Sudden jump in teen suicides jolts Midland

By Jimmy Patterson
Editor

A sudden surge in teen suicides in Midland in late 2011 brought alarm and swift reaction by Midland school officials.

Following the self-inflicted deaths of three students -- one each at Midland High, Midland Lee and Midland Christian -- as well as what officials believed were two more attempts, educators turned their attention to the concerns of students, canceling teaching and instead listening to students and their thoughts, according to MISD Superintendent Ryder Warren.

“This is going to be a major issue and stay a major issue for a while because these kinds of issues stay with kids,” Warren said in a hastily called news conference December 8.

The suicides also prompted increased levels of conversation on social media networks, such as a forum on Facebook called “Teen Suicide, 100% preventable. Help us <3,” and the creation of a YouTube video by a senior at Midland Lee who lost her father to suicide almost ten years ago but only recently discovered the cause of death was suicide (see related story, Pg. 6)

Anne Tyson, a spiritual director and bereavement retreat leader who lost a son to suicide (Please See RESPONSE/11)

Home for Good

The Midland-Odessa Deanery Prolife Committee recently completed purchase of a structure adjacent to the Planned Parenthood office in Midland in hopes of bringing an end to the killing of the unborn — as many as 40 a week — that occurs at the facility on Secor St.

Pictured is Gina Aron, president of the committee in Midland, right; John Savage, also on the Pro-Life Committee, and Msgr. James Bridges, of St. Stephen’s Church in Midland. Please see story/Pg. 2

Photo by Jimmy Patterson / The Angelus

Pope: Prayer must include praise, thanks, not just requests

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

"The way Jesus prayed to his Father "teaches us that in our own prayers, we must always trust in the Father's will and strive to see all things in light of his mysterious plan of love," he said during his weekly general audience Dec. 14.

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

Everyone should seek to understand that when asking something of God in prayer, "we mustn't expect the immediate fulfillment of what we are asking for, of our will, but rather trust in the will of the Father," the pope said. (Please See PRAYER/21)
From the Bishop’s Desk

Protecting the unborn: the preeminent life issue

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

Since the deadly decision of the Supreme Court in 1973, granting human permission to kill the unborn at any stage of development, the lives of more than 54 million precious little ones have been destroyed in our country. The cruelty of abortion happens in Texas 81,500 times every year. The protecting of the unborn and working to overcome the grave evil of abortion, more than ever, is the pre-eminent life issue. This means that one cannot make other life issues, such as education or health care, morally equivalent to the deliberate destruction of innocent life. Pope Benedict XVI has called this “the key to our entire existence.”

As we mark the 38th anniversary of the Supreme Court decision, more than ever all Catholics, all who call themselves pro-life, must step forward, and not only pray for an end of abortion and protection of the unborn, but participate much more actively in pro-life programs to protect the precious new human life that is stamped with God’s image, beginning at conception. We must stress over and over that all human life issues are connected, and that as true Catholics, we are pro-life at every stage of life. Moreover, all life issues depend on the protection of the most fundamental right, which is the right to life. Pope John Paul II stated, “all other human rights are ‘false and illusory’ if the right to life, the most basic fundamental right and the condition for all other personal rights, is not defended with maximum determination.”

Our pro-life position on the sacredness of all human life, beginning at conception, is based on the Bible in particular texts and in the entire biblical context, which affirms the sacredness and dignity of all human life beginning at conception. The

(Please See BISHOP/22)

DIOCESAN BRIEFS

Annual Conference Day focuses on missioning
SAN ANGELO — The annual Diocesan Conference Day will be February 11, at the McNease Convention Center in San Angelo. The theme will be “Missioned to Proclaim the Good News” with keynote speaker Anne Scanlan from RENEW International. Scanlan holds a Master’s degree in Theology with a concentration in Pastoral Ministry and Spirituality from St. Michael’s College, Colchester, VT, and a Bachelor of Arts from Holy Family College/University in Philadelphia.

Scanlan’s ministerial background includes 15 years experience as a Retreat and Spiritual Director. She has taught in Catholic elementary schools, and junior and senior high schools for 15 years. As a college professor, she has taught Sacred Scripture and Christian Spirituality at Gwynedd-Mercy College and Neumann University in Philadelphia.

The theme will be “Missioned to Proclaim the Good News” with keynote speaker Anne Scanlan from RENEW International. Scanlan holds a Master’s degree in Theology with a concentration in Pastoral Ministry and Spirituality from St. Michael’s College, Colchester, VT, and a Bachelor of Arts from Holy Family College/University in Philadelphia.

Scholarship deadline
SAN ANTONIO—Catholic laymen and women pursuing a graduate degree in theology or religious studies in order to serve their church in a professional capacity must submit applications for the Rev. Msgr. Larry J. Droll Scholarship by February 15. The renewable $2,000 scholarship will be awarded to two candidates in need of tuition assistance for additional education who serve or want to serve his or her parish as an Administrator, Youth Minister, Parish Coordinator or other role.

The scholarship is geared to those who have already obtained their bachelor’s degree and who are either enrolled or wanting to enroll at any Catholic graduate school in Texas, Arizona, Florida, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma or Mississippi. Applicants may also be enrolled in an extension program or in the Catholic University of America School of Canon Law.

Applications can be obtained at www.ciu.edu, by contacting the Communications Department at 800-292-2548 or by writing Catholic Life Insurance, Attn: Communications Department, P.O. Box 659527, San Antonio 78265. Catholic Life Insurance also offers IRAs and retirement annuities to individuals and businesses in Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Mississippi.

Scouting Awards Mass
SAN ANGELO — The Diocese of San Angelo Scout Awards Mass will be held at Sacred Heart Cathedral in San Angelo at 5 p.m., Feb. 4, 2012 for those receiving their Boy and Girl Scout religious emblems. All who are involved or interested in scouting are welcome. For more info, call Becky Sotelo, 432-689-4411.

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Pictured, left to right, are Deacon Dan Shanahan, Msgr. Larry Droll, Fr. Chinha Pagidela, Msgr. James Plagens and Deacon Allan Lange. (Photo by Alan P. Torre)

Wall celebrates 70 years

The church was dedicated on Dec. 7, 1941, the day of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Its membership has grown to include 385 families with 65 families in its mission church, Holy Family in Mereta.

The rich cultural history of St. Ambrose is deeply rooted in its people's past. The Wall pioneers held their first Fall Festival in 1940 to raise money to build a church. The entire community of men, women and children joined hands to participate in the construction.

The original church building and rectory are still used today. St. Ambrose parishioners exhibit the same tenacity and cooperation as the early pioneers. The highest priority is to pass on to the next generation the same faith and morals taught by past generations.

Fr. Chinha Pagidela, the parish’s parochial administrator, leads the congregation with love and goodness through the word of God. In his welcoming remarks, he said, be encouraged with God's word from John 15:5 – “I am the Vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from Me you can do nothing.” He encouraged people to grow in their gifts, because everyone’s life has significance and there is purpose in what we do. He stressed that we are special to the Lord and special to those whose lives we touch.

EDICTAL SUMMONS
December 29, 2011
CASE: HAMBY (ROSE)-LANCASTER
NO.: SO 12/02

The Tribunal Office of the Catholic Diocese of San Angelo is seeking George Robert Lancaster.

You are hereby summoned to appear before the Tribunal of the Catholic Diocese of San Angelo, at 804 Ford Street, San Angelo, Texas 76905, on or before the 31st day of January 2012, to answer to the Petition of Elmo Jean Hamby (Rose), now introduced before the Diocesan Tribunal in an action styled, “Elmo Jean Rose and George Lancaster, Petition for Declaration of Invalidity of Marriage.”

Said Petition is identified as Case: HAMBY (ROSE) -- LANCASTER; Protocol No.: SO 12/02, on the Tribunal Docket of the Diocese of San Angelo.

You may communicate with the Tribunal in person or in writing. Failure to communicate within the prescribed period of time will be considered your consent for the Tribunal to continue its proceedings in the above-named case.

Given at the Tribunal of the Diocese of San Angelo on the 29th day of December 2011.

Reverend Tom Barley, MSW, MBA, M. Div., JCL Judicial Vicar
History

From the asphalt jungle to the holy city

By Msgr. Benedict Zientek

(Part 2 of 2)

Sacred Heart Cathedral, where I lived and worked for many years early in my priestly life in the diocese, was on Beauregard Street. Across the street facing the cathedral was First Methodist Church. Behind the cathedral and across the alley was First Baptist Church. A block away was First Christian Church. One day I told Bishop we were going to have to change the cathedral name to First Catholic Church. Bishop Leven was the bishop and he screamed at me and said, “You cannot do that without the bishop’s approval!” He didn’t have a great sense of humor. I apologized and told him it was only a joke.

On May 1, 1977, I was assigned as pastor to the holy city of Rowena and lived there for 10 happy years. I was given St. Charles in Eden as a temporary mission that turned out to be two years and four months until Bishop Fiorenza came to San Angelo and assigned a pastor for Eden. It was 80 miles round trip every Sunday, which prompted one young man to tell me, ‘They make you work for your bread.’

After 10 years in the asphalt jungle of downtown San Angelo, moving to Rowena, Eden and Olfen was quite a change. From ambulances, fire trucks and police chases to a new hobby: counting the number of cars that passed the rectory in a single day.

After 10 years in Rowena, I returned to Brownwood for a second round of duty. I spent a total of 20 years of my career in Brownwood — the last 16 there as pastor.

Among the well remembered priests in the diocese was Father Fidelis Albrecht, pastor of St. Joseph in San Angelo. He had a courtyard in front of the church and kept geese, ducks and fish in

Del Escritorio del Obispo

El proteger al no nacido es el tema pre-eminente de la vida

Por el Obispo Miguel Pfeifer, OMI

Desde la decisión mortal de la Corte Suprema en 1973, dando permiso humano para matar al no nacido en cualquier etapa de desarrollo, las vidas de más de 54 millones de preciosos bebés han sido destruidos en nuestro país. La crueldad del aborto ocurre en Texas $1,500 veces cada año. El proteger al no nacido y trabajar para vencer el grave mal del aborto, más que nunca, es el tema pre-eminente de la vida

Obispo Miguel Pfeifer
OMI

Miguel Pfeifer, OMI
Our Top Story-2011

The top story of the year in the Diocese of San Angelo was, without question, the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the diocese on October 16, 2011. The weekend was highlighted by the first-ever visit to San Angelo by a cardinal, Archbishop Daniel DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, as well as more than 20 other visiting bishops and a Mass attended by more than 5,000 at the San Angelo Coliseum.

Anniversaries, ordinations, Mother Nature top stories in diocese’s year

By Jimmy Patterson
Editor / The Angelus

JANUARY

The Diocese of San Angelo enters the social networking era with a page on Facebook. To this point, the page has over 200 friends and counting.

More than 550 young people from 26 parishes in the diocese attended a Youth 2000 weekend retreat at St. Stephens Church in Midland.

FEBRUARY

Women religious and their supporters celebrated the 10-year anniversary of the Our Lady of Grace Carmelite Monastery near Christoval.

MARCH

Wrongly convicted former death-row inmate Juan Roberto Melendez speaks to groups at St. Joseph/St. Anthony in south Odessa cautioning about the fallibility of the capital punishment system and how it can easily take innocent life. “We can all release an innocent man from prison, but we can never release an innocent man from the grave,” he said.

APRIL

Masses were cancelled and prayers increased for victims of raging wildfires in Texas. Pecos, Andrews, Tom Green, Coke, Ector and Midland counties were the hardest hit. Mission churches in both Robert Lee and Bronte were forced to cancel Masses and April 17 was designated a Day of Prayer for rain in the diocese. The drought and wildfires were easily one of the most significant stories of the diocesan year, likely the second-most impactful story.

JUNE

Rev. Patrick Akpanobong and Rev. Prem Sunil Thumma were ordained, becoming the diocese’s two newest priests. Fr. Akpanobong was assigned Odessa’s south side while Fr. Prem was assigned to St. Stephen’s in Midland.

JULY

Sister Mary Grace Erl, prioress of the Our Lady of Grace Convent, and Sister Malachy Griffin, vicar for women religious and retired Newman Center Director at Angelo State University, celebrate 50 years of their professed vows in a solemn ceremony at the Carmelite convent near Christoval.

Missionaries from San Angelo, Midland and elsewhere travel to San Pedro Sula, Honduras, to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the partnership, or hermanamiento, with our sister diocese in the Central American country.

AUGUST

Seventeen young people and others from the diocese participate and celebrate with 1.5 million other pilgrims the biennial World Youth Day in Madrid, Spain.

SEPTEMBER

Church officials announce a dinner will honor 24 “Pioneers of the Faith” as part of the 50th anniversary celebration weekend for the diocese. The dinner was attended by Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI, of the Diocese of San Angelo, as well as Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, Archbishop of Galveston-Houston; Austin Bishop Joe Vasquez, formerly of the Diocese of San Angelo; Archbishop Joseph Fiorenza, fourth bishop of San Angelo, and many others.

OCTOBER

Over 5,000 faithful celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Diocese of San Angelo at the San Angelo Coliseum, October 16, 2011.

The diocese releases a commemorative history book: “50 Years: The Story of the Diocese of San Angelo,” selling over 1,400 at the celebration and in the weeks that follow.

NOVEMBER

Diocese announces it is again in full compliance with a national audit conducted annually to assure the safety and protection of children and young people.
Roman Missal voted top story of 2011

By Nancy Frazier O’Brien
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — The introduction of the English translation of the Roman Missal topped the religious news stories of 2011, and Pope Benedict XVI was again the top newsmaker, according to the annual poll conducted by Catholic News Service.

The continued effect of the global economic downturn was second among the 30 news stories on the ballot, the democracy movement in the Middle East dubbed the Arab spring took third place.

Among the 24 newsmakers on the ballot, Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan of New York, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, was second and U.S. President Barack Obama was third.

The poll was the 50th annual survey conducted by CNS. This year's ballots were distributed Dec. 2 and the deadline for returns was Dec. 8.

When the editors' poll was first conducted in 1962, the overwhelming choice for top story was the opening of the Second Vatican Council. Last year, editors chose the recovery and rebuilding effort that followed the devastating January earthquake in Haiti as the top religious story of the year and Pope Benedict as the top newsmaker.

Editors were asked to vote for the top 10 news stories from a list of 30, and the top five newsmakers from a list of 24. Votes were weighted by the rankings editors gave -- 10 points for a first-place vote, nine

(Please See YEAR/22)

Ministry of the Third Cross missionaries have retreat

By Fr. Tom Barley

On November 18-20, 2011, a Ministry of the Third Cross Retreat was given to 23 girls at the Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) Facility in Brownwood. This was the fourth MOTC Retreat held there and the first that was given by an all-DOSA team (pictured above). The Retreat was co-directed by Linda Gonzalez and Angie Serrano. It was modeled on the ACTS retreats and modified to meet the facility’s guidelines. The team had been meeting for several months to prepare themselves spiritually, organizationally, and operationally for the retreat. As the ministry is still growing we were getting new members for the team throughout our preparation process. You could feel the Holy Spirit working with us. As the team came together it was apparent that each person brought a different combination of gifts to this ministry. The common thread was that all felt called by God to minister to the incarcerated.

As always at this retreat the girls came in to the chapel unsure of what would happen and how to react. Over the time of the retreat they transformed from residents in the facility to girls under the loving, non-judgmental ministry of the MOTC team. By the end of the retreat many of the girls have a reconnection to the Catholic faith their grandmothers taught them years ago. Many returned to the Sacraments and experienced the profound presence of Christ in adoration at the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. They listened to the stories of team members during talks. They prayed the Rosary in English and Spanish and heard of the lives of several female saints. At the end they celebrated their collective birthdays.

On one retreat one of the girls commented that this was the first time anyone had ever celebrated her birthday. As the retreat ended they asked us to write to them, to visit them, and to pray for them. We asked them to pray for us. As we walked away, each team member could feel how God had bless her with this ministerial opportunity and how blessed we all were to have spent this time with these girls.

Since the retreat, team members have written to the girls and some of them have written to us.

This ministry asks for your prayers for the grace of God to fall upon the incarcerated, their families, the victims of crime and violence, and all those who care for the residents in our prisons and jails. Remember, the words of Jesus: “This day you will be with me in paradise” were spoken to a repentant thief.

There but for the grace of God go I.

Eden senior: ‘I feel as though I own my faith’

Bishop’s Note: On the feast of Christ the King, I had the privilege of celebrating Confirmation with Nicholas Regalado, a senior in high school and a parishioner at St. Charles Church in Eden. I am publishing here the letter that he wrote me in preparation for his beautiful Confirmation day. I am very proud of this talented and gifted young man who wants to be a true servant for Christ and His Church.

— Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

By Nicholas Regalado
St. Charles Parish-Eden

Dear Most Reverend Bishop Michael Pfeifer,

There are many things that affect our daily lives. The biggest being the Father Almighty. I soon will take the step to become an adult in our Church just like many before me. I thank you for coming to St. Charles to help me celebrate this sacrament. It is with great honor that I receive this sacrament in high hope that I will become a witness of my faith as an adult in the eyes of our Church and in the eyes of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Who is the Holy Spirit and what will He do for me? Not only is the Holy Spirit the third person of the Holy Trinity, but He is so much more. He is calling to me in my time of need, in my time of peace, and a calling me to be what my Savior Jesus Christ wants me to be. He calls me everyday to be my best and a calling me to be what my Savior Jesus Christ wants me to be. He calls me everyday to be my best to people and to help people. He fills me with faith

(Please See NICHOLAS/19)
More on Suicide:

“Discussing suicide at home” /Pg. 14
Jimmy Patterson on bullying /Pg. 14

Signs of Suicidal Thoughts

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry lists the following warning signs for parents concerning the risk for suicide in adolescents:
• Change in eating and sleeping habits
• Withdrawal from friends, family, and regular activities
• Violent actions towards self and others
• Rebellious behavior or running away
• Drug and alcohol use
• Unusual neglect of personal appearance
• Marked personality change
• Persistent boredom, difficulty concentrating, or a decline in the quality of schoolwork
• Frequent complaints about physical symptoms such as stomachaches, headaches, or fatigue, often related to emotions
• Loss of interest in pleasurable activities
• Not tolerating praise or rewards
• Complaining of being a bad person or feeling rotten inside
• Giving verbal hints with statements such as “Nothing matters. It’s no use” or “I won’t see you again”

Midland teen shares story of dad’s suicide on YouTube

By Jimmy Patterson
Editor

When she was 9 years old, Caitlin Dunaway’s father killed himself. But it wasn’t until Caitlin was 17 that she learned how he died and that he had taken his own life.

Hearing the news almost a decade after his death, Caitlin said, was like living through the news that he was gone twice.

Despite her pain, Caitlin was able to find a way to turn that grief around and help others. Recently, when Midland experienced an increase in teen suicides — three in just over a month and at least two other attempts — she made her own YouTube video, telling her story through the displaying of index cards that revealed a little about her with each written message. At the end of her video, which is nine minutes in length, Caitlin’s pain is fully revealed as she admits how much she loves and misses her father, talks of the experiences they were never able to share, and then reveals a picture of the two of them together.

Caitlin admits that her video is not unique and that many others exist on the popular video web site. But when she pulls out the photo of her and her father, it is a story that belongs to her and her alone.

“I finally realized that it’s OK to talk about (my father’s suicide),” she said. “It doesn’t make me weak.”

Along with that realization came a greater understanding of the meaning of life and the importance of relationships.

“You need to appreciate people in your life,” Caitlin said. “It’s important to not make it harder for someone because you don’t know what they are going through. Sometimes a friend may have a problem and you say to them, ‘I don’t wanna hear it,’ but you need to listen. You need to be there for them.”

Caitlin was pained at the rash of suicides in Midland in the late fall and personally knew one of the victims. She sees bullying as a major problem in teen suicides, though she has no knowledge of whether it played a role in any of the recent deaths.

When she made the video she had no idea what kind of response to expect. For the first 24 hours she had a handful of views, and then it was posted — and reposted and reposted — on Facebook, and it took off. While not exactly going viral on a global scale, it went global at her school, Midland Lee High School, where Caitlin sings alto in the choir.

A parent saw the video and called the high school principal, Stephanie Howard, who was so moved by its content that she recommended that all of the teachers at LHS show the video to their students if time allowed.

“Mrs. Howard called me into her office and told me how touched she was by it,” Caitlin said. “She asked me for my permission to show it to the whole school. I was shocked, I didn’t understand how it spread so fast.”

When Caitlin took the attendance roll to the office, the clerk said, ‘You’re that girl!’

“I said, ‘What girl?’ and she said, ‘The video girl.’”

“I’m just glad I could help. I have had friends who have been more than willing to help me when something has been going on in my life. To be there for someone else is something they will remember for a long time.”

Caitlin’s video might very well save someone’s life. It also demonstrates the positive aspects of social networking and the new media most all of us can access.

Suicide

There is someone who can heal our pain — Jesus

( Editor’s Note: This article originally appeared in its entirety in the October 2011 Angelus). By Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

The loss of a loved one to suicide is one of the greatest tragedies life can bring. We often react with shock, guilt, anger, and depression. Family members often feel profound guilt and responsibility. Our reaction is why did this happen? What could we have done better? What did we fail to see? Suicide of a son or daughter can feel like the ultimate failure of parenting.

When someone dies of suicide, the shock and confusion it causes has a severity all its own. Dying by one’s own hands has different implications than dying of natural causes and the grief that follows a suicide is one of the most traumatic experiences in life. The survivors may blame either their loved one or themselves.

It is difficult to know what really went on in the mind and heart of a person before suicide. To generalize is not helpful because each suicide is individual. Some who committed suicide may simply have felt trapped, perceiving themselves as victims in a hopeless situation. They saw death as a way out of unbearable pain.

Amidst grave suffering, there will always be a tendency to want to know why such tragedies occur. If there were a suicide note, it might shed some light on the motives. If the person had a troubled past or had been receiving mental health services, questions about the appropriateness of the medication and the quality of the services may become obsessive.

Mental Disorders

Veterans’ suicides account for a fifth of the some 33,000 suicides each year due to the war conflicts they have experienced and the number is increasing. Everyday, roughly 85 people in the United States take their own lives. Mental illness and suicide among youth are serious problems in the United States.

(Please See SUICIDE/11)
A Note from Baron Batch:
I wrote this about nine months ago, in March 2010 and it was read over 200,000 times on my blog. This column quickly went viral, but that was never my intent; I was just telling a story the way it happened. This article was by far the most read I have ever written, but more importantly it was a huge reason why I kept writing in general. Recently I was made aware of a string of teen suicides in my hometown of Midland, Texas. It breaks my heart to hear about young people that saw no other way out. It breaks my heart to imagine thinking that death is an escape. To those families dealing with the loss of a loved one, I am persistently praying for you. Everyone has so much to live for, and everyone’s life is valuable and precious. I just wanted to repot this column in hopes that it will again create a ripple that touches someone I might not ever meet. That is my hope and prayer. If you are read this and feel like you have no one to talk to, you can always talk to me. Feel free to shoot me an email. This is a story of connectedness. This is a story simply told the way it happened.

Editor’s Note:
Like many people, I first heard about Baron Batch when he led Midland High School to the Class 5A State Football Game in 2000. Baron would go on to become one of the most exciting runningbacks ever featured at Texas Tech. Always with a reputation of a quality person and good young man, Baron has always led whatever community he has been in by his Christian example. When his college football career was over he was drafted by the Pittsburgh Steelers but has missed his rookie season because of a knee injury suffered in training camp. But football is not the sum and substance of Baron’s life. When the Midland Reporter-Telegram asked him to keep a journal of his experiences going into his senior season at Texas Tech, we all found out he could write well, too. No one expected, though, that Baron would write this. It remains one of the most powerful pieces of modern journalistic writing I have ever read. When Midland experienced a rise in teen suicides this fall, I wrote Baron and asked if we could publish this column in The Angelus. He graciously granted his permission. (Baron’s additional columns are at www.baronbatch.com.)

When ripples collide

By Baron Batch

Let me start by saying I’m not sure how to convey this story in words. Words don’t do it justice but I’ll try.

Have you ever watched rain fall on a lake? Each raindrop creates its own ripple. When you combine the millions of raindrops and the millions of ripples that each singularly creates, you have a countless number of overlapping ripples that all have an effect on one another. The cool thing about this is that each raindrop’s ripple has an effect on the other ripples in the lake, even if it’s just in a small way. This is how people operate on a daily basis. We are individual raindrops in a huge lake. Of course each of us has our own ripple, but our lives are primarily made up of other people’s ripples crashing into our own. Many people like to think that our ripples crash randomly into each other without purpose or reason. Maybe that’s true, but then again maybe it’s not true at all. Perhaps I can help you decide. Maybe this story is the result of many ripples just coincidentally crashing into each other. Or maybe each ripple was ordered, measured, weighed, named, and timed perfectly to synchronize with the others to save a life.

The story I am about to tell shows what happens when ripples collide perfectly.

Ripple 1.)
Just about every day someone approaches me and tells me how much they enjoy my writing. This is always humbling because I was never a good writer while I was in school. It’s strange to now be a published writer and have zero writing experience or background. It’s even more insane to get a request to speak to a high school creative writing class! What do I say? “Hi, my name is Baron. I failed English, let me show you my writing skills?” I’m not really sure how things got to this point where writing is such a huge part of who I am. Maybe it’s all a coincidence. Maybe everything is just random, and this is another one of my crazy hobbies that I have picked up; just like the time I watched the “Karate Kid” marathon and then researched bonsai trees and decided I needed one. Or maybe there is a reason, maybe there is an order, maybe there could possibly be a plan.

Maybe someone, somewhere, at some time, needed to read something that I would at some point write.

Would it be far-fetched to say that there is a reason you are standing where you are standing at this exact moment and reading these words at this exact time? Would it be far-fetched to say that a small decision that you see as pointless or routine could save a life? Perhaps we are all far more connected than anyone can see or comprehend. Maybe one day you will save my life. It’s not as far-fetched as you may think. Maybe everything is just a coincidence, but maybe its not.

Get on board, buckle up, and lets take a trip.

Ripple 2.)
Back in August I approached the Midland Reporter-Telegram and the Lubbock Avalanche Journal about writing a weekly column chronicling my senior year at Texas Tech. After talking with both papers I came to the decision that my column would run every Wednesday. Maybe the fact that we agreed on Wednesday was simply random. What if we would have decided on a Thursday? No biggie right? Would it be far-fetched to say that this would be a life or death decision?

Ripple 3.)
As the season progressed I continued to write every week. However, it became increasingly difficult, especially after a loss. People said that I wasn’t focused and it was hurting the team. There were weeks I told myself that I was just going to quit writing. I rationalized my thinking by telling myself that I should probably just focus all my attention on football, and that writing was distracting me. It probably wouldn’t have been a big deal if I had missed a week right? Every part of me wanted to quit writing my column. After the Oklahoma State loss I decided I was going to discontinue my column. A friend talked me into continuing my writing by saying, “Maybe someone needs to hear something you have to say Baron.” I decided not to stop. I’m glad I didn’t.

This is where ripples collide.

Ripple 4.)
Last Monday I had all four of my wisdom teeth removed. It’s not as bad as everyone makes it out to be, so the next day I decided that I wanted to have a steak. As I was strolling through the meat section of the supermarket directly violating the dentist’s orders to eat only soft foods, something happened that changed the way I will use the word random.

As I was checking out the price on ribeye steaks an older man came up to me with his hand extended and said, “You’re Baron Batch and I just want to shake your hand and say thank you.”

I could tell by the look in his eyes that the handshake meant much more than I imagined. The look in his eyes was different than if he was just a regular Texas Tech fan. The man just continued to shake my hand while staring at me; it started to get awkward the amount of time his hand clung to mine. I thought to myself, “Geez, this guy is acting like I saved his life or something.” Finally he let go of my hand but still didn’t speak a word. Of all the awkward Texas Tech fan moments I have experienced this one had been the most awkward for sure. I got nervous when he prefaced his conversation with “I don’t expect you to respond to what I’m about to tell you”.

Ripple 5.)
Finally he released his grasp and spoke words that I will never forget. This is what he said:
“Your saved my life. Five months ago I had given up, I was going to end it all. It was a Wednesday (ripple 2). I felt like I had nothing else to live for. I had my pistol in my lap while I sat at my desk. I had set newspaper out around the floor so I wouldn’t make a mess for whoever found me. I was about to do it. Right before I pulled the trigger I looked down and saw a piece of newspaper that said, “The easiest thing in the world to do is quit.” I put the gun down and started to read more. It was a column that you had written. Your column saved me. Thank you.”

(Please See Ripples/23)
Call death penalty what it is: Cruel, unusual and crazy

By Stephen Kent
Catholic News Service

While Congress' inability to deal with such basic accounting practices as revenue and expenses captured the headlines, the nation's inexorable inability to deal with life and death quietly continued considering the how, why, whether and when to kill miscreants.

In Idaho, a death-row inmate for almost a quarter-century did not want to be killed. He was executed.

In Oregon, a two-time murderer wanted to be executed. He was reprieved, and now plans legal action against the governor, whom he calls a coward for denying him his right to be killed.

A federal judge in Ohio approved changes, which the state made in its execution procedures, such as not having enough executioners on a given day. ("Two chairs, no waiting?!"

"Ohio's revised lethal injection policy and practices are the most comprehensive in scope and will be the best documented in the nation," said a spokesman for the prison system. Might this result in a license plate motto: "Ohio: We Do Death Right"?

And in Washington state, a person charged with a capital crime must be recommended by the prosecution before the jury considers the ultimate fate.

Church teaching does not approve the death penalty. It gives a highly conditioned exemption if it is the only possible way to protect society. "But the cases in which the execution of the offender is an absolute necessity 'are very rare, if not practically nonexistent.'" (The latter is a quote from Blessed Pope John Paul II.)

"I simply cannot participate once again in something that I believe to be morally wrong," said Oregon Gov. John Kitzhaber in announcing a reprieve for convicted murderer Gary Haugen and said he will do the same for anyone up for execution until his term ends in 2015.

Kitzhaber said he has regretted not stopping two earlier executions. The death penalty is morally wrong, unfairly administered and amounts to a very expensive life sentence, he said, because no one is executed unless they waive appeals.

The object of Kitzhaber's clemency -- Haugen -- was not appreciative, to say the least.

"I feel he's a paper cowboy," Haugen said. "He couldn't pull the trigger."

The governor "basically pulled a coward's move," said Haugen, by acting on his personal beliefs instead of carrying out the will of Oregon voters, who reinstated the death penalty in 1984.

The 49-year-old inmate said he plans to ask lawyers about possible legal action to fight Kitzhaber's temporary reprieve, which lasts until the governor leaves office.

In neighboring Idaho, despite pleas from the pope and his bishop, the state's Catholic governor declined to stop the execution of Paul Rhoades, "It's tough, it's tough," Gov. Butch Otter said of reconciling his faith and the death penalty. "I support the death penalty." Other ways are available to punish criminals and project society, Boise Bishop Michael P. Driscoll reminded Otter in a letter.

Stumbling economy even downsizes CNS columnist

By Therese J. Borchard
Catholic News Service

During the autumn of 2001, I was holding my 4-month-old son when I received an unexpected call from Catholic News Service. A pleasant editor introduced herself as Carole Greene and said she had been given a copy of my book, "Winging It: Meditations of a Young Adult."

"Would you consider writing a column for us on young adult themes?" Carole asked. And, because worry and anxiety are deeply embedded into my DNA, my first question back was, "What age qualifies as young adult?"

She said I was cool if I wrote to a readership of 40 or below.

So my second question was, "What about when I turn 40?"

With her signature calmness and melodic tone, she responded, "We'll cross that bridge when we get there."

We eventually got there, so my column morphed into family-life issues. I tackled topics relevant to most of the young parents that I know: How can I make enough money to pay for food, heat, and water and still be an involved mom? How can I best pass on the Catholic faith to my kids without appearing as a hypocrite?

How can I live out the values of the Gospel when on some days I seem allergic to kindness, forgiveness and patience?

How do I lessen the impact of today's media exposure on my preteens? How can I care for my kids and my aging parents at the same time?

But after 10 years, the time has come to say goodbye.

As many of you have experienced yourselves, the feeble economy has turned our household upside down. a few years ago.

Securing good health insurance has been especially problematic, because neither of us is presently aligned with a large employer.

To meet these needs, I've begun a full-time corporate job, leading the communication efforts of a local technology company that specializes in cloud computing and semantic web technology.

I have yet to get through "Cloud Computing for Dummies" and "Semantic Web for Dummies," because this tech talk is certainly a foreign language to me. But just like I learned French well enough to live in France for eight months, I shall persevere in this new world.

My husband Eric gets homework duty with the kids and most of the shuffling to sports.

There's no doubt that I, like Mary in Luke's Gospel, have the better part, or at least the easiest.

Remember the joke about the guy who died, went to heaven and asked God why he didn't save him? God reminded him that he sent a raft, a boat and helicopter.

Well, God won't have to remind me about the help that he sent.

Remember the joke about the guy who died, went to heaven and asked God why he didn't save him? God reminded him that he sent a raft, a boat and helicopter.

Well, God won't have to remind me about the help that he sent. While I will miss writing this column and much of my freelance work, I can't help but view my opportunity in my latest career move as the lifeboat that God has sent to our family in the flood.

I want to thank all the editors at Catholic News Service -- and especially my main editor, Carole Greene, who has become a dear friend -- for giving me the opportunity to write this column for 10 years.

And, most definitely, I'd like to thank you, readers, for all of your encouragement and support over the years.
Too much anger can send ripples through your civility meter

By Karen Osborne
Catholic News Service

If you're human, you've been angry. That's pretty much a given.

We've all gotten angry at politicians, at bad drivers, at bullies, at mean people and even at ourselves. We vent our anger to friends, to the Internet and to strangers in line at the supermarket.

We don't like to acknowledge that we can become angry at our friends and our family members, too. Somehow, that kind of anger feels worse than any other. And in high school, the betrayals, slights and wrongs that lead to that kind of anger cut straight to the bone.

I remember how angry I was when one friend started dating the guy I really liked. I might have resembled Yosemite Sam, you know, the cartoon Western gunslinger with steam coming out of his ears. I remember the rage I felt when another friend told untrue rumors about me to get into the popular clique.

Both times I said and did things that I normally wouldn't have done, if I hadn't been so angry.

When you're angry, the filter of civility that guards your words and deeds falls away. People say things when they are angry that they would never say otherwise -- things they don't honestly mean and often live to regret.

There's an old adage that "sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me." But words do hurt -- they wound, deep and often forever, and once uttered, can never be taken back.

When you find yourself so angry that you feel like a carbon copy of Yosemite Sam, take a deep breath, count to 10, and never, ever say the following phrases:

- "You're an [insult]."
- This is what rhetoricians call an "ad hominem" attack, and it never works. All it does is escalate the problem and make the person with whom you're angry defensive and uncooperative.

You wouldn't want to be called those names, so don't use them yourself.

- "I hate you!"
- Chances are, you don't really mean this; it's just the heat of the moment controlling your speech.

- "You made me ..."
- It's tempting to blame the other person for making you angry, especially if his or her words or deeds were in the wrong.

- But if you think about it, the only person in the world who can control how you feel about something or what you do about something is you. Act accordingly.

- "You should have ..."
- The past can't be changed. Whatever happened has happened -- for good or for ill -- and arguing about it is useless. The only way out is forward.

"It's your fault."

In reality, very few situations that you'll find yourself dealing with are one-sided. Every story has multiple facets, and the more you look for those instead of relying on just the little bit that you can see, the faster you'll be able to go back to being friends again.

More than anything, acknowledge your anger as a warning bell that something probably needs to change. After all, if the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. wasn't angry about unjust segregation laws, or the residents of colonial Boston hadn't been angry about a particularly steep tax on tea, our whole world would be in a radically different place.

Don't be Yosemite Sam, stomping and steaming and firing your gun.

Instead, become a bridge-builder and see how even the worst situations fueled by anger can sometimes turn out for the best.
Making Sense of Bioethics

We are called to give unconditional parental love to our children

By Father Tad Pacholczyk

Once I met a woman who had worked for years in fashion and modeling. Unsurprisingly, she was strikingly attractive. She was accompanied by her teenage daughter who, by contrast, was rather unremarkable to look at, maybe even a plain-Jane. After spending time with them, I began to sense that the mother, whose life had largely revolved around her appearance, seemed to look down on her daughter, perhaps unconsciously, because of her average appearance. Her daughter seemed aware of this lack of maternal acceptance, and seemed troubled and uncomfortable as she tried to compensate and please her mom in other ways.

The girl’s situation was a strong reminder to me of how important it is for every child to experience unconditional acceptance from their parents if they are to grow and mature in a healthy way. Unconditional love profoundly and beautifully molds us as human beings.

A growing number of parents in our society, however, no longer seem to hold to this key notion of unconditionally accepting their own children. If parents are told by doctors that their children might be born with physical or mental disabilities, many parents today will reject them and even yield to the temptation to end their lives through direct abortion.

I was recently discussing the Special Olympics with the father of a boy who has Down syndrome, and he remarked that when he takes his son to the local church, the people there seem to be reduced numbers of new children participating each year. He wondered if this could be due to the expanded targeting of Down syndrome children through prenatal testing and abortion.

Most unborn children diagnosed with Down syndrome, in fact, are never allowed to be born. Data from the United Kingdom indicate that between 1989 and 2006 approximately 92% of women chose to terminate a pregnancy with a prenatal diagnosis of Down syndrome, while in the U.S., several published studies suggest the figure may be somewhere between 87% and 98%. A great many Down syndrome children, indeed, never see the light of day.

In the face of these harsh data, the importance of explicitly repudiating the eugenic mindset that has taken hold in our society cannot be overstated. No child is perfect, but every child is precious. We need to act as a people “set apart” in our attitude to the begetting of children who may be disabled. Historically, Catholics have always stood apart in this way.

Practically, this means overturning our culturally-conditioned attitudes towards “imperfect” children, and accepting every child without preconditions. We must push back against the almost ubiquitous pressure that counsels us to ensure that our children are born without defects.

Bioethicist Luke Gormally argues it this way: “In part these pressures are the natural temptation to avoid the burdens of care for the handicapped... In part, however, they are the pressures of cultural attitudes, assimilated by many Christians, towards the child.”

He continues: “For many it has become merely quaint to think of each child as a unique gift of God; children are more like planned acquisitions in our culture, acquisitions which should fit into our expectations about how our lives should go, about the ease and enjoyments that should characterize our lifestyle. A child who might threaten our ease may, if he or she is viewed as an acquisition, be thought of as a replaceable acquisition. And indeed genetic counselors will tell parents: you can terminate this pregnancy and try again for a ‘normal child.’”

A husband and wife are called to give themselves to each other completely and unreservedly, and to accept each other unconditionally in the marital embrace. Every child of theirs, whether entering the world with a handicap or not, is an expression and fruit of themselves and their acceptance of each other. To reject their own progeny because of a disability is to reject each other on some level. To deny life to their own flesh and blood is also to reject an infinite gift from the Giver of gifts, and to arrogate to themselves a ruthless power over life. Meanwhile, the unconditional acceptance of a child as a gift of God flows from the true and unconditional acceptance of each other as husband and wife, even with all their spousal faults and defects.

As Gormally concludes, “Truly unreserved self-giving carries with it a commitment to unreserved acceptance of the fruit of that self-giving. The dignity of the child is only adequately recognized in the acceptance and cherishing of him just as he is.”

We do well continually to realign our thinking, so we can come to see how our children, whether “perfect” or not, are treasures and never possessions; they are gifts, and never acquisitions. They are blessings to be safeguarded and nurtured in the embrace of unconditional parental acceptance.

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

Divine truth, defined Catholic teaching are guides for upcoming presidential elections

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

As we approach the presidential and other elections, our ultimate guide in selecting candidates for whom we cast our vote should be first and foremost Divine truth and the defined teaching of our Catholic Church. Our selection of the candidate for the top office of our nation should be based on biblical and moral principles explained to us by our Catholic Church, and not primarily on party platforms or party affiliation. Sadly, many Catholics put party affiliation and party platform ahead of even the Divine truths that are given to us by God in the Bible and sacred Tradition, and above the defined teaching of our Catholic Church on some specific moral issues.

As a nation and as a Church, we are facing unprecedented challenges that threaten to undermine the integrity of our moral, social, political life and foundational principles of society, and we are letting mere human judgments and laws become the ultimate standards that guide us for voting for political candidates and for formulating laws and policies instead of Divine laws and doctrines of our Catholic Church. We should let our selection of government leaders on all issues be guided by the social justice teaching of our Catholic Church.

To guide us in the political selection of the person that we choose as our President, we must seriously ask ourselves which candidate’s political position is most in accord with Divine truth and defined teaching of our Catholic Church. The socio-political-economic issues before us must be analyzed in the moral framework of these two guiding principles. Guided by these two principles, I present to you the issues that Catholic voters and other people of good will must take into account as they cast their votes.

The number one issue that should guide our vote for the President of our country is our understanding and belief that the unborn human life, from the first moment of conception, is true human life, sacred because it is stamped with the very image and likeness of God and that direct abortion is seriously immoral and a crime. Based on several passages of Sacred Scripture, the Catholic Church holds that a new human being begins at conception, and that this human life must be given the highest respect and protection through pregnancy and throughout the life of this new person until the natural end of life as determined by God. Simply said, our Catholic Church teaches that we are pro-life at every stage of life—from the womb to the tomb. Catholics need to seriously consider which Presidential candidate will do the most to show respect for the precious
SUICIDE
(From 6)

According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), half of all cases of mental illness begin by age fourteen. The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry states that suicide is the third leading cause of death for 15- to 24-year-olds.

Recent studies show that more than 95 percent of young people who took their own lives had been diagnosed with a mental disorder. Severe depression is the most prevalent of these disorders. Other psychological diagnoses that increase the risk of suicide among teens include bi-polar disorder and addiction to alcohol and/or drugs. Often, other contributing or precipitating factors are physical illness along with mental illness, disintegrating family relationships, a sense of not belonging, bullying, personal or economic failures, grief over the loss of a loved one, overwhelming social pressures. These conditions often cause people, especially the young, distress, irritability, agitation, hopelessness, and feelings of worthlessness. One just does not wake up one day and want to die. There are events in life that make some people more vulnerable to suicide.

Given the strong correlation between psychological conditions and suicide, it is important to recognize the early symptoms in order to seek professional help that could make a significant impact.

Read the complete text of Bp. Pfleifer’s article on suicide in the Oct. 2011 Angelus or online at www.sanangelodiocese.org.

RESPONSE
(From 1)

in 1994, said it is important that people educate them about the signs of suicide. Tyson, a parishioner at Midland’s St. Ann’s Church, recommended three resources, each with Websites and easily found through Google: the American Association of Suicidology, Suicide Awareness: Voices of Education (SAVE.org), the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and the Suicide Prevention Resource Center in Washington.

Tyson said as important as it is to not panic as a parent and adult, it is equally important not to panic a child or young person when suicide occurs.

“If you go into panic mode, a young person is liable to shut down on you,” Tyson said. “Don’t panic the child, educate yourself.”

Tyson related a personal story of a woman who said after a recent suicide she tried to broach the subject with her teen but the teen told her mom that she was OK and didn’t need to talk. After awhile, the mom returned and related a story of her own dealing with suicide, specifically when a friend took her life.

“She began to tell her daughter about how it impacted her life, and when she did, her daughter broke down in tears and began to open up about how she was feeling.”

Suicide, Tyson said, can be caused by a number of factors that overwhelm a person’s ability to cope.

“There is not a single profile that identifies a person who will take their life,” Tyson said. “Statistically, though, research shows that 90 percent of persons who take their life are suffering from depression, untreated or treated, diagnosed or undiagnosed, and a larger percentage will take their life if it is undiagnosed and untreated.

A recent study by the SPRC has also showed that bullying is a contributing factor to suicide only if the victim is someone who has already had depression and suicidal thoughts.

Tyson, who travels the country as a grief support facilitator and spiritual director in private practice in Texas and Michigan, said she frequently uses the following quote, from a young minister named Warren Stevens. The quote was first spoken at a funeral for a person who had taken his own life:

“Our friend died on his own battlefield, killed in action fighting a civil war. He fought against adversaries that were as real to him as this casket is to us. They were powerful adversaries that took a toll on his energies and endurance and exhausted the last vestiges of his courage, and only God knows how this child of His suffered in silent skirmishes that took place in his soul.”

ZIENTEK
(From 3)

ponds as well as peacocks. He was like St. Francis. The rest of the Franciscans -- there were many serving the diocese at the time -- referred to St. Joseph’s as “The Fidelis Zoo.”

It was the Franciscans who taught me how to play poker, and the occasion was the dedication of the new church in Lamesa, in the Diocese of Amarillo, which was under the guidance of Bishop Morkovsky. Father Vitek, the pastor, invited me to the celebration. After the ceremony, I was invited to join in the game of poker they were playing. I didn’t know much about it at the time, but my tutors were a bishop and three or four Franciscans.

Father Howard had a better hand than the bishop, who said, “Don’t you know you’re not supposed to beat the bishop?” Father Howard responded, “I put in as many chips as you did and I had the better hand.” Precious memories.

When Bishop Leven retired in 1979, during my stay in Rowena, I was named administrator of the diocese until a new bishop was found. How do you describe this job?!

It was a lot like being a bridesmaid, not a bride. The job lasted six months, four hours and 29 minutes. Amen! It was a treasured learning experience.

I retired from the priesthood Feb. 1, 2003. Since retiring I do weekend supply. I’ve supplied in Brady three weeks after retirement; Goodfellow AFB; St. Margaret’s and in Abilene at Holy Family every summer for three weeks for nine years. I’ve also supplied at St. Vincent in Abilene, Rowena, Olfen, Miles, Winters, Coleman, Brownwood, Andrews, Millersview, Melvin and other places I may have forgotten.

I served five bishops in 25 years in the diocese of San Angelo and many, many others while living in the Diocese of Austin. You would think I was allergic to bishops.

Now you have the rest of the story!

I was honored to be recognized as the only priest who was there when the diocese was organized in 1961 and was honored to be seated next to Cardinal Daniel DiNardo at the 50th Anniversary Mass -- I waited 53 years to be seated next to a cardinal!

With gratitude for 53 years a priest and 50 years in the Diocese of San Angelo ... God is Good! Always!

-- Father Z.

Encountering God in Rohr’s ‘Men’s Rites,’ ‘FIRMing’

By Gary Collins

ABILENE — This past September, I headed down south to join with a group of about 30 guys for a Christian men’s experience at a ranch on the Pedernales River. That experience was entitled ‘FIRMing’ (Fifth Initiation Rite for Men). The primary aspect of the experience was solitude and fasting in the wilderness. In addition there were teachings, group rituals, and some one-on-one reflection.

The underlying theme of that particular weekend was ‘Shadow work’. In just a few words, each of us has a shadow side, both with dark aspects, that side of us that we are ashamed of and believe that we can hide and defeat, and golden aspects that call us to do great things, and yet we convince ourselves that is not who we are, so we let it go. (see the works of C.G. Jung for more on “The Shadow”).

“The scriptural backdrop of the FIRMing was the biblical saga of Jacob and Essau, both sons of Isaac (see Genesis 25-33 for the full account). Our scriptural readings and the rituals we took part in centered around their differences, deception, rage, fear and their eventual reconciliation. Each of them had a shadow side of their own, and yet they were greatly blessed by God. All of this opened the door for my brothers and I to more clearly see our own shadows once we had entered our time of solitude and fasting in the wilderness.

The FIRMing that I participated in was a continuation, an extension of an earlier men’s experience in which I participated in May 2001. That experience was the Men’s Rite of Passage (MROP) that I underwent with 115 other men in the mountains of New Mexico. The Men’s Rites was a benchmark experience for me, one that continues to unfold through the journey of my life. The number of men who have gone through the MROP is small but growing worldwide, with an approximate 5,000 men who have undergone it in eight countries around the world.

The Men’s Rites of Passage is the culmination of many years of work and study by Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM (a Franciscan of the New Mexico province, and the founding director of the Center For Action and Contemplation (CAC). Father Rohr saw that all primal cultures throughout history and around the globe initiated their boys into men, and saw the survival of the culture as being dependent on that process. Likewise, Fr. Rohr has seen that with the expansion and evolution of our cultures, these initiation rites were dropped and/or discontinued. Fr. Rohr believes that many of the problems that we have within our own culture and around the globe exist because our boys, growing to men, have not been exposed to much in the way of true elders. They’ve been led to believe in power without learning first the essential lessons of powerlessness. They have not been shown wisdom.

Fr. Rohr also points out that every major figure in the Bible had his primary encounter with God, not in church or

(Please See RITES/21)
A new Stations of the Cross prayer garden, featuring life-size, cast-iron figures depicting each of the stations, was built adjacent to the Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi and opened in October 2010. (Station photos by Jimmy Patterson)

A fascinating look at the faith and its early roots in the southwest is well worth the drive to New Mexico

By Jimmy Patterson

SANTA FE, N.M. — The drive from Santa Fe to Midland takes about seven hours as the odometer rolls over 400 times. From San Angelo, it would obviously be even more.

Yet, the trove of Catholic history and culture that awaits travelers at the end of the journey to Santa Fe defies description. It is spectacular. If we had a “Mecca” for Catholicism in the United States, it literally lies only a long weekend trip away for most everyone in the Diocese of San Angelo.

From the miraculous staircase at the Loretto Chapel to the indescribable feeling you feel inside the oldest church in the country as you look out on handmade drawings on canvas of the Stations of the Cross to a bell that was forged in the 13th century and brought to the southwest in the 1700s, Santa Fe is like a spiritual mini-retreat.

As historic as this city is, one of its must-see sites is the Stations of the Cross prayer garden, opened in October 2010 adjacent to the Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi.

The basilica of St. Francis is one of only four basilicas in the United States. The status of basilica means the church falls under the jurisdiction of the Vatican.

For the full effect of the faith’s roots here, make a short trip to Chimayo, a short 30 miles northeast of town in the foothills of the Santa Fe mountains. Every year, a pilgrimage is made from Santa Fe to Chimayo.

The breathtakingly beautiful Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi is the architectural and spiritual focal point of this city of unique structures and religious history.

Mass has been celebrated on the site of the basilica for 400 years. The Church was constructed during the apostolate of Bishop Jean Baptiste Lamy, of France, after Lamy was assigned to oversee the newly formed diocese, in 1850. The Church was elevated to basilica by Pope Benedict XVI in 2005.

The Loretto Chapel, now privately owned, is home to what many call the Miraculous Staircase. When the chapel was built, there was no staircase to the choir loft. Monks and priests at the chapel simply used a ladder to access the loft. But when the sisters came, they found it difficult to climb a ladder and they prayed a Novena. Soon, a stranger appeared and in six months had constructed a staircase, said to be structurally perfect. The original stairs had no railing and no support beams and remained operational only because it was, quite literally, perfect in its design and construction. The stranger disappeared shortly after its completion. Many believe Joseph, patron saint of carpenters, built the staircase.

The breathtakingly beautiful Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi is the architectural and spiritual focal point of this city of unique structures and religious history.
St. Ann’s talks with students about suicide

By Jimmy Patterson
Editor

Joan Wilmes, principal at St. Ann’s School, said teachers and staff responded quickly when news came of three suicides in Midland late last year.

Class discussions were held at the middle school level with students voicing concerns about suicide, coping skills and how to confront issues that seem insurmountable. Additional conversations on how to cope with life were held on the fourth and fifth grade levels with students from third through fifth grade.

Wilmes said educators are trained to look for the following signs that would indicate troubling thoughts could be occurring in an elementary or middle school aged child (there is no high school at St. Ann’s):

• depression such as helplessness or hopelessness
• shifts in behavior (inability to concentrate)
• changes in physical habits or appearance
• sudden changes in personality such as withdrawing from relationships
• increased absenteeism
• indirect clues
• suicidal or death themes in journaling, drawing and/or writing
• suicide threats and/or notes

Any one of the signs or several signs, Wilmes said, are indicators to parents and teachers that the child is in trouble. An educator must be in tune with students so they can pick up on danger signs. Constantly encouraging students to confide in a teacher, parents or adults.

“We continue to share in truth and action that all God’s children know they are loved and valued,” Wilmes said.

Family room

Bullies can have a lifelong effect on their victims

By Jimmy Patterson / Editor

I don’t know how many teen suicides are ultimately brought on by bullying. I would expect that it would be a significant number. Whatever the number, even if it’s one, it’s too many.

Bullying is a fixable societal problem. And yet we seem uncomfortable when talking about it. If we talk about it.

I’m not sure if it has been determined how many of the recent teen suicides in Midland came by kids who were relentlessly picked on, poked at and made fun of by other children who inflate their self-worth and perceive themselves as some sort of higher being than the victim, often someone who can be, but is not always, smaller, meeker, milder and not as brash or outspoken as the bully.

This is a story about a 9-year-old kid who was bullied. Save for his parents’ response, nothing was ever done about it. Fortunately, the boy never entertained thoughts of suicide. But that doesn’t mean the incident just magically went away.

It was the summer of 1969 and this kid had been baptized in a protestant church a month or so earlier and so he was, in today’s parlance, on fire. So he decided to be brave and venture out from the walls and protection of his mom and dad, something he had never before done. He and his parents had been many places together, near and far, and so the kid felt comfortable in their company.

When he finally relented and agreed to attend summer camp, he did so with sweat on his palms and a knot in his throat. But he went and that was a big step.

The kid will never forget the first night of his church-sponsored camp. After spending most of the afternoon alone (he was a shy kid, see), he had dinner with other campers and at the end of the night the born-again 9-year-old with a newfound sense of boldness and adventure returned to his bunkhouse with the others. But that first night’s experience was different for him than it was for the other campers because the kid was a rookie.

Some call what happened initiation. Others may think of it as hazing. To me, it was bullying.

The kid was tossed into the bunkhouse unawares and told to run down the middle aisle. On either side of the middle aisle were the bunks, upper and lower, of the 30 or so other campers who were there for a week of fun and games and praise and worship.

So the kid ran down the middle aisle. And as he did,
Our Faith

Wearing the rosary; attending non-Catholic services

By Father Kenneth Doyle
Catholic News Service

Q. I am an 8th-grade teacher in a public school. I am devoted to the rosary and pray it daily. I have several Hispanic students who wear the rosary around their neck. I tell them that the rosary is meant to be prayed, not to be worn as jewelry. When I ask them about the prayers involved in the rosary, they have no idea what I’m talking about. So I ask them to take it off. Am I wrong? (Georgia)

A. Canon No. 1171 is the church’s guideline that relates most directly here. This provision of the church’s Code of Canon Law states: "Sacred objects, which are designated for divine worship by dedication or blessing, are to be treated reverently and are not to be employed for profane or inappropriate use even if they are owned by private persons."

One might argue that the rosaries in question were probably never blessed, and, in truth, the canon was meant to apply more to objects for liturgical worship, such as chalices, than to rosaries. But I would contend that a rosary is a sacred object, whether blessed or not, and should not be used simply for ornamentation.

That having been said, I would caution against concluding that the students have no religious motive, particularly since there is a long-standing custom among Latinos of wearing rosaries to show their faith in Jesus and in his mother, Mary. That the students don’t seem to know the prayers that go with each bead doesn’t necessarily prove that they do not have a religious purpose in wearing their rosaries.

What you might want to do, rather than making the students remove the rosaries, is to teach them.

Why not say to them, "I’m glad to see that you and I share the same faith in Jesus and love for Mary." (Of course, in a public school setting, you have the added hurdle of having to do this on your own time and not in a classroom setting.)

Q. After fulfilling our Sunday obligation, are Catholics permitted to attend a non-Catholic church service when invited by a relative? (During the holiday season, this presents an annual dilemma for my wife and me.) (Newburgh, Ind.)

A. "Yes," is the clear answer, and further, it is a good idea.

Catholics may attend and participate in common prayer experiences with non-Catholics. (The one caution is that, in general, Catholics may not take Communion if it is offered as part of the non-Catholic service, as specified in Canon No. 844 of the church’s Code of Canon Law.)

The Vatican, in particular the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, has strongly encouraged common prayer among Christians, especially psalms and hymns, and, if invited, a Catholic may read a lesson at a non-Catholic service or even preach. Such attendance does not serve Catholics as a substitute for Sunday Mass, but you said that you had already satisfied the obligation of Sunday Eucharist.

The particular circumstance that you reference -- sharing prayer with family members, especially at holiday time -- is an ideal setting, as are joint Thanksgiving services or weddings and funerals of non-Catholics.

Father Barron's Word on Fire Catholic Ministries

By Father Peter J. Daly
Catholic News Service

Thank God for Father Robert Barron. He has revitalized our adult education program for two years in a row.

Last year, he taught us about the seven deadly sins and the seven saving virtues. This year, he is reacquainting us with the history and magnificence of Catholicism.

If you have been on another planet or in a parallel universe, you may not have heard of Father Barron. He is the poster priest of what Pope Benedict XVI means by the "new evangelization."

Not only is Father Barron smart, he talks like me with a flat Chicago accent. He also founded and directs Word on Fire Catholic Ministries, which puts out books and videos of extraordinarily good quality.

I was educated about Father Barron by my parishioners. One man in our parish, Russ Spaulding, discovered Father Barron online. Russ kept telling me every weekend after Mass about this great new media priest. He said that he was the new Archbishop Fulton Sheen. Finally, I took a look myself.

I was made a believer when I first saw his videos on the seven deadly sins. Father Barron had a way of lifting our minds to think the big picture. I loved his use of literature to make his point. He quoted everything from Dante Alighieri’s "Divine Comedy" to Bob Dylan’s music.

Father Barron’s use of literature opens us to the wider world. It underscores that our Catholic faith is truly universal. We can appreciate any truth, no matter where it is found. It finds a home in the Catholic mind and heart, even if not specifically Catholic.

Father Barron has an interesting technique, which works well in appealing to the modern mind. He does two things.

First, he focuses on the basic and eternal truths of the faith.

Second, he illustrates those truths with beauty that is found in our Catholic tradition in music, art, literature and philosophy.

His method has meaning.

By focusing on the basics of our faith, he reminds us of what unites us as Catholics. We’ve had enough of the controversies. Now we want to be reminded of what we agree on. Liberal and conservative Catholics can come away singing from the same hymn book.

Father Barron’s "Catholicism" series, for instance, is focused on the big things: the mystery of God, the teachings of Jesus, the life of prayer and the sacramental life of the church. These are the essentials that we really need to talk about. Plenty of other people can deal with the controversy of the moment.

Many undereducated Catholic adults need to learn or relearn the basics of our faith. We need to remind ourselves what makes us distinctive among religions.

By presenting everything with beauty, Father Barron reminds us that religion should inspire. His videos use music, art, architecture and poetry to lift our spirits. Every now and then I find myself emotional as I am transported by Mozart or touched by some image of a pilgrimage to Lourdes.

Father Barron has remembered what the ancient Greeks knew, that beauty is one of the attributes of God.

The nice thing about Father Barron’s videos is that, when we hit the "play" button, they don’t just entertain us for an hour; they stimulate discussion.

Father Barron has done something we have needed for a long time. He has given us a tool to make us want to know God better.

Thank God for that!
**Summary of Audited Financials**

Diocese of San Angelo  
Fiscal Year 2011  
(ended June 30, 2011)

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**Administrative and Program Offices of the Roman Catholic Diocese of San Angelo**

**Statements of Financial Position**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 30,</td>
<td>$542,577</td>
<td>$370,783</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$9,550,000</td>
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<td><strong>Assets</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Certificates of deposit - for Seniors' Nurse Endowment Fund</td>
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<td>Notes receivable</td>
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<td>Property and equipment, net</td>
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<td><strong>Total Assets</strong></td>
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**Liabilities and Net Assets**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$599,169</td>
<td>$521,032</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accounts payable and accrued liabilities</td>
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<td>Accounts payable due to the Catholic Charitable Foundation</td>
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<td>Accounts payable due to the Diocese of San Angelo</td>
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<td>Parishes related by the Diocese of San Angelo</td>
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**Net Assets**

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unrestricted</td>
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<td>$1,751,365</td>
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<tr>
<td>Temporarily restricted</td>
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<td>4,599,466</td>
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<tr>
<td>Permanently restricted</td>
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<td>1,861,187</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Net Assets</strong></td>
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<td>$5,175,296</td>
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**Statement of Activities**

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<th>Temporarily restricted</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td><strong>Revenue, Gains, and Other Support Contributions</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Grants</td>
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<td>Interest and dividends</td>
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<td>$2,521,496</td>
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<td>Other income and gains</td>
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<td>221,320</td>
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<td>Non-operating gains</td>
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<td>$2,479,929</td>
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<tr>
<td>on investments</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Revenue, Gains, and Other Support Contributions</strong></td>
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<td>$216,030</td>
<td>$216,030</td>
<td>$2,953,556</td>
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**Expenditure**

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<tr>
<td>Change in Net Assets:</td>
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<td>$216,030</td>
<td>$2,953,556</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Expenses</td>
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<td>$1,751,365</td>
<td>$1,861,187</td>
<td>$5,650,835</td>
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**Change in Net Assets**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change from operations activities</td>
<td>$5,023,853</td>
<td>$5,175,296</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Change in Net Assets</strong></td>
<td>$2,523,857</td>
<td>$216,030</td>
</tr>
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**Net Assets, Beginning of Year**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unrestricted</th>
<th>Temporarily restricted</th>
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**Net Assets, End of Year**

<table>
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<th></th>
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<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$4,037,283</td>
<td>$344,697</td>
<td>$1,741,735</td>
<td>$5,423,715</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.

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**Diocese of San Angelo**

**Office of the Bishop**

**December 19, 2011**

**Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,**

I am happy to present to you selected information from the Diocese of San Angelo’s audited financial report for the most recent year ending June 30, 2011. The entire report as prepared by our auditors, BDO USA, LLP, has been carefully studied by the Presbyterial Council, the Diocesan Finance Council, the Diocesan Finance Officer, and myself, and has been accepted by me as bishop.

I want to express my sincere appreciation for your generous financial support upon which our church ministries depend. Your material generosity helps me and those who serve with me to fulfill our mission of serving Christ’s people.

I invite any of you who would like to receive the full audited financials to contact our Diocesan Finance Officer, Regina Bedford, who will be happy to provide a copy to you.

Your servant in Christ and Mary.

[Signature]

[Name]

Bishop of San Angelo
**‘Good Shepherds, Good Leaders’ program builds priestly skills**

**The Angelus**

Whether they serve in parishes or in diocesan leadership positions, and in many cases, both, the reality is that the role of the priest defined long ago has faded and a new and drastically different definition of that role today has emerged.

Beyond their responsibilities of celebrating Mass and the Sacraments, and being a pastoral presence in their flocks, priests – especially those serving in parishes – have also found themselves involved in the inner workings of their ministries by having to become administrators, business managers, the human resource person and a host of other titles that they didn’t bank on when they were ordained.

To respond to these challenges facing the presbyterate and better equip priests for ministry in today’s Church, the Diocese of San Angelo has enlisted the support of a program called “Good Leaders, Good Shepherds.”

Sponsored by the Catholic Leadership Institute, “Good Leaders, Good Shepherds” is a two-year, six-module program that offers priests the equivalent of a graduate-level business management course. Over the two years, the priests attend a number of three-and-a-half day workshops and participate in exercises which focus on different areas of leadership development: Self-Preparation for Leadership; Leading in the Self Context; Leading in the One-to-One Context; Leading in the Team Context; Leading in the Organization Content, and Leading Strategic Relationships between Organizations. Participants are given materials to deal with time management, working with individuals and teams, and how to create a vision for the parish or institution and a plan to carry it out.

The Catholic Leadership Institute sponsors the “Good Leaders, Good Shepherds” program which was introduced as a nationwide program in 2006. More than 1200 priests are currently enrolled or have graduated from the program, and the Catholic Leadership Institute’s partnership encompasses 44 dioceses.

Diocese of San Angelo Priests on Board Currently, 18 priests from the Diocese of San Angelo are enrolled in the program. “Good Leaders, Good Shepherds” fosters a “curriculum that clearly supports a priest’s level of confidence and competence as they minister to their people as well as enhances the sense of fraternity that is developed among the priests,” according to Father Bill Dickinson, the national director of the CLI’s leadership development.

“In priesthood ordination, we have three offices that we are responsible for: to teach, to sanctify and to govern. Through “Good Leaders, Good Shepherds,” we’re addressing the governing office of our vocation,” said Fr. Dickinson. “And that’s something that priests find attractive because they acquire the skills to

(Please See SKILLS/21)

**Sisters open Franciscan Resource Center**

**Facility to offer reflection, classes, direction, prayer, other activities**

**Office of Education & Formation**

Diocese of San Angelo

SAN ANGELO — The School Sisters of St. Francis opened a Franciscan Resource Center in downtown San Angelo on September 25. Bishop Pfeifer blessed the building located at the Concho Suites on historic Concho Street. Friends and supporters joined the sisters for the blessings; a reception followed. Sisters from San Antonio and Pennsylvania also visited for the opening of their center.

The objective of the Franciscan Resource Center is to offer people a place to learn and experience Franciscanism. Days and evenings of reflections will be offered as well as classes on spirituality, Franciscan saints and Franciscan history (especially in our diocese). Evening prayer is held on Thursdays with the sisters. The center is open on Tuesdays and Thursday 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Some of the offerings have include: “Care for Creation: a course on Eco-Spirituality” with Sandy Seidel, “An Autumn Morning with God” with Brenda Maiman, “Three Medieval Women: St. Clare of Assisi, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, and St. Agnes of Prague” with S. Adelina Garcia, OFS, and “Grecio: the Story of the Creche.”

It is the desire of the Sisters to continue the legacy of the Franciscans, who first came here in 1632 to build the first mission in Texas in 1632. In modern times the Franciscan Friars of the Cincinnati Province served in our diocese for many years 1920s-1960s. The Franciscan Sisters came in 1993 and continue to serve here also. Come learn more about the Franciscan Order and Spirituality.

Spiritual direction is also available. Brenda Maiman and S. Adelina Garcia offer this service. For those desiring more information on this please check out the website below.

Come join us on the banks of the quiet Concho River in downtown San Angelo and experience the peace of St. Francis and St. Clare.

We are located at 133 W. Concho Suite 108.

Contact us at 325-651-2403 or frcsanangelo@gmail.com or www.frcsanangelo.org

(Please See SCHOOLS/24)
**War Horse: A stirring Spielberg film, but not for kids**

NEW YORK (CNS) -- "War Horse" (Disney) is director Steven Spielberg's epic screen version of Michael Morpurgo's 1982 novel, the stage adaptation of which has proved a critical and popular success both in London and on Broadway.

Despite Morpurgo's tenure as the U.K.'s official children's laureate, though, Spielberg's vast canvas makes unsuitable viewing for kids -- because of the intensity of the onscreen drama, the level of violence in scenes of World War I fighting and some of the vocabulary used in screenwriters Lee Hall and Richard Curtis' script. Mature audience members, on the other hand, will encounter a stirring affirmation of human solidarity amid the tragedy of the trenches.

Ironically, this realization of shared values is brought about by the heroism and endurance of the film's nonhuman protagonist, the titular equine.

We first meet the thoroughbred -- who eventually acquires the sobriquet Joey -- while he's in the auction pen of a small English town. There he sets off a bidding war between the local squire (David Thewlis) and one of his tenants, farmer Albert (newcomer Jeremy Irvine), by contrast, is delighted. Albert insists that he can transform Joey into a working horse, capable of plowing the fields.

When Ted brings Joey home, his good-hearted but timid wife Rosie (Emily Watson) is appalled; his teenage son stubbornly outbids his overbearing landlord just to thwart him.

Albert (newcomer Jeremy Irvine), by contrast, is delighted. Albert insists that he can transform Joey into a working horse, capable of plowing the fields.

Though he eventually does so, with the onset of the Great War, continuing economic pressures prompt Ted to sell Joey to Captain Nicholls (Tom Hiddleston), an army officer bound for the Western Front.

This initiates a series of adventures and trials that are, by turns, touching and harrowing. The horrors to which Joey is subjected will likely make the substantial portion of the movie that follows a difficult slog for animal lovers, while those indifferent to our furry, feathered or hoofed friends will hardly be drawn to this tale in the first place.

But those who imitate Joey by persevering through it all will find themselves rewarded with a positive message based on humanistic values.

The film contains considerable combat and other violence, including an execution; about a half-dozen uses of crass language; and a few vague sexual references. The Catholic News Service classification is A-III -- adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG-13 -- parents strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

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Mulderig is on the staff of Catholic News Service.

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**Pope’s collection on thinkers celebrates Catholic tradition**

Reviewed by Brian Welter / Catholic News Service

"Great Christian Thinkers," a collection of Pope Benedict XVI's weekly audiences on central theological thinkers up to the Reformation, offers a concise, well-balanced introduction to the history of doctrine. Accessible to all, it shows not only Benedict's famously concise language, but also his pastoral side.

While the pontiff is not afraid to depict the frequent, intense theological conflicts that have happened throughout Christian history, he shows how theologians constantly found a solution or offered a new insight that could solve the problem.

Heresy could be a life-and-death issue, as Christians tended to judge each other harshly. Inner divisions were a constant problem in Eastern, Greek- and Syriac-speaking Christianity. Thus, Benedict informs us, Theodore the Studite, born in 759, "became the leader of the iconoclasm of (Byzantine Emperor) Leo V."

Even mundane religious activity would be punished in such a theological battle: "The procession of icons organized by the monks of Studios evoked a reaction from the police. Between 815 and 821, Theodore was scourged, imprisoned and exiled to various places in Asia Minor."

Thinkers such as Theodore were fighting for the truth. Benedict's concern for this battle comes out time and again in these writings. The truth is never easy, so struggles were common.
he was struck repeatedly with belts. He was hit on the torso, the chest and in the backside more times than he cared to remember. The only thing that exceeded the pain of being struck was the humiliation that came with it. In fact, that stung a lot worse and a lot longer than the belt marks.

At the end of the “beltline,” as it was fondly called by the aggressors, were a couple of bigger kids in the bathroom. By then, the kid was crying. And when he got to the bathroom, the two bigger kids took the new kid, lifted him up and buried his head in a toilet filled with urine.

The bigger kids had a good laugh about the fun time they’d just had. For the rookie, the few moments in the aftermath disappeared from his memory. Maybe because it was just too embarrassing to have to walk back through the beltline after the fun and festivities were over, knowing that he was on his way to the camp office, humiliated and embarrassed enough to call home and say, ‘Please come get me.’

“Why?” the kid’s mom and dad would ask during the call for help. And so the kid told them, and two hours later they had made the trip from their Dallas area home and picked up their urine soaked, belt-licked, born again son.

The parents, like the good parents they were, informed the camp and the officials at the church, and everyone prayed that the incident would be forgotten and forgiven after the offenders were duly tongue-lashed and finger-scodled.

But the after-effects of the incident never really subsided. The kid was never embraced by the group of kids his own age in the church, most particularly by those who swung at him and filled the toilet bowl with their surprise at the end of the long run through the bunkhouse.

The kid was scorned and never part of the “in crowd,” and he often found himself sitting alone in church or with his parents while the other kids his own age bonded together in their own pew. He would, in fact, spend nine more years at the church as he waited for his 18th birthday, but God never really seemed to be there with him. Not in his pew, at least.

That kid was me.

The incident happened in June of 1969, several weeks after I was baptized in a protestant church in which my parents raised me. It’s been 42 years since that summer, and although the pain is most certainly gone now, the memories of what happened are not.

Did it change my life? Yes it did. After being shunned by others my age for the remainder of the time I attended that church, it turned me off entirely to that way of practicing the faith. Six years after I last set foot in that church, I met my wife and would warmly embrace — and would be warmly embraced by — the comfort and serenity of the Catholic Church.

I was one of the lucky ones, finding a faith that I could call my own after a bad experience. It took awhile, but I can honestly say those who did what they did quite literally never spoke to me again.

Pain gave way to new faith, and what has been a wonderful life.

But not all stories turn out this way.

If you know someone who is being bullied, encourage them to step forward and talk about it. When they do, remember, that’s when your job as a supporter of that bullying victim is only beginning. A person being bullied needs someone with them just as much as they struggle through the pain and scorn that will inevitably follow.

Pray for people who are the victims of bullying. And be with them. The scars can last a lifetime, and those who bear them need to be guided through their ordeal so that they will outlive the memories.

One third of teens say they have been bullied while at school.

Percentage who reported being:

- made fun of: 20%
- rumored or gossiped about: 18%
- physically bullied: 11%
- threatened: 6%
- excluded from activities: 5%

The readings from the Sunday of my Confirmation speak to me of following the words of our Lord such as keeping the temple of my body holy and by living a chaste life. Sounds simple but sometimes the hardest to do but this makes a big difference in the eyes of our Lord. We must live by Jesus’ example and live His words. For every prayer of asking the Lord for help, we must at least thank the Lord for what he has already given us. My teacher recommended this and I must admit, I had never done this before that day in class. But ever since then, I always thank the Lord for the little things He has given me. He has clothed me, fed me, given me drink, and made me stronger in my time of illness. If I were to hear the Lord asking anything from me, I am glad to say I would help Him in any way I can. He is my shepherd and I one of His sheep. I will make sure this sacrament stays forever within my heart, body, and soul. Someone once told me, a sound soul, dwells within a sound mind, and a sound body. I will always do my best to make sure I have a sound soul.

Yours in Christ,
Nicholas Regalado
St. Charles Parish-Eden
unborn, to work to overcome abortion, and provide protection for this human life throughout pregnancy and when the new human person is borne. Pope John Paul II outlined in his magnificent Gospel of Life, the defined teaching of the Catholic Church as regards the precious life of the unborn and the grave evil of abortion, which is a crime.

A second and integrally related issue to this important principle about when life begins is the Divine teaching given by God in the Bible as regards how we understand the traditional meaning of marriage, from which new life comes. The critical question is which candidates uphold the teaching on marriage that comes from God? There are many today who want to change the Biblical and constant Judeo-Christian teaching about marriage. From the Bible it is clear, and from the constant teaching of our Catholic Church, that a true marriage can only be between a man and a woman in the sacred union of matrimony. The idea that marriage should only be defined as a sacred and lifelong covenant between a man and a woman is under serious attack in our times. Sadly, there is a strong movement in our country approved by many present government officials who are using their political office to promote human laws that would give approval to so-called marriages between the same sexes. This is a very critical issue, and Catholics need to study very carefully the Catholic teaching that is involved here. Which candidate will do the most to preserve the Biblical and traditional understanding of marriage? God has clearly determined that marriage can only be between a man and woman, and Sacred Scripture teaches that homosexual acts (same-sex marriages) are immoral and bring about Divine condemnation. No President, no government, no mere human being is authorized to change the Divine meaning of marriage.

It needs to be stated very clearly as we enter the Presidential election process that we Catholics are pro-life at every stage of human life, beginning at conception and until that life is ended as determined by God. Respect for the sacredness of the unborn and the traditional understanding of marriage are central and foundational issues that a Catholic must take into account in voting for a Presidential candidate. Which Presidential candidate will uphold the Divine truth and the defined teaching of the Catholic Church about these critical basic issues and other important life issues that affect the quality and holiness of human life?

Linked to these foundational life issues is euthanasia and assisted suicide. Based on Scripture, the Catholic Church teaches that only God is the master of life and no human being can usurp the Divine authority as when human life should end. In light of Church teaching, consider carefully the position of political candidates on this issue.

Besides the issue of abortion and the traditional biblical understanding of marriage and euthanasia, there are other vital life issues that need to be looked at very carefully, and we must study how these issues are grounded in Scriptural teaching about the human person and the constant social teaching of our beautiful Catholic Church. Catholics are pro-life at every stage of life, and we must be concerned about respect for human life as regards issues of economy, employment, health, education, housing, racism, peace and environment, and the death penalty.

After considering the issues of the sacredness of the unborn, of abortion and the Divine understanding of marriage, surely in this election year much will be discussed and debated about the economy and the effects that it has on the human person. In the economic system, it should always be stressed that the human person is pre-eminent and not primarily motives for profit and financial gain. At the present time, as we approach the Presidential election, our country is facing critical economic issues. Some 14 million are unemployed, and millions more are underemployed. More than 15 million families live in poverty in our country, the land of prosperity and opportunity. Our President and elected government leaders must assist and protect the poor and jobless as they seek to promote economic growth and fiscal responsibility. The present economic failures have fundamental institutional and systemic elements that have either been ignored or made worse by political and economic behaviors which have undermined the trust and confidence of most people.

As we cast our vote, another critical issue to consider is racism which is intrinsically evil and a follower of Christ can never approve the discrimination of another human being based on color or ethnicity, as this violates human dignity. Another issue to be kept in mind before casting a vote for a person to assume the highest office in the land is the Catholic understanding of human cloning and destructive research on human embryos. Research that destroys human embryos had been defined by Pope John Paul II as eugenic abortion. According to Catholic teaching, this can never be permitted, as it is intrinsically evil as it destroys human life at its earliest stages of development. Which Presidential candidate best represents the Church’s teaching on this critical issue?

Other critical life issues that must be taken into account as one casts a Presidential vote are the issues of health and the welfare of human persons. At this time in our present government, there is a strong move to force all health care insurance plans to include elements of contraception and sterilization. This mandate violates the Constitutional freedom of conscience (Please See DECAY/21)
SKILLS

(From 17)
support the governing office of their
priesthood.”

“Today, more than ever, our
Catholic community needs holy
men of God who not only revere
their own ministry, but also honor
the people they serve. “Good
Leaders, Good Shepherds” cel-
brates the priesthood by engaging
participants in a comprehensive cur-
riculum designed to provide the best
leadership practices to priests. This
ongoing formation revitalizes the
spirit and empowers participants to
embrace their extraordinary voca-
tion more fully. By developing and
exercising leadership skills and
practices, priests are seen as being
more credible and prophetic,” said
Fr. Dickinson.

The process gathers the priests of
diocese together for 16 different
dates during the two years; all
of the gatherings are multi-day “res-
idences.” In today’s climate, this
means the priest’s parishioners must
be prepared to support their priests
through prayer, and expect some
changes in the parish schedule
while their priests are away.
Participants in the inaugural group
of the “Good Leaders, Good
Shepherds” program are:
Father Laurent Mvondo
Father Joseph Vathalloo, CMI
Father Ariel Lagunilla
Father Joey Faylona
Father Patrick Akpanobong
Father Prem Thumma
Father Edward DeLeon, OMI
Father Hubert Wade
Father Barry McLean
Father George Thiramungalam,
CMI
Msgr. Maurice Voity
Msgr. Bernard Gully
Msgr. James Bridges
Msgr. Larry Droll
Father Yesu Mulakaleti
Father Emilio Sosa
Father Francis Njoku

We have already had two sessions
of “Good Leaders, Good Shepherds”
presented to us and everyone who
has attended reports that the sessions
are very beneficial to them both per-
sonally and pastorally.

Would you consider making a gift
to defray the costs of your priest or
of the program in general? Parishes
and institutions in other dioceses
where the “Good Leaders, Good
Shepherds” program has been held
report that their priest is more holy,
healthy and happy and that the
parish or institution is more vibrant
and that people are being led to a
deep relationship with Jesus.

The Diocese of San Angelo
recently received a grant from a pri-
ivate foundation to help defray the
costs for the Diocese, our priests
and the parishes. We are thankful to
this foundation for their generosity.

We can only hope and pray to see
the same results in our personal
lives and in our parishes and institu-
tion. May it be so!

RITES

(From 11)
a synagogue but in solitude in the
wilderness. This was true of Abraham, all of the
prophets, and for Christ Jesus as well.

I have been on several retreats in my life.
All of them were good, and I grew in some
different ways from each of them. And yet it was
my Men’s Rite of Passage, and since then my
more recent FIRMing, that has had the great-
est impact for me.

What I gained and brought back with me, much of it I can’t quite put my
finger on. But I have come to realize that
faith is not about knowing the right answers
or practicing correct technique. Faith is largely
about mystery. Faith is not about knowing with
certainty but about unknowing, believ-
ing and hoping in the Holy Living One even
in the face of that unknowing. It’s about real-
izing that the events of my life, including
the presence of my shadow, have been a part of
my faith journey and intended for me all
along. I have come to look for and yearn for
the presence of God in everything and every-
one that he has created, and to see all of us
as Christ’s Body. This is just some of what I
have gained from the Men’s Rites of
Passage, from solitude in the wilderness.

For more information on the Men’s Rites
of Passage movement, visit
malespirituality.org.

Gary L. Collins II is a parishioner at Holy
Family in Abilene.

YEAR

(From 5)
points for second, etc., and five points
for top newsmaker, four for second, etc.
With 29 editors and CNS staff mem-
bers submitting ballots, the maximum
points a story could have received was
290. The most a newsmaker could
receive on the five-point scale was 145.

Rounding out the top five for reli-
gious news stories were the Irish
curch's sex abuse scandal and the issue
of religious freedom.

Pope Benedict, who has been the top
religious newsmaker in the CNS poll
every year since 2006, took first place
this year for his travels to Croatia,
Benin, Germany and Spain; his declara-
tion of the upcoming Year of Faith; and
his meetings with U.S. bishops, which
were to continue into 2012.

Among newsmakers, Blessed John
Paul II, who was beatified in May, and
Fordham University theologian Sister
Elizabeth Johnson, whose 2007 book
"Quest for the Living God" was
denounced "seriously inadequate as a
presentation of the Catholic under-
standing of God" by the bishops' Com-
munity on Doctrine, were fourth
and fifth, respectively.

DECAY

(From 20)
sience assurance and cannot be obeyed.
What is the position of our Presidential
candidates on this basic issue of religious
freedom of conscience?

As we enter this Presidential election
year, there is a loss of the sense that there
is a natural law given to us by God to
Msgr. Larry Droll
Msgr. James Bridges
Msgr. Larry Droll
Father Yesu Mulakaleti
Father Emilio Sosa
Father Francis Njoku

look funny because I have a lot of freckles? I didn't know you were with the freckle police."
4. Be an appeal to an authority figure. ("I'm not going to fight you about this. I'm saying if it happens again
I'm going straight to (such and such a person) and whatever happens happens." Straight to whom? For a kid it
might be the teacher, principal, day-care supervisor, a parent. For an adult it could be the pastor, boss, human
resources, "my lawyer," the cops.)

"Speaking Up to Fight Back

Bullies rely on "don't be a tattletale." However, there's a
huge difference between "Timmy took an extra cookie" and "Timmy just tore up my book report that's due tomor-
row." Between "Bob never puts the tape dispenser back
where it belongs" and "Bob thinks it funny to tell 'fat
jokes' and watch me blush."

On the Web: Is Your Child a Bully?
For more information for parents and teachers, includ-
ing help if your child is a bully, go to the London
[Ontario] Family Court Clinic site at:
www.lfcc.on.ca/bully.htm.

Bill and Monica Dodds' Web site is www.FSJC.org. Bill
is the author of "Your Grieving Child: Answers to
Questions on Death and Dying" (Our Sunday Visitor).
Simplemente, uno no puede ser pro-aborto de un partido, y ponerlo en práctica. La conciencia moral de cada uno debe guiado por el Espíritu Santo. Cada católico debe creer y mantener esta enseñanza suprema de la Iglesia Católica para ser un verdadero católico, y en la formación personal de la conciencia moral de cada uno. Cada persona, cada político, que se proclama ser Católico, tiene que aceptar esta doctrina de la Iglesia antes de la creencia personal o la posición política o la plataforma política de un partido, y ponerla en práctica. Simplemente, uno no puede ser pro-aborto.

La idea de matrimonio que viene desde el Creador y que tiene el nombre de matrimonio sagrado, es un don de Dios para el hombre. El matrimonio sagrado se define en el Alcázar de valores sagrados y se manifiesta en la espiritualidad de la vida del hombre. El matrimonio sagrado es el acto de Dios en el mundo, y se manifiesta en la espiritualidad de la vida del hombre.

El más pobre entre nosotros, el más inocente e indefenso entre nosotros, el más propenso a una muerta violenta es el niño en el vientre de su madre. Este niño necesita la protección de una madre que alimenta, de padres amorosos, y de una sociedad que respecta la dignidad de la vida de cada niño hecho en la imagen y semejanza de Dios.

Al acercarnos a las elecciones presidenciales o otras elecciones, nuestra guía última en seleccionar los candidatos a quienes queremos dar nuestro voto ha de ser primariamente y ante todo la verdad Divina y la enseñanza definida de nuestra Iglesia Católica. Nuestra selección del candidato para la oficina más alta de nuestra nación ha de ser basada en principios bíblicos y morales explicados a nosotros por nuestra Iglesia Católica, y no principalmente en plataformas de un partido y afiliación a un partido. Tristemente, muchos católicos ponen afiliación a un partido y la plataforma de un partido antes de las verdades nos de Dios en la Biblia y la sagrada Tradición, y ante la enseñanza definida de nuestra Iglesia Católica en algunos temas específicos.

(Mira VIDA/23)
morales y de la vida.

Como nación y como una Iglesia, nos afrontamos a unos desafíos sin precedentes que amenazan a socavar la integridad de nuestra vida moral, social, política y princi- pios fundamentales de la sociedad, y esta- mos dejando que juicios y leyes meramente humanos lleguen a ser las últimas normas que nos guían a votar por los candidatos políticos y para formular leyes y políticas en vez de leyes Divinas y doctrinas de nuestra Iglesia Católica. Deberíamos dejar que nuestra selección de líderes guberna- mentales en todos asuntos ser guiados por la enseñanza social justa de nuestra Iglesia Católica.

Para guiar en la selección política de la persona que escojamos como nuestro Presidente, deberíamos seriamente preguntarnos cual posición del candidato político está más de acuerdo con la Divina verdad y enseñanza definida por nuestra Iglesia Católica. Los temas socio-político-econó- mico anto nosotros deben ser analizados en la estructura moral de estos dos principios guiadores. Guiados por estos dos prin- cipios, les presento a ustedes los temas que los votantes Católicos y otra gente de buena voluntad han de tomar en cuenta al decidir sus votos.

Para guiar en la selección política de la persona a quien escojamos como nuestro Presidente, debemos preguntarnos, cual posición del candidato político está más de acuerdo con la verdad Divina y la enseñan- za definida por nuestra Iglesia Católica en cuanto a la concepción de una nueva vida humana y la protección de la nueva vida humana durante el embarazo y la vida ente- ra de una persona. Un segundo tema y inte- gralmente relacionado a este principio importante de cuando la vida comienza es la enseñanza Divina dada por Dios en la Biblia como entendemos el significativo tradicional del matrimonio, de donde viene nueva vida. La cuestión crítica es ¿cuáles candidatos sostienen la enseñanza del matrimonio que viene de Dios? Hay muchos hoy día que quieren cambiar la enseñanza bíblica y Judio-Cristiana tocante a matrimonio. De la Biblia está claro, y de la enseñanza constante de nuestra Iglesia Católica, que un verdadero matrimonio solamente puede ser entre un hombre y una mujer en la unión sagrada de matrimonio. La idea que el matrimonio debe ser sola- mente definido como sagrado y una alianza de vida está bajo serio ataque en nuestros tiempos. Tristemente, hay un movimiento muy fuerte en nuestro país, aprobado por muchos oficiales gubernamentales actuales quienes están usando su oficina política para promover leyes humanas que darían aprobación a los tal llamados matrimonios entre el mismo sexo. Este es un tema muy crítico, y Católicos necesitan estudiar muy cuidadosamente la enseñanza Católica que está en juego en esto. ¿Cuál candidato hará lo más para preservar el entendimiento bíblico y tradicional del matrimonio? Dios claramente ha determinado que el matrimonio solamente puede ser entre un hombre y una mujer, y la Sagrada Escritura enseña que los actos homosexuales (matrimonios entre el mismo sexo) son inmorales y trae condenación Divina. Ni un Presidente, ni un gobierno, ni un simple ser humano está autorizado a cambiar el significado Divino del matrimonio.

Tristemente en nuestra diócesis hay tres centros de muerte para el no nacido donde hacen abortos. Ellos son el Planned Parenthood en Midland donde hacen abortos quirúrgicos, y los Planned Parenthood en San Ángel y Abilene donde hacen abortos químicos. Más que nunca les pido al pueblo Católico de la Diócesis que se pongan a trabajar y proclamen nuestra posi- ción de pro-vida por los no nacidos, y por toda vida humana por medio de tomar parte en actividades y programas que contrare- tan el mal del asesinato del no nacido que estos centros están haciendo. Es especial a mano a todos nuestros católicos a unirse en oración en frente de estos centros de muerte, y de ser mucho más vocales en expresar nuestra posición por los medios de comunica- ción y por cartas y artículos en nuestros periódicos, y en las salas gubernamentales donde decisiones políticas críticas de vida y

leyes son hechas, y fuertemente apoyar los centros de embarazo de vida que ayudan a padres de familia, especialmente a mujeres embarazadas, hacer una decisión a favor de la vida por su no nacido.

He regado en muchas ocasiones, y de nuevo les pido al pueblo de nuestra diócesis a ayudarme en implementar nuestro Plan Diocesano de Pro-Vida para el No Nacido. Este Plan da pasos muy específicos que se han de tomar para vencer la práctica bárbar- ra del aborto. La protección del no nacido, venciendo el aborto, y extendiendo la mano a padres de familia, especialmente a madres quienes luchan con una decisión de emba- razo, es la prioridad numero uno de nuestra diócesis.

La oración es nuestra manera principal para vencer el aborto, pero después de rezar, entonces deberíamos estar dispuestos a aceptar las gracias por las cuales hemos rezado y usar esas gracias para expresar nuestra fe en acción, de lo contrario estaríamos malgastando las gracias de Dios. Nuestra posición de pro-vida está basada en la confianza en Jesús, quien dio Su vida por toda la gente, y la intercesión de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe. Como seguidores de Cristo, debemos decir claramente que ama- mos a las personas en estos centros de muerte del Planned Parenthood, pero como pueblo de Dios, fuertemente protestamos los crímenes terribles que ellos cometen allí.

**Ripples**

(From 7)

I’m glad that he told me that he didn’t expect me to respond because I was speechless. I was in awe. I was stunned. Before I could even think of anything to say back to him he said, “I’m doing much better now. I feel like you just needed to know that you’re making a huge difference.” Then he walked away.

I’m not an emotional person at all but I almost cried in the meat section of the United Supermarket. At that exact moment all of those random coincidences swirled into one beautiful event that made perfect sense.

What if I had chose to have my column run on a Thursday instead of a Wednesday? It would have been a day late. What if I had given up writing my column simply because the season wasn’t going as I wanted? There are hundreds of ripples that if any had been changed would have NOT resulted in the perfect situation for that man to sit the gun down. What if my column had been printed on another page of the newspa- per? I was in complete awe, and still am.

I was curious to find out what the exact column the man had read by what he described it said.

**Ripple 6.)**

This why I am even more in awe. I went back and found out what column he had read and this is the paragraph he said.

“...The easiest thing in the world to do is quit on something. Quitting takes zero effort. Quitting can even be justified with excuses and legitimate reasons at times. When someone quits at something they can even lie to themselves by saying that what they quit on wasn’t that important. To those people with that mentality this is what I have to say. If it was important enough to start, it is important enough to finish. Don’t quit. Hold on, cling to what you have until your fingers cramp; and once your fingers cramp switch hands.”

**Ripple 7.)**

I wrote that column on October 18, after a loss to Oklahoma State in mid October. There are a few reasons why I find it mind blowing that was the column that the man had read.

**Ripple 8.)**

I wasn’t going to write a column that week. After the Oklahoma State loss I had decided I wasn’t going to write any- more. The reason I wrote about not quit- ting in my column that week was because I really wanted to quit and never write again. Good thing I didn’t quit.

**Ripple 9.)**

The other reason that it’s mind blowing that that was the column the man read is because of the date it was actually written. When I went back and looked on my blog history, the date I posted that was October 18. So why is that date impor- tant?

Let me tell you why, and I’m getting chills as I write this. October 18 was the date I broke my ankle my freshman year. The reason this date is important to me is because if I wouldn’t have been injured I would have never redshirted, and as a result would have only played at Texas Tech for four years instead of five — meaning that this past season for me wouldn’t have existed, and neither would the column I wrote.

**Ripple 10.)**

In all reality the only reason any of you are reading this right now is simply because I was at the wrong place at the wrong time on October 18, 2006 around 3:30 p.m., and broke my ankle my fresh- man year. Or maybe the reason you are reading this is because I was at the perfect place at the perfect time and broke my ankle so that our ripples would collide.

This will be my 25th column and I never would have imagined that it would have morphed into what it has. I never thought I would be known as a writer or be approached to write books. I mean seriously, I was the kid who hated English class and still don’t really enjoy reading. I had to share that story with everyone simply because it’s blown my mind for the past few days. Maybe it’s all just one humongous coincidence and series of random events that I somehow constructed into a story. Maybe it’s all luck and chance, maybe you stumbled on this article randomly surfing the web.

Maybe nothing we do matters at all... but what if everything does?

God Bless.
Odessa

Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer, center, helps celebrate the 18th anniversary of the adoration chapel at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in November (Photo by Alan P. Torre).

SCHOOLS

(From 17)

Murphy Scholarship Fund for financial aid thus providing eleven families with 14 children with needed help to be able to send their children to the school. One family had been unemployed and just getting back on their feet and four of the families are single parents. St. Mary’s Central Catholic in Odessa helped 11 students with financial aid plus purchased textbooks for the library for 75 students and one computer class of 27.

Also as we begin the new year and the celebration of Catholic schools week I would also like to take the opportunity to update you on the progress of a proposed high school for the Midland-Odessa area Catholic community. Following a very favorable Feasibility Study the Diocesan Commission recommended to Bishop Pfeifer that we move forward with the next steps that were to explore land availability, costs for annual budget, building and construction, and financial support from the Catholic community. A presentation will be made to the vicariate that includes the parishes where these two schools are located in January 2012.

We completed the Diocesan Plan for Catholic Education last year and are moving forward with implementing the goals and objectives. The four main areas as developed by the Summit on Catholic Education in Texas are: Catholic Identity, Finances, Students with Special Needs and Retaining and Recruiting Hispanic Students.

Our schools continue to grow and strengthen as we move forward into this next decade and serve the Church of San Angelo.