEO of Catholic Charities Fort Worth, Inc.; Jean Riley, an advocate for the disabled within the Church and Fort Worth community; Daniel Shine, an active parishioner of Our Lady Queen of Peace Church in Wichita Falls and a member of various diocesan boards and committees, such as the capital campaign committee; and Ann Louise Smith, an Oblate of the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur with service as a campus minister and hospital minister.

Barks became a member of the advisory council after being urged by his wife, Marie, to replace her.

A member of the Knights of St. Peter Claver, he said he couldn't turn down an increased role as

chairman of the council when asked a year later.

Under his guidance, he helped marshal the school through its most significant transition since opening in 1929. Since becoming chairman in 2006, the church has built and opened a new school while continuing its mission temporarily at St. Mary of the Assumption on the Near South Side of Fort Worth.

Barks, who has undergraduate and graduate degrees from Norfolk State University and the University of Texas at Arlington, respectively, is involved in seemingly every activity at the school, from fundraising to recently reading essays written by students competing for a scholarship at the school.

Dr. Carolyn M. Yusuf, the school's principal, said Barks' accomplishments have been phenomenal. "He's made a great difference at Our Mother of Mercy."

'That was God's call'

One day in the mid-1960s, Monsignor Joseph Schumacher asked Popo Gonzalez if he would translate the baptism literature at Immaculate Conception Church in Denton from English to Spanish.

"And then he asked me to teach it!" Deacon Popo Gonzalez said, recalling his befuddlement. "I told him: 'Father, you don't know me. I'm a high school dropout; I have no education.' You couldn't pay me to get in front of people and say my name, much less teach a class. But he said 'give it a try, see what happens.'"

"Forty-four years later, I'm still doing it."

Dcn. Popo and his wife Lupe's



Bishop Vann presents the *BENEMERENTI* medal to Peter Flynn, vice chancellor of Administrative Services.

lives of doing are as strong as ever. Faith is their life.

They minister mostly now to the church's Hispanic community, working in Baptism and marriage preparation, visiting nursing homes, and the homebound. Dcn. Popo has a jail ministry, and Lupe translates the bulletin every week.

Popo was a reluctant applicant to the diaconate 16 years ago, twice telling Msgr. Schumacher no.

He had a barber shop to run. On the second try, Msgr. Schumacher left behind an application.

"Another priest here, from Mexico, Father Trujillo, encouraged me and helped me with the application," Popo said. "He said, 'Just turn it in and see what happens.'"

Today, Dcn. Popo's reach within the community is far greater because he is a deacon. He can now perform weddings, funerals, and baptisms.

"At first, I thought 'What am I doing here. I don't belong here.' But no, that was God's call, and God is good. All the time."

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Catholic Charities Spotlight: CASA housing for elderly/disabled



Photo by Juan Guajardo / North Texas Catholic

Lucy Nicholas, CASA resident and member of San Mateo Mission applies adhesive to re-attach Jesus' arm to a much worn statue. Nicholas also teaches art to CASA residents.

Lucy Nicholas, 63, has been on the move for the past 45 years. A former military wife, this mother of four and grandmother of twelve has resided in Germany and in various parts of the United States, including Indiana, Ohio, Virginia, Maryland, and Texas. Now a resident of Casa, Inc., a housing facility operated by Catholic Charities of Fort Worth (CCFW), Lucy hopes to put down roots. "I have lived here since March of this year, and I can honestly say that Casa is the best apartment I have ever lived in," she marvels. "I can't say enough about this wonderful place and the Casa staff. I feel so blessed to be here."

Monica Quiroz, CCFW's executive director of housing, explains that Casa, a 200-unit apartment building located in the cultural district of Fort Worth, is one of four housing facilities operated by CCFW, as part of the organization's commitment to providing high-quality, safe, and affordable housing to low-income elderly and disabled clients. The facilities — which also include two apartment buildings in Stephenville and one in Arlington — are open to those who meet low income eligibility criteria set by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

For Lucy, a skilled artist and teacher, her new home and its proximity to her parish, San Mateo Mission, has given her an opportunity to be of service in ways that are deeply meaningful to her. "I lost a leg to cancer over 26 years ago," she explains matter-of-factly. "I was sent home to die, but God had other plans for me."

Through a series of events that Lucy calls "truly miraculous," her cancer went into remission. Now Lucy teaches weekly art classes to fellow Casa residents and has also been volunteering at her parish, painstakingly repairing and restoring damaged statues.

"Lucy brings people together in a very special way," says Monica. "Many of our residents have been through very tough times. Our Casa staff and individuals like Lucy help to make Casa feel like a community. It is inspiring to see." Lucy agrees that activities like the cooking, creative writing, and art classes that are offered, as well as the regular "game nights" and communal meals, all help to make the well-maintained apartment building feel like "a real home."

"I've moved a lot, over the years," she says. "Now, I'm staying put."

Catholic Charities Fort Worth, Inc., provides affordable, subsidized housing for low-income elderly and disabled/handicapped persons. To be eligible, a person must be 62 years of age or older and able to function self-sufficiently. The cost is based on 30% of the resident's annual adjusted gross income as described by Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) guidelines. CCFW is not currently accepting housing applications for disabled individuals under age 62 due to a change in guidance from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). For more information about the CCFW housing program, visit the CCFW Web site at www.catholiccharitiesfortworth.org/housing or call (817) 534-0814.

Vocations

Former physician Michael Moloney ordained to transitional diaconate

By Michele Baker
Correspondent

Bishop Kevin Vann ordained Michael Moloney of the Diocese of Fort Worth to the transitional diaconate Nov. 19 at Sacred Heart Chapel on the campus of Sacred Heart Seminary in Franklin, Wisconsin. Ordination to the transitional diaconate is the final step before ordination to the priesthood which usually takes place six months to a year later.

For Michael Moloney, the journey to this point has been a long one, covering 50 years and two continents. Born to a dairy farming family in County Waterford, Ireland, Moloney had what he describes as “a full Catholic school education.” His first inkling of a call to the priesthood came when he was a first-year high school student.

“A missionary priest from Africa visited our school,” he recalls. “And I went home and told my mother that I’d like to be a missionary priest. She laughed and said, ‘Talk to me when you’re 21!’ and that was that for a long while.”

Tracked into the biology/pre-med field, he put thoughts of missionary work aside and continued in the field of medicine. When Moloney graduated from medical school in the 1970s, Texas passed legislation to recruit doctors. The Irishman, who’d loved cowboys and John Wayne movies as a child, jumped at the chance and relocated to Houston. Before long, he’d acquired all the trappings of a successful physician.

“I had the BMW, a beautiful home, vacation properties,” Moloney said. “But I’d long since packed away my faith, and by the time I was 30, I started asking myself if what I had was all there is.”

That question led him on a search for truth that Moloney believes could only have happened in Texas.

“Texas gave me a context for conversion,” he explains. “There was a religious tolerance that I’d never experienced before and lots of people sharing their faith.” Encouraged by that openness, he found himself in a Bible study for doctors at the hospital where he worked.

“And I fell in love with the Word of God,” Moloney said. “The Gospel of John worked on me. And I found that my colleagues were much more ‘real’ in Bible study class than they were in the professional arena.”

After years as a regular in the group, he began attending services at a Presbyterian church.



Photo courtesy of Sacred Heart School of Theology

Deacon Michael Moloney accepts the Book of the Gospels from Bishop Kevin Vann during his Nov. 19 ordination, hearing the words “Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you now are. Believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what you teach.”

He eventually enrolled in a school in Canada that taught doctors how to use their skills in the mission field. There, at that Protestant school for missionaries, Moloney returned to his Catholic faith.

As the school taught them Catholic spirituality Moloney said, “it all began to make sense because I was drawing on my Catholic education.” And so he returned to the Church and became active in parish life.

While attending a bioethics conference in Lincoln, Nebraska, he once again began to hear that whisper of a call to the priesthood.

At lunch Moloney was seated next to Bishop Glennon P. Flavin of the Diocese of Lincoln. While talking to him, Bishop Flavin suggested that Moloney might have a call to the priesthood. Moloney laughed, but Bishop Flavin countered by asking,

“Don’t you believe the Lord speaks through his bishops?”

The question would hang over Moloney’s head for years. When his career led him to take a position as medical director of a hospital in Wichita Falls he developed a friendship with the Irish priest, Father Aidan Donlon, SAC, who served as chaplain there.

“There was a vocations dinner and Fr. Donlon invited me to attend. Bishop Vann was there and spoke of beginning a discernment group for men. I knew then and there that I had to participate,” Moloney said. “If for no other reason than to put this question out of my mind once and for all.” In 2008 he ended up at Sacred Heart Seminary in Wisconsin in a program designed specifically for later vocations.

So now, at age 61 Deacon Michael Moloney is scheduled to be ordained in early Summer, 2012. What does he think about all this?

“I am 100 percent at peace,” Dcn. Moloney said. “I see it as a grace.”



Photo courtesy of Diocese of Fort Worth Vocations Office

Michael Moloney poses for his formal Seminarian portrait taken at St. Peter Church in Lindsay.

Henrietta native prepares for foreign mission as Salesian Lay Missioner

By North Texas
Catholic Staff

While most college students look for jobs immediately after graduating, Henrietta native Kaitlin Darnell, who graduated from Texas Tech University in Lubbock in December, will instead spend a year serving a mission as a Salesian Lay Missioner in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, with the Salesian Sisters at Don Bosco Skills Training Center.

Darnell, the daughter of Kevin and Jean Darnell of Sacred Heart Parish in Wichita Falls, will leave for the Cambodian capital two weeks after Christmas on Jan. 10.

While a student at Texas Tech, she was an active member of St.

Elizabeth Parish’s campus ministry program, which she described as her “home away from home.”

“I helped with a lot of retreats, and that’s where I decided I wanted to do some kind of faith-based service.”

While in Phnom Penh, Darnell will teach English at a school that trains 18- to 22-year-old women in secretarial skills.

“It’s a good opportunity because it’s setting them up with a good job to support their families,” she said.

Darnell, 22, is one of 14 lay missioners from the United States that have been commissioned by the Salesians of Don Bosco to serve as Salesian Lay Missioners. The missioners, ranging in age from



Photo courtesy of Salesians of Don Bosco

Kaitlin Darnell

early 20s to mid-50s, will serve overseas and domestic missions working with poor, at-risk youth.

The volunteers received two weeks of orientation at Maryknoll and a Salesian summer day camp in Port Chester, New York,

followed by a week of retreat with Salesians at Haverstraw-Stony Point, New York. The 14 were commissioned during Mass closing out the retreat on August 6. Father Thomas Dunne, SDB, provincial of the Salesians in the Eastern U.S. and Canada, presided over the commissioning.

Fr. Dunne observed that at the Transfiguration of Jesus (the feast of August 6), Peter, James, and John had nothing with them when they met God on the mountaintop. When they and the rest of the apostles went out to preach the Good News, God was all they had to depend upon; they had to leave behind all their extra “tools” like extra clothes and money. He told the soon-to-depart missionaries that

they also would have to leave a lot behind when they went out to be evangelizers. He cited the examples of people he knew who did just that and had life-changing experiences: meeting the Lord in their own emptiness and in the joy of the people to whom they were sent.

Darnell says that she’s becoming a Salesian Lay Missioner “to serve, to share God’s love.”

“I wanted to go inside the culture and work with the youth,” she added. “I thought this was a great way to share what I’ve learned along the way.”

Father Michael Mendl, SDB, communications coordinator for the Salesians of Don Bosco, contributed to this report.

Catechesis

'In the mystery of Christmas, the paschal mystery is already present'

By Lucas Pollice

As we celebrate this Christmas season and once again hear the marvelous good news of Christ's birth proclaimed, most of us have become very familiar with the Christmas story and the events and circumstances that surround the nativity of Christ. But what do these stories and events really reveal to us? You might be surprised how much meaning is really contained within these simple and beautiful passages of Scripture. For as Blessed Pope John Paul II recalled: *"In the mystery of Christmas, the paschal mystery is already present. Jesus comes into the world to fulfill his mission of salvation which will culminate in his crucifixion and in the extraordinary event of his Resurrection"* (Angelus Message, Dec. 26, 1996). With this in mind I would like to highlight some of the most important symbolism and meaning surrounding Christ's birth that reveal to us the Father's plan of salvation that will unfold in the life and mission of this amazing Christ-child:

Bethlehem: The fact that Jesus was born in the city of Bethlehem is of great meaning and importance. First, it was foretold by the prophet Micah that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, the birthplace of David:

But you, Bethlehem-Ephrathah too small to be among the clans of Judah, From you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel; Whose origin is from of old, from ancient times... He shall stand firm and shepherd his flock by the strength of the LORD, in the majestic name of the LORD, his God; And they shall remain, for now his greatness shall reach to the ends of the earth; he shall be peace.

— Micah 5:2-4

The name Bethlehem also has significant meaning concerning the mission of Christ. In Hebrew, it means "house of bread" which is a foreshadowing of Christ who will become for all of us through his death and Resurrection the "bread of life" in the Eucharist. Jesus comes into the world to give himself and his Body and Blood as the true food and drink for the world so that all may have life and have it in abundance.

The Rejection at the Inn: The fact that Mary and Joseph were rejected at the inn because "there was no room" is also a foreshadowing of the future rejection of Christ as the Messiah by the House of David that leads to his crucifixion and death.

The rejection at the inn is also symbolic of humanity having no room for God in their hearts due to sin from which Christ comes to free us.



CNS photo/Paul Haring

*For a child is born to us, a son is given to us;
upon his shoulder dominion rests.
They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero,
Father-Forever, Prince of Peace.
His dominion is vast and forever peaceful,
Upon David's throne, and over his kingdom,
which he confirms and sustains By judgment and justice,
both now and forever.*

(Isaiah, 9:5-6)

The Swaddling Clothes: After his birth, Mary wrapped Jesus in swaddling clothes. All of us who are parents know that is still very much the norm to wrap a baby in a blanket or a cloth to keep him or her warm and safe. But why does Luke go out of his way to mention such a normal and seemingly insignificant practice? In the Jewish/Semitic culture, the baby was wrapped very tightly in a cloth not only to be kept warm and safe, but to also give them good posture. This wrapping in swaddling clothes was a very tight wrapping with a thin cloth, a little different from how we do things today. However, for Luke, Jesus being wrapped in a cloth at his birth is already a foreshadowing of his death and burial, when Christ would once again be tightly wrapped in his burial shroud in the tomb. Thus, even at Christ's first coming into the world, his ultimate mission of reconciling the world to God through his blood on the cross is already being revealed and foreshadowed.

The Manger: Christ was not laid in a crib or a bed, but was placed in a manger in the stable. A manger is a feeding trough for animals that held hay or other food. Again we have the Eucharistic theme: Jesus who is the "true bread that comes down from heaven" is born in the city named the "house of bread" and is born into a manger which feeds the flocks of the shepherd. Thus, Jesus

is the Good Shepherd who gives his life so that he may feed his flock and give them eternal life.

The Shepherds in the Field: This extraordinary event of the angels of heaven appearing to the shepherds in the field and announcing the good news of Christ's birth is a foreshadowing of the Church, to which Christ the Good Shepherd would entrust the good news of salvation: to his shepherds, the successors of the apostles, to be the living and visible instrument of salvation until the end of time.

Thus, Christmas reveals to us not only the birth of the Savior, but in the fullness of time also reveals the Paschal mystery of Christ and the salvation that will be won for us through the death and Resurrection of Christ, and his Real Presence in the Eucharist that will remain with us and be our true spiritual food until the end of time.

Christmas also a time in which we once again are called to contemplate the face of Christ, in particular the face of the infant Jesus who loves us with a pure and unconditional love that is so simple yet so profound. Christmas certainly seems to bring out the child in all of us, and it should also bring about the simple child-like faith that we are all called to have. It is so easy in our complicated world to even complicate

our spiritual life and relationship with God. During this holy season of Christmas, I am always reminded of St. Thérèse of Lisieux, who was a young Carmelite nun who lived in the last part of the 19th century. St. Thérèse had a very special devotion to the child Jesus, and she lived such a simple life of spirituality and love. Her spirituality was called the "little way," and it consisted of daily offering to God simple acts of love and sacrifice that blossomed into a profound and burning love for God and neighbor. Thérèse embodied in her life and spirituality the simple love of God that is revealed to us by the infant Jesus at Christmas. This love and spirituality is beautifully articulated in her autobiography *The Story of a Soul* which is a must read for any Catholic and would be particularly great reading during the season of Christmas. St. Thérèse was truly a child before God, and her spirituality was so profound that Blessed Pope John Paul II proclaimed her a Doctor of the Church in 1997 saying:

One can say with conviction about Thérèse of Lisieux that the Spirit of God allowed her heart to reveal directly to the people of our time the fundamental mystery, the reality of the Gospel.... Her 'little way' is the way of 'holy childhood'. There is something unique in this way, the genius of St. Thérèse of Lisieux. At the same time there is the confirmation and renewal of the most basic and most universal truth. What truth of the Gospel message is really more basic and more universal than this: God is our Father and we are his children?"

— Apostolic Letter, *The Science of Divine Love*

May we, through the intercession of St. Thérèse, receive the grace to contemplate anew in our hearts the face of the infant Jesus and through his great love and mercy revealed in the Incarnation rediscover in our own lives our "holy childhood" before our heavenly Father as we celebrate the holy night of Christ's birth:

*Silent night! Holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord at thy birth.
Jesus, Lord at thy birth.*

Merry Christmas!

Lucas Pollice is director of Catechesis and Adult Faith Formation and RCLIA for the diocese.

VOICES of the CHURCH

opinions, stories, wisdom, and personal voice

However we arrive here: Each life is a gift from God

By Denise Bossart

My father was the product of a marriage that lasted about five minutes. According to family lore, the ink wasn't dry on the marriage license before the d-word came up. The breach in his parents' marriage had a lasting effect on Dad. The healing came when he realized that God had called him into being despite the circumstances of his conception, despite the animosity that existed between his parents. Even though his parents' refusal to speak to one another lasted 60 years, Dad knew that God had a plan for him.

My sister and I are 10 ½ months apart in age. I wasn't in the plan — at least not the plan my parents had set into place. My mother was into her fifth month of pregnancy before she would wear maternity clothes or admit to anyone that another child was on the way.

I know how she felt. It's how I felt when my third child was born before the middle child was two and the older child was four. But my discomfiture went far beyond the spacing issues. The circumstances surrounding the conception are still painful and something I keep private. Bottom line, I did not want to be pregnant.

Talk about a long line of less-than-ideal conceptions. Dad. Me. My daughter. The world would probably give its nod to terminating any pregnancy conceived in these circumstances.

The world is wrong.

I learned about unconditional love from my father. He was the first and best example I have experienced of the love our Heavenly Father has for His children. As a Protestant pastor, Dad lived and shared the Gospel message. He was an evangelical with a heart for ecumenism. What a great combination! His suffering and death sent me on a journey that ended with my entry into Mother Church. He taught me to love God and follow Him — no matter where the journey took me.

Dad's life was a gift to everyone he met.

I am the mother of four children. At the age of 40, I entered the Catholic Church. To date, I have written articles for 43 diocesan newspapers, shared my conversion story with numerous parishes, been a guest on two EWTN programs, and been interviewed on so many radio shows that I have lost count. I have taught hundreds of students over the years. I continue to write, teach, and pour myself into my children, grandchildren, students and readers. I have a passion for the New Evangelization and Ecumenism. I learned from my father that these two are

Dad's life was a gift to everyone he met
.... I hope my life is a gift to everyone I meet.

completely compatible. Two sides to the same coin. My greatest joy is sharing the faith.

I hope my life is a gift to everyone I meet.

My third child is a free spirit. We laugh at the things she's tried. Soccer. Flute. Swimming. Fencing. Guitar. Community college. Massage school. Dog grooming. My daughter, the free spirit, is a gift from God.

She moved back home about a year ago, along with her two sons. She isn't married. Hasn't ever been married. After a long day, she lays one baby down in a crib in one corner and another baby in a toddler bed in the other corner and then climbs into her own bed. It isn't ideal. The guest room was never designed to be used as a home for this little family. We are all tired and used to capacity. Bottles line the top shelf of the dishwasher. Laundry is going around the clock. Babies cry out in the middle of the night. Every day is a new adventure into the many ways a day can deviate from a plan.

We are living out the call to respect life. We believe that all human life is precious to God. Each life is a gift from God to the world.

I don't know what God has in mind for those two little boys. All I know is this. God made them, just as surely as He made my dad and me and my daughter — because the value of a life has nothing to do with how it is conceived. Human life has value because it is made in the image of God.

Life is a gift from God. Our pledge to be a people of life does not end with the birth of a baby. We show that we are a people of life every day because each life is a gift from God to the world.

Denise Bossart is a convert to Catholicism. She lives in near St. Louis and is a member of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in New Melle, Missouri. Read more of Denise's writing at www.catholicbygrace.blogspot.com

The new English Missal Makes good sense if you think about it

By David Mills

There's a lot to say about the new version of the Mass we started using the first Sunday of Advent, and it'll be keeping Catholic writers busy for a while. Here let's look at one aspect of the Mass relevant to the subjects this column covers: the new version of the Nicene Creed. I'd like to say two things about it, the first about its new opening and the second about its use of that obscure theological term "consubstantial." We'll look at the first in this column and the second in the next.

The Nicene Creed in the new Mass begins with "I believe," while the old one began with "We believe." The new version simply translates what the official Latin text says. Catholics in France, Germany, Spain, and other countries have always said "I believe."

Some people have noted that the original version of Nicene Creed began with "We believe," and think that the one we say at Mass should too. I don't think this follows. That particular version began with "we" because in it a Council of the Church's bishops were (way back in A.D. 325) speaking as a unified body.

The bishops were declaring what the Church believed. They meant not just "all we bishops" but "all we Christians." In other words, the first Creed was an official statement of a corporate commitment like the American Constitution, which begins with "We the People of the United States."

But the Creed we say at Mass is a declaration of personal commitment, even though it's one that we make with others. It's like the oath of allegiance immigrants take when they became American citizens. They usually all say it together but each one says "I hereby declare." He has to say "I" because he goes on to promise to defend his new country with his life, among other life-changing commitments. That's the kind of promise a person has to make by himself and for himself.

The Creed is the same kind of statement. It's not just a theological list with no connection to your life. It summarizes and focuses the Faith for which as a baptized Christian you've agreed to give your life, in ways big and small. It's a statement of your citizenship, of your fundamental and permanent commitment. It seems to me that we each need to say "I do."

To give another parallel, saying the Creed is like making a wedding vow. The bride and groom say "I do" because they're both betting their futures on the other. The drama comes when the man says "I do" to

But the Creed we say at Mass is a declaration

of personal commitment, even though it's one that we make with others. It's like the oath of allegiance immigrants take when they became American citizens. They usually all say it together but each one says "I hereby declare."

the woman and she says "I do" to him. Their saying "We do" wouldn't feel as personal nor as binding.

In saying the Creed at Mass, we're saying "I do" to God. We're saying "This is who you are and what you've done for us, and I'm betting my whole future on you."

If I'm right about all this, the effect of saying "I believe" is more personal and direct than saying "We believe." It's more dramatic and makes the reality of what we're agreeing to much starker. It feels to me a lot more binding, and that's a good thing.

One other thing. Saying "I believe" also better expresses our unity, though you might not expect it to. As a statement of our unity with the people standing next to us, and all the other Catholics in the world, it's even more powerful than "We believe" because everyone is making the same intimate declaration of commitment, the same immigrant's promise, the same "I do," at exactly the same time in exactly the same words

Someone — I think the English Catholic writer Ronald Knox, but I can't find the quote — described the effect this way. Hearing all the people say "I believe," he said, was like seeing a candle-lit procession along a hillside from a distance. Everyone held a candle of his own, but together they made one single moving, living stream of light.

David Mills is the executive editor of FIRST THINGS (www.firstthings.com). He and his family attend St. Joseph's Church in Coraopolis, just north of Pittsburgh.

VOICES of the CHURCH

opinions, stories, wisdom, and personal voice

The stockings were hung

Well, some were by the chimney, and others were, well...

By Kathy Cribari Hamer

Everybody needs somebody to talk to, so sometimes my daughter Meredith talks to her microwave.

It doesn't talk back, but she talks to it anyway. This happens, she's told me, when she's at her busiest in the kitchen, and the ringing phone brings an unsolicited conversation that is long and ludicrous. It could come from a telemarketer, an election volunteer, or even her long-distance aunt who chooses dinnertime to just chat.

While holding the phone, Meredith, a children's therapist, responds silently. She stands up straight, looks at her reflection in the shiny, silver microwave, puts both hands up, in a "Whaaat?" gesture, and smoothly continues the telephone conversation.

This is an occurrence I laugh at even though I've never actually seen it transpire. But the comedy of my funny daughter conversing with a microwave does not seem far-fetched. She is quietly processing her frustrations. I guess that makes the microwave a therapist's therapist.

"If you tell things to the microwave, no one gets mad at you," Meredith explains. My favorite thing to say is, "Oh, you've got to be kidding me..."

"The microwave is quiet, and it almost always agrees."

Some say when married couples disagree, their harshest words are about money, in-laws, or child rearing. It's been a long time since I exchanged harsh words with a spouse, and I thought Larry and I, married for almost a year, might escape this.

I was wrong. We had our first argumentative discussion during this holiday season. Ironically, it was about Christmas stockings, hung by the chimney with care.

First we couldn't agree on how many children we have. There are stepchildren, in-law children and grandchildren. We counted them by family, age, gender, hair color, and temperament. Everything but favorite foods and Hokey-Pokey skills.

Still, we didn't have enough fingers, and higher math got the better of us, even though my husband is a numerical genius.

We spent 15 minutes (or more... who's counting?) calculating yours and mine, boys and girls, husbands and wives. We continually lost track, and restarted by names, in each sub-family.

We took a break and measured the mantle, which was topped with a two-inch thick board we had cut to hold the stocking-hanging hooks.

When the stockings were hung, they overlapped haphazardly. The mantle looked messier than Mrs. Claus's clothesline in an Arctic wind-swirl.

We divided the board by the number of people we estimated — we had settled on 27 — and that was problematic, because dividing the length of the board by the number of offspring caused us to come out with a space on each end, and who wanted that??

So Larry decided to take the tactile approach and "walk the mantle," beginning on the far end, pencil-marking the boards, re-counting the kids and drilling holes.

He was happy after he drilled all 27 holes. But then we remembered we hadn't counted ourselves. There were actually 29 of us. Neither of us was laughing then.

Was Larry going to re-drill all the holes? No, he said, definitively. It would split the wood.

"Hrrumph," I replied, self-righteously, "If it was a sewing project, I would rip it out and start over."

Everybody needs somebody to talk to (a microwave), and sometimes even disagree with (a husband).

All my life I have enjoyed two things: communication ability and belief. I don't mean writing ability or oratorical talent, but the ability to speak easily, often loudly, with my Heavenly Father. And I have the amazing grace to believe He hears me.

Six years ago, after the death of our former bishop, Joseph Delaney, I was speaking (telephone, not microwave) with his sister Ann Carruth, who lives in Wyoming. We discussed problems, hers with familial sickness, mine with one of the mini catastrophes that hit all families.

We commiserated, and Ann gave me a solution: "Say a little prayer to Joe."

How lovely to realize her brother, who was closer than I to the source of all answers, would be willing to listen to me.

This year I have been talking with Msgr. Charles King, too. For 37 years, until his death six months ago, he had escorted me through most of my decisions. He had presided at every major sacrament our family had received — marriages, baptisms, and anointings.

He is gone now, but I still "say a little prayer" to him, asking his opinion, his advice. I think he answers. I believe he does.

During our first dispute, Larry and I shared words of sassy disagreement. He didn't re-drill the 27 holes. Together we found a creative solution.

We began by hanging the stockings from my children, and from his. My children's sequined stockings had been patched and re-jeweled over wax spills and melted chocolate stains. Those sparkled more than the Las Vegas strip.

Larry's children's first Christmas stockings were of patchwork cloth made by their mother Brenda, and topped with their names, painted in her own handwriting.

We filled empty hooks with felt stockings made for husbands, wives and grandchildren, and place-holding, gold-toe socks.

When the stockings were hung, they overlapped haphazardly. The mantle looked messier than Mrs. Claus's clothesline in an Arctic wind-swirl.

We stopped arguing and laughed. We removed some of the hooks, and on the remaining 17, hung stockings exclusively for our nine offspring and significant others.

And ourselves.

Then, after a discussion (I felt Joe and Charles listening), we created more stocking space with a thick board on the dining room buffet. We hung some 20 hooks, and reserved that "new mantel" for our 12 grandchildren.

It didn't matter if we agreed on the number 12; it would be constantly growing... quicker than we knew.

Larry and I, like other parents, have spent our lives experiencing joy and celebration, but also grief and pain.

We talk to God about these things, and we talk to each other about them.

Usually, from the talking and the listening we understand; from the beautiful harmony of the two, we accept. Hang your stockings. Say your prayers.

Kathy Cribari Hamer and her husband are members of St. Andrew Parish near TCU in Southwest Fort Worth. In May 2009 her column received the second place award for best family life column from the Catholic Press Association of the U.S. and Canada for the second time in two years. In 2005, Kathy's column received the first place award in the

Significance flows from the Christ Child

By Jeff Hensley
Editor, *North Texas Catholic*

A Christmas party for my wife's school had us driving from Southwest Fort Worth, along I-20 and south through Grand Prairie, winding our way to the shores of Joe Pool Lake, where her principal's beautiful home was.

On our way back, we decided to take a little tour of the area around the UT Arlington campus, where we'd gone to school in the late '60s.

At around 10,000 students, with fewer than a thousand living on campus, it was a much more intimate setting than its modern counterpart.

The drive under the walkways that extend across a lowered Cooper Street, the massive parking lots, the generally urban look of the place, was all a bit intimidating.

As we drove to I-30 and then west to Fort Worth, having seen a significant slice of merely the southwest corner of the Metroplex, I began to ponder how young people are able to feel their personal significance in such a resource rich, but crowded and urban place.

It brought to mind the observation often made, that most of America's presidents have come from small towns. It's easier to feel your significance in a smaller place; more roles in the local community are open for you to explore, and on and on.

But then I thought back to my own young adult years. At a time when I was seeking out my place in the world and beginning to explore coming back to faith, back to a belief in God and being a part of his people.

At that time we were serving in VISTA, striving to improve the lot of the rural poor in Northwest Arkansas.

Some evenings, I would drag a little redwood picnic bench out onto the track that ran from the gravel road to our country house and lie on my back, looking up at the stars — coincidentally feeling my own personal insignificance.

But a funny thing came of all of that. As I stared awestruck, into the stars above me, realizing my smallness, I came to appreciate how wondrous it was that God could love me — in my insignificance.

And we know of this love because the one who made those stars and the earth from which we view them, became one of us. Because a baby who was the Son of God came to us, as one of us, we know that we are loved, that we have a significance beyond measure.

Because of the Baby Jesus, we are intimately connected to the stars.

Features

I hate the growing 'Christmas' hype. It's about Jesus; not Santa Claus.

By Jeff Hedglen

It happens earlier and earlier every year. It used to be mid-December, then the week after Thanksgiving, and now, sometimes it happens early to mid-November. Typically I am making my way through the world in a shopping mall or grocery store; sometimes it is something I hear on the radio or while watching TV, but somewhere along the way, I realize that I am sick of Christmas.

Sometimes I fume and think... If I hear that "Santa Claus is coming to town" one more time, I might chunk a fruitcake at someone. Other times I get a little nauseated and kind of offended that I am being coerced into thinking I do not love my wife enough because I have not been to Jared's. The thing that irks me the most is that the mega marketing machine that fuels the secular x-mas so overexposes me to the seasonings of the season that I don't even like most of my favorite carols or even watching the "Charlie Brown Christmas Special" anymore.

At this point I would like to say that I am not someone who is next in line for a visit from the ghost of Christmas past. It is not so much that I am being a scrooge; rather I wish Christmas was celebrated more like the liturgical season that it is, not the eight-week, pregame show for Baby Jesus' birthday party that it has become.

I actually do not know what disturbs me more, the long build-up for Christmas or the lightning speed at which it is kicked to the curb, along with the Christmas tree, on Dec 26. (I have actually seen this). It seems that as soon as the presents are unwrapped, people are flooding the stores to return them for what they really wanted.

Again, I know I am sounding like a guy named Ebenezer, but what I am getting at is that Christmas

BEGINS December 24. Just when many people are winding down the holiday cheer, the Church is just revving up her celebratory spirit.

My wife's family in Germany does not put up their Christmas tree until December 24. The day before Christmas is filled with so much joy and excitement. The festive decorating, food preparation, and hot cocoa sipping all lead up to the celebration of Christ's Mass and a return home for a long dinner with longer conversations. Only when all of this is complete do they retire to the living room to open simple, often home-made gifts.

The liturgical season of Christmas officially goes until Jan 9. During this time we not only celebrate the birth of our Lord, we recall the Angel Choirs singing "Glory to God," shepherds coming to worship Jesus, and Wise Men who bring gifts and adore the newborn child. We also celebrate the feast of Mary the Mother of God Jan. 1, and the season of Christmas culminates with the Baptism of Jesus, Jan. 9.

One year ... I left the lights that adorned my home on until the Baptism of the Lord.

One year, in an effort to stick to the Liturgical Calendar, I left the lights that adorned my home on until the Baptism of the Lord. I figured if the stores were free to start playing Christmas music in September, I too was free to keep the celebration going. Although I got strange looks from my neighbors every time I drove up to the house, I was reminded that Christmas was not over yet.

One of the many challenges we encounter living in a secular world is to effectively live out our faith traditions when all those around us are not participating. But, with a little effort we can walk step by step alongside the Church, enjoying the season of celebrating the birth of our Savior. It might be hard to keep the Christmas spirit going when the rest of the society has moved on to Valentine's Day, but if you put the effort in, this could just be your best Christmas yet!

Jeff Hedglen, youth minister at St. Bartholomew Parish until Dec. 31, will assume new duties as campus minister at UTA and associate director of Young Adult Ministry, Jan. 1. He will remain active with Camp Fort Worth. Readers with questions can contact Jeff at Jeff.hedglen@gmail.com.



(CNS photo/Gregory A. Shemitz)

Msgr. Kevin Sullivan, left, executive director of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York, and Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan of New York help distribute turkeys and other food to people in need at a Catholic Charities' center in New York's Harlem community Nov. 22.



(CNS photo/Nancy Phelen Wiehch)

Alyssa Brooks smiles as the congregation recites a new response at the beginning of Mass at St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Alexandria, Virginia., Nov. 27. The new English translation of the Roman Missal was used for the first time in churches across the nation on the first Sunday of Advent.



(CNS photo/Paul Haring)

Carl Anderson, supreme knight of the Knights of Columbus, holds plans for a new plaza named for the Knights of Columbus during a ceremony with Rome Mayor Gianni Alemanno, left, Dec. 6. The new plaza near Rome's Circus Maximus honors more than 90 years of charitable work by the Knights in the city.

Cross-Words

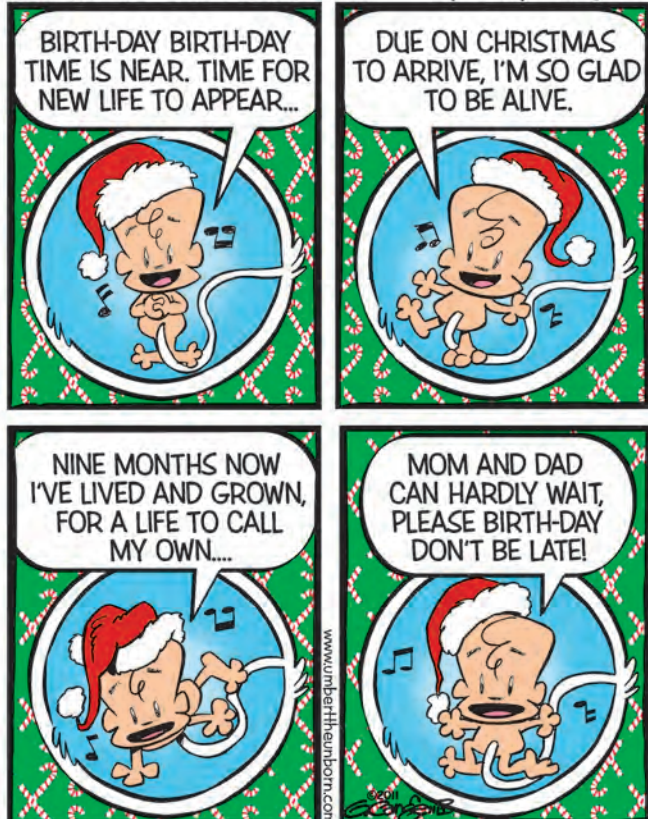
By Mark Simeroth

Across & Down:

1. And you, Bethlehem, land of _____, are by no means least.... (MT 2:6)
2. Handling
3. He slew Goliath
4. Maturing
5. Circumvent

1	2	3	4	5
2				
3				
4				
5				

Umbert the Unborn by Gary Cangemi



The FLOCK by Jean Denton



For four years, St. Patrick Cathedral has hosted the diocesan celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe, allowing devotees a chance to

Pay homage to Our Lady

Story and Photos by Joan Kurkowski-Gillen / Correspondent



Francisco "Pancho" Contreras portrays Juan Diego during a procession at the beginning of the Mass.

April Wall started the day early on Monday, Dec. 12. Before the first glimmer of dawn lit the Fort Worth skyline, the mother of two left her Fort Worth home to make a special delivery. The 31-year-old carried a bouquet of daisies inside St. Patrick Cathedral to place before the statue of a woman who has become a religious, cultural, and ethnic icon to millions.

"I'm Mexican and she's my mom," Wall said, fighting back tears as she gazed at the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe." I try to come here for her feast day every year."

Paying homage to the Virgin, who appeared to a poor Aztec Indian in 1531 on a hillside outside Mexico City, is something she learned as a child.

"She was everything to my grandmother, and it's the same for me," Wall whispered from a pew. "I always pray to Our Lady of Guadalupe. She runs my life."

The Virgin of Guadalupe, also known as the Patroness of the Americas, was celebrated in churches and shrines across the United States and Mexico — and in Rome — on Dec. 12 with special liturgies, processions, and vigils. Many parishes in the Diocese of Fort Worth, among them St. Andrew, San Mateo, St. Peter, All Saints, and St. Joseph, observed the Marian feast day with Mass and social gatherings.

Festivities inside St. Patrick Cathedral began at 5:30 a.m. Downtown streets were

empty, and the skies still dark as worshippers filed into the sanctuary to hear the Mariachi Girasol band serenade a replica of the Virgin with "Las Mañanitas" — a traditional Mexican song sung on birthdays and holidays. A Mass, celebrated by Bishop Kevin Vann, followed the 30-minute musical tribute.

Deeply-rooted Hispanic traditions and customs helped express the celebratory nature of the liturgy.

Dressed in Aztec-inspired costumes embellished with bells, rattling beads, and feathered headdresses, a troupe of school-age Matachines from Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church in Decatur, lead the procession to the altar at the beginning of

'Do not let your countenance, your heart be disturbed. Do not fear this sickness of your uncle or any other sickness, nor anything that is sharp or hurtful. Am I not here, I, who am your Mother? Are you not under my shadow and protection? Am I not the source of your joy? Are you not in the hollow of my mantle, in the crossing of my arms? Do you need anything more? Let nothing else worry you, disturb you.'

— Words of Our Lady to Juan Diego



The Matachines perform in St. Patrick's new hall during a reception following the Mass.

the Mass. Using movements and steps rich in symbolism, the liturgical dancers are part of a centuries-old tradition among Mexicans and Mexican-Americans. Their rhythmic movements tell the story of the apparitions and are considered prayers to the Blessed Virgin.

Young members of Ballet Folklorico, a Fort Worth-based arts organization, also participated in the Mass by performing "La Negra" during the processional and "jarabe tapatio," the Mexican hat dance, during the offertory.

"This is the fourth year for this celebration, and it's nice to see it continue to grow," said Josefina Villareal, who coordinated the first Our Lady of Guadalupe celebration at St. Patrick. "It's important to include young people in the liturgy because they are the ones who will carry on our traditions not only for Hispanics, but for the larger Catholic community. It's wonderful to see the love the Virgin has for her people and the people have for her."

Wearing a white vestment bearing an image of the Our Lady of Guadalupe, Bishop

Vann told the gathering of devotees that Mary's appearance to Juan Diego 480 years ago reminds us that God's promises are always fulfilled.

"She wants us to know that God is always present and, whatever challenges and worries we have, the Mother of God is with us," the bishop said, in a homily given in both English and Spanish. "Our Lady of Guadalupe proclaims once more the greatness of God."

Words spoken by Mary during the apparition, "I am here as your mother. I am here to protect you," still ring true today.

"Is she not the symbol of justice, strength, and faith for all peoples?" he asked, posing the rhetorical question. "Does she not also teach us that all life is sacred, especially before birth?"

The feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe is a great day for rejoicing, Bishop Vann declared.

"We rejoice in our faith. We rejoice in the Mother of God who tells us the words spoken by the Lord will be fulfilled," he said. "This is the message of faith Our Lady of Guadalupe

SEE OUR LADY, P. 20

Our Lady of Guadalupe:

The NORTH TEXAS CATHOLIC explores how an apparition spread like wildfire across the Americas to

By María de Lourdes Ruiz S

It is hardly a coincidence that in 1945, the year that World War II ended, Pope Pius XII looked at the suffering, fragmented world and declared Our Lady of Guadalupe patroness of the Americas.

As noted by the Mexican episcopate and echoed by Blessed Pope John Paul II, the Guadalupe event “meant the beginning of evangelization with a vitality that surpassed all expectations. Christ’s message, through his Mother, took up the central elements of the indigenous culture, purified them, and gave them the definitive sense of salvation... Guadalupe and Juan Diego have a deep ecclesial and missionary meaning and are a model of perfectly inculturated evangelization,” said the Pope in his homily for Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin’s canonization on July 31, 2002.

“At the heart of the Guadalupana message has been a deep-seated marriage between Mary the Mother of the Church and, first, Hispanic Catholics in Hispanic America — and then beyond, especially to the United States, eventually drawing into this spiritual world Catholic people of a variety of ethnic heritages,” indicated history professor Dr. Patrick Foley, founder of the journal *Catholic Southwest: A Journal of History and Culture*. Foley is a noted Texas Catholic historian, and long-time member of Holy Trinity Mission in Azle, just northwest of Fort Worth.

“The essence of this Guadalupe cult,” added Foley, “has inspired the spread of evangelization among millions of Catholics for hundreds of years, particularly Hispanics, but so many others also. It is an embodiment of their Catholic faith, their ethnic heritage, and their culture, bringing together the three in the love of *la Virgen de la Guadalupe*.”

It is a simple and familiar story.

An Indian named “Cuauhtlatoatzin” or “the talking eagle,” was born in Cuautlitlán, (part of what’s now Mexico City) and later baptized Juan Diego. He was a gifted member of the Chichimeca people, one of the more culturally advanced groups living in the Anáhuac Valley.

One Saturday in December, Juan Diego walked past the hill of Tepeyac (the “Hill of the Nose” in Nahuatl, his native tongue) on his way to church, when he heard singing, then a voice calling him from the hilltop, “Juan, my little one, Juan Diego.”

When he reached the top of the hill, he saw a lady who asked him to approach. Juan Diego bowed before her. “I am,” said the Lady, “the Holy Mary, the eternal Virgin, Mother of the true God. I wish a shrine to be built here to show my love to you. I am your compassionate

mother, yours, and all the dwellers of this earth. To bring to pass what I request, go and speak to the bishop of Mexico and say I sent you to make manifest to him my will.”

Our Lady appeared to Juan Diego three times, ultimately providing for a skeptical bishop proof of their encounter in the form of two signs: a cloak full of fresh roses in December, and a miraculous image of herself on Juan Diego’s *tilma* or shawl.

Traditionally set in 1531, the Guadalupe event took place just a few decades after Christopher Columbus arrived in the New World. While visions of Spanish conquistadores dominate the landscape of our imagination, the day-to-day culture of this altering world remained vastly Aztec, featuring a great diversity of dialects and norms. As the ethnicity of the population increasingly blended, so did the separation and rivalry among social classes.

Much of what we know of the culture of that era is a mix of personal narrative, tradition, archaeological theory, and iconographic sources. It is remarkable, then, that the first and oldest written document on the Guadalupe event dates back to 1556, “*el Nican Mopohua*” (written in the official



This image of the Chapel of Our Lady of Guadalupe on the main floor of the Basilica of the National Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, all the Americas, beginning with images of indigenous South Americans, such as the Inca on the

language of the Aztec empire, Náhuatl).

But the story of Juan Diego’s encounter with Our Lady was initially transmitted only orally, recorded originally through Aztec pictographic chronicles called *mapas*, as well as through the beautiful detailed ballads chanted by elderly Indians to accompany the annual dance in the plaza of Guadalupe. This ballad told the story of the miracle of the roses and of Juan Diego’s *tilma*, in addition to the installation of the sacred image at the newly built shrine.

According to Guadalupan scholar Father Martinus Cawley, Guadalupan devotion among Spaniards born in or near the capital city spread swiftly beyond Mexico’s central valley in the mid-1550s.

Until the Guadalupe story was printed,

noted Fr. Cawley, the first direct translator of Guadalupe from the original Náhuatl, “preachers and artists generally avoided public allusion to its individual episodes, but censorship was less strict for Indian dances at the shrine. As a result Spanish spectators could catch the gist of the story from the costumes and mimicry and from explanations by other onlookers. By 1600 this gist was so widely known that artists — though not preachers as yet — were discreetly depicting even the miracles of the roses and *tilma*,” explained the monk from the Trappist-Cistercian Abbey of Our Lady of Guadalupe outside of Fayetteville, Oregon.

Historians, scientists, and experts may forever argue about the veracity of specific details surrounding the Guadalupe story.



(CNS photo/Crosiers)

“Mary, who raises questions about how the birth of Jesus could happen, is not blamed for her uneasiness,” states Benedictine Father Dale Launderville. “Luke wishes to portray her more positively [than Zechariah] because she will give birth to the Son of God and not merely to the greatest of prophets.”

Arise! Shine

God's glory has dawned on you

*I*saiah 60 is about the future rule of Christ on earth. The prophet writes:

“Arise! Shine, for your light has come, the glory of the Lord has dawned upon you. Though darkness covers the earth, and thick clouds, the peoples, upon you the Lord will dawn, and over you his glory will be seen. Nations shall walk by your light” (v. 1-3).

He continues:

“They all gather and come to you — your sons from afar, your daughters in the arms of their nurses. ... “For the riches of the sea shall be poured out before you, the wealth of nations shall come to you. Caravans of camels shall cover you, dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all from Sheba shall come bearing gold and frankincense, and heralding the praises of the Lord” (v. 4-6).

CAROLE NORRIS GREENE
ASSOCIATE EDITOR, FAITH ALIVE!
CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

The Virgin Mother: ‘Let heaven and earth rejoice’

BY FATHER THOMAS THOMPSON, SM
CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

Advent is a good time to ask ourselves: Who is this Jesus, whose birth we are preparing to celebrate?

One way to respond is to linger long and lovingly on the phrases from the creed that we profess at Christmas and every Sunday: Jesus Christ is “the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages ... consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made.”

Those last words are also found in *John 1:3*, one of the Christmas Gospels: “All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be,” and in Paul’s Letter to the Colossians: Christ is “before all things, and in him all things hold together” (1:17).

These texts indicate the church’s belief that the one whose incarnation we celebrate at Christmas was present from the beginning of the world, and that the imprint of Christ is deeply embedded on all creation.

The birth of Christ was preceded and accompanied by the extraordinary events recounted in the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke.

— The first of these events was the

announcement to Zechariah that his wife Elizabeth would give birth to a son.

Similar to Abraham’s wife Sarah, Elizabeth was beyond child-bearing age. (When Sarah heard the news that she was to bear a son, she laughed, and the son that she bore was called Isaac, the laughter of God. Sarah’s laughter reveals that all of this world’s certitudes can be reversed.)

When Elizabeth gave birth to John, the people recognized that “surely the hand of the Lord was with him” (*Luke 1:66*).

— The second sign was the message of the angel Gabriel to Mary, announcing that she would conceive a child who “will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father,” and “of whose kingdom there will be no end” (*Luke 1:32-33*).

In answer to Mary’s question of how this could come about, the angel responded that this would be a wholly miraculous event brought about, not by a human father, but by God: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God” (*Luke 1:35*).

Then, in *Luke 1:37*, the angel spoke the same words already addressed to Abraham: “Nothing will be impossible with

God” — not even a virgin mother.

The virginal conception of Christ through the overshadowing of the Spirit has cosmic significance. The same creator Spirit, who hovered over the waters at the dawn of creation, was responsible for the conception of Christ in the womb of the Virgin Mary and for the renewal of creation in Christ.

Mary’s virginal conception was not so much a personal Marian privilege, but rather a sign that points to something much greater, something that confounds the ordinary course of the universe.

It was fitting that Mary should give birth in so extraordinary a manner to the one who is extraordinary beyond all measure.

Few may be able to enter into the implications of this truth that is expressed in doctrine. But Mary’s being both a virgin and a mother, and the resurrection of Christ from the dead, are two events in revelation history that show even the totally unlettered that the ordinary course of nature has been completely overturned.

These two events indicate that the God whom we believe in is not only our creator and savior but also the Lord of the universe!

The poetry of the early church, expressed in its hymns, made frequent reference to the virgin birth as the most fitting

way for Christ to come into the world.

A hymn from a sixth-century writer, Venantius Fortunatus, describes how all creation is in reverence as Christ comes to dwell in the body of Mary:

“The God whom earth and sea and sky adore and laud and magnify, whose might they own, whose praise they tell, in Mary’s body deigned to dwell.”

The early hymns also loved to dwell on the physical relation between Mary, a creature, and her son, the Word present at the beginning of creation. Mary, now enthroned on high among the stars, once cared for and nurtured the one who made the stars!

The new translation of the *Roman Missal* restores the complete text of Eucharistic Prayer 1, which contains the ancient church’s description of the role of Mary and the saints in the celebration of every Eucharist: We make this sacrifice of praise “in communion with those whose memory we venerate, especially the glorious ever-Virgin Mary, Mother of our God and Lord, Jesus Christ,” and of all the saints.

Marianist Father Thompson is director of the Marian Library at the University of Dayton, Ohio.

In the beginning was the Word

BY JOSEPH KELLY
CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

Catholics attending a later Mass on Christmas Day are often surprised by the Gospel reading. There is no mention of shepherds, of Magi, of angels, of Bethlehem or, very surprisingly, of Mary and Joseph.

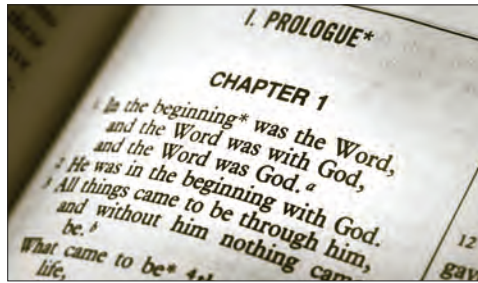
Instead, the Gospel starts: "In the beginning was the Word," and it continues to speak only of the Word of God.

What people are hearing is the prologue to John's Gospel. But why is this a Christmas Gospel reading?

John wrote his Gospel after Matthew and Luke had written theirs, and those are the two Gospels with the accounts of Jesus' birth.

Matthew has the Magi and the flight into Egypt, while Luke has the Annunciation, the census and the shepherds. They focus upon the birth of the human Jesus. Matthew's Gospel even includes a genealogy that traces Jesus' human ancestors all the way back to Abraham, the father of the Jewish people.

John, on the other hand, wanted to emphasize Jesus' divinity. His Gospel records Jesus' sayings such as "The Father and I are one" and "If you knew me, you would know my Father." John's emphasis upon Jesus as divine begins with the prologue.



"John's prologue is a type of genealogy, speaking of Jesus' eternal generation from the Father," writes Joseph Kelly. (CNS photo illustration/Bob Roller)

In fact, John's prologue is a type of genealogy — not the human genealogy recorded by Matthew but a divine one, speaking of Jesus' eternal generation from the Father. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

But why does John say "Word" rather than "Son"? Because, like all the evangelists, John wrote in Greek, and in that language, the word for "Word" means "the perfect expression." The Son of God is the perfect expression of the Father, that is, in his human form he will present the divine reality to us humans.

The prologue emphasizes that "the Word became flesh" because this was a radical idea for the ancient world, saying that the divine being could take on flesh and become incarnate as a revelation of divinity itself.

Although we accept this today, this

notion made tremendous demands upon ancient people. For some, it was just too much to accept. John tells us that many of the Jews who first heard this message objected to it and listened to Jesus no more.

But other Jews who heard of the Word made flesh did believe, and they became Jesus' first disciples.

Although the Gospel of John will tell primarily about the words and deeds of Jesus during his public career, this magnificent prologue focuses on what the Word did before becoming flesh.

In this prologue, John also alludes to the creation.

He tells his readers that the Word "was in the beginning with God" and that "all things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be," so the incarnation is not the first time the Son has been concerned with all of creation. John has effectively linked the Word with the world Jesus would come to save. Even more, the phrase "in the beginning" recalls the very first words of the entire Bible, *Genesis 1:1*.

John maintains the creation motif in the next verse: "Through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness."

Jesus represents the re-creation of the world, so John again takes us back to first day of creation when God separated the light from the darkness, and "God saw

that the light was good." Readers who also knew Matthew's Gospel would recall how the light of the star led the Magi to Jesus.

But John's prologue looks equally to Luke's infancy narrative. John speaks of "his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son." Readers familiar with Luke's account would recall that the angels sang to the shepherds, "Glory to God in the highest."

The modern religious Christmas focuses almost entirely on the infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke as well as on material that is not found in those narratives, for example, that Gospel Magi were actually three kings.

John's Gospel takes Jesus' birth very seriously indeed but does not express it in the familiar form. Like Matthew and Luke, John speaks about Jesus' birth but in terms of the divine Word, present at the creation, becoming again present but this time to the creation. The world was created through him, and now it would be redeemed through him via his human birth, his incarnation.

This prologue makes a superb Christmas Gospel reading.

Joseph Kelly is professor of religious studies at Jesuit-run John Carroll University in Cleveland and author of AN INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT FOR CATHOLICS, Liturgical Press.

The necessity of 'Dreaming of a First Christmas'

BY JEFF HEDGLEN
NORTH TEXAS CATHOLIC COLUMNIST

Christmas is a time full of dreams. Bing Crosby is dreaming of a white Christmas, almost everyone dreams of a peaceful night spent with family, good food, laughter, gifts exchanged, twinkling of lights and just the right amount of magic. But Christmas dreaming had been going on long before children were snug in their beds, with visions of sugarplums dancing in their heads.

For hundreds of years an entire nation dreamed about Christmas. Through all the ups and downs, hopes and dreams, and promises made that they believed were slow in being fulfilled. Through all this the people of Israel continued to dream of a Messiah, someone who would free them from bondage, occupation, sin, and suffering. A savior who would put the regrettable past behind them and lead God's chosen people into what were for them the seldom tasted waters of freedom.

God's chosen people never stopped dreaming. As the appointed time approached, more people began to dream and have visions more spectacular than any hall that has ever been decked with holly.

Strictly speaking Mary was not asleep during her visit by the Angel Gabriel, but I can imagine when it was over it must have seemed like a dream. Her reaction to the



This creche is displayed at Holy Cross Church in Onamia, Minnesota.

visit evoked the kind of questions asked after waking from a strange dream. "She was greatly troubled and pondered what sort of greeting this might be"; "How can this be, since I have had no relations with a man?" But with her head swimming with amazement and her faith exploding with trust, she accepts the overwhelming call to be the virgin Mother of God's son with a humble "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word" (*Luke 1:26-38*).

Her betrothed Joseph, on the other hand, was a bit less willing. Upon hearing that Mary was pregnant he decided to divorce her quietly rather than publicly accuse her of adultery. But then he

did something that changed his life: He went to sleep. In a dream the angel of the Lord came to him and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her" (*Matthew 1:20*). When he awoke, he did what he was commanded.

But this was not the end of Joseph's "Christmas dreaming." After Jesus was born, the angel of the Lord came to him again, this time warning him about a plot by Herod to have Jesus killed. Just like the first time, when he awoke he did what he had been commanded to do (*Matthew 2:13-15*).

The power of dreams surrounding the birth of Jesus was not limited to the people of Israel. Magi from the East came to Jerusalem in search for the newborn king of the Jews; they had seen his star in the heavens and followed it. Herod decided to use them as spies to discover the whereabouts of this child. They did find Jesus and upon seeing him paid him homage. Then in dream they were warned to not go back and report to Herod, and they went home another by another route (*Matthew 2:1-12*).

The story of the birth of Jesus has God and his messengers implanting dream after dream, announcing salvation, encouraging faithfulness, warning about danger, and thwarting the plans of an evil king. But behind the scenes of all this dream

weaving is a dream that began in the heart of God long ago.

God's dream for Christmas day began the day Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit. The crowning jewel of his creation, the only ones with a free will to love Him had chosen to disobey Him, and this disobedience broke their relationship. This was not the plan. I can in no way imagine what God was feeling in that moment other than love.

God's love created the universe and all that is in it. God's love gave humanity free will, God's love allows us to sin and turn our backs on Him and that very same love spawned a dream to bring us back into right relationship, to wash away our sin, to restore us to our original holiness. The culmination of the dream that was hatched in the Garden of Eden took form in a stable in Bethlehem and achieved its ultimate end on Calvary and in the empty tomb.

Love is wanting the good for another and being willing to do what it takes to make that good come to pass. God wanted the "good" of humanity being reconciled with Him. He was willing to do everything in his power to make that happen. The manifestation of God's love is not only legendary; it is the stuff of dreams.

Jeff Hedglen, is a youth and young adult minister who writes regularly for the NORTH TEXAS CATHOLIC.

Learning from the shepherds and the Magi

BY FATHER GERALD O'COLLINS, SJ
CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

At first glance, the shepherds in Luke's Nativity story and the Magi in Matthew's Nativity story hardly pair off together.

The shepherds may not be totally destitute, but they belong with the poor, who struggle to survive. They sleep rough at night as they guard their sheep under the stars. Economically they rate nowhere near the Magi, who have the resources to travel to Bethlehem from a distant country and bring expensive gifts for the newborn Christ Child. The shepherds have no gifts to bring to the manger. They can bring only themselves.

Moreover, the Magi are Gentiles and the shepherds are Jews. Admittedly, the shepherds' way of life makes it impossible for them to keep all the regulations of the law that God gave to his people. Religiously, the shepherds remain on the fringes of Jewish society. Yet, unlike the Magi, they are insiders and not gentile outsiders.

If we set our minds to it, further differences emerge. A short walk takes the shepherds to find Jesus lying in a manger in Bethlehem. They are already living and working in that region (*Luke 2:8*).

The Magi, however, prompted by a strange star that they observed at its rising, have traveled for many days or even some months before they reach the goal of their



journey: the newborn King of the Jews.

Distance and time set the shepherds and the Magi apart if they are going to keep their rendezvous with the Christ Child.

Yet the Magi and the shepherds stand together, and not least by being disadvantaged.

The Magi live in another country and do know the inspired Scriptures. The chief priests and scribes have studied their Scriptures and, through King Herod, can direct their exotic visitors from the East toward Bethlehem. That is where the

prophet Micah has placed the birth of the ruler who will shepherd his people.

In their search for the newborn King, the Magi are helped only by a new star that they first glimpse at its rising (*Matthew 2:2*) and then, much later, on the road from Jerusalem to Bethlehem (*Matthew 2:9*).

The shepherds, however, need an angel of the Lord, backed up by a multitude of other angels singing the praises of God, to stir them into leaving their sheep and heading for Bethlehem.

Unlike Elizabeth, Zechariah, Joseph, Simeon, Anna and Mary herself, the shepherds cannot be called devout and observant Jews. Religiously, they are marginal people who are taken up with keeping watch, day and night, over their flock.

What unites the Magi and the shepherds is the way in which, despite their disadvantages, they rise at once to the occasion. They respond immediately to the call and the chance they are given from heaven: a star in the case of the Magi and angelic visitors in the case of the shepherds.

The Magi, in particular, take advantage of the very limited chances they have been given to accomplish their mission. But before they reach their journey's end, when they arrive in Jerusalem not only King Herod but also the whole city are alarmed at what the Magi have to say about their search for the King of the Jews (*Matthew 2:3*).

Even though the priests, scribes and others know the Scriptures and, above all, the prophecy of Micah about the location of the Messiah's birth, none of them join the Magi in going the few miles from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. Those with decisive advantages fail to make use of their chance.

In the season of the Nativity, it is worth looking carefully at the figures of the shepherds and the Magi that surround our Christmas creches. We might ask ourselves: How did they get there to worship our Lord and Savior, the newborn Christ Child?

If we feel that life's lottery has given us few advantages, we can think of the poor shepherds and the rich Magi. In their different ways the two groups emerge from the Christmas story as those who made the very best of the limited chances they were given.

Whether we have to come from a distance or have to travel only a few miles, there is always room for us at the manger.

O come, let us adore our newborn King and Redeemer!

No matter where we start from, what counts is using our chance to kneel before the baby lying in the manger or nestling in the arms of Mary.

Jesuit Father O'Collins has taught theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. His 48 published books include JESUS OUR REDEEMER; Oxford University Press.

A WELCOME Christmas gift

BY FATHER STANLEY J. KONIECZNY
CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

The unseasonably warm weather gave Tim one last opportunity to add to the lights and Christmas decorations on his porch and lawn. But gusty breezes made it difficult to hold onto the latest additions — banners that read, "Hope," "Peace," "Joy" and other traditional watchwords of the season.

Struggling with "Peace" in the shape of a dove, Tim glanced across the street at the stark, somewhat untidy porch of his bachelor neighbor, Walter, who did not even bother to hang a wreath of holly.

"Next year, we're going to simplify our display like old Walter; maybe he has the right idea," Tim vowed as "Peace" snapped in his face and around his head.

Over the flapping of nylon, Tim heard a door slam and then a pleasant "Morning."

It was Walter, who always was economical with the words of his greetings.

"I'm off to do my Christmas shopping down at the hardware store," he mentioned to Tim.

"Christmas shopping at a hardware store? What an odd man," Tim thought.

Within 30 minutes, Walter was back.

"I finished my Christmas shopping and decorating in one stop," he yelled to Tim, who muttered, "This I have to see."

Tim crossed the street in time to find Walter picking up a handful of yellowed fliers for lawn services and delivery pizza from around his front door.

"You're just in time," Walter told Tim as he reached inside the door, and, with a flourish, produced a brand new doormat with the word "welcome" scrolled in black script against deep brown pile.

"You buy a new doormat and you call that Christmas shopping and decorating?" Tim asked in exasperation.

"No, not a doormat; a welcome mat," Walter corrected, adding, "And it is a decoration that happens to celebrate the most important word in all of Christmas."

Walter sat down on the porch, made himself comfortable and then explained:

"You see one Christmas, a number of years ago, I was far from home on business. I went to Mass and heard a priest preach about 'welcome' as the most important word, the holiest word uttered at the first Christmas. This priest said that the word that everyone longed to hear at

Bethlehem that holy night was 'welcome.'

"After their long journey to Bethlehem, the only word that Joseph and Mary prayed to hear was 'welcome.'

"Can you imagine how they felt when one caring innkeeper finally extended his hand to the carpenter, saying, 'My friend, you and your wife are welcome to stay in the stable out back?'"

"And then, when shepherds ducked their heads in to peer onto the poor shelter, they were blessed by Mary's gentle greeting of 'Welcome. This is my son, Jesus,' as she invited the visitors to come closer to the tiny bundle that she cradled tenderly."

"Well, when I came home from that trip, I noticed that the welcome mat by my front door was becoming a little thin and threadbare, just like the rest of the place. So that holiday season and every year after that I have replaced my doormat and have renewed that most holy message of Christmas: Welcome!"

"That is all the decorating I need to do."

Walter then picked up a hardware store bag, extended it to Tim, and said, "Oh, Tim, sorry to mention it, but I noticed that your welcome mat is a bit worn, too. Here's



The word "welcome" on a doormat conveys an inviting message similar to the one Joseph and Mary prayed to hear after their long journey to Bethlehem. (CNS illustration/Emily Thompson)

your replacement. Merry Christmas! You and Anne are welcome to come over this evening for a bit of Christmas cheer and to break in my welcome mat."

Then Walter added, "And tell Anne that she's welcome to bring a plate of her Christmas cookies as well."

Father Stan Konieczny is pastor of St. John the Baptist Church, Smithton, Illinois and a long-time contributor to the Catholic News Service Faith Alive! Christmas package.

Simeon continues to speak to modern believers

BY FATHER W. THOMAS FAUCHER
CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

For many years in the Pacific Northwest there was a famous monk (now deceased) who, as a novice in his monastery, had received the name of Simeon. He reveled in the description of the biblical Simeon as a man who was "righteous and devout, awaiting the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him."

The modern monk told everyone that he tried to live his life so that this would be a description of him as well.

His choice of Simeon as a role model was a wise decision.

Luke's description of Simeon as possessing the Holy Spirit is unique in the Gospels, and it speaks volumes about the interplay between the Old and New Testaments.

The great figures of John the Baptist, Zachariah, Elizabeth, Simeon, Anna the prophetess, and a few others connect the deep spirituality of the Jewish world into which Jesus was born with the transformation of that world by his life, death, and resurrection.

But of these, few have as many lines of Gospel texts as Simeon. Both Luke's narration of his story and Simeon's words reverberate down the centuries and continue to speak to modern listeners.

Simeon was given the gift by the Holy Spirit of knowing he would not die until he had seen the Messiah, and he recognized the baby Jesus as that Messiah. His prayer, the *Nunc Dimittis*, has been used for centuries as part of the Divine Office and is prayed by thousands of people each

day at night prayer.

What is so powerful about Simeon and what people say about him today is that he seems so timeless. He suddenly appears from nowhere with just a few incredibly praiseworthy words of introduction, and he lives out a promise made to him by God.

He "amazes" Joseph and Mary by calling Jesus "a light for revelation to the gentiles, and glory for your people Israel."

Simeon goes on to tell Mary that "this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel." He speaks of a sword piercing Mary's heart so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. Then, leaving behind the finest one-paragraph description of the life and meaning of Jesus Christ ever written, and having told God that he is ready to be called into heaven, he simply disappears from the Gospels forever.

One woman told me that, even as she tries and often fails to pray the Divine Office every day, the one prayer she will never omit is the *Nunc Dimittis*, where Simeon says to God that "now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation."

This woman went on to say, "Listen to that faith. What had he seen? He had seen a baby, just a baby. He didn't see any miracles, he didn't hear any preaching, and he didn't see the resurrection. He saw a baby and two overwhelmed parents. But he believed! And that meant that he could die in peace."

She continued, "I want so much from God to keep my faith strong. I just wish I

"Simeon was given the gift by the Holy Spirit of knowing that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah," writes Father W. Thomas Faucher. "He recognized the baby Jesus as that Messiah." (CNS photo/Crosiers)



could be like Simeon."

My friend, the modern monk Simeon, was a wonderful priest. He worked in a seminary and in parishes, and was often more comfortable outside of his monastery than within it.

He told me once, when he and I shared a project of writing fictional accounts of people who knew Jesus, that I should write a fictional account of the life of Simeon.

The modern Simeon wanted a story, even a fictional one, about this marvelous man.

I gave his suggestion some thought and prayer, and decided not to do it. Luke chose to make the biblical Simeon a man of mystery and profound faith, and I think that is all that needs to be said about him.

Father Thomas Faucher is pastor of St. Mary's Catholic Church in Boise, Idaho.

Witness and blessing of the elders

BY MAUREEN DALY
CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

The *New American Bible Revised Edition* in a note on *Luke 2:22-40* says: "The presentation of Jesus in the temple depicts the parents of Jesus as devout Jews, faithful observers of the law of the Lord, i.e., the law of Moses."

Similarly, the witnesses of the presentation are described by their faithfulness: Simeon is "righteous and devout, awaiting the consolation of Israel" and Anna "never left the temple, but worshiped night and day with fasting and prayer."

Deirdre O'Neal of Naperville, Illinois, finds special meaning in the testimony of the elderly witnesses. "After a lifetime of living as faithful observers of the Jewish law, both Simeon and Anna, male and female, were able to recognize that this was the Savior that they had been taught about and had been waiting for their whole lives," O'Neal said.



Simeon and Anna are types of the elderly, who having served faithfully, are rewarded to simply see the work of God in the world go forward. (CNS photo/Morteza Nikoubazl, Reuters)

"Even though they were elderly, they were able to recognize that this baby was special. They were not there to see him as an adult. They did not see him perform miracles, but they were able to see that this was the hope they had been waiting for. That was a gift from God."

O'Neal learned Simeon's prayer, "Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace," as "the night prayer of the church." She sees special significance in these words coming from older believers.

"It is so touching," O'Neal said. "Anna and Simeon were at peace now and could let go. I think it shows that, when you have been faithful all of your life, you will be able to let go and go on to the next, hopefully more fulfilling, part of your life."

She felt that society tends to dismiss its elderly, not appreciating the gifts that they have to offer, especially by way of their prayers.

"I think it is important for the elders to bless the little children, to say, 'I see you,

and you are good,'" O'Neal said.

Josephite Father Donald M. Fest sees the presentation in the temple as an example of Joseph's role as teacher of Jesus in the ways of faith. Fr. Fest, pastor of St. Veronica Catholic Church in Baltimore, said that his devotion to St. Joseph influenced his choice to join the Josephite order.

"I see St. Joseph as the protector of Mary and Jesus, and so, protector of the church," Fr. Fest said. "Joseph also was a teacher to Jesus."

He directed me to his order's website, www.josephite.com, where prayers focus on Joseph's role as Jesus' guardian and teacher. The daily prayer to St. Joseph asks: "Adopt me as your child." The petition to St. Joseph asks: "Instruct me in every doubt" and "be our guide, father and model through life."

Maureen Daly is a freelance writer in Baltimore.

Mother of the Americas

on Tepeyac Hill to an indigenous peasant named Juan Diego
to convert millions of people to Christianity

Scaperlanda / Correspondent



Photo courtesy of: Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington D.C.

nal Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. shows depicts her as patroness of
left, and gradually moving north to the Inuit of Canada on the right.

The problem, however, “evaporates,” said Fr. Cawley, “when one focuses on the lives of the most authentic devotees, especially those to be met in the earliest documents... Their blunders in setting a date or naming a prelate do not undermine their lived experience as pilgrims, nor the mystery of a Compassionate Providence that meets them.”

In 1666, 28-year-old Father Antonio de Gama went to Juan Diego’s hometown, Cuautitlán, to interview elderly witnesses of the Guadalupe story. This official Church inquiry became part of a petition sent to Rome to request liturgical honors for Guadalupe.

Thanks to this 1666 Inquiry, what have come to be known as the Eight Witnesses of Cuautitlán offer compelling examples of how the Guadalupe story was passed on, and more

importantly, of the vibrancy of their faith and devotion to Our Lady. “They took great pride that Juan Diego was from their hometown,” noted Fr. Cawley. “These witnesses believed the reason that they lived so long was that Our Lady wanted them to testify, to pass on the message,” he said.

Perhaps the most remarkable of the witnesses, said Fr. Cawley, is the widow Juana de la Concepción, who offers details that no other interviewee mentions as she describes “*la Aparición de la Virgen Santísima de Guadalupe*” (the apparition of the Holy Virgin of Guadalupe). Juana documents her father’s collection of *mapas* or pictogram records, and “assures us that both her parents knew Juan Diego well, often visiting him in his later years in his hermitage at the shrine, where they got

‘The Virgin Mary’s beautiful facial expressions, reflecting the love of her Divine Son, and her appearance as an indigenous lady, greatly attracted the Aztecs and other indigenous people to the Catholic faith.’

— Dr. Patrick Foley, professor of history
Founder of *Catholic Southwest: A Journal of History and Culture*

the Guadalupe story from his own mouth,” said Fr. Cawley.

As district governor, Pablo Xuárez noted when interviewed later that same day, “in his grandmother’s day, the story was so popular that even the toddlers were heard ‘reciting or chanting it,’” added Fr. Cawley. “I visualize little Juana on her father’s lap, singing along with him as he rehearses the ballad for the annual dance — since someone so deeply interested in local lore would surely be an apt candidate for chanting it at the shrine.”

According to Dr. Foley, it is hard to dispute the impact of Our Lady’s presence on the unfolding New World.

Quoting historian Francis Johnston, Foley emphasized that, “by the end of 1539 about eight million had embraced the Catholic faith as a direct result of the creation of the sacred image.” In the book, *Our Lady of Guadalupe and the Conquest of Darkness*, author Warren Carroll also noted that between 1532 and 1548, there occurred in Mexico nine million baptisms, most of them inspired by the reported apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

It is agreed by numerous Guadalupe scholars, Foley added, that, “the Virgin Mary’s beautiful facial expressions, reflecting the love of her Divine Son, and her appearance as an indigenous lady, greatly attracted the Aztecs and other indigenous people to the Catholic faith.”

In 1736, Guadalupe became the patroness of the City of Mexico, and ten years later, the patroness of the whole of “New Spain,” spreading devotion beyond Mexico. In 1810, the Creoles (Spaniards born in the New World) joined forces with the Indians and mestizos (people of Indian and Spanish blood), to start what would be an 11-year revolutionary war for independence. “*Viva la Virgen de Guadalupe*” was a common rallying cry for these pioneers.

“By the time of independence from old Spain” in 1821, explained Fr. Cawley, “[Guadalupe] was the main force to give all the provinces the sense of being one nation.”

Pius X declared Our Lady of Guadalupe patroness of all Latin American countries in 1910. In 1945, Pope Pius XII declared Guadalupe “Empress of the Americas.” And in 1960, John XXIII called Our Lady of Guadalupe the “celestial missionary of the New World” and “Mother of the Americas.”

Pope John Paul II became the first pope to visit the shrine in Mexico City in 1979, returning to Guadalupe in 1990 to proclaim Juan Diego “Blessed.”

“On a recent visit to the Tepeyac shrine I glimpsed what seems the essence of the devotion,” Fr. Cawley observed. The figure was “an elderly couple sitting silent and motionless, his arm gently around her shoulder. They seemed to be one heart and one soul as they gazed across the plaza to Our Lady’s house, rejoicing in her loving presence throughout their lives.”

“The Blessed Mother has an interesting way of empowering the poor like Juan Diego,” noted Mark Zwick, founder and director of Casa Juan Diego Catholic Worker House in Houston. “You can’t speak that kind of empowerment. She chooses an indigenous person — and that’s revolutionary! She chooses to appear almost exclusively to those who wouldn’t have a respectable place in society.”

It’s very clear that we need Juan Diego’s charism, says Zwick, “his fidelity in responding to God’s calling even when it’s difficult. Juan Diego certainly resisted the lady, and he was not well received by the Church, but he stayed with it — and ultimately brought about the conversion of eight million people.”

Like [Catholic Worker Movement founder] Dorothy Day’s revolution, “Juan Diego’s non-violent revolution truly changed the face of Catholicism in the world,” Zwick concluded.

Maria Scaperlanda is a freelance writer in Norman, Oklahoma, and the author of several books, including “The Seeker’s Guide to Mary” and “The Journey: a Guide for the Modern Pilgrim.” See: www.mymaria.net.

Our Lady...

FROM PAGE 13

brings to us: There is so much peace in the presence of God."

Maria and Teresa Ramirez attended the early morning liturgy for two reasons. They wanted to participate in the celebration and to ask Bishop Vann to bless a recently purchased statue of the Virgin which will replace one stolen from their front yard.

"I was very upset," Teresa Ramirez said, recalling the Sept. 16 theft.

Placing a statue of the Blessed Mother in the landscaping around your home is customary in many Hispanic households.

"It's something our parents did and we carry on the tradition," said the Northside resident who plans



LEFT: Bishop Kevin Vann blesses the altar with incense at the beginning of the Mass, assisted by Deacon Len Sanchez.

to shelter the treasured ornament behind a locked door in her grotto. "We pray to her and wear her medals."

Although the popularity of Our Lady of Guadalupe is spreading across the United States, feelings for the dark-skinned Madonna are particularly strong in South Texas, according to Manuel Valdez. The long-time St.

Patrick parishioner, who serves as Justice of the Peace in Tarrant County Precinct 5, was born in San Antonio.

"She's admired even more the farther you go south," the judge explained, adding that as a child growing up, Our Lady of Guadalupe played a highly important role in his life.

Valdez, who adjudicates

RIGHT: Gabriella Carrizales, a dancer with Ballet Folklorico, dances during the offertory.



Class C misdemeanors and small claims cases, prays to the Virgin for guidance.

"I pray every day right before I to court," he admitted. "I pray

we make fair and just decisions for everybody who comes in front of us. Our Lady of Guadalupe helps me all the time. I'm blessed to have her in my life."

Indigenous Interpretation of the Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe

The Mesoamerican peoples were transmitting the memory of their history from generation to generation through poems and songs, which when transcribed by figures and symbols in skins or bark paper were called codices. Experts agree that the Virgin of Guadalupe wanted to show the ancient indigenous peoples with an outfit full of symbols (as a manuscript) that the inhabitants of this land could easily understand. Listed are some elements describing of the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe:

1) Her face is brown, like the indigenous, oval and in deep profound prayer. Her face is sweet, fresh, friendly, reflects love and tenderness, in addition to great strength.

2) Her hair is loose, which for the Aztecs was a sign of a woman glorified by the child in her womb.

3) Her hands are gathered together a sign of the Virgin in deep prayer.

The right hand is whiter and stylish, the left is darker and fuller, this could symbolize the union of two distinct races.

4) The belt marks the pregnancy of the Virgin. Located above the womb. It falls into two trapezoidal ends, which in the Nahuatl world represented the end of a cycle and the birth of a new era. The image symbolizes that Jesus Christ is a new era for both the old to the new world.

5) The flower with four petals or **Nahui Ollin**, is the main symbol on the image of the Virgin, it is the ultimate Nahuatl symbol and represents the presence of God, the fullness, the center of space and time. The picture shows the Virgin of Guadalupe as the Mother of God and marks the place where our Lord Jesus can be found, in her womb.

6) The Virgin is surrounded by **golden rays** that form a halo or aura. The message conveyed is: she is the Mother of Light, the Sun, the Sun Child, the true God, she brings him down to the "center of the Moon" (Mexico in Nahuatl) for there he will be born, there he will bring light and life.

7) The Virgin of Guadalupe is standing in the **middle, or center, of the moon**, and it is no coincidence that the roots of the word

Mexico in Nahuatl are "Metz-xic-co" meaning "in the center of the moon." It is also a symbol of fertility, birth, life. It marks the fertility cycles of the woman and the land.

8) An angel at the foot of Guadalupe with an air of someone who just flew in. The wings are like eagles, asymmetrical and colorful, the tones are similar to those of Mexican bird *tzinitzcan* which Juan Diego heard singing and announcing the appearance of the Virgin of Guadalupe. His hands hold the left end of the robe of the Virgin and the right of the cloak.

9) The Stars on the Cloak: Tuesday Dec. 12, 1531 was the day when the Holy Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared on the tilma of Juan Diego. The morning of that day took place on the winter solstice, which meant in pre-Hispanic cultures: the dying sun that once again recovers its vigor, the birth of the new sun, life is coming back. The winter solstice is the point at which the earth, in its journey around the sun, is changing direction in its orbit and begins to approach the Sun again. This change of direction gives the impression that the Sun is regaining its strength and that winter is waning. For Indians the winter solstice was the most important day in their religious calendar, it was the day when the sun overcomes the darkness and emerges victorious. It is no coincidence that on this day the Virgin of Guadalupe has her Son Jesus to the indigenous peoples because they could understand she was carrying in her womb the true God.

According to Dr. Juan Homero Hernandez Illescas, on the cloak of the Virgin of Guadalupe you can find a reproduction of the sky at the moment of apparition: the sky of the morning of the winter solstice of 1531. On the cloak are represented the brightest stars of the major constellations visible from the Valley of Anahuac that morning of Dec. 12, 1531. The constellations are all there. The stars are grouped as they were in reality.

(With information from *LA VIRGEN DE GUADALUPE AND THE STARS*, Dr. Juan Homero Hernandez Illescas, Fr. Mario Rojas, Bishop Enrique Salazar, Center for Guadalupanos.) Translation by Pedro A. Moreno, OPL, MRE



Diocese's first bilingual men's conference challenges men to be strong in their faith and to defend their Church

By John Henry / Correspondent
Photos by Juan Guajardo

Catholic men, come home. Your Church needs your loyalty and faithfulness to care for her tired and poor, and to stand resolute with weapons of virtue and honor in defense of her against the dark forces of a wayward culture, rife with corruption, disobedience, and deviance.

Such was the message to more than 150 men who gathered Saturday at Immaculate Conception Church in Denton for a bilingual men's conference.

Speakers at the daylong seminar, titled "Long Live Christ the King," implored attendees to be the inspiration for bringing Catholic men back to the Church. They were encouraged to look to the manly example of the conference's patron Blessed Father Miguel Pro, who made the declaration "Long live Christ the King," as he was martyred by a Mexican army firing squad for daring to carry out his priestly ministry in the 1920s.

"We're soldiers for Christ," said Jesse Romero, a fiery orator from California who likened the Church's encounter with evil forces to the outmanned Hector's defense of the city of Troy against Achilles' powerful forces.

"This is the time right here in history, in the third millennium, to stand up for Jesus with your lives, your lips, and your love."

Romero, a noted Catholic lay evangelist, was among three featured speakers to address the conference. He has a master's degree in Catholic theology from Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio.

Doug Barry, who spoke at length on Blessed Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body, and Father Joe Classen, a parish priest in Alaska who has authored four books, also spoke to the men.

"I have to admit, a lot of the parishes I've served, a majority of people who come to Mass are women," said Fr. Classen, a native of St. Louis who jokingly admitted he was tempted to don a Cardinals baseball hat in Texas.

"That's great, don't get me wrong. But I often ask myself, 'What happened to their husbands? Where are their brothers and their fathers? Why have so many men abandoned their faith?'"

The answers, Fr. Classen acknowledged, could be debated for three days. But misplaced priorities, such as careers and hobbies treated as religion, are a big reason. Not to mention a popular culture that has defined men as being either lazy, irresponsible couch potatoes whose only interest is watching football; hot-shot executives whose virtue is in gaining material possessions and sexual conquests; and the in-betweens, which now carries the popular nomenclature, "metrosexual."

"There is a religious fervor to material

things and our vices," Fr. Classen said. "The truth is many have replaced a devotion to these things for a devotion to God, and anything that threatens that is a threat to our manhood."

Many, Fr. Classen continued, see the Church and Christianity as a threat to their masculinity.

"Nothing could be further from the truth," he said. And there is no better example than Jesus and his Disciples.

Christ and his followers were not "a bunch of big ol' sissies, pale and weak and not manly," as popular culture often portrays them.

"The reality is a whole different ballgame," Fr. Classen said. "Joseph, the foster father of Jesus, made his living by the sweat of his brow as a carpenter, and provided for his family with honest, hard work."

"He protected his family from danger. He was faithful and trusted in God all along."

Many of the Disciples were commercial fisherman, exposed to the harsh demands of that livelihood. "Brutal working conditions, long days, and little to no time off."

"These are the kind of guys Jesus called to follow him."

That's not to say you have to be one of these types of guys or one that bench-presses 500 pounds." The strength, he said, is ultimately derived from Jesus Christ.

Fr. Classen, too, said he recognized that the sex-abuse scandal had shaken the faith of many men and left him "physically sick."

No institution on earth is free of the corruption and sin of mankind, even the institution founded by the Son of God, he said.

"A lot of stuff goes on in our country that makes me sick and enrages me, too," he continued. "But, still, I'll be the first to proudly stand for my country. I still support



Approximately 150 men attended the Catholic Men's Bilingual Conference on Nov. 12 at Immaculate Conception Church in Denton. Keynote speakers like Doug Barry, Fr. Joe Classen, and Jesse Romero covered topics ranging from fatherhood to Theology of the Body and masculine spirituality.

the principles our country was founded on. Principles so many have given their lives for.

"Likewise, I love Jesus Christ and the Church he founded. I support the Church teaching and sacred traditions. I don't know about you, but I'm not going to allow the scandal of a few destroy that which I love."

"Now is not the time to jump ship." Barry pleaded with the men to defend their families against challenges to spirituality as if they were intruders to the home.

The fighting stance for such a battle, Barry said, is fists ablaze but with a Rosary in one hand and a Bible in the other. "Learn how to fight in this realm like there's no tomorrow."

Each of the speakers had a captivated audience.

Along with their pizza, those in attendance had a lunch hour that included opportunities for adoration and the sacrament of Reconciliation.

"I enjoyed it, it was fun," said Mark Heinen, a parishioner of St. Patrick Church in Denison who said he would likely attend another men's conference at Prince of Peace in Plano in April. "You have to continue to put yourself in front of Christ's teaching. It helps you to be engaged."

Romero, a former boxing and kickboxing champion, closed the conference with a talk on being "good Catholics." Like a champion, train hard in your faith. Go to church regularly, on Holy Days and required feast days. Reconcile your sins by confessing and an act of contrition. Pray the Rosary every day.

Respect life in the fullest sense. "The Church needs you," Romero shouted, before he closed the day, "This is the Catholic moment," he said, then quoted an admonition from the Old Testament book of Ester:

"You were born for such a time as this."



Noted author and avid outdoorsman Father Joe Classen explained to his listeners that the early disciples were "manly," and that following Christ should not make men today question their masculinity.



Speaker Doug Barry challenged the men in the audience to defend their families against spiritual attacks the way they would against physical attacks.



Lay evangelist Jesse Romero gave conference attendees tips on how to daily live out their Catholic faith.

With the dedication of St. Patrick Cathedral's new pastoral center, parishioners and visitors finally have a place to

Gather as a Community

By John Henry / Correspondent
Photos by Michael McGee

The brand-new addition to the grounds St. Patrick Cathedral represents a much-needed upgrade for the flourishing faith community of more than 140 years.

Phase 2 of an ambitious expansion plan will ensure that the historic complex on Throckmorton will help anchor the revitalization of the southern portion of Downtown Fort Worth.

Parishioners gathered for a ceremony Dec. 4 presided over by Bishop Kevin Vann to dedicate the St. Patrick Cathedral Pastoral Center, a three-story, 29,000-square foot facility that will serve as a place to come together for the church and diocese for the next 100 years.

"We don't dedicate buildings very often," said Art Dickerson, the chairman of the Cathedral's building committee. "The last one was 99 years ago, the rectory.

"So we don't do this very often. It's a glorious day in our history," added Dickerson, who along with his wife Patricia, was recently awarded membership in the Pontifical Equestrian Order of St. Gregory the Great (*see related article on Pages 6-7*).

The building, designed by architect Ray O'Connor and built by the Steele & Freeman construction company, includes a reception hall on the first floor and offices and a meeting room on the second floor. The third floor is incomplete and will remain so, but plans are in the works to make it fully functional.

"St. Paul speaks to us about the journey of faith," Bishop Vann said in remarks at the mid-day ceremony. "The journey of faith which is marked by the building up of the household of God, with each person a part of the structure of the living temple of God.

"The new building here is a visible reminder of the living temple of God, and each stone, each part, is a reflection of the faith, dedication, and generosity of all who have brought us to this day."

Growing even bigger

The ceremony doubled as a place to announce perhaps even bigger news.

Cathedral officials have secured a grant from the Amon Carter Foundation to enhance the complex grounds in all directions with a landscape and beautification project that will extend the physical Cathedral sidewalks by several feet on both its eastern front and western side.

The project, which is under way and expected to be completed by January 2013, will be covered by the more than \$1 million grant.

Light poles, trees, and landscaping "like you couldn't believe," Dickerson said, will line all the complex from the



The front of the St. Patrick Cathedral Pastoral Center. The center was dedicated Dec. 4.

Cathedral, to the St. Ignatius Academy building and the new structure.

The Cathedral's grounds will also expand south and encompass what is now 300 feet of 13th Street, which St. Patrick's acquired in an agreement with the city. That portion of 13th will become green space and front a complex into which diocesan offices are expected to move in the coming years.

Twelfth Street currently curves into Throckmorton Street at the stop light, and will be redesigned to run straight into Throckmorton. The city will oversee the 12th and 13th street portions.

A parking garage is planned with the new office complex. Dickerson said the Cathedral will have access to the garage on Sundays.

"As it stands, we will have a floor and parking spaces for use daily, and on Sunday will have access to all of it," Dickerson said. "It's going to be the best thing that could happen to us."

'One day we're going to have something much better than this'

When Cathedral builder Father Jean Marie Guyot arrived in Fort Worth in 1884, he found about 15 Catholic families.

Today, there are about 720,000 Catholics in the Diocese of Fort Worth, which is made up of 28 North Texas Counties covering 23,950-square miles starting in Tarrant and extending north to the Red River and to the west as far as Vernon and Quanah, and to the south as far as Penelope.

The rapid expansion of the Catholic population seems astounding until forecasts for the future are revealed: 1.2 million Catholics in the diocese by 2030.

The Diocese of Fort Worth is the fastest-growing in the country.

The expansion represents the Cathedral's place in serving future needs. The Cathedral serves 1,300 parish



Bishop Vann sprinkles the interior of the pastoral center, blessing the new building.

families.

"We are at the end of a journey, but we are beginning another," Dickerson said. "And the other will be the 1.2 million Catholics out there.

"The building and the landscape project makes a statement: We are ready for primetime. This is our moment. Our time has come. The Cathedral is on the threshold of a new era."

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



St. Patrick parishioners, members of the Downtown Fort Worth community, and guests, filled the pastoral center during its dedication.

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

The new pastoral center has been a long time coming and a desperate need, officials agreed. For more than 100 years, parishioners really had no place to gather, other than the Cathedral, which was limited to worship.

"I served here at St. Patrick's in 1978-79," said Father Joe Pemberton, Cathedral rector. "The only place we met was in the basement of Lehane Hall. Whenever we did anything that's where we went.

"To myself, I said, 'Golly, one day we're going to have something much better than this for our parishioners to gather together as a community of faith.'"

The pastoral center is the manifestation of that vision, and it's open to both the diocese and St. Patrick parishioners.

This project, after all, is his primary occupation these days.

Eventually, the project, along with the construction of the neighboring Omni Hotel "may be historically speaking the biggest thing that ever happened downtown," Dickerson said. "We're talking about an area that had been neglected."

The elements of the expansion has all the boldness of Fr. Guyot, who encountered quite a bit of criticism in 1888. Who, after all, would build a church on the outskirts of town, as Guyot had done?

As it turns out, a visionary.

Plans to finish out the Cathedral with bell towers and spires, as Fr. Guyot had planned, are still in the works. A new religious education building and the renovation of St. Ignatius are in the new visionaries' plans today.

Dickerson said he is confident that his colleagues on the building committee got it right at the beginning of the Third Millennium — all for the enhancement of parish life and worship for the next 100 years.

"Every stone [here], every part, is a reflection of the lives of all who helped bring us to this day — all the previous parishioners, pastors, religious in the early days of St. Patrick's," said Bishop Vann, "and all who have worked so hard in these past two years for this new center, which will certainly strengthen the life of the parish, Diocese, and faith in North Texas in the months and years to come. ...

"The solid foundation — set solidly on rock — is laid here, will help to continue to assure a solid foundation of life and faith for St. Patrick's and far beyond here. "



Building committee chairman Art Dickerson jokes with Bishop Kevin Vann while addressing those gathered for the dedication. To the right is Father Joseph Pemberton, rector of St. Patrick.



Members of the St. Patrick choir perform during the dedication ceremony.



The north end of the pastoral center faces a statue of Our Lady of Victory outside the cathedral.

The future and the past

The energetic Dickerson talks about the new building and future plans the way a father would a new baby.

To Report Misconduct

If you or someone you know is a victim of sexual misconduct by anyone who serves the church, you may

• Call Judy Locke, victim assistance coordinator, (817) 560-2452 ext. 201 or e-mail her at jl Locke@fwdioc.org
• Or call the Sexual Abuse Hotline (817) 560-2452 ext. 900

• Or call The Catholic Center at (817) 560-2452 ext. 102 and ask for the moderator of the curia, Father Stephen J. Berg


To Report Abuse

Call the Texas Department of Family Protective Services (Child Protective Services) at (800) 252-5400

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Respect Life

At all stages

Bishop Vann urges pro-life workers to not give up hope at second annual Vigil for All Nascent Human Life

Story and Photos by Joan Kurkowski-Gillen / Correspondent

Thanksgiving is celebrated with overeating, football games, and frenzied shopping trips to the mall. But some North Texas Catholics carved out time during the busy holiday weekend to refocus their attention on a less worldly aspect of the anticipated Christmas season.

More than 100 people joined Bishop Kevin Vann in praying for the unborn at the second annual Vigil for All Nascent Human Life observed Nov. 26 in Holy Family Church.

The global liturgy was requested by Pope Benedict XVI. It underscores the absolute and unequivocal commitment of the Catholic Church to the defense of every human life from conception to a natural death. This is the second year the pope asked dioceses around the world to use the First Vespers service of Advent to recognize the value of unborn children and the gift of human life.

“This vigil provides a beautiful opportunity to stop and reflect on the gift of life and how our Lord Jesus embraced the entirety of the human experience,” explained Chanacee Ruth-Killgore, director of the diocesan Catholics Respect Life Office. “The first Sunday of Advent, as we prepare for the coming of the Lord, is the perfect time to come together and thank God for the gift of his Son, the gift of life, and to pray for greater respect for all life, especially the unborn.”

Calling Advent a season of promise, hope, and new life, Bishop Vann reminded vigil participants that it is also the start of a new liturgical year.

“And with a new year comes hope and new possibilities, especially for those involved in the ministry of pro-life,” he continued.

The traditional opening hymn of Advent, “*Rorate Caeli*” — “let the heavens open and send forth a savior” is a plea, he explained, adding, “In our pro-life ministry we also begin with a plea. Oh, God, teach us how to show the world the gift and sacredness of human life.”

Speaking from the church’s raised ambo, Bishop Vann said Advent — a time when we turn our attention to Mary and the birth of Christ — offers the perfect opportunity to reflect on the importance of the unborn child. He then advised worshippers to never underestimate the value of pro-life advocacy.

“Whether it’s Project Rachel,



Bishop Kevin Vann (center), kneels in Adoration at the beginning of the prayer service.

Respect Life work in the diocese, standing on the front lines at the clinics, or educational efforts, the Savior will come to guide and strengthen us in this most important ministry,” the bishop assured. “Never lose hope. Those candles, greens, symbols, and readings of Advent remind us of a new beginning, a new time and a new hope.”

The birth of Christ tells us that all life is created in the image and likeness of God.

“Whatever we do in pro-life ministry, the Lord himself will show us the way,” the bishop said in closing.

The word “nascent,” used to describe the prayer vigil, comes from the Latin word *nasci* — to be born. While it primarily refers to developing life, it can also mean promising or potential.

During a time when thoughts turn to the hope and expectation of the coming Christ, the Holy Father asks Catholics to remember the 50 million unborn souls around the world lost to abortion each year.

As Pope Benedict told the crowd in St. Peter’s Basilica, gathered in 2010 for the first Prayer Vigil for Nascent Life, “Christ began his journey on earth in the womb of Mary.

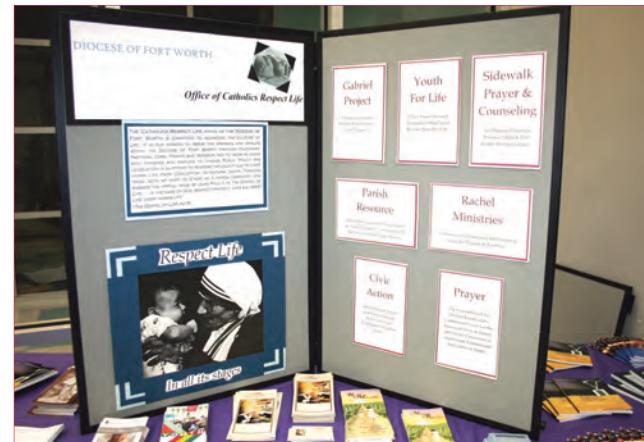
“So the mystery of the Incarnation of the Lord and the beginning of human life are intimately connected and in harmony with each other,” the pope said in his remarks. “The Incarnation reveals to us, with intense light and in an amazing way, that every human life has an incomparable, elevated dignity.”

The pope acknowledged that science itself celebrates the mystery and complexity of the developing embryo in the womb. Unborn children should not be treated as possessions or objects manipulated for the interests or benefit of others, he cautioned.

“This is not an accumulation of biological material, but a new living being, dynamic and wonderfully ordered. So was Jesus in Mary’s womb. So it was for all of us in our mother’s womb.”

In the United States, the vigil falls on Thanksgiving weekend when families traditionally gather. The timing is a happy coincidence that further highlights the value and mutual dependency of each human relationship.

Holy Family parishioner Maria Conley brought her three daughters, Carolyn, Madeleine, and Adrienne to the Saturday evening prayer vigil.



The diocesan Catholics Respect Life Office had a table in the narthex of Holy Family Church highlighting its programs and ways people can get involved in the pro-life movement at the Vigil for All Nascent Human Life Saturday, Nov. 26.



Rachel’s Vineyard Coordinator Betsy Kopor (second from left) goes over parts of the prayer vigil with NCHS students, sisters (from left to right) Carolyn, Madeleine, and Adrienne Conley.

The teenagers, all students at Nolan Catholic High School and members of the Lifesavers Club, were each asked to lead a decade of the Rosary. She believes the early Advent prayer service counteracts some of the Christmas commercialism that begins full force with the Thanksgiving holiday.

“It refocuses us on what we should be thinking about — preparing for Jesus to come and the gift of life God gave us,” Conley said. “We’re blessed to be in a wonderful diocese that encourages pro-life activities and involves young people in them.”

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Tessy Ross...

FROM PAGE 32

education,” Ross said. “Catholic school helps the parents promote responsibility and discipline. It creates an appreciation for faith and family.”

Ross’s career in education began at her own parish, St. Andrew, where she sought a tutoring position to get her foot in the teaching door — she had yet to hold a full-time position outside of college and had been a stay-at-home mom for 15 years. But at the interview, the principal, Clarice Peninger, offered her a full-time position teaching middle school math. Toward the end of her 12 years in the classroom, Ross also took over as the math coordinator.

“I never knew how much energy and education it took to be a teacher until I was in the classroom,” she said. “To be a good teacher you don’t just do the minimum of what’s required. It’s not just teaching the students. It’s going beyond that with extracurricular activities, being supportive of projects and activities at school, making sure all of them have the opportunity to reach their potential.

“At the end of 12 years I felt that a lot of my energy, that level I wanted to maintain, wasn’t the same. If I couldn’t do that for all the students, maybe it was time for me to retire,” she said.

Her retirement lasted six months.

As she read through an issue of the *North Texas Catholic* she came across an ad for a part-time position with the center-city schools for someone with a background in writing. Ross was the editor of her high school newspaper, was co-editor of her parish newsletter, and had minored in English.

She applied and found herself back in Catholic education for the next 13 years.

At first her job was to publish the *Good News*, a Catholic Schools newspaper inserted into the *North Texas Catholic* three times a year; assist with the Catholic Schools Banquet; and assist center-city schools enrollment promoting and recruiting. Her role later grew to encompass working with the school development forum, a meeting of all school development directors to share ideas and discuss how things are done at each of their campuses in an effort to improve all the schools.

She retired again in July, handing over her role to Lisa Griffith with whom she had worked for six years while Griffith was development director at Holy Family School. They had been acquainted with each other for 25 years.

Griffith said assuming Ross’s role is humbling, because she leaves behind a large pair of shoes to fill.

Griffith said Ross’s skills set and attention to detail made functions she was responsible for seamless, but she knew that Ross “was nervous it would not be perfect.

“Whether teaching at St. Andrew’s or working with the schools at the diocesan level, Tessy lives out the ‘universal and inclusive’ meaning of Catholic identity by engaging in not only work during the day, but encouraging others in small faith groups and other evening or weekend functions. She, with her husband, Bill, have supported numerous Catholic groups for decades” said Griffith.

“Tessy makes me proud to be Catholic.”

Ross was contacted about receiving the education award prior to Thanksgiving. It is difficult for her to be on the receiving end, she said.



Photos Courtesy of Tessy Ross

This picture was taken at the 2004 principals’ retreat. Included in the picture are Superintendent Don Miller (TOP ROW, THIRD FROM LEFT), Associate Superintendent Charlene Hymel (MIDDLE ROW, FOURTH FROM LEFT), and Tessy Ross (BOTTOM ROW, FAR RIGHT).



This photo of Tessy, Bishop Kevin Vann, and Don Miller, was previously published in the *FORT WORTH BUSINESS PRESS* following the Jan. 27, 2007 Catholic Schools Banquet.



Tessy and her husband, Bill, pose in a family photo with their daughters (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT) Lisa, Chrissy, Jenny, and Cathy.

“I felt very honored that [Catholic Schools Superintendent Don Miller] and the bishop had chosen me as this year’s awardee,” Ross said. “I feel humble that I’m in the company of 24 other individuals who have been honored in the past, and I told him ‘It’s a little awkward for me.’ I feel I was doing my job. And it’s not just a job...

it’s a ministry, an extension of working for the Church. It’s not necessary to be recognized for what you usually do,” she said.

“I believe in Catholic schools. I’ve been working 25 years promoting and passing on the legacy of Catholic schools to other children. It means a lot to me.”



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Word = Life

Readings Reflections

“May God ... let his face shine upon us.”
— Psalm 67:2



**January 1,
Solemnity of Mary,
Mother of God.**

Cycle B. Readings:

- 1) Numbers 6:22-27
Psalm 67:2-3, 5-6, 8
- 2) Galatians 4:4-7
Gospel) Luke 2:16-21

By Sharon K. Perkins

It's not uncommon for females, especially high-profile celebrities (or teenaged daughters!), to avoid appearing in public unless they have their makeup on. They are accustomed to presenting a certain face to the world, and they feel less confident when that face is not looking its best. (I have to agree that a little mascara and lipstick go a long way.) Indeed, only a very few trusted individuals are allowed to see these women's "real," unadorned faces in private.

In the Scriptures, the "face of God" is synonymous with God's glorious presence in all its beauty and fullness. That glory was so incredibly overpowering that no one could see God's face and live; yet a privileged few — including Jacob, Moses, and Isaiah — were allowed to encounter God "face to face" in a limited way, as it were, through dreams, visions or partial glimpses.

Even so, the people of God have always been encouraged to "seek the face of the Lord," which simply means to ardently desire to be in God's presence.

Today's readings are an earnest prayer for God's face to shine upon us, replete with God's blessings of kindness, mercy, and peace. The way that God has chosen to reveal his "face" to the world is through his son, Jesus, "born of a woman" named Mary. For Catholics, the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, affirms and celebrates two ancient Christian truths: that Jesus, fully human and fully divine, is the "face" of God in all its glory, presented to the world; and that as Jesus' mother, Mary can truly be called "Mother of God."

Seen in this way, the Gospel account of the shepherds' visit to the infant Jesus is not simply a sweet story. It communicates a profoundly joyful and hopeful truth: God's face is no longer hidden from our view. Regardless of earthly privilege or lack of it, no one is prevented from "seeing" God, for in Jesus, God's presence shines on all who seek it. And Mary, who continues to "reflect on these things" in her heart, is the exemplar for those who continually seek God's face.

QUESTIONS:

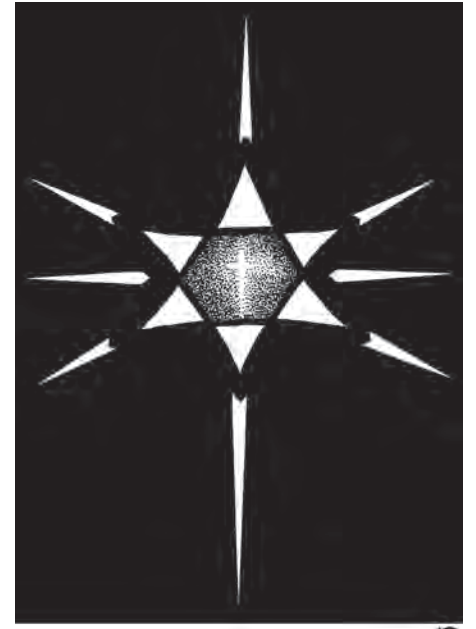
How earnestly do you "seek the face" of God? How can Mary, the Mother of God, help you to more fully enter into God's presence?

“Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem!
Your light has come.”
— Isaiah 60:1

**January 8, Epiphany
of the Lord.**

Cycle B. Readings:

- 1) Isaiah 60:1-6
Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-13
- 2) Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6
Gospel) Matthew 2:1-12



By Jeff Hensley

The young black woman working behind the prepared foods counter at Central Market had a glow about her. The way she waited on the customers ahead of me showed great sensitivity as she focused her attention on each of them and their needs.

I'd seen this before and had an idea of where it came from. I asked her what church she attended, to verify my suspicions, so that I could tell her that I could see the light of Christ shining through her.

The readings for Epiphany speak a lot about light. The Isaiah Scripture tells of the coming savior: "Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you." And later: "Nations shall walk by your light and kings by your shining radiance."

Most of the time when Scripture refers to Israel, it refers both to the nation and to those who are what the name Israel means: the God-ruled.

So our laws and our culture have grown out of that shining radiance, in their basis, if not in all the particulars of either culture or law.

Hospitals grew out of the life of the church. Our charitable institutions and governmental programs taking care of the poor — of widows and orphans — grew, and continue to grow, out of that revelation that is the shining radiance for Israel.

Jesus, from this time of his birth and the public showing forth of his origins that we celebrate at Epiphany to the present, is always becoming the light of God among us.

When the Wise Men arrived to do homage to the Holy Child one prophet had described as "a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel," they had followed the star until "it came and stopped over the place where the child was."

Then they entered and offered their treasures of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, two of which were mentioned specifically in the Isaiah Scripture that open these readings; the third, myrrh, a bitter herb used in oils for anointing for burial, was a prefiguring of this baby's ultimate destiny, a destiny that would burn brighter in our lives than any star.

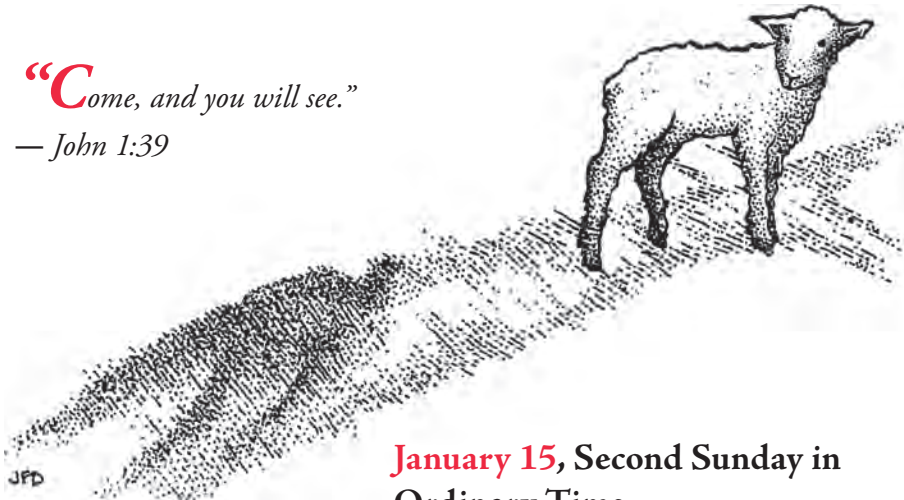
QUESTIONS:

How can I help bring the light of Christ into the place where I live: my family, my work, my service to others?

Word = Life

Readings Reflections

“Come, and you will see.”
— John 1:39



January 15, Second Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Cycle B. Readings:

- 1) 1 Samuel 3:3b-10, 19
Psalm 40:2, 4, 7-10
- 2) 1 Corinthians 6:13c-15a, 17-20
Gospel) John 1:35-42

By Jean Denton

The story of God’s call to Samuel in this week’s readings mentions that when he first heard God’s voice, Samuel “was not familiar with the Lord because the Lord had not revealed anything to him as yet.” But once he entered God’s presence, Samuel stayed with God and was forever under his guidance.

The Gospel tells the same story with the disciples first recognizing Jesus and then choosing to stay with him. In staying, they came to know him and to belong to him.

That process of being called, responding openly and being enfolded into the life of Christ by a desire to stay, is the truth of conversion. It happens in real life. It’s predictable.

Jim Albright has been a social minister his whole adult life. He sometimes takes small groups of college students to a migrant farm workers camp near Virginia’s Eastern Shore where, for a few long days, they live with the workers and join them in the fields picking tomatoes.

Jim knows such an “immersion” experience is one of the most effective ways to make someone a believer in social justice. Add prayer and the word of God in Scripture, and you are likely to inspire a number of participants to a lifetime of involvement in social justice ministry.

“People need that experience of coming in contact, for instance, with the migrant farm workers, to understand their life and situation,” Jim explained. “It raises questions and when they go to Scripture it sustains them and forms them for action.”

They hear God, become familiar and stay, because they desire to be part of God’s life.

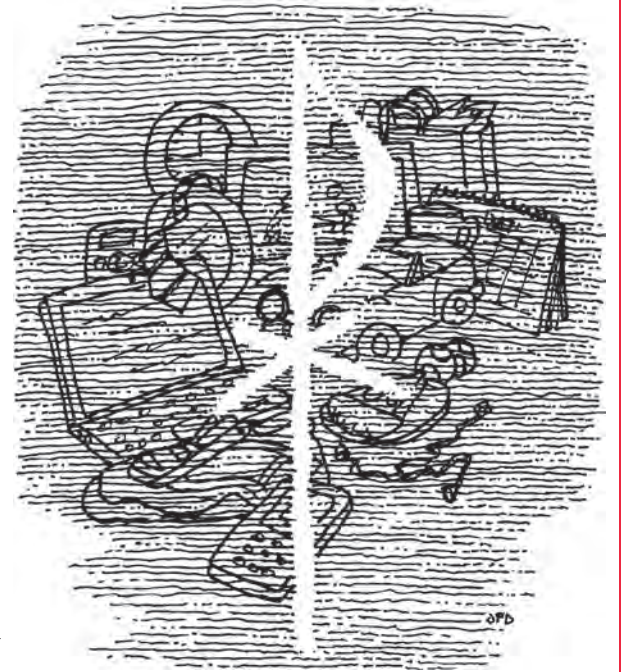
That’s how it was for Samuel. That’s how it was for Jesus’ first disciples.

That’s how it is for us when we listen for God’s call and respond with openness. If we choose to stay with him, Jesus will sustain us and form our actions according to his way.

QUESTIONS:

When and how have you experienced Jesus’ call recently? How did you respond and what did God reveal to you? How was your life changed?

“This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the Gospel.”
— Mark 1:15



January 22, Third Sunday in Ordinary Time. Cycle B.
Readings:

- 1) Jonah 3:1-5, 10
Psalm 25:4-9
- 2) 1 Corinthians 7:29-31
Gospel) Mark 1:14-20

By Jeff Hedglen

I can get obsessed with the little things of life. Sometimes I fixate on a particular material possession I have yet to acquire. I’ll scour the Internet for much longer than necessary trying to find the best deal or travel from store to store looking for the exact “right” version of whatever it is I am preoccupied with at the moment.

Other times, I get overly consumed by the way things appear to the outside world. Whether it is my personal appearance or my perception of how others perceive me, I tend to give too much of myself to these thoughts

I am not particularly proud of these aspects of my life, especially after reading this week’s Scriptures. Jonah walked through Nineveh delivering God’s message that in 40 days the city would be destroyed. The people repented and God had mercy.

St. Paul says, “I tell you, brothers and sisters, the time is running out ... for the world in its present form is passing away.” Then I read Jesus proclaiming, “This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the Gospel.”

Each of these messages cuts me to the core when I think about the amount of time I waste on petty things. Years ago, when I was pursuing a degree in theology, one of the professors really rocked my world when he challenged students to examine our lives and assess the degree to which our activities were helping us grow closer to God, strive for heaven and bring others along for the ride.

I immediately thought of the countless hours I spent watching sporting events and felt a little indicted. The professor was quick to point out that he was not suggesting that every moment of every day was supposed to be 100 percent directly related to personal spiritual formation and evangelization. He simply was exhorting us to seek higher things and work more at building the kingdom.

This Sunday’s readings have a similar message: Compared to eternity, our time on earth is very brief. With the New Year just starting, this is a good time to refocus and refixate on things with eternal consequences.

QUESTIONS:

What are some things that can be obsessions for you? What can you do to become more focused on building the kingdom of God?

Nuestro Pastor Habla

El período de Navidad es el momento perfecto para compartir la luz y vida de Jesucristo

Queridos Hermanos y Hermanas en Cristo,

En la región había pastores que vivían en el campo y que por la noche se turnaban para cuidar sus rebaños. Se les apareció un ángel del Señor, y la gloria del Señor los rodeó de claridad. Y quedaron muy asustados. Pero el ángel les dijo: «No tengan miedo, pues yo vengo a comunicarles una buena noticia, que será motivo de mucha alegría para todo el pueblo: hoy, en la ciudad de David, ha nacido para ustedes un Salvador, que es el Mesías y el Señor. Miren cómo lo reconocerán: hallarán a un niño recién nacido, envuelto en pañales y acostado en un pesebre.»

— Lucas 2:8-12

La revelación de los ángeles a los pastores en los campos de las afueras de Belén es el cumplimiento de la promesa de salvación de Dios que fue anunciado siglos antes, tras la caída de Adán y Eva. La escena de la natividad, el niño envuelto en pañales, nacido de la santísima Virgen María — es el nacimiento del salvador — el que va a golpear la cabeza de Satanás y el pecado, pero aún más asombroso, este pequeño bebé es Dios hecho hombre, el Emmanuel; realmente es Dios con nosotros. El signo del niño-Dios Jesucristo, nacido en Belén, envuelto en pañales y acostado en un pesebre, ya nos está anunciando el misterio pascual de la muerte y la resurrección de Cristo. La envoltura en pañales prefigura el sudario donde envuelven el cuerpo muerto del Señor que es puesto en la tumba. Belén significa en hebreo "casa del pan", y el niño Jesús que es colocado en un pesebre — un recipiente de comida para los animales — apunta hacia la Eucaristía, y Jesús es el pan que baja del cielo. Los que comen de su carne y beben de su sangre participarán de su Resurrección y su vida. Como cantamos en el himno tradicional de la Navidad, en su versión en inglés, ¿Qué niño es este?:

¿Por qué está acostado Él en tal lugar desagradable,

Donde el buey y la mula se están alimentando?

Buenos cristianos, tengan miedo, pues la Palabra silenciosa

por los pecadores aquí están rogando.

Clavos y lanza le traspasará,

La cruz la llevará por mí y por ti.

Salve, salve el Verbo hecho carne,

El bebé, el hijo de María.

(La letra de este villancico en español es diferente)

Esta escena sagrada — en la que los pastores miraban con asombro en esa noche fría de invierno en Belén — es cuando Dios una vez más camina entre nosotros, y nos revela el gran amor misericordioso y redentor del Padre ya plenamente manifestado a toda la humanidad en el niño-Dios Cristo Jesús. En



Monseñor Kevin Vann

esta bendita noche de Navidad, recordamos y celebramos la encarnación de Jesucristo, el misterio profundo que el hijo de Dios, la segunda persona de la santísima Trinidad, por el gran amor y misericordia para nosotros — a través del poder del Espíritu Santo, y la fe y la obediencia de la santísima Virgen María — asumió una naturaleza humana y se convirtió en uno como nosotros en todo, menos en el pecado. El pequeño niño Jesús, al asumir nuestra naturaleza humana, no sólo rescata plenamente nuestra humanidad, sino también por ser uno de nosotros, se une íntimamente con cada persona. Dios y la humanidad están siempre unidos en la comunión íntima con la persona de Jesucristo. Como nos enseña el Concilio Vaticano II:

En realidad, el misterio del hombre sólo se esclarece en el misterio del Verbo encarnado.

Porque Adán, el primer hombre, era figura del quien había de venir; es decir, Cristo nuestro Señor, Cristo, el nuevo Adán, en la misma revelación del misterio del Padre y de su amor, manifiesta plenamente el hombre al propio hombre, y le descubre la sublimidad de su vocación. Nada extraño, pues, que todas las verdades hasta aquí expuestas encuentren en Cristo su fuente y su corona. El que es imagen de Dios invisible (Col 1,15) es también el hombre perfecto, que ha devuelto a la descendencia de Adán la semejanza divina, deformada por el primer pecado. En él, la naturaleza humana asumida, no absorbida, ha sido elevada también en nosotros a dignidad sin igual. El hijo de Dios con su encarnación se ha unido, en cierto modo, con todo hombre. Trabajó con manos de hombre, pensó con inteligencia de hombre, obró con voluntad de hombre, amó con corazón de hombre. Nacido de la Virgen María, se hizo verdaderamente uno de los nuestros, semejantes en todo a nosotros, excepto en el pecado.

— Constitución Pastoral Sobre la Iglesia en el Mundo Actual, *Gaudium et Spes*, 22

La buena nueva de la noche de Navidad es que el amor y la misericordia de Dios ha roto las tinieblas del pecado y de la muerte; este amor es más grande que cualquier pecado; y Dios Padre es fiel en su amor por nosotros al enviarnos su único Hijo para revelar su misericordia y para llevar a cabo nuestra redención. El beato Papa Juan Pablo II reflexiona sobre este gran amor que se revela en la Encarnación:

El Dios de la creación se revela como Dios de la redención, como Dios que es fiel a sí mismo, fiel a su amor al hombre y al mundo, ya revelado el día de la creación. El suyo es amor que no retrocede ante nada de lo que en él mismo exige la justicia. Y por esto al Hijo «a quien no conoció el pecado le hizo pecado por nosotros para que en Él fuéramos justicia de Dios». Si «trató como pecado» a Aquel que estaba absolutamente sin pecado alguno, lo hizo para revelar el amor que es siempre más grande que todo lo creado, el amor que es Él mismo, porque «Dios es amor». Y sobre todo el amor es más grande que el pecado, que la debilidad, que la «vanidad de la creación», más fuerte que la muerte; es amor siempre dispuesto a aliviar y a perdonar, siempre dispuesto a ir al encuentro con el hijo pródigo, siempre a la búsqueda de la «manifestación de los hijos de Dios», que están llamados a la gloria. Esta revelación del amor es definida también misericordia, y tal revelación del amor y de la misericordia tiene en la historia del hombre una forma y un nombre: se llama Jesucristo.

— El Redentor del Hombre, 9

La encarnación de Jesucristo revelado en la Navidad es también la revelación de la gran dignidad en todos y cada persona. Dios ve la dignidad en cada uno de nosotros y se convierte en uno de nosotros, uniéndose íntimamente con cada persona. Navidad, entonces, es cuando la Iglesia celebra y se regocija en el amor misericordioso de Dios revelado en Cristo, pero la Navidad es también la gran fiesta de la dignidad humana. El niño Jesús envuelto en pañales es el signo que siempre nos muestra lo precioso que es la persona humana y que el mismo Dios asume nuestra naturaleza, y con el tiempo derrama su preciosa sangre por nuestra redención. El Papa San León Magno, en uno de sus sermones sobre la Natividad, ilustra profundamente este punto y nos recuerda la dignidad y el destino, como cristianos, que la Natividad de nuestro Señor nos llama a todos a vivir:

Reconoce, cristiano, tu dignidad y, puesto que has sido hecho partícipe de la naturaleza divina, no pienses en volver con un comportamiento indigno a las antiguas vilezas. Piensa de qué cabeza y de

qué cuerpo eres miembro. No olvides que fuiste liberado del poder de las tinieblas y trasladado a la luz y al reino de Dios.

Gracias al sacramento del bautismo, te has convertido en templo del Espíritu Santo; no se te ocurra abuyentar con tus malas acciones a tan noble huésped, ni volver a someterte a la servidumbre del demonio: porque tu precio es la sangre de Cristo.

También es importante recordar que no nos limitamos a celebrar la Encarnación sólo en el día de Navidad, sino que la Iglesia celebra la encarnación de Cristo a lo largo de la temporada navideña, que se extiende desde el día de Navidad hasta la solemnidad de la *Epifanía del Señor* el 8 de enero, y terminando el 9 de enero con la *Fiesta del bautismo del Señor*. Este tiempo litúrgico ofrece muchas otras fiestas y celebraciones que, incluso con más detalle, revela el misterio de la Encarnación. Durante la semana después de Navidad, la Iglesia celebra la octava de la Navidad, en la que estamos llamados a seguir descansando y reflexionando sobre el don de la Encarnación.

Este año en el domingo después de Navidad, se celebra la fiesta de María, Madre de Dios, que se celebra el 1 de enero. Esta fiesta se dirige directamente a la verdad y la realidad de la Encarnación, a través del cual una persona, Jesucristo, es totalmente humano y totalmente divino sin confusión ni división. En otras palabras, ya que Jesús es real y verdaderamente Dios, la segunda persona de la Trinidad hecha carne, entonces María, la madre de Jesús, es verdaderamente la madre de Dios. No sólo es fiesta en honor de María y su papel en la historia de la salvación, sino que también continúa la celebración del misterio de la Encarnación.

El 6 de enero, o doce días después de Navidad, la Iglesia celebra tradicionalmente la *Fiesta de la epifanía del Señor*, pero esta fiesta ha sido recientemente transferida al segundo domingo después de Navidad; este año cae el 8 de enero. *La fiesta de la epifanía* es una de las fiestas cristianas más antiguas, y la palabra *epifanía* es una palabra griega que significa "revelar", porque la fiesta está centrada en Dios, que se revela al hombre en Cristo. *La epifanía* se celebra por primera vez en el este, y originalmente se celebraban cuatro "epifanías" o acontecimientos reveladores en la vida de Cristo: el bautismo de Jesús, el primer milagro de Cristo en las bodas de Caná, la natividad de Cristo, y la visita de los Reyes Magos. Todos estos eventos, de alguna manera, revelan la divinidad de Cristo — que Él es verdaderamente el Hijo de Dios. Es importante señalar que la epifanía fue la celebración original de la Navidad, o el nacimiento de Cristo. Eventualmente, en el oeste, la celebración de la natividad fue separada, y se celebra la Navidad el 25 de diciembre, pero

CONTINUADA A LA DERECHA

Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe: Madre de las Américas

Por María de Lourdes Ruiz Scaperlanda

No es una coincidencia que en 1945, año en que terminó la Segunda Guerra Mundial, el Papa Pío XII vio el sufrimiento del mundo fragmentado y declaró a Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe *Patrona de las Américas*.

Como señaló el episcopado mexicano y nos lo repitió el Papa Juan Pablo II, el acontecimiento Guadalupano "significó el comienzo de la evangelización con una vitalidad que superó todas las expectativas. El mensaje de Cristo, a través de su madre, tomó los elementos centrales de la cultura indígena, los purificó y les dio el definitivo sentido de la salvación... Guadalupe y Juan Diego tienen un hondo significado eclesial y misionero, y son modelo de una evangelización perfectamente inculturada", dijo el Papa en su homilía para la canonización de Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin el 31 de julio de 2002.

"En el corazón del mensaje Guadalupano encontramos un matrimonio profundamente arraigado entre María, la Madre de la Iglesia y, en primer lugar, los católicos hispanos de Hispanoamérica, y después los de más allá—especialmente los Estados Unidos—con el tiempo atrayendo a este mundo espiritual a católicos de una gran variedad de herencias étnicas", indicó el profesor de historia, Dr. Patrick Foley, fundador de la revista *Southwest Catholic: A Journal of History and Culture*. Foley es un notado historiador católico de Texas, y miembro durante mucho tiempo de la *Misión santísima trinidad (Holy Trinity Mission)* en Azle, justo al noroeste de Fort Worth.

"La esencia del culto Guadalupano", añadió Foley, "ha inspirado a la propagación de la evangelización entre millones de católicos durante cientos de años, especialmente los hispanos, pero muchos otros también. Es la incorporación de su fe católica,



Esta imagen de la *Capilla de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe* en una capilla lateral del *Santuario Nacional de la Inmaculada Concepción* en Washington, D.C. la muestra como patrona de las Américas — comienza con imágenes de sudamericanos, gradualmente representando pueblos hacia el norte, hasta llegar a los Inuit en Canadá, a la derecha. El mural en la pared arqueada está compuesto de pequeños mosaicos de vidrio. Foto cortesía de la *Basilica del Santuario Nacional de la Inmaculada Concepción*, Washington, D.C.

su herencia étnica y su cultura; estos tres elementos se reúnen en el amor a la Virgen de Guadalupe".

Es una historia sencilla y familiar.

Un indio llamado "Cuauhtlatoatzin", o "el águila que habla", nació en Cuautitlán (parte de lo que ahora es la Ciudad de México), y más tarde fue bautizado Juan Diego. Fue un talentoso miembro de los Chichimecas, uno de los grupos más culturalmente avanzados que vivían en el valle de Anáhuac.

Un sábado de diciembre, Juan Diego pasó por delante de la colina de Tepeyac (el "cerro de la nariz", en Náhuatl, su lengua materna), en su camino a la iglesia, cuando oyó el canto de muchos pájaros finos, y entonces una voz que lo llamaba desde la cima de la colina, "Juanito, mi chiquitín, Juan Dieguito".

Cuando llegó a la cima de la

colina, vio a una señora que le pidió que se acercara. Juan Diego se inclinó ante ella. "Yo soy", dijo la Señora, "la perfecta siempre virgen Santa María, madre del verdaderísimo Dios... Mucho deseo que aquí me levanten mi casita sagrada en donde mostraré mi amor por ti: porque yo en verdad soy vuestra madre compasiva, tuya y de todos los hombres que en esta tierra estáis... y para realizar lo que pretende mi compasiva mirada misericordiosa, anda al palacio del obispo de México, y le dirás que yo te envío, para que le manifiestes cómo mucho deseo que aquí me provea de una casa..."

Nuestra Señora se apareció a Juan Diego en tres ocasiones, y por último, le dio prueba de su encuentro al escéptico obispo bajo la forma de dos signos: un manto lleno de rosas frescas en diciembre, y la milagrosa imagen de sí misma en la tilma de Juan Diego.

Tradicionalmente establecido en 1531, el evento Guadalupano tuvo lugar apenas unas décadas después de la llegada al Nuevo Mundo de Cristóbal Colón. Mientras las visiones de conquistadores españoles dominan el paisaje de nuestra imaginación, la cultura diaria de este mundo cambiante se mantuvo primordialmente azteca, con una gran diversidad de dialectos y normas. Mientras que el origen étnico de la población pasaba por un proceso cada vez más intenso de mestizaje, también incrementaba la separación y rivalidad entre las clases sociales.

Gran parte de lo que sabemos de la cultura de esa época es una mezcla de narrativa personal, tradición, teoría arqueológica y fuentes iconográficas. Es notable, entonces, que el primero y más antiguo documento escrito sobre el evento Guadalupano se remonta a 1556, el *Nican Mopohua* (escrito en

el idioma oficial del Imperio Azteca, el Náhuatl).

Sin embargo, la historia del encuentro de Juan Diego con la Virgen al principio se transmitió solamente por vía oral; después fue grabada en crónicas pictográficas Aztecas conocidas como Mapas, así como también a través de las hermosas y detalladas baladas cantadas por los indios más ancianos para acompañar el baile anual en la plaza de Guadalupe. Estas baladas cuentan la historia del milagro de las rosas y de la tilma de Juan Diego, además de la instalación de la imagen sagrada en el recién construido santuario.

De acuerdo con el erudito Guadalupano, el Padre Martinus Cawley, la devoción Guadalupana entre los españoles nacidos en o cerca de la capital se extendió rápidamente más allá del valle central de México a mediados de la década de 1550.

Hasta que la historia de Guadalupe llegara a imprimirse, señaló el Padre Cawley—primer traductor de la historia de Guadalupe al inglés desde su idioma original, Náhuatl—"predicadores y artistas en general evitaban alusiones públicas a sus episodios individuales, pero la censura era menos estricta para las danzas de los indios en el santuario. Como resultado, espectadores españoles podían captar la esencia de la historia por medio de los trajes, la mímica y las explicaciones de otros observadores. Ya para 1600, esta esencia de la historia era tan ampliamente conocida que los artistas—aunque los predicadores todavía no—estaban discretamente ofreciendo representaciones del milagro de las rosas y la tilma", explicó el monje cisterciense de la abadía trapense de *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe* cerca de Lafayette, Oregón.

CONTINUADA

la *Fiesta de la epifanía del Señor* se mantuvo como la celebración de los otros tres eventos, como el final de la temporada navideña. Con el tiempo se continuó separando las otras fiestas, y hoy celebramos el *Bautismo del Señor* — el domingo después de la *Epifanía*, y la *Fiesta de las Bodas de Cana* se celebra el próximo domingo.

La *epifanía del Señor* hoy para nosotros es la celebración de la visita de los Reyes Magos de Oriente que, siguiendo la estrella de Belén, vieron al niño Jesús y su gloria. La *Epifanía* es cuando Cristo se revela al mundo como el Mesías, el hijo de Dios. En muchas partes del mundo, como

en Europa, la *Epifanía* se considera por lo menos tan importante como la Navidad, y es a veces llamada la "Pequeña Navidad". En muchas culturas, siguiendo el ejemplo de los Reyes Magos, se ofrecen regalos a Cristo, y es cuando se lleva a cabo el intercambio de los regalos navideños.

La *Epifanía* es también un recordatorio para todos nosotros que estamos llamados a ser una "epifanía" de Cristo en el testimonio diario de nuestras vidas. A través de una continua conversión y santidad de vida, debemos ser una señal que irradia la presencia de Cristo en el mundo, para atraer a otros hacia

Cristo y el amor y la plenitud de vida que Él ofrece. Esto es clave para la "nueva evangelización" a la que la Iglesia está llamada al comienzo del Tercer Milenio. El tiempo de Navidad es un momento perfecto para compartir la luz y el don de Cristo con los demás, especialmente con aquellos católicos que, por alguna razón, han dejado la Iglesia, o han dejado de practicar su fe.

Para muchos, la temporada Navideña es un recordatorio de la fe, de la Iglesia como hogar y familia, y por lo tanto un recordatorio, una gentil invitación para que le acompañen a Misa, o un simple testimonio de

su propia fe que puede convertirse en la inspiración del Espíritu Santo para atraer a alguien más otra vez a la Iglesia. Me gustaría extender una invitación a cualquier persona que ha abandonado la fe por la razón que sea — cualquier dolor o circunstancia de vida — para que vuelvan a su casa, la Iglesia Católica, en esta Navidad. Para más información, consulte el sitio web de la diócesis (www.fwdioc.org) para ayudarlo a volver a su casa en esta Navidad.

Por último, me gustaría desearle a todos ustedes y a sus familias una Santa Navidad, y rezo para que la paz y la alegría de la encarnación de

Cristo esté con ustedes al celebrar la época navideña. ¡Feliz navidad y un año nuevo lleno de bendiciones

+ Kevin W. Vann

+ OBISPO KEVIN W. VANN, JCD, DD
DIOCESIS DE FORT WORTH





El día de la Fiesta de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe trajo mariachis, matachines y grupos de baile folclóricos a la catedral antes del amanecer

La celebración diocesana de la *Fiesta de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*, el 12 de diciembre, trajo mariachis, matachines y grupos de baile folclóricos a la catedral antes del amanecer. Siguiendo las agujas del reloj, desde arriba a la izquierda: Francisco "Pancho" Contreras, representando a Juan Diego, entra a la iglesia en procesión, llevando consigo una representación de la tilma / el obispo Kevin Vann inciensa el altar al comienzo de la misa conmemorativa, ayudado por el diácono Len Sánchez / María Aguilar lleva en brazos a su hijo Julián, de 14 meses de edad. Su esposo, José Aguilar, bailó con los Matachines de la *Parroquia de la Asunción de la Santa Virgen María* en Decatur / Con su falda extendida, Gabriella Carrizales, del *Balet Folclórico*, baila durante el ofertorio / Luego de la misa, los feligreses degustaron chocolate caliente y pastelitos mexicanos en el nuevo *Centro Pastoral de San Patricio*, acompañados del baile de los Matachines / Los Matachines de la *Parroquia de la Asunción de la Santa Virgen María* en Decatur se arrodillan en oración frente a la estatua de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, a la derecha del altar de la catedral. Se pueden encontrar más fotos en el sitio Web <http://www.fwdioc.org/ntc> (NTC / Joan Kurkowski-Gillen)



DESDE PAGINA 29

Historiadores, científicos y expertos siempre estarán argumentando acerca de la veracidad de los detalles específicos que rodean la historia de Guadalupe.

El problema, sin embargo, "se evapora", dijo el padre Cawley, "cuando uno se concentra en las vidas de los devotos más auténticos, especialmente los que encontramos en los primeros documentos... Sus errores en la fijación de una fecha o en el nombrar a un prelado no suspende su experiencia vivida como peregrinos, ni el misterio de la *Providencia compasiva* que sale a su encuentro".

En 1666, el Padre Antonio de Gama, de 28 años de edad, fue a la ciudad natal de Juan Diego, Cuautitlán, para entrevistar a testigos ancianos acerca de la historia de Guadalupe. Esta investigación oficial de la iglesia se convirtió parte de una petición enviada a Roma para solicitar honores litúrgicos para Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe.

Gracias a esta investigación de 1666, lo que conocemos como los *Ocho testigos de Cuautitlán* nos ofrece ejemplos convincentes de cómo la historia de Guadalupe sucedió, y más importante, de la vitalidad de su fe y devoción a la Virgen. "Ellos estaban orgullosos que Juan Diego era de su ciudad natal", señaló el Padre Cawley. "Estos testigos creían que la razón por la cual ellos vivieron tantos años fue por que la Virgen quería que ellos ofrecieran sus declaraciones y transmitieran

el mensaje", dijo el Padre.

Quizás el más notable de los testigos, dijo el Padre Cawley, es la viuda Juana de la Concepción, que ofrece detalles que ningún otro entrevistado menciona como ella, cuando describe a "la aparición de la Virgen Santísima de Guadalupe". Juana describe la colección de *mapas* de su padre (archivos pictográficos), y nos asegura que sus padres personalmente conocían a Juan Diego y a menudo lo visitaban, al final de sus años, en su ermita en el santuario, donde escucharon, de sus propios labios, la historia de Guadalupe", dijo el Padre Cawley.

Como gobernador de distrito, Pablo Xuárez señaló, al ser entrevistado más tarde ese mismo día, que "en los días de su abuela, la historia era tan popular, que incluso los niños pequeños se escuchaban recitándola o cantándola", añadió el Padre Cawley. "Yo me imagino a la pequeña Juana en el regazo de su padre, cantando junto a él mientras ensayaba la balada para el baile anual — ya que alguien tan profundamente interesado en las tradiciones locales sería sin duda el candidato perfecto para cantarlo en el santuario".

Según Dr. Foley, es difícil negar el impacto de la presencia de la Virgen en el Nuevo Mundo que se estaba desarrollando.

Citando al historiador Francis Johnston, Foley destacó que, "a finales de 1539, unos 8,000,000 habían abrazado la fe católica como consecuencia directa de la creación de la

sagrada imagen". En el libro *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe y la conquista de la oscuridad*, el autor Warren Carroll también señaló que, entre 1532 y 1548, se produjo en México nueve millones de bautismos, la mayoría de ellos inspirados en las apariciones de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe.

La mayoría de los eruditos en el hecho Guadalupeano están de acuerdo, agregó Foley, que "la hermosa expresión facial de la Virgen María, lo que refleja el amor de su divino Hijo, y su aparición como una mujer indígena, en gran medida atrajo a los aztecas y otros pueblos indígenas a la fe católica".

En 1736, Guadalupe se convirtió en la patrona de la Ciudad de México, y diez años más tarde, en la patrona de la totalidad de la "Nueva España", extendiendo la devoción más allá de México. En 1810, los criollos (españoles nacidos en el Nuevo Mundo) unieron fuerzas con los indios y los mestizos (gente de sangre india y española), para iniciar lo que sería una revolucionaria guerra por la independencia que duraría 11 años. "Viva la Virgen de Guadalupe" era el grito común de guerra para estos pioneros.

"Al independizarse de la vieja España" en 1821, explicó el Padre Cawley, "[Guadalupe] fue la fuerza principal que le dio a todas las provincias el sentido de ser una nación".

Pío X declaró a Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe patrona de todos los países de América Latina en 1910. En 1945, el Papa Pío XII la declaró *Emperatriz de las Américas*. Y en 1960,

Juan XXIII llamó a Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe "la celestial misionera del Nuevo Mundo" y "Madre de las Américas".

El Papa Juan Pablo II se convirtió en el primer Papa en visitar el santuario de Guadalupe en la Ciudad de México en 1979, volviendo al santuario en 1990 para proclamar a Juan Diego "beato".

"En una reciente visita al santuario de Tepeyac, percibí lo que parecía ser la esencia de la devoción", observó el Padre Cawley. La imagen era "una pareja de ancianos sentados en silencio e inmóvil, el brazo del hombre delicadamente alrededor de los hombros de su mujer. Parecían tener un solo corazón y una sola alma, al mirar a través de la plaza a la casa de Nuestra Señora, regocijándose en su presencia amorosa a lo largo de sus vidas".

"La Virgen, nuestra madre, tiene una forma interesante de apoyar y fortalecer a los pobres como Juan Diego", señaló Mark Zwick, fundador y director de la *Casa Juan Diego, casa del trabajador católico* en Houston. "No se puede hablar de ese tipo de

apoyo y fortalecimiento. Ella elige a una persona indígena — ¡eso es revolucionario! Ella elige aparecerse casi exclusivamente a aquellos que no tienen un lugar de honor dentro de la sociedad".

Es muy claro que necesitamos el carisma de Juan Diego, dice Zwick, "su fidelidad en la respuesta al llamado de Dios, incluso cuando es difícil. Juan Diego ciertamente resistió a la Señora, y no fue bien recibido por la Iglesia, pero seguía persistiendo — y al final provocó la conversión de ocho millones de personas".

Al igual que la revolución de Dorothy Day [la fundadora del movimiento del trabajador católico], "la revolución no violenta de Juan Diego verdaderamente cambió la cara del catolicismo en el mundo", concluyó Zwick.

Maria Scaperlanda es una escritora independiente de Norman, Oklahoma, y la autora de varios libros, incluyendo THE SEEKER'S GUIDE TO MARY y THE JOURNEY: A GUIDE FOR THE MODERN PILGRIM. Véase: www.mymaria.net

Mecanismos para reportar la conducta sexual inapropiada

Si usted o alguien que conozca es víctima de conducta sexual inapropiada por parte de cualquier persona que trabaje para la iglesia, sea voluntario, empleado, o miembro del clero, puede reportarlo de las siguientes maneras:

- Llamar a Judy Locke, Coordinadora de asistencia para víctimas, al número (817) 560-2452, Ext. 201, o, mandarle correo electrónico a jlocke@fwdioc.org
- Llamar al número de emergencia para el

abuso sexual: (817) 560-2452, Ext. 900

■ o llamar al Centro Católico al número: (817) 560-2452, ext. 102 y preguntar por el canciller/moderador de la curia, el padre Stephen Berg.

Mecanismo para reportar abuso

Llamar al Ministerio de familias de Texas Servicios de protección (Servicios de protección de niños) al número: (800) 252-5400.

Events Calendar

Around the Diocese and region

January Dates

5

DIVORCE CARE & DIVORCE CARE FOR KIDS (DC4K)

6:30 to 8:30 p.m. - 13-week program - St. Paul the Apostle Church, 5508 Black Oak Lane., Fort Worth. For information, contact Stephanie Ayala at (817) 239-1297 or sayala3@sbcglobal.net, or Dianne Garcia at (817) 201-2656 or dgdocofdc@yahoo.com.

6

AN EVENING OF PRAYER AND SHARING WITH THE SISTERS OF ST. MARY OF NAMUR

4 to 7:30 p.m. - Our Lady of Victory Center, 909 West Shaw St., Fort Worth. For information, contact Sister Yolanda Cruz at (817) 923-3091 or by e-mail at sycruz@sbcglobal.net

7

CALIX SUPPORT GROUP

10 a.m. - A monthly support meeting for Catholics who are alcoholic and those struggling with addiction and seeking recovery. Holy Family Church, 6150 Pershing Ave., Fort Worth. For information, contact Deacon Joe Milligan at (817) 431-5369.

9

SECOND MONDAY SUPPORT GROUP FOR HEALING AFTER ABORTION

7 to 9 p.m. - Catholic Renewal Center, 4503 Bridge St., Fort Worth. For information, contact Rachel Ministries at (817) 923-4757 or e-mail forgiven@racheltx.org.

20

ANNUAL RESPECT LIFE MASS

7 to 8:30 p.m. - St. Patrick Cathedral, 1206 Throckmorton St., Fort Worth. For information, contact Chanacee Ruth-Killgore at (817) 560-2452 ext. 257.

21

ANNUAL MARTIN LUTHER KING MASS

7 p.m. - St. Patrick Cathedral, 1206 Throckmorton St., Fort Worth. For information, contact Patricia Gonzales at (817) 560-3300.

THIRD ANNUAL HIKE FOR LIFE IN WEATHERFORD

1:30 p.m. - 1802 Bethel Rd., Weatherford. For more information visit the web site www.hikeforlifetexas.org. To register for the hike call (817) 709-6076 or e-mail doschicas@att.com.

COME AND SEE - SISTERS OF THE INCARNATE WORD

Incarnate Word Convent, Victoria. For information visit the website www.iwsvictoria.org or call (361)575-7111 or e-mail iwsvoc@yahoo.com.

24-27

SOUTHWEST LITURGICAL CONFERENCE

50th Anniversary study week - Keynote Speaker, Cardinal Donald Wuerl, 8:15 p.m. Tuesday. For information on the conference, visit www.swlc.org.

26

FORT WORTH DIOCESAN MINISTRY WITH LESBIAN AND GAY CATHOLICS, OTHER SEXUAL MINORITIES, FAMILIES, FRIENDS

7 p.m. - Catholic Renewal Center, 4503 Bridge St., Fort Worth. For information, contact Father Warren Murphy at (817) 927-5383 or Dorene Rose at (817) 329-7370.

27

FAMILY MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR UNBORN BABIES

6:30 to 9 p.m. - St. Andrew Parish, 3312 Dryden Rd., Fort Worth. For information, contact Alice Curran at (817) 927-5383.

27-29

BEGINNING EXPERIENCE

Weekend program for separated divorced, or widowed individuals - Catholic Conference and Formation Center, 901 S. Madison Ave., Dallas. For information, call (972) 601-4091 or e-mail dfwbe@hotmail.com or visit www.beginningexperiencedfw.org or www.beginningexperience.org.

28

RCIA AND RCIA ADAPTED FOR CHILDREN DIOCESAN FORMATION DAY

8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. - Immaculate Conception Church, 2255 North Bonnie Brae St., Denton. For information on the bilingual program, contact Lucas Pollice at (817) 560-2452, ext. 260 or lpollice@fwdioc.org. Registration is requested by Monday, Jan. 23.

DIOCESAN SINGLES MASS

7 p.m. - St. Joseph Church, 1927 SW Green Oaks Blvd., Arlington. For information, contact Tony Scardino at (817) 703-4312 or Peggy Spears at (817) 507-5350.

TEXAS PRO-LIFE RALLY BUS TRIP TO AUSTIN

8 a.m. to 7 p.m. - Bus leaving St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, 2016 Willis Ln., Keller. For information, contact Burnie Vaughn at frisco19451scom.net or (817) 750-0045. Information on the Texas Rally for Life is available on www.texasrallyforlife.org.

Mass For Families With Special Needs

Families with special needs find it difficult or uncomfortable at times to celebrate Mass together. In an effort to support these families and include those that are sometimes viewed as disruptive, Holy Family Catholic Parish, 6150 Pershing Ave., Fort Worth, is now offering a monthly Mass that welcomes any and all special needs families. This Mass is celebrated the second Saturday of each month at 7 p.m. in the Holy Family Chapel. For more information, contact Robyn Flores at (817) 228-8812 or rlh0655@hotmail.com.

February Dates

4

CALIX SUPPORT GROUP

10 a.m. - A monthly support meeting for Catholics who are alcoholic and those struggling with addiction and seeking recovery. Holy Family Church, 6150 Pershing Ave., Fort Worth. For information, contact Deacon Joe Milligan at (817) 431-5369.

18

RESPECT LIFE PARISH COORDINATOR'S MEETING

10 to 11:30 a.m. - The Catholic Center, 800 West Loop 820 South, Fort Worth. For information, contact Chanacee Ruth-Killgore at (817) 560-2452, ext. 257 or visit the diocesan website at www.fwdioc.org.

23

STEPHEN BREEN MEMORIAL FOUNDATION - GIVING WINGS DINNER

6:30 to 9:30 p.m. - The Botanical Research Institute of Texas, 1700 University Dr., Fort Worth. For information, visit www.stephenbreenmemorialfoundation.org or contact Jim Breen at (817) 846-6887.

FORT WORTH DIOCESAN MINISTRY WITH LESBIAN AND GAY CATHOLICS, OTHER SEXUAL MINORITIES, FAMILIES, FRIENDS

7 p.m. - Catholic Renewal Center, 4503 Bridge St., Fort Worth. For information, contact Father Warren Murphy at (817) 927-5383 or Dorene Rose at (817) 329-7370.

25

BREAKING FREE YOUTH RALLY

3 to 8 p.m. - St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Formation Building, 2016 Willis Ln., Keller. For information, contact Sue Laux at (817) 939-8595.

Classifieds

General Construction Services

General construction work/repairs inside and out including topsoil, sand, gravel, washed materials, driveways, concrete, backhoe, and tractor services. Custom mowing lots and acres. Call (817) 732-4083.

Full-Time Administrative Assistant

The Diocese of Fort Worth seeks a full-time administrative assistant to provide clerical support for the Records Management and Archives department, including its Electronic Records Management tool, HP TRIM. For a full job description and application, visit www.fwdioc.org. Application due date is Jan. 6.



IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE NORTH TEXAS CATHOLIC:

Coverage of the dedication of the new, majestic Vietnamese Martyrs Church in Arlington that took place on Dec. 10. Father Polycarp Duc Thuan, CMC, pastor of the parish, said the new church at the corners of Collins Street and Mayfield Road will seat 2,000 persons, making the church the largest Vietnamese Catholic Church in the United States.

The 29,000-square-foot church which includes a small chapel and offices, has a distinctive design that includes a bell tower visible from Interstate 20. The church is accented with more than 750,000 pounds of Vietnamese marble and granite on both the exterior and interior of the facility. The

main altar and chapel altar are also made of marble from Vietnam.

The church's new pews are crafted from American oak that was shipped to Vietnam. Ten statues of various saints, including Mary and Joseph and the Apostles Peter and Paul are also made of Vietnamese marble.

The \$6.8 million church replaces a revamped Food Lion supermarket building which served as the parish's church since the establishment of Vietnamese Martyrs Catholic Parish in 2000 by the late Bishop Joseph Delaney. The new church is on the parish's 12-acre campus.

In July 2008, Bishop Kevin Vann approved construction of the new, larger church to accommodate the 3,500 parishioners who attend Mass each week.

Good Newsmaker

After 25 years of devoted service to Catholic schools, including working behind the scenes in the Catholic Schools Office and organizing the annual Catholic Schools Banquet, retired special events coordinator Tessa Ross finds herself

On the Receiving End

By Crystal Brown / Correspondent

After years of helping organize the Catholic Schools Banquet, Tessa Ross will find herself center stage during the awards ceremony Saturday, Jan. 28, at the Fort Worth Convention Center.

Ross is this year's honoree for the banquet because of her 25 years of dedication to Catholic education as a teacher and later as the diocese's development associate for the schools. But her experience with Catholic schools started much before her career.

Catholic education has been at the center of Ross's life since she was a young child in El Paso. The middle of three children, she attended St. Joseph Elementary, a parochial school, and Loretto Academy, an all girl's Catholic private school, before attending the University of Texas at El Paso.

Each school day started and ended with prayer. Mass was part of the daily schedule, and grace was said before lunch. In high school, the choir assisted at funerals and other church events.

"You lived your life with a focus on faith," Ross said.

High school was filled with religious organizations that created community among the students, she said. When President John F. Kennedy was assassinated, Ross's classmates went to the chapel and prayed.

"You have that faith response in times of catastrophe, in times of difficulties, and celebration too," she said, "but in trying times, you have your faith to fall back on."

Community also played an important role in Ross's upbringing. She lived two blocks from school and church, and most families in the neighborhood sent their children to Catholic school. Nearly every social event was connected in some way with the church.

When Ross married her husband Bill and they had four daughters — Lisa, Cathy, Jenny, and Chrissy — she wanted the same religious opportunities for them. All four girls attended St. Andrew School and graduated from Nolan Catholic High School with the youngest graduating in 1997.

Like their mom, most activities were school and church-related. And while there were students who attended Catholic school with the Ross girls who were not Catholic, only one daughter questioned the idea of attending a religious school over a public school. Ross said questioning is normal after so many years of wearing uniforms and noticing their public school peers may not be carrying home as much homework.

"If we look at the main reason for going to Catholic school," Ross said, "in the last *Good News* issue, [Superintendent Don Miller] said, 'Everything is seen through the lens of faith.' That's the way teachers and administrators look at Catholic education. Everything we do is in the light of our faith."

During her tenure she remembers an instance when two students had parents who passed away. She said the outpouring of compassion and generosity from their fellow students was natural and didn't have to be promoted.

"There is something that goes beyond a normal academic

SEE TESSY ROSS, P. 25

25th Annual Celebration of Catholic Schools

Saturday, Jan. 28

Fort Worth Convention Center Ballroom

6 p.m. Social Hour 7 p.m. Dinner

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Michael Caruso,
Executive Director, NCEA Department of
Chief Administrators of Catholic Education

Master of Ceremonies: John Rhadigan,
Fox Sports Network

**\$80 per person; RSVP by Jan. 11 to
Lisa Griffith at (817) 560-2452, ext. 280, or
by e-mail at lgriffith@fwdioc.org by Jan. 11**



Photo by Crystal Brown / North Texas Catholic
Tessa Ross, retired special events coordinator for the diocesan Catholic Schools Office, will receive the Diocesan Leadership Award for her service at the 25th Annual Celebration of Catholic Schools banquet at the Fort Worth Convention Center Jan. 28.



Photo courtesy of Tessa Ross
In this undated photograph, Tessa Ross writes on a chalkboard while serving as a math teacher at St. Andrew School.

Please enclose label with address change or inquiries concerning mail delivery of your North Texas Catholic. Thank you.