

# North Texas Catholic

Bringing the Good News to the Diocese of Fort Worth

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December 19, 2008



Angels surround Mary and Jesus in "Holy Night" by Italian Baroque painter Carlo Maratta. The Christmas season begins with the Dec. 24 evening vigil and ends on the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, Jan. 11 in 2009. (CNS photo/courtesy of Art Resource)

## Papal preacher: People need only accept God's invitation for salvation

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — God opens the doors to salvation while humanity has only to accept his invitation, said the preacher of the papal household.

The preacher, Capuchin Father Raniero Cantalamessa, told Pope Benedict XVI and top Vatican officials Dec. 5 that God took the initiative of offering salvation through his son, Jesus Christ.

Individuals "have only to welcome, in faith, God's offer and live out its requirements," he said.

Offering an Advent meditation on St. Paul's conversion, Father Cantalamessa said the gift of salvation is just like a king who opens the doors to his palace, which has been decked out with a huge buffet.

"Standing at the door, he invites every passer-by to come in, saying, 'Come, everything is ready!'"

He said Jesus makes the same appeal in his parable of the wed-

ding banquet, calling on people not to miss the opportunity to enter the kingdom of heaven.

The papal preacher said St. Paul makes a similar point with his teachings on justification.

"Christianity doesn't start out telling people what they have to do, but what God did for them in Jesus Christ. Christianity is the religion of grace" and of receiving God's gifts, he said.

"There is room — and how — for performing one's duties and observing the commandments, but that comes after, as a response" to God's gift of justification, he said.

Doing good works and following God's laws are not the cause or the price to pay to receive salvation, he said.

"He does not save us for doing good works even though he doesn't save us without doing good works," Father Cantalamessa said. Rather, he said, people who believe are made just in the eyes of a merciful God.

## Bishop Vann to celebrate Respect Life Mass at St. Patrick Cathedral, 7 p.m. Jan. 16

The Respect Life Ministry of the diocese invites all to join Bishop Kevin W. Vann Friday, Jan. 16, at 7 p.m. for the annual Respect Life Mass at St. Patrick Cathedral, 1206 Throckmorton

St. in downtown Fort Worth. The diocesan liturgy each January marks the anniversary of the *Roe vs. Wade* Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion. The landmark ruling striking down

all state laws restricting abortion was handed down Jan. 22, 1973. A candlelight procession will be held in remembrance of the millions of deaths that have occurred as a result of abortion.

## Vatican issues updated statement on bioethics

The Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued its 32-page instruction, *Dignitas Personae* (*The Dignity of a Person*), Dec. 12. The text was personally approved and its publication ordered by Pope Benedict XVI. The document updates the congregation's 1987 instruction, *Donum Vitae* (*The Gift of Life*), which rejected in vitro fertilization, human cloning, surrogate motherhood, and nontherapeutic experiments with human embryos. The new instruction has

expanded on those teachings and presented new ones in such areas as stem-cell research, the "morning after" pill, embryo manipulation, and gene therapy. The new Vatican document warns that certain recent developments in stem-cell research, gene therapy, and embryonic experimentation violate moral principles and reflect an attempt by man to "take the place of his Creator."

See Catholic News Service stories on pages 10 and 11 of this issue of the *North Texas Catholic*.

The first diocesan celebration of the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe at St. Patrick Cathedral featured the serenading of Las Mañanitas beginning at 5 a.m. Dec. 12, followed by Mass at 6 a.m. In the top picture at right, Bishop Vann and Cathedral Rector Father Richard Flores participate in a re-enactment of St. Juan Diego's presentation of the December roses and the miraculous image imprinted on his tilma. In the picture below, a few of the many musicians leading Las Mañanitas strum and sing before the altar of St. Patrick Cathedral. They were joined by trumpets, violins, and other instruments.

More complete coverage of the Our Lady of Guadalupe celebration will appear in the Jan. 9 issue of the *North Texas Catholic*.





# The Season of Christmas offers us many chances to appreciate the gift of God's love in Christ – and to offer that gift to others

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

St. Luke in his Gospel, in Chapter 2 says, "For today in the city of David, a savior has been born to you who is Messiah and Lord." Thus the Church calendar proclaims with joy the beginning of the Christmas season. We celebrate the birth of the Child Jesus in Bethlehem, and we celebrate the fulfillment of God's promise to send us a Messiah, a Savior.

The truths and mysteries of Christmas are a series of blessings and truths for which we have been preparing all during Advent. They require our belief, openness, and participation. This attitude of Faith is especially important during these times when unbelief, even though it is just among a few, has become fashionable again, and even at times militant.

I would like to reflect on those around us who sadly are not truly celebrating the birth of the Lord this Christmas season for whatever reason. They too are part of our community and are in need of our witness, love, and prayers. I believe if we seek to understand them a bit more, then perhaps we can spread our Christmas joy and help them in welcoming the Christ Child in their lives and hearts.

First there are those who are sadly overwhelmed with pain, illness, and suffering. This can make the Christmas season unbearable for them. Many also place expectations and requirements on God that the good Lord cannot fulfill and still carry out his redemptive plan. Others cannot distinguish between what God permits and what God wills and desires. Because of this mistaken thinking, sickness and pain become, in the minds of a few, God's fault. All of this can become an insurmountable obstacle that ruins Christmas for many. I invite you to find these members of our various faith communities and reach out to them with healing love so that Christmas can become real again for them too.

There are also those who some-



Bishop Kevin W. Vann

*May we never forget that God's grace is offered, not imposed. Christmas, a most beautiful example of grace, is a gift from a loving Father, and we are all invited by the Father to trust and accept this wonderful gift that is freely and generously given to all. Once we accept the precious gift, we need to unwrap it from all the seasonal packaging and truly welcome Him into our hearts, especially as we receive Him in the Eucharist during our various Christmas liturgical celebrations.*

times wish to fit in with certain crowds or peers that are of the opinion that it is either useless or foolish to be a faithful Catholic or a believer in Christ. Fitting in and not being left alone, becomes more important than being faithful. For them the next step is to celebrate the winter solstice and not Christmas.

When we encounter our colleagues or friends who think this way, give them the gift of true Christian friendship. Invite them to worship at your parish. Show them where it is safe to be a true believer in Christ and where Christmas is celebrated publicly and joyfully, as Luke, in Chapter 2, also proclaims, "good news of great joy that will be for all the people."

Then there are those who outright reject Christmas out of a stubbornness and an intellectual stance filled with old arguments that have been tried and been found wanting and have nothing to do with the reality that Jesus Christ was born in a manger in Bethlehem.

For many who have these characteristics, this is the season for material goods and comforts that hide a spiritual poverty. Sadly for them the birth of Christ is not the reason for the season. Jesus, for many who live this way, is more an afterthought than the primary motive for Christmas.

Do you know anyone like this? Pray to be patient and loving with them. Say "God bless you" and "Merry Christmas." Be kind; invite them over for the parish dinner, if you can, and pray for them. Ask God to place the grace of true Christmas joy in their hearts.

May we never forget that God's grace is offered, not imposed. Christmas, a most beautiful example of grace, is a gift from a loving Father, and we are all invited by the Father to trust and accept this wonderful gift that is freely and generously given to all. Once we accept the precious gift, we need to unwrap it from all the seasonal packaging and truly welcome Him into our hearts, especially as we receive Him in the Eucharist during our various Christmas liturgi-

cal celebrations.

There is a common carol and saying by the poet Christina Rossetti that says, "Love came down at Christmas." Thus Christmas is an invitation from God, not an imposition. Christmas, the Nativity of the Lord, is God reaching out to us and reminding us how much He loves us all and how He wishes to dwell within us and among us.

Christmas is a celebration of life and how the life of this one Child will unite us in a God-given *communio*, fruit of the salvation and loving redemption, which He brings. Christmas is God showing us how much He cares and how much He desires for us to really get to know Him, a task that is so much easier said than done.

May we never forget that it takes a bit of effort to get to know God personally, especially when we look at Him in the manger during the Christmas Season. It takes a certain degree of humility to realize the humility of the One born in a manger. It takes a certain degree of a God-given faith to realize how the One in swaddling

clothes is the center of our faith. It takes a little bit of love to realize the infinite love of the One whose birth we celebrate.

It also takes our willingness, for at least a moment, to let go of our pains and sorrows, so we can find the great joy that floods humanity with the simple birth of this baby in the arms of Mary. It takes a small prayer to realize, and to reawaken to the understanding that the hope we so hunger for is found in the One whose birth we celebrate — Jesus.

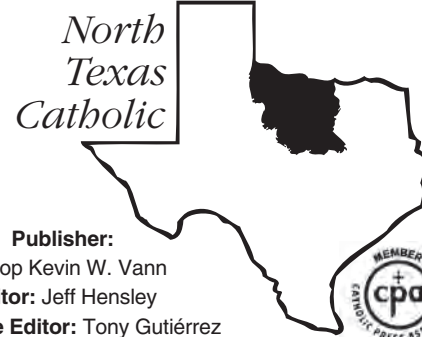
Yes, during the Christmas Season we remember, celebrate, and believe in the profound truth that our hope became flesh, Jesus Christ, the incarnate love of God. May the celebration of Christmas throughout the Diocese of Fort Worth spread the seeds of the love and hope of Jesus Christ all over North Texas and beyond.

May this season, which is not just one day, but *twelve days and beyond*, be a time of grace and blessings for all of you. I ask your continued prayers and please be assured of mine for all of you and your loved ones. Thank you for living the gift of your Catholic Faith in the generous ways that I, and so many others, have seen and experienced.

Merry Christmas and may God bless you always.

*+ Kevin W. Vann*

+ Most Reverend Kevin W. Vann  
Bishop of Fort Worth



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## Holy sites need legal protection, say speakers at Rome conference

ROME (CNS) — Every Friday afternoon in Jerusalem's Old City, thousands of Muslims walk to Al Aqsa Mosque to pray, thousands of Jews walk to the Western Wall to pray and thousands of Christians carry a cross in procession along the Via Dolorosa, recalling the Way of the Cross.

Daniel Seidemann, an Israeli lawyer, said the Friday afternoon scene "is not touchy-feely, it's not fuzzy warm and when the people glance at each other, more often than not it is a glance of disdain or contempt, but the damn thing works."

Seidemann, who describes himself as a Zionist committed to ensuring Jerusalem remains a city where Jews, Christians, and Muslims coexist, spoke in Rome Dec. 10 at an international conference on different legal and religious approaches to the status of holy places and religious institutions.

The conference was co-sponsored by the interdisciplinary program in law and religion at Catholic University's Columbus School of Law in Washington.

Marshall J. Breger, a professor at the law school, told Catholic News Service, "We believe the political issues — as difficult as they are in places like Palestine and Israel — cannot be resolved without recognizing the religious issues involved."

"Conferences like this let us uncover the facts concerning the law, theology and culture of the different stakeholders in a conflict," he said.

Tariq Ramadan, a professor of Islamic studies at Oxford University and president of the European Muslim Network, said that while religious leaders should educate their followers in the obligation to respect the holy sites of all religions, if those sites are not protected by law, "in situations of conflict, there will be a mess."

"Idealism offers no protection from the dark side" of human behavior, he said, so laws are needed to protect and govern access to places people consider sacred.

Seidemann said that while Jerusalem may not be a model of interfaith friendship and cooperation, its identity is essentially tied to being a city where different religious groups exist side by side.

But, he said, the city's history has shown violence is almost guaranteed when there is a "real or perceived threat or violation of sacred space."

The government must guarantee the security of and ac-

cess to holy sites and not allow fundamentalist Jewish, Muslim, or Christian activists the opportunity to ignite more violence, he said.

While the majority of Israelis and Palestinians now agree that they want peace and have converged around a solution based on Israel withdrawing from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, "the volcanic core of the conflict" — the Old City of Jerusalem and its holy sites — remains volatile, Seidemann said.

So far, he said, peace proposals have shown themselves "inadequate for dealing with the religious ecosystem of Jerusalem."

In addition, Seidemann said, the flight of Christian residents from Jerusalem threatens the already fragile coexistence of believers from the three faiths and "is the cultural, the religious impoverishment of Jerusalem."

"This is dangerous," he said. "The Christian community of Jerusalem is the canary in the coal mine; when that community is ill, everybody is ill."

Franciscan Father David Jaeger, who has been involved in Vatican-Israeli negotiations, said that except for the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and the tomb of Mary in Jerusalem and the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem, all of the Catholic churches and shrines in the Holy Land are the private property of the Catholic Church.

The three major sites are governed by an internationally recognized agreement, which is guaranteed by both Israel and the Palestinian Authority, Father Jaeger said. "In the future, when Jerusalem has an internationally guaranteed special statute (something for which the Vatican hopes) that responsibility may pass to an international organization designated for the purpose."

As for the other churches and shrines the Catholic Church considers holy, Father Jaeger said the Catholic Church asks only that the normal laws governing private property be respected.

In the Catholic codes of canon law, he said, sacred places are not sacred because of the traditions associated with the site, but because the church has performed a rite consecrating the place.

For Catholics, Father Jaeger said, "law, not mysticism, defines a sacred place" in contrast with other believers who "have decided that certain places are holy places for which they are prepared to shed blood — their own and other people's."

*Responding  
to God's Call*

## Remembering Christ at Christmas is essential for society's future

By Father Kyle Walterscheid

**H**ow are you keeping Christ in Christmas? It really is important you know. Our children deserve better than what we present to them. Our children are yearning to know about the real Christmas story. Our children deserve to know the truth.

Blessed are you, if your parish puts on a Christmas play which focuses on the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ! Blessed are you, if you are a parent who explains the true meaning of Christmas to your children! The coming of Jesus is truly our greatest joy! In fact, Jesus is the source of all our joy, so why not bring our children to the very source of our life and joy, Jesus who comes to us as a little baby boy.

As adults we should try to distinguish for ourselves things that belong to the Christmas story and things that are purely commercialized propaganda that distracts us from the point of Christmas. Commercialized, Christmas has been turned into a holiday season filled with color, decorations, songs, movies, and more, which have little, if anything, to do with Christmas.

How many retail stores use Christmas to pitch their products? If a store is going to use Christmas as part of their sales pitch, then they have the duty to actually promote Christ, else they are abusing the name of Christ and insulting all Christians by watering down and drowning out the

meaning of Christmas.

In these cases they are doing Christianity a grave disservice and causing great harm to our children, our families, and our community. But is it not our own fault?

I have led teenagers in discussions many times to help them see more clearly for themselves how the meaning of Christmas has been watered down. I help them make two columns, one designated as Christmas themes centered on the birth of Christ and the other as folklore themes that are attached to Christmas but are clearly not about the birth of Christ. Categories include kinds of decorations, Christmas cards, crafts, games, gifts, music, animations, and movies.

Suddenly the meaning of Christmas comes alive to them. It's God, Divine Love, having sent the Angel Gabriel to Mary to announce the Incarnation of our Lord in her womb. It's God sending us his Son to be our Savior.

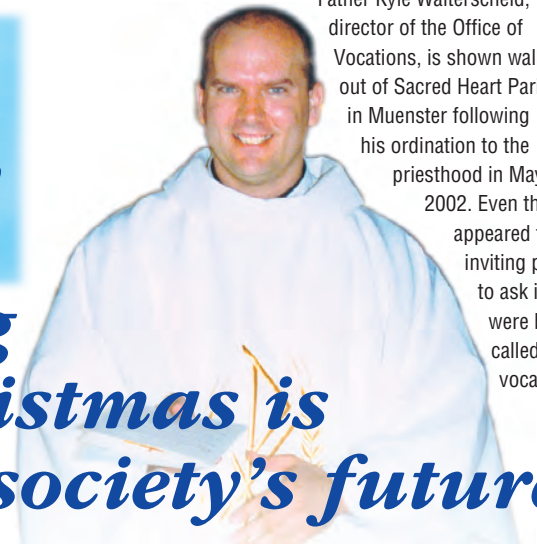
Thus, true Christmas songs include songs like "What Child is This?," "O Little Town of Bethlehem," and "Silent Night" as opposed to secular songs like "Winter Wonderland," "Silver Bells," or "Have a Holly Jolly Christmas" which have no real connection to Christmas.

True Christmas movies are even more scarce. Some movies carry some spiritual message, but they overwhelmingly leave out any message of our Savior coming into this world.

Christian brothers and sisters, we need to wake up! Without Christ there is no holiday season! Without Christ there is no Christmas! Without Christ there is no joy!

Yes, our children deserve better. Our Christian culture has all but collapsed! We once drew children annually to the story of the Nativity of our Lord, but now our children are drowned by secular songs,

Father Kyle Walterscheid, director of the Office of Vocations, is shown walking out of Sacred Heart Parish in Muenster following his ordination to the priesthood in May 2002. Even then, he appeared to be inviting people to ask if they were being called to a vocation.



Father Kyle Walterscheid is the director of Vocations for the Diocese of Fort Worth. He can be reached by e-mail to [kwalterscheid@fwdioc.org](mailto:kwalterscheid@fwdioc.org).



## Seminarians for Life director to visit St. Patrick

Father Bill Bellrose, CPM, director of Seminarians for Life, will speak about "The Pro-Life Movement Around the World" on Tuesday, Jan. 6 at St. Patrick Cathedral, located at 1206 Throckmorton St. in downtown Fort Worth. The evening will begin with a Holy Hour and rosary at 7 p.m., followed by Fr. Bellrose's talk.

Seminarians for Life was founded in 1989 by Father Paul Marx, OSB, as an outreach of Human Life International to be the worldwide pro-life educational apostolate for Catholic seminarians. SFLI currently reaches seminarians around the world via the SFLI newsletter and pro-life educational training. SFLI's pro-life seminarian apostolate has reached countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and both American continents.

Fr. Bellrose has come to Human Life International from Most Sacred Heart Parish in Eureka, Missouri. Fr. Bellrose is a priest with the Fathers of Mercy, a small religious community that preaches parish missions. No RSVP is required. For more information, contact Chanacee Ruth-Killgore, director of Respect Life for the diocese, at (817) 560-3300 ext. 257.

## Young Adults invited to Mass and cookout with Fr. Bellrose at UNT

All young adults are invited to the University of North Texas Catholic Campus Center for 11 a.m. Mass with Father Bill Bellrose, director of Seminarians for Life, Sunday, Jan. 4 at 1303 Eagle Dr. in Denton.

After the Mass, there will be a lunch at the center. After lunch there will be a hike at Lake Ray Roberts with a cookout dinner for fun and fellowship to end the day.

For more information contact Janet Wolf at (940) 229-2241.

## Benedictine sisters invite single women for Life Weekend

The Benedictine sisters of Ferdinand, Indiana invite all single Catholic women between the ages of 18 and 40 and interested in experiencing religious life to join them for a "Benedictine Life Weekend" Jan. 2-4.

During this weekend women will have the opportunity to share in the prayer and community life of the sisters as well as hear input on the theme "Mindful Living: Being Present to the Moment."

This vocation weekend is free, with a room, meals, and input provided.

For more information or to register online, visit [www.thedome.org/JoinUs](http://www.thedome.org/JoinUs), or call Director of Vocation Ministries Sister Michelle Sinkhorn, OSB, at 800-734-9999, or email [vocation@thedome.org](mailto:vocation@thedome.org).

## Monthly vocational discernment event scheduled

All men and women ages 18 to 50 are invited to attend a monthly discernment program at St. Patrick Cathedral, 1206 Throckmorton St. in downtown Fort Worth.

The Men and Women's Monthly Discernment Program includes a Holy Hour of eucharistic adoration, an hour discussion on vocational discernment, and an evening meal provided by the Serra Club.

The women's group is led by the religious sisters serving in Fort Worth, and the men's group is led by the priests of the Vocation Office and various religious men who serve the Diocese of Fort Worth. This program welcomes anyone who is at least a sophomore in high school and at least 15 years of age.

For more information, contact Father Kyle Walterscheid at [kwalterscheid@fwdioc.org](mailto:kwalterscheid@fwdioc.org) or at (817) 560-3300 ext. 110.

# People & Events

of Importance for the Church of Fort Worth



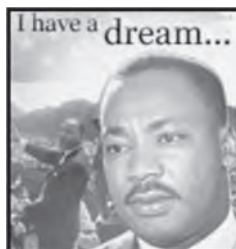
**CHRIST THE KING, IOWA PARK** – On Sunday, Dec. 7, the children of Christ the King Parish in Iowa Park, celebrated the feast of St. Nicholas. The children left their shoes in the vestibule of the parish hall and proceeded to feast on donuts and juice. After a movie about St. Nicholas, the saint himself arrived and passed out cups filled with goodies to all the children. As the children left, they found that St. Nicholas had filled their shoes with golden coins. Parents and children alike enjoyed the celebrations and said it was a wonderful way to begin this joyous season. Pictured in the back row from left to right are Cannon Hodges, Allison Schubert, Rylee Hodges, and Shand Cornman with St. Nicholas. In the front row from left to right are Lillian Francis, Hailey Cornman, Emma Schubert, Wyatt Schultz, Johnny Schultz (kneeling), Jacob Schultz, and Gunnar Hodges.

## Bishop Vann to celebrate Mass in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Bishop Kevin Vann will celebrate a Mass for the 23rd Annual "Celebration of Life for Martin Luther King, Jr." at 7 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 17 at St. Joseph Church at 1927 SW Green Oaks Blvd. in Arlington.

A reception will follow the Mass. The annual celebration held in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr., takes place in a different location every year.

For more information, contact Deacon Len Sanchez at (817) 560-2452 ext. 305 or [lsanchez@fwdioc.org](mailto:lsanchez@fwdioc.org).



## Catholic homeschooling information meeting Jan. 16

Catholics interested in homeschooling their children are invited to an information meeting from 7 to 9 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 16 to learn about the different philosophies of homeschooling, the different Catholic curriculums available, and the legalities of homeschooling.

Experienced homeschoolers will be available to answer questions as well as show materials.

Catholics Teaching at Home (CATH), a homeschool group for Catholics in the Fort Worth Diocese, will sponsor the presentation.

For more information, contact Diane Ashour at (972) 601-9751 or [ashour\\_23@sbeglobal.net](mailto:ashour_23@sbeglobal.net).

## NTC deadlines for submission

The *North Texas Catholic* is published twice monthly, except during the months of June, July, and August when it is published monthly. The deadline to submit information is noon on the Wednesday of the week before the paper is published.

Items for the Jan. 9 issue must be received by noon on Wednesday, Dec. 31. Items for the Jan. 23 issue must be received by noon on Wednesday, Jan. 14.

## Cardinal Newman Institute to offer 'Liturgy and Sacraments' course in January

The Cardinal Newman Institute of Fort Worth will offer its spring 10-week course on the liturgy and sacraments beginning Saturday, Jan. 17. The course will be offered from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the St. Maria Goretti Church's Holy Family Life Center, located at 1200 S. Davis Dr. in Arlington.

Participants will examine the fundamental liturgies of the Catholic Church, such as the Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours, as well as the role and nature of the sacraments, their relationship to the plan of salvation and the history of their development.

The Institute "highly recommends" the course for religion teachers, those preparing others for the sacraments, and Catholics wishing to enhance one's participation in the Mass and sacramental life.

Students will examine basic documents of the Church as liturgical directives. Tuition is \$200, with at least half payable at the first class. Full-time employees working in the Church's catechetical, pastoral and educational ministries are eligible to receive a half-tuition reduction.

For information or to pre-register to obtain the reading list and begin to acquire resources, call (817) 277-4859 or e-mail at [cni.info@yahoo.com](mailto:cni.info@yahoo.com).

## Courage group meets twice monthly

Courage D/FW, a spiritual support group for Catholics striving to live chaste lives according to the Catholic Church's teachings on homosexuality, meets the second and fourth Friday evenings of each month.

For more information, e-mail to [CourageDFW@Catholic.org](mailto:CourageDFW@Catholic.org) or call (972) 938-5433.

## Training sessions offered for EMs for homebound, hospitalized

St. Michael Church at 3713 Harwood Rd. Bedford will offer a training session for new extraordinary ministers of holy Communion to the homebound, hospitalized, and nursing home residents.

The training is divided in two sessions from 8:45 a.m. to 1 p.m. Jan. 31 and Feb. 7.

Participants will learn basic visit skills, what pastoral care to the sick and the dying is, and the overall importance of this ministry. Participants from outside St. Michael need to pay a fee of \$8 to cover cost of materials. Lunch will be provided.

To RSVP, contact Martín Peña at (817) 283-8743. Deadline for registration is Jan. 19.

## Knights of Columbus scholarships available for Lewisville area students

Three \$600 Knights of Columbus scholarships, for a Catholic college-bound senior from Lewisville High School, Marcus High School, and Flower Mound High School, will be awarded in May. Applicants must be Catholic.

Two additional \$600 scholarships have been added this year for students attending any area high school, provided the student's father is a member of St. Philip the Apostle Parish, Our Lady of Lebanon Parish, or a member of Knights Council # 9884.

Instructions and applications for the 19th annual Knights of Columbus Scholarship are now available from high school counselors at Lewisville High, Flower Mound High, and Marcus High, as well as the St. Philip the Apostle Church office.

The scholarships are funded by contributions from Council 9884, the Lady Knights, and local Fourth Degree Pope Paul VI Assembly #2291. Applications must be postmarked by Feb. 14.

For more information, contact chairman Mike Crivello at [macrivello@hotmail.com](mailto:macrivello@hotmail.com).

## Ministry with gay, lesbian Catholics to meet Jan. 22

The regular fourth Thursday of the month meeting of the Fort Worth diocesan Ministry with Lesbian and Gay Catholics, other Sexual Minorities and Their Families will not be held in December, due to the holidays.

The next regular meeting of the ministry will be held on Thursday, Jan. 22 at 7 p.m. at the Catholic Renewal Center at 4501 Bridge St. in Fort Worth. For more information, contact Father Warren Murphy, TOR, at (817) 927-5383 or Doreen Rose at (817) 329-7370.

## Theology professor to speak about Catholic perspective on Rapture

Sister Dorothy Jonaitis, OP, will present "The Left Behind Alternative: A Workshop on Apocalyptic Literature" from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 31 at St. Bartholomew Church at 3601 Altamesa Blvd. in Fort Worth.

Sr. Jonaitis is the author of *Unmasking Apocalyptic Texts: a Guide to Preaching and Teaching*, and an assistant professor at the University of Dallas School of Ministry. She will present the Catholic teaching of apocalyptic texts, especially related to the rapture and imagery of the Book of Revelation.

Sr. Jonaitis will sign copies of her book, which may be purchased at the workshop.

For more information, call Marco Castellon at (817) 293-5589.



**IMMACULATE CONCEPTION SCHOOL, DENTON** – Immaculate Conception School scored 602 total points which included 13 first-place finishes to win the championship of the North Texas Independent League Academic Meet, a competition that featured other Catholic schools placing second and third against other private schools in the region at North Central Texas College in Gainesville. Approximately 60 students from second through eighth grades competed in events ranging from art memory to storytelling to science. ICCS took first place while St. Mary's in Gainesville was second with 518 points and Sacred Heart of Muenster placed third with 251 points. Pictured are ICCS students who garnered the highest point totals in the meet including, from left to right, Hayden Hawley, Sarah Owens, Madison Morgan, Margo Del Mundo, Christian Luke, Ali Oberman, Scott Wolf, and Joe Ralston.



## Diocesan

# Ministry Formation Day scheduled for Jan. 10 at Nolan Catholic HS



Father John Robert Skeldon, a locally popular homilist, workshop presenter, and instructor for the Biblical School at the University of Dallas, will offer the keynote presentation at Ministry Formation Day, Saturday, Jan. 10 at Nolan Catholic High School located at 4501 Bridge St. in Fort Worth. Fr. Skeldon, who serves as parochial administrator of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Wichita Falls, will speak on the theme of the day, "Encountering the Living Word!"



Fr. John Robert Skeldon

The event will begin with registration and a light breakfast at 8 a.m.; the opening prayer and welcoming remarks will be offered at 9 a.m. Fr. Skeldon will give the keynote presentation in English at 9:30 a.m., and in Spanish at 10:45 a.m. Three breakout sessions, including sessions in Spanish and

Vietnamese, will be offered prior to and following the noon catered lunch.

Breakout sessions will include topics such as "Service Projects with Children," offered by Mary Moody and Susan Overcash of St. John the Apostle School in North Richland Hills; "Essential and Ef-

fective Catechesis for RCIA," led by Lucas Pollice, diocesan director of Adult Formation; "Why a Year of St. Paul?" offered by Scripture scholar Sister St. John Begnaud, SSMN; "Reaching Out to Young Adults," by Marion Cannon, co-coordinator of the Diocesan Young Adult Council; "Encouraging Vocations Among the Next Generation," led by Father Kyle Walterscheid, diocesan director of Vocations; "Theology of the Body for the Family," presented by Diane Schwind, diocesan coordinator of Family Life; "The Sacrament of Marriage and Marriage Nullity Cases," presented by Meg Hogan, director of the diocesan Marriage Tribunal; and "Organizing a Youth Group: the Members' Perspective," to be offered by Diane Donahue, director of youth ministry at St. Vincent de Paul Church in

Arlington and a panel of youth group participants.

Ministry Formation Day is sponsored in two different locations within the diocese each year by the diocesan offices of Children's Catechesis, Adult Formation, Hispanic Pastoral Services, Youth, Young Adult, and Campus Ministry, Worship, Catholic Schools, Peace and Justice, Marriage and Family Life, the Marriage Tribunal, Pastoral Planning, Stewardship and Development and Finance.

"All are invited to gather for an enrichment day that includes English, Spanish, and Vietnamese workshop sessions, exhibits, networking opportunities, and an exciting keynote presentation," said Joe Rodriguez, coordinator of the Ministry Formation Day event. "There will be something

for everyone."

The early registration cost for the Jan. 10 event is \$25 and includes a continental breakfast, lunch, and materials. The cost at the door without prior registration is \$30. Partial scholarships are available; parishioners may register as individuals or as members of a parish group. For more information about Ministry Formation Day at Nolan, call Joe Rodriguez at (817) 560-3300 ext. 115 or e-mail to jrodriguez@fw-dioc.org. For a complete listing of the day's schedule and workshop topics, or to obtain a registration form, visit the diocesan Web site at [www.fwdioc.org](http://www.fwdioc.org) and click on "Faith Formation."

## St. Mary of the Assumption prepares to celebrate centennial anniversary



St. Mary of the Assumption Church in Fort Worth will celebrate its centennial anniversary in 2009. This photo is taken from the parish Web site.

St. Mary of the Assumption Church will celebrate its 100th Anniversary next year with festivities planned throughout 2009.

St. Mary began with its first Mass on May 6, 1909.

The church will hold its "Centennial year Kick Off" with an English Mass at noon on Jan. 1, for the feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, where a new "Centennial Chalice" will be blessed. A reception will follow in the cafeteria.

"We have procured a centennial chalice from Spain, and Bishop [Kevin] Vann will bless it," said Father David Bristow, priest in charge of St. Mary. "It will be used in all the Masses throughout the year, and then for high festivals and high occasions only after that."

On Sunday, May 10, Bishop Vann will celebrate the official

Centennial Masses at 10 a.m. in English and 12 p.m. in Spanish with receptions following. Because St. Mary was a parish of the Diocese of Dallas during its first 60 years, Dallas Bishop Kevin Farrell has been invited. Any priests that have served at St. Mary's are also invited.

Finally, a Mass will be celebrated at 12 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 15, in honor of the patron feast day of the parish, Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, with a centennial reception afterward.

Fr. Bristow also said that concerts will be held in honor of the centennial throughout the year and parishioner John Araujo is currently writing a book about the history of the parish that is expected to be published in 2009.

For more information, contact the church at (817) 923-1911.

## End of life forum planned at St. Andrew

A half-day forum on end of life issues will be held from 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Jan. 17 in the parish hall at St. Andrew Church, 3717 Stadium Dr. in Fort Worth, with registration beginning at 9 a.m.

The purpose of the forum is to educate Catholics and the general public about the clinical, emotional, social, ethical, and legal implications of end of life issues, and to encourage informed advanced care planning, according to promotional material.

A moderated forum of four pre-

sentations with the opportunity for participants to ask questions will be offered. Presenters will include Dr. David Capper, a geriatrician, internist and hospice and palliative care physician; Scott Taylor, a personal finance and asset protection specialist; and Enrique Illingworth, LMSW, and Kathy Kalina, RN, CHPN, both of whom serve as hospice care professionals.

Topics to be addressed during the day will include care giving, spirituality at the end of life, social dynamics, resources, financial im-

plications of a final illness, advance directives, surrogacy, and clinical scenarios.

The Pastoral Care Committee, Happy Hearts Group, St. Andrew Nurses, and Women of St. Andrew are co-sponsoring the event.

A light lunch will be served at noon. The panelists will be available for more questions and answers during this time. Reservations are required by Wednesday, Jan. 14.

For more information, call the parish office at (817) 927-5383.

## Flower Mound freshman wins international Knights of Columbus free throw competition

Taylor Johnson, a freshman at Flower Mound High School, is the 2008 Knights of Columbus International Basketball Free Throw Champion in the boys' 13-year-old bracket and was recognized by Council #9884, based in Lewisville, at the monthly business meeting of the council, held Dec. 4.

Tom Kupper, contest chairman, and Joe Ward, grand knight of the council, presented Taylor with his award of a golden basketball. Taylor is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Brian Johnson of Flower Mound.

Each year, over 200,000 boys and girls ages 10-14 participate in this international competition.

Taylor qualified earlier this year at the local, district, regional and state levels by making 88 percent of his 90 free throw attempts, according to Kupper. Taylor completed 25 of 25 attempts at



Knights of Columbus Council #9884 Grand Knight Joe Ward presents Flower Mound High School freshman Taylor Johnson with a golden basketball for winning the organization's international free throw competition.

the state level championship in San Antonio.

Grand Knight Ward announced that the 2009 competi-

tion will be held in January, and any youth living in the Lewisville Independent School District are eligible to participate.



# Diocesan



Father George Foley, pastor of St. Jude Church in Mansfield, celebrated the 50th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood at a Mass and reception Nov. 21, at St. Vincent de Paul Church in Arlington. Fr. Foley, a native of South Africa, was ordained in Pretoria on Nov. 30, 1958. He has served at St. Jude's, a diverse community of approximately 3,000 families, since 2003.



Priests of the diocese gather with Fr. George Foley (seventh from left), at his golden jubilee anniversary celebration held Nov. 21. Over the years, Fr. Foley has served parishes in Bedford, Rhineland, Knox City, Breckenridge, Albany, Throckmorton, Cisco, Ranger, and Eastland.

## Bishop Vann announces successful audit results for Charter for protection of children and young people, thanks all who helped

In a letter sent Nov. 7 to all pastors, deacons, pastoral administrators, and ministry leaders within the Diocese of Fort Worth, Bishop Kevin Vann announced that the diocese has passed the 2008 independent audit for compliance with the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, a comprehensive set of guidelines developed by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in 2002. "Representatives from the Gavin Group visited the Diocese of Fort Worth during the week of October 13 to audit our Safe Environment program," wrote Bishop Vann. "They reviewed our curriculum; they checked our participant databases; and they interviewed a good number of pastors, principals, and various staff members of our parishes and schools."

While many of the interviews were done by telephone, several were done in person at the parish and school sites, the bishop told staff members at the *North Texas Catholic*. "The auditors were extremely complimentary about the work that is done here in our diocese to protect young people," said the bishop. "They really affirmed the excellence of our personnel in the various ministries and at the diocesan level."

Representatives of the Gavin Group Inc., based in Winthrop, Massachusetts, conducted the audit at The Catholic Center Oct. 13-17, said Ruth Smith, director of Child and Youth Protection for the Diocese of Fort Worth. "The representatives also met with Bishop Vann, with our chancellor, Father James Hart; our vicar general, Father Stephen Berg, and with members of our Diocesan Review Board," said Smith.

The auditors also spent time working with Smith and with diocesan Victims Assistance Coordinator Judy Locke, noted Smith. "We shared with the auditors the materials we use in our safe envi-

ronment trainings and seminars; they examined the records that are kept to verify the background checks that are done on employees and volunteers within our parishes and schools, and they reviewed the record keeping processes that are used to ensure the protection of young people and vulnerable adults in our parishes and schools," said Smith.

The Diocese of Fort Worth's original policies, which addressed the matter of sexual misconduct by clergy, religious, or lay leaders, were first adopted in 1993 and were further updated in 2002 to bring diocesan policies into accord with the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. The Charter was created with the goal of preventing the sexual abuse of minors within the church.

The 2008 audit was the fifth since the Charter was implemented in 2002, said Smith. "The Diocese of Fort Worth has been found

in compliance with the Charter during each audit," she noted.

All audits in dioceses and eparchies across the United States will be completed by the end of December, and the Office for Child and Youth Protection with the USCCB will then publish a comprehensive report of all audit results in early 2009, said Smith.

"I want to express my sincere gratitude to each of you for supporting our Safe Environment program," wrote the bishop in his Nov. 7 letter. "I know that complying with record keeping and teaching requirements is hard work. But I want you to know that others have noticed and appreciate the great responsibility that you, our employees and volunteers, share. Through your support and dedication, the Catholic Church in North Texas, and across the United States, continues its mission to serve others faithfully in the footsteps of Our Lord and Savior."

## Tribunal to host presentation by canon lawyer Fr. Patrick Lagges, JCD, Jan. 26

The Marriage Tribunal of the Diocese of Fort Worth will host a workshop Wednesday, Jan. 26, at Most Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church, 2100 N. Davis Dr. in north Arlington. Registration will begin at 9:30 a.m.; the workshop will begin at 10 a.m. and will conclude at 4 p.m. Father Patrick Lagges, JCD, judicial vicar of the Marriage Tribunal of the Archdiocese of Chicago and lecturer in canon law at Mundelein Seminary in Chicago, will serve as the presenter and will address recent developments in tribunal theory and practice.

Fr. Lagges has years of expertise in dealing with issues related to the annulment process in the Catholic Church, said Meg Hogan, diocesan director of the Marriage Tribunal in Fort Worth. "We welcome everyone in the diocese to attend, especially those who are presently in tribunal ministry, those who might be interested in tribunal ministry, and anyone who's ever wanted to learn more about marriage annulments or how tribunals work," said Hogan. "Fr. Lagges is an engaging speaker and has a wealth of experience and knowl-



Fr. Patrick Lagges

edge in Tribunal work."

There is no charge for attending the workshop; lunch and materials will be provided. Preregistration is required prior to Friday, Jan. 23 at 4 p.m. To register, call the Tribunal office at (817) 560-3300, ext. 200, or e-mail to mhogan@fwdioc.org.

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## Diocesan



(L. to R.) Al Garcia; Fr. Ivor Koch; Dr. Tom Hoffman; and Fr. Hoa Nguyen

### Sacred Heart Church in Wichita Falls retires debt and ceremoniously burns the note

By Jenara Kocks Burgess  
Correspondent

Wichita Falls firefighter Al Garcia; retired pastor of Sacred Heart Church, Father Ivor Koch; church finance council member Dr. Tom Hoffman; and current Sacred Heart pastor, Father Hoa Nguyen, led a ceremonial note burning Nov. 16 in front of the church to celebrate having paid off the debt incurred by parish renovations.

In 1993, Fr. Koch spearheaded renovations to modernize the church while preserving historic elements of Sacred Heart Church. The remodeling also increased the church's seating capacity by 70 percent. Included in this renovation were the con-

struction of chapels, sacristy, plaza, atrium, and a new parish hall. The total cost of the project was more than \$3.1 million.

In 2006, when Fr. Hoa became the new pastor, the church had paid off all but \$1.4 million. Fr. Hoa worked with the finance council to present a series of stewardship talks to encourage parishioners to renew their commitment to paying off the debt and participate in a two-year pledge campaign, Hoffman said.

With the help of several large anonymous donations and the parishioners' faithful pledges, the debt was paid off more than seven months before the scheduled end of the pledge drive in July 2009.

### Knights to sponsor End of Life Issues Workshop in Arlington, Jan. 21, 7 to 9 p.m.

Terms such as "medical directives," "health care proxies," and "living wills" may seem confusing, but "help is on the way," according to Jerry Hauck, a member of the Knights of Columbus, St. Jude Council #6269. The Knights will sponsor a workshop on end of life issues Wednesday, Jan. 21, from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Knights' Council Hall, 2625 S. Cooper St. in Arlington. Father Tom Kennedy, associate pastor at St. Michael's in Bedford, will lead the workshop. The event is free.

Fr. Kennedy, an experienced hospital chaplain, will offer workshop participants the opportunity to work through the information in San Antonio Archbishop José H. Gómez's brief book, *A Will to Live: Clear Answers on End of Life Issues*. Participants will be provided copies of the book, and copies of the National

Catholic Bioethics Center publication, *A Catholic Guide to End-Of-Life Decisions*.

According to Hauck, Fr. Kennedy will lead participants in working with the forms all Catholics should possess in case of a medical emergency. "Every attendee will leave the seminar with a witnessed health proxy [form] and an Advance Medical Directive that takes into account Catholic faith," said Hauck. "As Catholics who respect life, we not only care about the beginnings of our lives here on earth. One of the things we can easily prepare for is the eventuality of not being able to make decisions about our own health care. We do not want to end up without documentation that is in accordance with our Catholic teachings."

The "living will" is specifi-

cally designed to give medical instructions while a hospital patient is still able to make critical decisions, Hauck explained. "The proper terminology for Catholics is an Advance Medical Directive. This is a witnessed document that gives general and specific instructions to any care provider about your medical well being. You can add the specific instructions as you desire," said Hauck.

A witnessed health proxy document, also known as a "durable medical power of attorney," provides a loved one with instructions for care in the event of an emergency. For more information about the workshop, contact Chanacee Ruth-Killgore, diocesan director of the Respect Life office, at (817) 560-2452 ext. 257, or e-mail to [cruth-killgore@fwdioc.org](mailto:cruth-killgore@fwdioc.org).



Members of Girl Scout Troop #3003 of St. Andrew Church in Fort Worth took tickets and passed out programs while volunteering at the Casa Mañana performing arts center Sunday, Oct. 24. Members of the troop, now in their sixth year of scouting, are planning a year of volunteer service at the theatre. Pictured in the front row from left to right: Emily B., Christine V.; back row, Isabel C., Katie H., Emma B., and Mary Kate B.

### Theologian and environmentalist Mary Evelyn Tucker to present annual Catholic lecture at TCU's Brite Divinity

Mary Evelyn Tucker, Ph.D., a theologian and environmentalist, will speak Wednesday, Feb. 4 at 7 p.m. at Ed Landreth Hall at Texas Christian University (TCU). The auditorium is located at the corner of South University Dr. and Cantey St. in Fort Worth. Tucker's presentation, "A New Way Home," will be offered through TCU's Brite Divinity School's Roman Catholic Lectureship, an annual event since the lectureship was established in 2003.

Tucker, a lecturer and research scholar at the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies in the Religious Studies Department at Yale University, is co-founder and co-director of the national Forum on Religion and Ecology and, along with author John Grim, has organized a series of conferences on world religions and ecology

at the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard Divinity School.

She is the author of several books, including *Worldly Wonder: Religions Enter Their Ecological Phase* (2003) and *Moral and Spiritual Cultivation in Japanese Neo-Confucianism* (1989). She has edited numerous publications on spirituality and ecology.

"We humans are destroying the life-support systems of the planet at an alarming rate," wrote Tucker and Grim in a 2007 article, "The Greening of the World's Religions," in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. "...Global warming is already evident in melting glaciers, thawing tundra, and flooding of coastal regions. Furthermore," they continue, "scientists are documenting that we are living in the midst of a sixth extinction,

with more than 20,000 species lost annually... In other words, we are shutting down life systems and causing the end of our geological era."

Whereas environmental issues were once considered to be the concern of scientists, lawyers, and policy makers, wrote Tucker and Grim, "Now the ethical dimensions of the environmental crisis are becoming more evident... Can religious and cultural perspectives be considered in creating viable solutions to environmental challenges?"

Student tickets to the lecture are free; general admission is \$15 per person. Reserved seating with parking and admission to the reception prior to the presentation is \$35 per person. For more information, contact Toni Craven, Ph.D., at (817) 257-7575 or at [t.craven@tcu.edu](mailto:t.craven@tcu.edu).

### Art and photography competition will complement environmental theme of Brite's Catholic lecture

In conjunction with the Catholic Lecture, "A New Way Home," offered at Texas Christian University (TCU) by Mary Evelyn Tucker, Ph.D., at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 4, Brite Divinity School at TCU is sponsoring an art and photography competition.

According to materials promoting the competition, "We invite you to take an original photograph or create a work of art that can encourage humans to become a healing, helpful presence on the planet. Our hope is that your artistic endeavor will help us rethink the relationship between humans and our Earth home."

Competition participants are invited to submit a photograph or image of their artwork in .jpg format, along with a com-

pleted entry form, by e-mail to [britephotos@tcu.edu](mailto:britephotos@tcu.edu) by Jan. 14. Participants will receive a confirmation notice within 24 hours after successfully submitting their image and entry form. Entry forms may be found on the Brite Divinity School Web site at [www.brite.tcu.edu](http://www.brite.tcu.edu).

Prizes of one \$100 award and two \$50 awards will be presented in each of the following categories: Grades Pre-K to 4; 5 to 8; and 9 to 12; undergraduate students; graduate students; and the general public. Winners will be notified by Jan. 30. Winning entries will be presented in a slide show at 5:30 p.m. Feb. 4, prior to the lecture offered by Tucker at 7 p.m.

For additional information, contact Mary Jo Kaska at (817) 257-7575.



# Years of love and labor allow Notre Dame children to Walk the Rosary

Story and Photos by  
Jenara Kocks Burgess  
Correspondent

To those passing by on Lansing Boulevard, the front lawn of Notre Dame School and the concrete sign looks like any other sidewalk.

But if they were to stop and look at the stained glass roses, other flowers, and the religious pictures that sparkle like jewels in the concrete, they would discover the sidewalk is actually a life-size rosary pathway in the grass in front of the school.

Bishop Kevin W. Vann blessed the project, named "A Prayer Walkway: The Blessed Rosary" Aug. 28 after an all-school Mass at Our Lady Queen of Peace Church in Wichita Falls.

Notre Dame Development Director Peggy Foix said the project was in the works for quite some time and said she was very moved by the dedication of the rosary walkway.

The walkway depicts the scenes of the Glorious Mysteries: The Resurrection, The Ascension, The Assumption, The Crowning of Mary, and The Baptism of the Holy Spirit in intricate and colorful patterns of stained glass set into concrete.

Former Notre Dame Principal Chris Neeb first came up with the idea and asked Carol Segura, who has four children that have attended the school, if she could do the work on the stained glass. Over the past six years,

Segura, Foix, and other parents and students, and a few Wichita Falls community businesses have brought it to fruition.

The walkway's artist, Segura, began making stained-glass stepping stones as a hobby eight years ago. During the past six years, she created 150 rosary stepping stones and picked 59 of the best to be used in the Rosary Walkway. The project took 600 hours with an average of 30 pieces of different colored glass used in each stone.

"We decided to use flowers for all the Hail Mary stones," Segura said.

"They are all beautiful and show varied colors within each flower. They represent God's variety and complexity in his creations," she said.

A giant three-dimensional cross sits at the beginning of the walkway. For the Apostles Creed stone, Segura used the Michelangelo depiction of God reaching out toward Adam's outstretched hand as a model. She created the next three stones to depict the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Trinity with three intertwined rings, and The Rose of Sharon. These stones represent the three Hail Marys that are said at the beginning of the Rosary.

The other 50 Hail Mary stones are all flowers.

"So much time and effort was put into planning the color of the flowers. You can tell by the way she [Carol Segura] made it, her heart was in it. I'm so glad we finished our goal. It's a legacy. Kids can use it in the religious programs for years to come," Foix said.

Foix said Segura did all the work on the rosary stones while she, in her capacity as the school's development director, found ways to make the project a fundraiser for Notre Dame School.

In addition to being a tangible tool for learning the rosary in Notre Dame School and Our Lady Queen of Peace Church's religious formation classes, each stone, bench, and brick paver represents a donation. So far, the project has raised \$30,000 for the school.

People are still able to purchase bricks and put their names or family members' or friends' names on them for \$50 each.

Foix said that one of the most important elements that made this project possible was donations by various Wichita Falls community members, businesses, and business owners who made major contributions of materials, labor, or both to make the rosary walkway happen. She said the donations by all individuals and businesses were "such a blessing" because they allowed more of the money raised to be used directly for the school.

Foix said the whole project definitely taught both her and Segura about perseverance and helped them

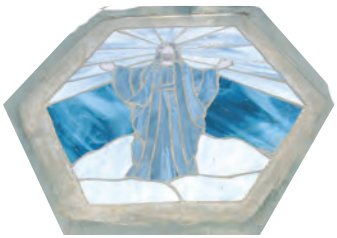
develop a special friendship. "Whenever you work on a project together for six years, you spend a lot of time bonding," Foix said.

"It's kind of been like being parents together," Segura said.

"This was our baby for six years," said Foix.



Notre Dame Development Director Peggy Foix and artist Carol Segura sit on the stone cross of the completed rosary walkway outside of Our Lady Queen of Peace Church in Wichita Falls.







Members of the Knights of Columbus in the Diocese of Fort Worth sponsored a "Bowl-a-thon" Sunday, Dec. 14, to raise funds for the diocesan Deaf Ministry Program. According to Mary Cinatl (pictured, far left), director of the diocesan Deaf Ministry Program, participants enjoyed an afternoon of "fun, great friends, and holiday cheer."

## Diocesan young adult retreat set for Feb. 27 to Mar. 1

Members of the Diocesan Young Adult Council will sponsor "Quo Vadis," (Where Are You Going?) a retreat designed for single or married young adults, ages 18 to mid-thirties. The retreat will be offered Friday, Feb. 27 through Sunday, March 1, at the Catholic Renewal Center, 4503 Bridge St. in Fort Worth. The cost for registration prior to Feb. 2 is \$35. Registrations will be accepted at \$45 per person through Feb. 16.

Retreat promotion materials ask young adults, "Are you stuck at a crossroads in your life? Do you know where you are going? And, more importantly, do you know where God is leading you?" The weekend retreat, promise

organizers, "... is just what you need to help you find your way! Come join the Diocesan Young Adult Council for a weekend of prayer, fellowship, and fun. Let God be your GPS and figure out where you may be going!"

According to organizers, the retreat will include opportunities to listen to dynamic speakers, participate in small groups, enjoy prayer and quiet time, and to discuss other topics that relate specifically to young adults.

For more information, contact Shawndra Hall at [Retreats@fortworthyoungadults.org](mailto:Retreats@fortworthyoungadults.org) or at (512)809-6131. A printable registration form may be found on the Web under Young Adult Ministry at [www.fwdioc.org](http://www.fwdioc.org).

# Advocates are optimistic comprehensive immigration reform will be addressed

WASHINGTON (CNS) — A sense of optimism about the coming year is starting to settle in among advocates for immigrants who had begun to weary after years of unsuccessfully seeking reform of immigration laws and policies.

Several nominations and appointments by President-elect Barack Obama are being taken as one reason for some hope. Signals also are coming from Congress that leaders may be prepared to tackle immigration sooner rather than later in the 111th Congress.

And resounding support for Obama among Latino, Asian, and immigrant voters and a new poll conducted for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops are more indicators that the hostility that helped defeat immigration reform several times recently may no longer hold the same sway in Washington.

Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano, Obama's nominee to head Homeland Security, which includes immigration-related agencies, is well-respected by those who support comprehensive immigration reform.

As governor, she opposed the construction of a wall along the Mexican border and vetoed legislation that would have required local police to enforce federal immigration policies, saying it would make immigrants reluctant to report crimes to the police. She also brought in the National Guard to help with enforcement along the border, aggressively prosecuted smugglers and worked for comprehensive reform.

Obama's appointee to be director of intergovernmental affairs at the White House, Cecilia Muñoz, comes from a career of working to improve the situation of immigrants. She currently is vice president of research, advocacy and legislation at the National Council of La Raza. Earlier in her career, she headed a legalization outreach program run by Catholic Charities in Chicago.

Muñoz has long been a key player in forming the coalitions seeking changes in immigration law that would reunite families, pull immigrants without legal papers out of the shadows and simplify the process for immigration in a way that addresses labor shortages and human needs.

Other Obama appointments, including Georgetown Law Center Dean T. Alexander Aleinikoff to Obama's immigration transition team, are adding to the immigration advocacy community's hopeful attitude.

Although nobody expects immigration to take precedence over the economy in Congress, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid of Nevada has been quoted as saying he would push to move a comprehensive immigration bill through the Senate in 2009.

Exit polls surely will influence Reid and his fellow congressional leaders in that direction. Polls showed Latinos accounted for a record 9 percent of all voters this election, with 67 percent of them backing Obama. In several states, high turnout among Latino voters was credited with pushing the winning margin of votes into Obama's column. Although the economy was the top concern for

Latinos as it was for the majority of all voters, 89 percent of Latinos told pollsters that immigration was important to them.

At a Nov. 19 press conference for the release of a report on border policy by the Border Network for Human Rights, Rep. Raul Grijalva, D-Ariz., said "the sooner the better" is his recommendation for Congress to tackle border issues. He described the border wall as "symbolism without a purpose," and said it's time for Congress to deliberate and debate immigration.

"We haven't had that debate in Congress and it's high time," Grijalva said.

Kevin Appleby, director of migration and refugee policy for the USCCB, said the bishops' conference is encouraging the new administration to quickly re-evaluate some of the policies of the Bush administration. That includes the construction of the wall along the border, ramped-up immigration raids on employers, the prosecution of immigrants picked up in raids under felony identity theft laws, and the policy of pushing local law enforcement agencies to serve as agents of federal immigration laws.

"There are 20 other issues, too," that the administration could address without the involvement of Congress, Appleby said. He ticked off some examples: policies on matching Social Security numbers for employment, temporary protected status for Haitians and detention practices.

He said he's encouraged by Obama's choice of Napolitano

and Muñoz. "Cecilia will be a great advocate for immigrants," he said. And he's also feeling bolstered by the results of a recent survey of Catholics' attitudes on immigration.

A Zogby poll of Catholics commissioned for the USCCB found wide support for the main elements of comprehensive immigration reform, such as a system for legalizing the status of people in the U.S. illegally if they learn English and pay a fine. The poll of 1,000 Catholics nationwide conducted in October found between 60 percent and 64 percent oppose building a wall along the border. The results

varied somewhat depending on the phrasing of the question.

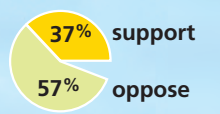
In response to a question about whether they agree that it is morally acceptable for people to enter the country illegally to find work to support their families, a slight majority said no, with 52 percent disagreeing and 46 percent agreeing.

Yet 75 percent of the Catholics surveyed said they agree the church has a moral obligation to help meet the humanitarian needs of immigrants regardless of their legal status.

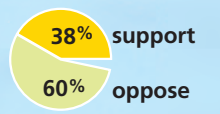
The poll had a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

### Catholics on Immigration

Would you support or oppose U.S. government assistance and trade policies that would create jobs abroad in order to prevent immigrants from coming here illegally to seek employment?



Would you support or oppose federal legislation to build a wall along the entire U.S.-Mexico border that is intended to stop illegal immigration?



Do you agree or disagree that the church has a moral obligation to help provide for the humanitarian needs of immigrants regardless of their legal status?



Telephone survey conducted among 1,000 Catholic adults in the U.S. The margin of error is plus or minus 3.2 percentage points.



# Vatican document warns certain new research violates moral principles

By John Thavis  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — A new Vatican document warned that certain recent developments in stem-cell research, gene therapy and embryonic experimentation violate moral principles and reflect an attempt by man to “take the place of his Creator.”

The latest advances raise serious questions of moral complicity for researchers and other biotech professionals, who have a duty to refuse to use biological material obtained by unethical means, the document said.

The 32-page instruction, titled *Dignitas Personae* (*The Dignity of a Person*), was issued Dec. 12 by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Pope Benedict XVI personally approved the text and ordered its publication.

The document represented an updating of the congregation’s 1987 instruction, “*Donum Vitae*” (“The Gift of Life”), which rejected *in vitro* fertilization, human cloning, surrogate motherhood, and nontherapeutic experiments with human embryos.

The new instruction expanded on those teachings or presented new ones in the following areas:

- **Stem-cell research:** The document recognized that stem cells have opened new prospects in regenerative medicine. It said it is morally acceptable to take stem cells when they do no serious harm to the subject, as is generally the case when tissues are taken from an adult organism, from the umbilical cord at the time of birth or from fetuses that have died from natural causes.

On the other hand, it said, it is always “gravely illicit” to take stem cells from a living human embryo, because it invariably causes the death of the embryo.

- **The morning-after pill and other anti-implantation methods:** The document said an embryo is constituted after fertilization of the egg, and drugs and techniques that prevent its implantation in the uterine wall are morally illicit because they intend to cause an abortion — even if they don’t actually cause an abortion every time they are used.

Anyone who seeks to prevent the implantation of an embryo that may have been conceived, and who therefore requests or prescribes such a drug, generally intends abortion, it said. The use of such anti-implantation methods “falls within the sin of abortion” and is gravely



An embryologist removes frozen embryos from a storage tank at the Smotrich IVF Clinic in La Jolla, California, in this 2007 file photo. The new Vatican document *DIGNITAS PERSONAE* (*THE DIGNITY OF A PERSON*) warns that certain recent developments in stem-cell research, gene therapy and embryonic experimentation violate moral principles and reflect an attempt by man to “take the place of his Creator.” (CNS photo/Sandy Huffaker)

immoral; when there is certainty that an abortion has resulted, there also are serious canon law penalties, it said.

- **Gene therapy:** It said genetic engineering that aims to correct genetic defects by intervening on nonreproductive cells, a process called somatic-cell gene therapy, is in principle morally acceptable. The effects in this case are limited to a single person.

But it is not permissible to make genetic modifications that seek to transmit the effects to the subject’s offspring, called germ-line cell therapy, because of potential harm to the progeny, the document said. It said that “in the present state of research” germ-line cell therapy in all its forms is morally illicit.

- **Embryo manipulation and “adoption”:** The document repeated earlier condemnations of the *in vitro* creation of human embryos, a technique often used in fertility treatment, first because it separates procreation from the conjugal act in marriage, and sec-

ond because in practice unused embryos are often discarded, thus violating the principle that “the human being is to be respected and treated as a person from the moment of conception.”

Freezing such embryos is itself a violation of ethics, because it exposes them to a serious risk of death or harm, the document said. Most of such embryos remain “orphans,” it said. Despite the good intentions of people who have suggested a form of “prenatal adoption” to allow unused frozen embryos to be born, such a proposal would be subject to medical, psychological, and legal problems, it said.

- **Freezing of human eggs:** The freezing of oocytes, immature human egg cells, has been introduced as part of an *in vitro* fertilization technique, in which only those eggs to be transferred to the mother’s body are fertilized. The document said the freezing of oocytes for this purpose is morally unacceptable.

- **Human-animal hybrid cloning:** The document rejected as immoral recent efforts to use animal eggs to reprogram human cells in order to extract embryonic stem cells from the resulting embryos. These efforts represent a grave offense against human dignity by mixing animal and human genetic elements capable of “disrupting the specific identity of man,” it said. In addition, use of the resulting stem cells would expose humans to unacceptable risks, it said.

In a section titled “The use of human ‘biological material’ of illicit origin,” the document examined the ethical questions posed for people who, in research or the production of vaccines or other products, deal with cell lines that are the result of a procedure the church considers immoral.

In cases where there is a direct connection, such as embryonic experimentation that inevitably involves the killing of the human embryos, such acts “always constitute a grave moral disorder,” it said.

It said the situation was more complex when a researcher works with cell lines produced apart from his research center or obtained commercially. The document rejected the “criterion of independence,” as formulated by some ethics committees, which argues that using such biological material would be ethically permissible as long as there is a clear separation between those causing the death of embryos, for example, and those doing the research.

The document said it was necessary to distance oneself in one’s ordinary professional activities from the injustice perpetrated by others, even when immoral actions are legal, in order not to give the impression of “tacit acceptance of actions which are gravely unjust.”

“Therefore, it needs to be stated that there is a duty to refuse to use such ‘biological material’ even when there is no close connection between the researcher and the actions of those who performed the artificial fertilization or the abortion, or when there was not prior agreement with the centers in which the artificial fertilization took place,” it said.

In the wider framework, it added, there are differing degrees of responsibility, and grave reasons may in some cases justify the use of such “biological material.” For example, it said, the danger to the health of children could

permit parents to legitimately use a vaccine that was developed using cell lines obtained illicitly. In such a case, it noted, the parents have no voice in the decision over how the vaccines are made. At the same time, it said, everyone should ask their health care system to make other types of vaccines available.

The instruction repeated earlier Vatican condemnations of human cloning, whether done to produce embryos for stem cells or to define the genetic identity of an individual person, which the document called “a form of biological slavery.”

The document said couples need to be aware that techniques such as pre-implantation diagnosis, which is used in artificial fertilization and leads to the destruction of embryos suspected of defects, reflects a growing “eugenic mentality.” It cited an increasing number of cases in which couples with no fertility problems are using artificial means of procreation in order to engage in the genetic selection of their offspring.

The document closed with an appeal to view the church’s teachings not as a series of “no’s” but as an effort to protect society’s weakest and most defenseless against forms of unjust discrimination and oppression.

“There are those who say that the moral teaching of the church contains too many prohibitions. In reality, however, her teaching is based on the recognition and promotion of all the gifts that the Creator has bestowed on man: such as life, knowledge, freedom and love,” it said.

“Behind every ‘no’ in the difficult task of discerning between good and evil, there shines a great ‘yes’ to the recognition of the dignity and inalienable value of every single and unique human being called into existence,” it said.

*Dignitas Personae* drew on a number of sources, in particular *Donum Vitae* and Pope John Paul II’s 1995 encyclical, *Evangelium Vitae* (*The Gospel of Life*). It also cited the teachings of Pope Benedict XVI, notably his address on stem cells to the Pontifical Academy for Life in 2006.

The Vatican said the new document, as a papally approved instruction of a doctrinal nature, falls under the category of the “ordinary magisterium,” which is the church’s teaching authority, and is to be received by Catholics “with the religious assent of their spirit.”



# Officials say Vatican document not an attack on modern science

By John Thavis  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The Vatican's new instruction setting forth moral principles in biotechnology should not be seen as a negative attack on modern science but as a defense of the sacred nature of human life, Vatican officials said.

"This is in no way an attempt to say 'halt' to the commitment of science in favor of life," Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, the Vatican spokesman, said in a statement. "On the contrary, the document offers a series of guideposts so that science is truly at the service of life and not of death, or of the arbitrary and dangerous manipulation of the human person," he said.

The instruction, *Dignitas Personae* (*The Dignity of a Person*), was issued Dec. 12 by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. It presents teachings — and in many cases moral prohibitions — in areas such as stem-cell research, human cloning, gene therapy, and embryo experimentation.

In general, the document rejects any procedure that

separates procreation from the conjugal act in marriage or presents risks to human life from the moment of conception.

"The church believes it must be courageous and decisive in affirming these principles. The continuity of the development of the human being from the moment of conception does not allow for uncertainty in the defense of the embryo and his dignity," Fr. Lombardi said.

"This is a position in favor of small and weak human beings, who have no voice and who today, in fact, do not find many who speak in their favor," he said.

Dominican Father Augustine Di Noia, undersecretary of the doctrinal congregation, told Vatican Radio that it would be wrong to see the new document as a series of "no's" against prohibited services.

As Pope Benedict XVI has noted many times, these "no's" are derived from a much larger "yes" to human life and human dignity, he said.

Fr. Di Noia said the document offers a number of other positive reflections, including

appreciation of science and its recent developments, a "yes" to fertility treatments that overcome pathologies and re-establish the normal functioning of human procreation, a "yes" to the therapeutic use of stem cells when obtained licitly, and a "yes" to the value of every human being.

"Some of these affirmations and positive assertions have a negative side, but their principal direction is a positive account, a vision of what it means to be human, and why human life is sacred from conception to natural death," he said.

Archbishop Rino Fisichella, president of the Pontifical Academy for Life, predicted that the document would provoke various reactions. Some will ignore it, some will deride it and others will label it another church effort to impede progress, he told a Vatican press conference.

But many, he said, will share the Vatican's concern and analysis, and others will be prompted by its teachings to formulate questions of their own regarding the morality of recent scientific developments.



A teenager receives vaccine to immunize her against hepatitis B in St. Clair Shores, Michigan.

## An embryo must be treated as a person, says bioethics document

By John Thavis  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The Vatican's latest document on bioethics forcefully stated that although there is no certainty about when a human being receives a soul an embryo is to be treated as a person from the moment of conception.

That means all human embryos deserve recognition of fundamental human rights, including the inviolable right to life, the document said.

This ethical principle conforms to natural moral law and is also supported by solid scientific evidence about the initial stages of human life, said the instruction, *Dignitas Personae* (*The Dignity of a Person*), issued Dec. 12 by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Debate over the precise timing of ensoulment has been raised by some who argue that the destruction of an early-stage embryo might not be the same as killing an innocent human person.

The Vatican document said that although the presence of the spiritual soul cannot be observed experimentally, scientific knowledge about the human embryo supports "continuity in development of a human being" from conception onward.

"Indeed, the reality of the human being for the entire span of life, both before and after birth, does not allow us to

posit either a change in nature or a gradation in moral value, since it possesses full anthropological and ethical status," the document said.

"The human embryo has therefore from the very beginning the dignity proper to a person," it said.

The instruction builds on the teaching expressed in a similar 1987 Vatican instruction on procreation, which noted increasing scientific evidence about personal identity from the earliest moments of life and raised the question: "How could a human individual not be a human person?"

This argument leaves the burden of proof on those who hold that an embryo is not a person, a point made in 1987 by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger — now Pope Benedict XVI — when he was head of the doctrinal congregation.

At that time, Cardinal Ratzinger said determining whether an embryo is a person with a soul was a question for philosophy, not science. On the basis of scientific evidence, however, there is "at least a good probability that it is," he said.

He said science shows there is no "qualitative leap" in the life of a child in the period from conception to birth.

"Already in the zygote (fertilized egg) there is a genetically defined individual," he said.

## The Vatican bioethics document at a glance

By John Thavis  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Here are the major points of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's instruction, *Dignitas Personae* (*The Dignity of a Person*):

- Two fundamental principles for reflection on bioethical questions are: First, the human being is to be respected and treated as a person from the moment of conception; second, responsible human procreation occurs in the act of reciprocal love between a man and a woman in marriage.

- Stem-cell research opens new prospects for regenerative medicine and is morally permissible when it uses stem cells taken from adult organisms, but not when it takes cells from human embryos, because it invariably causes their death.

- Researchers in the biotech profession have a moral duty to refuse to use biological material that comes from a procedure considered gravely

immoral by the church, even if there is no close connection between the researcher and those doing the illicit procedure.

- The morning-after pill and other methods of preventing the implantation of a fertilized egg are immoral because they are intended to cause an abortion. Using such methods falls "within the sin of abortion," and when there is certainty that an abortion has taken place there are serious canon law penalties.

- Human cloning, whether for producing embryonic stem cells or to obtain the birth of a genetically predetermined baby, is immoral.

- Techniques for assisting fertility are morally permissible if they respect the right to life of every human being and respect procreation as a result of the conjugal act in marriage.

- In vitro fertilization and the deliberate destruction of embryos are morally unacceptable.

- The freezing of embryos

or of human eggs, commonly done in assisted fertility treatment, is also morally illicit.

- The thousands of unused, frozen human embryos are in a sense "orphans." The proposal for "prenatal adoption" that would allow frozen embryos to be born, although well intended, would itself be subject to a number of problems.

- Genetic therapy that aims to correct genetic defects on a subject's nonreproductive cells, limiting the effect to a single person, is morally acceptable.

- Therapy that makes genetic modifications aimed at transmitting the effects to the subject's offspring is morally illicit, because of potential harm to the offspring.

- Pre-implantation diagnosis, used in artificial fertilization and leading to the destruction of embryos suspected of defects, represents a "eugenic mentality" and is morally unacceptable.



# Viewpoints

## God reveals love for us in his infant son, Jesus Christ, at Christmas

By Lucas Pollice

**“F**or the Son of God became man so that man could become like God.” These powerful words of St. Athanasius reveal the reality of the Incarnation of Christ and the truth of the Christmas event. Christ’s Incarnation and entrance into our humanity reveals a divine love that is beyond our imagination. God who so loved us, became one of us in all ways but sin, so that we can once again know and experience the love of the Father and also come to know our great dignity and worth in the eyes of our Creator.

### JESUS’ BIRTH CHANGED HUMAN HISTORY

The birth of the tiny infant in Bethlehem over 2,000 years ago is the most extraordinary and defining moment in human history. With the birth of the Christ-Child, the human family and the human experience would never again be the same. For on that cold and peaceful night, God and humanity are once again forever joined in an inseparable union of the human and divine in the person of Jesus Christ.

To gaze into the eyes of the holy Infant is to gaze into the eyes of our loving Father, whose unconditional love was pledged to us in creation, offered over and over to us in the covenants of old, and is now permanently and fully revealed to us through Christ.

For in the Incarnation, Jesus once again fully reveals God to man; he is the complete and total revelation of the Father and is the revelation and restoration to man of that great divine love that created him, and that merciful divine love that has set out to redeem all of humanity from slavery to sin and brings all men back into communion with God.

*To gaze into the eyes of the holy Infant is to gaze into the eyes of our loving Father, whose unconditional love was pledged to us in creation, offered over and over to us in the covenants of old, and is now permanently and fully revealed to us through Christ.*

Pope John Paul II speaks of this “divine dimension” of the Incarnation and what Jesus as the Son of God comes to reveal about the Father and his love:

*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.” Above all, love is greater than sin, than weakness, than the “futility of creation;” it is stronger than death; it is a love always ready to raise up and forgive, always ready to go to meet the prodigal son, always looking for “the revealing of the sons of God,” who are called to the glory that is to be revealed.” 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.*

— *Encyclical Letter The Redeemer of Man*, 9

*\*Emphasis Added*

### GOD FULLY REVEALS MAN TO HIMSELF

It is also through this union of God and man in the person of Jesus Christ where God fully reveals man to himself. Through the Incarnation, Christ enters human history as the one and unique man who is not only the perfect reflection of the Father, but also shows each and every person his or her dignity and destiny as a son or daughter of God.

God’s love and mercy for us is so great and profound that He clothes Himself with our humanity and all that it entails in order to redeem and restore our human nature. Jesus reveals to man his divine likeness that had been disfigured by sin. He is “the Way, the Truth, and the Life” who communicates to us through his words and deeds the fullness of life for which man was created and to which he is called.

As the Second Vatican Council states:

*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 (Romans 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” (Colossians 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.*

— *Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, 22

*\*Emphasis Added*

### CHRIST IS FULLY HUMAN

Therefore, through the Incarnation, Christ was fully human, and through his humanity united himself with each and every person in all times, places, cultures, and circumstances. By fully assuming our human nature and living a truly human life, Jesus redeems and restores every aspect of human nature and existence.

The Incarnation of Christ first revealed at the Annunciation and seen in its fullness at Christmas, reveals the incredible gift and dignity of each human being at every stage of existence. For Christ redeemed the human family from the first moment of conception to the last moments of death.

Christ, the Son of God made man, reveals once again the image and likeness in which we are all created and the profound amazement of God toward every person.

This is the Good News of Christmas:

we are no longer lost to sin, but are now forever joined to Christ who comes to heal and restore our humanity! This is the “human dimension” of the mystery of the Incarnation.

As John Paul II powerfully states:

*This, as has already been said, is why Christ the Redeemer “fully reveals man to himself.” If we may use the expression, this is the human dimension of the mystery of the Redemption. In this dimension man finds again the greatness, dignity and value that belong to his humanity... The man who wishes to understand himself thoroughly—and not just in accordance with immediate, partial, often superficial, and even illusory standards and measures of his being—he must with his unrest, uncertainty and even his weakness and sinfulness, with his life and death, draw near to Christ. He must, so to speak, enter into him with all his own self, he must “appropriate” and assimilate the whole of the reality of the Incarnation and Redemption in order to find himself. If this profound process takes place within him, he then bears fruit not only of adoration of God but also of deep wonder at himself. How precious must man be in the eyes of the Creator, if he “gained so great a Redeemer,” and if God “gave his only Son” in order that man “should not perish but have eternal life.”*

— *The Redeemer of Man*, 10

Therefore, as we once again celebrate the season of Christmas, may we contemplate anew the great love of God revealed in the holy face of the Infant born that night in Bethlehem and never cease to be amazed not only by God’s great love for us, but by the gift and dignity of every person who bears within them the image and likeness of God. May we also continue to work tirelessly as people of faith, hope, and love, to uphold and defend from the moment of conception to natural death the gift and dignity of every human being who has indeed been joined to Christ through the great mystery of the Incarnation. Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year!



Lucas Pollice is director of Catechesis and Adult Faith Formation and RCIA for the diocese. Lucas holds a degree in theology from the Franciscan University of Steubenville and has a master’s degree in theological studies from the Institute for Pastoral Theology of Ave Maria University. He is an adjunct professor of theology with the Cardinal Newman Institute in Fort Worth. Lucas and his wife, Mary, have five children, Cecilia, Nicholas, Timothy, Christian, and Julia.



# Time to Stand Up for life

By Richard M. Doerflinger

At their November 2008 general meeting, the Catholic bishops of the United States congratulated our new President-elect and urged Americans to unite in solidarity at a time of economic crisis, reminding us that “we are our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers.”

They also expressed grave concern over a looming pro-abortion agenda that could divide our nation as never before.

At the core of that agenda is a radical proposal called the “Freedom of Choice Act” (FOCA). Despite its name, FOCA would deprive Americans of their freedom to enact almost any restraint on abortion at any stage of pregnancy. It would overturn hundreds of current laws on conscience rights, informed consent, limits on tax-funded abortion, and parental involvement in minors’ abortion decisions. President-elect Obama has vowed (and recently reaffirmed) that he looks forward to signing it into law.

The bishops said with one voice that they will mobilize the Catholic community to oppose this agenda. Catholics — whether they voted against Mr. Obama because of his abortion stance, or voted for him despite that stance — can unite in a massive grassroots campaign against FOCA, urging Congress to retain all existing federal laws that prevent government funding and promotion of abortion.

Some may see this as useless, because both chambers of Congress now have pro-abortion majorities. But the same was true in 1993, when Bill Clinton became president. An earlier version of FOCA was steadily moving forward in Congress, when millions of postcards

In this campaign Catholics will be fighting a specific bill, [FOCA] and the overall agenda that it embodies — that of knocking down the modest laws that have reduced abortions, and prevented outright government subsidies and mandates for abortion, for 35 years.

signed by Catholic parishioners landed on Capitol Hill and began convincing members to back off from this radical pro-abortion agenda. FOCA became stalled as members debated whether they really wanted to overturn all longstanding and popular laws placing any limit on abortion. The 1994 election then brought another change in Congress, and the threat was averted for years to come. This can happen again.

Ironically, some may think the opposite — that there is no need for a campaign, because FOCA (and perhaps the pro-abortion agenda generally) will be on the back burner for months or years while the economy and health care dominate congressional debate. That, too, would be a mistake. FOCA as a single bill may not come up right away. But extending the appropriations bills that fund all federal programs will be one of Congress’ first duties in January, and new funding bills covering the next fiscal year will be written in early spring. Many current laws on taxpayer funding, conscience rights, and other issues exist only as provisions in these bills, and could be eliminated with the stroke of a committee chairman’s

pen — paving the way for the more wholesale assault of FOCA, if pro-life Americans do not voice their opposition early and clearly.

In this campaign Catholics will be fighting a specific bill, and the overall agenda that it embodies — that of knocking down the modest laws that have reduced abortions, and prevented outright government subsidies and mandates for abortion, for 35 years. These laws must not be swept away all at once, or one at a time. We will urge Congress not to start down this destructive path, but to serve the life, health and prosperity of all Americans, beginning with the most vulnerable. This goal could be achieved if millions of Catholics would take a minute to sign a postcard to their elected representatives.



Richard Doerflinger is Associate Director of the Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Go to [www.usccb.org/prolife](http://www.usccb.org/prolife) to learn more about the bishops’ pro-life activities.



Does anyone  
know  
where  
I can find  
a tacky

## Christmas Sweater?

By Kathy Cribari Hamer

The invitation said we were having a holiday party, which I knew, because it was happening at my house. What I hadn’t known was the dress code my students had established for the annual event.

“Wear tacky Christmas sweaters,” the invitation read. “There will be a prize.”

I smiled, naively wondering where I would get such attire, especially of prize-winning caliber.

“Where can I find a tacky Christmas sweater?” I asked my daughter Julie, the family’s fashion czar. “Let me think,” she said, and before taking a second breath, added, “Your closet?”

“Which do you think is tacky?” I asked her. “Is it the one covered in snowflakes of pearls, or the one with ice-skating bears?” I also have a tuxedo shirt adorned with a huge little drummer boy (a yuletide oxymoron) and rhinestone buttons. I didn’t count the shirt as a possibility, because it isn’t knit, and really, who is jaded enough to refer to any drummer boy, huge or little, as “tacky” and still sleep nights?

It turns out I have a generous collection of what my children call “teacher sweaters” and vests for every holiday, from Presidents’ Day to the first day of winter. For Independence Day I usually wear earrings shaped like dangling flags with beaded poles.

Christmas sweaters are an integral part of the season, and when I was searching for my party clothes, I had mixed pleasure in finding something that would be prize-winningly tacky. I actually like all my sweaters, and find it offensive, somehow, that my students go to junk shops to buy clothing I consider treasure-wear.

Holiday sweaters are a decoration, children. We bring them out at Christmas. That’s how we like it.

This fall, I have had the privilege of viewing decorative artwork in two different ways, neither of them tacky.

One was an 18th century *presepe*, or *crèche*, from Italy; the other, much simpler, came from Smithville, Texas, where a small parish’s opaque windows were the inspiration for a series of sacred paintings less than four years old.

The tradition of the *presepe* is said to have begun at a 13th-century Christmas Eve Mass, when St. Francis of Assisi staged a live nativity scene in a cave near Greccio; the art form flourished in the 18th century, in Naples,

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# The Astounding Christmas Message

## brought by unexpected visitors

By David Gibson  
Catholic News Service

**H**ow do you think Mary and Joseph felt when they noticed several breathlessly excited shepherds arriving from the countryside to join them at the manger in Bethlehem where they were tending the newborn Jesus?

A new baby's family can be so busy and exhausted! The time right after a birth isn't the easiest of times to extend a heartfelt welcome to unexpected guests. Caring for their new child may be about all a family can manage.

Do you suppose Mary and Joseph smiled warmly at the shepherds and invited them to linger a little longer at the manger than they had planned? Did Mary and Joseph listen attentively to all that these astonished shepherds reported to them?

Remember, an angel had spoken to the shepherds; initially this terrified them. The angel calmed them, however, and then conveyed some "news of great joy" meant to be shared with everyone about a newborn child in Bethlehem. As if that wasn't enough, "a great throng" of very vocal heavenly hosts joined the angel at that point.

The shepherds had a lot to tell! I'll bet their attempts to put into words all that had happened back in the fields took more than a few minutes.

What's more, at the manger the shepherds somehow recognized that what the angel told them about this newborn child was true. They surely wouldn't have rushed away.

We are told that Mary treasured and pondered what the shepherds said. Was the time that she, Joseph, and the shepherds spent together what people today call "quality time"? Probably the shepherds felt quite welcome.

I wonder how much quality time I accord to the unexpected "visitors" and "guests" encountered during the comings and goings of my daily routines. To tell the truth, I frequently stumble and rush through the day, hoping against hope to complete my to-do lists without interruption.

The unexpected visitors and guests of my daily life are not necessarily people who arrive at my doorstep — like the shepherds. I'm talking about:

— The unexpected phone call from a "visitor" who genuinely requires my attention.

— The friend or acquaintance who has



Fieldworkers pay homage to the newborn Christ in "Adoration of the Shepherds," by Renaissance Italian painter Giovanni Francesco Guerrieri. (CNS photo/courtesy of Art Resource and Alinari)

*Imagine a very busy Mary and Joseph ignoring or slighting the shepherds when they presented themselves in Bethlehem.*

*Christmas would have gotten a much different start!*

lost a job or suffered an illness and who crosses my path as I'm hurrying to an appointment.

— The person encountered by chance who deserves a word of encouragement and hope or of congratulations.

The challenge as the day races along is to slow down enough so that I don't run right past these unexpected "visitors."

Pope Benedict XVI thinks Christians should reflect on the difficulty they have making time for others. He asks: "Do we have time for our neighbor who is in need of a word from us ... or in need of my affection? For the sufferer in need of help? For the fugitive or refugee seeking asylum? Do we have time and space for God?" (*Midnight Mass, Christmas 2007*).

When people are preoccupied with their own lives, they think they need their time for their own purposes, Pope Benedict challenged his listeners.

Time is a problem. We have no time. Or, our time is not under our control.

If this frustrates us sufficiently, we may view ourselves as victims of time pressure,

always pushed by the clock's spinning hands. Possibly we'll begin to search for a big solution to our problem, inquiring how we might create the large pockets of time needed for others, for God, and our own well-being.

I admire people who insert large blocks of time into their existence through major lifestyle and career changes. For me, though, solving the problem of time always boils down to finding better ways to approach the smaller blocks of time — the moments of the day, like the person who calls who genuinely needs my attention, the acquaintance who crosses my path as I'm rushing to an appointment.

These moments are the times when, as Pope Benedict said, someone needs a word from me, or affection, or help.

How do preoccupied people re-center their attention on others — for a moment? Are there ways to convey hope to someone or express true concern in a few moments?

One friend consistently makes the most of a moment by saying convincingly, "It's always so good to see you!"

It works. Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta realized that a warm smile is a gift; if people feel they have nothing to offer another person at the moment, she thought they should give their smile.

Imagine a very busy Mary and Joseph ignoring or slighting the shepherds when they presented themselves in Bethlehem. Christmas would have gotten a much different start!

So many people want a chance at Christmas to set time apart for others — for those closest to them, for friends they don't see often enough, for people who in one way or another are poor. But finding the time is a problem.

Time also is a challenge, however. And repossessing some of our time is all of the essence.

*David Gibson served on the Catholic News Service editorial staff for 37 years. As editor for Special Projects, he oversaw the editing of Faith Alive!, CNS columns, and was editor of ORIGINS, the CNS documentary news service.*



# St. Nicholas Eve gifts continue to 'fill a need'

By Sharon K. Perkins  
North Texas Catholic

When I was a little girl, my mother encouraged me to leave an empty pair of shoes next to my bed on the evening of December 5, so that St. Nicholas could fill them with candy overnight. In my child's way of thinking, St. Nicholas Eve was an exciting foretaste of Christmas treats to come, a winter version of the Easter bunny or the tooth fairy. As I grew older and our observance of the feast became more sporadic, it dawned on me that none of my peers celebrated St. Nicholas Eve — it was one of those unique traditions that came with being a Catholic of Czech heritage.

For many Eastern European Catholics, St. Nicholas Day was historically the most popular of the Advent holidays and the only one still celebrated despite decades of religious suppression and a more recently creeping consumerism. The standard narrative told how the good bishop Svaty Mikuláš would descend from heaven on a golden cord, accompanied by a threatening, chain-rattling devil (*Cert*) and a protective, record-keeping angel (*Andel*). The saint would quiz children about their prayers or



Filling children's shoes with small gifts or treats on St. Nicholas Eve is part of Eastern European tradition.

their behavior and reward them with some small treat (the rare penalty was coal or old potatoes). To this day, Czech villages erupt in revelry on December 5, as bands of costumed bishops, angels, and devils roam the streets.

As an adult, I resolved to keep the custom alive with our own three children, and my husband supported it with gusto, filling even my shoes with goodies. Maybe my

decision sprang from the desire to preserve some part of my ethnic heritage, despite the poignant loss of my ability to speak the language; perhaps it was a stubborn Catholic mom's attempt to venerate the saint behind the iconic Santa Claus of popular culture; or just maybe, it bespoke a deep longing to give the kinds of gifts seldom associated with Christmas morning — things like religious coloring books and movies, or Advent calendars, or holy cards (along with the candy, of course!) — that symbolized the gift of faith that we wanted to entrust to them.

Whatever the motive, I started filling shoes on December 5, 1989, and I haven't stopped since, even the year we were far from home in a hotel room, or the time the date sneaked up on me and I had to make a midnight run to the store, or just this past feast day, when I shipped boxes of treats to two different universities in another state. Even as I was tucking the Advent calendars and the "Keep Christ in Christmas" car magnet and the "Jesus is the reason for the season" lapel pins into the box with the marshmallow Christmas trees (including a prayer card for the non-Catholic boyfriend), I second-guessed myself with some trepidation. Were my young adult children getting too sophisticated for St. Nicholas? And

more importantly: how would they react to my thinly-veiled attempts at evangelism?

I got my answer when my eldest called on December 6, anxiously wondering if I could track her package because it hadn't arrived yet, and she had been looking forward to it for a whole month and "I want to do this with my own children someday!" And 24 hours later, when she texted me to say that she had invited her boyfriend to tag along with her to Sunday Mass. And again, when my son called, and I assured him of my long-distance prayers for him during final exams, and in the long, heartfelt hug I received from my youngest daughter.

They say that Christmas is a children's holiday. But, truth be told, we're all children, waiting expectantly for Christ to fill our hearts anew just as bountifully as St. Nicholas fills empty shoes. And fill them he does.

*Sharon K. Perkins, currently a parish DRE and a doctoral student in theology at the University of Dayton, lives in Ohio with her husband, Mike, and two of their three kids. The Perkins family were members of St. Rita Parish on the East Side of Fort Worth for 20 years, and Sharon coordinated the first diocesan Synod.*

# Meditating on photos from God's Creation album

By Jeff Hedglen  
North Texas Catholic

This Advent I experienced something new and amazing. Part of my daily meditation was photographs taken by the Hubble Telescope. Each day a Web site would reveal a different image, each one more breathtaking than the last. Infused with color and the majesty of the Creator, these images simultaneously evoked wonder at worlds unknown and awe at galaxies beyond our own.

One morning while meditating on a photo of a billowing tower of cold gas and dust about 90 trillion kilometers tall and a mere 7 thousand light years away, I found myself thinking about *Genesis 1:1*. "In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless wasteland, and darkness covered the abyss." This Scripture came alive in that photo. It was like God took a photo of the scene in the heavens just before he went to work.

Verse three of *Genesis* is where the action of creation really begins. In fact it is the first two words of that verse that introduce us to the Son of God. The text says: "God said..." This is a seemingly innocent start to that famous line "let there be light," but we should not skip over those two very important words. For when God "said" He not only spoke a word, he invoked The Word.

As my meditation continued each day, I saw spinning solar systems and unorganized clusters of stars, a veritable photo album of the creation story, and I realized the writers of *Genesis* got more right than



they could have imagined. The Word of God brought order out of the chaos. Slowly, with each progressive word the formless wasteland began to take shape. Moment by moment, light year by light year, until eventually God breathed his life into humanity and order was established.

As the story goes, this beautifully created order lasted one and a half chapters, for in *Genesis 3* our sin brought chaos roaring back into the world, and we began to spin out of control again. This spinning wasteland of sin and death continued on its uneasy course until we heard the fateful words again: In the beginning... this time from John's Gospel.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be" (*John 1:1-3*).

*'The Word of God brought order out of the chaos.'*

Hubble telescope looks at Monocerotis: Public Domain. Credit: NASA, ESA, and The Hubble Heritage Team (STScI/AURA)

This Word is not a collection of consonants and vowels found in a dictionary. Rather it is a person, Jesus the Son of God, who from the moment of creation has been bringing order out of chaos.

Later in the first Chapter of John we hear that this Word has "become flesh and made his dwelling among us," literally, he pitched a tent among us. No longer was God elusive, vengeful, and unseen. God is now and forever tangible.

The ancient nomadic people only pitched a tent if they were done wandering. Thus when God became man, He did so for good. Though Jesus did ascend to heaven, He remains with us today in the tabernacle, a word that comes from the Latin meaning tent.

Christmas is a time for celebrating God becoming human. It is a time to revel in the Christchild born to bring peace. It is

a time that brings family together and joy to homes. It is also a time that reminds us that our life, that is so often inundated with chaos, can find order in the Word made flesh.

Grade school science reveals to us a solar system with a central sun that has planets neatly organized in controlled orbits. As we manipulate styrofoam balls and coat hangers to mimic this scene, the chaos that birthed our home never even enters our mind. Yet the God who firmly placed earth in just the right place to sustain life, calls out to us this Christmas with just as much gravity.

He has ordered our personal universe with his Son at the center. When we are oriented toward Him, our chaos slows. Just like in *Genesis*, each encounter with the Word brings more and more order. Temptation continues to loom just like it always has, but Christmas is a time to once again firmly affix Jesus at the center of our existence.

So as the tree glows in the dark of the house, and the shiny packages mingle with evergreen branches, and the wonder of the season still flickers amidst the commercialized x-mas, take a moment to look, with telescopic faith, into your heart and see the Word made flesh pitching his tent and peace being restored.

*Jeff Hedglen, a columnist for the NORTH TEXAS CATHOLIC, is youth minister at St. Bartholomew Parish in Southwest Fort Worth and chief organizer of Camp Fort Worth. He and his wife Monika, are active parishioners at St. Bartholomew's.*



# The True Meaning of Christmas Giving

By Margo MacArthur  
Catholic News Service

It is hard to imagine the world of the first century when the heavy foot of Roman imperialism strode through a vast empire of conquered people. In this brutal time under the tyranny imposed by that rule on the beleaguered little nation of Israel, the first Christmas materialized as if by magic.

Said Pope Benedict XVI in his 2007 Christmas homily, in this setting "God (stepped) out of his concealment" to connect with mankind and promise salvation in the form of his son.

It is an old story still relevant today, one that tells us that God's good news is often shut out; there is no room in the inn, and Christ's entry into the world is ignored, except by the wise men, the animals, and their shepherd.

So too, our modern lives are often very busy, too full of worry and self-involvement to allow us more than a passing glimpse of the miraculous birth, let alone each other. That is, unless we make a conscious deci-

*There are countless ways we Christians can contribute to good in the world by reaching out to others. A smile, a gesture that relieves another's loneliness and lifts a heavy heart, cost nothing except the recognition that another human being is helped.*

sion to make the time to reach out and connect with our neighbors, identifying the way we can best serve.

Many other Christians have prepared the way for us. A few are profiled here:

- Fred F. has regularly served lunch and

dinner at his local soup kitchen whenever possible, modeling the behavior for his six children, now grown.

- Pam M. is naturally vivacious and a mover and doer. She recently spearheaded an entire neighborhood's response to the needs of a temporarily disabled member. If you ask Pam where she finds the time with a full-time job, a spouse, and two young children, she'll say it's a central part of her faith. But those around her know that Pam loves her neighbors best through cooking and encouraging others to do the same.

- Lauren M., in her early 20s, promised a former classmate who is in drug rehabilitation: "When you leave there and go home, I will be your listening ear and help you stay positive and move your life in a good direction." Since Lauren works more than 30 hours a week and goes to college full time, her love for her friend will require the sacrifice of time; yet she did not hesitate to offer help when it was needed.

- At 23 Chris W. is the youngest in his family, and he can't remember what age he was when he joined his parents, brother

and sister in serving Christmas dinner to those without a dinner table of their own. He thinks he was perhaps 12. He does know, however, that he will continue the tradition for years to come and that he will share it with a family of his own.

- Dottie B., who lives alone in a senior citizen building, says she quite simply enjoys doing a good turn every time she has the opportunity. "People today don't understand that. I get a kick out of their realization that extending small kindnesses to those around me is my way of sharing my faith," she said.

There are countless ways we Christians can contribute to good in the world by reaching out to others. A smile, a gesture that relieves another's loneliness and lifts a heavy heart, cost nothing except the recognition that another human being is helped. As Pope Benedict reminds us, "Heaven does not belong to the geography of space, but to the geography of the heart."

Margo MacArthur is a freelance writer in Andover, New Jersey.

## At last, a comfortable cup of Christmas tea!

By Father Stan Konieczny  
Catholic News Service

One holiday surprise came early to recently ordained Father Steve, who was spending his first Christmas as a priest at St. Joseph Parish. It was no treat, either, for Father Steve to discover that the rectory was not immune to the hustle and bustle of the Christmas rush.

Father Steve had hoped for calm and serenity that would lend itself to prayer and reflection on the mystery of Christmas. Instead, he found himself up to his eyebrows in all sorts of preparations for the celebration of Christ's birth.

Despite the many area penance services, people still rang the doorbell looking for a confessor. Shut-ins had to be visited. Church decoration decisions and choices had to be made. Organizations had to be matched with families in need for holiday outreach. Every class in the grade school had some program or project to delight the priest. And there was an unending list of evening dinners and parties with parish groups.

All of this was compounded by the classic seminary joke that was no joke. Every day there was at least one telephone call asking, "Father, what time is your Christmas Eve Midnight Mass?"

"Surprise, surprise, there is little Christmas serenity around here," Father Steve muttered in the rectory kitchen as he waited for a mug of tea to steep. "I just wish I had a minute of peace and quiet, just enough to finish a cup of tea."

He sighed as he thought back to his grade school days when the Mercy Sisters who taught him spoke of their foundress, Catherine McAuley, and her instructions to have "a comfortable cup of tea" ready for anyone who came seeking help.

Half way through musings over his

favorite mug of Earl Grey, the telephone rang. It was Miss Emily. Three times she turned down Father's inquiries about bringing her Communion for Christmas. She always insisted that she could get to Mass on her own. Now she insisted the weather was bad and Father had better come now, before her holiday guests arrived.

"No serenity, no comfortable cup of tea for me," Steve thought as the contents of half a mug poured down the drain.

In 15 minutes, Father Steve arrived at the apartment and on the first ring, the door was opened by Miss Emily, prim and proper as ever. Those two qualities frankly unnerved the young priest.

Inside the museum-like living room, Father Steve proclaimed the good news of Christmas, sang a carol, and distributed Eucharist. After the prayers and some small talk, the priest started to leave.

Emily, however, ordered him to wait as she hobbled off through a darkened doorway.



*"Father Steve muttered in the rectory kitchen as he waited for a mug of tea to steep. 'I just wish I had a minute of peace and quiet, just enough to finish a cup of tea.'"*

After a 10-minute eternity for Father Steve, Miss Emily came out with a large tray that held a complete tea service, garnished with warm zucchini bread.

"You look chilled to the bone, Father," Miss Emily chided. "Now you sit there, young man, and drink all of this herbal tea. Then I'll get you another. And eat this zucchini bread that my cousin made. It's good for you. And none of your nonsense about having too much to do. Nobody is too busy for a comfortable cup of Christmas tea. I won't hear of it."

As Miss Emily shuffled back into the kitchen, Father Steve settled into an overstuffed chair and enjoyed a real holiday surprise: a comfortable cup of Christmas tea, which melted away the hustle and bustle of the holidays.

Father Stan Konieczny is an associate pastor at St. Augustine of Canterbury Church in Belleville, Illinois and a long-time contributor to Faith Alive's Christmas and Easter packages.

### Discussion Point:

What do you do during the Christmas season to reach out to others?

Selected Responses From Readers:

Our CCD chooses a service to do. ... One year it was baby bundles, filling shoe boxes with baby supplies for impoverished countries; last year ... kids brought in games and activity books for (giving to kids from) their age group ... at local shelters."

— Mary Ellen Lane  
Morrisville, Pennsylvania

Our family adopts a family, and we provide for them so they can have a love-filled Christmas morning.

— Janet Wrabel,  
Fairfield, Connecticut

I take people to church who don't have transportation — usually the elderly or handicapped. I visit the homebound all year, but bring them a gift at Christmas.

— Marga Bohm  
Akron, Ohio

We try to include everyone in our holiday meal, such as relatives who are not well-off. We make sure no one is alone. We also help our five kids come home for holidays, which may mean subsidizing tickets.

— Suzanne Harmon  
Bothell, Washington



## Pope calls for reflection on ecumenism's past to identify way forward in search for Christian unity

By Cindy Wooden  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Now is the time for a "broad, precise, and detailed" reflection on what the ecumenical movement has achieved, where it has stalled and what is needed to move the search for Christian unity forward, Pope Benedict XVI said.

"One could say that we find ourselves 'on the way,' at an intermediate stage, where it appears useful and opportune to examine objectively the results obtained," the pope said Dec. 12 during a meeting with members of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

The council was holding its plenary meeting at the Vatican, focusing on how ecumenical agreements have been received by the Catholic Church and looking at new possibilities for moving forward.

It included the presentation of what the council called a "harvest project," looking at agreements reached over the past 40 years with the Lutheran World Federation, the World Methodist Council, the Anglican Communion and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

Pope Benedict told the council, "While you have outlined that which, with the help of God, already has been achieved in mu-

*"One could say that we find ourselves 'on the way,' at an intermediate stage, where it appears useful and opportune to examine objectively the results obtained."*

—Pope Benedict XVI

tual understanding and in identifying elements of convergence, you have not avoided identifying with great honesty that which remains to be done."

The pope told council members it was essential to review the past in order to "identify new paths to follow, trying to overcome together the differences that unfortunately still remain in relations among the disciples of Christ."

Looking particularly at relations with the Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox churches, Pope Benedict said significant steps forward had been made in the theological dialogue and in the "consolidation and growth

of ecclesial fraternity."

"It is consoling to note how a sincere spirit of friendship between Catholics and Orthodox has been growing in these years," he said.

Cardinal Walter Kasper, president of the Christian unity council, told the pope that, while council members had identified "many good fruits" produced by the ecumenical dialogues, "we cannot close our eyes to the current situation, to new difficulties and challenges."

"We have identified new problems and looked for ways to face them," the 75-year-old cardinal said.

"We also are convinced that recent difficulties cannot be a motive for slowing down or abandoning our commitment; rather, they must be a stimulus for reinforcing and intensifying it and for seeking new ways and methods to bring it to completion," he said.

Without mentioning any specific ecumenical difficulties, such as the differences with the Anglican Communion over homosexuality and over the ordination of women bishops, Cardinal Kasper said one of the chief barriers to Christian unity is differences in the way Christians interpret the word of God and the weight they give to Christian tradition.

## South African parish increases food aid as Zimbabweans flee cholera

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (CNS) — A Catholic parish on the South African border with Zimbabwe has been increasing its food supply to respond to the escalating number of Zimbabwean refugees fleeing a cholera outbreak.

The church in Musina, South Africa, has donated 250-300 food parcels daily since June as part of its response to the flow of refugees into the northern border town, which has gained some notoriety because of the spread of cholera from Zimbabwe, said Missionaries of the Sacred Heart Father Adrian McHugh, who ministers to asylum seekers.

This cross-border movement has grown since June from about 50 a day to 500, said Father McHugh. By Dec. 9, South Africa had reported nearly 500 cholera cases, including seven deaths.

In Musina, refugees were living completely without shelter, with hardly any access to toilets, showers, food and clean water. Some refugees managed to have at least one meal a day thanks to the initiatives of the Catholic parish and the Anglican church, said Father McHugh.

He said many local volunteers had responded to the crisis, which belied the kind of xenophobic attitudes often associated with South Africans. The priest said many people are volunteering despite the great demands on the town's limited resources and economic hardships that

arose from droughts that struck the rural area. He ascribed such values-based attitudes to the abiding influence of the churches in the area.

Father McHugh said the international medical agency Doctors Without Borders set up mobile clinics at the showgrounds in the wake of the cholera outbreak.

He said that from the beginning of the crisis he had seen cooperation among aid agencies, including the Jesuit Refugee Service, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, Lawyers for Human Rights, the local legal advice office and Save the Children.

The local home affairs office, he said, also has operated at the camp to process up to 300 asylum applications a day.

One report said thousands of asylum seekers were "staying on fenced-in showgrounds in Musina as they wait to lodge their asylum claims and are fearful of arrest and deportation if they leave."

About 200-400 refugees are arrested and deported from Musina to Zimbabwe each day, reports said.

Zimbabwe's cholera epidemic is made worse by its economic crisis. Inflation is officially 231 million percent, but prices double every 24 hours. Basic foodstuffs are running out, and the flow of refugees has spread the cholera to Mozambique, Botswana and Zambia, in addition to South Africa.

## New visa rules for religious workers add steps, delays, paperwork; response to fraud hampers the innocent

By Patricia Zapor  
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — New federal regulations for visas will slow the process of bringing in religious workers from other countries, while adding to the costs and paperwork, according to an attorney for Catholic Legal Immigration Network Inc.

The regulations took effect immediately when they were issued Nov. 26, said Anne Marie Gibbons, director for religious immigration and protection for the agency, known as CLINIC.

The lack of notice effectively trapped some church personnel outside the United States, she explained. She said she knows of several immigrants who left over the long Thanksgiving weekend for what they expected would be routine

trips, during which they had appointments to renew their visas at U.S. consulates or embassies in their home countries.

The regulations now require applicants for religious worker visas to first get approval from the office of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, an extra step that Gibbons said will add months to the process of being admitted to work in the U.S.

With the requirement of that first step, two Canadian priests who work in Washington will find their visits home at Thanksgiving will extend months longer than they anticipated, Gibbons said. They can't return to their jobs until their U.S. employer applies on their behalf and their applications are approved by Citizenship and Immigration Services, she explained.

The wait for those petitions could be up to nine months.

Other religious workers likely were affected similarly, she said.

For instance, a priest from India who was scheduled to begin work in the U.S. within a few weeks had an appointment scheduled to get his visa in December, Gibbons said. He will now have to rearrange his plans while Citizenship and Immigration Services considers his petition. After that he'll have to get another appointment with the consulate and redo his travel plans some months from now, she said.

Between 10,000 and 11,000 religious workers are admitted with the visas annually.

Most of the other changes in the religious worker visa system are less of an obstacle,

according to Gibbons. Visas will now be issued for 30 months, with a 30-month renewal possible. Previously they were issued for an initial three years with a two-year renewal option.

Other provisions define religious denominations, requirements for the religious workers' compensation and standards for who is eligible for the visas. Employers now have to file "a lot of additional attestations" with applications, Gibbons said. They now must provide such information as how many other employees there are at the institution, what their work entails and what other immigrants have used the religious worker visas.

The changes in the program were drafted over the last few years in response to congressional concerns about fraudulent

use of religious worker visas.

A fraud assessment of the program released by Citizenship and Immigration Services in 2006 found fraud in 33 percent of the 220 applications it reviewed. Among examples it cited were nonexistent addresses for employers or jobs that were not the same as those cited in the applications.

Gibbons said there has been no comparison provided by Citizenship and Immigration Services of rates of fraud in other categories of visas, so it's unclear whether the religious worker applications actually have a higher rate of problems.

She said she's now advising dioceses and other religious institutions that use CLINIC's help to apply for religious worker visas to "plan a year ahead."



INTERNATIONAL  
NEWSBRIEFS**Pope's busy year highlights three themes: St. Paul, Bible, U.S. trip**

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — For Pope Benedict XVI, 2008 was the year of St. Paul, the year of the Bible and the year of the United States. Amid the hundreds of papal meetings and events, those three themes stood out in special focus as 2008 drew to a close. In June, the pope opened a jubilee year to celebrate the 2,000th anniversary of the birth of St. Paul. Accompanied by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople and other representatives of Orthodox and Anglican churches, he said the apostle was a model of missionary courage for people struggling against religious indifference in modern society. In October, the pope presided over a three-week Synod of Bishops on the Word of God that explored ways to bring Catholics closer to the Bible and promote better use of Scripture in liturgy and catechesis. In April, Pope Benedict made his first papal visit to the United States, spending six days in Washington and New York and addressing the U.N. General Assembly.

**Ordinations cap Shanghai's celebration of 400 years of evangelization**

SHANGHAI, China (CNS) — The Diocese of Shanghai capped its nine-month celebration of the 400th anniversary of Catholicism's arrival with the ordination of two priests. Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Xing Wenzhi of Shanghai ordained Fathers Joseph Li Gangyao and Joseph Xu Ruhao Dec. 6 at St. Ignatius Cathedral, reported the Asian church news agency UCA News. About 2,000 Catholics, including relatives of the new priests, attended the ordination Mass, which 87 priests from Shanghai and neighboring dioceses concelebrated. With the ordination of Father Li, the Shanghai Diocese now has 75 diocesan priests. Father Xu was ordained for the Anhui Diocese. Bishop Xing told the congregation that although the anniversary celebrations have come to a close, "our mission does not end today, but rather it marks a new impetus for us to spread the Gospel to those who have never heard of it." Noting that the universal church is now in the midst of celebrating the Pauline year, Bishop Xing urged congregation members to model themselves after St. Paul in evangelizing zeal.

**Catholic officials, organizations launch campaign for climate change**

WARSAW, Poland (CNS) — Catholic Church officials from 38 countries have launched a campaign with more than 170 Catholic organizations to persuade the United Nations to meet the "moral obligation" of tackling climate change. "Climate change is a reality today affecting the lives and livelihoods of millions in developing countries by exacerbating storms, droughts, and natural disasters," said an appeal signed by 92 bishops, archbishops, and cardinals. "As a matter of equity and responsibility, those who have created the problem must pay for the solution. Economically developed nations have a moral obligation to tackle climate change because of their disproportionate consumption of natural resources," it said. The climate campaign and related appeal were launched by Caritas Internationalis, which represents 162 national Caritas church charities, and CIDSE, a Belgian-based alliance of 16 Catholic development agencies. The campaign was introduced at a Dec. 7 Mass at the cathedral in Poznan, Poland. Government representatives from around the world were meeting in Poznan Dec. 1-12 for the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change.

**Wife's love gave Austrian martyr strength, says cardinal Schonborn**

By Cindy Wooden  
Catholic News Service

ROME — Blessed Franz Jagerstatter, an Austrian farmer beheaded for refusing to serve in the Nazi army, had the strength to follow his conscience because of his wife Franziska, said Austrian Cardinal Christoph Schonborn of Vienna.

With the 95-year-old widow and the couple's three daughters in the front row, Cardinal Schonborn participated in the Dec. 9 presentation of a new biography in Italian, *Christ or Hitler? The Life of Blessed Franz Jagerstatter*.

The book launch was held in Rome's St. Bartholomew Church, which Pope John Paul II designated as a shrine to martyrs of the 20th century. The original handwritten copy of Blessed Jagerstatter's "spiritual testament" is on a side altar in the church, along with letters and objects owned by other victims of Nazism and communism in Europe and of dictatorships in Latin America, Africa, and Asia.

The Austrian martyr's widow said she did not want to respond to reporters' questions, but she did say her happiest memory was the 1936 honeymoon pilgrimage she and Franz took to Rome.

Her daughter, Maria, said her earliest memory was "the whole family sitting around the table and Mother reading the letter that my father had been beheaded. Everyone cried."



*Franziska Jagerstatter, widow of Franz Jaegerstaetter, attends his beatification at St. Mary's Cathedral in Linz, Austria, Oct. 26, 2007. He was beheaded in 1943 after refusing to perform military service with a weapon. (CNS PHOTO/REUTERS)*

Maria was 4 years old when her father was beheaded by guillotine on Aug. 9, 1943.

"We never felt he abandoned us," she said. Rather they believed he was in heaven and "he protected us."

Her father was beatified in 2007, but he "was always a saint to us. If you read his last letter, you

would know he was," she said.

In the letter, written a few hours before he was executed, Blessed Jagerstatter apologized to his wife and family for the suffering they endured; he promised to watch over them always; and he talked about how Jesus must have suffered knowing that his mother was there watching him die.

Cardinal Schonborn told the audience that he first heard of Blessed Jagerstatter in 1968 when he read the late Gordon Zahn's book, *In Solitary Witness: The Life and Death of Franz Jagerstatter*.

Strangely, he said, almost no one seemed to have heard of the Austrian martyr and his transformation from a superficial Catholicism to a deep faith that forced him to question how one could be "a soldier for Christ" and a soldier in Hitler's army at the same time.

The growth in faith, the cardinal said, was due to the example of his wife. "Franz had the strength to follow his conscience because he was supported by the love of his wife," he said.

Cardinal Schonborn introduced Franziska Jagerstatter and her three daughters to Pope Benedict XVI Dec. 10 at the end of the pope's general audience.

The pope stood to greet the widow and continued to hold her hands as they spoke; then, her daughters came up and gave the pope flowers and other gifts.

**Church opposes criminalizing homosexuality, spokesman says**

By John Thavis  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — A Vatican spokesman said the Catholic Church is clearly against considering homosexuality a crime, but is wary of international declarations that use the issue to promote a political agenda based on sexual orientation.

The spokesman, Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, made the comment Dec. 11 in response to questions at a Vatican press conference.

In early December, a leading Vatican diplomat drew criticism from gay-rights groups when he said the Vatican opposed a proposed U.N. declaration to endorse the universal decriminalization of homosexuality.

The diplomat, Archbishop Celestino Migliore, the Vatican's

apostolic nuncio to the United Nations, said such a declaration might be used to put pressure on or discriminate against countries that do not recognize same-sex marriage.

Father Lombardi, in his latest comments to reporters, said the Vatican was not conducting a battle against the United Nations or weakening its opposition to discrimination against homosexuals, which is clearly stated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

"There is no question that the church is contrary to legislation that criminalizes homosexuality," Father Lombardi said.

The church's position stems from its respect for the rights and dignity of every person, and explicitly excludes "any unjust discrimination on the basis of homosexuality," Father Lom-

bardi said.

The spokesman noted that Archbishop Migliore's comments were made in response to a question about a draft declaration that had yet to be presented at the United Nations or in any public forum.

He said Archbishop Migliore's point was that it's one thing to argue against discrimination and criminalization regarding homosexuality, but another to contend that anyone who makes a distinction based on sexual orientation is considered an adversary of human rights.

Specifically, Archbishop Migliore expressed the fear that the draft declaration could lead to a situation in which "states that do not recognize same-sex unions as 'marriage' will be pilloried and put under pressure" to do so.



# Church agencies try to help out of work Americans in their search for employment

By Mark Pattison  
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — More Americans are losing jobs, and Catholic agencies are trying their best to tide them over until they find new work.

The United States shed 533,000 jobs in November, the most in any single month in 34 years. The national unemployment rate climbed to 6.7 percent in December — itself a 15-year high — up from 6.5 percent in October.

But 6.7 percent is the average. Many states' unemployment rates are considerably higher. In Michigan, beset by auto-industry woes, it was up to 9.3 percent in October. Joining it was Rhode Island, whose unemployment rate shot up from 5.1 percent in October 2007 to 9.3 percent in October 2008. California, the nation's most populous state, recorded 8.2 percent unemployment this October.

Rounding out the states with the highest unemployment rates were South Carolina, 8 percent; Nevada, 7.6 percent; Alaska, 7.4 percent; Illinois, Ohio, and Oregon, each at 7.3 percent; and Mississippi, 7.2 percent.

Janice Luongo, director of Mary House in Providence, Rhode Island, said many patrons at its soup kitchen and meal center are filled with despair and anxiety caused by unemployment and an inability to pay food, rent, and utility bills.

Some, who are employed full time in low-paying jobs, are frustrated because they cannot put gasoline in their cars or afford to live in better accommodations. "You can tell that they are sliding downhill," Luongo observed.

But now, 25 patrons will get an opportunity to gain valuable life and job training skills through a new initiative called the Thrive Mentoring Program. It will match volunteer mentors' skills with the needs of people who need to learn how to complete job applications, open and balance a checking account, acquire social services, shop at the supermarket, and become strong self-advocates.

Several computers have already been donated to the program. Students from Dominican-run Providence College will teach basic computer skills and show patrons how to use the Internet.

As bad as things are in the Detroit area, the crisis could even worsen. "I, as well as everyone



A worker tightens lug nuts on a tire on the assembly line at a General Motors plant in Lansing, Michigan, Dec. 1. Detroit-area religious leaders convened by Cardinal Adam J. Maida emerged from a Dec. 4 meeting to call on Washington lawmakers to provide federal assistance to stabilize the American automobile industry. (CNS photo/Jim West)

else, am concerned about the tremendous loss of jobs that would come from a Chrysler-GM merger. The whole church of Detroit would be hurt," said Father Duane Novelly, pastor of St. Matthew Parish in Detroit.

Collections are down about 10 percent from a year ago at Our Lady of Refuge Parish in suburban Orchard Lake, Michigan, according to pastor Father Gerald McEnhill.

Although situated in an upscale suburb, job losses and home foreclosures have hit people in the parish. "We are seeing requests for assistance significantly up through our St. Vincent de Paul conference, and we try to help," Father McEnhill said.

With unemployment at 10 to 12 percent in several counties in the Diocese of Sacramento, California, and the cost of groceries up 7.2 percent over last year — with the price of milk and eggs alone spiking 25 percent to 40 percent higher — working families are scrambling for financial stability.

Rocio Rocha, case manager at Centro Guadalupe in Sacramento, a program of Catholic Charities, reports "more clients, more phone calls, more people calling with really, really high utility bills and disconnect notices."

"People are losing their jobs," Rocha said. "I have encountered people with five, seven, 10 years at a company laid off because there is a lack of business, or the company is going out of business, or their work hours have been drastically reduced.

"In the past we saw people on welfare or already in some sort of assistance program," she noted. "Now we are seeing more working, middle-class families. People call and say, 'I've never asked for help before, but I have children and I need help.'"

Don Johnston, a retiree and member of Precious Blood Parish on Pawleys Island, South Carolina, about 20 miles south of Myrtle Beach, has had a ministry of helping unemployed parishioners find work. Now, though, rising joblessness prompted parish leaders to ask him to conduct a series of networking seminars, with the first scheduled for Dec. 11.

"Those that are well-networked have a greater opportunity to secure employment and change careers than those who aren't," said Johnston, whose own career had been in job staffing.

During the seminar, there would be details about the region's job markets, word from the unemployed about "roadblocks" to work, and to "learn from the group what it is that they believe ... where they need the help. About 30-45 minutes of this networking meeting will be an opportunity for those who attend to sit down with each other ... talk with each other about what their experiences are, and ask for help," Johnston said.

Though advance registration was small, "we're expecting an enormous number of people," he added. "Once we have this meeting, the word will begin to spread."

## NATIONAL NEWSBRIEFS

### Report lauds Bush's faith-based ventures, seeks reforms from Obama

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The incoming Obama administration is being handed a report that recommends it embrace the outgoing Bush administration's partnerships with faith-based organizations, but with some reforms. The Brookings Institution, in cooperation with Wake Forest University Divinity School's Center for Religion and Public Affairs, released its in-depth report with recommendations for the new administration on future partnerships with faith-based organizations at a Dec. 5 press conference at the National Press Club in Washington. With 16 recommendations, the issue was being studied by Brookings before Democratic Sen. Barack Obama won the Nov. 4 presidential election. Among its many recommendations, the report calls on the Obama administration to: welcome religious organizations to partner with government and increase funding for programs that work; clarify restrictions on direct aid and religious activities; protect the identity of religious providers and improve monitoring of compliance with church-state safeguards; address religion-based decision-making in government-funded jobs; and avoid cronyism and religious patronage by highlighting peer review, evaluation, and accountability.

### First Vietnamese-American in Congress is former Jesuit seminarian

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The first Vietnamese-American member of Congress is a former Jesuit seminarian who served for four years on the National Advisory Council to the U.S. bishops. Anh "Joseph" Quang Cao, a 41-year-old Republican, defeated Democratic Rep. William J. Jefferson in a Dec. 6 runoff election to represent Louisiana's 2nd District. Jefferson had held the seat since 1991, and no Republican has represented the congressional district that includes New Orleans since 1890. Cao, pronounced Gow, was named in January 2003 to a four-year term on the advisory council, a 63-member group of laymen and laywomen, religious men, and women, diocesan priests and bishops that meets twice a year to review documentation and offer recommendations on matters before the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. A member of Mary Queen of Vietnam Parish in New Orleans, Cao told The Associated Press that his run for political office was motivated by his Catholic faith. "It was something that I was called to do, literally, in the religion sense," he said.

### Catholic Charities USA gets high marks for nationwide service

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (CNS) — Catholic Charities USA is the country's top provider of social services, according to Charity Navigator's Holiday Giving Guide 2008. The Alexandria-based agency also finished second overall in The *NonProfit Times* Top 100 list of the country's largest charities and 11th in the most recent Philanthropy 400 ranking by *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*. Father Larry Snyder, Catholic Charities USA president, welcomed the recognition. "These rankings are invigorating. They speak to the hard work and professionalism of Catholic Charities agencies' staff and volunteers around the country," he said in a statement. "It's my sincere hope that this encourages others to join us in our efforts to help those affected by the economic downturn, especially during the holiday season." Charity Navigator, considered the country's most utilized evaluator of charities, annually ranks nonprofit agencies in 34 categories ranging from the environment to youth development. Charity Navigator's ranking list can be found online at: [www.charitynavigator.org](http://www.charitynavigator.org).





December 28, The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Cycle B. Readings:

- 1) Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14  
Psalm 128:1-5
- 2) Colossians 3:12-21  
Gospel) Luke 2:22-40

By Jeff Hedglen

Recently, as I was holding my 3-month-old goddaughter in my arms I began thinking about the life ahead of her. She has wonderful parents and a huge community of people ready to support her as she grows.

Gazing into this child's eyes as they are just starting to focus, I wondered what she sees and what those eyes will see in the future. There are so many possibilities ahead for her: Will she be a girly girl or more of a tomboy? Will she be a dancer or a soccer player, or both? What subjects in school will be her favorites? What will she grow up to be? Who will she marry? The questions are endless.

With each new life that comes into the world the opportunities and options they have are never-ending. Every baby brought to the church for dedication is full of potential. This was never truer than when Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple.

**"Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, ... for my eyes have seen your salvation, ... and glory for your people Israel."**  
— Luke 2:29-30, 32

In the story from this week's Gospel we hear of a man named Simeon who had been told by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Anointed One from the Lord. When he sees Jesus, he sees ultimate possibility: He sees salvation. I cannot imagine what that must have been like. Simeon was in on the biggest of secret plans. He knew that the Savior was coming, and he was one of the first to hold salvation in his arms.

His words shout loudly of faith and triumph, "Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, ... for my eyes have seen your salvation, ... a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel."

Simeon, upon seeing Jesus, knew the possibility he held just as I did when I held my goddaughter at her baptism. I knew that graced with



the waters of baptism, the doors to heaven are unlocked for her.

On this feast of the Holy Family we learn from Mary and Joseph that when we dedicate our children to the Lord, we open up for them unlimited possibility, for they are now incorporated into the vision Simeon had of the salvation of the world and the glory of God's people.

## QUESTIONS:

How confidently can you say: "Master, you may let your servant go in peace?" If you are a godparent, what has that experience been like for you?

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## Faith comes from listening, having relationship with God, says pope

By Carol Glatz  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Faith does not happen with a solitary reading of Scripture; it comes from being in a relationship with God and listening to his word, Pope Benedict XVI said.

"Faith is not a product of our thoughts and our reflections," the pope said Dec. 10 at his weekly general audience.

"It is something new that we cannot invent but can only receive as a gift" that is made and given by God himself, he said.

With an estimated 5,000 people gathered inside the Paul VI hall, Pope Benedict continued his audience talks about the life and teaching of St. Paul, focusing on how the apostle contributed to the church's understanding of sacramental life.

"Faith doesn't come from reading but from listening. It is not just an inner experience but a relation" with someone who proclaims God's love and urges unity and communion in the truth, he said.

The Holy Spirit — the spirit of the resurrected Christ — does not only touch an individual's



Pope Benedict XVI waves as he arrives to lead his weekly general audience in Paul VI hall at the Vatican Dec. 10. (CNS photo/Tony Gentile, Reuters)

heart, it also must manifest itself concretely in the world, he said.

"The Spirit must reunite us and truly create a community" out of the divisions and distances separating humankind, the pope said.

He said Christ's Spirit serves to create a visible community with the proclamation of the word and the sacraments, especially baptism and the Eucharist.

Christianity, like baptism, is

passive, the pope said.

"No one can baptize himself; he needs someone else. No one can become a Christian by herself," he said. This other who offers the gift of faith and of baptism is the community of believers — the church — which, in turn, is acting on God's behalf, he said.

The church "does not act on its own, following its own ideas and desires," he said. It passively accepts God's will because "only Christ can constitute the church.

Christ is the true giver of the sacraments," he said.

St. Paul taught that baptism is more than a mere washing away of sin; it is death and resurrection into a new life in fullness with Christ, the pope said.

He said becoming a Christian is not a cosmetic or superficial event in which "something beautiful is added to a life that is more or less already complete. It is a new existence, a rebirth, death and resurrection."

The sacrament of the Eucha-

rist is Christ giving himself and his love to humanity so that a new world may be created, Pope Benedict said.

Explaining the transformative power of the Eucharist, the pope said, "When a person eats normal bread, digestion turns this bread into a part of the person's body, transforming it into an element of human life."

But the opposite happens when receiving Communion, he said.

"Christ, the Lord, makes us like him. He brings us into his glorious body, and that is how we all together become his body," he said.

Receiving the Eucharist is both a personal and a social experience in which Christ "personally reunites with me and the man and the woman next to me" thereby uniting everyone with each other.

"The Eucharist without solidarity with others is abusing the Eucharist," he said.

Christ unites himself equally with everyone who receives Communion, he said, making everyone "one bread, one body."



## Scripture Readings



January 4, The 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 Jean Denton

Months before the U.S. incursion into Iraq, Najla began welcoming Iraqi refugees to the Caritas migrant center in Beirut. They were pouring out of their homeland in droves. More than two million, over the next five years, would seek resettlement in Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon.

Najla is director of the migrant center. A professional social worker for two decades, she had never before heard such horrific stories of victimized, uprooted families as she heard from these refugees. The Caritas center offers them a range of help including housing, employment, job training, education, medical care, and legal assistance.

It also provides programs for children who may have been kidnapped or witnessed the killing of a parent or the rape of a family member. Recently, the agency increased efforts to help individuals heal from post-traumatic stress, a condition the staff was recognizing more and more.

I met Najla when she came to the U.S. for specialized training in trauma healing, and I

**“Raise your eyes and look about; they all gather and come to you.”**

— Isaiah 60:4



interviewed her for a newspaper story about her participation in the program. She explained to me that Caritas is the social services arm of the Catholic Church in many countries, including Lebanon. (It is an international partner of Catholic Relief Services.)

In the Middle East, she told me, neither the national governments nor nongovernmental organizations provide much assistance to the refugees; rather, “It is the church that is their support and their protection.”

A Lebanese Christian herself, Najla noted that the Caritas center accepts all comers regardless of their religious beliefs. Just as the Epiphany story in this week’s Scriptures shows us that Jesus’

light and grace are promised and will become known to all people, Najla witnessed how it happens in real life:

An Iraqi woman with two young children came to the center to participate in a group therapy session. An array of pictures was spread out on a table. “She was asked to select a picture that showed how she imagined the future,” Najla recalled, “and this Muslim woman found an image of Jesus Christ protecting the children. She told us, ‘You passed my way and supported me in a very difficult moment.’”

“Your light has come,” Isaiah proclaimed. May we all be so blessed to witness it with such power as Najla experienced.

### QUESTIONS:

Into what dire situation have you seen Jesus’ light come and be recognized? How have you been a channel of his presence to others?

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## We focus a lot on lists; why not a **Positive Focus?**

By Jeff Hedglen

This time of year is filled with lists, and not just the ones that are being checked twice by the man in a red and white suit.

These other lists are being displayed on newsstands, posted on the Internet, and being made into television shows. Lists about who were the best and worst dressed in 2008, which were the best songs, TV shows, and books of the year, and lists of which lists are the best of 2008.

These lists drive us to measure our life in the context of best and worst. When we fall into this trap, we are in danger of failing to honor other things that are sometimes more worthy of speculation than the top 10 things that were on the list.

As the new year approaches, I would like to offer a different list to measure our lives by, a list that has endured the test of time and continues to inspire people to strive for great things. This is a list that could be a resolution for 2009. In fact,

I believe that while we are on this earth, we will never be able to completely escape times of trial, be they from illness, hurt feelings, unjust circumstances, or whatever, but we do always have a choice on how we react to them.

if we could achieve only one of the things on this list, next year would surely be a year of growth and propel us deeper into our love of Jesus.

The list comes from *Philippians 4:8*, and it is this: “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”

Imagine spending the year thinking about all that is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, gracious, excellent, and worthy

of praise, instead of dwelling on all that we do not have, wish we had, hoped to be, long to achieve, continue to fear, hate to be around, and will not forgive. St. Paul has the better list.

Replacing the calendar on the wall usually brings with it hope for change in life as well. We look back on the year we have had and all the things we promised the last time we hung a new collection of cats in cute poses or cars we could never afford the insurance on, let alone the monthly payment, or light-houses, or whatever inspires us. When the old calendar comes down, it is often accompanied

by our spirits, for we realize that we did not accomplish what we had in mind when we hammered the nail in the wall.

Resolutions are notoriously hard to keep, so this year I think I will go with St. Paul’s list and really try to focus on things that are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, gracious, excellent, and worthy of praise. This might mean an adjustment to my life to rid it of things that lead me to think of things that are false, appalling, undeserved, tainted, unpleasant, impolite, ordinary, and contemptible.

It is hard to admit that more than I would like, this second list is more commonly traveling through the synapses of my mind than the holier list. Too often I think negatively when there is a more positive and uplifting thought I could be having.

I believe that while we are on this earth, we will never be able to completely escape times of trial, be they from illness, hurt feelings, unjust circumstances, or whatever,

but we do always have a choice on how we react to them. I just had a conversation with a young woman whose mother has just been diagnosed with cancer and is facing surgery and unpleasant treatments. I asked this young woman how her mom was doing, and she replied, “She is handling things better than we are.”

This is a story that reveals the truth that it is possible to not be consumed by the dark times we are in. So, with a lot of will power and even more grace from God, we can, if we put our minds to it, spend 2009 thinking of all things that are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, gracious, excellent, and worthy of praise, no matter what comes our way.

This kind of thinking could radically change our life and the world along the way. Jeff Hedglen, youth minister at St. Bartholomew Parish in Southwest Fort Worth, is the principal organizer of Camp Fort Worth each summer. Readers with questions can contact Jeff at [jeff@stbartsfw.org](mailto:jeff@stbartsfw.org).



## La época navideña nos ofrece muchas oportunidades para apreciar el regalo del amor de Dios en Cristo—y para ofrecer ese regalo a otros

### Estimados hermanos y hermanas en el Señor,

San Lucas en el capítulo 2 de su evangelio nos dice, “que hoy, en la ciudad de David, os ha nacido un Salvador, que es Cristo el Señor.”

Así el calendario de la Iglesia proclama con alegría el principio de la época de Navidad. Celebramos el nacimiento del niño Jesús en Belén, y celebramos el cumplimiento de la promesa de Dios de enviarnos un Mesías, un Salvador.

Las verdades y los misterios de la Navidad son una serie de bendiciones y de verdades para las cuales nos hemos estado preparando durante el adviento. Requieren de nuestra parte el creer, disponibilidad y participación. Esta actitud de fe es especialmente importante durante estos tiempos cuando el dejar de creer en estas verdades, aunque sean solo algunas, está de moda otra vez, e incluso en ocasiones con actitud militante.

Quisiera reflexionar sobre aquellos alrededor nuestro quienes tristemente, por cualquier motivo que sea, no están celebrando en verdad el nacimiento del Señor en esta época de la Navidad. Ellos también son parte de nuestra comunidad y están necesitando nuestro testimonio de vida, amor y oraciones. Si intentamos entenderlos un poco más, después quizás podamos irradiar nuestra alegría navideña y ayudarles a recibir al Niño Jesucristo en sus vidas y corazones.

Primero hay los que están tristemente abrumados por dolor, enfermedad, y sufrimiento. Esto puede hacer que la época navideña sea insoportable para ellos. Muchos también ponen expectativas y requisitos sobre Dios que el buen Señor no puede satisfacer y a la vez realizar su plan redentor. Otros no pueden distinguir entre aquello que Dios permite y lo que Dios quiere y desea. Debido a este modo de pensar tan equivocado, la enfermedad y el dolor se convierten, en las mentes de algunos, en situaciones



Monseñor Kevin W. Vann

**L**a Navidad, un ejemplo hermoso de la gracia, es un regalo de un Padre de amor, y el Padre nos invita a todos a confiar y aceptar este maravilloso regalo que Él nos da libremente y con mucha generosidad.

de las cuales Dios es culpable. Todo esto puede convertirse en un obstáculo insuperable que arruina la Navidad a muchos. Les invito a que encuentren a estas personas, miembros de nuestras diversas comunidades de fe, y acójalos con un amor sanador para que la Navidad llegue a ser realidad una vez más para ellos también.

Hay también muchos que a veces desean ser acogidos por ciertos grupos o compañeros que son de la opinión que es inútil o absurdo ser fiel católico o creyente en Cristo. El ser acogido y evitar la soledad se convierte en algo más importante que ser fiel. Para ellos el siguiente paso es celebrar el solsticio invernal y no la Navidad. Cuando encontremos a colegas o amigos que piensen de esta manera, déles el regalo de verdadera amistad cristiana. Invíteles a alabar a Dios en su parroquia. Demuéstrenles donde se puede ser un verdadero creyente en Cristo sin miedo de ser ridiculizado y donde la Navidad se celebra públicamente y con alegría. Por ejemplo, Lucas, en el capítulo 2, también proclama, la “buena noticia, que será motivo de mucha alegría para todo el pueblo”.

Entonces tenemos a aquellos que rechazan absolutamente a la Navidad por tercios y tomando posturas intelectuales llenas de viejos argumentos que carecen de fundamento y no tienen nada que ver con la realidad de que Jesucristo nació en un pesebre en Belén.

Para muchos que tienen estas características, ésta es la época para los bienes materiales y comodidades que ocultan una pobreza espiritual. Tristemente para ellos el nacimiento de

Cristo no es la razón de la estación. Jesús, para muchos que vivan de esta manera, es más un idea pasajera que el motivo principal de la Navidad.

¿Conoce a alguien como estos? Ore para ser paciente y amoroso con ellos. Dígale “Que Dios lo bendiga” y “Feliz Navidad.” Sea bueno con ellos; invíteles a la cena parroquial, si puede, y ore por ellos. Pídale a Dios que derrame la gracia de la verdadera alegría navideña en sus corazones.

Que nunca olvidemos que la gracia de Dios es ofrecida y no impuesta. La Navidad, un ejemplo hermoso de la gracia, es un regalo de un Padre de amor, y el Padre nos invita a todos a confiar y aceptar este maravilloso regalo que Él nos da libremente y con mucha generosidad. Una vez que aceptemos este precioso regalo, necesitamos desempacarlo de su envoltura y verdaderamente acogerlo en nuestros corazones, especialmente cuando lo recibimos en la Eucaristía durante nuestras celebraciones litúrgicas navideñas.

Hay un villancico y dicho de la poetisa Christina Rossetti que dice, “El amor bajó en la Navidad”. Así la Navidad es una invitación de Dios, no una imposición. La Navidad, la natividad del Señor, es Dios estrechándonos sus brazos para acogernos y recordándonos de lo mucho que nos ama y cuanto desea morar dentro de nosotros y entre nosotros. La Navidad es una celebración de la vida y cómo la vida de este niño nos unirá en una *communio* dada por Dios, fruto de la salvación y amorosa redención que Él nos trae. La Navidad es Dios demostrándonos cuánto le importamos y cuanto Él

desea que lo conozcamos, algo que es más fácil dicho que hecho.

Que nunca olvidemos que toma un poco de esfuerzo para conocer a Dios personalmente, especialmente cuando lo miramos en el pesebre durante la época de la Navidad. Toma un cierto grado de humildad para darse cuenta de la humildad del recién nacido que está en el pesebre. Toma un cierto grado de una fe dada por Dios para darse cuenta de que él quien está en pañales es el centro de nuestra fe. Toma un poco de amor para darse cuenta del infinito amor de aquel a quien le estamos celebrando su nacimiento.

También toma nuestra disposición, por lo menos por un momento, de soltar nuestros dolores y sufrimientos, para que podamos encontrar la gran alegría que inunda la humanidad con el simple nacimiento de este bebé que está en los brazos de María. Toma una pequeña oración para darse cuenta, y para volver a comprender, que la esperanza que tanto anhelamos se encuentra en aquel, cuyo nacimiento celebramos — Jesús.

Sí, durante la época de la Navidad recordamos, celebramos, y creemos en la profunda verdad de que nuestra esperanza se hizo carne: Jesucristo el amor encarnado de Dios. Que la celebración de la Navidad en la Diócesis de Fort Worth esparce las semillas del amor y de la esperanza de Jesucristo por todas partes del Norte de Texas y más allá de nuestro territorio.

Que la época, que no es solo un día, pero doce días y mucho más, sea una época de gracia y de bendición para todos ustedes. Les pido sus continuas oraciones y les aseguro que yo oraré por todos ustedes y por sus seres amados. Gracias por vivir el don de su fe católica de las maneras tan generosas que yo, tantos otros, han visto y experimentado.

Feliz Navidad y que Dios los bendiga siempre.

+ Kevin W. Vann

+Monseñor Kevin W. Vann  
Obispo de Fort Worth

## El Papa nombra un español sucesor de cardenal Arinze en congregación de culto

CIUDAD DEL VATICANO (CNS) — El Papa Benedicto XVI ha aceptado la renuncia del cardenal nigeriano Francis Arinze como prefecto de *La congregación para el culto divino y los sacramentos* y ha nombrado al cardenal español Antonio Cañizares Llovera, de Toledo, como su sucesor.

Anunciando los cambios el 9 de diciembre, el Vaticano dijo

que el cardenal Arinze se está jubilando después de seis años como director de la congregación y un total de 23 años en el Vaticano; él celebró su 76<sup>to</sup> cumpleaños el 1 de noviembre y el 50<sup>mo</sup> aniversario de su ordenación al sacerdocio el 23 de noviembre.

El cardenal Cañizares, de 63 años de edad, es especialista en catequesis y ha servido como miembro de la *Congregación para*

la doctrina de la fe desde 1995, cuando la oficina era dirigida por el cardenal Joseph Ratzinger, el futuro Papa Benedicto. Él también es miembro de la Pontificia Comisión *Ecclesia Dei*, la cual supervisa el cuidado pastoral de los católicos adheridos al uso de la Misa del rito tridentino.

Nacido en Utiel, España, el 15 de octubre de 1945, el cardenal Cañizares fue ordenado en 1970

después de estudiar en el seminario de Valencia y obtener doctorado en teología con énfasis en Catequesis de la *Pontificia universidad de Salamanca*. Él enseñó en la universidad durante muchos años y fundó la *Asociación española de catequistas*.

Nombrado obispo de Ávila en marzo de 1992, él redactó documentos para la conferencia episcopal española sobre temas

que abarcaban desde eclesiología y los sacramentos hasta ética sexual y médica. Él fue nombrado arzobispo de Granada en diciembre de 1996 y transferido a Toledo seis años más tarde. Desde el 2005 hasta principios de este año sirvió como vicepresidente de la conferencia episcopal española.





El 12 de diciembre, la primera celebración diocesana del día de nuestra señora de Guadalupe en la catedral de San Patricio (St. Patrick Cathedral) en el centro de Fort Worth comenzó con una serenata de las Mañanitas a las 5 A.M., seguida por una misa a las 6 A.M. **(Arriba a la izquierda)**: En el altar, el Obispo Vann acepta un regalo tradicional de un joven mariachi. **(Centro)**: El Obispo Vann y el rector de la catedral, el Padre Richard Flores, participan en una reconstrucción de la presentación de Juan Diego con sus rosas en diciembre y la imagen milagrosa que apareció en

su tilma. **(A la derecha)**: Varios de los muchos músicos cantando las Mañanitas tocan la guitarra y cantan ante la baranda del altar en la catedral de San Patricio. Otros músicos los acompañan, tocando trompetas, violines y otros instrumentos.

La celebración del día de nuestra señora de Guadalupe tendrá cobertura más completa en el próximo número del **North Texas Catholic** el 9 de enero.

## En un documento del Vaticano se advierte que algunas prácticas de investigación violan los principios morales

Por John Thavis  
Catholic News Service

CIUDAD DEL VATICANO — En un nuevo documento del Vaticano se advertía que algunas prácticas recientes en la investigación de células germinales, terapia de genes y experimentos con embriones violaban los principios morales y reflejaban un intento de los humanos de “suplantar al Creador (del universo)”.

Debido a prácticas más recientes, se plantean serias preguntas de complicidad inmoral de investigadores y otros profesionales de tecnología biológica, que tienen el deber de rechazar el uso de materia biológica obtenida por medios faltos de ética, se decía en el documento.

Las instrucciones, redactadas en 32 páginas, tituladas *Dignitas Personae* (Dignidad de la persona), fueron publicadas el 12 de diciembre por la *Congregación de la doctrina de la fe*. El Papa Benedicto XVI aprobó personalmente el texto y ordenó su publicación.

Este documento representó una puesta al día de las instrucciones publicadas por la misma congregación en el año 1987, que llevaron el título en latín de *Donum Vitae* (El don de la vida), en el que se rechazaba la fertilización “in vitro” (fertilización artificial en el laboratorio), la reproducción humana a base de réplicas celulares o geminación, la maternidad con inseminación del óvulo de otra persona, y los experimentos no terapéuticos con embriones humanos.

Con las nuevas instrucciones se amplían esas enseñanzas o se presentan nuevas en los siguientes tópicos:

— Investigación con células germinales: En el documento se reconocía que las células germinales han abierto nuevas perspectivas en medicina regenerativa. Y se decía que es moralmente acep-



Una ilustración muestra un feto humano en la matriz. El nuevo documento *Vaticano Dignitas Personae* (Dignidad de la persona) advierte que ciertos desarrollos recientes en la investigación de células germinales, terapia de genes y experimentos con embriones violan los principios morales y reflejan un intento, por parte del hombre, para “suplantar a su creador”. (CNS ILLUSTRATION/EMILY THOMPSON)

table extraer células germinales cuando no se causa serio daño al sujeto en cuestión, como es generalmente el caso cuando se toman tejidos de un organismo adulto, del cordón umbilical a la hora del nacimiento o de fetos que han muerto de causas naturales.

Por otra parte, se decía, que es siempre “gravemente ilícito” extraer células germinales de embriones humanos vivos, pues esto invariablemente causa la muerte del embrión.

— La ingestión de la píldora en la mañana, por parte de la mujer, después de una noche de relaciones sexuales y otros métodos en contra de la implantación: En el documento se decía que un embrión se constituye después de la fertilización del huevo, y que las medicinas y técnicas que evitan su implantación en las paredes del útero son moralmente ilícitas debido a que intentan causar el aborto, incluso aunque no se cause el aborto en realidad en cada ocasión en que se usen.

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Cualquier persona que tenga la intención de evitar la implantación del embrión que podría ser concebido, y que por lo tanto requiera o prescriba tal medicamento, generalmente busca el aborto, se decía. El uso de tales métodos que evitan la implantación “cae dentro del campo del pecado de aborto” y es gravemente inmoral. Cuando hay certeza de que se ha producido un aborto, se aplican serias penas canónicas, se decía.

— Terapia de genes: Se decía que las prácticas de ingeniería genética que tienden a corregir defectos genéticos con intervención de células no reproductivas, proceso conocido como terapia de genes en el cuerpo de la célula, es en principio moralmente aceptable. Los efectos, en este caso, se limitan a una sola persona.

Pero no es permisible hacer una modificación genética que busque la transmisión de los efectos para el hijo del sujeto en cuestión, proceso llamado terapia celular germinal en línea, debido

a daños posibles para la progenie, se decía en el documento. Se decía que “en el presente estado de cosas de investigación” la terapia celular germinal en línea en todas sus formas es moralmente ilícita.

— Manipulación de embriones y “adopción”: En el documento se repetía la prohibición anterior de reproducción de embriones humanos “in vitro” (artificialmente en la probeta de laboratorio), técnica usada con frecuencia en tratamientos contra la infertilidad, debido, en primer lugar, porque esto separa la procreación del acto conyugal del matrimonio; y, en segundo lugar, porque en la práctica, los embriones que se usan simplemente se tiran, cometiendo una violación en contra del principio “que el ser humano tiene que respetarse y ser tratado como persona desde el momento de la concepción”.

El congelamiento de tales embriones es en sí una violación ética, debido a que expone al embrión a grave riesgo de muerte o daño, se decía en el documento. La mayor parte de tales embriones permanecen “huérfanos”, se decía. A pesar de las buenas intenciones de algunas personas que han sugerido una forma de “adopción prenatal” para permitir que los embriones que han sido congelados y no se han usado nazcan, tal propuesta estaría sujeta a problemas médicos, psicológicos y legales, se decía.

— Congelamiento de huevos humanos: El congelamiento de oocitos, células de huevo humano inmaduro, ha empezado a usarse como parte de la técnica de fertilización en laboratorio, mediante la cual solamente se fertilizan los huevos que se aplicarán al clastro materno. En el documento se decía que el congelamiento de oocitos con esta intención es moralmente inaceptable.

— Duplicación artificial de células en forma híbrida, mezclando células humanas y animales: En el documento se rechazaban como inmorales recientes pruebas de usar huevos de origen animal para volver a programar células humanas a fin de extraer células embrionarias germinales de los embriones resultantes. Estas pruebas representan una grave ofensa en contra de la dignidad humana, al mezclarse elementos genéticos de origen animal con elementos humanos capaces de “desorganizar la identidad específica de un ser humano”, se decía. Por añadidura, el uso de las células germinales resultantes expondría a los humanos a riesgos inaceptables, se decía.

El Vaticano dijo que el nuevo documento, en calidad de instrucciones aprobadas por el Papa, de naturaleza doctrinal, se clasifica bajo la categoría del *ordinary magisterium* (magisterio ordinario o común) que representa la autoridad de las enseñanzas de la iglesia, y que este nuevo documento debe ser recibido por los católicos “con el consentimiento religioso del espíritu de cada uno”.

En el documento se terminaba con la instancia de que se vean las enseñanzas de la iglesia no como una serie de “no”, sino como un esfuerzo para proteger a los más débiles y con menor defensa entre los miembros de la sociedad, en contra de formas de discriminación y opresión injustas.

“Hay algunas personas que dicen que las enseñanzas morales de la iglesia presentan muchas prohibiciones; sin embargo, en realidad, las enseñanzas se fundamentan en el reconocimiento y promoción de todos los dones que el Creador les ha dado a los seres humanos; tales como la vida, el conocimiento, la libertad y el amor”, se decía.



# Día de formación del ministerio en el colegio Nolan, el 10 de enero

El padre John Robert Skeldon, un predicador popular, presentador de talleres e instructor del seminario bíblico en la Universidad de Dallas, dará el discurso de orden durante el Día de formación del ministerio, el sábado, 10 de enero, en *Nolan Catholic High School*; la dirección es 4501 Bridge St., en la sección este de Fort Worth. El padre Skeldon, quien sirve como administrador parroquial para la iglesia *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe* en Wichita Falls, presentará el tema del día: "¡Encontrando la palabra viviente!"

El evento comenzará con matrícula y desayuno ligero a las 8 A.M.; la oración inicial y palabras de bienvenida se ofrecerán a las 9 A.M. El padre Skeldon presentará el discurso de orden a las 9:30 A.M. Este mismo discurso de apertura se presentará en español a las 10:45 A.M. Tres sesiones con talleres, incluyendo sesiones en español y vietnamita, se ofrecerán antes y después del almuerzo a domicilio al medio día.

Se ofrecerán sesiones sobre una variedad de temas, incluyendo "Proyectos de servicio con los niños", presentado por Mary Moody y Susan Overcash de la escuela *St. John the Apostle* en North Richland Hills; "El catecismo esencial y efectivo para RCIA", dirigido por Lucas Pollice, director diocesano de formación de adultos; "¿Por qué un año sobre San Pablo?" ofrecido por la hermana St. John Begnaud, SSMN, erudita de Escrituras Sagradas; "Al alcance de los jóvenes", por Marion Cannon, co-coordinadora del consejo diocesano de jóvenes; "Promoviendo las vocaciones en la próxima generación", dirigido por el padre Kyle Walterscheid, director diocesano de vocaciones; "La teología del cuerpo a favor de la familia", presentado por Diane Schwind, coordinadora diocesana de planificación familiar; "El sacramento del matrimonio y los casos de la anulación del mismo", ofrecido por Meg Hogan, directora del tribunal diocesano sobre el matrimonio; y "Organizando un centro de jóvenes: la perspectiva de los miembros", formulado por Diane Donahue, directora del ministerio de jóvenes en la iglesia *St. Vincent de Paul* en Arlington, con una comisión de participantes jóvenes.

El día de formación del ministerio se lleva a cabo en dos



El padre John Robert Skeldon

lugares diferentes dentro de la diócesis cada año, y está siendo patrocinado conjuntamente por las siguientes oficinas diocesanas: *Catecismo para los niños, Formación adulta, Servicios pastorales hispanos, Jóvenes y ministerio universitario, Servicio de adoración, Escuelas católicas, Paz y justicia, Matrimonio y planificación familiar, Tribunal del matrimonio, Planificación pastoral, Administración y Desarrollo, y Finanzas.*

"Todos son invitados para reunirse durante un día de enriquecimiento que incluye talleres en inglés, español y vietnamita, exhibiciones, oportunidades de establecer contactos, y una presentación de orden emocionante", dijo Joe Rodríguez, coordinador del evento del día de formación del ministerio. "Habrá algo para todos".

El costo de matrícula, si se

El padre John Robert Skeldon, quien es un predicador popular y presentador de talleres e instructor del seminario bíblico en la Universidad de Dallas, dará el discurso de orden durante el Día de formación del ministerio.

hace temprano, será \$25 para este evento el 10 de enero; incluirá desayuno continental, almuerzo y materiales. Sin embargo, el costo ese mismo día, sin matrícula previa, será \$30. Hay becas parciales disponibles; los feligreses pueden matricularse como individuos o como miembros de una parroquia particular. Para más información sobre el día de formación del ministerio en Muenster, sírvase llamar a Joe Rodríguez al número (817) 560-3300, Ext. 115, o se puede mandar un correo electrónico a [jrodriguez@fwdioc.org](mailto:jrodriguez@fwdioc.org). Por un listado completo del horario del día y los temas de los diversos talleres, o para obtener el formulario de matrícula, sírvase visitar al sitio Web de la diócesis: [www.fwdioc.org](http://www.fwdioc.org). Teclée la entrada "Formacion de fe" (Faith Formation).



# Defensores de inmigrantes, optimistas, al sentir que se le dará atención a la reforma

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Se empieza a sentir una sensación de optimismo con respecto al año entrante entre los defensores de inmigrantes que habían empezado a fatigarse, después de años de búsqueda sin éxito para lograr una reforma de las leyes de inmigración y su aplicación.

Una de las razones para sentir algo de esperanza es el nombramiento y asignaciones que ha empezado a hacer el recién nombrado presidente Barack Obama. También hay señales de que el Congreso se avocará al asunto con presteza y no con tardanza.

La gobernadora de Arizona Janet Napolitano, candidata propuesta por Obama para presidir la oficina de Seguridad del Territorio Nacional, en la que se incluyen las agencias relacionadas con inmigración, goza del respeto de los que defienden una reforma completa de inmigración.

Como gobernadora, se opuso a la construcción de un muro a lo largo de la frontera con México, y vetó un proyecto de ley mediante el cual se le hubiera requerido a la policía local la aplicación del plan de acción federal de inmigración, diciendo que haría que los inmigrantes se volvieran renuentes cuando se tratara de informar de crímenes a la policía. También acudió a la Guardia Nacional para ayudar a la protección de la frontera, agilizó el enjuiciamiento de contrabandistas y trabajó por una reforma total de (las leyes de inmigración).

La propuesta candidata de Obama para ocupar el puesto de directora de asuntos internos de gobierno en la Casa Blanca, Cecilia Muñoz, viene de una carrera profesional de trabajo para mejorar la situación de los inmigrantes. En la actualidad es vicepresidenta de investigación, defensa y legislación del *Concilio nacional de la raza*.

Muñoz ha sido desde mucho tiempo participante clave en la coalición que busca cambios en las leyes de inmigración que harían factible la reunión de

miembros de familia, sacaría de la sombra en que se encuentran a los inmigrantes que carecen de documentos y simplificaría el proceso de inmigración de manera que se enfocara el asunto de carestía de mano de obra y necesidades humanas.

Aunque nadie espera que el asunto de inmigración se considere antes del asunto de la economía en el Congreso, Harry Reid de Nevada, el líder de mayoría del Senado, dijo que impulsaría un proyecto de ley de inmigración total pronto para que el Senado lo considerara.

En una rueda de prensa del 19 de noviembre, el representante Raúl Grijalva, D-Arizona, dijo que "mientras más pronto, mejor" es su recomendación para que el Congreso se avoque a tratar los asuntos fronterizos. Él mismo describió el muro de la frontera como "un simbolismo sin ningún propósito", y dijo que ya era hora de que el Congreso deliberara y debatiera sobre el asunto de inmigración.

"Vamos a contemplar otros graves asuntos: la guerra y la paz, la economía, el cuidado de la salud y el medio ambiente", dijo; "pero no pongamos el asunto de inmigración muy lejos hasta atrás de la fila que nos olvidemos de ello. Podemos hacer más de una cosa al mismo tiempo".

Kevin Appleby, director de inmigración y aplicación de normas para refugiados de la *Conferencia de obispos católicos de Estados Unidos*, dijo que los obispos animan a la nueva administración a que se revalúe de manera rápida algunas de las acciones políticas de la administración de Bush, tales como la decantada construcción de un muro a lo largo de la frontera, redadas sin escrúpulos en contra de empleadores, el enjuiciamiento de inmigrantes apresados en redadas bajo el cargo del delito de robo de identidad y la práctica de impeler a las agencias locales de aplicación de la ley para que actúen como agentes de las leyes federales de inmigración.

## 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

[jllocke@fwdioc.org](mailto:jllocke@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 James Hart

**Mecanismo para reportar abuso**  
Llamar al Ministerio de familias de Texas Servicios de protección (Servicios de protección de niños) al número: (800) 252-5400.

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# Diocesan



The *presepe* pieces shown here are on loan from four sources in Italy: the Museo Nazionale di San Marino in Naples, and private collections from three Italian families. (Photo by Robert LaPrelle)

## Presepe...

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also participated.

The sculptures and their dress (the *pastori* wear woven clothing with jewels, and carry silver vessels and musical instruments) are only part of the art; the installation — choreography — is the element that makes every presentation unique, de Cavi said.

“This choreography was invented by Elio Catello,” she said. “Two young people stood inside the space saying ‘do you want it like this or like this?’” The older man watched, pointed out placement, and the two inserted nails in the permanent base, where the *pastori* and animals would be placed. “They spent lots of time deciding,” de Cavi said. “The position of one figure took 10 minutes.”

The *pastori* and animals are sometimes in different perspectives, so the installation artist has the job of making the different sizes work together. “We had these pieces,” de Cavi said, “and it is thanks to him that he knows how the foreshortening might work if he adjusts the figures in a certain way, then everything

makes sense. If I would have arranged this, the proportions would not have worked out. For example, that angel,” she pointed out the central angel near the manger scene, “is too big unless you put it in a certain angle, and then it looks fine.

“This installation is a work of art—a temporary work of art. For instance, some of the figures yesterday were there and then Elio slept on it, and today he didn’t like it and moved them all again. This is spontaneous.”

A traditional *presepe* can have several scenes—the major one, always done, is “the mystery,” the Holy Family.

“Often, still now,” de Cavi said, “in families in Italy, people would have that single scene under glass and keep that in the bedroom. When they have more scenes, they start getting the *presepe* out of the nativity, adding the adoring shepherds and then the Magi and then the tavern scene.”

Always present are typical *presepe* figures, such as the marveling shepherd and the adoring shepherd. Also present in this installation are Georgian women, pale, in elaborate dresses, “clearly contrasted,” de Cavi said,

“with the black queen, a traditional figure as well, a little boy with parrots and the dromedary visiting from Africa. The *presepe* used to be a mix of races,” she said, “because Naples in the 18th century, was a very big port, with lots of society passing through it, lots of races and communities living there.”

When St. Francis presented his live nativity scene, it was part of the Christmas worship, while in the 18th century, according to Elio Catello’s essay on the *presepe*, the lavish nativity scene was something else entirely.

After the death of St. Francis of Assisi, according to an exhibition book provided by the Kimbell Art Museum, a Franciscan pope, Nicholas IV, in 1290 commissioned the first permanent *presepe*, in marble, to be placed in the Chapel of the Presepio in Santa Maria Maggiore, in Rome. The *presepe* survives today, almost in its entirety, missing only the original Madonna and child.

Because the work was commissioned in marble, a prestigious medium, the book states, “Pope Nicholas IV was declaring the *presepe* deserved all the respect and solemnity of ‘high’ sculpture.”



ABOVE: Animals within *presepe* collections are carved by hand from wood or, like the dromedary shown above, are sculpted in terracotta. (Photo by Kathy Cribari Hamer)



ABOVE: These pieces, sculpted by Francesco Gallo and entitled *Resting Cows*, are from the collection of the Museo Nazionale di San Martino in Naples. (Photo by Beatrice Pedicini)



RIGHT AND BELOW: Art historian and translator Sabina de Cavi describes the intricate figures of the Magi. (Photo by Kathy Cribari Hamer)



ABOVE: Roberta Catello makes adjustments to one of the delicate sculptures, *An Old Man Dressed for the Fair*, made by artist Giuseppe Gori. The piece is from the collection of the Lembo family. (Photo by Kathy Cribari Hamer)

LEFT: *African Queen with Parrot*, created between 1750 and 1780, is part of the Catello family collection. (Photo by Kathy Cribari Hamer)



Sculptor Giuseppe Sanmartino created this Saint Joseph *pastori* figure, which is nearly 20 inches high. Collection of the Lembo family. (Photo by Luciano Pedicini)



Baroque sculptors Felice Bottigliero and Francesco Gallo created this foot-high figurine, *Young African Page with Pair of Parrots*, from the collection owned by the Catello family. (Photo by Luciano Pedicini)



## Pope Benedict's World Day of Peace message

## Shortsighted policies, unjust structures demand overhaul

By Carol Glatz  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Building peace and eradicating poverty demand an overhaul of shortsighted financial policies and unjust economic and social structures, Pope Benedict XVI said.

In his annual message for the Jan. 1 celebration of the World Day of Peace, the pope said "peace can be built only if everyone is assured the possibility of reasonable growth: Sooner or later, the distortions produced by unjust systems have to be paid for by everyone."

The world of finance and commerce need global governance and a new ethical approach that can ensure that investments and development truly contribute to the common good and peace in the world, he said.

The message, "Fighting Poverty to Build Peace," was sent to heads of state around the world and was released Dec. 11 at a

Vatican press conference.

The pope said that while globalization has brought many benefits, it must be governed and "managed with great prudence."

Policies and norms must be based on a common code of ethics, he said, and actions must be guided by "the principles of fraternity and responsibility."

With natural law, God has inscribed upon every conscience a deep yearning to uphold the common good and peace in the world, he said.

Closing the gap between rich and poor will only happen if people everywhere listen to their conscience and "feel personally outraged by the injustices in the world and by the concomitant violations of human rights," he said.

"It is utterly foolish to build a luxury home in the midst of desert or decay," he said.

The world of finance has lost sight of its most important

function, which is to sustain the possibility of long-term investment and hence development," he said.

He said the current economic and financial crises are the result of financial activities — on both the national and global level — that are "based upon very short-term thinking."

Financial practices that are limited to the short term become "dangerous for everyone, even for those who benefit when the markets perform well," he said.

By not taking into any long-term consideration of the common good, investments lose their "capacity to function as a bridge between the present and the future" and to stimulate new businesses and job opportunities in the long term, said the pope.

He said economic and legal structures must work together to come up with and implement strategies to fix current shortcomings in the financial and commercial

world and create incentives for more appropriate behaviors.

Overcoming the scandal of poverty means addressing the institutional, material, and cultural causes of poverty along with the spiritual and moral flaws that are "harbored in the human heart, like greed and narrow vision," he said.

It is not enough to skim off one's surplus to redistribute to the poor, he said. A real change of heart, "of lifestyles, of models of production and consumption and of the established structures of power" governing communities, is urgently needed, he said.

Pope Benedict said when people show a lack of respect for the transcendent dignity of every human person "the cruel forces of poverty are unleashed."

He criticized some major causes of poverty and economic inequality, such as immense military spending, the inadequate distribution of food resources, and price speculation in food commodities.

Because many have linked high birthrates to poverty, some family planning campaigns have used methods that violate the right of parents to responsibly choose how many children to have, the pope said.

This has caused "the extermination of millions of unborn children, in the name of the fight against poverty," he said.

The pope noted that despite marked demographic growth the percentage of the world's population living under the threshold of absolute poverty has been cut in half since 1981.

In fact, some of the nations that have emerged today as new economic powers "have experienced rapid development specifically because of the large number of their inhabitants," the pope said.

"Population is proving to be an asset, not a factor that contributes to poverty," he added.

While AIDS is a major cause of poverty in the world, the disease must be fought with educational campaigns and "a sexual ethic that fully corresponds to the dignity of the person," he said.

Life-saving treatment and medicines must be made available to poorer populations, which may call for the "flexible application" of international rules protecting drug patents, he said.

Pope Benedict said people should also be concerned about forms of poverty that have nothing to do with a lack of basic physical necessities.

For example, he said, even people living in wealthy societies can experience marginalization or "affective, moral, and spiritual poverty."

Cardinal Renato Martino, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, presented the message to the press Dec. 11.

He said the pope's emphasis on so-called "moral underdevelopment" and the negative consequences of "superdevelopment" referred to a growing lack of respect for the right to life as seen in the growing number of laws permitting abortion, assisted suicide, and euthanasia.

## Hamer...

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which is considered the world capital of *presepi*.

On the other hand, the paintings were created one time only, and by one person, an artist who had attended Mass at St. Paul Parish in Smithville, and, walking back from communion, saw an image in a window. Worthy of note is that St. Paul Parish windows are not painted or stained, but simple, opaque glass, like a shower door.

I viewed the window paintings with a group of about 50 women, at a Quiet Day, at the Carmelite Monastery in Arlington. The retreat presenter, who is the artist's sister, described the first image her sibling envisioned on the glass, and the work of the painting project so far. She also taught inspired meditations, inviting viewers to find messages in the art.

Resembling a stained-glass window, the paintings have intense colors, with overlays of tissue or Oriental paper, and gold leaf embellishment. The completed body of work will include 16 paintings of sacred-themed art, each measuring eight feet by three feet — the size of the church windows.

The magnificent *crèche* from Naples is comprised of 66 pieces, including both animals and *pastori*. The word *pastori* means shepherds, but I was told it is used to identify all characters, from wisemen to passersby, and most of them are fashioned

from the finest terra cotta. The animals are usually carved from wood. Both are extremely valuable.

Today's *presepi* have three basic parts — the "mystery" (holy family), shepherds, and wisemen. They expand yearly, with symbols of the past, and frequently with pop and political culture, as well as humor showing up in the scenes. *Presepi* remind me, in a small way, of Christmas villages, expanded yearly, with trivialities that somehow symbolize our lives.

Except our Christmas villages are, in fact, trivial. So are our holiday sweaters, tacky ones or not. But they are part of the season.

At the Carmelite Auxiliary Quiet Day, Father John Hennessey spoke of the window artwork, and the concept of inspired meditation, telling the assembly, "God reveals himself to us every day," he said. "He continues to reveal himself to us through other people's faith, and even through art."

I am not certain the *presepi* bring with them the ecclesiastical tradition they began with, when they were found mostly in churches, and treated with reverence. Perhaps the simple reality was their indication of privilege and aristocracy, becoming ever richer and more pretentious.

Either way, I believe the "mystery," the simple manger scene in the center of the *crèche*, reminds us what the center of the season is.

After experiencing the art of

Naples and the art of Smithville, I prayed at St. Patrick Cathedral, on the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and experienced more art. It was the art of the Diocese of Fort Worth, exhibited through mariachis and Ballet Folklorico. The next day I prayed at my own parish and experienced the art of St. Andrew's. How?

It was there that I saw babes in arms, women struggling on walkers, and old friends sharing peace and joy with each other, here and now. Not in Smithville. Not in Naples. Not anywhere in the Americas any more than here.

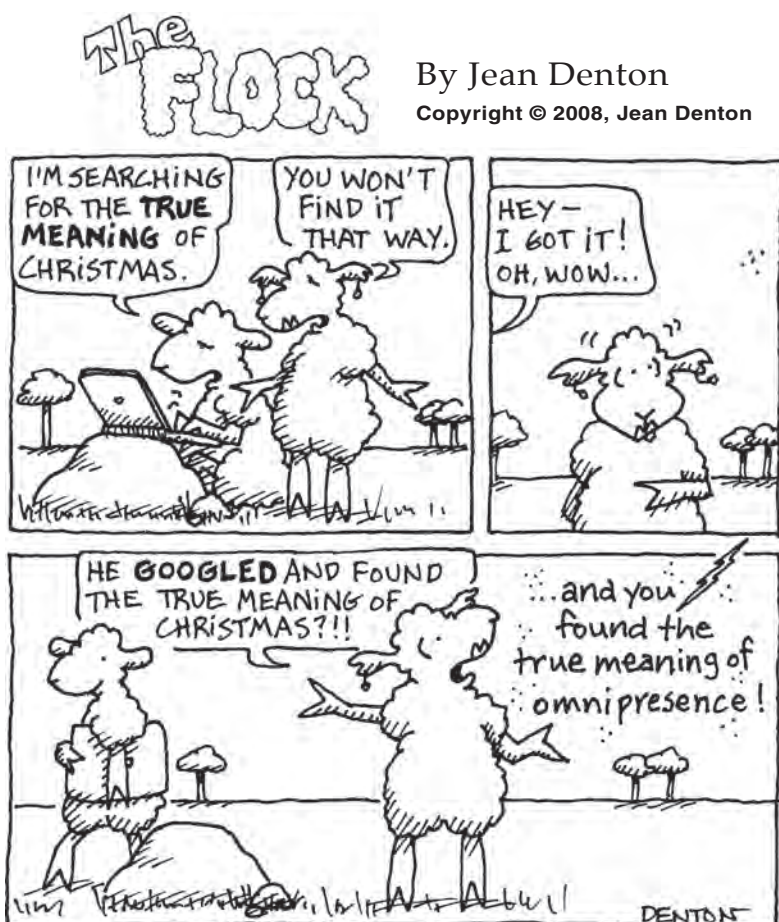
Let us look around us to find the joy of the season. Not the grandest, and not the tackiest. Just the simplest.

The greatest artwork of all is still the same, whether it is displayed in a magnificent *presepe*, on a brilliant painting, or in the back row of the parish church.

And "The Best Gift of All," as it says on one of my least tacky Christmas sweaters, "is love."



Kathy Cribari Hamer, a member of St. Andrew Parish, has five children, Meredith, John, Julie, Andrew, and Abby. In May, her column received the second place award for best family life column by the Catholic Press Association of the U.S. and Canada at the Catholic Media Convention in Toronto. In 2005, Kathy's column was recognized with the first place award in the same category.



By Jean Denton

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# Calendar

## RACHEL MINISTRIES

Rachel Ministries, a program that offers a safe, non-judgmental, and supportive environment to those struggling with abortion's aftermath, is expanding its outreach to include programs and services in Spanish. The expanded outreach program is currently seeking volunteers who can read and speak Spanish to help build the Spanish program. The ministry is also seeking Spanish-speaking licensed counselors to volunteer during the Rachel's Vineyard weekend retreats. There are also opportunities for volunteers to be included on the referral list. Training will be provided to all volunteers. Anyone who is bilingual and is interested in this ministry is asked to contact Betsy Kopor at (817) 923-4757 or by e-mail to forgiven@racheltx.org.

## PASTORAL CARE TRAINING

St. Michael Church at 3713 Harwood Rd. in Bedford will offer a training session for new extraordinary ministers of holy Communion to the homebound, hospitalized, and nursing home residents. The training is divided in two sessions from 8:45 a.m. to 1 p.m. Jan. 31 and Feb. 7. Participants will learn basic visit skills, what pastoral care to the sick and the dying is, and the overall importance of this ministry. Participants from outside St. Michael need to pay a fee of \$8 to cover cost of materials. Lunch will be provided. To RSVP, contact Martin Peña at (817) 283-8743. Deadline for registration is Jan. 19.

## MINISTRY FOR GAYS, LESBIANS

The regular fourth Thursday of the month meeting of the Fort Worth diocesan Ministry with Lesbian and Gay Catholics, other Sexual Minorities and Their Families will not be held in November and December, due to the holidays. The next regular meeting of the ministry will be held Thursday, Jan. 22, 2009, at 7 p.m. at the Catholic Renewal Center. For more information, contact Father Warren Murphy, TOR, at (817) 927-5383 or Doreen Rose at (817) 329-7370.

## DEAF MINISTRY

The Deaf Ministry Program is in need of a court reporter to help with CART (Computer Assisted Real-Time Translation) services. The Deaf Community celebrates a special Deaf Community Mass on the first Sunday of each month at 1:45 p.m. at San Mateo Church near downtown Fort Worth. The ministry would like to provide CART services for deaf persons who do not sign so they can read the simultaneous transcriptions and be a part of the special liturgy. To help with this service, contact Mary Cinatl, director of the Deaf Ministry Program, at (817) 284-3019 (Voice and TDD) or mcinatl@fwdioc.org.

## LAY CARMELITES

The Lay Carmelites invite those in search of a deeper relationship with Christ to join them on the second and fourth Sundays of the month for a time of prayer and fellowship. Those interested in participating are asked to gather at 2 p.m. in the chapel of The College of St. Thomas More, 3017 Lubbock St. in Fort Worth. Formation will take place in the college library from 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. For more information, call Phyllis Poth at (817) 457-1746.

## APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE

Sister Dorothy Jonaitis, OP, will present "The Left Behind Alternative: A Workshop on Apocalyptic Literature" from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 31 at St. Bartholomew Church at 3601 Altamesa Blvd. in Fort Worth. Sr. Jonaitis is the author of *Unmasking Apocalyptic Texts: a Guide to Preaching and Teaching*, and an assistant professor at the University of Dallas School of Ministry. She will present the Catholic teaching of apocalyptic texts, especially related to the rapture and imagery of the Book of Revelation. Sr. Jonaitis will sign copies of her book, which may be purchased at the workshop. For more information, call Marco Castellon at (817) 293-5589.

## 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 jlocke@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 chancellor/moderator of the curia, Father James Hart

## To Report Abuse

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

## GLOBAL PRO-LIFE LECTURE

Father Bill Bellrose, CPM, director of Seminarians for Life will speak about "The Pro Life Movement Around the World" on Tuesday, Jan. 6, at St. Patrick Cathedral located at 1206 Throckmorton St. in Fort Worth. The evening will begin with a Holy Hour and rosary at 7 p.m., followed by Fr. Bellrose's talk. Seminarians for Life was founded in 1989 by Father Paul Marx, OSB, as an outreach of Human Life International to be the worldwide pro-life educational apostolate for Catholic seminarians. SFLI currently reaches seminarians around the world via the SFLI newsletter and pro-life educational training. SFLI's pro-life seminarian apostolate has reached countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and both American continents. Fr. Bellrose has come to Human Life International from Most Sacred Heart Parish in Eureka, Missouri. Fr. Bellrose is a priest with the Fathers of Mercy, a small religious community that preaches parish missions. No RSVP is required. For more information, contact Chanacee Ruth-Killgore, Director of Respect Life for the diocese at (817) 560-3300 ext. 257.

## YOUNG ADULT MASS AND HIKE

All young adults are invited to the University of North Texas Catholic Campus Center for 11 a.m. Mass with Father Bill Bellrose, director of Seminarians for Life, Sunday, Jan. 4 at 1303 Eagle Dr. in Denton. After the Mass, there will be a lunch at the center. After lunch there will be a hike at Lake Ray Roberts with a cookout dinner for fun and fellowship to end the day. For more information contact Janet Wolf at (940) 229-2241.

## SINGLES NEW YEAR'S DANCE

The Singles Council of the Diocese of Fort Worth will host a New Year's Eve dance at St. Joseph Church at SW Green Oaks Blvd. in Arlington. Doors open at 8 p.m. and music starts at 9 p.m. Tickets are \$15 at the door, and no advance tickets are needed. The council will provide hats, horns, noisemakers, snacks, and soft drinks in a smoke-free environment. All proceeds will benefit the Catholic Divorce Ministry. For more information, contact Vince Chairez at (817) 896-5726.

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## K OF C SCHOLARSHIPS

Three \$600 Knights of Columbus scholarships, for a Catholic college-bound senior from Lewisville High School, Marcus High School, and Flower Mound High School, will be awarded in May. Applicants must be Catholic. Two additional \$600 scholarships have been added this year for students attending any area high school, provided the student's father is a member of St. Philip the Apostle Parish, Our Lady of Lebanon Parish, or a member of Knights Council # 9884. Instructions and applications for the 19th annual Knights of Columbus Scholarship are now available from high school counselors at Lewisville High, Flower Mound High, and Marcus High, as well as the St. Philip the Apostle Church office. The scholarships are funded by contributions from Council 9884, the Lady Knights, and local Fourth Degree Pope Paul VI Assembly #2291. Applications must be postmarked by Feb. 14. For more information, contact chairman Mike Crivello at macrivello@hotmail.com.

## NTC DEADLINES FOR SUBMISSION

The *North Texas Catholic* is published twice monthly, except during the months of June, July, and August when it is published monthly. The deadline to submit information is noon on the Wednesday of the week before the paper is published. Items for the Jan. 9 issue must be received by noon on Wednesday, Dec. 31. Items for the Jan. 23 issue must be received by noon on Wednesday, Jan. 14.

## ST. AUGUSTINE GROUP

The St. Augustine Men's Purity Group, a support group for men who struggle with sources of sexual impurity such as those found on the Internet, meets regularly in Room 213 at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School, located at 2016 Willis Lane, Keller; at 1301 Paxton Ave. (Padre Pio House) in Arlington; and at Immaculate Conception Parish in Denton at 2255 Bonnie Brae St. For additional information, visit the Web site at www.sampg.com, or e-mail to Mark at seasmenspurity@yahoo.com.

## CALIX SUPPORT GROUP

Calix, a monthly support meeting for Catholics who are alcoholic and others who are struggling with addiction and seeking recovery, is offered the first Saturday of each month at 10 a.m. in the chapel of Holy Family Church, 6150 Pershing Ave. in West Fort Worth. Calix meetings focus on enhancing spiritual growth through sharing Eucharist, discussion, and fellowship. For more information, call Deacon Joe Milligan at (817) 737-6768 ext. 105.

## SPAIN AND PORTUGAL PILGRIMAGE IN THE SPRING

Msgr. Charles King, pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish in Denton, is leading a group to Spain and Portugal departing DFW on April 13 and returning April 27. The group will enjoy the services of an English speaking escort and a private motor coach throughout the trip. Some of the highlights will include visits to Madrid, Salamanca, Santiago de Compostela, Porto, Lisbon and Fatima, just to name a few of the destinations. For more information and a copy of the itinerary call Bob Wolfe at (817) 788-9383.

## BENEDICTINE LIFE WEEKEND

The Benedictine sisters of Ferdinand, Indiana invite all single Catholic women between the ages of 18 and 40 interested in experiencing religious life to join them for a "Benedictine Life Weekend" Jan. 2-4. During this weekend women will have the opportunity to share in the prayer and community life of the sisters as well as hear input on the theme "Mindful Living: Being Present to the Moment." This vocation weekend is free, with a room, meals, and input provided. For more information or to register online, visit www.thedome.org/JoinUs, or call Director of Vocation Ministries Sister Michelle Sinkhorn, OSB, at 800-734-9999, or email vocation@thedome.org.

## CATHOLIC HOMESCHOOLING INFORMATION MEETING

Catholics interested in homeschooling their children are invited to an information meeting from 7 to 9 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 16 to learn about the different philosophies of homeschooling, the different Catholic curriculums available, and the legalities of homeschooling. Experienced homeschoolers will be available to answer questions as well as show materials. Catholics Teaching at Home (CATH), a homeschool group for Catholics in the Fort Worth Diocese, will sponsor the presentation. For more information, contact Diane Ashour at (972) 601-9751 or ashour\_23@sbcglobal.net.

## CARDINAL NEWMAN COURSE

A study of the liturgy and sacraments begins and continues Jan. 17 for 10 weeks on Saturday mornings, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. at St. Maria Goretti Church's Holy Family Life Center, at 1200 S. Davis Dr. in Arlington. Tuition is \$200 with full-time employees in select church ministries receiving half-tuition. Pre-registration is encouraged so participants may obtain books in time. For information on this course and to pre-register, leave a message at (817) 277-4859 or e-mail at cni.onfo@yahoo.com.

## MARTIN LUTHER KING MASS

Bishop Kevin Vann will celebrate a Mass for the 23rd Annual "Celebration of Life for Martin Luther King, Jr." at 7 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 17 at St. Joseph Church at 1927 SW Green Oaks Blvd. in Arlington. A reception will follow the Mass. The annual celebration held in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr., takes place in a different location every year. For more information, contact Deacon Len Sanchez at (817) 560-2452 ext. 305 or lsanchez@fwdioc.org.

## COURAGE GROUP

Courage D/FW, a spiritual support group for those striving to live chaste lives according to the Catholic Church's teachings on homosexuality, meets every second and fourth Friday evening. For information, e-mail to CourageDFW@Catholic.org or call (972) 938-5433.

# Classified Section

## ACCOMPANIST

Accompanist with experience at three-manual pipe organ needed for three weekend Masses at Holy Family Church in Fort Worth. Responsibilities include rehearsals with up to two choirs weekly, holy day Masses; availability for parish funerals, weddings, and major parish celebrations throughout the year is preferred. Applicant must be familiar with post-Vatican II Catholic liturgy. Send a résumé to Holy Family Church; Attn: Diane Kain, 6150 Pershing Ave., Fort Worth 76107 or e-mail to dkain@holysfamilyfw.org. For more information, call (817) 737-6768 ext. 104

## CEMETERY SPACES

Three cemetery spaces for sale in Mount Olivet Cemetery, Plaza Garden. Must sacrifice at \$1,200 each. This area permits double interment if desired. For information, call (972) 242-3744.

## MAINTENANCE WORKER

Local Catholic retirement facility is seeking a maintenance worker. Applicant must have a/c and electrical experience. Send résumé to deanah@saintfrancisvillage.com

## SERVICES AVAILABLE

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## PASTORAL ASSISTANT

Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Wichita Falls seeks a full-time Pastoral Assistant to assist the Pastor in meeting the temporal and pastoral needs of this active 1,300-family parish. Principal duties will include administrative and facilities management as well as serving as staff liaison to all parish ministries and committees. Qualifications include a Master's degree in Theology or other related field, or its equivalent in education and experience; prior experience in ministry; practicing Roman Catholic. For a full job description and application procedure, please visit www.sacred-heartwf.org. Applications are accepted immediately.

## LITURGICAL MUSIC DIRECTOR

St. Patrick Cathedral seeks a full-time Director of Liturgical Music and Organist to assist the Rector by assuming responsibility for the musical life of the parish. The successful candidate will provide organ music for all 5 weekend Masses, Holy Days, and occasional diocesan events; will direct and rehearse the Adult choir and develop other ensembles; supervise and train Cantors; select hymns and find imaginative ways to broaden the musical and liturgical efforts of the Cathedral taking advantage of its location at the heart of downtown. Applicants must possess degrees in organ, choral or sacred music, strong organ and conducting skills, complete knowledge of Catholic liturgical traditions, and should be practicing Catholics living in full accord with the teachings of the Church. For a complete job description, compensation information and application procedure, please see the Cathedral website, www.stpatrickcathedral.org.

## LITURGY COORDINATOR

Large Vatican II parish with five weekend Masses is looking for an energetic, engaging person to coordinate liturgical celebrations with style and reverence. Responsibilities will include training and scheduling ministers, planning weddings, funerals, and sacramental rituals. The coordinator will also be responsible for all liturgical articles and vestments. This is a full-time position with weekends and offers competitive salary and benefits. Send a cover letter and résumé to LC Search, St. Philip the Apostle Church, 1897 W. Main St., Lewisville 75067; office@stphilipcc.org; fax (972) 219-5429. No phone calls. Job description may be viewed at www.stphilipcc.org/job\_board.htm.

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## Good Newsmaker

With centuries-old collections from Italy, the Kimbell Art Museum shares the

# Nativity



This *pastori* figure, the Virgin Mary, was sculpted by Giuseppe Sanmartino, and is part of the Lembo family collection. (Photo by Kathy Cribari Hamer)



Elio Catello, and his daughter, Roberta Catello, traveled from Italy in late November to participate in the installation of the sculptures at the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth. Members of the Catello family have been collecting and installing *presepe* pieces since the early 19th century. (Photo by Kathy Cribari Hamer)



**ABOVE:** Carlo Iacoletti, an internationally recognized expert on *presepe* pieces, assisted with the installation at the Kimbell. (Photo by Kathy Cribari Hamer)

**BELOW:** Artist Giuseppe Gori, a student of Giuseppe Sanmartino, sculpted *The Wise Man Balthasar* in the late 18th century. The figure is part of the collection of the Scarlato family. (Photo by Kathy Cribari Hamer)



By Kathy Cribari Hamer  
Correspondent

**O**n Christmas Eve nearly eight centuries ago, one of the Church's most revered saints, Francis of Assisi, staged a live reenactment of Christ's birth, in a cave near Greccio, 60 miles from his hometown.

Francis, a humble man, presented a simple depiction, yet historians say it was instrumental in leading to a magnificent trend in an art form, the *crèche*, or *presepe* in Italian. The genre bloomed in the 18th century, primarily in Naples, and remains an elaborate and cherished tradition in Italy, and this year in Fort Worth.

At the Kimbell Art Museum, an exhibition of a magnificent nativity scene is on loan from Naples and offered free to the public until Jan. 25. The installation comes from four sources: the Museo Nazionale di San Martino; Naples, and three collectors, Roberto Catello, Jr., Giuseppe Lembo, and Mauro Scarlato.

"This set is about 66 pieces and everything is



**ABOVE:** This nativity scene represents many of the 66 *presepe* pieces that are included in the Kimbell Art Museum exhibit. (Photo by Kathy Cribari Hamer)

**LEFT:** *Angel with Censer*, created by Italian sculptor Giuseppe Sanmartino over 250 years ago, is part of the Lembo family collection. (Photo by Luciano Pedicini)

**BELOW:** This *pastori* figure, depicting one of the African visitors who came to worship the infant Christ child, is dressed in real textiles. (Photo by Kathy Cribari Hamer)



counted, even the little baskets and little objects," said Sabina de Cavi, an interpreter for Elio Catello, Roberto Catello, Jr.'s brother, and a well-known scholar on *presepe*, who installed the art.

*Presepi* are made up of two categories, animals and *pastori* (shepherds). "Anyone, even the wise men, are called *pastori*," de Cavi said, "*pastori* and animals—that is the division.

"The animals are in wood or fully sculptured in terra cotta, completely handmade. The dromedary," she pointed out an elaborately decorated camel in the exhibition, "is in the finest terra cotta. That single piece is worth 70,000 Euros [about \$92,000]."

"This collection is one of the major 19th century collections of *pastori* in the world."

Participating in the installation in late November were Elio, his daughter Roberta. Roberta's nephew Carlo Iacoletti, a private restorer of *presepe* figures,

**SEE PRESEPE, P.25**

## Inside... This issue of the NTC

For stained-glass artist Carol Segura and Notre Dame Development Director Peggy Foix, putting together the Rosary Walkway in Wichita Falls was a six-year project. Take a look at the results!

**8**

The Vatican's new bioethics document updates a 1987 version. It deals with new assaults on the dignity of human life in its most vulnerable forms, as well as older threats.

**10-11**

In the Christmas package Sharon Perkins, Jeff Hedglen, and David Gibson remind us of the roles hospitality, service, and tradition play in this season of our Lord's birth.

**14-16**

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