

# North Texas Catholic

Bringing the Good News to the Diocese of Fort Worth

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December 21, 2007



**JOY OF CHRIST'S BIRTH** — The birth of Jesus is depicted in stained glass at St. Michael's Cathedral in Toronto. The Dec. 25 Christmas feast commemorates the birth of Christ. The Christmas season begins with the Dec. 24 evening vigil and ends on the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, Jan. 13 in 2008. (CNS photo/Nancy Wiehcek)

## Family is the first, indispensable teacher of peace, pope says

By Cindy Wooden

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Anything that threatens the traditional family threatens peace, because the family "is the first and indispensable teacher of peace," Pope Benedict XVI said.

In his annual message for the Jan. 1 celebration of the World Day of Peace, the pope also said the responsibilities learned and the joys and struggles shared within individual families must be mirrored on a global level because everyone is part of one human family.

The pope chose "The Human Family, A Community of Peace" as the theme for 2008, the 40th

anniversary of the Catholic Church's celebration of World Peace Day.

"The first form of communion between persons is that born of the love of a man and a woman, who decide to enter a stable union in order to build together a new family," the pope wrote.

"But the peoples of the earth, too, are called to build relationships of solidarity and cooperation among themselves, as befits members of the one human family," he said.

War and violence, exploitation of the weak, rampant poverty and underdevelopment, destruction

SEE FAMILY IS..., P. 24

## Vatican document reminds Catholics of duty, right to share Gospel with others

By Cindy Wooden

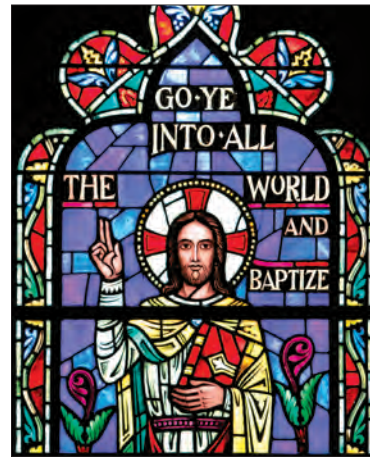
VATICAN CITY (CNS) — When Catholics fulfill their right and duty to share their faith with others, they are not engaging in proselytism or showing contempt for the beliefs of others, said a new document from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Sharing the Christian faith, with the hope that another may accept it, is a command given by Christ to his followers and is a natural result of wanting others to share something special, said the "Doctrinal Note on Some Aspects of Evangelization."

Cardinal William J. Levada, prefect of the doctrinal congregation, presented the document at a Dec. 14 Vatican press conference.

In addition to reminding Catholics of their obligation to share the Gospel with others, the document harshly criticized Catholics who believe that every religion offers salvation, and it defended Catholics in some Orthodox countries from charges of proselytism when they welcome into the Catholic Church people who freely ask to join.

"For a long time, the reason



A window at Washington National Cathedral depicts Christ and his call to spread the faith. A new Vatican document reminds Catholics of their obligation to share the Gospel with others. (CNS photo/Nancy Wiehcek)

for evangelization has not been clear to many among the Catholic faithful," the document said.

"It is even stated that the claim to have received the gift of the fullness of God's revelation masks an attitude of intolerance and [is] a danger to peace," it said.

In reality, the document said, when Christians share their faith with another they are responding to the right and the need the other has to hear the truth and to accept

or reject it.

Cardinal Levada said the document, which already was being prepared when Pope Benedict XVI was still prefect of the congregation, was the result of a growing "confusion about whether Catholics should give testimony about their faith in Christ," particularly to people who already belong to another religion.

Respect for another, he said, absolutely forbids any use of "coercion or tactics unworthy of the Gospel," but it also means sharing one's blessings, the greatest of which is the good news of salvation in Christ.

Indian Cardinal Ivan Dias, prefect of the Congregation for Evangelization and a member of the doctrinal congregation, also participated in the document's presentation and spoke about the need to balance respect for other religions with the desire to lead others to faith in Christ.

When talking with members of other religious traditions, "Christians must try to discover the action of the Holy Spirit, that is, the 'seeds of truth,' as the SEE MISSION OF CHURCH..., P. 24

## At Ministerium, Bishop Kicanas talks of working collaboratively to strengthen the mission of Christ

By Nicki Prevou  
Staff Writer

When Bishop Gerald Kicanas, keynote presenter at this year's diocesan Ministerium, returned home to the Diocese of Tucson, he mentioned his time in Fort Worth in his weekly "Monday Memo" to the people of his diocese. He wrote that he was "honored" to serve as the keynote presenter at the event for "ministry leaders in the Diocese of Fort Worth on 'Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord,' the [U.S. bishops'] foundational document on lay ecclesial ministry.

"I have been very encouraged by the interest within dioceses to learn more about how priests, religious, deacons, and laity can work more collaboratively to strengthen the mission of Christ,"

SEE 'YOUR MINISTRY...' P. 16



**DIOCESAN MINISTERIUM** — Bishop Gerald Kicanas of Tucson, Arizona, speaks to ministry leaders of the Diocese of Fort Worth about the U.S. bishops' document on lay ecclesial ministry, "Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord." He was invited by Bishop Kevin Vann to speak at the 21st annual diocesan Ministerium, held Nov. 30 at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Arlington. (Photo by Than Nguyen)

# Proclaim God's hope expressed in Jesus' birth into our world

Dear Friends in the  
Diocese of Fort Worth,

**A**s we  
are  
now at  
the end of  
Advent, we  
have little  
time left to  
prepare for  
the celebration of Christmas.



Bishop Kevin W. Vann

Part of this preparation has been the enthusiastic celebrations of our Lady of Guadalupe throughout the Diocese of Fort Worth. I wish to thank the many people who braved the inclement weather to show up at the various parishes so early in the morning to sing praises to our Blessed Mother, Our Lady of Guadalupe. The numerous groups of matachines who danced, the various mariachi groups who played their instruments, and the many devotees who prepared the flower arrangements, and delicious food, combined to make this celebration a very special one in various parishes all over the Diocese.

I especially wish to mention the Fort Worth parishes of Holy Name and St. Mary of the Assumption; St. Francis of Assisi in Grapevine; and also Nolan Catholic High School. These communities are where I celebrated the Eucharist and shared with the matachines.

To all of you, a heartfelt thanks for keeping this devotion to our Blessed Mother, our star of hope, alive in the Diocese of Fort Worth.

Another way in which we can prepare for the celebration of Christmas, in addition to the many Angel Trees in our parishes and other donations for those in need throughout our Diocese, is to take some time for reflection, meditation, and prayer. Our parishes do offer wonderful opportunities for communal prayer; our eucharistic celebrations are the best example of this, but we also need to take some quiet time for perso-

**W**e are saved through hope because Jesus Christ, the human face of love and hope, has saved us and brought to each one of us the loving gift of new life.

nal prayer and reflection. I would not be able to serve as Bishop of our Diocese, if it weren't for the strength and hope that is born, and maintained, through prayer and the sacraments.

Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, has gifted us all with a wonderful tool for reflection, meditation, and prayer. I am referring to his new encyclical entitled *Spe Salvi*, on Christian hope. I would like to take a look at some of the ideas from this letter in the light of the Christmas season that is now almost upon us.

Our Holy Father invites us to consider the question: What is Christian hope? As I read his words I come to the conclusion that ultimately Christian hope is to live in the knowledge of who God is and to not forget all that God has done for us.

A translation of the title to Pope's letter is "Saved Through Hope." This brings us to a second question: Why do we find salvation in Christian hope? Our Holy Father responds to this in a very extensive way. Here is a quote which begins to respond to this question:

"God is the foundation of hope: not any god, but the God who has a human face and who has loved us to the end, each one of us and humanity in its entirety. His Kingdom is not an imaginary hereafter, situated in a future that will never arrive; his Kingdom is present wherever he is loved and wherever his love reaches us. His love alone gives us the possibility of soberly persevering day by day, without ceasing to be spurred on by hope, in a world which by its very nature is imperfect. His love

is at the same time our guarantee of the existence of what we only vaguely sense and which nevertheless, in our deepest self, we await: a life that is 'truly' life."

We are saved through hope because Jesus Christ, the human face of love and hope, has saved us and brought to each one of us the loving gift of new life. This new life is attained for us through Jesus' redemptive death on the cross and his resurrection on the third day. By his Incarnation, life, passion, death, and resurrection, He expresses to us just how good and rich in mercy He truly is. He guides us to true life.

Advent is a very appropriate time for the release of his new encyclical because hope is one of the Advent themes. In one of the Holy Father's Angelus messages, he mentions how this season of Advent is so appropriate to reflect on his new encyclical. He even says to us, echoing the spirit of Advent, "We hope in Christ, we await him!"

Moreover, at Christmas every celebration is a celebration of hope because it focuses on the birth of Jesus Christ, our hope and our salvation. When we visit the beautiful manglers in our parishes and rest our gaze on the central image laying in the creche we are looking at a sign of hope. When we look upon the face of this image of the divine Child, dressed in swaddling clothes and placed in the fresh hay, we are looking at how God communicates to us his infinite and eternal love for each one of us. This Child reminds us that there is always hope because He also tells us that we are always loved! Christmas is the birth and welcoming of the Christ Child our hope and salvation by God's love.

An important part of our evangelization in the Diocese of Fort Worth is the promotion of hope. We do this by

welcoming the Christ Child into our hearts. To believe in Christian hope is to give Christ, our hope, free reign of our hearts and lives, so He can make them new again. This newness begins when He transforms us from within, into his image and likeness, and brings us all together as one body to share his light of hope and love in the world. To believe, and to live lives, firmly rooted in these truths is to always have hope, no matter what. To believe, and live, firmly rooted in Christian hope will help us become more effective disciples, more effective servants and communicators of Christ's love in our parishes.

Each one of the twelve days of the Christmas season offers us the opportunity as disciples, parishes, and as a Diocese, to reach out to others as God reaches out to us at Christmas. Through our various acts of generosity and love, we are helping to fill the lives of others with Christian hope. By acting as a people of hope, we are demonstrating with our lives that we care and we love. Let's never forget that hope in action is love and life. In this way, the reality of the Incarnation becomes evident in our midst.

May the birth of the Christ Child in our hearts, especially when we receive Him in the Eucharist this Christmas, be a clear sign of the hope which lives within us and the love we have for one another.

I hope and pray for all of you and your loved ones a very special Christmas blessing and a most blessed New Year to all. Please continue to pray for me. Once again, I thank each and every one of you for your firm commitment to living our Catholic faith. The recent installation of Daniel Cardinal Dinardo is a recognition of that life of faith here in Texas.

## Memorial Mass for Sister Mary Bonaventure Mangan set for Jan. 18

Cassata High School has announced a memorial Mass for Sister Mary Bonaventure Mangan, SHSp, Jan. 18, at 2 p.m. at St. Mary of the Assumption Church, 509 West Magnolia St., Fort Worth.

The release announcing the memorial Mass describes Sr. Bonaventure as "a legendary educator who believed that students of all backgrounds and faiths

deserved every opportunity to learn and be successful."

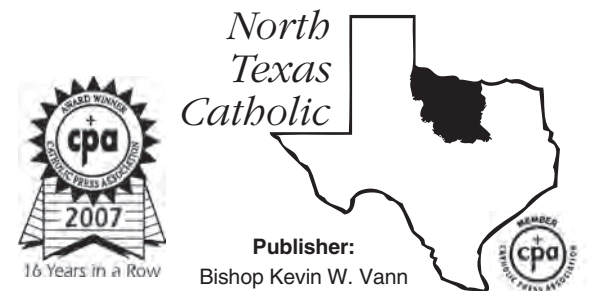
Sister Bonaventure served as principal at Our Mother of Mercy School in Fort Worth from 1962 to 1975 and associate superintendent of Catholic schools for the diocese from 1974 to 1983.

In 1975 she and Sister Mary Venard Fulbright, SSMN, co-founded Cassata Learning Center, now Cassata High School, a

non-traditional high school with a self-paced curriculum.

A reception will follow the Mass at Cassata High School, 1400 Hemphill St. near St. Mary Church.

For more details, contact Sal Espino, president of Cassata High School, at (817) 926-1745 by e-mail at [sespino@cassatahs.org](mailto:sespino@cassatahs.org) or visit [www.cassatahs.org](http://www.cassatahs.org).



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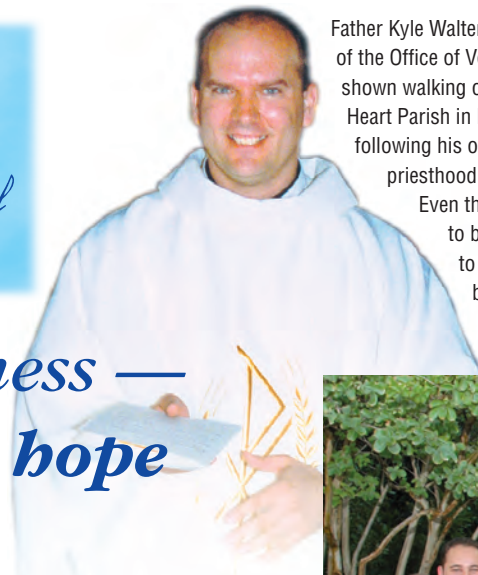
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## Diocesan

### Responding to God's Call



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.

**Below:** Bishop Kevin Vann (center), joined by staff from the diocesan Vocations Office — Father Kyle Walterscheid (right of bishop), director; Father Jim Pemberton (left of bishop), associate director; and Father Richard Flores (left), assistant director of Hispanic vocations — appear with some of the seminarians of the Diocese of Fort Worth in this photo taken at a special dinner held July 29 at Joe T. Garcia's Mexican Restaurant on Fort Worth's North Side. In his column, Fr. Walterscheid says, "We are very hope-filled in the diocesan Vocations Office as we enter the year 2008." One reason may be because of the increasing number of vocations to the priesthood and religious life in the Diocese of Fort Worth. The diocese currently has 21 seminarians studying for the priesthood. (Photo by Donna Ryckaert)

## Vocation awareness — Where does our hope come from?

By Father Kyle Walterscheid

**D**oes hope derive from my Christmas bonus or from my job? Does hope come from watching television, listening to the radio, or reading the newspaper? Does hope originate from my good actions, my good words, or my intellect? Where, specifically, does our hope come from?

In recent years we have been made more aware of the devastation caused by natural disasters such as hurricanes, tsunamis, forest fires, and floods, yet more often than not, hope arises among the people. Even from the ash heap of war and terror comes hope, as we clearly have seen from our own country's Civil War, World War II, or Sept. 11. Where does hope come from?

A few weeks ago, on the Second Sunday of Advent, we read a passage that we may want to retain for our Christmas holidays and beyond. Isaiah 11:1-10 speaks to us about the origin of hope. "On that day a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse," and "Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb."

What we are hearing in this reading is simply incredible, unbelievable. Imagine a dead stump of a tree that has been out in a field for years. All the passersby know that the tree is dead. Yet our Lord speaks of a cause, a first action, that regenerates a hopelessly dead tree, a dead nation. More directly, God is saying that He, himself, is the cause of hope coming to us, even in the midst of complete and total despair. As we see in the New Testament, hope is made visible in Jesus, our Christ, Emmanuel, God with us.

But you may offer rebuttal: "Hey, Padre, I don't see any wolves and lambs being best friends. Are you out of your mind?" That is precisely the point about the hope that derives from

God. We can't even imagine the hope that God has in store for those who love Him! This hope that we receive, in whatever the circumstance, comes directly from God as the primary giver of life.

We are far from true peace in this world precisely because we are still far from living in his Word, placing all our trust in God. If we are to have hope, then we need to personally attach ourselves to the root of Jesse, to the vine of God, and depend completely on him for our daily bread. Jesus said "I am the vine, you are the branches" (John 15:5a), and, "Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither

can you unless you remain in me" (John 15:4b).

Hope has come to us. God is now forever with us. Jesus our Savior is born! We continue to celebrate his birth with great joy, because in Him lies all our hope. If we live for Christ, then He will reveal to us over time that He has been clearing out a path of hope in our lives all along.

We are very hope-filled here in the diocesan Vocations Office as we enter the year 2008. We see a great future for our diocese, as God is calling every young man and woman from our parishes and families to dedicate themselves to the service of the Lord of hope and his people. May we all work at promoting a culture

where our teenagers feel free to openly talk about serving God and about considering the religious life with enthusiasm and hope.

May you turn to Christ every day for strength and vision of hope in your life and pray for the future of the Church by asking God to call more men and women to dedicate themselves to the Church, especially through the religious life.

I couldn't be more joyful or hopeful. Merry Christmas.

*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).*



**AD ALTARE DEI TOUR** — With the 10,000-foot peak "Tooth of Time" looming in the distance, Scouter John Ryan (front row, kneeling) poses for a picture with Scouts and Scout leaders on the 2007 Ad Altare Dei Tour, after their arrival at Philmont Scout Ranch, five miles southwest of Cimarron, New Mexico. Ryan's efforts in bringing this Scout pilgrimage to fruition was acknowledged at a recent dinner organized by the diocesan Catholic Committee on Scouting.

## Bishop Vann recognizes adult Scout leaders' contributions to Catholic Scouting programs

On Friday, Nov. 30, Bishop Kevin Vann and the diocesan Catholic Committee on Scouting honored several adult Scout leaders who have made significant contributions to diocesan Scouting programs. The special dinner honoring these Scout leaders was held at St. Philip the Apostle Church in Lewisville.

John Corpany and Richard Cureton, both of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Keller; Tina Jezek, of Immaculate Conception Parish in Denton; and Mary Jo Veltman, of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Arlington, each received the Bronze Pelican award. The

Bronze Pelican is awarded to adults who support the ideals of Catholic Scouting through their service to the church and Scouts over a period of at least three years.

Bill Harrison, of St. John the Apostle Parish in North Richland Hills; Patty Meyers, of St. Vincent de Paul Parish; and Fran Zaccaria, of St. Mark Parish in Denton, each received the St. George emblem on behalf of the National Catholic Committee on Scouting. This award is given for those demonstrating significant and outstanding contributions to the spiritual development of Catholic

youths through Scouting.

John Ryan, who conceived and implemented the 2007 Ad Altare Dei Tour this past summer, received special recognition from Bishop Vann, the committee, and all of those in attendance for his efforts. The tour, a pilgrimage to Catholic religious sites in Texas and New Mexico, was experienced by 39 Scouts studying for the Ad Altare Dei award and 19 adult leaders.

For more information about Catholic Scouting in the Diocese of Fort Worth, visit the Catholic Committee on Scouting's Web site at [www.bsaccs.org](http://www.bsaccs.org).

## Deaf Ministry Program to offer interpreted Christmas Eve Mass

Members of the deaf and hearing-impaired community within the Diocese of Fort Worth will have the opportunity to participate in a Christmas eve Mass at St. Francis of Assisi Church, located at 861 Wildwood Lane in Grapevine. The Dec. 24 Mass, which will begin at 8 p.m., will be interpreted in sign language.

Special seating for the deaf and hearing-impaired will be reserved in the front right pews. Family members and friends are invited to join the community in celebrating the Christmas Eve liturgy.

For more information, contact Mary Cinatl, director of the Deaf Ministry Program, at mcinatl@fwdioc.org or by calling (817) 284-3019 (voice and TTY). More information may also be found on the diocesan Web site at [www.fwdioc.org](http://www.fwdioc.org), by clicking on Deaf Ministry under the Pastoral Services icon.

## Program on 'Defending the Church' to be presented by John Martignoni

Nationally recognized speaker John Martignoni, known for his unique approach to apologetics, will present "Defending the Church" at St. Maria Goretti Church, 1200 S. Davis Drive in Arlington, Saturday, Jan. 26. The event will begin with check-in and continental breakfast between 8:30 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. and will conclude at 2:30 p.m.

Promotional material for the event describes the day as an opportunity to gain skills in using apologetics as a way of learning "how we can defend the one, holy, catholic, [and] apostolic church using Scripture as the primary reference. With these tools we can go out into the world and feel confident in sharing our Catholic faith with others." The program is suitable for Catholics of junior high age and older.

John Martignoni is founder and president of the Bible Christian Society, a nonprofit Catholic apostolate based on education and evangelization. He has been a guest on the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN) and currently hosts EWTN Radio's Open Line, which can be heard locally each Monday afternoon from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. on Catholic Radio KATH 910 AM.

There is no charge for attending the event. Optional box lunches are available for \$6 per person if ordered prior to Jan. 16. To register or for more information, contact John Cox at (817) 274-0643 ext. 226 or visit the parish Web site at [www.smgparish.org](http://www.smgparish.org).

## Ministry Formation Day in Fort Worth to be held Jan. 5

"Encountering the Living Christ" is the theme of the diocesan Ministry Formation Day, to be held Jan. 5 at Nolan Catholic High School, 4501 Bridge Street in East Fort Worth. The event is an opportunity for enrichment, fellowship, and development of practical skills for ministry.

Ministry Formation Day will begin at 8 a.m. with registration and the viewing of exhibits. Bishop Kevin Vann will welcome the participants at 8:45 a.m., and a brief prayer service will follow.

The English-language keynote address, to be offered at 9:30 a.m., will be presented by Mike Patin, a Catholic motivational speaker from Lafayette, Louisiana. The Spanish-language keynote, which will begin at 10:45 a.m., will be presented by Father Nathan Stone, SJ, from Montserrat Jesuit Retreat House.

During the English keynote address, a breakout session with Spanish-language workshops will be held, and while the Spanish keynote is offered, English-language workshops will take place. There also will be two more rounds of workshops offered in the afternoon, the first beginning at 12:45 p.m. and the second at 1:55 p.m. Workshops will also be offered in the Vietnamese language.

Ministry Formation Day will conclude at 3 p.m.

All involved in parish or school ministry are welcome to attend. The cost, which includes lunch, is \$20 per person prior to Dec. 22; after that date, the cost is \$25. Scholarships are available. For more information, call The Catholic Center at (817) 560-3300 or visit the diocesan Web site at [www.fwdioc.org](http://www.fwdioc.org).

## Grief ministry offers peer support for the divorced, separated, widowed

Help is available for those whose marriage has ended through death, divorce, or separation. A structured and confidential peer ministry, sponsored by the diocesan Family Life Office, was created to help persons work through the stages of grief that accompany the loss of a spouse. A new series will begin Monday, Jan. 28, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Catholic Renewal Center, 4503 Bridge Street in East Fort Worth, next to Nolan Catholic High School.

For information or to register, contact Helen Engle at (817) 261-9706 or e-mail to [hengle@sbcglobal.net](mailto:hengle@sbcglobal.net); or call Kevin Gamble at (817) 626-9382.

# People & Events

of Importance for the Church of Fort Worth



Ryan Tenny (left) and Matt Eastman were awarded the rank of Eagle Scout at a Court of Honor, held Oct. 27.

## Matt Eastman, Ryan Tenny achieve rank of Eagle Scout

Matt Eastman, 17, and Ryan Tenny, 16, both parishioners at Immaculate Conception Church in Denton, were awarded the rank of Eagle Scout, the Boy Scouts of America's highest honor for achievement, at their Court of Honor, Oct. 27. The teens are members of Boy Scout Troop 65, which is chartered by First United Methodist Church in Denton, where the Court of Honor was held.

The Court of Honor opened with a prayer by Father James Flynn, associate pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish. Many family members, as well as adult leaders and Scouts from Troop 65, participated in the ceremony.

Matt, the son of Bob and Tammy Eastman of Oak Point, is a junior at Ryan High School in Denton. For his Eagle Scout project, Matt built

10 score tables for the Evers Park Baseball Complex. He has spent many years playing baseball at these fields, and he knew the facility was in great need of these tables.

Ryan, the son of Michael and Sue Tenny, is a junior at Krum High School. For his Eagle Scout project, Ryan redesigned and remodeled several large garden beds and constructed a walkway through the garden for the residents of Good Samaritan Village in Denton.

Both teens organized and led volunteers, including Scouts from Troop 65 and their families, in completing these Eagle Scout projects. The two friends have expressed their appreciation for everyone's assistance in the project, and offer their thanks to Troop 65 and its leaders for the persistence and the confidence shown in them.

## Retrouvaille weekend Jan. 18-20 to offer help for hurting marriages

A Retrouvaille weekend, part of a program which offers help to married couples who are struggling in their relationship, will take place Jan. 18-20 in the Metroplex area. Offered through the Family Life Office of the Diocese of Fort Worth, Retrouvaille is a three-month process which combines a live-in weekend with post-weekend follow-up sessions.

Through the Retrouvaille program, couples who are distanced in their relationship learn how listening, forgiveness, and communication are powerful aids for building a loving and lasting union. All names and conversations will be kept confidential.

To register or for more information, call 1 (800) 470-2230, or visit online at [www.retrouvaille.org](http://www.retrouvaille.org).

## Marriage Encounter weekend to be held Feb. 15-17 at CRC

A Marriage Encounter weekend will be held Feb. 15-17 at the Catholic Renewal Center, 4503 Bridge Street in East Fort Worth. Marriage Encounter, a marriage enrichment program, is centered on three principles: building communication between husband and wife, nurturing the commitment of marriage vows, and strengthening the couple's faith.

"It is a great opportunity for a weekend away to deepen, renew, and refresh your marital love," according to Marriage Encounter materials.

Reservations are required. For more information or to make a reservation, call (817) 451-6005. More information is also available online at [www.ntexasme.org](http://www.ntexasme.org).

## Jason Evert to speak on embracing virtue of chastity at programs in Muenster

Jason Evert, a dynamic, motivational speaker on the subject of chastity, will be presenting two programs, one for adults and one for teens, at Sacred Heart Church in Muenster Jan. 16-17.

Evert will speak to adults Wednesday, Jan. 16, at 7 p.m. in the Sacred Heart Community Center. (Mass that evening will be moved to 6 p.m.) The talk, entitled "Raising Chaste Teens," is open to all adults — parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, or any adult who would like to help young people in living a chaste life.

Area youth are invited to hear Evert speak Thursday, Jan. 17, at the parish community center. The talk, entitled "Romance Without Regret," will be offered to high school students at 9 a.m. and junior high students at 1 p.m. Because of limited space in the parish hall, this program is limited to students from area schools, which include Sacred Heart School, the Muenster ISD, the Lindsay ISD, St. Mary's School in Gainesville, and Immaculate Conception School in Denton.

Jason Evert, who received his master's degree from Franciscan University in Steubenville, Ohio, travels the country speaking to more than 100,000 youth annually, giving them compelling reasons for embracing the virtue of chastity. He has appeared frequently on the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN) and on many radio programs. Evert is currently employed by Catholic Answers, a nonprofit apostolate dedicated to serving Christ by proclaiming and defending the Catholic faith.

For more information, call Nicole Hennigan at (940) 759-2306; Karen Davis at (940) 759-2053; or Barbara Rohmer at (940) 759-2511 ext. 16.

## 'Fair trade' coffee house and chocolate tasting set for Jan. 11 at St. Michael's

All are invited to come to the parish hall at St. Michael Church, 3713 Harwood Road in Bedford, Friday, Jan. 11, between 7 p.m. and 9 p.m., to taste a variety of "fair trade" coffees and chocolates.

Participants at the event will also have an opportunity to learn about Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and how the international organization assists coffee and cocoa farmers, their families, and communities in several countries, including Bolivia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, the Philippines, Uganda, and Vietnam.

Participants may RSVP by calling (817) 283-8746 ext. 30, so that adequate amounts of coffee can be prepared. Childcare is available free of charge by advance reservation by calling (817) 283-8746 ext. 31.

For more information about CRS Fair Trade policies and products, visit the organization's Web site at [www.crsfairtrade.org/coffee](http://www.crsfairtrade.org/coffee).

## 'Celebration of Catholic Schools' to be held Jan. 26 in downtown Fort Worth

The 21st annual diocesan "Celebration of Catholic Schools" will be held Saturday, Jan. 26, at the Fort Worth Convention Center Ballroom in downtown Fort Worth. The event will begin with a social hour at 6 p.m.; dinner will be served at 7 p.m.

A keynote address will be offered by Dr. Elinor Ford, recipient of the 2007 NCEA Seton Presidential Award.

The event is an opportunity to honor those people who have dedicated their lives in support of Catholic Schools. Twenty local honorees, each chosen by their representative diocesan Catholic school, will be recognized for the significant contributions which they have made in furthering the success of their school. This year's diocesan honorees, who will be receiving the 2008 Diocesan Leadership Award at the banquet, are the TOR Franciscan communities.

Tickets are available at a cost of \$75 per person. Proceeds from the event will benefit the Bishop's Scholars Fund, the diocesan tuition assistance program. For more information, visit the diocesan Web site at [www.fwdioc.org](http://www.fwdioc.org), then click on the Catholic Schools link; or contact Tessa Ross at (817) 560-2452 ext. 280.

## Ministry with gay, lesbian Catholics to meet Jan. 24

The next monthly meeting of the Fort Worth Diocesan Ministry with Lesbian and Gay Catholics, Other Sexual Minorities, and Their Families will be held Thursday, Jan. 24, at 7 p.m. at the Catholic Renewal Center, 4503 Bridge Street in East Fort Worth.

Father Warren Murphy, TOR, coordinator of the ministry, encourages those interested to "come join us for prayer and sharing."

For more information, contact Fr. Murphy at (817) 927-5383 or Deacon Richard Griego at (817) 421-1387.

## Calix support group meets monthly at Holy Family

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 Holy Family Church, 6150 Pershing Avenue in West Fort Worth. The next meeting will be held Jan. 5, beginning at 10 a.m. in the chapel.

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.

## Official Assignment

The following assignment has been made by Bishop Kevin Vann:

Father Aloysius Muthaya, SAC, has been assigned as the pastor of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Pilot Point, effective Jan. 13.

## People and Events



**JESSE TREE CELEBRATION** — During Advent, the students of St. Mary's School in Gainesville participate in a Jesse Tree celebration. Each morning, an ornament representing an Old Testament figure who waited patiently for the coming of the Lord and helped prepare his way is placed on the Jesse Tree. Students from the kindergarten class are shown dramatizing the story of Adam and Eve, played by Cooper Goldsworthy and Hunter Wolf, respectively; Garrett Hess portrayed God in the story from Genesis, and Jessie Gutierrez played the serpent. Each class has a turn at presenting the daily program, with the biblical stories being offered through skits, pictures, Scripture readings, reports, stories, and songs. In this way, according to information from the school, the students at St. Mary's start each day with their hearts and minds focused on Jesus and are reminded daily of the true meaning of Christmas.

### Lay Carmelites change time, location for twice monthly gatherings

"Would you like to deepen your relationship with Jesus and Mary?" ask the Third Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel (Lay Carmelites). The Lay Carmelites invite those in search of this deeper relationship to join them on the second and fourth Sundays of the month for a time of prayer and fellowship.

The time and location for this prayer service has been changed. Those interested are asked to gather at 2 p.m. in the chapel of The College of St. Thomas More, 3017 Lubbock Ave., Fort Worth. Formation will take place from 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. in the school building. For more information, call Phyllis Poth at (817) 457-1746.

### Benedictine sisters to offer vocation experience Jan. 4-6

Single Catholic women, ages 18 to 40, who want to experience the Benedictine way of life are invited to attend a Benedictine Life Weekend Jan. 4-6 at Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand, Indiana.

The weekend will focus on the theme "Stability: Commitment to a Particular People and Place." Participants will have the opportunity to experience the rhythm of the monastic schedule, share in the prayer and community life of the sisters, and meet other women who are considering religious life.

There is no charge for the program, which runs from 7 p.m. Friday to 1 p.m. Sunday. Women wishing to register or to obtain more information may call Sister Agnes Marie Dauby, OSB, or Sister Michelle Catherine Sinkhorn, OSB, at (800) 738-9999, or e-mail to vocation@thedome.org. Information about the vocation program of the Ferdinand Benedictines is also available at [www.thedome.org](http://www.thedome.org).



**VOCATION POSTERS** — Students from Immaculate Conception School in Denton recently participated in a local vocation poster contest sponsored by the Knights of Columbus. Winning posters focused on a variety of vocation themes, such as "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" and "Here I Am, Lord." Knights representative Dave Petty, shown here with the contest winners, presented the awards at a recent school pep rally. The winners, listed here in their placement order of first, second, third, and honorable mention, included: K-2nd Division: Alex Villa, Caroline Costilla, Mary McKenna, and Peter Zampino; 3rd-5th Division: Jennifer Medelberg, Kate McDonals, Anthony Canizares, and Grayson Morgan; 6th-8th Division: Catarina Gomes, Mary Baker, Hannah Johnson, and John Baker.

### Application deadlines approach for Scouts working on religious emblems

Bishop Kevin Vann is scheduled to present religious emblems to Venture Crew, Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts, and Campfire Girls in March. In anticipation of the annual event, the diocesan Catholic Committee on Scouting has announced the dates for the submission of the religious emblem applications for the various programs.

Cub Scouts who have earned the Light of Christ or Parvuli Dei emblems should mail their signed, completed application from their workbooks, along with a \$10 check payable to the Catholic Committee on Scouting, to Rich Lockwood at 1014 Duane Street, Fort Worth 76126, before Feb. 18.

Venture Crew or Boy Scouts who have earned the Ad Altare Dei or Pope Pius XII emblems should bring their signed, completed applications to Rich Lockwood at the Ad Altare Dei board of reviews, which will occur at St. Philip the Apostle Church in Lewisville from noon to 4 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 10. The Pope Pius XII board of reviews should be arranged with Tom Moore prior to that date. Adult counselors traditionally attend these reviews. Any questions about the Venture Crew, Boy Scout, or Cub Scout religious emblems may be directed to Tom Moore by e-mail to [tommyjoe2@verizon.net](mailto:tommyjoe2@verizon.net).

Completed workbooks and applications for Girl Scouts and Camp Fire Girls and Boys must be submitted before Jan. 15 to Teresa Harner at 2213 Creekridge Drive, Carrollton 75007. Direct any questions on Girl Scout or Campfire Girl religious emblems to Teresa Harner by e-mail to [tharner3@verizon.net](mailto:tharner3@verizon.net).

The Venture Crew, Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts, and Campfire Girls and Boys completing the application process are asked to arrive at 1 p.m. Sunday, March 2, at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church in Keller for the annual diocesan religious emblem ceremony with Bishop Vann.

Additional information on Diocesan Catholic Committee activities is available on the Catholic Committee on Scouting's Web site at [www.bsaccs.org](http://www.bsaccs.org).

### St. Augustine Men's Purity Group meets weekly

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 at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School, 2016 Willis Lane in Keller, in Room 213, and at the Padre Pio House, 1301 Paxton in Arlington. Those men interested in attending one of the upcoming sessions are asked to consult the group's Web site, [www.sampg.com](http://www.sampg.com), for specific meeting dates and times.

For more information, e-mail to Mark at [seasmenspurity@yahoo.com](mailto:seasmenspurity@yahoo.com) or call the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish office at (817) 431-3857.



**RHINELAND CHRISTMAS PROGRAM** — The junior youth of St. Joseph Parish in Rhineland presented their annual Christmas play Dec. 5 in the Rhineland gym. The well-attended program, entitled "Once Upon a Starry Night," was told from the perspective of the stars' heavenly view. Following the program, refreshments were served. The community offered special thanks to Catholic Life, a fraternal insurance organization, which gave a monetary donation to assist with the evening's expenses. (Photo provided by Janet Dillard)

### Texas Mission Council to hold conference in Dickinson, Feb. 15-17

The Texas Mission Council of the Texas Catholic Conference invites all Catholics who are interested in the missionary work of the Catholic Church to attend its annual mission conference at the Christian Renewal Center in Dickinson, near Houston, from Friday, Feb. 15, through Sunday, Feb. 17.

The conference will focus upon theme "Spirituality of Mission." Father Joseph Donders, a former missionary to Africa who holds the missionary chair at Catholic University of America, will present the keynote address.

"Mission today includes short-term immersion programs as well as the traditional long-term mission activities..." states a press release from the Texas Mission Council. The council offers this conference "to help people become modern missionaries, taking into account the necessities of their daily life."

The Texas Mission Council recently published a booklet on short-term mission immersion trips, which it says is "today's answer to missionary participation by the laity." The manual will be available at the conference.

For more information, contact Awa-nda Whitworth at (713) 688-1060, or e-mail to [mklawandaw@aol.com](mailto:mklawandaw@aol.com).

### North Texas Catholic 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. 11 issue must be received by noon on Wednesday, Jan. 2. Items for the Jan. 25 issue must be received by noon on Wednesday, Jan. 16.

### Faith and Fiction group to meet Jan. 17

"Faith and Fiction: Conversations on Spirituality and Imagination," a venue for discussing novels and films with themes that shed light on the journey of faith, will meet Thursday, Jan. 17, at the Catholic Renewal Center, 4503 Bridge Street in Fort Worth. The topic of discussion will be the novel *The Book Thief*, by Markus Zusak.

Those planning to participate are asked to read the book, reflect on it in light of personal experiences, and come to the session with questions, insights, or observations to share. A potluck supper will be served at 6:15 p.m., and the discussion will take place from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Future dates and topics include the following: Feb. 21, *84 Charing Cross Road*, by Helene Hanff; and March 27, *Wuthering Heights*, by Emily Bronte.

To ensure good conversation, space will be limited. To reserve a spot or for more information, call the Catholic Renewal Center at (817) 429-2920 or e-mail to [danluby@udallas.edu](mailto:danluby@udallas.edu).

### Notre Dame conducting study of American pastors

The University of Notre Dame, in conjunction with the Institute for Educational Initiatives, is conducting a national survey of pastors with oversight of Catholic schools. The current study seeks to explore and understand pastors' needs, perceptions, and attitudes as they pertain to Catholic schools and Catholic education.

According to a statement by Father Ronald Nuzzi, director of Notre Dame's ACE Leadership Program, the study will replicate elements of two previous national studies of pastors and respond to elements of the Notre Dame Task Force Report on Catholic Education.

Pastors with oversight of a Catholic school and who wish to participate in the study are encouraged to contact Fr. Nuzzi by e-mail to [pastors@nd.edu](mailto:pastors@nd.edu) or by phone at (574) 631-7730.

### New Year's Eve Dance to be held at St. Joseph's in Arlington

The Catholic Divorce Ministry, formerly known as the North American Conference of Separated and Divorced Catholics, will be sponsoring a New Year's Eve Dance, to be held Monday, Dec. 31, at St. Joseph Church, 1927 S.W. Green Oaks Blvd. in Arlington. The dance, which is being hosted by St. Joseph's Singles Ministry, will take place from 8:30 p.m. to 1 a.m.

DJ music will be by Charlie V. Productions. Light snacks will be provided.

Everyone is invited to attend this dance in a "welcoming atmosphere," according to organizers. A donation of \$15 per person is requested. For more information, call Greg Mills at (817) 456-6750 or Vince Chairez at (817) 896-5726 or (817) 551-5251.

### St. Maria Goretti Parish to host New Year's Eve party

St. Maria Goretti Parish, 1200 S. Davis Drive in Arlington, will host its annual New Year's Eve party Monday, Dec. 31, in the parish's Family Life Center. The doors will open at 6:45 p.m., and a buffet dinner will be served at 7:30 p.m.

Among the evening's activities will be dancing, drawings by a caricature artist, door prizes, and a midnight toast. Beverages will be provided; attendees are also welcome to bring their own.

The cost is \$20 per adult (no children, please). Reserved tables are available. Tickets will be available until Dec. 22; no tickets will be sold at the door.

For more information or to purchase tickets, call Michelle at (817) 795-3459 or e-mail to [smg.parties@sbcglobal.net](mailto:smg.parties@sbcglobal.net). To order by mail, send check to: M. Licater, 1861 Brown Blvd., Ste. 740, Arlington 76006.



**JUNIOR KJZT PILGRIMAGE** — The Junior Division of KJZT Catholic Family Fraternal of Texas Society #104 of Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Abbott recently joined with their counterparts at St. Mary of the Assumption Parish in West for a pilgrimage to local religious sites to pray for the unborn. They began with the recitation of the rosary at an outdoor statue of Mary on the grounds of Immaculate Heart of Mary. Then, they proceeded to St. Mary's Cemetery in West, where they are pictured before a statue memorializing the passion of Christ. The final stop on the tour was a Marian shrine in the Assumption Parish courtyard. Following the pilgrimage, the entire group was treated to a meal, courtesy of the West KJZT Society.

## NCCW Province of San Antonio to hold meeting Feb. 22-24 in Irving

The National Council of Catholic Women (NCCW), Province of San Antonio, will hold its 2008 winter meeting Feb. 22-24 at the Embassy Suites Hotel, 4650 West Airport Freeway in Irving. The Diocesan Council of Catholic Women (DCCW) of Dallas will host the event, which will focus on the theme "Bringing Light to our Global Society."

Fort Worth DCCW is a part of the San Antonio Province, along with councils from the Archdiocese of San Antonio, and the dioceses of Dallas, Amarillo, Laredo, Lubbock, and San Angelo. The meeting is open to all Catholic women in the province.

The meeting will begin Friday, Feb. 22, at 7:30 p.m. with a keynote address by James McGill, a visiting instructor at the University of Dallas School of Ministry's Catholic Biblical School. McGill will speak on the topic "The Biblical Mandate for Social Justice."

A variety of listening forums and workshops will be offered. Sister Kay Kolb, SSND, and Sister Pat Miller, SSND, directors of Ministries Outreach at the Catholic Renewal Center in Fort Worth, will offer a presentation entitled, "Spirituality and the Environment." Sister Roberta Hesse, SSMN, and Sister Charlie Marie Serafino, SSMN, will present a session on "The Faces of Women in Global Poverty," reflecting on the Sisters of St. Mary Africa Solidarity.

On Saturday evening, Bishop Kevin W. Vann will celebrate the 5 p.m. Mass for the province assembly. Following the liturgy, he will join meeting participants for the Saturday evening banquet.

Kay Elliot, NCCW Region II past vice president, will lead the Sunday morning prayer service at 8:30 a.m., speaking to participants about her new book, *Enhancing our Spirituality: A Collection of Prayers and Readings for Personal or Group Reflection*. Afterward, Eunice Washa, Region II vice president of NCCW, will give a presentation on NCCW's programs, development, and leadership.

The meeting registration fee of \$100 includes all materials, meetings, and the Saturday lunch and banquet. The registration deadline is Feb. 8.

A block of rooms has been reserved for NCCW attendees at a convention rate of \$109 to \$119, depending on occupancy. Hotel reservations must be made directly with the hotel by calling (972) 790-0093 by Jan. 22.

For more information or to register, call Kathleen Thome, province director, at (817) 236-8518 or contact her by e-mail to Velvet68@aol.com.

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## Diocesan Pastoral Council ready to serve after appointment of new members

By Nicki Prevou  
 Staff Writer

Members of the newly formed Diocesan Pastoral Council have now been appointed, following a lengthy process of nomination, discernment, and interviews, said Joe Rodriguez, assistant director for Pastoral Planning for the Diocese of Fort Worth. The council, which is comprised of 22 lay members, an ecclesial lay minister, one member of a women's religious congregation, one deacon, and one priest, also includes Father Michael Olson, diocesan vicar general, and Father James Hart, diocesan chancellor.

Formerly known as the Diocesan Pastoral Advisory Council (DPAC), the council is headed by Bishop Kevin Vann as ex-officio president. The bishop "will be consulting this group on issues that pertain to pastoral life in the Diocese of Fort Worth," explained Rodriguez, noting that each member of the council has a three-year term which may be renewed once.

Dr. Lewis Gaspar, a parishioner at St. Mary the Virgin Church in Arlington, will serve as moderator of the council. Ronald Sumcizk of St. Michael Church in Bedford will serve as assistant moderator.

The process of reshaping the former advisory council was a carefully planned transition, said Rodriguez. Members of the former council worked with canon lawyer Dr. Barbara Ann Cusack in preparing for the changes to the council structure.

At the invitation of Bishop Vann, Cusack came to Fort Worth in February and in April to work with DPAC members in defining the goals and structure of the new council. Cusack, who serves as chancellor of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, offered information to the group on the guidance given through canon law to dioceses on the ministry of consultation. Cusack was also present to assist in facilitating the new council's first meeting, held Nov. 17 at

*The Pastoral Council is a body of Catholics, ordained and lay, who are active in and in touch with the life of the church in the Diocese of Fort Worth. The members of the Pastoral Council reflect on their faith, experience, and information presented in order to investigate, consider, and propose practical resolutions so as to advise the Bishop on areas of policy and future direction.*

— Mission and Purpose of the  
 Diocesan Pastoral Council,  
 Diocese of Fort Worth

Most Blessed Sacrament Church in Arlington.

"I have known Bishop Vann for more than 20 years," said Cusack, in an interview with the *North Texas Catholic*, referring to her longtime association with the bishop through the Canon Law Society of America. "It was a privilege to work with the bishop in focusing the work of the council. Our goal was to form a collaborative, consultative board that will assist him most effectively in his leadership."

Cusack "very much enjoyed" the time she spent in Fort Worth, she said. "The process that the planning council undertook in reshaping the council and surfacing new members was outstanding. I was so impressed with the very committed Catholics who have been discerned as leaders in this area. There is a great cross section on the council, representing so many areas of the diocese."

As mandated by canon law, several different parishes, deaneries within the diocese, and ethnic groups are represented through the diverse council membership, noted Rodriguez. The body will gather for a one-day meeting four times during the calendar year, he explained, and will offer advice to the bishop on a variety of issues.

"We are approaching our 40th anniversary as a diocese, and the bishop will welcome the council's


input on how we should observe our anniversary, from a pastoral perspective," said Rodriguez.

"Additionally, the [diocesan] Catechetical Commission has been conducting a comprehensive, diocesan-wide study," he added. "Members of the commission will be making a report to the pastoral council so that a process for creating a catechetical plan can be established."

New council member Josephine Kuffel, a resident at St. Francis Village in Crowley, said that she is "very excited" to be a part of the pastoral council. "I am looking forward to learning a great deal more about our diocese," said Kuffel, a native of Chicago who has lived at St. Francis Village for approximately 11 years. "I was so impressed with Dr. Cusack and the work she did with us at the November meeting. It is a very diverse and very interesting group of people on the council. We had an excellent agenda for our meeting that allowed us to get to know each other, so that we will be more effective in working together in the future."

*Editor's Note: For a listing of Diocesan Pastoral Council members, visit the diocesan Web site at [www.fwdioc.org](http://www.fwdioc.org) and click on the following links: About the Diocese, Consultative Bodies, Councils, and Diocesan Pastoral Council.*

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## KC efforts in Lewisville develop into Knight Light Charities foundation

A group of Lewisville-area citizens has organized Knight Light Charities, a new charitable foundation whose purpose is to raise funds in support of social service agencies in Denton County that help those in need of financial assistance.

"From time to time," stated a press release from the Knight Light Charities, "many low income residents need assistance with their rent, utilities, [and] medical or grocery expenses, and [they] turn to one of several

agencies for help. Knight Light Charities' goal is to provide the funding to cover these unbudgeted expenses when called upon by agencies such as Christian Community Action or the Salvation Army."

Bill Louree, a member of the Knights of Columbus, indicated that the newly established not-for-profit organization grew out of a 15-year project supported by the Knights of Columbus in Lewisville. The Knights have been providing about \$10,000

annually to assist the needy in the community.

In the next two to three years, Knight Light Charities will strive to build an endowment of at least \$250,000. The income earned by that fund is expected to provide the largest share of the annual funding of the agencies' requests.

For more information about Knight Light Charities in Denton County, contact board member Fred Chanslor at (972) 317-6572.

## Cardinal Newman Institute to offer course on *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

"A Walk Through the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*," a 10-week course offered by the Cardinal Newman Institute, will begin Saturday, Jan. 5, and will be held in the Holy Family Life Center at St. Maria Goretti Church, 1200 S. Davis Drive in Arlington. Sessions will be held from 9 a.m. to noon.

According to course organizers, the sessions will provide participants with the opportunity

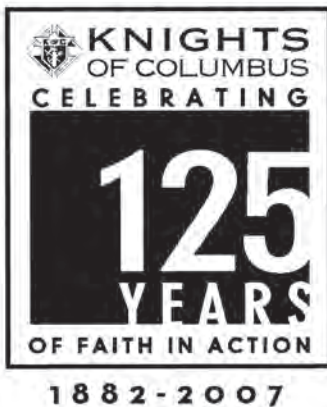
to "re-visit or become acquainted with this great gift the church gave us some 13 years ago. Its appeal is not only to the mind, but also the heart, as one discovers the beauty and reasonableness of our faith that is so richly presented."

Sessions may be audited or may also be taken for credit toward certification in the institute's theological studies program. College credit is also

available through the College of St. Thomas More in Fort Worth. Catholic school teachers and religious education directors/coordinators are offered half-tuition scholarships to defray course tuition of \$200.

Participants may register at the Jan. 5 class. For more information about required materials or to pre-register for the class, call (817) 277-4859 or e-mail to [cni.info@yahoo.com](mailto:cni.info@yahoo.com).

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The Order's focus through its field agents is needs-based planning services that help members achieve, maintain and preserve family and/or business goals. Field agents also assist members with charitable giving planning, as well as estate planning on a

team basis with a member's legal and financial advisors or those alliances our agency maintains relationships with for referral.

John F. Regan, the managing local general agent with the Order since 1986, graduated from Dallas Jesuit in 1982, and Spring Hill College, Mobile, Alabama in 1986. To better serve the Order's membership, and field agents, John has attained the professional designations of Certified Financial Planner (CFP), Fraternal Insurance Counselor (FIC), Certified Life Underwriter (CLU) and Chartered Financial Consultant (ChFC).

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If you would like to learn more about membership, our insurance benefits, a college internship or a professional career opportunity and have a background in sales or an entrepreneurial type business, in the Diocese of Fort Worth, please contact my office at (972) 599-2803, Metro (817) 265-2967 or send an e-mail to [John.Regan@kofc.org](mailto:John.Regan@kofc.org).



**VOLLEYBALL CHAMPS** — The Lady Knights of Immaculate Conception School in Denton won the 2007 North Texas Independent League Championship recently, with a hard-fought win against Tioga. The Lady Knights finished the season with an NTIL record of 8-0 and an overall record of 22-3. This year's volleyball team members are Kaillie Ralston, Jessica Riney, Haley Fowler, Allie Shelton, Sara Nicolas, Sarah Owens, Bethany Rush, Hannah Schoendorf, Ashley Combes, Kennedy Feigle, Michelle Zimmerer, Rachel Davis, Haley Davis, Hannah Thies, Lauren Lange, Delaney Shanahan, Elizabeth Costilla, Rebecca Klinke, Abby Fowler, Kristen Howorka, Ambryne Deanda, and Brianna Stachowiak. Greg Medina serves as athletic director and head coach, and Bridget Ralston serves as assistant coach.

## FOCUS to hold student leadership conference in Grapevine

The Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS) will hold the 2008 National Student Conference Jan. 2-6 at the Gaylord Texan Resort and Convention Center, located at 1501 Gaylord Trail in Grapevine.

Convention speakers include Father Benedict Groeschel, CFR; sports star Mike Sweeney; author Jeff Cavins; and Eduardo Verastigui, star of the film *Bella*. The Christian rock group Third Day will also perform.

FOCUS is a national student outreach organization serving

both secular and Catholic college campuses. According to the organization's leaders, FOCUS "brings the teachings of Christ and the faith and moral traditions of the Catholic Church to college students and gives them the tools to help share those teachings with their friends and family."

The FOCUS conference is open to all young adults, campus ministers, priests, and members of religious orders. For a complete list of speakers and registration information, visit online at [www.focusconference.org](http://www.focusconference.org).



**KJT DONATION** — The KJT St. Augustine Society #109 at Our Lady of Mercy Church in Hillsboro presented a \$250 check to Father Albert Bueno, pastor, to be used for further improvements to the CCD program for children and the parish religious education program. Pictured at the presentation are (l. to r.) Josephine Kozlovsky; Bill Kozlovsky; Flo Pustejovsky, CCD superintendent; Diane Davidson; Vernon Markwardt, religious education coordinator; Fr. Bueno; Milton Peterson, president of the local KJT society; and Irene Peterson, secretary/treasurer of the society. The KJT Society, a fraternal society promoting activities which strengthen family relationships, was organized in July 1889 by a group of Czech immigrants. KJT stands for the name of the organization, "Catholic Union of Texas," in the Czech language.



**DONATION TO WOMEN'S CENTER** — The 8th grade class of Sacred Heart School in Muenster gathered Dec. 5 to present a \$2,000 check to ABBA Women's Center, a faith-based, not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting the sanctity of life. The students raised the funds during a Walk for Life event held at Muenster Park in October, in honor of Respect Life Month. Eighth grade teacher Annette Bayer is shown giving the check to Sandee Feyereisen, executive director of ABBA Women's Center. ABBA, an acronym for All Babies Born Alive, offers many services, including pregnancy testing, prenatal classes, nutrition classes, and assistance with material needs for families in crisis. For more information about the services ABBA provides, call (940) 668-6391. (Photo by Emma Collis)

## Scholarships for Catholic laity are available through Msgr. Droll fund

Catholics who are pursuing a graduate degree in religious or pastoral studies may seek funding for further education through the Msgr. Larry J. Droll Scholarship Fund for Catholic laity. The \$2,000 renewable scholarship, established in 2002, is administered by Catholic Life Insurance.

"Today many dedicated Catholics, who are not ordained clergy or women religious, serve parishes as parish coordinators or administrators, as pastoral associates, directors of religious education, youth ministers, liturgists, and many other roles," said Msgr. Larry J. Droll, vicar general of the Diocese of San Angelo and spiritual advisor to Catholic Life Insurance. "This scholarship can help provide the funds to earn the advanced educational degree in theology or religious studies that is often

required for these positions."

The scholarship is open to students who are enrolled in Catholic graduate schools of theology or religious studies and who have already completed a bachelor's degree. Applicants also must be practicing Catholics and must reside in one of the states in which Catholic Life operates: Texas, Arizona, Florida, Louisiana, Oklahoma, New Mexico, or Mississippi.

Students may attend any Catholic graduate school in one of the states in which Catholic Life operates, or applicants may also be enrolled in an extension program or in The Catholic University of America School of Canon Law.

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# Report cites accomplishments and challenges in church response to abuse

By Carol Zimmermann

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Although the church has taken positive steps in its response to the clergy abuse crisis, more needs to be done, according to a five-year report on the crisis released Dec. 13 by the National Review Board, the lay group that oversees the U.S. Catholic bishops' compliance with child protection policies.

The report, addressed to U.S. Catholics on the fifth anniversary of the board's establishment, called the church's response to the abuse crisis "impressive" but also noted that its "work is only beginning."

It said church officials must do a better job of providing victims with the help they need and should also help Catholics at the parish level understand how best to respond to victims and their families. It also recommended church leaders provide "protection and restoration" for priests accused of abuse who are later found innocent and called for "greater speed" in investigating and responding to abuse allegations.

The report gave high marks to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' audit process, which monitors how dioceses are complying with the church's national standards for child protection programs, prevention of sexual abuse, and response to abuse allegations.

"Those audits provide substantial evidence of the bishops' efforts to protect children and respond to the abuses of the past and present," the report said. It noted that, as of 2006, 98 percent of dioceses and eparchies — the name for dioceses in the Eastern Catholic churches — have participated in the audits and have been found to be in full compliance.

The report said the audits have been published by the USCCB in annual reports in an "effort to maintain transparency."

Although the review board commended the audit process, it also said the audits were not enough and suggested that they be expanded to measure the "quality of the work that the dioceses and parishes are doing." To that end, the report recommended that the USCCB conduct random audits of parishes which could help establish "best practices in educational programs, victim care, background checks, and investigation of allegations."

In its section on the church's accomplishments, the report noted that more than 6 million children have participated in

*"Church efforts for prevention, healing, and vigilance will be demanded for the rest of our days."*

— Judge Michael Merz  
Chairman  
National Review Board

education programs and 1.6 million background investigations have taken place as part of diocesan safe-environment programs. It also said dioceses have established procedures to respond promptly to abuse allegations.

The review board stressed that educational programs and response procedures "cannot ensure that abuse will not take place" but can make certain that abuse is "less likely to occur" and will also address the needs of victims and their families.

The report also mentioned two studies on clerical sexual abuse commissioned by the U.S. bishops in their "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People."

The studies were conducted by the New York-based John Jay College of Criminal Justice. The first study, completed in 2004, looked at the nature and scope of the abuse crisis in the church. The second study, set for completion in 2009, will look at the causes and context of clerical sexual abuse.

The review board said it hoped the results of the ongoing study would provide "needed insights and recommendations."

In citing future challenges that the church will face as it continues to respond to the abuse crisis, the report said some issues are "not easily resolved" because they are so complex.

"One of the most significant issues is the need for greater understanding of victimization and its consequences," the report said. "Discussions with victims provide evidence of serious needs that still need to be addressed in order for victims and their families to find the healing that they need."

Another challenge highlighted in the report is the relationship of the church to its priests, "the vast majority of whom," it pointed out, "are not involved in scandal, but many of whom feel alienated from both the bishops and the laity." The report also stressed that the church needs to

"provide appropriate protection and restoration for those accused but later found innocent."

The report called for "greater speed in the process of determining credibility of allegations and consequent responses, as well as determination of an appropriate role for the church in the supervision of offenders."

It also pointed out that parishes can be "victims of sexual abuse" since parishioners often experience a sense of betrayal or outrage over accusations that lead to the removal of a pastor or associate. The report stressed that more attention should be given to parishioners who often do not know how to respond to abuse victims and their families.

The review board also cited the need to keep church members better informed on the positive responses the bishops have made and help them become more active observers of the programs and processes in their parishes and dioceses.

"Such communication is vitally important since the work of the National Review Board is strengthened by vigilant parents and parishioners who investigate the presence and quality of the programs in their parishes and dioceses," the report said.

It also made it clear that the responsibility to prevent abuse belonged to everyone. "The obligation to provide safe environments that prevent damage to children, young people, families, parishes, dioceses, and the church rests with all Catholics," it added.

Judge Michael Merz, chairman of the National Review Board, said the church's response to the abuse crisis will be ongoing.

"Church efforts for prevention, healing, and vigilance will be demanded for the rest of our days," he said in a Dec. 13 statement.

"The price of this crime is steep, both in the pain felt by victims and the shadow cast on the reputation of innocent Catholic priests," he added. "Most priests never have abused a child or even someone's trust in them, but they bear shame by association."

Merz noted the bishops have taken a strong approach to dealing with the abuse crisis, and he also stressed that sexual abuse of children is not a problem in the church alone. He said the bishops, as moral leaders, "must stand in the forefront of protecting children."

**Editor's Note:** The full report may be accessed online at [www.usccb.org/nrb/nrbreport2007.pdf](http://www.usccb.org/nrb/nrbreport2007.pdf).

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# Catholic leaders caution against 'The Golden Compass' movie

WASHINGTON (CNS)—The movie "The Golden Compass" has prompted a blizzard of words assailing the movie and the books on which it is based, as well as defenses of the film.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops announced Dec. 10 it was withdrawing a review of "The Golden Compass" prepared by its New York-based Office for Film & Broadcasting and originally posted on the USCCB and Catholic News Service Web sites Nov. 29.

The USCCB gave no reason for its decision, although the review itself had received a considerable amount of criticism among people distrustful of the anti-religionist bent of both the novels and their author.

"Today, I saw the movie. And I'm not going to change a word of what I've written as a result," said a Nov. 20 online posting by Jeffrey Overstreet, author of the book *Through a Screen Darkly*, a memoir and travelogue of "dangerous moviegoing," on his blog, the Looking Closer Journal.

"If the filmmakers tried to 'tone down' the anti-religious content, they pretty much failed. 'The Magisterium' is not a term invented by [book author] Philip Pullman. It's a reference to the Catholic Church, or at least to the truth that shines through Scripture and the history of the church. And it isn't hard to see that in the film."

The movie starring Nicole Kidman and Daniel Craig, which debuted in theaters Dec. 7, is based on the first book of British author Pullman's trilogy entitled *His Dark Materials*. The other two volumes are *The Subtle Knife* and *The Amber Spyglass*.

*His Dark Materials* recounts the adventures of Lyra Belacqua, a 12-year-old girl in an alternate universe that resembles our own. With the assistance of several other characters, she sets out to overthrow the Authority, which is God in Pullman's work. The novels depict him as a weak, false god, and, in the final book in the

trilogy, he actually dies.

"Nothing says 'dark irony' like a movie focused on blasting a 'Magisterium' using a group of, er, bishops, to sell itself," said Amy Welborn, a former Catholic News Service columnist, in a Dec. 4 posting on her blog, Charlotte Was Both. Last year she wrote the booklet "The Da Vinci Code Mysteries: What the Movie Doesn't Tell You," which was published a month before the film premiered in theaters.

Welborn mocked the reaction of some critics that "The Golden Compass" "is so, so valuable because it will give parents and young people a great opportunity to discuss the important issues raised by Pullman about religious authority, human freedom, and so on.... After we finish with 'The Golden Compass,' shall we break out 'The Protocols of the Elders of Zion' to open up discussion on Judaism? Probably not. Why? Because we recognize that the 'Protocols' are lies.... So it is with 'The Golden Compass.'"

In a joint review by Harry Forbes, director of the U.S. bishops' Office for Film & Broadcasting, and John Mulderig, a staff critic for the office, "The Golden Compass" was classified A-II — adults and adolescents — for "intense but bloodless fantasy violence, anti-clerical subtext, standard genre occult elements, a character born out of wedlock, and a whiskey-guzzling bear."

The now-withdrawn USCCB review rankled some in the blogosphere with its more positive than negative tone. It said: "This film — altered, as it is, from its source material — rates as intelligent and well-crafted entertainment.... Taken purely on its own cinematic terms, ['The Golden Compass'] can be viewed as an exciting adventure story with, at its core, a traditional struggle between good and evil, and a generalized rejection of authoritarianism."

The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, headed by Bill Donohue, had earlier called

for a boycott of the movie, and it maintained its position in a Dec. 3 statement.

"The Catholic League wants Christians to stay away from this movie precisely because it knows that the film is bait for the books: Unsuspecting parents who take their children to see the movie may be impelled to buy the three books as a Christmas present," it said. "And no parent who wants to bring their children up in the faith will want any part of these books."

Jesuit Father James Martin, associate editor of Jesuit-run *America* magazine, quoted an article by religion journalist and author Hanna Rosin saying that Christians were offended by the portrayal of religion in the books.

"In this case, I agree with [Bill] Donohue," Fr. Martin said in a Nov. 27 posting on the magazine's blog. "Rosin's article seems to warn that when parents buy their kids something [that] they expect to mirror *The Chronicles of Narnia*, they might be surprised — or appalled — when they learn that it's less like [Narnia author] C.S. Lewis than Christopher Hitchens," a high-profile anti-religionist who made the best-seller list this year with the book *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*.

In his column in the Nov. 24 issue of the *Clarion Herald*, newspaper of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, Archbishop Alfred C. Hughes alluded to "The Golden Compass" in his column, "The Lure of Atheism." "I do understand that the film is less blatant than the books but may serve as an inducement to the purchase of the books. Atheism is alive and well!" he said.

Archbishop Hughes added, "There is a spiritual war going on. The kingdom of Satan is at war with the kingdom of God. Rebellion, from the beginning, has been Satan's goal. His weapons are violence and deceit. In some ways, violence is easier to fight against."

## Archbishop Dolan named CRS board chairman

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan of Milwaukee has been appointed chairman of the board of directors of Catholic Relief Services, the U.S. bishops' overseas relief and development agency.

The appointment, confirmed by Cardinal Francis E. George of Chicago, president of the bishops' conference, was announced in a Dec. 13 news release.

Archbishop Dolan, a CRS

board member since January 2007, succeeds Bishop Robert N. Lynch of St. Petersburg, Florida, who had been chairman since 2001 and has been a member of the CRS board since 1995.

Ordained to the priesthood in 1979, then-Father Dolan was secretary to the apostolic nunciature in Washington for five years before serving as rector of the Pontifical North American College in Rome. In 2001 then-

Msgr. Dolan was ordained to the episcopate when he was appointed auxiliary bishop in his native St. Louis. A year later, he was appointed archbishop of Milwaukee.

"We are excited to welcome Archbishop Dolan as our new board chair and look forward to his leadership in our mission to assist the world's poor," said a statement from CRS president Ken Hackett.



**MEMORIAL SERVICE** — Father Robert F. "Roc" O'Connor, rector of the Jesuit community at Creighton University, leads a Dec. 6 community prayer service at St. John's Church on the Creighton University campus in Omaha, Nebraska, for victims of a shooting rampage at one of the city's shopping malls. Robert A. Hawkins, 19, of Bellevue, Nebraska, opened fire with a rifle inside the Von Maur department store at Westroads Mall Dec. 5, killing eight people and then himself, police said. Five others were wounded, including Jeff Schaffart, a graduate of the law school at Jesuit-run Creighton. (CNS photo/Don Doll, SJ)

## Pope OKs plenary indulgence for Lourdes' anniversary

By Carol Glatz

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — To mark the 150th anniversary of Mary's appearance to St. Bernadette Soubirous near Lourdes, France, Pope Benedict XVI authorized a special indulgence to encourage renewed holiness.

Catholics can receive a plenary indulgence for taking part in any public or private devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes, said U.S. Cardinal J. Francis Stafford, head of the Apostolic Penitentiary, a Vatican court dealing with indulgences and matters of conscience.

As Christians strive to become more holy, they can look to Mary who "calls the faithful to her son and his sacrifice and to the love of the Father," said the cardinal, quoting from *Lumen Gentium*, the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church.

The Vatican published the cardinal's statement announcing the indulgence and outlining the requirements for receiving it Dec. 5.

An indulgence is a remission of the temporal punishment due for sins committed. A plenary indulgence is the remission of all punishment.

Cardinal Stafford said the indulgence can also be applied to the souls of the faithful in purgatory.

Catholics can receive the indulgence during two time frames.

Pilgrims visiting the Massabielle grotto, where Mary appeared to St. Bernadette, can receive the indulgence during the Lourdes jubilee year, which runs from Dec. 8, the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, until Dec. 8, 2008.

Pilgrims who visit any public sanctuary, shrine, or other

worthy place dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes may receive the indulgence Feb. 2-11. Feb. 11 is the day the first of 18 apparitions occurred and is the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. Feb. 2 is the feast of the Presentation of the Lord.

Cardinal Stafford said that to obtain the special indulgence one must fulfill the normal requirements set by the church for all plenary indulgences; these include the person going to confession within a reasonably short period of time, receiving the Eucharist, and praying for the intentions of the pope, all in a spirit of total detachment from the attraction of sin.

Those who make a pilgrimage to Lourdes must visit the following sites, preferably in this order:

- The parish where St. Bernadette was baptized.
- The Soubirous family home.
- The Massabielle grotto.
- The chapel where St. Bernadette received her first Communion.

At each location the faithful should end their meditation by praying the Lord's Prayer, the creed, and the special jubilee prayer or a prayer to Mary.

Those visiting a holy place dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes in another part of the world Feb. 2-11 also should pray the Lord's Prayer, the creed, and the special jubilee prayer or a prayer to Mary.

Catholics who cannot visit Lourdes or join a communal service dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes because of illness or other serious reason could still earn the indulgence "in their own home or wherever they are" Feb. 2-11, Cardinal Stafford said.

# Viewpoints

## We gain a sense of wonder as we contemplate the symbols surrounding the birth of Jesus

By Lucas Pollice

**A**s we celebrate this Christmas season and once again hear the marvelous good news of Christ's birth proclaimed, most of us have become very familiar with the Christmas story and the events and circumstances that surround the nativity of Christ. But what do these stories and events really reveal to us?

You might be surprised how much meaning is contained within these simple and beautiful passages of Scripture. For as John Paul II states: "In the mystery of Christmas, the paschal mystery is already present. Jesus comes into the world to fulfill his mission of salvation which will culminate in his crucifixion and in the extraordinary event of his Resurrection" (*Angelus Message, Dec. 26, 1996*). With this in mind I would like to highlight some of the most important symbolism and meaning surrounding Christ's birth that reveal to us the Father's plan of salvation that will unfold in the life and mission of this amazing Christ Child:

### BETHLEHEM:

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

*But you, Bethlehem-Ephrathah too small to be among the clans of Judah, From you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel; Whose origin is from of old, from ancient times... He shall stand firm and shepherd his flock by the strength of the LORD, in the majestic name of the LORD, his God; And they shall remain, for now his greatness shall reach to the ends of the earth; he shall be peace. (Micah 5:2-4)*

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

*May we all during this Christmas season contemplate anew in our hearts the face of the infant Jesus, and through his great love and mercy revealed in the Incarnation, rediscover in our own lives our "holy childhood" before our heavenly Father.*

The young girls in this file photo are patiently waiting to play their roles as angels in their parish's annual children's Christmas pageant at St. John the Baptist Church in Wading River, New York. (CNS photo by Gregory A. Shemitz, LONG ISLAND CATHOLIC)

and drink for the world so that all may have life and have it in abundance.

### THE REJECTION AT THE INN:

The fact that Mary and Joseph were rejected at the inn because "there was no room" is a foreshadowing of the future rejection of Christ as the Messiah by the House of David that leads to his crucifixion and death. The rejection at the inn is also symbolic of humanity having no room for God in their hearts due to sin from which Christ comes to free us.

### THE SWADDLING CLOTHES:

After his birth, Mary wrapped Jesus in swaddling clothes. All of us who are parents know that it is still very much the norm to wrap a baby in a blanket or a cloth to keep him or her warm and safe.

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

### THE MANGER:

Christ was not laid in a crib or a bed, but was placed in a manger in the stable. A manger is a feeding trough for animals that held hay or other food. Again we have the Eucharistic theme: Jesus who is the "true bread that comes down from heaven" is born in the city named the "house of bread" and is born into a manger which feeds the flocks of the shepherd. Thus, Jesus is the Good Shepherd who gives his life so that he may feed his flock and give them eternal life.

### THE SHEPHERDS IN THE FIELD:

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

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

Christmas is also a time in which we once again are called to contemplate the face of Christ, in particular the face of the infant Jesus who loves us with a pure and unconditional love that is

so simple yet so profound. Christmas certainly seems to bring out the child in all of us, and it should also bring about the simple child-like faith that we are all called to have.

It is so easy in our complicated world to complicate even our spiritual lives and relationship with God. During this holy season of Christmas, I am always reminded of St. Therese of Lisieux, young Carmelite nun who lived in the last part of the 19th century. St. Therese had a very special devotion to the child Jesus, and she lived a simple life of spirituality and love. Her spirituality was called the "little way," and it consisted of daily offering to God simple acts of love and sacrifice that blossomed into a profound and burning love for God and neighbor.

Therese embodied in her life and spirituality the simple love of God that is revealed to us by the infant Jesus at Christmas. This love and spirituality is beautifully articulated in her autobiography *A Story of a Soul* which is a must read for any Catholic and would be particularly great reading during the season of Christmas. St. Therese was truly a child before God, and her spirituality was so profound that Pope John Paul II proclaimed her a Doctor of the Church in 1997 saying:

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

May we all during this Christmas season contemplate anew in our hearts the face of the infant Jesus, and through his great love and mercy revealed in the Incarnation, rediscover in our own lives our "holy childhood" before our heavenly Father. Merry Christmas!



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 four children, Cecilia, Nicholas, Timothy, and Christian.

# Guess who came to Egypt with no papers

By Jeff Hensley

Just last week, one of my wife's English as a Second Language students came to her with tears of pain streaking his face. He had a very bad toothache.

He had gone to our local "charity hospital" and been refused treatment unless he could fork over \$500.

My wife's response was to want to bundle him up and carry him to the front door of a candidate for political office, part of whose platform has included getting state law to line up with Tarant County's policy of refusing to pay for medical services for illegal immigrants. She didn't, of course, but it was a good thought.

She would have confronted him with both the teenager and the question, "How would you respond if this were one of your children?" That question has an easy answer, easy for any one of us, even if we think we have fixed ideas on how to treat immigrants without papers.

At this time of year we put a lot of attention on a very famous, well-known, even revered, illegal immigrant. He would have qualified as a refugee, since there was a credible threat of physical harm. Those who sought to take his life did take the lives of all male children around his age, so even our laws would have allowed his refuge here. Fortunately there weren't even any papers or court proceedings in Egypt at the time. Jesus was "home" free.

But now there are laws. And there is enforcement. And there is xenophobia, fear of strangers, specifically, fear of those recently arrived from Mexico, who are merely fleeing hunger and lack of opportunity.

But as the Vatican is pointing out to us in recent pronouncements, even they are not

*At this time of year we put a lot of attention on a very famous, well-known, even revered, illegal immigrant.*

criminals. The laws broken by illegal immigrants in seeking economic asylum are civil laws, not criminal laws.

But even if compassion fails to move us, even if arguments from a Christian point of view fail to get our attention, there are other things at stake here. There's a huge amount of self-interest involved in welcoming the immigrants and treating them as we ourselves would want to be treated (Isn't that from Scripture? Isn't it called The Golden Rule?)

As someone who just turned 60, I'm particularly sensitive to this self-interest set of arguments. I'm delighted to see this reasoning showing up in columns from political pundits. A friend, having heard the arguments from me, was happy to pass along an article from the *Wall Street Journal* with all but one of them. I'll come back to that one in a bit.

These arguments have to do with the soon-to-be-failing Social Security system. If those under 40, particularly, want to see any money coming back from that system when they need it, they need to be working to get illegal immigrants legal — legal and paying into the system. And not only do they want to see them paying into the system, they want them doing well economically, educated to the maximum consistent with their intelligence and skills. And they want their children to be healthy and also educated as well as possible, so they can achieve and make their own contributions to our society, while supporting

their own children, who can be expected to do even better than they have.

And of course we should be wanting these things and advocating for these things because we believe they are right, because they are consistent with Catholic Social Teaching, consistent with what both the Vatican and our bishops, acting in concert through the USCCB are telling us.

And none of this is inconsistent with making our borders secure. But for those already with us, already making our hamburgers, steaks, tacos, soups, and salads; for those who are taking care of our children, planting, picking, and packing our food, and waiting on us in our restaurants; for those working in our nursing homes and factories and doctors' offices and other places of business, we need for them to do well. We need their labor.

We lost the option of making them legal when we failed to keep *Roe v. Wade* from coming onto the American scene. Whether you use the number 30 million or 40 million or even more; whatever unimaginably large number of aborted children you want to use for the past 34 years of carnage, we have a tremendous hole in the American labor force that the illegal and legal immigrants are only partially filling.

Even economists are now admitting that the hole is there, but because it's the huge blind spot in those who comment on the American social scene in the secular arena, no one is say-

SEE HENSLEY, P. 26



A spot  
of tea  
and

## Christmas Memories

By Kathy Cribari Hamer

When she comes to my house, the first thing my four-year-old granddaughter Natalie wants is a cup of tea. Not just any cup of tea. She wants it poured from a silver teapot, into her great-grandmother's antique china cup.

She wants to sit at the dining room table, munching on cookies that have been spread on a china saucer. Sometimes she wants sprinkles on her cookies. Those do not have to be baked onto the cookies, nor do they need to be on the china saucer with the cookies. They can be — and usually are — sprinkled on the table and the floor.

Natalie doesn't care what kind of tea it is. It need not be herbal tea, nor to have been imported from Japan or the Mediterranean. The tea need not make you calm, nor soothe your throat.

The tea doesn't have to be sereni-tea, or sinceri-tea, two kinds I recently purchased in a gift shop that has excellent marketing sensitivi-tea. I bought some sereni-tea, but so far have not had an opportuni-tea to note any difference in my mentali-tea.

Natalie doesn't care about any of that. In fact, she doesn't care if it is tea at all. Natalie seems equally happy drinking imaginary tea. Air tea.

My beautiful Nattie loves to sit at Grammie's table pouring daintily, munching politely, and enjoying the endearing click of cup to saucer. Grammie enjoys the absence of clicking, and applauds the absence of dropping and shattering.

Sam loves his other grandma's house, in Kansas, where it is a family tradition to save a lavish collection of autumn leaves in their huge, tree-studded backyard. Grandma and Papa do not rake until late November, so during the children's Thanksgiving visit, when the backyard becomes an oak-and-maple-leaf trampoline, the children can savor the fall, running and jumping on the leaves, the crisp air kissing their cheeks and noses.

For parents and grandparents, watching the children reminds them of those times of joy in their own lives, years before, when the fun was their own, along with the security and comfort that accompanied it.

Children know their grandparents' homes like they know the mothers' and fathers' arms.

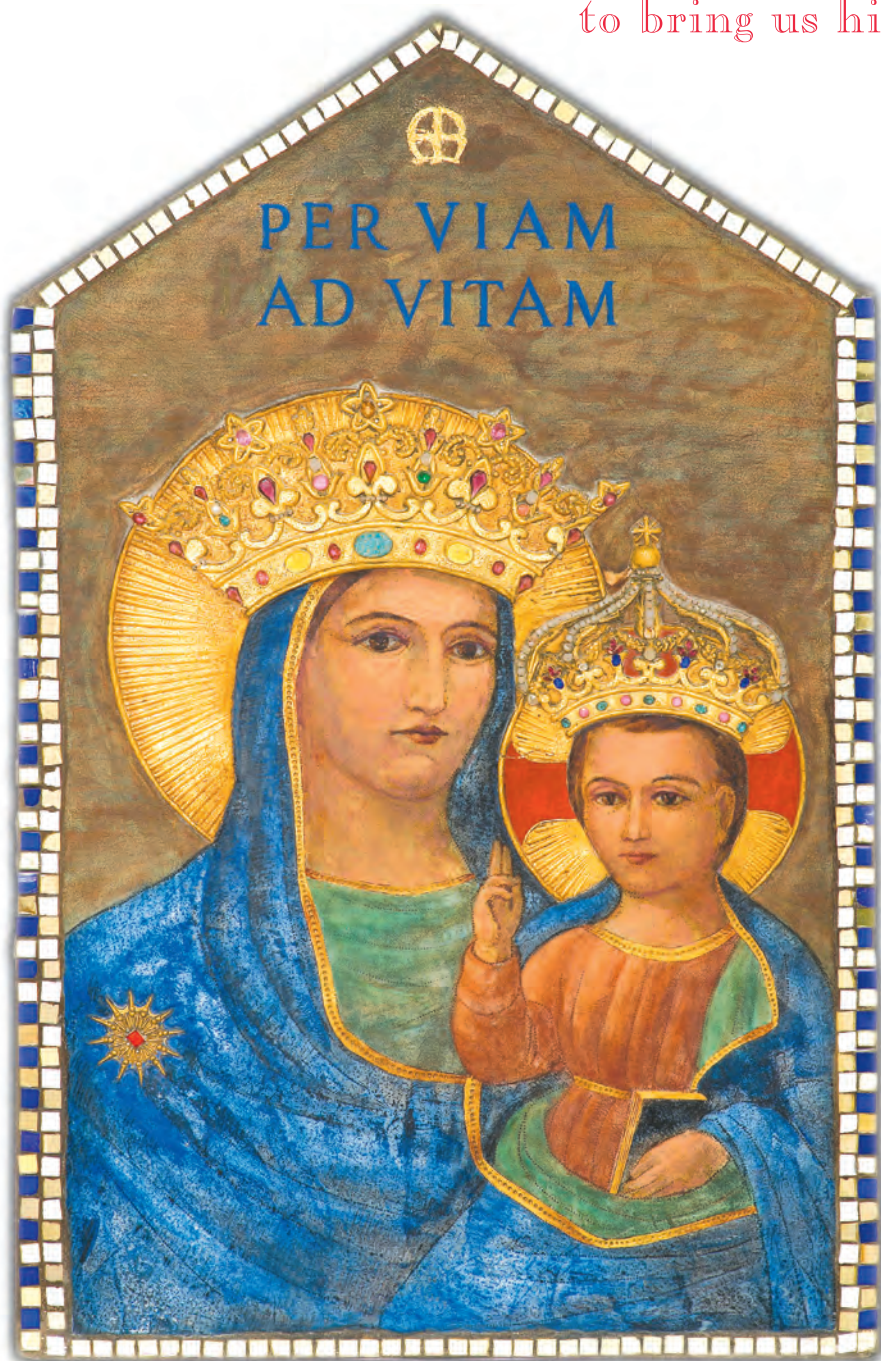
The comfort of Mommy's and Daddy's arms comes from repeated parental embraces in times of fear, doubt, and oh yeah — hunger. The ongoing joys of grandparents' houses come from the tiniest memories that, like the silver teapot, have acquired a splendid patina from years of periodic use.

When Sam and Nattie spend the night at my house at Christmastime, I watch them, never hurrying them, as they walk around to their favorite places. They are drawn to the same things: a glass box filled with unusual marbles; a basketful of action figures — everyone from

SEE HAMER, P. 26

# Christmas brings us JESUS!

despite loss, sorrow, and our unseeing eyes, He's there  
to bring us his joy and peace and life



*This work depicting Mary and the Christ Child, by Chicago artist Melville Steinfelds, hangs in the Madonna della Strada (Our Lady of the Way) Chapel on the grounds of Loyola University Chicago. The Dec. 25 Christmas feast commemorates the birth of Christ. The Christmas season begins with the Dec. 24 evening vigil and ends on the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, which is Jan. 13 in 2008. (CNS PHOTO/BART HARRIS, COURTESY OF LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO)*

## Food for Thought

**W**e think of our loved ones at Christmas. They ground us, affirm our worth as human beings. When someone precious to us dies, our sense of well-being is altered.

But we are not without hope.

In his Angelus address on Christmas Eve 2006, Pope Benedict XVI reminded us:

“It is true, we are all here in passing, but it is precisely Jesus who makes us feel at home on this earth, sanctified by his presence. He asks us, however, to make it a home in which all are welcome.

“The surprising gift of Christmas is exactly this: Jesus came for each one of us.”

So the person of Jesus is a constant in our lives that we can cling to. He will not pass us by. In fact, he still has work for the living to do.

Because each person is precious in the sight of God, the pope said, “The corresponding duty is to increasingly overcome preconceptions and prejudices, to break down barriers and eliminate the differences that divide us, or worse, that set individuals and peoples against one another, in order to build together a world of justice and peace.”

Carole Norris Greene  
Associate Editor, Faith Alive!  
Catholic News Service

## A Christmas miracle of wire and flannel

By Father Stan Konieczny  
Catholic News Service

**D**uring my first Christmas as a priest, the children of my parish taught me a valuable lesson. Through their enthusiasm and innocence, I learned that the hope of Christmas can transform the practical and mundane into the holy.

St. Augustine of Canterbury Parish School has its own distinct traditions, one of which is the Energy Club. The students who belong to it volunteer after school to lead recycling drives, promote good ecological practices on the parish campus and assist with some light groundskeeping chores.

Last Christmas the Energy Club decided to take on a new task: holiday decorating. Members figured they could easily add this to their growing repertoire, and

the new priest at the parish would be an easy mark as collaborator.

They barraged me after school one autumn afternoon in the parking lot. Excitedly they shared their plans to decorate the nearby shrine to Mary with garlands and lights. They also wanted funds to buy a nearly life-sized creche from a local hardware store that would be “perfect” for the holiday display. “It’s on sale, Father,” they cried in chorus.

After a bit of creche shopping of my own and subjecting them to a suitable number of suspense-filled days, I agreed to the project.

“There have to be some conditions, though,” I explained. “I do not want to have to chase after Nativity scene figures blowing down the street on a blustery day. I want them secured to that wrought iron around Mary.”

The teens’ grinning faces turned solemn as they nodded in



*“In a touching addition, one of the Energy Club members had tucked the figure under a swatch of soft, blue flannel,” writes Father Stan Konieczny. (CNS PHOTO ILLUSTRATION/BOB ROLLER)*

agreement.

“And,” I added, trying to sound authoritative, “I do not want the Christ child carried off by some pranksters. Make sure he is secured as well.”

With those words of caution I left the Energy Club to begin planning their project.

Weeks went by without another thought of the club’s holiday ambitions. I even thought that perhaps they gave up on the entire project.

Then one evening as I walked over to the church for Mass, I stopped dead in my tracks. Twinkling blue Christmas lights surrounded the Mary shrine. Small spotlights focused attention on Mary and Joseph as they stood securely beside wrought-iron posts.

The Christ child was the center of attention. In a touching addition, one of the Energy Club members tucked the figure under

a swatch of soft blue flannel. That impromptu layette made me think of the poverty of the first Christmas. It was a holy moment for me.

The next morning, I walked over to the school to congratulate the Energy Club after the morning assembly. And I said it was a nice touch to cover up the Baby Jesus.

One of the girls replied, “Well, Father, the baby Jesus did look a little cold lying there, and we had to cover up all the wires that you made us use to tie him down!”

The practical becomes holy.

That is the hope, the miracle of Christmas.

*Father Stan Konieczny, the associate pastor of St. Augustine of Canterbury Parish, Belleville, Illinois, is a long-time contributor to the Catholic News Service Christmas package.*

## Christmas brings us Jesus!

# At the center of Christmas: Love

By Dolores R. Leckey  
Catholic News Service

Christmas is about love. Of course, you say; all the advertising and merriment declare that gift-giving is a sign of love. And so it is.

But what is the underlying meaning of exchanging gifts and gathering friends and family?

How we understand our nuanced meanings is found in the history of Christmas situated in the narrative of a baby born in the town of Bethlehem, in a country under Roman occupation, to Mary, a woman from the village of Nazareth. All other stories surrounding this central one are about the effect of the child's life on others.

The stories of this child's first days and months on earth are stories of high drama: Extraordinary people come to visit the child, the person in authority (Herod) tries to kill him; his family flees their homeland and takes him to an alien place for safety where they all are refugees.

The beginning of the Christmas story is not like a Norman Rockwell painting.

Over the centuries, as the story of Jesus' birth and early childhood has been told, other children moved to the center of the ongoing narrative. We have Christmas tales that describe how "the stockings were hung by the



This angel waits backstage for her big moment during the Christmas Pageant at St. Theodore Church in Gates, New York in this file photo. (CNS photo, Mike Crupi, Catholic Courier)

chimney with care," and the next morning the stockings were filled with good things for the children of the house.

We all have our piece of the ongoing Christmas story. Here is mine.

In 2003, six months after the death of my husband Tom, I wondered how I would maneuver my way through the merriment that is rightly part of the Christmas story. The truth is, I did more than wonder — I dreaded the holy holiday.

Memories of Christmases past

were very present in my mind. In recent years with our children grown and busy with their children, Tom and I enjoyed the quietude of Christmas Eve, the joy of simply being together before the busyness of Christmas Day and the usual family dinner at our house.

Tom always filled a Christmas stocking for me, small treasures repeated year after year, and I came to count on this part of the Christmas Eve ritual. I didn't know how I would face "an empty stocking," symbolic perhaps of the empty place in my life.

However, Christmas Eve brought surprising grace. And once again children old and young led the way.

Granddaughter Monica was an angel at a Christmas Eve Mass, so that solved the problem of where to worship. After Mass we gathered at the home of our son Tom and his family.

Most of the grandchildren visiting that first Christmas without their grandfather had rehearsed Christmas carols accompanied by various musical instruments. This musical offering was done with seriousness and skill — and obviously lots of practice.

One of the glories of Christmas is music! Their pageant brought to mind an unpublished poem by Bishop Robert F. Morneau of Green Bay, Wisconsin, "Christ-

mas Concert":

*They made music —  
Children in white robes,  
Adults in formal dress,  
The symphony with shining  
instruments.  
The sounds washed over us,  
Winter pilgrims housed in the  
concert hall,  
Safe from the cold, dark  
arctic air.  
We sang of Jesus and his joy to  
the world;  
Handel showed up with his  
sidekick Isaiah;  
And, of course, Franz Gruber  
allowed us to sing together  
'Stille Nacht.'  
Two hours of beauty  
For the ear and eye,  
And then we ventured back  
into the winter's dark and cold,  
Warmed by the music,  
Graced by the light of a  
Christmas star.*

Returning home and settling into my annual reading of the Christmas Eve section of Washington Irving's "The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon," I knew the hurdle of Christmas Eve without my husband had been overcome.

When I started for bed I was stunned to see a stocking hanging on the mantle, unnoticed during my reading time. After some hesitation, I emptied the contents so similar to other years: a hummingbird pin, a jar of jam, some

pens — and the giveaway — a copy of Tom Stoppard's play, "Arcadia," a favorite of my daughter Celia. Obviously Celia had been at work between the Mass and the meal at her brother's.

I went to sleep feeling surrounded by beatitude — the hospitality of family, which I had been reading about in the "Sketchbook."

The next morning I was at peace, ready to prepare a Christmas meal for my family.

At the end of the day as everyone was heading out the door for their own homes, my son Tom announced this year "a wonderful Christmas!"

And so it was. But why? What made his holy holiday so rich for us?

I think two forces were at work to make it so One was the conscious exchange of love within the family; each of us was looking out for the others.

The second was simply Christmas itself, an event so much larger than any of our individual lives or our separate sorrows.

Christmas is Christmas, and it carries itself.

*Dolores Leckey is a senior fellow at Woodstock Theological Center, Georgetown University. This account of Christmas will appear in her book VESPER TIME, set for publication in 2009.*

## Being true to the spirit of Christmas (NOT AS SIMPLE AS I AT FIRST THOUGHT)

By Sharon K. Perkins  
Correspondent

This Christmas, my minivan is sporting something new in honor of the holidays—not a lighted auto wreath — but a magnetic cut-out depicting the silhouette of Mary and Joseph in the manger and prominently displaying the words, "KEEP CHRIST IN CHRISTMAS."

I put it there on the first weekend of Advent as a form of protest after I became exasperated at all the trappings that appeared in the store aisles immediately after Halloween. I was becoming discouraged by the numbers of children in our parish religious education program whose parents didn't attend Mass, much less observe Advent at home.

I had become so incensed by the number of advertising circulars doubling the bulk of my Sunday paper, I affixed the sign to my car — reasoning that by my action I could "light one small candle" instead of "cursing the darkness." I also reasoned that I needed the reminder as much as

my tailgaters, and I was determined to live up to the challenge.

It didn't work — at least not entirely. The first purple candle on our Advent wreath had barely stopped smoldering when my youngest child and I became engrossed in the movie, "The Polar Express" — one of those 25 consecutive Christmas films that airs during December. Of course, it featured a quest for the North Pole and Santa, not the trek to find Jesus in the manger.

And the St. Nicholas Day package I shipped to my college student had a popular DVD and a gift card to the Gap packed atop the Advent calendar and candles.

I resisted putting up my Christmas decorations too early, even as I feverishly shopped online for just the right gifts. The final capitulation was renting and watching (twice!) the classic film "White Christmas;" I guess I was compensating for those Christmas Eves during my teen years when the local TV station had the audacity to air the movie just as our family was leaving for midnight Mass (we didn't have Tivo then),

*Maybe it's not  
Always as  
conspicuous as a  
magnetic bumper  
sticker, but the  
signs are all  
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look closely.*

and I found myself dragging my feet all the way to the car.

Although my resolve this year had been firm and I wasn't totally "selling out," I found myself engaged in a persistent tug-of-war between the secular and the sacred, between resistance and surrender, which seemed to give the lie to that magnetic bumper sticker. Surely, I thought, there must be a way to be "in the world but not of it," especially where Christmas preparations were concerned.

A reflection on one of the Advent Scripture readings helped me put things in perspective. The prophet Isaiah described

the coming of the Lord as a time when "the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid" (Isaiah 11:6). As unimaginable as it seemed, these creatures would not only co-exist but thrive despite their traditional enmity.

Could it be that in my well-meaning attempts to preserve the "religious" sense of Christmas, I was missing some important revelations at work in the "secular"?

I guess when I thought about it, the message of the "Polar Express" wasn't just about Santa — it was about retaining a child-like faith. Didn't Jesus say something about that?

And I guess following that impulse to drop whatever I was doing and share the movie with my child counted for something. Shipping that package to my eldest and laughing about the DVD's title — "How to Lose a Guy in Ten Days" — opened the door to some really meaningful mother-daughter conversation. Shopping for Christmas presents online became an exercise in good stewardship of resources.

And White Christmas wasn't just about snow — its story line featured two people who had misjudged each other, almost lost their chance at love, and reconciled in the end. Sort of like my restorative participation in the parish's Advent Reconciliation service, after a long absence from the sacrament had dulled my zeal.

For me, "Keeping Christ in Christmas" this year has meant a departure from the "sacred/secular" dichotomy to an appreciation of Christ's breaking into our lives in all sorts of unexpected — and even non-religious — ways. Maybe it's not always as conspicuous as a magnetic bumper sticker, but the signs are all around us, if we look closely.

*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. They are former members of St. Rita Parish on the East Side of Fort Worth and Sharon coordinated the first diocesan Synod.*

## Christmas brings us Jesus!

## Christmas, and the divinity of Christ

By Father John Catoir  
Catholic News Service

Every Christmas we have the opportunity to reaffirm our faith in the Lord. The secularization of the Christmas holiday has weakened the faith of many. However, to the rescue comes Pope Benedict XVI with his new book, *Jesus of Nazareth*. It is a beautifully written defense of the divinity of Jesus.

The pope makes the Incarnation the central issue in every part of the Gospel. The joy of the Christmas season is based on the belief that God came to us in the form of man: "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost" (*Luke 19:10*). "For us men and for our salvation, he came down from heaven.... He was born of the Virgin Mary and became man" (*The Nicene Creed*).



Father John Catoir finds Pope Benedict XVI's new book *JESUS OF NAZARETH* a strong statement of the link between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith. This file photo of the figure of the baby Jesus is seen during Christmas Eve Mass at St. Esprit Cathedral in Istanbul, Turkey. (CNS PHOTO FROM REUTERS)

Modern secular Scripture scholars have challenged this mystery for decades, treating the texts solely as literary works and discarding the faith perspective in their interpretations.

They distinguish between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith, saying that the Scriptures have often reflected later influences coming from the faith of the

Gospel writers, not from actual firsthand witness.

Demythologizing the Scriptures is a legitimate study, but it goes off track when it contradicts the truths of revelation.

In his book, Pope Benedict demonstrates the limitations of the historical-critical method of interpreting Scripture and insists that there is a need for a fuller,

more integrated theological perspective in order to supplement the exegeses.

Pope Benedict XVI sees no difference between the Christ of faith and the historical person of Jesus. In unifying the two he presents a simple, integrated view of the person of Jesus, and even refers to the kingdom of God as Jesus Christ personified.

The Holy Father says, "This book is not meant to be a pronouncement of the magisterium.... It is my personal search 'for the face of the Lord.'"

One of my favorite passages is when Pope Benedict cites the Lord's disagreements with the authorities of the time. Here Jesus uses the expression "I am," which means "Yahweh."

It was a bold assertion of his mission and his divinity, and the Pharisees saw it as such. They considered it pure blasphemy and became infuriated. Shortly afterward they began planning Jesus' crucifixion.

Pope Benedict also shows how Jesus was called the Logos (the Word) in St. John's Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (*John 1:1,14*).

This means that God is fully manifested and glorified in the person of the historical Jesus, right

from his infancy in Bethlehem.

The importance of Pope Benedict's book cannot be overestimated. It restores the simplicity of the Christmas story to its traditional place in the history of Christianity.

*Jesus of Nazareth* already has its opponents. Father Joseph S. O'Leary, an English literature teacher at Sophia University in Tokyo, said this about the book's impact: "A whole century of New Testament scholarship will now have to be radically corrected, and largely jettisoned" (*National Catholic Reporter*, 9/27/07).

Doctrinal teachings about the divinity of Jesus in the fourth century were all based on the faith of the primitive Christian community expressed in the New Testament. The message has always been the same and quite simple; namely, we are destined for eternal life. To get there we all need to acknowledge our dependence upon Jesus as Lord, who said, "Without me you can do nothing" (*John 15:5*).

Father John Catoir is the founder and president of St. Jude Media Ministries, a national radio ministry reaching out to lapsed Catholics and the unchurched. He is a former director of The Christophers and a past president of the Catholic Press Association of the U.S. and Canada.

## The man who put the Christmas message in a timeless story

By Antoinette Bosco  
Catholic News Service

My house is loaded with books, many of them purchased at used book sales. I intend to read all of them "someday."

This week I noticed one bought a long while ago. It had two great names on the dust jacket, *Charles Dickens: The Last of the Great Men*, by G.K. Chesterton.

Thinking of Dickens' great *A Christmas Carol*, I picked up Chesterton's book and read it in one sitting, so taken was I with Chesterton's wonderful writing.

Chesterton, a Catholic convert, said Dickens felt "comradship and serious joy are not interludes in our travel; but rather, our travels are interludes in comradship and joy, which through God shall endure forever."

His words had me reflecting on Dickens' story and remembering that he himself once said he hoped it would "pleasantly haunt



This reproduction of a hand-colored etching is one eight illustrations created by John Leech for the 1843 publication of Charles Dickens' classic tale, *A CHRISTMAS CAROL*. (ILLUSTRATION COURTESY OF CHARLESDICKENSPAGE.COM)

the lives" of his audiences; and it has, generations of them.

As for why, it certainly is because Dickens dealt with the two ultimate themes of existence — life and death — and with human failing. That failing, of course, is the love of money, which so easily carries one to the extreme of crowding out all the really good things in life.

When money becomes one's

"god," the next logical need is to have power. For without power, you cannot protect your money.

Dickens' character Scrooge exercises his power over his employee, Bob Cratchit, bleeding every ounce of labor from him to protect and increase his own wealth.

Cratchit, a man who values fidelity to his family, accepts this exploitation in order to keep his

job and support those who are dependent upon him. He also bears a cross — knowing he cannot provide the medical care needed by his son Tiny Tim. Thus the child faces an early death.

As the story progresses, Dickens creates an eerie setting that forces Scrooge to face his own evil and the death to which this evil will lead.

It may seem strange that a Christmas story deals with death, for Christmas is a time of birth — the greatest birth ever.

But that's the seduction of *A Christmas Carol*. By undergoing his symbolic death, Scrooge realizes how he lost his life, and he asks for forgiveness and another chance. It is a wish that is granted to him.

Dickens' story then becomes a tale of life renewed. In the rebirth of Scrooge and the saving of Tiny Tim, *A Christmas Carol* is a renewal of the Christmas message of hope and redemption, and so it lives on.

I got the sense that I was supposed to write about Charles Dickens this Christmas because when I put down Chesterton's book I picked up another small book that had numerous biographies of men of science and litera-

ture. There I found some personal writings of Charles Dickens, a father of nine, who died suddenly at age 58.

In a letter to his son Edward who was leaving for Australia, Dickens wrote, "I put a New Testament among your books ... because it is the best book that ever was or will be known in the world...."

"You will therefore understand the better that I now most solemnly impress upon you the truth and beauty of the Christian religion, as it came from Christ himself, and the impossibility of your going far wrong if you humbly but heartily respect it."

His message is beautifully appropriate for Advent!

Antoinette Bosco is the author of a number of books, including her most recent, *MOTHER BENEDICT, FOUNDRESS OF THE ABBEY OF REGINA LAUDIS; COINCIDENCES: TOUCHED BY A MIRACLE; and THE PUMMELED HEART: FINDING PEACE THROUGH PAIN*. Her Web site has more information about this remarkable writer who has worked as a writer and editor in both the Catholic and secular press for more than 50 years: [antoinettebosco.com](http://antoinettebosco.com).

## Christmas brings us Jesus!

# The fullness at the heart of Christmas

By **Janaan Manternach**  
Catholic News Service

Christmas 2007 will be different for the families of Lady Bird Johnson, Luciano Pavarotti, mime artist Marcel Marceau and many others who have died this year.

In my own family the loss of both my mother and husband six months apart colors Christmas differently for me too.

My mother died on Jan. 13 from old age; she was 103, sound of mind and almost ready to go.

My husband died on July 12; he was 78 and had Alzheimer's. I'll never know whether Carl was ready to go because there were moments when he sensed the inevitable and became visibly sad.

When we ponder Christmas, prepare for it and talk about it, it's nearly always in terms of the coming of a child into the world.



"I thank God for faith that assures me that death is also a beginning, a birth into new life, a different Christmas," writes Janaan Manternach. In this file photo two women share a laugh at the annual Boston Community of Sant'Egidio Christmas party at Boston College in 2005. (CNS PHOTO BY WILLIAM B. PLOWMAN)

There's no one more full of life than a child. That fullness is at the heart of Christmas because the child we remember coming into our world is Jesus.

Death is a whole other story. It's an ending moment for someone once as full of life as that Christmas child. And unless death is sudden, there's a waiting period.

Like the solemn waiting and preparing for the coming of Jesus,

the waiting for someone to die is also solemn, but this solemnity is often without the joy that permeates Advent and Christmas. It's often a period so painful that the memory of it refuses to quit for months, sometimes years.

I've always loved Christmas. Our home took on the Christmas spirit with an Advent wreath, a decorated tree, a creche, dinner parties and gifts, and midnight

Mass or an earlier celebration.

Now I must connect the "endings" that the deaths of my mother and husband are, with the beginning that is Christmas.

I thank God for faith that assures me that death is also a beginning, a birth into new life, a different Christmas, so to speak. I'll need my faith as this new truth that Mom and Carl are dead tries to eclipse the beliefs that I so easily wrote about in religion curriculum and spoke about in talks and workshops for decades.

This Christmas I'm up against a challenge I have hitherto not known. I'd like to totally escape the season, but that's not possible! So I've come up with a plan to face it, to feel it, and appreciate all it is trying to help me focus on: the person of Christ incarnate!

I already meditate daily, and throughout this Christmas season I am praying about a new beginning without Carl and Mom.

At Stonehill Franciscan Care Center in Dubuque, Iowa, there are two women, Eileen Fassbinder and Shirley Lang, who ate at the same table day after day with Mom, Carl, and me. They became friends, and I'm keenly aware that they would like me to visit.

While I've selfishly avoided both them and Stonehill, I plan to break through the loneliness I identify with that place and welcome their friendships once more.

In addition, I plan to break down that wall I come up against every time I want to write thank you notes to the many people who sent sympathy cards and gifts following my losses.

This Christmas I'm also planning a new attempt at stillness, a different way of entering into silence by looking honestly at those times when I was unkind to Carl in particular, at stuff I preferred to keep hidden and not deal with.

I'm beginning to realize that in order to forgive myself, to become whole without Carl, I need to renew my belief in God's comforting promise of forgiveness. I need to ponder and accept the truth that Christ, whose love is boundless, came precisely to wipe away sin — and tears.

*Janaan Manternach is a veteran catechist and freelance writer in Dubuque, Iowa. She is a long-time contributor to Catholic News Service's Faith Alive! religious education packages.*

## Christmas with the Little Sisters of the Poor

By **Maureen E. Daly**  
Catholic News Service

What does Christmas mean to those who have outlived most of their family? How does someone with very little money, frail health, limited strength, celebrate the season?

Three elderly persons who live with the Little Sisters of the Poor at St. Martin's Home in Catonsville, Maryland, took some time on a blustery fall evening to speak about the meaning of Christmas and how they feel the feast should be kept.

For Deacon Phillip W. Harcum, age 81, "Christmas is very important because of the need. It is a time of people reaching out to people. Folks know there is a need and try to answer it."

For many years Deacon Harcum was the man who saw that needs were met, filling Christmas

baskets for more than 200 families each year.

As a deacon at St. Bernardine Parish in West Baltimore during the 1980s and 1990s, he identified families who needed food, a turkey, and gifts at Christmas. Then he worked with the nearby more affluent parish of St. William of York to collect the donations that filled the baskets.

The annual project helped the people who received the baskets, and it also gave people who wanted to be generous a chance to give where they were needed, he said.

Deacon Harcum has no children, but he helped his mother raise his nephew.

"Christmas," he said, "is for keeping the family close together. It is not as much sharing gifts as sharing the love they have for each other. That's the important thing."

"I love Christmas. I always have and so did my husband," said Rose Dente, 95, who moved in with the Little Sisters of the Poor in 1975, not long after she was widowed. Dente said she was once known for her cooking at large Sunday gatherings.

She used to make a Christmas cake "and put the baby Jesus in a crib on top." She used to send



For the members of the Sant'Egidio community of Boston serving their elderly friends and the children from the School of Peace after-school program at their annual Christmas party, Christmas is all about service and the gifts we bring to others. Deacon Phillip Harcum shares similar thoughts about the season of the Lord's birth in Maureen Daly's interview with him at St. Martin's Home in Catonsville, Maryland, where the Little Sisters of the Poor now care for him. (CNS PHOTO BY WILLIAM B. PLOWMAN)

many Christmas cards, but she has cut back, concerned about the cost of postage.

And Christmas gifts? She said they come almost last. "I focus on Jesus because it is his birthday," she explained.

But Dente does not miss those activities. She feels blessed with good health and a sense of humor.

Now, she said, it comes down to this: "The answer is love. Love is the magic word that will get you into heaven."

"I have practically nobody," said Dolores Wachter, 71, "and this can be a lonely time."

Wachter has lived with the Little Sisters for eight years. Christmas, she says, "is a time when we

all come together. You don't have that any other time of year. That's important, even though we may complain about it."

Wachter worked in Catholic social services for 36 years and was a longtime volunteer at a women's shelter. She noticed that some volunteers "could get resentful that people were not sufficiently grateful. I haven't seen that here. Everything we receive comes from the heart."

Wachter said she learned from her work, "Give with a loving heart, expecting nothing, and there will be a great response."

Sister Geraldine Harvie, 67, the superior at St. Martin's Home, said two highlights of the Christmas season are inviting guests to a big family dinner and visiting corporations to ask for donations.

"We are the residents' family, and they are our family," said Sr. Harvie. "We as sisters don't possess anything, don't own anything, but we don't want for anything. And the Lord provides a hundredfold."

*Maureen Daly is a freelance writer and editor in Baltimore, Maryland. She is a former editor of the Faith Alive! and columns packages for Catholic News Service.*

At the diocesan Ministerium, Bishop Kicanas of Tucson, Arizona, tells priests, deacons, religious, and lay ecclesial ministers that

# 'Your ministry is a gift and a blessing to the church'

STORY BY  
NICKI PREVOU

PHOTOS BY  
THAN NGUYEN



**Above:** Speaking without notes and encouraging discussion among Ministerium participants, Bishop Gerald Kicanas offers his insights on the spiritual and theological foundation of "Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord." The document on lay ecclesial ministry was approved by the U.S. bishops in November 2005.

**Above:** Bishop Kevin Vann offers his thanks to Bishop Gerald Kicanas at the conclusion of the day. The bishop also took the opportunity to congratulate Msgr. Charles King on the 51st anniversary of his ordination (Dec. 16), and Father George Foley on the 49th anniversary of his ordination (Nov. 30).



Sister Yolanda Cruz, SSMN, (left) translates Bishop Kicanas' remarks into Spanish as he speaks, while Sister Micaela Diaz, MCSH, (above) of Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Fort Worth, listens to the translation on a headset.

**FROM PAGE 1**  
he added. "At the presentations I have given, I have been impressed by the quality and dedication of people serving in ministry.... The church is blessed by those serving generously in our parishes and Catholic institutions."

In an interview with the *North Texas Catholic* after the Ministerium, Bishop Kevin Vann, said the Diocese of Fort Worth, in turn, felt "blessed" by the inspiring and encouraging presentations offered by Bishop Kicanas. Bishop Vann had invited his fellow bishop to address the Nov. 30 Ministerium, hosted by St. Vincent de Paul Church in Arlington. The annual gathering of professional and volunteer ministers of the diocese drew about 350 priests, deacons, vowed religious, and lay leaders from parishes, schools, and the diocesan administrative offices. The program began with a prayer service and included morning and afternoon presentations from Bishop Kicanas, as well as animated table discussions among participants.

"I was very proud to have Bishop Kicanas here with us in the Diocese of Fort Worth," added Bishop Vann, explaining that he has known the bishop for many years when both were living and ministering in their home state of Illinois.

"Bishop Kicanas — who was recently elected vice president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) — gave us the real spiritual and theological foundation of the

**Above:** A Ministerium participant rises to ask a question of presenter Bishop Kicanas. Approximately 350 ministry leaders from throughout the diocese participated in this year's gathering, held in the Johnson Activity Center at St. Vincent de Paul Church in Arlington.

document on lay ministry, and he gave us a great deal of encouragement in the way that he affirmed the priests, laity, deacons, and the religious, and showed us how we can all work together," said Bishop Vann. "I think he was very uplifting."

Scripture readings, songs, and prayers were offered in both English and Spanish at the opening prayer service.

In his opening remarks, given after the prayer service and Bishop Vann's introduction, Bishop Kicanas addressed the group by asking all participants to stamp their feet loudly on the floor. "How beautiful are the feet ... of those who bring the good news," the bishop reflected, as the stamping subsided. "Thank you for using your feet to bring the good news to the people of your diocese and beyond."

Throughout the day, the bishop, who spoke without the use of notes, repeatedly referred to Catholic lay ecclesial ministers as "a great gift of the church," and he thanked participants for "all the work that you do to build the church, day in and day out."

Lay ecclesial ministers have so many responsibilities, and are so busy, that it is "critical to pull away from the hectic pace and to realize that you are not lone rangers," Bishop Kicanas admonished his listeners. He

praised them for taking the time to attend the gathering, saying, "We are, all together, entrusted with such important work. So it is very important for all of us to come together periodically to be re-inspired, to be strengthened, to be restored. Because it is only in working together that we can possibly hope to serve in carrying out the mission of Christ."

A noteworthy addition to the day was the first-time inclusion of immediate translation services for Spanish-speaking participants. Diocesan staff members Sister Yolanda Cruz, SSMN, and Pedro Moreno, while listening to the presentations and discussion that were offered in English, immediately translated the proceedings into Spanish. Twenty-one members of the gathering, while wearing headphones and listening to the translated remarks, were then able to actively participate in the proceedings.

"We were so pleased to be able to offer this service at this year's Ministerium, thanks to technology that was provided to us at a very minimal cost," said Sr. Yolanda. "We hope to be able to offer the same service in Vietnamese at next year's gathering."

Bishop Kicanas, who served as rector at two large seminaries in the Chicago area during the



## Diocesan



**Left:** Bishop Kevin Vann smiles as he listens to a story told by Bishop Gerald Kicanas at the Ministerium gathering. "Seek an attitude of gratitude, always," Bishop Kicanas urged his listeners. "Cultivate a profound sense that everything in life is a true blessing."

**Left:** Bishop Gerald Kicanas greets Father John Robert Skeldon, who serves as parochial administrator at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Wichita Falls.

**Below:** Mary Kay Manning (standing), a staff member at St. Vincent de Paul Church in Arlington, greets Pat Mancuso of Holy Family Parish during a roundtable discussion session. The day offered an opportunity for priests, deacons, vowed religious, and lay ecclesial ministers from across the diocese to gather for shared prayer, enrichment, and inspiration.

**Above:** Hilda Flores, diocesan Mission Outreach coordinator, addresses the gathering as Bishop Kicanas looks on. Ministerium participants offered questions and reflections at the microphone at the interactive morning and afternoon sessions.

1980s and 1990s, was appointed auxiliary bishop of Chicago in 1995. Pope John Paul II appointed Bishop Kicanas the coadjutor Bishop of Tucson in October 2001; upon the retirement of Bishop Manuel Moreno, Bishop Kicanas became the sixth bishop of Tucson on March 7, 2003.

Bishop Kicanas, who, like the late Bishop Joseph Delaney of Fort Worth, served as a chair of the USCCB Subcommittee on Lay Ministry, was also involved in the subcommittee's sponsorship of listening sessions and focus groups that took place in preparation for the writing of the "Co-Workers" document. The process took a total of 10 years before the document was approved by the USCCB in November 2005.

The document, with the full name "Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry," has four components, Bishop Kicanas told Ministerium participants. He noted that the document serves to affirm the ministry of lay ecclesial ministers; it stresses the importance of formation through opportunities for lay ministers to grow personally, intellectually, spiritually, and pastorally; the document suggests that lay ministers should be commissioned and authorized formally by the bishop of their diocese; and, last-

ly, the document emphasizes the necessity of collaboration among priests, deacons, religious, and lay leaders.

Citing several studies funded by Lilly Endowment grants on the religious beliefs and practices of youth and young adults in the United States, Bishop Kicanas reflected upon the implications of the results of those studies as they affected the work of lay ecclesial ministers, particularly those directly involved in catechetical work. He also led participants in discussion about their own experiences of being called to serve in ministry and their need for affirmation and support, and reminded them of the need to seek personal holiness, saying, "Before you purify others, you have to be purified yourself. You have to be sanctified in order to sanctify."

As participants expressed their appreciation and enjoyment of the day, Bishop Kicanas returned their compliments. "You're quite an impressive group, I must say," he told his listeners in his closing remarks. "We all need to be recognized, valued, and appreciated," he added. "Your ministry is a gift and a blessing to the church, and if you hear no other message from this document ["Co-Workers"], I hope you hear that message."

## 'Dying to Live,' story of immigrants' perilous journey toward hope, is discussed at pre-Ministerium breakfast

BY NICKI PREVOU  
STAFF WRITER

Approximately 70 Ministerium participants, representing parishes and schools from various parts of the Diocese of Fort Worth, attended the annual pre-Ministerium breakfast, sponsored each year by the diocesan office of Community and Pastoral Services.

Ralph McCloud, diocesan director of Community and Pastoral Services, led participants in discussion after a viewing of the video "Dying to Live: A Migrant's Journey." The video, produced by the Catholic Communication Campaign, is being used as a resource in the "Justice for Immigrants: A Journey of Hope" campaign nationwide in Catholic parishes and schools.

The film, produced in 2005, is a moving depiction of the realities of individual migrants from Mexico. The documentary offers the insights of several theologians, activists, musicians, and Pulitzer prize-winning photographers who have personally served as witnesses and ministers to those

who risk their lives in their quest for a better life.

After watching the video, Father Stephen Jasso, TOR, pastor of All Saints Church in Fort Worth, noted the importance of advocating for immigration reform. His experiences of offering pastoral care to immigrants and their families has led him to work with congressional leaders and with local organizations on behalf of his migrant parishioners whose families have been separated through deportation.

"The bishops have been clear in saying that efforts should be made to keep families together," agreed McCloud, noting the pastoral letter issued by the Catholic bishops of Mexico and the United States, entitled "Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope."

"As Catholics, it is our task to calm the conversation about immigration issues," McCloud said. "The conversation often borders on hatred and is often very polarizing. Immigrants among us are facing so many challenges, as when they are robbed and they are afraid to call the police, or

when they are denied preventive healthcare. The bishops have urged us to support their call for reforms that will protect the human dignity of all people."

Karen Roach, pastoral assistant at Holy Family Church in Fort Worth, said that she felt that the video and accompanying guidebook could be a valuable resource in churches and schools that wish to offer information and guidance on Catholic Social Teaching and immigration issues.

"We have a Peace and Justice committee at Holy Family," said Roach. "I know we could have the same kind of viewing of the video and discussion at our parish. I think that would be helpful."

McCloud said that copies of a parish resource kit are available through the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Migration and Refugee Services. Information about obtaining the kit, the video and guidebook, and other information about the bishops' current campaign for immigration reform is available online at [www.justiceforimmigrants.org](http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org).

## Scripture Readings



December 30, The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

Cycle A. Readings:

- 1) Sirach 3:2-7, 12-14  
Psalm 128:1-5
- 2) Colossians 3:12-21  
Gospel) Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

By Jeff Hedglen

When I was 16 I shared a car with my 19-year-old sister. We split the cost of the car payment and insurance down the middle. The plan was that we also would have equal use of the vehicle. She was older and had a job around the corner; I was younger and had a girlfriend who lived 30 minutes away. Naturally this caused a lot of problems.

Nothing in my life with four other siblings could compare with the fights we had about the use of that car. Doors would slam; very un-Christian words would fly; and feelings were shredded.

One day, after a typical display of mutual selfishness, I slammed the door to my room and said to no one in particular, "Why won't she even try?!" A few minutes later after the steam

stopped billowing from my ears, I heard a small voice in my head say, "Are you trying?"

God in his fashion had challenged my self-righteousness — and I lost. When I came out of my room, my sister was in the bathroom. I wrote her a note that simply said, "I'll try if you will."

From that point on I don't think we had another fight.

On the feast of the Holy Family, the church gives us a passage from St. Paul that calls us, not just to put up with each other, but to bear with one another in compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

It was only when God's prompting toward these graces broke through my bitter, angry resentment of my sister that peace came to our relationship.

Being a family of holiness takes work, prayer, submission, and selfless behavior. It is not unlike the family that had a virgin teenager say yes to God; a fiancé who initially wanted to cut and run, but submitted to God's plan; and a Son who had no idea what lay ahead of him, but when his hour came, took the cup his Father handed to him.

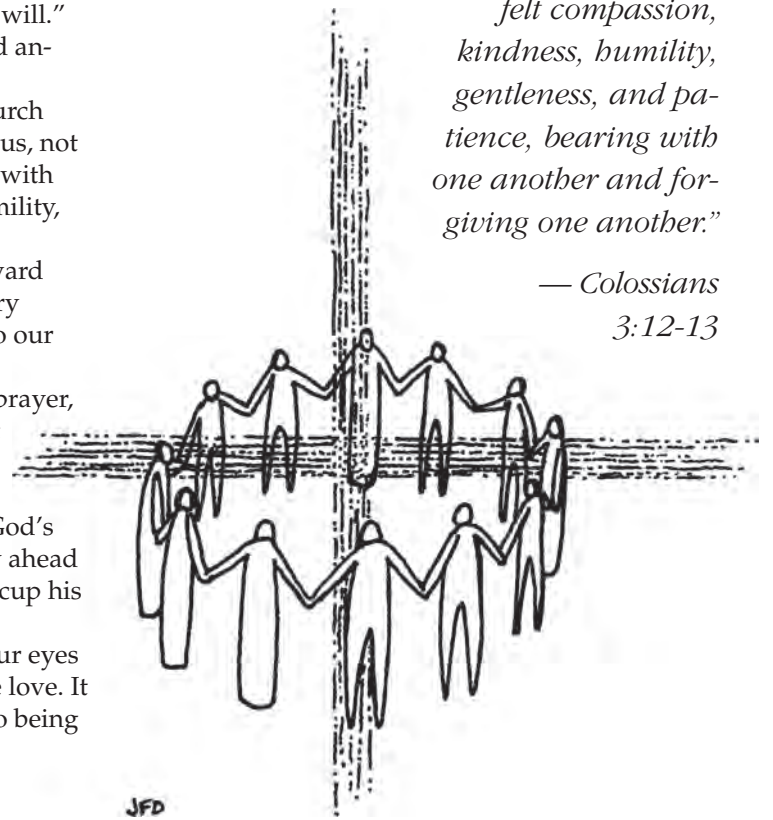
One of the steps to holiness is to take our eyes off of ourselves and put them on those we love. It is this kind of action that paves the road to being a holy family.

### QUESTIONS:

What are some ways we can "bear with one another" when the other is hard to get along with? Do you have a story that shows how you or someone you know has grown in holiness?

**"Put on, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another."**

— Colossians 3:12-13



JFD

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## Pope says unity in Christ makes friends out of strangers

By Carol Glatz  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Being united in Christ makes friends even out of complete strangers, Pope Benedict XVI said at his weekly general audience.

"Without having met, we know each other because we are members of one body," the body of Christ and the church, he said, quoting a letter by St. Paulinus to St. Augustine.

During his Dec. 12 general audience in the Vatican's Paul VI hall, the pope continued a series of talks on the teachers of the early church with a catechesis on St. Paulinus, the bishop of Nola in southern Italy. Born in southern France in 354, the saint converted to Christianity as an adult. After the death of their first child, he and his wife lived a life of chastity, prayer, and dedication to the poor.

When he was chosen bishop of Nola in 409, St. Paulinus continued to help the poor and stayed close to his flock during the tumult of barbarian invasions.



The pope said St. Paulinus used his gifts as poet and lover of literature to serve the church. Pope Benedict quoted the saint as saying "for me, the only art — faith — is Christ, my poetry."

St. Paulinus' correspondence with many contemporary churchmen revealed his sense of communion, the pope said.

In a letter to St. Augustine, St. Paulinus wrote it was not surprising that the two of them should feel intimately close as brothers even though they had never met because "we are members of one body, we have one head, we are bathed by the same grace, we live by the same bread, walk the same path, and dwell in the same home."

The pope said this was a "beautiful description of what it means to be Christians, to be the body of Christ, living in catholic communion of the church."

St. Paulinus' concept of communion helps people under-

stand the teachings of the Second Vatican Council concerning the church "as sacrament of the intimate union with God and therefore of our unity, and finally [the unity] of all humankind."

At the end of his general audience, the pope thanked representatives of a national association of Italian bakers for their "appreciated donation" of panettone, an Italian Christmas cake, that the pope will distribute through his charities to those in need this holiday season.

Another gift the pope received was a 6-foot by 4-foot portrait of himself, wearing a gold miter and rich red vestments, seated on the throne of Leo XIII.

The Vatican Museums' Patrons of the Arts commissioned the piece by Natalia Tsarkova, a Russian Orthodox painter living in Rome. One of Tsarkova's many portraits of Pope John Paul II hangs in the cultural center named after him in Washington.

Pope Benedict XVI smiles as he leaves St. John the Baptist Hospital in Rome at the end of his pastoral visit Dec. 2. (CNS photo/Giampiero Sposito, Reuters)

## Scripture Readings



January 6, The Epiphany of the Lord.  
Cycle A. 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

**B**ody language: Specialists in human behavior have helped the rest of us understand how important it is in communication. Psychologists explain that we can determine a great deal about a person's attitude, underlying his or her words, by observing body language.

In certain arenas, in fact, body language is actually taught. For example, it is part of the training for interviewing, sales pitching, or athletic competition. I remember my son once coming home from tennis team practice with written instructions regarding body language during a match.

Peering over his shoulder at those instructions, I learned a few helpful physical attitudes. Don't drop your shoulders and head or slow your gait after losing a point, for instance. When I, myself, applied this on the court, I realized that it probably had more of an effect on me than on my opponent. Keeping my shoulders back, head up and moving purposefully into position for the

**"We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage."**

— Matthew 2:2



next point, I was positive and focused, not feeling defeated.

I've realized the same influence of body language holds true when I approach God in prayer. I grew up Protestant, so the tradition of kneeling — in community worship — wasn't prevalent. I always bowed my head, but rarely knelt, in prayer. What a change in attitude I felt before God when I lowered my entire body to a posture of supplication.

I understood better who I was in relationship to my Savior, wholly dependent on his good

graces, thankful for his mercy, and amazed that he should care at all, much less love me.

In the Gospel reading for Epiphany, the Magi, representing the greatest among human beings, searched for the light of God entering the world's darkness. Finding it, they brought their best stuff to the Savior and prostrated themselves before him.

They modeled for us, with extreme body language, an attitude in approaching Jesus that allows us to experience the awesomeness of his presence and blessings.

### QUESTIONS:

What is your basic daily attitude in approaching God? Besides kneeling in prayer, what other kinds of body language have helped you develop an attitude of humility and gratitude to Jesus as your Savior?

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# Our Emmanuel pitched his tent among us

By Jeff Hedglen

**T**his time of year many people travel to visit relatives. Some families have plenty of space for the visitors, and so they simply make up the guest room. Other people fold out the couch or blow up the air mattress. Still some people just have no room, so the guests find space at the nearby inn.

Few if any people plan to pitch a tent for accommodations this Christmas. This is too bad because this is exactly the way the Gospel of John explains the coming of Jesus.

The typical representation of Jesus' birth comes from Luke's Gospel. As the story goes, Mary and Joseph look for a room at an inn, but they have no luck. They end up in a barn surrounded by animals and shepherds. All of this is beautifully depicted in manger scenes that come to us courtesy of St. Francis who began the practice of creating them live in 1223.

John's Gospel paints a very different picture, but it is one

**I**t is no mistake that Jesus is called our Emmanuel — God with us! For in his taking flesh, making his dwelling among us, God has pitched his tent in our hearts. And as a result we share in the glory of God.

that gives us deep insight into the plan of God in sending us his son wrapped, not in swaddling cloths, but in flesh.

John says it this way: "And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

This one verse is loaded with imagery easily overlooked. We are very familiar with words like: became, dwelling, and glory, so much so that we

might miss what John is trying to tell us.

The Word became flesh. The Word did not take the appearance of flesh or temporarily have flesh, it became flesh. This tells us that the Word of God, the second person of the Trinity, the one whom we call Jesus, became human. God became a human — this is big stuff!

Next, John says that the Word made his dwelling among us. In the original language, this is literally "pitched

his tent" (or tabernacle). So the Scriptures actually say that Jesus pitched his tent among us.

The significance of this is huge. First, if you have ever been camping, you know that pitching a tent is not something to do if you're just stopping for a rest. This is what you do when you are settling in at this spot.

Second, in the history of the Jewish people the tent holds an important place. When the Israelites left Egypt and were wandering in the desert, the Lord's presence was in the tent where the Ark of the Covenant was kept. Thus a tent is synonymous with the presence of the Lord. So, in saying "pitched his tent among us," what is revealed is that the Incarnate Word is the new mode of God's presence among his people.

Glory is a word we often associate with God, and rightly so, for it is the visible manifestation of God's majesty and power. In this verse from John's Gospel, it brings to light how Jesus is now the Glory of God. Before this time the

most perfect example of God's glory was the tabernacle in the temple in Jerusalem. But now that Jesus has pitched his tent (or tabernacle) among us, he is the most perfect expression of the Glory of God.

It is no mistake that Jesus is called our Emmanuel — God with us! For in his taking flesh, making his dwelling among us, God has pitched his tent in our hearts. And as a result, we share in the glory of God.

As we attempt to find our way through the thicket of the commercialized X-mas to the holy silent night when Christ was born, let's remember that the glory of the season is not the lights on the house or the presents under the tree, or the spread of food on the table, rather it is the Word made flesh, dwelling in our midst, revealing the glory of God.

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).

# Comienza el *Buen samaritano* buscando voluntarios

El proyecto *Buen samaritano*, la iniciativa más reciente de la Pastoral Juvenil Hispana — un equipo de Solidaridad que consiste de jóvenes en la pastoral de varias parroquias — organizó su primer encuentro el 18 de noviembre en la iglesia San Juan Apóstol de Fort Worth. La convocatoria inicial precisó como objetivo la idea que hay mucha necesidad de ayudar al prójimo, sobretodo a los más pobres y necesitados de nuestra comunidad. Su misión fundamental es concientizar a los jóvenes sobre los problemas de la humanidad para que respondan con amor y servicio hacia los más desamparados. A la vez, compartiendo su fe y su vida con los demás en forma de oración y reflexión, sus miembros pueden llegar más allá de servir a sus parroquias para ayudar a la comunidad en la cual vivimos.

En las palabras de la Hermana Elvira Mata, mcdp, "Queremos que los jóvenes se den cuenta que Jesús los llama para que salgan a las calles, a las cárceles, a los hospitales, y para que sean el Cristo para los demás, quienes necesitan oír la buena nueva".

Aproximadamente 70 jóvenes asistieron a la reunión inicial para escuchar las aspiraciones y actividades de diversas organizaciones, las cuales explicaban sus misiones y oportunidades de trabajo voluntario para servir a los más empobrecidos de nuestra sociedad. Al evento fueron representantes de *AIDS Interfaith* de Fort Worth, *Meals on Wheels*, ministerios de las cárceles y de los hospitales, el hospital de niños *Cook Children's Hospital*, varios hospicios para los ancianos y finalmente *Girls Club*.

**"Queremos que los jóvenes se den cuenta que Jesús los llama para que salgan a las calles, a las cárceles, a los hospitales, y para que sean el Cristo para los demás, quienes necesitan oír la buena nueva".**

—Hermana Elvira Mata

Después de las presentaciones, los jóvenes tuvieron la oportunidad de hablar con los representantes de las agencias, interrogarles sobre puntos específicos y, finalmente, anotarse como voluntarios si tenían algo en particular que los atraía a cualquiera de las organizaciones presentes. Durante el evento, los jóvenes tuvieron amplia libertad para encontrar oportunidades de servicio al prójimo, entre ellas distribución de comida y visitas a cárceles, hospitales, hospitales de niños, casas de ancianos, y enfermos con SIDA.

Durante el mes de diciembre, los jóvenes finalizarán el proceso de aplicación a las diversas organizaciones, al igual que la orientación y entrenamiento requeridos para cada una. Entonces será el momento en que podrán comenzar a servir a los más necesitados y ser la presencia de Cristo ante quienes más requieren de Él.

Los organizadores del proyecto piensan que lo ideal fuese servir de una a dos horas semanales en alguno de estos ministerios.

Parte del proyecto contempla reuniones periódicas cada dos meses, para que los jóvenes puedan compartir sus experiencias, finalizando cada reunión con una oración comunitaria.

Una de las decisiones del grupo fue la creación de una planilla que llenarían cada vez que asistiesen a brindar su servicio. El objetivo de dicha hoja sería para ayudar al joven a desarrollar conciencia y reflexionar sobre sus experiencias. Wendy Albarran, una de las principales organizadoras del *Buen samaritano*, explica lo que desea del futuro y de la participación de los jóvenes en este proyecto: "Espero que esta iniciativa sirva para entusiasmar a los jóvenes a utilizar sus talentos en el servicio del prójimo, y que a la vez pueda servir como instrumento para ofrecer sus esfuerzos a Dios".

Durante el mes de enero estos jóvenes esperan poder comenzar su servicio de voluntarios, para reunirse otra vez más el 20 de enero en la iglesia de San Juan Apóstol de Fort Worth, y así convocar y hablar sobre sus experiencias de los últimos meses. Finalizarán rezando juntos y aprendiendo sobre la doctrina social, que es la llamada a servir con amor y servicio hacia los pobres y los más necesitados.

Si están interesados en aprender más sobre el proyecto *Buen samaritano*, puede comunicarse con Wendy Albarran: wendaly@msn.com o la Hermana Elvira Mata en las oficinas de la diócesis de Fort Worth: (817) 560 3300 Ext. 273.

## Vaticano: los que se dedican a los medios de comunicación deben ser como Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe

CIUDAD DEL VATICANO (CNS) — A semejanza de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, los católicos que se dedican a los medios de comunicación deben de compartir el mensaje del Evangelio en forma tal que refleje la cultura de los oyentes y use imágenes y gestos para cautivar la imaginación y el corazón de todos ellos, dijo el arzobispo Claudio Celli.

En una declaración del 12 de diciembre, fecha en la que se celebró la fiesta de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, el arzobispo Celli, presidente del Consejo Pontificio de Comunicaciones Sociales, le dijo a los que se dedican a los medios de comunicación en Latinoamérica que el éxito de sus

esfuerzos depende del amor, la humildad y la creatividad.

Como "modelo de la perfecta evangelización en cultura", Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe se apareció al indígena mexicano Juan Diego en 1531 bajo las apariencias de una mujer indígena, dijo.

"Se adaptó a la mentalidad de sus hijos, su cultura, su ritmo", dijo el arzobispo Celli. "Su mensaje no estaba hecho solamente de palabras, sino de gestos, forma, imagen, lengua e idioma".

El ejemplo que nos dio la Virgen María, dijo, fue de "una comunicación amorosa, y completa aceptación del mundo de sus hijos, que tiene un efecto dinámico obrando un cambio permanente

en el que escucha".

La Virgen María no hizo menos a Juan Diego, que fue canonizado en el año 2002, ni lo menospreció con palabras, dijo el arzobispo; en lugar de eso, reconoció en su totalidad su dignidad humana y le dio el gran encargo de comunicarlos a otros su mensaje.

El arzobispo Celli les dijo a los católicos que se dedican a los medios de comunicación que en su preparación de la Navidad deben llenarse de un temor reverente ante el hecho de que Dios se hizo humano en Jesucristo y que "Él que era todopoderoso y mantiene el universo en su mano se hizo débil y dependiente".

Noche de Paz, Días de Paz,  
Meses de Paz y Años de paz

## La verdadera paz comenzó con una familia en Belén y un pesebre

Por Pedro A. Moreno, OPL  
Director, Instituto Luz de Cristo

Noche de paz es lo que encontramos en la famosa cueva de Belén. Ahí encontramos al niño Jesús envuelto en pañales, María a su lado pendiente de su recién nacido y José mirando a los dos seres, foco de su amor. Ellos viven en paz, pues viven dándole a Dios prioridad.

Cada familia, como a la Sagrada Familia, le corresponde ser una escuela de paz. Es en la familia donde se educa una nueva humanidad y donde se aprende, en un ambiente sano, a vivir la paz. Es en la familia donde se aprende a respetar la ley de Dios para así vivir en paz con Dios. Es en la familia donde se aprende el valor de relaciones justas como punto de partida para vivir en paz unos con otros. Es en la familia donde se aprende de que mientras más nos amamos, más profunda es la paz que podemos vivir. La familia es la primera escuela de paz.

Vidas llenas de paz es lo que nos ofrece el niño Jesús en la navidad. El ejemplo de la Sagrada Familia nos enseña cómo hacer que sea un hogar una escuela de paz, pero la paz se puede vivir por mucho más de una noche y más allá de nuestro hogar.

Identificar lo que es la paz es importante. San Agustín la define como tranquilidad de orden, o sea, serenidad y calma; detalles que jamás podrán existir si a Dios no le damos la prioridad que se merece.

Debemos seguir el ejemplo de la Sagrada Familia que no solo convirtió su hogar en escuela de paz, si no que ellos también compartieron esta paz con sus vecinos. Las relaciones de amor y comunión entre las diversas familias de un vecindario van creando pueblos de paz. Incluso, la paz que encontramos en Cristo, nuestro Príncipe de Paz, es tan contagiosa y fuerte que podríamos incluso traer la paz al mundo entero.

Acabo de leer el mensaje del Santo Padre para la próxima Jornada Mundial de la Paz y aquí les ofrezco una cita del mismo: Familia humana, comunidad de paz... la primera forma de comunión entre las personas es la que el amor suscita entre un hombre y una mujer decididos a unirse establemente para construir juntos una nueva familia. Pero también los pueblos de la tierra están llamados a establecer entre sí relaciones de solidaridad y colaboración, como corresponde a los miembros de la única familia humana: "Todos los pueblos forman una única comunidad y tienen un mismo origen, puesto que Dios hizo habitar a todo el género humano sobre la entera faz de la tierra; también tienen un único fin último, Dios".

Durante esta Navidad y Año Nuevo estaré orando por todos mis lectores y les invito a que vivan una noche de paz, días de paz, meses de paz y muchos años de paz. Amen.



Pedro Moreno es director diocesano del Instituto Luz de Cristo. Sus escritos espirituales han recibido múltiples premios de la Asociación de Periodismo Católico de los Estados Unidos y Canadá. Vive en el noroeste de Fort Worth con su esposa Maria Mirta y sus tres hijas Maria, Patricia y Mirangela. Pedro es Laico Dominicano.

# Proclamar la esperanza de Dios expresada en el nacimiento de Jesús

## Queridos Amigos en la Diócesis de Fort Worth,

**Y**a estamos al final de Adviento y nos queda poco tiempo para preparar-nos para la celebración de la Navidad.



Monsieur Kevin W. Vann

Parte de esta preparación ha sido las entusiasmadas celebraciones de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe a través de toda la Diócesis de Fort Worth. Deseo agradecer a todas las personas, que a pesar de las inclemencias del clima, llegaron a sus parroquias tan temprano en la mañana para cantar alabanzas a nuestra bendita madre, Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe. Los numerosos grupos de matachines que bailaron, los diversos grupos de mariachi que tocaron sus instrumentos, y los muchos devotos que prepararon los arreglos florales y los alimentos tan deliciosos, se combinaron para hacer esta celebración una muy especial en las diversas parroquias de toda la diócesis.

De manera especial quisiera mencionar las parroquias de Santo Nombre y Santa María de la Asunción en Fort Worth, San Francisco de Asís en Grapevine, y también *Nolan Catholic High School*. Fue en estas comunidades donde celebré la Eucaristía y donde compartí con los grupos de matachines.

A todos ustedes mis más expresivas gracias por mantener esta devoción a nuestra bendita madre, nuestra estrella de la esperanza, viva en la Diócesis de Fort Worth.

Otra manera para prepararnos para la celebración de la Navidad, además de los muchos árboles de ángeles en nuestras parroquias y de otros donativos para aquellos con necesidades a través de nuestra diócesis, es tomar un tiempo para la reflexión, meditación,

**S**omos salvos a través de la esperanza porque Jesucristo, el rostro humano del amor y la esperanza, nos ha salvado y nos ha traído a cada uno de nosotros el amoroso don de la nueva vida.

y oración. Nuestras parroquias ofrecen oportunidades maravillosas para la oración comunitaria; nuestras celebraciones eucarísticas son el mejor ejemplo de esto, pero también necesitamos tomar un cierto tiempo a solas y en silencio para la oración y reflexión personal. No podría servir como obispo de nuestra diócesis si no fuera por la fuerza y la esperanza que nace, y se mantiene, a través de la oración y los sacramentos.

Nuestro Santo Padre, el Papa Benedicto XVI, nos ha regalado a todos una herramienta maravillosa para la reflexión, meditación y oración. Me estoy refiriendo a su nueva encíclica *Spe Salvi*, sobre la esperanza cristiana. Quisiera darle una mirada a algunas de las ideas de esta carta a la luz de la época navideña que está a punto de comenzar.

Nuestro Santo Padre nos invita a considerar la pregunta: ¿Qué es la esperanza cristiana? Al leer sus palabras llego a la conclusión que la esperanza cristiana es vivir en el conocimiento de quién es Dios y no olvidarse de todo lo que Él ha hecho por nosotros. Una traducción del título de la carta es "Salvados por la esperanza". Esto nos trae a una segunda pregunta: ¿Por qué encontramos la salvación en la esperanza cristiana? Nuestro Santo Padre responde a esto de una manera muy extensa. He aquí una cita que comienza a responder esta pregunta.

"Dios es el fundamento de la esperanza; pero no cualquier dios, sino el Dios que tiene un rostro humano y que nos ha amado hasta el ex-

tremo, a cada uno en particular y a la humanidad en su conjunto. Su reino no es un más allá imaginario, situado en un futuro que nunca llega; su reino está presente allí donde Él es amado y dónde su amor nos alcanza. Sólo su amor nos da la posibilidad de perseverar día a día con toda sobriedad, sin perder el impulso de la esperanza, en un mundo que por su naturaleza es imperfecto. Y, al mismo tiempo, su amor es para nosotros la garantía de que existe aquello que sólo llegamos a intuir vagamente y que, sin embargo, esperamos en lo más íntimo de nuestro ser: la vida que es 'realmente' vida".

Somos salvos a través de la esperanza porque Jesucristo, el rostro humano del amor y la esperanza, nos ha salvado y nos ha traído a cada uno de nosotros el amoroso don de la nueva vida. Esta nueva vida nos llega a través de la muerte redentora de Jesucristo en la cruz y su resurrección al tercer día. Por su Encarnación, vida pasión, muerte y resurrección, Él nos expresa cuán bueno y rico en misericordia Él es en verdad. Él nos guía hacia la verdadera vida.

El Adviento es una época muy apropiada para entregarnos esta nueva encíclica, pues la esperanza es uno de los temas del Adviento. En su mensaje durante la recitación del Ángelus, el Santo Padre nos menciona cuán apropiado es reflexionar en su nueva encíclica. Incluso llega a decirnos, haciendo eco del espíritu del Adviento, "¡En Cristo esperamos; es a Él a quien aguardamos!"

Sobretudo durante la Navidad, cada celebración es una celebración de la esperanza porque se centra en el nacimiento de Jesucristo, nuestra esperanza y nuestra salvación. Cuando visitamos los hermosos pesebres en nuestras parroquias y fijamos nuestra mirada en la imagen central del nacimiento, estamos mirando un signo de la esperanza. Cuando miramos el rostro de esta imagen del divino niño, vestido en pañales y puesto sobre hierba fresca, estamos mirando cómo es que Dios nos comunica su amor infinito y eterno para cada uno de nosotros. ¡Este niño nos recuerda que siempre habrá esperanza porque Él también nos dice que siempre seremos amados! Navidad es el nacimiento, el darle la bienvenida

al niño Dios, nuestra esperanza en la salvación por medio del amor.

Una parte importante de nuestra evangelización en la Diócesis de Fort Worth es la promoción de la esperanza. Hacemos esto al darle la bienvenida al niño Dios en nuestros corazones. Creer en la esperanza cristiana es darle a Cristo el libre manejo de nuestros corazones y nuestras vidas para que así Él pueda hacerlas nuevas otra vez. Esta nueva vida comienza cuando Él nos transforma desde adentro, en su imagen y semejanza, y nos une a todos en un cuerpo para compartir su luz de esperanza y amor en el mundo. Creer y vivir vidas arraigadas firmemente en estas verdades es tener siempre esperanza; no importa qué retos se nos presenten. Creer en y vivir vidas arraigadas firmemente en la esperanza cristiana nos ayudará a ser discípulos más eficaces, servidores y comunicadores más efectivos del amor de Cristo en nuestras parroquias.

Cada uno de los doce días de la época navideña nos ofrece la oportunidad como discípulos, parroquias, y diócesis, para estrechar nuestras manos hacia los demás como Dios lo hace con nosotros en la Navidad. Con nuestros variados actos de generosidad y de amor, estamos ayudando a llenar las vidas de los demás con la esperanza cristiana. Actuando como un pueblo lleno de esperanza, estamos demostrando con nuestras vidas que nos importan y que amamos a los demás. Recordemos siempre que la esperanza en acción es amor y vida. De esta manera la realidad de la encarnación se hace más evidente entre nosotros.

Espero que el nacimiento del niño Dios en nuestros corazones, especialmente cuando lo recibamos en la Eucaristía en esta Navidad, sea una muestra clara de la esperanza que vive en nosotros y del amor que nos tenemos unos a otros.

Espero y oro para que todos ustedes y sus seres amados reciban una bendición muy especial en esta Navidad y disfruten de un año nuevo lleno de bendiciones. Por favor sigan orando por mí. Una vez más, le doy las gracias a cada uno de ustedes por su firme compromiso en vivir nuestra fe católica. La reciente instalación de Daniel Cardenal Dinardo es un reconocimiento de esa vida de fe aquí en Texas.

## Encuentro para comprometidos 12 y 13 de enero

El Encuentro para Comprometidos es una preparación matrimonial de fin de semana para parejas de novios que desean contraer matrimonio. Está designado para dar a las parejas la oportunidad de dialogar intensamente y honestamente sobre su futura vida como pareja.

Es presentado por un equipo de parejas casadas. El próximo fin de semana se llevará a cabo el 12 y 13 de enero, en el *Catholic Renewal Center*, 4503 Bridge St., Fort Worth, Tx. 76103. Favor de hablar con Suzanna Ordóñez para inscribirse al 817-560-3300 ext. 256.

## 'Empezando una vida nueva' Grupo de apoyo para separados, divorciados y viudos

"Empezando una vida nueva" es un grupo de apoyo para personas que están pasando por el dolor de una separación, un divorcio o muerte de su cónyuge. El grupo se reúne una vez por semana por diez semanas y su propósito es de compartir

destrezas de superación que otras personas han aprendido, encontrar nuevos amigos/as que caminarán con usted hacia el futuro, perdonar, adquirir aceptación y más... "Empezando una vida nueva" comenzará el lunes, 28 de enero, 2008, de las 7 p.m.

a las 9 p.m. en el nuevo salón parroquial de la Iglesia Todos los Santos, 214 N.W. 20th St., Fort Worth. Si desea inscribirse o desea más información, favor de hablar con Carmen Zacarías al (682) 472-8517.

# Arranca el programa vocacional para la comunidad hispana con su primer encuentro

Por Ana M. Fores  
Coresponsal

Todos los bautizados bajo la fe llevamos una vocación para ser alguien especial, y lograr algo inconfundible en cuanto a nuestra fe. Algunos damos nuestros talentos para servir a Dios, a la Iglesia y a nuestros semejantes a través de la vocación religiosa: nos convertimos en sacerdotes, religiosas o decanos; otros damos testimonio de nuestra fe a través de la oración y del desempeño de una vida de acuerdo a los preceptos de la religión católica. Así conocemos mejor la palabra de Dios y vivimos el evangelio al servicio de los demás. De cualquier manera, la oficina diocesana de vocaciones en Ft. Worth, bajo la dirección del Padre Kyle Walterscheid, convoca reuniones y da información para quienes están considerando asumir este compromiso radical que representa una vocación religiosa.

El fin de semana del 19 al 21 de octubre, en el Catholic Renewal Center de Fort Worth, se llevó a cabo el primer fin de semana vocacional en español, llamado ¡Ven y Sígueme! De acuerdo a la Hermana Elvira Mata, mcdp, participaron alrededor de 40 jóvenes hispanos "que buscan responder al llamado de Jesús para comprender cómo servirle mejor en el mundo". Durante el fin de semana, organizado por un comité de jóvenes, hermanas religiosas y el Padre Kyle, 13 comunidades — desde las hermanas de Santa María de Namur a las Misioneras Catequistas de la Divina Providencia y los Capuchinos Franciscanos, entre muchos otros — dieron charlas sobre sus comunidades religiosas en particular. Los participantes invitados que estuvieron presentes pertenecían a distintas parroquias alrededor de toda la diócesis. En palabras de la Hermana Elvira, "Realmente fue un gran logro este fin de semana, pues la respuesta de los jóvenes

indica su deseo y apertura de servir a través de una vocación religiosa o sacerdotal".

La Hermana Elvira explicó: "El propósito de este fin de semana se desarrolló para que los jóvenes hispanos conociesen más sobre la vida religiosa y la vida sacerdotal como respuesta al llamado del Señor". Este evento se llevó a cabo a través de charlas presentadas por sacerdotes y hermanas religiosas, exposiciones de las distintas comunidades presentes, y tiempo para compartir con otros jóvenes así como con las hermanas y sacerdotes presentes. Además se presentó una película sobre el Padre Alberto Hurtado, S.J., y su respuesta vocacional. Dentro de las actividades más importantes del fin de semana estuvieron las diversas oportunidades que dispusieron los jóvenes para entrevistarse con sacerdotes o religiosas. A lo largo del fin de semana, ellos pudieron pasar tiempo con aquellos que han respondido a este llamado religioso. "Comieron, platicaron, cantaron y oraron con ellos y así conocieron más a fondo lo que es la vocación religiosa", comentó la Hermana Elvira.

Una de las cosas que le gustó más a Carolina Mata, feligresa de la Iglesia Católica de San Judas, en Mansfield, fue la variedad de opiniones y personalidades de las religiosas: "No eran calladitas, ni sericitas. Había muchas congregaciones, y muchas se dedicaban a cosas diferentes. Algunas eran religiosas fuera del país, con trabajo misionero, y otras se dedicaban a trabajar aquí. Pero lo que más me gusto fue cuán realistas eran todas, y no nos forzaban a nada. Nos daban su punto de vista y nos dejaban escoger con libertad". Actualmente, Carolina Mata está asistiendo los discernimientos que comenzaron como respuesta a este fin de semana vocacional, que toman lugar todos los meses. Para complementar su búsqueda en torno a la vocación religiosa, la

Señorita Mata también se reúne con la Hermana Elvira dos veces al mes.

Después de ese fin de semana vocacional tan exitoso, la Hermana Elvira Mata propuso un seguimiento natural: una vigilia vocacional que tomaría lugar mensualmente, en la cual los jóvenes interesados en llevar un proceso de discernimiento podrían seguir buscando su vocación. El grupo se reuniría en distintas parroquias o conventos de sacerdotes y hermanas religiosas. Estas reuniones consistirían de varios componentes: compartirían preguntas sobre la vocación, se presentaría un tema vocacional al mes por una hermana o sacerdote, y se finalizaría con una oración ante el santísimo. La primera reunión después del fin de semana vocacional en español ocurrió el 16 de noviembre en la catedral de San Patricio, y fue dirigida por el Padre Kyle Walterscheid, quien piensa que la juventud Hispánica es clave para el futuro de la iglesia, ya que más de la mitad de los jóvenes católicos son hispanos. El Padre Kyle explica por qué, en su opinión, este programa es vital: "No podemos decir que los hispanos son parte íntegra de nuestra iglesia católica aquí en los Estados Unidos hasta que tengamos un liderazgo presente entre ambos sacerdotes y religiosas, quienes reflejen el espíritu latino y le den voz a las preocupaciones de la población hispana".

Habrà otra vigilia vocacional a mediados de diciembre y, para el año nuevo, el 18 de enero, las hermanas franciscanas de la Inmaculada Concepción, bajo la dirección de la Hermana Flor Barreto, tendrán el tercer discernimiento. La Hermana Elvira concluye demostrando su entusiasmo con estas palabras: "Esperamos que, a través de estas reuniones, se pueda ayudar, animar, apoyar, y guiar al joven hispano en su búsqueda vocacional".

Fotos por  
Donna Ryckaert

Izquierda: El Padre Kyle Walterscheid, director de vocaciones para la Diócesis de Fort Worth, le habla a un grupo de jóvenes buscando su camino de vocación durante un retiro para Hispanos en octubre.



Abajo: La Hermana Rosa visita con participante Nancy Lopez durante el retiro vocacional.



A la derecha: La Hermana Yolanda Cruz, director de Catequesis para los niños de la Diócesis de Fort Worth, conversa sobre la vida religiosa y el punto de vista femenino durante una de las charlas del día.



Abajo, a la izquierda: Las hermanas comparten cuentos de cómo fueron invocadas a la vida religiosa.

Abajo, a la derecha: Padre Richard Flores habla animadamente mientras comparte con un grupo de hombres; a la vez, Francisco Laríz, uno de los participantes, lo mira, reflexionando sus palabras.



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IN THEATERS EVERYWHERE THIS CHRISTMAS



**POPE  
CELEBRATES  
FEAST OF  
IMMACULATE  
CONCEPTION**

— Pope Benedict XVI leaves in his popemobile after celebrating the feast of the Immaculate Conception near the Spanish Steps in Rome Dec. 8. (CNS photo/Dario Pignatelli, Reuters)

## Family is primary agency of peace in society, says pope in message

FROM PAGE 1

of the environment, and the arms race are all threatening signs that individuals and nations have not learned to live together in harmony and mutual responsibility, the pope said.

"Humanity today is unfortunately experiencing great division and sharp conflicts which cast dark shadows on its future," he said.

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

He said Pope Benedict's concerns about the arms race, both nuclear and conventional, reflects the fact that global military spending reached an all-time high in 2006 and that, in many cases, countries have tried to justify their increased military spending by claiming it was necessary in order to combat terrorism.

"After the terrorist attacks against the United States of Sept. 11, 2001, the international community adopted severe measures against the risk of terrorism," Cardinal Martino said. "At the same time, nations — especially the nuclear powers — began a renewal of their military apparatus and their weapons.

"On this basis," he said, "it seems correct to affirm that the current policy of state security threatens the very peace and security of the people it intends to defend."

In his message, Pope Benedict wrote, "In difficult times such as these, it is necessary for all persons of good will to come together to reach concrete agreements aimed at an effective demilitarization, especially in the area of nuclear arms."

In explaining the theme he

chose for the message, the pope said the fact that a strong, healthy family is the basis of a healthy society is not simply a slogan.

"In a healthy family life we experience some of the fundamental elements of peace: justice and love between brothers and sisters; the role of authority expressed by parents; loving concern for the members who are weaker because of youth, sickness, or old age; mutual help in the necessities of life; readiness to accept others and, if necessary, to forgive them," Pope Benedict said.

The pope said that anyone who weakens the institution of the family weakens "what is in effect the primary agency of peace" in society.

"Everything that serves to weaken the family based on the marriage of a man and a woman, everything that directly or indirectly stands in the way of its openness to the responsible acceptance of a new life, everything that obstructs its right to be primarily responsible for the education of its children, constitutes an obstacle on the road to peace," he said.

The family needs and has a right to a home, employment, education for the children, and health care, the pope said.

But the whole human family has parallel needs and rights, he said, including the need for an environment that is used with care and preserved for future generations.

"Human beings, obviously, are of supreme worth vis-a-vis creation as a whole," the pope said. "Respecting the environment does not mean considering material or animal nature more important than man."

However, he said, the earth belongs to all people and to all

generations and, therefore, must be used with care.

Pope Benedict said the costs and sacrifices required to protect the environment and to halt its degradation must be shared globally, but — as in a family — with an awareness of the limited resources of the poorer nations and the greater responsibility of the industrialized countries.

The pope said it might be necessary to establish a new international agency to coordinate efforts to ensure "the stewardship of this 'home' of ours."

Within the topic of ecology, he said, special attention must be paid to "the stewardship of the earth's energy resources," to exaggerated levels of consumption in some countries, to the need to expand use of renewable sources energy, and to ensure that poorer countries that possess natural energy resources are not exploited.

Pope Benedict also dedicated a chapter of his message to the need for people around the world, like members of one family, to hold certain values in common.

"For the sake of peace," he wrote, "a common law is needed, one which would foster true freedom rather than blind caprice and protect the weak from oppression by the strong."

In too many situations, the pope said, "the weak must bow not to the demands of justice, but to the naked power of those stronger than themselves."

*Editor's Note: The English translation of the pope's message is available by going to the Vatican Web site at [www.vatican.va/phome\\_en.htm](http://www.vatican.va/phome_en.htm) and then clicking on the following links: Benedict XVI, Messages, World Day of Peace, and 41st World Day of Peace 2008.*

## Mission of church is universal, not restricted to specific regions, says Vatican document

FROM PAGE 1

Second Vatican Council called them," that are present in those religions, he said. At the same time, one must try "to lead them, without any superiority complex, to a full understanding of the truth in Jesus Christ."

"Even if the various non-Christian religions possess seeds of truth planted in them by the Holy Spirit and the people who follow them may be saved, that does not mean that the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ is irrelevant. It is our task to help the seeds of truth grow so that they find their fullness in Christ," Cardinal Dias said.

Nigerian Cardinal Francis Arinze, prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments and also a member of the doctrinal congregation, told reporters, "The sharing of our Catholic faith with others who do not yet know Christ should be regarded as a work of love, provided that it is done with full respect for their human dignity and freedom.

"Indeed, if a Christian did not try to spread the Gospel by sharing the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ with others, we could suspect that Christian either of lack of total conviction of the faith or of selfishness and laziness in not wanting to share the full and abundant means of salvation with his fellow human beings," Cardinal Arinze said.

Archbishop Angelo Amato, secretary of the doctrinal congregation, said the document is a practical follow-up to the 2000 document *Dominus Iesus*, on the uniqueness of Christ and universal salvation in him.

Despite the 2000 document's insistence on the importance of proclaiming salvation in Jesus Christ alone, he said, "there still exists a coolness toward missionary activity" in many parts of the church.

In addition, he said, the document is an affirmation of the right

and duty of Catholics to share their faith with others who ask to know more, whether those asking belong to other religions or to other Christian communities.

He said that when non-Catholics are free to minister to their members in predominantly Catholic countries, it only makes sense that the Catholic Church would have the same right to offer pastoral care to Catholics in predominantly non-Catholic countries.

Besides China, where all religion is restricted, and some Muslim countries where Christians cannot openly practice their faith, the issue also involved some parts of the former Soviet Union, where the Russian Orthodox Church has accused the Catholic Church of proselytism, or trying to convince members of the traditionally Orthodox population to become Catholic.

The document said: "The mission of the church is universal and is not restricted to specific regions of the earth. Evangelization, however, is undertaken differently according to the different situations in which it occurs."

Asked specifically about the Russian Orthodox claims, Cardinal Levada said, "Especially in a country like Russia where there were long years of atheistic communism, one must respect the sensitivity of the Orthodox, who are concerned about rekindling Christianity in the life of their people."

Whilesome evangelical groups have launched proselytism campaigns in Russia, he said, the Catholic Church is there to offer pastoral care to Catholics.

"We do not proselytize, but it can happen that someone has an encounter with the Catholic faith and wants to join the Catholic Church," the cardinal said. In such situations, the Catholic Church must respect the individual's conscience and help him or her to follow it.

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## NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL NEWSBRIEFS

### Vatican official: Communicators must be like Our Lady of Guadalupe

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Like Our Lady of Guadalupe, Catholic communicators must share the message of the Gospel in a way that reflects the culture of their audience and uses images and gestures to capture imaginations and hearts, said Archbishop Claudio Celli. In a Dec. 12 statement marking the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Archbishop Celli, president of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, told Catholic communicators in Latin America that the success of their efforts depends on their love, humility, and creativity. As the "model of perfectly inculturated evangelization," Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared to the Mexican Indian Juan Diego in 1531 looking like an indigenous woman, he said. "She adapted herself to the mentality of her audience, his culture, his rhythm," Archbishop Celli said. "Her message was not made up of words alone. It was gesture, form, image, language, and idiom."

### Threats to invade Iran unnecessarily raise tensions, says Cardinal Martino

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Threats to invade Iran by the United States and other countries appear to be "just words," but they unnecessarily raise tensions and fuel the arms race, said Cardinal Renato Martino. The cardinal, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, spoke about war and threats of war during a Dec. 11 press conference to present Pope Benedict XVI's message for the Jan. 1 celebration of World Peace Day. Asked if the pope's remarks about increasing tensions among countries and about concerns over more nations possessing nuclear weapons referred specifically to Iran, the cardinal said, "they refer to what is on the table," which includes Iran. However, he said, "all of these threats of war, of invasion" to stop what was perceived as Iran's efforts to build a nuclear bomb "were just words." "Now it has been discovered that there are no weapons of mass destruction, a bit like what happened in Iraq," he said.

### Pope among 12 religious leaders on CBS documentary 'In God's Name'

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The genesis for a documentary on why people use religion and faith as justification for some of history's most horrible acts came from one recent horrible act: the World Trade Center attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Jules Naudet, who with brother Gedeon produced the upcoming CBS documentary "In God's Name," collaborated with his older brother on "9/11," which aired on CBS five years ago. Until those terrorist attacks, the Naudets intended to make a documentary on the lives of firefighters. What resulted was something entirely different. The Naudets were at the trade center Sept. 11 because they had begun work on their film about firefighters. Pope Benedict XVI is one of 12 spiritual leaders, five of them Christian, featured in the new documentary, scheduled to air Dec. 23, 8-10 p.m. CST. Non-Christians include the Dalai Lama, the chief rabbi of Israel, a Hindu spiritual leader, and a prominent Sunni Muslim leader. The pope did not give a private interview. Historically, the Vatican has not given private interviews with the pope, Jules Naudet noted, so they researched archives and found features on the pope that yielded answers to their questions.

### Dioceses sell property, reduce staffs to pay abuse settlements

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The clergy sex abuse scandal continued to have a major financial impact on U.S. Catholic dioceses in 2007 as multimillion-dollar settlements were reached with abuse victims and dioceses funded their share by selling church property, reducing staff, and, in at least one case, soliciting contributions from priests and lay Catholics. In California alone, financial settlements from decades-old abuse cases exceeded \$1.8 billion after the statute of limitations was lifted for one year. The Diocese of San Diego began bankruptcy proceedings early in 2007 just as the Diocese of Spokane, Washington, and the Archdiocese of Portland, Oregon, emerged from bankruptcy brought on by costly abuse settlements. In early December, the Diocese of Davenport, Iowa, agreed to an abuse settlement of \$37 million. The agreement, which required the approval of the bankruptcy judge to take effect, will allow the diocese to come out of bankruptcy, which it filed last year in anticipation of the sex abuse lawsuits. Two years before filing, the diocese had reached settlements with abuse victims totaling more than \$10.5 million. This fall, the San Diego Diocese and the San Bernardino Diocese agreed to pay \$198.1 million to settle lawsuits brought by 144 people who claimed they were abused by church personnel between 1938 and 1993.



### PREPARING FOR CHRISTMAS IN BETHLEHEM

— Palestinian  
Francis Morat of Bethlehem lights a candle before Mass on the first Sunday of Advent, Dec. 2, in St. Catherine's Church, which adjoins the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, West Bank. (CNS photo/Debbie Hill)

## Theologian's book could mislead faithful, bishops' committee says

By Nancy Frazier O'Brien

WASHINGTON (CNS) — A Vietnamese-American theologian's 2004 book on religious pluralism contains "pervading ambiguities and equivocations that could easily confuse or mislead the faithful," the U.S. bishops' Committee on Doctrine said in a Dec. 10 statement.

Father Peter C. Phan's *Being Religious Interreligiously: Asian Perspectives on Interfaith Dialogue*, published by Orbis Books, also contains "statements that, unless properly clarified, are not in accord with Catholic teaching," the committee said.

In its 15-page statement, the committee said it undertook an evaluation of *Being Religious Interreligiously* at the request of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and "invited Fr. Phan to respond" to questions.

"Since Fr. Phan did not provide the needed clarifications, and since the ambiguities in the book concern matters that are central to the faith, the Committee on Doctrine decided to issue a statement that would both identify problematic aspects of the book and provide a positive restatement of Catholic teaching on the relevant points," the statement said.

In response to a Catholic News Service query, Fr. Phan said in an e-mail message that he was not going to comment on the committee's statement. Orbis did not return a phone call from CNS seeking reaction.

The statement was signed by Bishop William E. Lori of Bridgeport, Connecticut, chairman of the Committee on Doctrine, and the six other committee members.

Fr. Phan, a former Salesian and now a priest of the Dallas Diocese, holds the Ellacuria chair of Catholic social thought in the

theology department at Jesuit-run Georgetown University in Washington.

The statement on "clarifications required" in Fr. Phan's book cited three areas of concern:

— Christ's role as "the unique and universal savior of all humankind."

— The "salvific significance of non-Christian religions."

— The Catholic Church as "the unique and universal instrument of salvation."

Quoting frequently from the book, the documents of the Second Vatican Council, and *Dominus Iesus*, the 2000 declaration of the Vatican doctrinal congregation on the "unicity and salvific universality of Jesus Christ and the church," the committee said Fr. Phan's book "could leave readers in considerable confusion as to the proper understanding of the uniqueness of Christ."

Although "the uniqueness of Jesus Christ is affirmed at some points" in the book, it is presented at other times as "not exclusive or absolute," the committee said.

Fr. Phan says in the book that the terms "unique," "absolute," and "universal" in relation to Jesus' role as savior "have outlived their usefulness and should be jettisoned and replaced by other, theologically more adequate equivalents."

But *Dominus Iesus* declares that theological understandings of Jesus as just one of many historical figures who manifest "the infinite, the absolute, the ultimate mystery of God" are in "profound conflict with the Christian faith," the committee said.

Although the church finds "elements of goodness and truth" in other religions "as a preparation for the Gospel," Fr. Phan's book "rejects this teaching as an insufficient recognition of the salvific significance of non-Chris-

tian religions in themselves," the statement said.

By asserting that "God has positively willed non-Christian religions as alternative ways of salvation," the book calls into question "the very goal itself of universal conversion to Christianity" and implies that "to continue the Christian mission to members of non-Christian religions would be contrary to God's purpose in history," the committee said.

But the church sees its evangelizing mission not as "an imposition of power but an expression of love for the whole world," the statement added. "Thus there is no necessary conflict between showing respect for other religions and fulfilling Christ's command to proclaim the Gospel to all the nations."

Fr. Phan's book also says the church's claim "as the unique and universal instrument of salvation" should be "abandoned altogether," primarily because of "the humanness of the church and her historical entanglement with sin and injustice," the committee said.

"The book is certainly correct when it points out that members of the church, through the course of history, have sinned and that the credibility of Christian witness to the world has suffered greatly from this," it added. "Nevertheless, the holiness of the church is not simply defined by the holiness (or sinfulness) of her members but by the holiness of her head, the Lord Jesus Christ."

As *Dominus Iesus* points out, "it would be contrary to the faith to consider the church as one way of salvation alongside those constituted by the other religions, seen as complementary to the church or substantially equivalent to her," the committee said.

## Diocesan

# Jack McKone's vocation is his response to the example of the Good Shepherd

FROM PAGE 28  
the 65,000 people served by the area's one parish, half of whom live in surrounding mountain villages. He drove a truck and delivered food and medication, much of which he had secured as donations from people in the Diocese of Fort Worth.

In a reflection after his stay in Patzún, McKone wrote of his work there and his feelings about the people. He had brought with him a photograph from Guatemala that had appeared in a San Antonio newspaper. It showed a volunteer fire fighter, a "bombero," tenderly carrying the body of a tiny child, wrapped in a rough cloth. McKone, who

was worried about the people in the area of the storm, had a chance meeting with a good friend, Miguel Angel, one day as he approached the convent where he was staying. Angel is a community leader in Patzún, as well as a choir director, church architect, catechist, husband, and former chief of the volunteer bomberos.

McKone showed Angel the photograph and asked his friend if he knew the bombero, or the child he carried. Angel knew the man's name, but not the little girl's. Of her, he said, "La niña murió en el derrumbe, y creo que no había nadie que supo el nombre de ella." ("The

little girl died in the landslide, and I don't think there is anyone left who knows her name.")

"Suddenly a whole new meaning to the tragedy imposed itself on my mind," McKone wrote. "Suddenly the child had a background, indefinite as it was. Suddenly she had a gender. Suddenly she was from Panabaj. Suddenly she was about four years old. But there was no one who could tell the heartbroken bombero her name."

To McKone, the bombero carrying the child looked "like an image of the Good Shepherd, as his sad and exhausted eyes seemed to probe my thoughts.

"Why did this little girl have to die? Why do the innocent seem to suffer the most? Why is it that some of the worst affected areas were the poorest? Could it be that the Good Shepherd grieves as much for those he looks out at through the eyes of a tired bombero, as he does for those beloved little ones that he carries in Guatemala, Louisiana, and Pakistan? Is it me that he is looking at, asking me what part I will take in response?"

Deacon Jack McKone will be ordained to the priesthood at 11 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 5, at St. Patrick Cathedral in downtown Fort Worth.

"It's exciting, and I'm really

looking forward to it," he said, "but at the same time it's a big responsibility. I really think that priests and religious have to be open to the Spirit and, a lot of times, turn their work over to the Spirit. Left to our own devices, it would not be very pretty," Deacon McKone said.

When he wrote his reflections on his mission work in Patzún, Deacon McKone seemed to be giving a literary description of the vocation he chose and the reasons he chose it. "The Good Shepherd is looking at me," he wrote, poignantly, "and asks, 'What will you do for these, the least of your brethren? If you love me, you must love them.'"

## Hamer...

FROM PAGE 11  
Luke Skywalker to the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles — previously cherished by their aunts and uncles.

Sam plays the drums, the piano, and a brass bugle that decorates the front of our fireplace; Natalie opens the dress-up trunk, modeling every dance costume, satin shoe, and prom dress. She drapes beads around her neck and wraps herself in boas. Then, at my dressing table, she decorates her lips in a color of purple-red that is forbidden in some residential neighborhoods.

It makes me remember my own grandmother's house, with its glass-enclosed cabinets housing Uncle Charlie's old pipes; my grandfather's hand-scrolled music manuscripts; and porcelain figurines dressed in lace.

Christmastime to grown-ups can bring feelings of sadness for those who have no loved ones around them, or have suffered illness and unanticipated change. The subtle feelings of unexplained grief can also come from less tangible sources: estrangement, loss of love.

Jesus is enough to fix all that, I know, as I go to him for comfort. He is there for everyone, and he will fill us with hope, if we allow him to do that. It's his job.

He has given us a wonderland of fall leaves, music, starlight as fancy as Natalie is, and people who love us, even when others are gone. Sometimes it is hard to believe.

Our world is like a grandparent's house, and God is there with the same sense of serenity we received as children.

My friend Barbara lost her mother two years ago. Kathryn was lovely, witty, and vibrant, and her children remember her constantly. Barbara recently visited the cemetery to place a wreath at her mother's grave.

"I wanted something that would last," Barbara said, "So I took a grapevine wreath and wrapped it with evergreen, to symbolize ongoing life, in spite of death."

Delivering the wreath, Barbara felt sad at the loss of her mother. She parked the car, took the newly-assembled wreath from her back seat, and walked to her mother's graveside. She knelt to arrange her gift, then prayed quietly.

"When I got back into the car," Barbara said, "there was a fragrance coming from the backseat. It was sweet, combined with an overpowering scent of evergreen. I looked around to see if anything was there.

"I looked at my hands, smelling them to see if I had touched anything outside, bringing fragrance to the car. There was nothing on my hands to smell, but the scent in

the car was powerful.

"I felt it was my mother," Barbara said, "sending me a message: 'Daddy and I are fine.'"

Barbara was comforted by the scent of evergreen that day, and when she told me about it, we both smiled. The wreath Barbara brought to her mother was fashioned of grapevine that was genuine, but greenery that was not.

The evergreen was artificial — nothing but poly vinyl tips and wire. But the fragrance it left was real.

When God gave us the world — his house — he gave us millions of special places. It is full of ways we can be comforted by his presence, and assured of a life filled with hope.

He sent his love, through his mountains, his evergreen trees, and mostly his beloved Son.

"I am in all the right places," he tells us, now. "I am there when you need me. And I will help you feel safe, serene, and secure."



Kathy Cribari Hamer, a member of St. Andrew Parish, has five children, Meredith, John, Julie, Andrew, and Abby. Her column is syndicated in a number of the best Catholic diocesan newspapers across the U.S. In May of 2005, her column received the first place award for best family life column by the Catholic Press Association of the U.S. and Canada.

## Hensley...

FROM PAGE 11  
ing where the hole came from. The hole that has been ripping the fabric of American society since 1973 has also ripped a hole in our work force, in our economy.

Funny, isn't it? Catholics (and Protestants too) can take great offense at measures aimed at making "illegal" immigrants legal (even though it's in our own long-term self interest), but fail to recognize that they are here taking jobs of unborn children never born because of a "legal" procedure.

Even if others can't speak to the "why" of legalizing immigrants, it's a particularly Catholic sort of thing for

you and me to talk about it openly. Everyone has tried to make the social justice issue of abortion a Catholic issue these past 34 years. Well, now it's time for us to turn things on their heels and make legalizing immigrants — who are already a part of who we are — a Catholic issue and not just a social justice issue.

By the way, one final question for anyone around my age still clinging to their fear of strangers, "Where do you think the laborers to care for the elderly will come from in a decade or two or three, if there's a huge shortage in the labor force?"

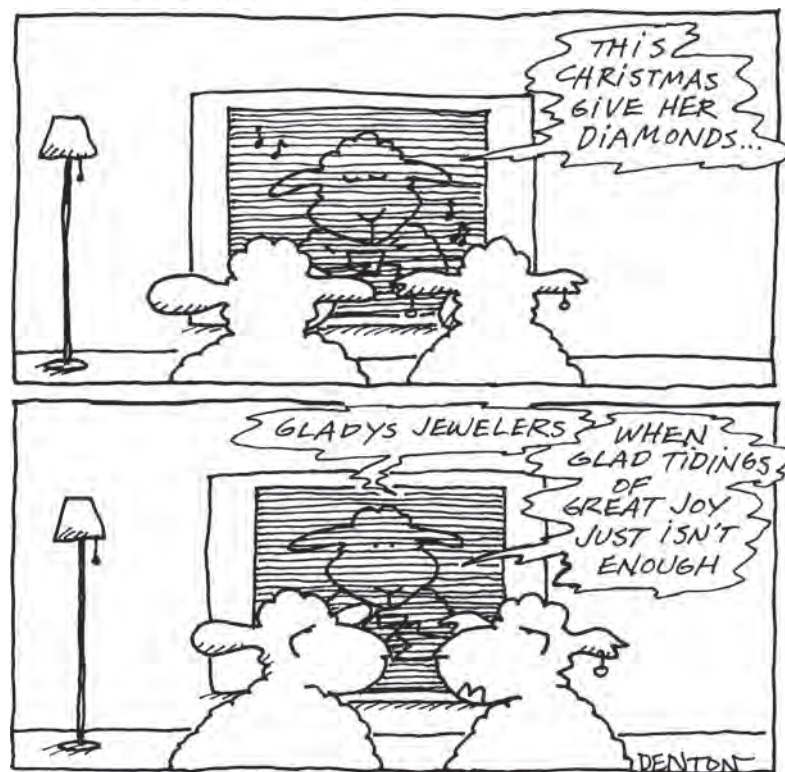
Jeff Hensley is the editor of the NORTH TEXAS CATHOLIC. He and his wife Susan and daughter Amy attend St. Bartholomew Parish in Southwest Fort Worth.

## Umbert the Unborn



## The FLOCK

By Jean Denton  
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## Good Newsmaker

From his parents' early guidance to his mission work in Guatemala, there were many influences that led Jack McKone to understand that he was

# Called to be a Priest

STORY BY KATHY CRIBARI HAMER

PHOTOS BY JEROD DUET

**Left:** Deacon Jack McKone prepares his notes for class at Assumption Seminary in San Antonio. He will receive the sacrament of holy orders Saturday, Jan. 5, at St. Patrick Cathedral in downtown Fort Worth.

**Right:** Deacon McKone spends a quiet moment reading holy Scripture at Assumption Seminary.

**W**hen Hurricane Stan hit Guatemala in 2005, Jack McKone was busy in his third year at Assumption Seminary in San Antonio, but he still wanted to help.

The October tropical storm, the 11th of the Atlantic hurricane season that year, had caused torrential rain, flooding, and mudslides in Guatemala, El Salvador, and southern Mexico. Nearly 2,000 deaths were attributed to the storm and its aftermath.

It was fall break at the seminary, and although McKone had available time, he realized it would be tough catching up with studies when he returned. He asked permission from Sister Donna Ferguson, then Fort Worth diocesan director of seminarians, to travel to Guatemala.

"Sister told me, 'If you can do it, go ahead,'" McKone said. So he did.

Deacon McKone, a seminarian who is soon to be ordained to the priesthood for the diocese, was familiar with

the Guatemala mission, having made his first visit there in 1995. He also had served with the diocesan mission team which in 2001 had purchased five used school buses for Fort Worth's sister diocese, the Diocese of Juticalpa, in the Olancho province of Honduras.

McKone helped coordinate the purchase of spare parts and the refurbishing of the buses to prepare for a five-day journey to Honduras. He took advantage of that journey to move to Guatemala, beginning an 18-month period in the mission there.

That devotion to mission work is descriptive of McKone's drive to a vocation, but it is not the only reason he accepted the call to the priesthood. "A vocation is not out of an isolated incident," he said. "It is not out of nothing

— you don't live and work and play in a vacuum."

"The first influences on my vocation were my parents," he said of his father, Peter Joseph, and mother, Marcella, who died in January 1987. He has nine siblings: Colleen, Mark, Mary Andrea, Donna, Christopher, Mary Elisa, Tom, Peter, and Chuck. "The family couldn't drive very far without saying the rosary," he laughed. "I don't know if the car would stop or what!"

He was always an altar server, he said, recalling the morning Masses during the summer months when he would serve at 6:30 a.m., "But it seemed like 3:30."

After attending St. Rita School and later graduating from Nolan Catholic High School, Deacon McKone studied for two years at The University of Texas at Arlington and then took a job in service at a car dealership. He continued that career until 2001, when he stopped for his extended stay in Guatemala. He began his seminary work in 2003.

"There are a lot of older vocations now," said Deacon McKone, 55. "For some of us, it takes a little longer to ripen."

"I think it's a wealth of experience we have in a priesthood of this age. Older guys from different backgrounds and experiences relate in different ways, broadening the range of horizons people may encounter in the ministry," he said.

"When I was working for the dealership, I lived in Ponder and had acreage. I talked with Father Juan Rivero about being active in the church, and he told me to look at the Knights of



Deacon Jack McKone

Columbus or the diaconate. But he let me find my own way — with the Holy Spirit's help.

"For someone who wanted a ranch and a wife and two kids and a white picket fence, the priesthood didn't look too good. The first thing I thought about it was 'No, surely not me!'"

"But that's the beauty of our Creator that draws you," said the man whose sense of humor and down-home wit fit comfortably with his hearty faith and spirituality. "God is very subtle and creative and considerate. He doesn't go away. He is very patient."

"It's not the sizzle on the steak," McKone said descriptively, "but something slow that keeps simmering."

"A vocation is a lifelong event. A lot of us take time to reconcile 'my idea with his.' But when do we ever have an absolute? If all our life is a series of 'Damascus experiences,' where's the challenge there? Where's free will?"

When Deacon McKone went to Patzún, Guatemala, to help with the aftermath of Hurricane Stan, he stayed with the Carmelite sisters, who tend to

SEE MCKONE'S VOCATION..., P. 26

**Below:** Deacon Jack McKone (second from left) relaxes with friends at the seminary.



## Inside... This issue of the NTC

The writers vary from our own former director of the diocesan Synod, Sharon Perkins, to Father Stan Konieczny, who's been writing for the CNS Christmas package since before he was a seminarian, to Delores Leckey and Janaan Manternach, both recently widowed, and writing of their experience of Advent and Christmas as seen through the lens of pain and loss. But what they all share in common, is the sense that Christmas, the birth of Christ, celebrated among our families and loved ones, brings us a sense of peace and joy and comfort that help make the presence of the Christ Child in our lives more real.

**12-15**

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