

ANGELUS

Serving the Diocese of San Angelo, Texas

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Pope Benedict released his first encyclical in January. Read more about it, Pgs. 8-9



Conference: acceptance, sharing vital

By Jimmy Patterson
Angelus Editor

SAN ANGELO. The very survival of the way we all think, feel and practice our chosen religion -- regardless the religion -- is dependent on our claiming, cherishing and nurturing our faith, according to Sister Terry Rickard, O.P., a Dominican Sister, assistant director of RENEW International and keynote speaker at the Diocesan Conference Day, Feb. 4, at the San Angelo Convention Center.

The Diocese used the conference to not only encourage people to witness and live their Catholicism but to also be not just tolerant but accepting of those who practice in different ways. It was an eye-opening, refreshing and to many a surprising message.

S. Rickard's message focused on why we should choose to grow our Catholicism and cited eight dimensions of the faith that work to help us nurture our

See CONFERENCE/14

21st Century Catholicism: Faith sharing taken to a whole new level

In his bestselling novel *The Life of Pi*, author Yann Martel tells the story of a boy trapped on a lifeboat with a 400-pound bengal tiger. But before the life-and-death sea quest begins, the book focuses on Pi's religion: he regularly attends a

From the Editor

Catholic Church, a Muslim mosque and a Hindu temple.

"Religion, Pi says, "is about our dignity, not our depravity."

See PATTERSON/14



Jimmy Patterson is editor of *The Angelus*



Lent

With Ash Wednesday, March 1, 2006, we begin the Lenten season, which prepares us to celebrate the greatest feast of Christianity, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ on Easter Sunday. The time of Lent is to be observed by Catholics as a special season of prayer, penance and doing works of charity. I share with you here the pastoral guidelines that hopefully will assist us during the season of Lent.

Story/Pg. 3

'Eagle's Wings' top song

"On Eagle's Wings," the musical reworking of the 91st Psalm by Father Michael Joncas, topped all other songs in an online poll asking which liturgical song most fostered and nourished the respondent's life. Two songs made popular by the St. Louis Jesuits — "Here I Am, Lord" and "Be Not Afraid" — came in second and third, followed by "You Are Mine," by David Haas.

The Back Page/16

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Glorious sendoff

Boy Scouts with Troop 152 in Midland properly retire a U.S. flag, right, after its final pledge (below) last Sunday during a retirement ceremony. Thirty-seven Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts will be honored February 11 as they receive their religious emblems at a 5:30 p.m. Mass at Holy Angels Church in San Angelo.

Story, Honorees/Pg. 7



Pfeifer: Newspaper's omission of facts in story harmful

■ January 22 lead story in *Standard-Times* omitted key facts in clergy sex abuse story.

The Angelus

SAN ANGELO. On January 22, 2006, the *San Angelo Standard-Times* published an article, "Sex cases pending."

"I believe it is important that *Standard-Times* readers be presented with additional facts that were omitted from the story. Had this information been included, we

feel the article would have presented a more balanced overview of the status of the civil cases involving former priests in the Diocese," Bishop of the Diocese of San Angelo, Michael Pfeifer said.

Omitted from the article was a critical piece of information that the reporter had full knowledge of and was included in testimony during Fr. Domingo Estrada's criminal case -- during which he was acquitted of all charges. That piece of information, which was included in a December 2004 *Midland Reporter-Telegram* article, stated clearly that Fr.

Estrada's accuser provided sworn statements that were perjurious. Specifically, the accuser stated that he had not retained legal counsel to represent him in a planned civil suit. Entered into evidence, however, was a letter that showed that the plaintiff had indeed retained an attorney for a civil trial yet that same attorney was abruptly dropped just one week prior to the beginning of Fr. Estrada's criminal trial.

In omitting this vital piece of informa-

Please see STORY/15

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Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI
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Jimmy Patterson
Director of Communications
Editor

Kenneth Grimm
San Angelo Standard Times
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verification. Please include name,
address and phone number when sub-
mitting letters.



It's Catholic Press Month ... time to thank you

By Jimmy Patterson
Angelus Editor

A wise man told me once that every
year for Father's Day, he would give his
wife and his children thank you notes,
paying tribute to them for making his life
a richer experience.

February is Catholic Press Month.
Thank you for helping make *The Angelus*
the newspaper it is.

I've heard from plenty of you. You've
been kind and straightforward with me. I
think you overwhelmingly like what you
see in *The Angelus* and that makes my



Catholic Press Association logo for
Catholic Press Month.

job easier, so thank you.

We've increased the type size in the
paper making it easier for you to read.
We've included feature stories about the
Catholics in the Diocese that are doing
good things ... and we have barely

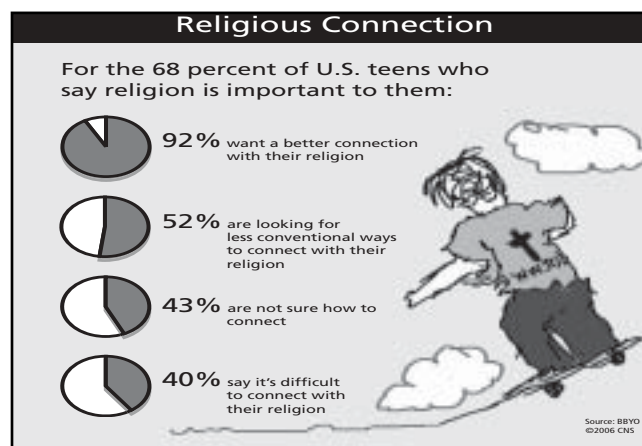
scratched the surface.

I am honored to serve in this capacity,
bringing you news and comment from
Bishop Pfeifer, from across the country
and around the world.

I try to be fresh and new every month,
not always easy.

If a person ever hopes to continue to
improve, he or she cannot fail to stop try-
ing to be better. And so neither will I. In
celebration of Catholic Press Month, I'd
ask you to continue with your letters,
emails and phone calls and your sugges-
tions and criticism.

JimmyLPatterson@grandecom.net.



DIOCESAN BRIEFS

Fatima Statue Visitation

The world famous International Pilgrim
Virgin Statue of Our Lady of Fatima, which
has been traveling the World since 1947, is
being brought to the Diocese of San Angelo
by the members of St. Maximilian Kolbe
Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order
(SFO) between February 1-21, 2006.

Revised Schedule

The Statue and her custodian will be at parishes in
the Diocese of San Angelo on the following dates
and times:

- 8 -- St. Joseph, Stanton (tentative), 5:30-6 p.m.
- 9 -- Sacred Heart, Big Spring, 5:30-6 p.m.
- 10 -- St. Lawrence, Garden City, 5 p.m.-
overnight; Mass 8:30 a.m., Feb. 11
- 11 -- St. Margaret of Scotland, San Angelo, 5
p.m.
- 12 -- Mt. Carmel Hermitage, Christoval, 8:30
a.m.
- 12 -- Our Lady of Grace Carmelite Monastery,
Christoval, 1:30-2 p.m.
- 13 -- St. Margaret of Cortona, Big Lake, 5:30-6
p.m.
- 14 -- Sacred Heart, McCamey, 5:30-6 p.m.
- 15 -- St. Agnes, Ft. Stockton, 5:30-6 p.m.
- 16 -- St. Mary's Odessa, 5:30-6 p.m.
- 17 -- Immaculate Heart of Mary, Sweetwater,
5:30-6 p.m.
- 18 -- Our Lady of San Juan, Midland, 4 p.m. (all
night vigil. Feb. 19 -- Masses at 8:30, 10 a.m.,
Noon.
- 20 -- 5 p.m., overnight vigil (tentative) may move
to Feb. 19; check with church.)

For more information regarding the International
Pilgrim Statue of our Lady of Fatima visit

www.pilgrimvirginstatue.com. For questions or
information, contact the St. Maximilian Kolbe
Fraternity through Dennis Robson, SFO at 432-
978-6570, email mandrobson@aol.com or contact
the individual parishes. Schedule subject to
change. Please call individual churches to verify
statue's appearance.

Encuentro Matrimonial

Señor Bendice Nuestro Hogar
Febrero 10, 11 y 12 del 2006
Lugar: Quality Inn, 3001 E. Business 20
Odessa, TX 79762
Costo: \$175.00
Deposito: \$50.00
Favor de llamar:
Pilar y Romelia Ornelas @ (432)362-4610
Eduardo y Sorina Dominguez @ (432) 368-0134
Conrado e Irma Franco @ (432) 385-0250

Wall: Ecumenical Prayer Seminar

St. Ambrose Catholic Church in Wall is co-spon-
soring an ecumenical seminar on prayer with the
Brethren Church in Wall on March 3-4.
Registration begins Friday, Mar. 3, at 6 p.m. with
sessions from 6:30-8:45 p.m. and resuming
Saturday from 8 a.m.-4 p.m. A light lunch will be
served Saturday. The speaker is Pam Vicalvi.
The seminar is free and all are invited to attend.

(See Diocesan Dates/Pg. 5)

OBITUARY

Betty Jo Patterson, mother of *Angelus* editor Jimmy Patterson

Betty Jo Patterson, beloved wife, cher-
ished mother, and adored grandmother
and great-grand-
mother, died January
13 at an Irving hospi-
tal following a
lengthy illness. She
was 79.



Betty was born
December 31, 1926,
in Tulsa, Okla., the
first of three children
born to Marshall and
Alice Worthington,
both who preceded her in death.

Betty married Harold L. Patterson
January 3, 1947. The couple celebrated
their 59th anniversary January 3. Betty
and Harold were inseparable through the
years, together raising three children,
Jimmy and his wife, Karen, of Midland;
David, and his wife Dell Anne, of Irving,
and Claudia Cox and her husband James,
also of Irving. Harold and all three of their
children survive Betty. She is also sur-
vived by eight grandchildren and 14 great-
grandchildren.

Betty made the best chocolate pie in the
world and crocheted the most beautiful
afghans ever made. She loved Christmas,
when every year 35-40 family and extend-
ed family members would crowd into
"Nana and Pawpaw's House" for dinner, a
reading of the Christmas story and a gift
exchange. Her example of Christian living,
unending devotion to Harold and tireless
commitment to the many family and
friends she leaves behind are inspirations
to all who were fortunate to have known
her, and Betty's family and friends will
cherish her memory forever.

Betty is also survived by her sister,
Beverly Roberts, of Tulsa, Okla. She was
also preceded in death by a brother,
Marshall "Bud" Worthington.

Pallbearers were Jon Patterson, Jason
Patterson, Daniel Patterson, Chris Clark,
James Patterson and David Smith.

With Ash Wednesday March 1, some guidelines for the Lenten season

By Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI
Bishop of San Angelo

With Ash Wednesday, March 1, 2006, we begin the Lenten season, which prepares us to celebrate the greatest feast of Christianity, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ on Easter Sunday.

The time of Lent is to be observed by Catholics as a special season of prayer, penance and doing works of charity. I share with you here the pastoral guidelines that hopefully will assist us during the season of Lent.

Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, in particular, are the most important penitential days of the liturgical year. They are days of both fast and abstinence. All Fridays in Lent are days of abstinence.

The rule of fasting states that only one full meal may be taken



per day. Two small meals, "sufficient to maintain strength," are allowed but together they should not equal another full meal. Eating between meals breaks the fast but drinking liquids does not. The rule of fasting obliges all

Catholics from age 18 through 59.

Abstinence refers to the eating of meat of warm blooded animals (e.g., beef, lamb, chicken, pork). Under the present law, it does not include egg or milk products, meat broth or gravies. The rule of abstinence binds all Catholics 14 years of age or older. On days of abstinence, those who are eating in a school cafeteria may eat meat if it is served to them and there is no other main dish to choose.

The substantial observance of the laws of fast and abstinence is a serious obligation. Those whose work or health impairment make the observance difficult would be excused from fasting and abstaining. The individual conscience can decide if there is a proper cause to excuse. For

See LENT/14

Liturgical Directions for Holy Week

PALM SUNDAY

- It is strongly recommended that the Blessing of the Palms with procession be celebrated at least once at the principal Sunday liturgy.

HOLY THURSDAY

- The Mass of the Lord's Supper must be celebrated in the evening with procession to the altar of repose.
- Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament continues until midnight.
- For pastoral reasons, one other Mass may be celebrated during the day.

GOOD FRIDAY

- The Liturgy of the Lord's Passion should be celebrated around 3:00 p.m. For pastoral reasons, this celebration may be moved to a later time.
- Other paraliturgical celebrations are suggested and recommended at the discretion of the pastor (Viacrucis, 7 Palabras, Pesame a maria, etc.)

HOLY SATURDAY

- The entire celebration of the Easter Vigil takes place at night. It should not begin before nightfall; it should end before daybreak on Sunday.
- According to the rubrics for the Easter Vigil, no Eucharist may be celebrated prior to the Easter Vigil. If a pastor feels that pastoral reasons an additional Mass is needed AFTER the vigil, he may consult the Bishop for permission.

African American History Month, a time for thanks

By Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI

African-American History Month, celebrated throughout the month of February, focuses on the rich contribution African-Americans have made to the development and culture of our country. This month is set aside to honor our African-American ancestors and their accomplishments.

We pause during this month to recognize their greatness, their significant contribution to our culture and to build new bridges of understanding, appreciation and respect. During African-American History Month, people with roots on the African continent find a new sense of pride in their history and culture.

In 1926, Carter Godwin Woodson, a Harvard Ph.D., the founder of the Association for the study of Negro Life and History, initiated Negro History Week, the forerunner of African-American History Month. Fifty years later, the entire month of February was dedicated to the celebration of African-American art, history, music, literature and culture.

A people without a history is a people without an understanding of who they are. The possession of one's own history is the first step in an appreciation of one's own culture. The history of African-American people in America is a poignant one. African-Americans must never forget their roots nor fail to cherish the memory of their forebears, men and women who suffered indignities beyond comprehension to people with white skin.

Remarkably, they survived with dignity intact, and when the time came, with a courageous resolve led by prophetic civil rights leaders, like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., they brought about social and legal changes that were long overdue.

(See CULTURE/15)

From Bishop Pfeifer's Desk

God's mercy, forgiveness received in sacraments of reconciliation, penance

'Be reconciled to God'
-- 2 Cor. 5:20

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

During this YEAR OF RECONCILIATION, I am sharing with the people of our Diocese the teaching of the Catholic Church on the great Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation as given to us in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. I present for further study and reflection the following teaching of the Church on the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation from the *Catholic Catechism*:

1440 -- Sin is before all else an offense against God, a rupture of communion with him. At the same time it damages communion with the Church. For this reason conversion entails both God's forgiveness and reconciliation with the Church, which are expressed and accomplished liturgically by the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation.



Pfeifer

ONLY GOD FORGIVES SIN 1441 -- Only God forgives sins. Since he is the Son of God, Jesus says of himself, "The Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins" and exercises this divine power: "Your sins are forgiven."

Further, by virtue of his divine authority he gives this power to men to exercise in his name.

1442 -- Christ has willed that in her prayer and life and action his whole Church should be the sign and instrument of the forgiveness and reconciliation that he acquired for us at the price of his blood. But he entrusted the exercise of the power of absolution to the apostolic ministry which he charged with the "ministry of reconciliation." The apostle is sent out "on behalf of Christ" with "God making his appeal" through him and pleading: "Be reconciled to God."

RECONCILIATION WITH THE CHURCH

1443 -- During his public life Jesus not only forgave sins, but also made plain the effect of this forgiveness; he reintegrated forgiven sinners into the community of the People of God from which sin had alienated or even excluded

them. A remarkable sign of this is the fact that Jesus receives sinners at his table, a gesture that expresses in an astonishing way both God's forgiveness and the return to the bosom of the People of God.

1444 -- In imparting to his apostles his own power to forgive sins the Lord also gives them the authority to reconcile sinners with the Church. This ecclesial dimension of their task is expressed most notably in Christ's solemn words to Simon Peter: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." "The office of binding and loosing which was given to Peter was also assigned to the college of apostles united to its head."

1445 -- The words *bind and loose* mean: whomever you exclude from your communion, will be excluded from communion with God; whomever you receive anew into your communion, God will welcome back into his. *Reconciliation with the Church is inseparable from reconciliation with God.*

El escritorio del obispo

La Misericordia y Perdón de Dios son dados por el Sacramento

'Pónganse en Paz con Dios'

-- 2 Cor 5:20

por Obispo Miguel Pfeifer, OMI



Pfeifer

Durante este AÑO DE RECONCILIACION, estoy compartiendo con la gente de la Diócesis la enseñanza de la Iglesia Católica sobre el gran Sacramento de Penitencia y Reconciliación dada a nosotros en la *Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica*. Les presento para estudio y reflexión las siguientes enseñanzas de la Iglesia sobre el Sacramento de Penitencia y Reconciliación del *Catecismo Católico*:

1440 -- El pecado es, ante todo, ofensa a Dios, ruptura de la comunión con El. Al mismo tiempo, atenta contra la comunión con la Iglesia. Por eso la conversión implica a la vez el perdón de Dios y la reconciliación con la Iglesia, que es lo que expresa y realiza litúrgicamente el sacramento de la penitencia y de la Reconciliación.

SOLO DIOS PERDONA EL PECADO

1441-- Solo Dios perdona los pecados. Porque Jesús es el Hijo de Dios, dice de sí mismo: "El Hijo del hombre tiene poder de perdonar los pecados en la tierra" y ejerce ese poder divino: "Tus pecados están perdonados. Más aún, en virtud de su autoridad divina, Jesús confiere este poder a los hombres para que lo ejerzan en su nombre.

1442 -- Cristo quiso que toda su Iglesia, tanto en su oración como en su vida y su obra, fuera el signo y el instrumento del perdón y de la reconciliación que nos adquirió al precio de su sangre. Sin embargo, confió el ejercicio del poder de absolución al ministerio apostólico, que esta encargado del "ministerio de la reconciliación". El apóstol es enviado "en nombre de Cristo", y "es Dios mismo" quien, a través de él, exhorta y suplica: "Dejaos reconciliar con Dios".

RECONCILIACION CON LA IGLESIA

1443 -- Durante su vida pública, Jesús no sólo perdonó los pecados, también manifestó el efecto de este perdón: a los pecadores que son perdonados los vuelve a integrar en la comunidad del pueblo de Dios, de donde el pecado

los había alejado o incluso excluido. Un signo manifiesto de ello es el hecho de que Jesús admite a los pecadores a su mesa, más aún, El mismo se sienta a su mesa, gesto que expresa de manera conmovedora, a la vez, el perdón de Dios y el retorno al seno del pueblo de Dios.

1444 -- Al hacer partícipes a los apóstoles de su propio poder de perdonar los pecados, el Señor les da también la autoridad de reconciliar a los pecadores con la Iglesia. Esta dimensión eclesial de su tarea se expresa particularmente en las palabras solemnes de Cristo a Simón Pedro: "A ti te daré las llaves del Reino de los cielos; y lo que ates en la tierra quedará atado en los cielos, y lo que desates en la tierra quedará desatado en los cielos". "Está claro que también el Colegio de los Apóstoles, unido a su Cabeza, recibió la función de atar y desatar dada a Pedro".

1445 -- Las palabras *atar* y *desatar* significan: aquel a quien excluyáis de vuestra comunión, será excluido de la comunión con Dios; aquel a quien recibáis de nuevo en vuestra comunión, Dios lo acogerá también en la suya. *La reconciliación con la Iglesia es inseparable de la reconciliación con Dios.*

Make sure you are always attired in wedding garment of grace

By Fr. Anthony Sloan, OCSO
Chaplain, Carmelite Sisters

When I was invited by Bishop Michael Pfeifer, O.M.I., to contribute an article on the Sacrament of Reconciliation, for the Diocesan year of Reconciliation, with plenty of advance notice, I decided that I would not begin writing until, hopefully, I received some kind of inspiration. Weeks later, when I was reading the Sunday Gospel on the parable of the Wedding Feast, the inspiration came - especially when our Lord asked one of the invited guests: "my friend,

how is it that you are here not properly dressed?"

This poor man's ultimate fate was not good, because although he had been invited into the wedding banquet, he still lacked the proper wedding garment. Many Fathers of the Church identify this 'wedding garment' with virtue and grace dwelling in our soul; notably, sanctifying grace. And for me, the inspired thought was clear: this could not have happened to this man (or, potentially to anyone of us!) if he had received the Sacrament of Reconciliation before coming into our Lord's presence. In other words, the Sacrament of Reconciliation is an ever ready, and the ordinary means available to each of us, to make sure that we

are always properly attired in the wedding garment of sanctifying grace.

What a very wonderful and comforting truth of our Catholic faith! Comforting, because even if we have repeatedly 'fallen. short', the Church assures us in the Catechism that "all who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven." (CCC #1030).

See WEDDING/10

Mrs. King, 78, always true to civil rights, justice

ATLANTA (CNS) — Coretta Scott King, who died Jan. 31 at age 78, will be remembered for her fidelity to civil rights and nonviolent justice that had been sought by her husband, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

She died at 1 a.m. at a holistic health center in Baja California, Mexico. Funeral arrangements were not yet announced.

"The entire nation stands in awe of the wondrous legacy of this great woman of faith," said Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory of Atlanta in a Jan. 31 statement. "We in the Archdiocese of Atlanta are especially grieved at her death.

"She was a noble resident of our city and a proud bearer of the heritage of freedom and justice that her husband epitomized and that she fulfilled with incredible determination. Dr. King could not have found a



Coretta Scott King

worthier spouse and colleague in the struggle for social change and civil rights," Archbishop Gregory added.

Father John Adamski, the pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Atlanta's first African-American parish which is located adjacent to the King Center in Atlanta, called King's death the "transition of an era."

"For all these years, she represented Dr. King's work and all he meant to our country. I really see this as the closing of a chap-

ter," Father Adamski said.

King's impact on Catholics is equivalent to her impact on the world, the priest added. "The strength and determination of her commitment to continue as best she could her husband's work is an example of virtue for all of us," he said.

Speaking to the Catholic Press Association in Atlanta in 1969, one year after her husband was assassinated, King said the concept of churches offering financial reparation to African-Americans was "too little to demand of churches."

"Their help," she said, "can be more effective if the enormous influence of the 80 million members were mobilized behind demands upon Congress."

King added, "If programs which would end poverty and

See KING/15

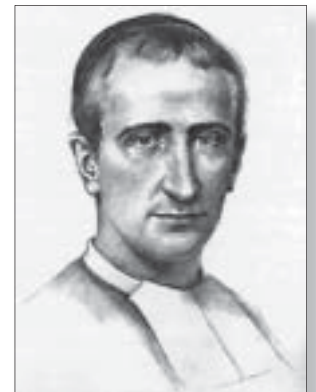
Miguel Febres Cordero Munoz

1854-1910

feast - February 9

Born with crippled legs to a prominent Ecuadoran family, Francisco was schooled at home until age 9, when he began attending a new school run by the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Though his family initially opposed it, 14-year-old Francisco joined the

Institute in 1868, becoming Brother Miguel. He taught Spanish and religion in Quito for 38 years, wrote a number of well-regarded textbooks and was elected to several national academies. He died in Europe, and was declared Ecuador's first saint in 1984.



Saints for Today

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DIOCESAN DATES**Bishop's Calendar****FEBRUARY**

10 -- SAN ANGELO: Forty Hours Devotion Begins with Mass at 8:30 a.m., Sacred Heart Cathedral.

11 -- SAN ANGELO: Holy Angels — Scouts Award Mass, 5:30 p.m.

12 -- SAN ANGELO: Forty Hours Devotion Ends with Mass, 10 a.m., Sacred Heart Cathedral.

13-15 -- SAN ANGELO: Priests' Clergy Day, Christ the King Retreat Center.

16-18 -- LAREDO: National Youth Congress

19-21 -- AUSTIN: Texas Conference of Churches Assembly

25 -- SAN ANGELO: Meeting with Leaders of Catholic and Episcopalian Cursillos, and Walks to Emmaus, Christ the King Retreat Center.

26 -- BIG LAKE: Mass, 11:30 a.m., St. Margaret.

26 -- SAN ANGELO: Deanery Gathering of Hispanic Youth, 1-7 p.m., St. Mary.

MARCH

1 -- SAN ANGELO: Ash Wednesday Mass, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Noon

2 -- SAN ANGELO: Presbyteral Council, 11 a.m., Diocesan Pastoral Center.

4 -- SAN ANGELO: Ecumenical Gathering of Concho Country Emmaus, Episcopal Cursillo, Catholic Cursillo, Chrysalis and Kairos, 10 a.m.-Noon, First United Methodist Church

5 -- SAN ANGELO: Rite of Election, Sacred Heart Cathedral, 2 p.m., 4 p.m.

8 -- SAN ANGELO: Staff Mass, 8:30 a.m., Staff Meeting, 11 a.m., Diocesan Pastoral Center.

8 -- SAN ANGELO: Soup and Sermon, Noon, St. Mary

9-12 -- SAN ANGELO: MACC Program, Welcome the Stranger, Christ the King Retreat Center.

14-17 -- Private Lenten Retreat

19 -- BIG SPRING: Federal Prison, Mass, 10 a.m.

21 -- SAN ANGELO: Staff Lenten Retreat, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., Christ the King Retreat Center.

22 -- ABILENE: Lenten Night of Prayer with Priests, Sisters, Deacons and Wives of the Abilene Deanery, 7 p.m., Holy Family.

23 -- SAN ANGELO: Workshop at Boys and Girls Club for Nano Kids Technology, 6 p.m.

25-26 -- SAN ANTONIO: University of the Incarnate Word - Mass to Celebrate the Quasiquicentennial of the University -4:30 p.m.

28 -- SAN ANGELO: Lenten Night of Prayer for Priests, Sisters, Deacons and Wives of San Angelo Deanery, 7 p.m., Holy Angels.

Chancellor's Calendar

(CKRC = Christ the King Retreat Center)

FEBRUARY

11 -- Basic Formation, 8:45 a.m., St. Francis, Abilene.

11 -- Deacon Discernment, 9 a.m., CKRC.

12 -- Confirmation Retreat, 9:30 a.m., CKRC, San Angelo.

13-14 -- Clergy Day, CKRC.

17-19 -- Engaged Encounter, CKRC

24-26 -- Beginning Experience, CKRC

24-26 -- Billings Ovulation NFP Seminar, CKRC.

26 -- Encuentro, San Angelo Deanery at St.

Mary's, San Angelo.

MARCH

1 -- Collection for Aid to Church in Central and Eastern Europe.

1 -- Operation Rice Bowl (thru April 16)

2-5 -- St. Ann's Midland ACTS Women's Retreat at CKRC, San Angelo.

4 -- Basic Formation, 8:45 a.m., St. Francis, Abilene.

5 -- Collection for Black and Indian Missions.

5 -- Confirmation Retreat, 9:30 a.m., CKRC

11 -- Advanced Formation, 8:45 a.m., St. Mary's, Odessa.

11 -- Deacon Discernment, 9 a.m., CKRC.

17-19 -- Engaged Encounter, CKRC.

26 -- Collection for Catholic Relief Services.

30 -- DOSA Budget, Group 1, 10:30 a.m., Pastoral Center.

31 -- St. Ann's Midland Confirmation Retreat, CKRC.

31 -- Region 10 Young Adult Encuentro, Austin.

APRIL

1-2 -- St. Ann's Midland Confirmation Retreat, CKRC.

1-2 -- Region 10 Young Adult Encuentro continues (Austin)

1 -- Basic Formation, St. Francis, Abilene, 8:45 a.m.

2 -- Confirmation Retreat, CKRS, 9:30 a.m.

3 -- Advanced Formation, St. Marys Odessa, 8:45 a.m.

8 -- Deacon Discernment, CKRC, 9 a.m.

14 -- Good Friday, DOSA Offices

14 -- Holy Land Collection

20 -- DRE, CRE, CYM Day of Reflection, 10 a.m.

22 -- Mustard Seed (tentative), CRKC

23 -- Confirmation Retreat, CKRC, 9:30 a.m.

24-27 -- Why Catholic? Launching Sessions

25-26 -- International Priests Gathering, CKRC

27 -- DOSA Budget Group 2, Pastoral Center, 10:30 a.m.

30 -- Catholic Home Missions Appeal.

Christ the King Calendar-- February

10 -- Natural Family Planning

11 -- Deacon Discernment

12 -- Confirmation Retreat

13-14 -- HBDI Clergy Day's

14 -- Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

17-19 -- Engaged Encounter

20 -- Heart of Mercy Prayer Group

21 -- Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

24-26 -- Beginning Experience

24-28 -- Billings Ovulation Method Teacher

Training

27 -- Heart of Mercy Prayer Group

28 -- Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

Necrology-February

9 -- Rev. Albert Fuytnick, C.S.S.R. (1997)

10 -- Rev. Leo E. Lavoie (1978)

20 -- Deacon Mark Reeh (2005)

21 -- Rev. Tom Kelley (2005)

22 -- Rev. Francisco Lopez (1994)



West Texan stationed in Crete sends photos of a Christmas Mass celebrated in a cave, one of the most memorable masses priest chaplain Steve Hicks said he has ever attended. More photos are on Page 12.

Bishop, priest chaplain stationed in Crete exchange Christmas correspondences

(Editors Note: The following are correspondences between Steve Hicks, stationed in Crete in the U.S. Navy, and Bishop Michael Pfeifer).

three years ago on the flight deck of my ship in the Arabian Sea. I hope you enjoy looking at them.

-- Steve Hicks

Dear Steve:

I was very happy to receive your message, and thank you for the enclosed pictures. It really was good to hear from you and especially to know how things are going with your ministry. I do remember the letter you sent me a few years ago as regards your Christmas Mass on the carrier, and this Christmas, you also had another very unique experience by celebrating Christmas Mass in a cave. I am sure it brought back memories of the birth of Christ who started off his life on earth in a cave/barn.

I am going to feature your letter in the *West Texas Angelus*, as I believe our people need to know about the good service being given by a fine priest chaplain of our Diocese to people in another remote part of the world.

Yes, we are preparing for the happy day of the ordination of Deacon Emilio Sosa on Saturday. Say a prayer for him. And, later this spring, we will be ordaining two of his companions, so we will have three new priests this year for our Diocese. Let us thank the Lord.

Steve, keep up your good ministry, and if I can assist you in any way, please let me know. Let us pray for each other. God's peace.

Your brother in Christ and Mary,
Bishop Mike

Dear Bishop Pfeifer:

Thank you so much for your letter of endorsement allowing me to continue serving in the Regular Navy. I hope that you had a good Christmas and I wish you the best for the new year. I understand that you will be ordaining a new priest in a few days. Congratulations to him and to the Diocese.

As I had mentioned to you before I began my assignment in Crete, there has never been a full-time Catholic chaplain here. There are only three Catholic churches on the entire island, with a Catholic population of about 3 percent. In the area, the Catholic Church offers a Saturday evening Mass, usually in English for tourists -- at least in the Summer, but sometimes it may be in Italian, since the priest is a Franciscan from Italy. Our military Catholics had mass on the base once a month when the area priest could come to offer it.

There is no "chapel" per se at this base. We have a room in the basement level of our office building. I could not imagine having a Christmas Eve mass in that space. So, with some help from the base Greek representative, we arranged to celebrate Christmas Eve mass in one of the many caves in the area. This particular cave is used each Christmas by the Greek Orthodox Church for their liturgy. The local pastor, along with the Orthodox bishop, gave us permission to use it for our Catholic Mass before their service. Below are some photos that were taken during the celebration. It was one of the most memorable and unique services that I have had, coming close to one I had

The Year of Reconciliation

Sacrament of penance involves entire community

S. Hilda Marotta, OFS and
S. Adelina García, OSF

Many of us celebrated our first confession when we were in one of the primary grades. We remember the words, "Bless me Father for I have sinned, My last confession was....". Most of the emphasis focused on a list of sins and confessing what we did wrong. Often we were fearful of how the confessor might respond.

Today, the sacrament of Penance has a different approach. The New Rite of Penance, promulgated in 1973, focuses on God's love and forgiveness and the communal aspect of reconciliation with the Church and community.

Scripture is filled with stories that remind us of God's unconditional love, mercy and compassion for people. We recall the covenant God made with Israel, "I will be your God, you will be my people". Although Israel fell short in the relationship, God was always faithful and responded with love and mercy. In the Gospels we read story after story of Jesus forgiving and calling people to begin again. The stories reveal a forgiving God who loves with an unconditional love.

As a People of God we are called to continue the forgiving ministry in our families and in our communities. We are called to reflect a God who has an unconditional love for each of us. Our Church offers us the opportunity to experience God's love and mercy through the sacrament of Penance.

Today we find people are less inclined to celebrate the sacrament. Perhaps it is because they feel forgiveness is not possible. Perhaps they think that going to God in prayer is sufficient. However, sin and forgiveness are not just a private experience. They involve the community. Often we fail to see the communal aspect of the sacrament of Penance. We are called to be reconciled with God, ourselves and the Christian community. The sacrament of Penance is a celebration of that forgiveness and reconciliation. We are the Body of Christ. "If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy." (Corinthians 12:26).

Our first experience of forgiveness and reconciliation is in the family. Thus, parents have a special role in the child's experience of forgiveness and unconditional love. "Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children. They bear witness to this responsibility first by creating a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity and service are the rule." (CCC#2223) As children grow and develop, parents are involved in preparing their children for the sacrament of Penance. Through teaching and example, parents help their children grow in their understanding of God's unconditional love, compassion, mercy and forgiveness.

Providing opportunities to celebrate the sacrament of Penance as a family, models that we all fall short in our relationship with God and one another. Taking time to reflect on those relationships and seeking forgiveness through the sacrament of Penance celebrates the unconditional love and mercy that God offers each of us.

Hints for making a good confession

By Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI
Bishop of San Angelo

The main focus of this Year of Reconciliation for the Diocese of San Angelo is the wonderful Sacrament of Reconciliation and Penance, commonly called the "Sacrament of Confession." In this year, I encourage all of our people to continue, or to reestablish the practice of frequent Confession which not only forgives sins, but fills us with God's mercy and strength to live good, Christian lives. I offer you here a few helps and hints to better understand the Sacrament of Confession.

Confession & Human Needs

Each time we confess our sins, there are a special set of human needs—spiritual, moral, emotional, and psychological—that are addressed. We are social beings, and we need another person to understand what we are feeling, to help us experience God's compassion. The designated human person for celebrating this Sacrament is the priest, who acts in Christ's name and is using the authority and power given by Christ to His Church. On the very day of Jesus' resurrection, when he appeared to His disciples, he told them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, whose sins you retain are retained." Christ knew that we need other human beings to help us with the human feelings of guilt, sorrow and anxiety when we seek God's forgiveness of sins in confession.

What Jesus does is most important

At the same time, we need to remember that it is what Jesus does in the Sacrament of Confession that is the most important thing, and on this we need to focus the most when we confess. The examination of conscience, sorrow for sin, purpose of amendment, and telling of the sins to a priest are indeed all important aspects of the Sacrament. But to have a more positive and meaningful experience of the Sacrament, we need to remember what Jesus does. The one to whom we are confessing our sins is Christ, and it is our merciful Savior who died on the cross who extends his hands each time we confess to

give us divine pardon and healing, to fill us with God's mercy, and to give us the strength to live good lives and to overcome sin and temptation.

Our experience of this Sacrament will be greatly enriched if we think about the reconciliation that Christ gives us, and not only about confession of sins, which is usually not easy for most people.

Reconciliation names what is most important and what Jesus does in this Sacrament. For this reason, the proper name given by the Church for this sacramental experience is the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Penance. The word reconciliation is rich in meaning and suggests the gift of God's forgiveness and the removal of the barriers we place in front of ourselves, our community, and our God.

Reconciliation means re-bridging the gap between God and us and between ourselves and others. It also suggests the deep peace that comes from being brought back into harmony with God and with our sisters and brothers.

Sin is more than 'Breaking the Rules'

In the Sacrament of Confession, our sins are forgiven. But sin is not merely about "breaking the rules." For the mature Christian, sin is understood in relation to love and breaking or weakening a loving relationship with our Heavenly Father and Creator. Our compassionate God has an immense love for us and constantly wants to pour out mercy upon us, even as we realize how often we have failed to return that love. Jesus our loving and Good Shepherd, who forgives our sins, constantly calls us to wholeness and maturity, reminding us that He came that we might have life and have it abundantly.

Yes, sin is more than just "breaking the rules." Sin is the failure to grow. Sin is the failure to respond to the love God has shown us in Christ Jesus, who gave His life to forgive our sins. For those who have cut themselves off from God and the Church by what we call "mortal sin" or serious and grave sin and now wish to return to God's table of the Eucharist, the Church offers the Sacrament of Confession to celebrate their homecoming. This is the only time when Catholics are required to cel-

brate the Sacrament. But we celebrate reconciliation not merely because we have to, but because it is a Sacrament, a sign and celebration of God pouring forth divine mercy by reconciling the world through Christ and by bringing peace for all people and all things.

Confession & the Prodigal Son

One of the most beautiful descriptions of what happens when we confess our sins is found in the heart-touching parable of the Prodigal Son as told by Christ. A splendid way to prepare for Confession is to read over this parable as found in Luke's Gospel, 15:11-32. Parents need to read over this parable with their children as they prepare for Confession, and explain that at times we are all in some way the prodigal son or perhaps the older son of the parable, and we are all called to be like the merciful father who forgives the younger son of all his sins and wrongdoings. Let me share a few highlights with you from this parable.

The prodigal son made a crucial life decision. He chose a way of living that would break him off from his father and his family. He demanded that his father give him money that he had no right to, then he ran away from home living a dissolute and sinful life, wasting all that had been given to him. He had not only left behind his father's table and love, he left behind what he was taught there. In contemporary terms, we would perhaps say he was an alienated, rebellious son, a runaway youth.

After the prodigal son had wasted all the gifts that had been given him by his father in sinful living and realized that he was no longer in the family circle, he was filled with hunger and slowly began to admit that he was mired in a pig-pen where he sought food, and mired in sin and guilt for his wrongdoings. It was first physical hunger that motivated him to return home to his father just as a "hired hand." But once the young man came to his senses, he made the decision to return home to his father where he hoped he would find food—and mercy and forgiveness. We read how the father ran to meet him, embraced him, loved

See RECONCILIATION/7

Boy Scouts to be honored in San Angelo Feb. 11

SAN ANGELO. Thirty-seven Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts from the Diocese of San Angelo have earned Catholic Scout Religious Emblems for the year 2006. Those Scouts will receive their emblems from Bishop Michael Pfeifer during the 5:30 p.m. Mass to be celebrated February 11th at Holy Angels Church in San Angelo. A reception for the scouts and their families will follow the event. Those receiving emblems are from the cities and towns of Abilene, Midland, Odessa, Ozona and San Angelo.

The Catholic Church offers four religious emblem programs for Boy Scouts and four for Girl Scouts, which correspond to the different levels of Scouting. Junior and senior high school age Scout programs require 8 trained counselors and 6-12 months to complete. The parents of the scouts usually counsel elementary age programs. Programs for junior and senior high are: 7th and 8th grade Boy Scouts. Adaltare Dei; High School Boy

Scouts to be Honored by Diocese Feb. 11

LIGHT OF CHRIST: Michael Brown, Blake Crenwelge, Jacob Edwards, Anthony Garibay, Ian Hoyle, Nicholas Lopez, Garrett Modawell, Jacob Valenzuela, Nathan Ybarra

PARVULI DEI: Matthew Berzoza, Daniel Edwards, Noah Garza, Mitchell Jeffers, Brennan Murnane, Carlos Ramirez, Nathan Richter, Andrew Romero

ADALTARE DEI: Clayton Binns, Thomas Blackwood, Patrick Buren, Ben Kalvoda, Marcus Martinez, Westin Zamarippa

POPE PIUS XII: John Blackwood, Ethan Flores, Tyler Halfmann, Ryan Hines, Peter Perez, Bryan Sablan, Thomas Snyder, Travis Zuberbueler

I LIVE MY FAITH: Adelina Caballero, Anna Foster, Samantha Foster, Kylie Lindsey, Catherine Sites, Elizabeth Teagarden.

Scouts and Venturers (male and female); Pope Plus XII; Cadette Girl Scouts -- The Marian Medal; Senior Girl Scouts -- The Spirit Alive.

Programs for elementary age Boy Scouts are: Tiger

and Wolf Cubs - Light of Christ; Bear and Webelos Scouts -- Parvuli Dei. Programs for elementary age Girl Scouts are: Brownies - Family of God; Junior Girl Scouts -- I Live My Faith.

Scouts who complete their emblem program during 2006 and whose completed applications are postmarked by December 1, 2006 will be presented the emblem in early 2007 by Bishop Michael Pfeifer, O.M.I.

All Boy Scout program books are available at your Scout Council Offices in Abilene, Brownwood, Midland, Odessa and San Angelo. Girl Scout program books can be purchased at Trudo's Religious Store in San Angelo. The Catholic Committee on Scouting is always looking for qualified men and women interested in being a counselor. We provide the training and material.?

For further information contact your local Boy Scout or Girl Scout Council.

ALITO SECOND STRAIGHT CATHOLIC JUSTICE SWORN IN; 5TH OVERALL

U.S. President George W. Bush smiles as Samuel Alito Jr. is sworn in as an associate justice of the Supreme Court during ceremonies at the White House in Washington Feb. 1. Chief Justice John Roberts, right, administers the oath to Alito. Confirmed Jan. 31 by the Senate, he is the fifth Catholic on the nine-member court.



Vocation to priesthood

by Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

I share with you an excerpt that I have taken from the December 2005 edition of National Association of Parish Catechetical Directors which strongly reinforces the role priests play in promoting Vocations to Priesthood.

"Research done for the Vocations Committee indicates that an invitation from a priest is one of the most effective ways of having a man consider the priesthood. Of seminarians ordained in 2003, 78 percent said

that a priest had invited them to consider the priesthood. A 2001 USCCB survey, however, indicated that only 30 percent of priests actively invite men to consider the priesthood. Statistics cited at: www.usccb.org/comm/archives/2005/05-233.shtml. You might encourage the priest(s) in your parish to reach out and invite men to consider the priesthood. Of course, our gratitude to our priests (and other ministers) makes them see their dedication as valuable in our eyes."

RECONCILIATION: 'Prodigal Son' powerful tool for penance

(From 6)

him, forgave him, took him back as a son—not as a hired hand—brought him back to the family table and never mentioned his sins.

We are the Prodigal Sons and Daughters

In the Sacrament of Confession, we are the prodigal sons and daughters who have already accepted the grace to admit our sin, and to return to our heavenly Father, the merciful father of the parable, who is always willing and ready to forgive us, to welcome us with a loving embrace when we have strayed from home. When we humbly admit our guilt and are sorry and confess our sins, God embraces us in mercy and love as we celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Pardon.

The parable of the prodigal son is the most striking, powerful illustration of the human process that happens when we go to Confession and celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and of the theology that is contained in the sacramental ritual that celebrates the divine mercy and pardon that we receive because of the suffering, death, and resur-

rection of Christ. God is not out to catch us in our sin, but is constantly reaching out and hanging on to us, embracing us in love, in spite of our sins, and always willing to forgive us.

Confession of sin can only be sincere if it is preceded by humble examination of conscience. Confession is actually the external expression of the internal transformation of conversion that happens in our hearts. Conversion is not a once-in-a-lifetime moment, but a continuous, ongoing, lifelong process which brings us ever closer to the holiness and love of God. Each time we go to Confession, our moral experience of conversion prompts us to turn more and more toward God, because each conversion experience reveals God in a new loving manner.

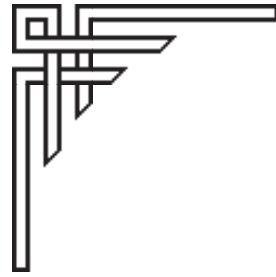
As we humbly and sincerely confess our sins, after admitting our guilt, we need to imagine in our minds the father of the parable of the prodigal son, our Heavenly Father, rushing out to hug us, to embrace us, to forgive us and fill us with love and accept us even before we confess our sins. In this parable, Jesus reveals to us a loving God who simply cannot not forgive.

Why Confess to a Priest

The question is often asked, why confess my sins to a priest? Why not confess them directly to God, since God has already forgiven me anyway? From God's point of view, this simple answer is: there is no reason. But from our point of view, the answer is that as human beings who do not live in minds and thoughts alone, we need to externalize in a bodily way with words, signs and gestures what is in our minds and hearts. We need to seek, hear and feel forgiveness, not just think about it. We need other human beings to help us externalize what is within us and open our hearts before the Lord, which then puts confessors in a new light. They are best seen not as faceless and impersonal judges, but as spiritual guides helping us with our guilt, sorrow and compassionately helping us to experience and receive the mercy of God in our lives. God's merciful grace and good confessors often help people to find the peace and tranquility that people often seek from psychologists and psychiatrists. As mentioned earlier, confessors help us to deal with basic human needs that we experience as we struggle with sin and celebrate God's love and forgiveness.

The Other Figure in the Parable

There is another figure in the parable we are dealing with—the older brother—the older son who is not ready to forgive, forget, and accept his younger brother back home. Perhaps at times, some of the attitude or behavior of the older brother lurks in all of our hearts—we are not ready to forgive, we require more even than God. The older brother's problem is a universal one. It is tough for most of us to say, "I am sorry;" it is even tougher to say, "You are forgiven." And it is most difficult of all to say gracefully, "I accept your forgiveness." To be able to do that, we must be able to forgive ourselves. That, too, is what we celebrate in the Sacrament of Confession, Reconciliation. The older son in the story would focus on the brother's sin and guilt and would not celebrate his return, forgiveness, even though his father pleaded. But, we should always strive to have the attitude and heart of the merciful and forgiving father, who told the older son, "But now we must celebrate and rejoice because your brother was dead and has come back to life again; he was lost and has been found." This is what happens when we "go to confession."



In his first encyclical, pope calls for deeper understanding of love

By John Thavis
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — In his first encyclical, Pope Benedict XVI called for a deeper understanding of love as a gift from God to be shared in a self-sacrificial way, both at a personal and social level.

The pope said love between couples, often reduced today to selfish sexual pleasure, needs to be purified to include “concern and care for the other.”

Love is also charity, he said, and the church has an obligation to help the needy wherever they are found — but its primary motives must always be spiritual, never political or ideological.

The nearly 16,000-word encyclical, titled “Deus Caritas Est” (“God Is Love”), was issued Jan. 25 in seven languages. Addressed to all Catholics, it was divided into two sections, one on the meaning of love in salvation history, the other on the practice of love by the church.

The pope said his aim was to “speak of the love which God lavishes upon us and which we in return must share with others.” The two aspects, personal love and the practice of charity, are profoundly interconnected, he said.

The encyclical begins with a phrase from the First Letter of John: “God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.” The pope said the line expresses the heart of the Christian faith, which understands the creator as a loving God and which sees Christ’s death as the ultimate sign of God’s love for man.

In today’s world, however, the term “love” is frequently used and misused, he said. Most commonly, it is understood as representing “eros,” the erotic love between a man and a woman. The church, from its earliest days, proposed a new vision of self-sacrificial love expressed in the word “agape,” he said.

At times, the pope said, the church, with all its commandments and prohibitions, has been accused of poisoning eros or of being ready to “blow the whistle” just when the joy of erotic love presented itself.

But in modern society, he said, it has become clear that eros itself has been exalted and the human body debased.

“Eros, reduced to pure ‘sex,’ has become a commodity, a mere ‘thing’ to be bought and sold, or rather, man himself becomes a commodity. This is hardly man’s great ‘yes’ to the body. On the contrary, he now considers his body and his sexuality as the purely material part of himself, to be used and exploited at will,” he said.

Properly understood, he said, eros leads a man and woman to marriage, a bond that is exclusive, and therefore monogamous, as well as permanent.

While it is true that the happiness of eros can give people a “foretaste of the divine,” eros needs to be disciplined and purified if it is to provide more than fleeting pleasure, the pope said.

The solution is to rediscover a balance between the ecstasy of eros and the unselfish love of agape, he said.

The key to regaining this balance, he said, lies in a personal relationship with God and an understanding of the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ. He said Christ gives the ultimate lesson in “love of neighbor,” which means: “I love even the person whom I do not like or even know.”

The pope said there was an essential interplay between love of God and love of neighbor.

“If I have no contact whatsoever with God in my life, then I cannot see in the other anything more than the other, and I am incapable of seeing in him the image of God,” he said.

“But if in my life I fail completely to heed others, solely out of a desire to be ‘devout’ and to perform my ‘religious duties,’ then my relationship with God will also grow arid,” he said.

The second half of the encyclical makes two main points:

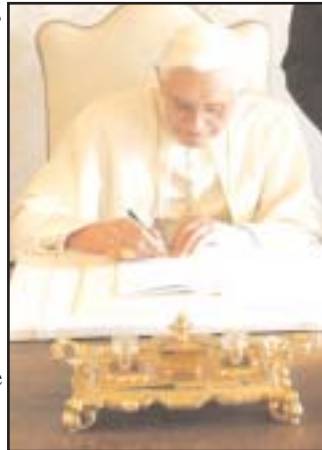
► As a community, the church must practice love through works of charity and attend to people’s sufferings and needs, including material needs.

► The church’s action stems from its spiritual mission and must never be undertaken as part of a political or ideological agenda.

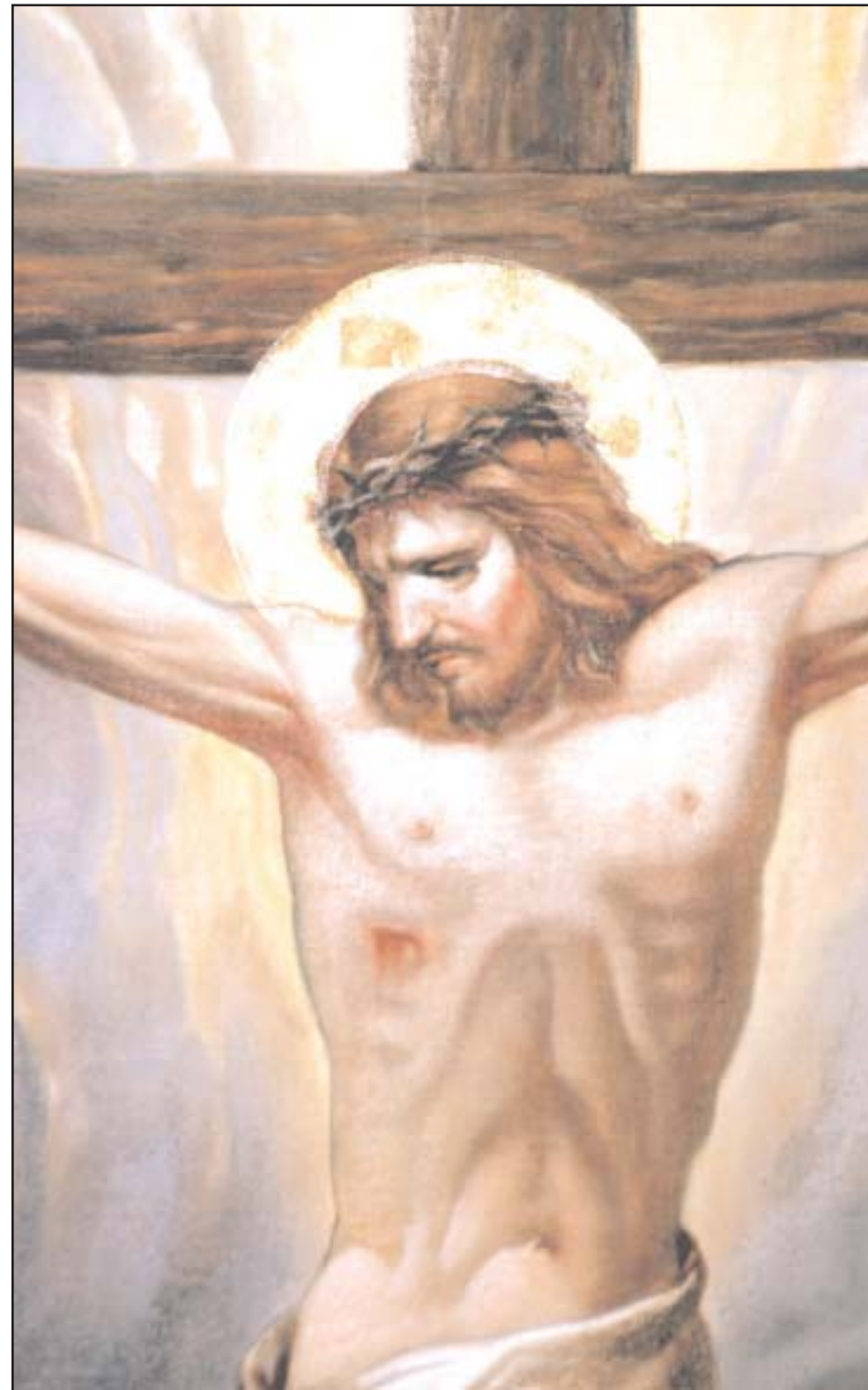
The pope said there was a connection between the commitment to justice and the ministry of charity, but also important

more than the other, and I am incapable of seeing in him the image of God,” he said.

See **ENCYCLICAL/15**



Pope Benedict signs his first encyclical.



Cardinal: New encyclical helps explain God’s love, human love

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Understanding human life as a totally free gift of God’s love and love as a gift that seeks nothing in return, people can learn to love one another without fear and without exploitation, said Cardinal Francis E. George of Chicago.

In writing his encyclical, “Deus Caritas Est” (“God Is Love”), Pope Benedict XVI was trying to help modern men and women understand the greatness of God’s love and of human love, the cardinal said.

Cardinal George offered theological reflections on the pope’s encyclical Jan. 24 during the closing session of a Vatican conference on the encyclical organized by the Pontifical Council Cor Unum, which promotes and coordinates Catholic charitable activity. The cardinal is a member of the council.

The cardinal told conference participants that love has to be seen in the light of “God’s self-revelation if the message of the encyclical is to be clearly understood.”

The Trinity itself is “a unity created by the total self-giving of the three divine persons, each to the others, for the others, in the others,” the cardinal said.

Again, acting only out of a love that neither needed nor asked for anything in return, God created each human being, he said.

Even on earth, the cardinal said, love must strive to reflect the totally free gift that is God’s love.

“In our culture we presuppose that there must be a separation between eros — understood as human desire, sexually expressed — and agape,” a selfless, spiritual love, the cardinal said.

“The pope tries to overcome, and I think does so successfully, a separation between eros and agape by pointing to the inner movement of erotic love toward a generosity between a man and a woman based on the total self-giving of one to the other for the sake of the other alone,” he said.

“Love becomes ecstasy when a person attains the freedom to give himself completely to another, where there is, in the loving, a purification of desire,” he said.

If agape does not become part of the loving relationship, he said, the love of eros decays, which is why “pornography is an addiction that is never self-satisfying.”

Cardinal George said modern culture has magnified the idea of love as spontaneous over the reality of love as involving choices

to the point that people talk about being swept away and losing control.

Yet if passion is the essence of love, he said, it actually involves the loss of the freedom people claim to worry about when they hesitate making a permanent commitment to one another.

Cardinal George said Pope Benedict also tries to address modern cultures’ separation between love and justice.

“What is seen in the encyclical is that, even if justice were to be established, love would always be necessary” for economic and political systems to safeguard, promote and defend the human person, he said.

An Iranian bishop asked Cardinal George what practical message the encyclical would give to a world in which a few rich and powerful countries try to control all the economic and political decisions of the rest of the world, ensuring they stay in a position of poverty and weakness.

The cardinal answered, “I sometimes try to tell my fellow Americans, ‘The world resents us, not because we are rich and free ... they resent us because too often we are blind and deaf,’” not understanding the injustice others suffer or being willing to change.

However, Cardinal George said, there also must be a deeper analysis of the factors, including the corruption and mismanagement in the developing world, that prevent a more equal sharing of the world’s goods.

People in rich countries must hear and take seriously the concerns and criticisms of people in poorer countries, he said, but anyone concerned about love and justice also must ask, “If the United States of America ceased to exist tomorrow, would there still be poverty and injustice in Iran or anywhere else in the world? I think there would.”

Cardinal George said the pope’s new encyclical, which was scheduled to be released Jan. 25, also emphasizes the identity of the church as a sacrament of God’s love in the world.

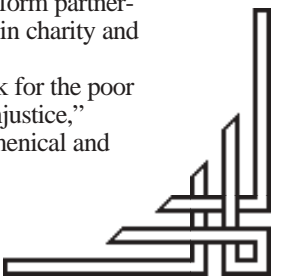
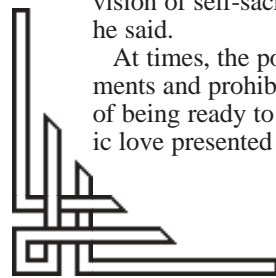
“From this, it must follow that the church is as committed to the service of charity in the form of Christ-like love as she is to the preaching of the word and the administration of the sacraments,” he said.

Motivated by love, he said, the church also must form partnerships with other groups and organizations engaged in charity and philanthropy.

“The church has no corner, no monopoly on work for the poor and for the elimination of economic and political injustice,” Cardinal George said. “The work of charity is ecumenical and universal both in its scope and its workers.”



Cardinal George



WEDDING: The garment of grace

(From 4)

So by receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we are assured of being in the state of grace, which means we are assured of heaven; either immediately, or after some further purification. Doesn't this make the Sacrament of Reconciliation a very special manifestation of God's immense mercy? And since everyone who goes to purgatory always goes to heaven without exception, doesn't this also make purgatory a doctrine of mercy? I believe it does.

I'm not the only one who recognizes God's infinite mercy in His Sacrament of Forgiveness. As Chaplain for the Carmelite Sisters, when I invited them to share with me any thoughts that they might have regarding Reconciliation, one of the Sisters had this to say: "Jesus came into the world to save sinners. If the angels of God rejoice over one sinner who repents, what can be said of Jesus' joy when a repentant soul comes to Him in the

Sacrament of His Mercy? His Heart must beat with a Divine joy as He absolves us through His priest. Jesus died to bring us this blessed release from sin and the joy of His salvation. He waits for us to come to Him in this Sacrament. He waits to bestow His merciful forgiveness upon us. He waits to fill us with His joyful freedom from sin, that His joy may be in us."

So my dear friends in Christ, with the Sacrament of Reconciliation readily available to all of us (thanks be to God!), will we ever have a sufficient excuse to give Jesus if we appear before his glorious throne without our proper wedding garment...without his sanctifying grace dwelling in our soul? At any moment during our fragile life we might appear before Him, and what could we possibly say? Are we going to say that we were too ashamed to confess our sins in this holy Sacrament, and thereby receive His healing grace? If so, then let us recall these sobering words of St. Ambrose: "This shame will avail us little at the judgment seat of God."

Ask Fr. Webster ...

What is the 'seamless garment?'

By Father John Dietzen
Catholic News Service

Q. In articles about abortion recently I've seen reference to a "seamless garment" and a "consistent ethic of life." I recently became Catholic and am not familiar with these names, which as I understand it come from the Catholic Church. What do they mean? (New York)

A. Both terms have approximately the same meaning: All issues involving respect for the dignity and sacredness of human life weave together. They support each other, and none can be ignored or minimized without undermining all of them.

The first to use the phrase "consistent ethic of life" was probably the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin. The beauty of such an ethic, he once said, "is that it provides an overall vision, and it shows how issues are related to each other, even though they remain distinct."

While he did not use those exact words, no one, I believe, has given a more clear description of this impor-

tant concept than the late Pope John Paul II in his January 1999 message for the World Day of Peace, and at greater length in the encyclical "The Gospel of Life."

In the first document, titled "Respect for Human Rights: The Secret of True Peace," he repeated that the right to life is inviolable. A culture of life, he wrote, "guarantees to the unborn the right to come into the world. In the same way it protects the newly born, especially girls, from the crime of infanticide. ...

"To choose life involves rejecting every form of violence: the violence of poverty and hunger, which afflicts so many human beings; the violence of armed conflict; the violence of criminal trafficking in drugs and arms; the violence of mindless damage to the natural environment. ... No offense against the right to life, against the dignity of any single person, is ever unimportant" (No. 4).

As the pope indicated, the first of all basic rights is the right to life. For the past 20 years, the seamless garment idea has helped our bishops and all of us better to understand and protect that right.

Q. Some time ago you wrote a column on the noncontraceptive use of the "birth control pill." My two daughters are suffering from some difficulties they have been

told could be solved with these pills. I've been ignoring my own doctor's advice to use the pill to alleviate problems of my own. Is using "the pill" an option for us? (Michigan)

A. A full response to your question would be far too long for this column and require much more information than you could give in your letter. I can only offer a few brief suggestions.

Noncontraceptive use of the so-called birth control drugs can be moral under certain circumstances. Several concerns always need to be considered, however.

For instance, physicians and reproductive scientists are increasingly concerned about the long-term effects of hormonal "medications."

Second, a significant group of contraceptive agents today are abortifacient; that is, they accomplish their contraceptive effect by some form of destruction of a fertilized ovum.

It is important that your daughters have a physician who knows the pharmacology of the hormone therapy he prescribes, what drugs are involved and their effects, and is also aware of the moral implications of any pharmaceutical product which works by destroying a developing human life.

(This month's Fr. Webster is Father John Dietzen).



Fr. Webster

The Human Side

Exactly how does a person become cheerful these days?

By Father Eugene Hemrick
Catholic News Service

Although I tried to avoid it, I couldn't stop staring at the man across from me on the Metro. What first caught my eye was the way he wore his fedora. It was plopped on his head with brim up in the same manner Don Corleone wore his hat in "The Godfather." The man's olive skin, white hair and demeanor fit the image of a mafioso boss par excellence.

Dismissing my Godfather fantasy, I looked into his eyes and was amazed how they danced with enthusiasm. He delighted in everything he looked at. He may have been in his early 70s, but you wouldn't know it because he was like a child experienc-



Fr. Hemrick

ing life around him for the first time.

I always have wondered what the biblical concept "cheerfulness of heart" might look like in a person. As I observed this man's serenity and joyfulness, I thought to myself, "This is what you are looking for: a person at peace with himself and the world, and who hasn't lost enthusiasm about life. His smile and cheerful enthusiasm are so natural!"

How, I wondered, does one cultivate a penchant for joy?

If we delved into this man's life, no doubt we would find that his heart was broken often. Perhaps his wife died or his children met with trouble. It could be that he suffers from an illness. Yet his face and eyes weren't dimmed.

In the midst of crises, had he somehow learned the wise lesson that no one escapes the travails of life? Perhaps he, like so many wise elders, came to accept life as it is rather than fighting it and crying "poor me" every time it wasn't to his liking.

Accepting life's realities makes it much easier to

endure the hardships. Instead of running from deep-seated anxieties, we face them squarely and in doing so are in possession of ourselves.

I also wonder if cheerfulness of heart is the result of cultivating the "sacrament of the moment," which we fully enter into by God's grace. Once so focused, distractions are minimized, leaving room for the peace that seems so basic to a cheerful heart.

As I further pondered the man's enthusiasm, it occurred to me that "cheerfulness," in Greek, means God's spirit coursing through a person. Interestingly, in Psalm 5 we read: "But let all who take refuge in God rejoice, let them ever sing for joy."

When we become one with God, we cannot but be filled with God's joy.

The next time you need cheering up, look around you for people who exude cheerfulness of heart. Then fire up your imagination and let it run wild wondering what it is exactly that makes them so joyful. You may just find their secret and join them.

DIOCE-SCENES



Carmelite Brothers Fr. Fabian Maria, O. Carm., Br. John David, O. Carm., Br. Martin Mary, O. Carm., and Br. Bill Hieb visited with Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer Dec. 19, 2005, to present him a Christmas gift with some of the products made at the Carmelite Hermitage in Cristoval, including kolaches, chocolate fudge, and jalapeno jelly.



The St. Ann's School 7th Grade Class, left, went to see the Vatican Exhibit in San Antonio on January 5, 2005. The class held a pancake breakfast and spaghetti dinner fund-raisers in December. They also raffled off a six feet tall stuffed stocking. The class also visited the San Antonio Riverwalk, IMAX Theatre, The Alamo and Ripley's Believe It or Not. They attended the noon bilingual mass at the San Fernando Cathedral in downtown on January 6th. Needless to say, it was a fun packed two days of historic treats and faith building activities. If you happen to see one of the student's ask them about their trip. It was a unique and exciting experience for them. St. Ann's School 7th Grade Class: John David Bertelson, Jeremy Blair, Patrick Butler, Shannon Corbitt, Audrey Erwin, Erica Gonzales, Lori Heredia, Matthew McCallum, Jessica Ochoa, Jon Perez, Lindsey Rivera, Amber Sosa, Wil Steward, Ashley Swedig, Jason Thornton and Diana Welch.



Priest Chaplain Steve Hicks, photo at left, celebrates Christmas Mass in a cave in Crete, near where he is stationed in the U.S. Navy. (See Related Story, Page 5).



In December, a group of 12 seventh and eighth graders at St. Mary's Odessa had an opportunity to have a Christmas afternoon of prayer, music, and fun. It was a mini-retreat for these students in order for them to begin to have a sense of belonging to a Christian community. For them, it was the first retreat of their young Christian lives. To recognize that each of us has special gifts and talents that we can share with each other in forming the body of Christ was one of the core items of this gathering. It was also an opportunity for these young people to be exposed to one of our Church's valuable components: a retreat. A retreat which gives them an opportunity to look within themselves and see how we all can live in the way Jesus taught us during his ministry. The retreat combined group games designed to build community along with periods of reflection and teaching. One activity for the afternoon was to determine what made up a "Community" and then what made up a "Christian Community", an activity that helped shows that we are all part of the Body of Christ. Because of this particular age group, there was also a session that dealt with "Put-Ups" and "Put-Downs". This issue is of particular importance to this age group because of the interaction at school with their own peers. We often find so often that it is really easy to put someone down and not know how bad it hurts that person. In defining community, Christian community, and the verbalization of put-downs, the retreatants were given exposure to the harm this type of behavior can generate. Another activity which illustrated Christian Community and our closeness with each other was the web of yarn. All of the participants were gathered in a circle and each person would toss a ball of yarn to a person across from them. Each person had to tell the group a particular gift or talent they possessed. It would continue that way until each person had the opportunity tell of his or her gift or talent. It wove a beautiful web. It showed them how we are all connected to each other, through Christ. Those who participated include Bre'Anna Ruiz, Christian Fierro, Nick Gurr, Antonia Rangel, Kristin Medrano, Maria Hernandez, Luis Esquivel, and Chris Mansanales.

FAMILY

From the Easy Chair

I heard my Dad laugh. And it was a very good thing to hear

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following selection is excerpted from Jimmy Patterson's blog about his mother's illness, her final days, death and the family's grief. The entire blog can be read at www.stickydoorknobs.typepad.com. Select "Mama"

I heard my Dad laugh last night on the phone and it wasn't a big laugh but it was a laugh nonetheless and it sounded good.

I don't remember what his laughter was about but I think it had to do with his trying to keep his mind on a book I had recommended that he read -- *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, by my favorite inspirational author Harold Kushner who can flat write when Grief is on the line.

He mentioned something about having to really concentrate on the meaning of the writing to put it all together and I remarked about how Kushner wasn't too convoluted I didn't think and he chuckled for a moment and Dad next said you just have to follow



Patterson

along with his every word or it might not make sense.

Don't feel forced to read it I told him *Oh, I'll read it*, he said. *I need to get something out of it.*

(My suspicion here frankly is that Dad is just having trouble concentrating at this particular moment because he has read Toffler and the over 3 million some odd pages I think James Michener wrote and he has read aircraft maintenance manuals -- some of which he probably *wrote* for crying out loud. So a little Kushner ain't too much to handle for an 81-year-old thinker guy like Dad. Unless he's 10 days removed from losing his wife of 59 years which Dad is.)

But the story, the *real* story, is not that Dad can't concentrate while reading just now, but that he managed to muster a chuckle and that's Good Stuff.

My wife Karen believes firmly in her father-in-law and his propensity for making it if you will. And he will I think.

There are mounting tidbits of Good Stuff coming from my childhood home where Dad still lives.

Last week amid the unbearable weight of his loss, he looked up at me one night and said *I think I might like to go to Cooperstown with you and Karen and the kids this summer.*

We have been talking about a New York vacation for several months, Karen and I, and it is getting closer to reality each day. Dad has been trying to get me to Cooperstown with him for probably 20 years and we have never been able to do it. Perhaps there is some sort of -- dare I say -- **God Thing** going on here ... Dad and I have never been able to go ... yet it appears we will finally be able to ... now that *he* needs it most.

God Thing.

Gotta be.

He has been to my sister's and brother's three nights in a row for dinner and on Tuesday he even went to something the Baptists call Evergreen where Senior Citizens at the church meet and eat each week. He went. Alone. And he hadn't been in a month. And the last time he went he was not alone. Yet he went alone. Yesterday. And that is Good.

And he and my brother will visit my brother's vacation home in Cloudcroft, NM (where God vacations, I believe) and stay

for four days next week, and he has talked about visiting Big Bend National Park very soon because it is one of his favorite places in the whole world. And that is Good too.

It really is a lot of Good. Sadness still hangs everywhere. Mama was buried just one week ago. The memories of the day are still quite vivid. The pain still hard. There is no getting over the loss of the matriarchal leader of our family. Mama. You cannot just "GET OVER IT." You can learn to be with the Grief. Take it to work with you and have it sit next to you for awhile as you type and plug numbers and whatever you do and you can manage Grief and accept it and still love that someone who is gone. It can be done. We are all doing it. All 70 or 80 of us who were loved most by Mama, Nana, Betty.

So the laughter from Dad was Good. The planning of life ahead Good. Really Good.

It rains. It pours. And then one day the sun peeks from behind a cloud. And a form of brightness seems to begin to emerge again.

Good Thing.

God Thing.

Gotta be.

Jimmy Patterson is Editor of the Angelus

Your Family

Memories of Catholic school days

By Bill & Monica Dodds
Catholic News Service

Let's start with a variation on those "You just might be a redneck" jokes.

If you pop up from your chair whenever a priest or sister enters the room -- you just might be a Catholic school graduate.

If, over the years as a student, you peddled more than 300 chocolate bars -- you just might be a Catholic school graduate.

If you automatically say a little prayer when an aid car passes by with its siren on -- you just might be a Catholic school graduate.

If you hate plaid skirts or cardigan sweaters -- you just might be a Catholic school graduate.

If you can easily name four Marian hymns -- you just might be a Catholic school graduate.

If your head automatically bobs when the word "Jesus" is said during the Hail Mary -- you just might be a Catholic school graduate.



Bill & Monica Dodds

If you have a "favorite" religious order -- you just might be a Catholic school graduate.

If it still occurs to you "today is First Friday" -- you just might be a Catholic school graduate.

If you landed a great scholarship at a college your family otherwise couldn't have afforded -- you just might be a Catholic school graduate.

If, despite mounting tuition, you're sending your children to a Catholic school -- you just might be a Catholic school graduate.

Character, Compassion, Values

This year's Catholic Schools Week, Jan. 29-Feb. 4, has the theme "Catholic Schools: Character. Compassion. Values." That slogan is "truly a reflection of our times," said Karen Ristau, president of the National Catholic Educational Association. "Parents are choosing Catholic schools for the strong values they provide. Our schools emphasize good character and encourage compassion, and these three words are key to our Catholic identity."

Dominican Sister Glenn Anne McPhee, education secretary at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, which co-sponsors the week with NCEA, said the weeks'

themes over the past 30-plus years often have reflected current issues or concerns. The marketing campaign is designed to encourage Catholic educators to sell and showcase their schools throughout the year -- not just during Catholic Schools Week.

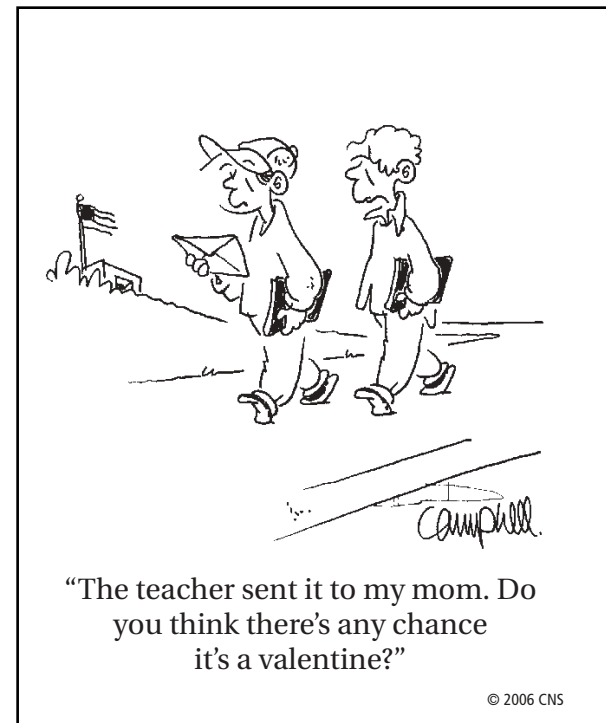
"Marketing." Now there's a word you may not have heard at a Catholic school if you graduated in the '60s or earlier. Here's another term: "development director." These days it takes a lot more than chocolate bars.

How to best mark Catholic Schools Week? No doubt a donation -- whether large or small -- will be greatly appreciated.

NCEA Facts

Established in 1904, the NCEA is the largest private professional education organization in the world, representing 200,000 Catholic educators serving 7.6 million students in Catholic elementary and secondary schools, in religious education programs, in seminaries, colleges and universities.

On the Web: "Thank you, Sister." The religious orders that were the backbone of Catholic education for many, many decades continue to struggle financially. Read more about how you can help at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' National Religious Retirement Office site: www.usccb.org/nrro.



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Answers:

- | | |
|------|--------|
| 1. O | 6. N |
| 2. O | 7. O |
| 3. N | 8. O |
| 4. N | 9. N |
| 5. O | 10. O |
| | 11. N |
| | 12. O. |



Jesus heals a leper and paralytic

By Joe Sarnicola
Catholic News Service

Jesus woke up before the first sunlight of morning and went out where he could be alone to pray. When his prayers were interrupted by Simon and a few of his other disciples, Jesus said, "Let us go on to the nearby villages that I may preach there also. For this purpose have I come." Jesus and his friends went on to Galilee, preaching, healing and performing miracles.

A leper who had heard about Jesus knelt down and begged before him. "If you wish, you can make me clean," he said.

Jesus nodded and smiled at the man with leprosy. Then he extended his hand and said: "I do will it. Be made clean." Immediately the man was completely healed from his disease.

Jesus also made one request of the man in a stern voice. "See that you tell no one anything, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses prescribed; that will be proof for them."

But the man was so excited about being healed that he told everyone he met what had happened to him and who had done it. As a result, Jesus

could not enter any town in the area without large groups of people waiting for him, asking for his help. He tried to stay in deserted places away from the towns, but even there, people would find him.

After Jesus returned to Capernaum, so many people came to the house where he was staying that there was no room for them. So Jesus decided to preach to the people, since he knew they wanted him to speak.

Trying to get through the crowd were four men. They were carrying a paralyzed friend on a stretcher. They wanted Jesus to heal him. They could not get near the house, so they climbed up onto the roof and broke a hole in it. Then they carefully lowered their friend down in front of Jesus.

Jesus saw their faith and said to the paralyzed man, "Child, your sins are forgiven." There were Scribes present who did not think a man could forgive sins. Jesus knew their thoughts and said, "The Son of Man has authority to forgive sins on earth."

The paralyzed man picked up his mat and was able to walk home with his friends.

JUST 4 KIDS

READ MORE ABOUT IT
Mark 1 & 2

Q&A

1. What was Jesus doing when Simon found him?
2. What did Jesus ask of the leper?

BIBLE ACCENT

The Middle East

Iraq, Israel, Syria and other Middle Eastern countries are mentioned in the news almost every day. The region, which is important to Jews, Muslims and Christians, has a long history of conflict. Some of the tension has been caused because of boundaries that were created after World Wars I and II. This has been especially true about the relationship between Israel and neighboring Arab countries. In Iraq, there also is conflict between the Sunni Muslims and Shiite Muslims.

Oil is very valuable to the region and to the world. The largest reserves of this natural resource are in Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Israel has a negligible amount of oil within its borders.

Water is also a factor, because it is needed for drinking, irrigation and industry. The bodies of water around the Middle East provide routes to import and export supplies.

We should pray for the people of the Middle East when we pray for peace.

SPOTLIGHT ON SAINTS

St. Benedict

Benedict of Aniane was born about the year 750 in southern France. When he was a boy, he was a cupbearer for King Pepin and his son Charlemagne. As a man, Benedict knew he wanted to pursue a religious life of some kind. He joined an abbey near his home where he would be able to live peacefully and quietly as a monk.

When the abbot died, Benedict

was asked to take his place. He refused and built a small hermitage on his own land. His devotion and simple life attracted several followers, who worked to earn money to buy what little food they ate.

Eventually Benedict had to build a larger monastery. He was very influential in developing reforms in some of the other monasteries of the region. He served Emperor Louis the Pious and helped to write the canons, or laws, of reformation for the council of Aachen in 817. Benedict wrote many rules and texts, including the Concord of Rules, for monks and other religious.

After many years of hardships and sickness, he died in 821 at the age of 71. We remember him on Feb. 12.

KIDS' CLUB

Share your thoughts on this week's Bible story with family and friends by writing an essay in response to this question:

What is one of your favorite Bible stories, and why?

PUZZLE

Place an "O" next to the books that are from the Old Testament, and an "N" for those from the New Testament. Try it first without looking at your Bible:

1. Genesis _____
2. Obadiah _____
3. Jude _____
4. Romans _____
5. Esther _____
6. Ephesians _____
7. Haggai _____
8. Joshua _____
9. Galatians _____
10. Amos _____
11. Revelation _____
12. Malachi _____

Coming of Age

Learning more about AIDS ... some people know more than they think

By M. Regina Cram
Catholic News Service

I walked into the high school classroom, all eyes locked on me. I knew what they were thinking because a student had tipped me off ahead of time. They were wondering, "Does she have AIDS?"

The answer is no, but they didn't know that. All they knew was that a guest speaker would teach that day on

the topic of HIV/AIDS. I was the lucky speaker.

The class had just completed a unit on HIV and AIDS, so they knew all about the subject. At least they thought they did. My goal was to shake up some of their comfortable assumptions and perhaps put a human face on the disease. It turned out to be an easy assignment.

I began by reviewing some basics: HIV stands for Human

Immunodeficiency Virus, the virus that eventually leads to AIDS. I asked how many of them thought they might know someone with HIV. Three or four hands tentatively went up.

When I asked how many were fairly certain that they don't know anyone with HIV, a sea of hands were raised.

I smirked as I proceeded to tell them about a health class I taught in a wealthy suburb. Most of those kids were also certain they didn't know

anyone with HIV. Ironically, two students in that very classroom were, in fact, HIV positive. These two kids didn't look any different from anyone else, so no one knew. Their presence certainly didn't endanger anyone. The virus was part of their lives.

I showed the class a photo of three young women. I explained that the women were sisters; two were

See YOUTH/14

PATTERSON: Openness to all beneficial for all

(From 1)

Welcome, too, to the 21st Century Catholic Church.

OK, suggesting that Catholics mix in a little Islam and Hindu teaching with their weekly or daily Eucharist is stretching it a bit, but what happened last weekend at the San Angelo Convention Center was indeed something you would've probably never seen or heard just a few years ago.

Certainly Pope John Paul II was ecumenical and loving of people of all faith traditions, but it now seems that it is now being taken to a whole new level.

A workshop entitled "Being Catholic in a Pluralistic Society," conducted by Fr. Abraham Orapankal, a missionary priest from the Diocese of Kohima in northeast India.

What transpired over the course of the hour-plus session was more a discussion of how non-Christians are welcome to practice how they best see fit -- and who are we to say they will or won't enter heaven -- as it was how to

be Catholic amid the other world religions. And it was fascinating, yet at times uncomfortable for some in attendance.

More than one workshop attendee expressed more than a slight discomfort with the notion that a Hindu or a Muslim has his or her ticket punched for a heavenly hereafter.

"Every religion has some truth and reflects aspects of the divine," Fr. Abraham said, noting that Gandhi was not a Christian yet one of the most beloved and noble spiritual thinkers in history.

No longer do Catholics hang a sign out that says *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* -- "Outside the church there is no salvation." Instead it is embracing our world differences and making it very clear that we are not to judge others by their religious beliefs, we are to respect them.

There will certainly continue to be examples of ignorance directed at the Catholic Church (the latest being one West Texas minister reportedly teaching his congregation that we Catholics worship the pope -- *oh, brother* -- and don't believe in hell) yet we are now at a time that we are becoming much more open to

respecting other traditions. And we can only become much better for it.

Being non-judgmental in a world of religious intolerance and ignorance can only make the Catholic Church more appealing. After all ... he who is not against us ... is for us.

When my mother passed away in January, my parish in Midland celebrated her memory by offering Mass for her -- for 10 straight days. My mom was a Baptist. I found the kindness of this cross-denominational gesture both moving and revealing.

This ecumenism and acceptance of other beliefs -- both Christian and non-Christian -- is really a brilliant move first introduced by Vatican II and recently brought to the fore again. We can all learn, be accepting of others, cease to be judgmental and create for our Church a reputation of openness to all. Aside from it being a good move for the church and its people ... it's simply the right thing to do.

Jimmy Patterson is editor of The Angelus.

LENT: Abstinence on Fridays recommended during lenten season

(From 3)

more pastoral guidance on this point one may contact the local pastor. A more serious reason should be present to excuse from the Ash Wednesday and Good Friday penance.

Self-imposed fasting on the other weekdays of Lent is recommended. Abstinence on all Fridays of the year is also highly recommended. The Peace Pastoral of the American Bishops, stating that prayer is incomplete without penance, urges Friday abstinence as something all American Catholics should offer for the sake of world peace.

Parents and teachers should see to it that even those who are not bound by the laws of the fast and abstinence because of age are brought up in an atmosphere that is conducive to a sense of penance.

The faithful should be clearly and positively encouraged to receive the Sacrament of Penance during Lent. There should be adequate time scheduled for Confessions before Easter. Group penance services should not be scheduled for the last days of Holy Week.

All the faithful, after they have been initiated into the Most Holy Eucharist, are bound by the obligation of receiving Communion at least once a year, ordinarily, during the Easter Season.

Funeral and Nuptial Masses are not allowed on Holy Thursday, Good Friday or Holy Saturday. The Funeral Rite outside of Mass, however, can be held either in church or at the chapel on those days, with a memorial mass later.

The liturgical directions of the Sacramentary and the Lectionary must be faithfully observed regarding all the special Holy Week Rites.

CONFERENCE: Faith's dimensions help us grow

(From 1)

beliefs:

▶ **Catholicism is sacramental.** In fact, Catholicism offers three aspects other faiths do not: the Eucharist, tradition and Sacramentals.

▶ **Catholicism makes present the divine mystery in a concrete way.**

▶ **Catholicism is communal.** We bring communion to the sick, have devotion to Mary, and pray to saints and Mary to intercede for us, an aspect of the faith that began very early.

▶ **Catholicism is a tradition.** Not only do we have the traditions the church has given us, but we are also, contrary to some, a Bible-based faith. How we developed the reputation of not being Bible-based is in itself a mystery ... especially since a large portion of the Mass is Bible based from prayers to Holy Communion to the readings, which of course include the

Psalms and the Gospel.

▶ **Catholicism celebrates the human intellect.** "We engage our central faculties with the continuing revelation of Jesus Christ," Rickard said. "We don't have the same difficulties some other churches may have, but for us we look at the whole context of the Scripture. What did Scripture mean to the early cultures and what does it mean to us today?"

"There is a bumper sticker I've seen: 'Jesus said it. I believe it. That settles it.' If you're Catholic, you ask: What did he say ... when did he say it ... and what does the Church teach about it? Catholicism allows us to engage in Scripture."

▶ **Catholicism finds God in all creation.**

▶ **Catholicism is universal.** The Mass is celebrated in 45 languages in Los Angeles and it is said that every minute of every day the Mass is being said somewhere in the world and they are all celebrating the body of Christ.

▶ **Catholicism has a social conscience.**

"Our U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops speaks out against social issues like immigration rights and abortion. Our people work for justice. It is at the heart of who we are and what we celebrate."

Rickard said the 300-plus in attendance were "seekers and pilgrims" who need to be constantly renewed.

She also amusingly cited that not every -- or not any -- church is perfect.

"Fr. Andrew Greeley said 'If you can find a perfect church then you should go ahead and join it. But as soon as you join it, it won't be perfect.'"

In a letter introducing the conference, San Angelo Bishop Michael Pfeifer wrote that the conference "will challenge us to look at the various religious traditions that exist in our world. Vatican II calls us to learn more about these and how people of other religious traditions come to know God and live their faith."

YOUTH: No danger in talking to people who have AIDS

(From 13)

healthy, and one had AIDS. I asked if they could tell me which one.

They couldn't.

So I pointed to a vibrant young woman in the center of the photo, and slowly I unraveled her story. I said that she was my kid sister and that what began as sneaking cigarettes and beer in junior high ultimately led to a 20-year addiction to drugs and alcohol. My sister went through detox centers and numerous drug treatment pro-

grams, but she always returned to the drugs. Eventually she contracted HIV.

Again I posed a question to the class. "Imagine that your best friend is in the late stages of AIDS and that you visit him every week at the AIDS residence where he lives. Now imagine that you have two tiny children. Do you bring them with you when you visit?"

Hands shot up around the room. "No! A child's immune system isn't mature; my kid could catch something from someone with AIDS."

"Definitely not," insisted another. "I

just wouldn't take the chance."

"I wouldn't either," answered one guy honestly, "but really, it's more out of prejudice than anything else."

Then I passed around photos of two young children looking adoringly at their aunt as she painted their tiny fingernails. "The truth is that your children would not be endangered by your friend with AIDS," I stressed. "If anything, it's the other way around since your friend's immune system would be so weak. Besides, you can't get HIV by playing 'Go Fish' with

someone. You don't get it by sharing a pizza or holding hands. HIV is not transmitted by normal social contact."

I told a few more stories, the students asked questions, and all too soon the bell rang. Several kids stopped to say "thank you" before heading to the door.

One kid turned back around, hesitated a moment, and said quietly, "I'm really sorry about your sister."

ENCYCLICAL: Pope calls for humanitarian witnesses

(From 8)

distinctions. Building a just social and civil order is an essential political task to which the church contributes through its social doctrine, but it "cannot be the church's immediate responsibility," he said.

"A just society must be the achievement of politics, not of the church," he added.

"The church cannot and must not take upon herself the political battle to bring about the most just society possible. She cannot and must not replace the state," the pope said.

"Yet at the same time she cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice," he said. The church's role is to make the rational arguments for

justice and awaken the spiritual energy needed for the sacrifices that justice requires, he said.

"Christian charitable activity must be independent of parties and ideologies. It is not a means of changing the world ideologically, and it is not at the service of worldly stratagems, but it is a way of making present here and now the love which man always needs," he said.

The pope examined and rejected the Marxist arguments that the poor "do not need charity but justice," and that charity is merely a means of preserving a status quo of economic injustice. He said the church must help the needy wherever they are found, and he cited Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta as an example of love in action.

"One does not make the world more human by refusing to act humanely here and now," he said. And charity will always be necessary, even in the most just society, he said.

In any case, he said, it is an illusion to think that the state can provide for all needs and fully resolve every problem.

"We do not need a state which regulates and controls everything," but a state that supports initiatives arising from different social forces, he said. The church is one of those forces, he said.

The pope said that those working for Catholic charitable organizations need to be witnesses of the faith as well as professionally competent in humanitarian affairs.

The church's charitable activities, he

said, should not be seen as opportunities for proselytism, in the sense of imposing the church's faith on others.

"But this does not mean that charitable activity must somehow leave God and Christ aside," he said. Without proposing specific guidelines, he added: "A Christian knows when it is time to speak of God and when it is better to say nothing and to let love speak alone."

The pope said that prayer should not be forgotten as the church tries to alleviate the immense needs around the world.

"People who pray are not wasting their time, even though the situation appears desperate and seems to call for action alone. Piety does not undermine the struggle against the poverty of our neighbors, however extreme," he said.

CULTURE: Diversity of America has richly rewarded us all

(From 3)

The cultural dimensions of African-Americans have enriched and enhanced our country. African-Americans especially offer a spirituality rooted in family that is so much needed in our nation today. This spirituality has come out of the historical lived experience of the African-American community in the USA, in Africa, and, for some, in the Caribbean and other places. It is rooted in the present-day lived experience of African Americans as they face the problems and demands of today's contemporary society.

This unique cultural dimension, with its varied expressions, is woven into many religious, literary artistic expressions that make our country strong.

The annual remembrance of African-

American History Month is intended to evoke a sense of racial pride and empower African-Americans to honor the rich legacy of their forebears. Sankofa is a design symbol of Adrinka cloth traced to the Asante people of Ghana. It literally means "go back and fetch it," signifying the wisdom of learning from the past to build the future.

This is the primary reason for the annual celebration of this month. It brings with it a call to African-Americans to draw from the great legacy of their ancestors, their wisdom, courage, hope, resolve, and unshakable faith that allowed them to conquer insurmountable odds. This rich legacy inspires all of us to pursue the best in life.

What has often blocked the full expression of the African-American culture and

heritage is racism. Sadly, racism still remains a part of the American landscape. Racism dulls the conscience, blinds reason, wounds the will, stifles creativity, and erodes charity. Racism operates silently in strategies of self-interest and in structured patterns of discrimination.

Because racism is fundamentally a moral evil against the nature of the human person, its elimination requires ultimately a moral solution. African-American History Month reminds us that racism will be eliminated only when human beings acknowledge and respect all other human being as persons made by God in the Divine image and likeness.

In this special month, African-Americans experience a special pride in their color and their heritage. The challenge today is to bring this rich heritage

into the family and the home where people learn who they are and why. It is the family that can teach us much about ourselves, and to respect families that are different than ours. It is the family that is the first school and the first laboratory for the transmission of culture, the passing on of values, the handing down of traditions, the planting of the seeds of faith and the proclamation of the Good News of love and hope.

As we continue through the new century and millennium, all of us are challenged to step outside of our cultural experiences, to embrace our differences and to let our lives be enriched by them.

This month helps us to appreciate the great contribution African-Americans have made to our country.

STORY: Diocese hopes for amicable outcome

(From 1)

tion from the *Standard-Times'* January 22 story, the article fell short of giving its readers a story complete in its facts. As a result of this neglect, Paul Anthony's story carried with it a negative bias toward the diocese," Pfeifer said.

Additionally, the article held until the final three paragraphs information regarding the diocese's full compliance with an audit that shows we are creating in the diocese a safe environment for children. Conducted by the Gavin Group, an independent firm engaged by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Office of Child and Youth Protection, the audit's finding showed the diocese to be in "complete compliance with all article

of the bishops' Charter," which serves as the guiding document in this crucial matter. For three years, since the audit's inception, the diocese has received the highest praise.

"We have conducted 100 Ethics Workshops for over 3,600 clergy, religious, employees, and volunteers, making them aware of recognizing and reporting child sexual abuse," Pfeifer said. "Realizing the scope of this terrible problem in today's society, the diocese has also conducted over 150 workshops for parents, and presented a Safe Environment Curriculum to over 13,000 students.

"We have taken a proactive position on this terrible subject. We are better for it and our children are safer for it."

Had the *Standard-Times* mentioned this important information and perhaps told its

readers sooner about the environment we are all working toward for our children, the article would have been a fairer piece.

"The people of West Texas are deserving of accurate information regarding the churches where they worship," Pfeifer said. "It is our newspapers' responsibility to present that information for its readership. Yet, it must take all necessary steps to present ALL of the information. Doing anything less is unfair not only to the Church itself, but to the parishioners of the Church."

The Diocese of San Angelo and the *San Angelo Standard-Times* have enjoyed a long-standing good and amicable relationship. We wish that to continue and are hopeful it can.

KING: Cure to societal ills -- turn off television

(From 4)

abolish discrimination were enacted, all society would benefit. And all society would pay the cost rather than one part of it."

Thirty years later, addressing the Catholic Health Association in Orlando, Fla., King had a simple remedy to cure many societal ills: "Turn off the television."

Although positive role models exist, she told the CHA, they are not "raised up" because the media is too busy elevating "newsmakers." Sports figures and celebrities with spotty records get air time, along with violent events and negative role models, and as a result a "toxic culture" is created, she said.

THE BACK PAGE

Journalist investigates controversial, mysterious Catholic force 'Opus Dei'

"Opus Dei: An Objective Look Behind the Myths and Reality of the Most Controversial Force in the Catholic Church," by John L. Allen Jr. Doubleday (New York, 2005). 403 pp., \$24.95.

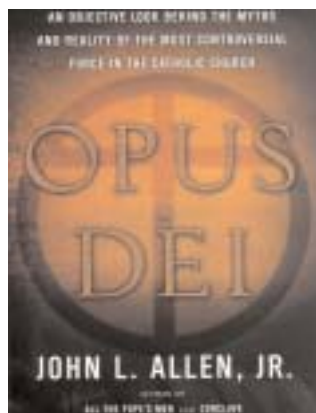
Reviewed by **Graham G. Yearley**
Catholic News Service

Opus Dei, an international association of Catholic men and women, has been for decades the darling of conspiracy theorists. John L. Allen Jr.'s new book, "Opus Dei," not only forcefully dispels many of the myths surrounding the organization, but offers a balanced overview of its founder, St. Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer, and the spiritual formation program he created.

Allen makes clear that he is not and has never been a member of Opus Dei. If he were, he wouldn't be a particularly good member, as Opus Dei (Latin for "God's Work") believes that its adherents should work in the everyday world anonymously and not trade on the name of Opus Dei for personal gain.

The book is subtitled: "An Objective Look Behind the Myths and Reality of the Most Controversial Force in the Catholic Church." Allen begins with an overview of the organization and its founder. Father Escriva, a young Spanish priest, had the vision that inspired Opus Dei May 2, 1928. While Father Escriva claimed his vision arrived "whole and complete," Allen points out that changes and amendments to Opus Dei were made with Father Escriva's cooperation during his lifetime.

Next, Allen details the four fundamental beliefs that the recently canonized St. Escriva envisioned as a spiritual program for both Catholic laity and clergy. Most important of these is the position that all men and women participate in the redemption of the world



in the ordinary tasks of daily life. He also taught that Christians are called to be contemplatives in the world and should see themselves as daughters and sons of God, not as slaves. As sons and daughters, Christians are free. That freedom includes holding any political position and voting for any candidate, as long as the teachings of the

Catholic Church are respected. Even many ex-members of Opus Dei report they were never coerced to vote for or support any particular position.


Opus Dei was never intended to be an autonomous religious order. Instead, its members accept wholeheartedly the authority of the church and remain subject to the local bishop. In 1982, Pope John Paul II granted Opus Dei the canonical status of a personal prelature, which Allen describes as "a limited kind of diocese, only in this case the borders are defined by contract rather than geography." Opus Dei remains the only group granted this status.

Members of Opus Dei do not wear clothing or badges that might distinguish them. They are free to tell their families of their vocation, but Opus Dei discourages its followers from making their calling public knowledge. This anonymity is spiritually enriching, but it is often interpreted as secrecy. Allen argues that Opus Dei is far more open to examination than its critics maintain and is much smaller in number, around 85,000 worldwide.

Top Ten

An on-line liturgical music survey lists the following as the top 10 church songs

1. On Eagle's Wings
2. Here I Am, Lord
3. Be Not Afraid
4. You Are Mine
5. How Great Thou Art
6. Holy God, We Praise Thy Name
7. Amazing Grace
8. All Are Welcome
9. Prayer of St. Francis
10. Ave Maria



Source: National Association of Pastoral Musicians ©2006 CNS

'On Eagle's Wings' is top song in online liturgical music survey

By **Mark Pattison**
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — "On Eagle's Wings," the musical reworking of the 91st Psalm by Father Michael Joncas, topped all other songs in an online poll asking which liturgical song most fostered and nourished the respondent's life.

Two songs made popular by the St. Louis Jesuits — "Here I Am, Lord" and "Be Not Afraid" — came in second and third, followed by "You Are Mine," by David Haas.

The online poll was sponsored by the National Association of Pastoral Musicians. The poll was featured last year in an issue of its membership magazine, Pastoral Music, and announcements about the poll were distributed to diocesan newspapers in an effort to get the input of "rank-and-file Catholics," said J. Michael McMahon, the association's president.

In the poll, respondents could vote for only one song. No songs were listed on the Web site to give them suggestions. About 3,000 people took part in the poll.

Of the 25 liturgical music songs mentioned most, songs written after the Second Vatican Council took not only the top four positions, but six of the top nine, and 12 of the top 25. The fourth-ranked song, "You Are Mine," received 138 votes, 81 percent more votes than the fifth-ranked song, "How Great Thou Art," which got 76.

McMahon, in a telephone interview with Catholic News Service, cautioned against the notion that post-Vatican II music has dominance over all other liturgical music. "We got 670 different songs mentioned," he said. "Even the top choice is only 8 percent of the total," or 242 votes.

The poll results didn't surprise McMahon. "It panned out pretty much like the way I expected," he said, adding that The Tablet, a British Catholic newspaper, conducted a similar survey, which found "Here I Am, Lord" to be the top choice of its readers.

Rounding out the pastoral musicians association's top 10 was, in sixth place, the traditional Catholic hymn "Holy God, We Praise Thy Name," whose lyrics are ascribed to Ignaz Franz, followed by John Newton's "Amazing Grace," Marty Haugen's "All Are Welcome," Sebastian Temple's "Prayer of St. Francis," and "Ave Maria."

Those who voted for "Ave Maria" and "Panis Angelicus," which finished 15th, probably meant the versions by Franz Schubert and Cesar Franck, respectively, "but we don't know for sure," McMahon said. "Since many of them (voters) were not professionals, they probably didn't realize there was more than one version."

Turin, here we come

U.S. cross-country skier Rebecca Dussault of Gunnison, Colo., poses for a photo in December 2005. Dussault, a Catholic, will be part of the U.S. cross-country ski team during the 2006 Winter Olympics in Turin, Italy, which begin Feb. 10. (CNS photo/courtesy Sharbel Dussault)

