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At Mount Sinai, Pope Calls For Return To 'Universal Moral Law'

By John Thavis
Catholic News Service

ST. CATHERINE, Egypt (CNS) — Pope John Paul II, making a long-awaited pilgrimage to the mountain where Moses received the Ten Commandments, appealed for the return to “universal moral law” as the only hope for the future of society.

Standing at the foot of Mount Sinai Feb. 26, the pope said the modern world needs to rediscover the sense of “liberating obedience” that prompted Moses to receive God’s call and lead his people to the Promised Land.

“The Ten Commandments are not an arbitrary imposition of a tyrannical Lord. They were written in stone; but before that, they were written on the human heart as the universal moral law, valid in every time and place,” he said.

It was the fulfillment of a dream for the 79-year-old pontiff, who appeared to relish the moment as he

toured parts of the sixth-century Greek Orthodox Monastery of St. Catherine. He fell to his knees and prayed at the spot where, according to the biblical account, God first appeared to Moses in the burning bush.

At a prayer service, the pope sat under a sunlit, flowering almond tree next to the monastery walls, surrounded by the stark outcroppings that have attracted hermits and religious followers for thousands of years. As some 500 people cheered him, he spoke about his deep emotion at being able to retrace the steps of Moses.

In this place, he said, God gave to Moses the “law of life and freedom” and made a lasting promise of salvation to humanity, he said.

“Today, as always, the 10 words of the law provide the only true basis for the lives of individuals, societies and nations. Today, as always, they are the only future of the hu-

man family,” he said.

He said the commandments offer a simple and effective remedy against “false gods” past and present, like the “greed for power and pleasure” that overturns justice



and human dignity. The commandments offer freedom — not the freedom to follow blind passions, but the freedom to choose what is good, he said.

The pope also prayed for harmony among Christians, Muslims and Jews, saying that all three religions find a meeting point in God.

The pilgrimage was deeply satisfying to the pope, his spokesman said. But it was less than what the pope had hoped for when he outlined jubilee plans several years ago and spoke of possible interreligious or inter-Christian meetings on Sinai.

The problems were underscored when his hosts, Archbishop Damianos and his community of 22 Greek Orthodox monks, refused to join the pope’s prayer service.

“We welcome the pope, and we are happy that he has come,” Archbishop Damianos told journalists as the pope was giving his sermon around the corner.

“But we cannot have prayer together because there is not ecclesiastical communion,” he said.

The Orthodox archbishop embraced the pope on his arrival and led him through part of the monastic complex, showing him a 1,300-year-old icon of St. Peter and examples from the manuscript library, one of the best in the world. The pope prayed before the relics of St. Catherine of Alexandria, a virgin martyr whose remains have drawn pilgrims to the spot for centuries.

The pope seemed energized and in good spirits. At one point, shown a heavy jeweled miter worn by an ancient bishop, the pope quipped: “He must have had a hard head.”

On the podium outside the monastic walls, Archbishop Damianos gave a welcoming talk and the monks showered the pope with gifts — including icons and crosses. Then the Greek Orthodox left the podium before the Liturgy of the Word began and returned only at the end.

“On the issue of common prayer, we are near but not together yet,” Archbishop Damianos told reporters. He said ecumenical dialogue

see “SINAI”, page eleven

Bush Responds To Accusations Of Anti-Catholicism

By Patricia Zapor
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Texas Gov. George Bush told New York Cardinal John J. O’Connor in a Feb. 25 letter that he wanted to assure Catholics his Bob Jones University appearance does not mean he “approves of the anti-Catholic and racially divisive views” associated with the school.

Charges of anti-Catholicism have followed the GOP candidate around the country since he spoke at the evangelical Christian university in

South Carolina in early February.

The school bans interracial dating as immoral, and its leaders have called Catholicism a cult and likened it to satanism.

The Bob Jones University issue reached a peak during the Michigan primary campaign, when some voters there received recorded phone calls accusing Bush of religious bigotry because of his appearance and urging support for Arizona Sen. John McCain.

The McCain campaign initially denied any involvement with the

calls, but later acknowledged the calls originated with his staff.

Detroit Cardinal Adam J. Maida decried the injection of religious bigotry into the campaign in his state.

In the Feb. 25 edition of The Michigan Catholic, newspaper of the Detroit Archdiocese, Cardinal Maida said the bishops of the United States are clear in their insistence that the church keep out of partisan politics. The challenge, he said, is “to be principled without being ideological, to be political without be-

ing partisan, to be civil without being soft.”

“The Detroit Archdiocese goes to great lengths to encourage political involvement and responsibility,” he said. But “it’s not our approach to label candidates as ‘pro’ this or ‘anti’ that,” he added.

The Texas governor, in his letter to Cardinal O’Connor, released Feb. 27, said he “should have been more clear in disassociating myself from anti-Catholic sentiments and racial prejudice. It was a missed opportunity, causing needless offense, which I deeply regret.”

Bush told the New York cardinal that because of the cardinal’s “long friendship” with members of the Bush family and the cardinal’s



Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush shakes hands with students and faculty at Bob Jones University. (CNS photo from Reuters)

see “BUSH”, page five



The Passion of Christ

The Heart of the Lenten Pilgrimage

By Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI

The some 40 days of Lent are often referred to as a spiritual pilgrimage. The reason we undertake the annual Lenten pilgrimage is to get somewhere. Easter is that somewhere, but there is no Easter, no resurrection, without Jesus' Passion. Neither is there an Easter or a resurrection in our lives without our first sharing in the Passion of Christ.

The Passion of Christ is not simply a record of Jesus' suffering and death. It is a process through which all of us must go, and indeed are privileged to go. At the heart of Lent is entering into the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ.

But to what sort of passion are we summoned? Are we, like Christ, to be betrayed, abandoned by friends, condemned and put to physical death? For some few of us, the answer may be yes. But for all of us, the passion we are called to share mirrors Jesus' Passion in a way that, while not so concrete, is nonetheless very real.

We are called to share the passion of letting go of selfish desires, of grasping, of being pretentious, of wearing masks. The Passion of Christ calls us to become vulnerable as Jesus was vulnerable, to wear our hearts on our sleeves, to forgive rather than to seek revenge, to call out and work for wholeness and peace and not division, and to give ourselves completely to life.

To live the Passion of Christ means that we adopt the attitude, the mind and heart of Jesus in dealing with others. We learn the attitude of Christ by giving more time to meditation, to prayer, by reflecting on God's word in Sacred Scripture and celebrating the Sacraments.

What motivated Christ to go through his Passion was his immense love for God and compassion for humanity. To fully live the Passion of Christ means that we are willing to take on the spirit of compassion that Jesus showed for human weakness and his forgiveness for human fickleness.

In imitation of Christ, compassion creates the atmosphere of love and acceptance

see "PASSION" page eleven



La Pasión de Cristo

El Corazón de la Peregrinación Cuaresmal

Por Obispo Miguel D. Pfeifer, OMI

Los 40 días de la Cuaresma con frecuencia se refieren como una peregrinación espiritual. La razón que nosotros tomamos la peregrinación anual de la Cuaresma es para llegar a algún lugar. La Pascua es ese lugar, pero no hay una Pascua, ninguna resurrección, sin la Pasión de Jesús. No hay ninguna Pascua ni resurrección en nuestras vidas sin primero compartir la Pasión de Cristo.

La Pasión de Cristo no es simplemente una anotación del sufrimiento y la muerte de Jesús. Es un proceso por el cual todos nosotros tenemos que pasar, y ciertamente tenemos el privilegio de pasarlo. Al corazón de la Cuaresma es entrar en la Pasión y la Muerte de Jesucristo.

¿Pero a que tipo de pasión somos llamado? ¿Somos nosotros, como Cristo, traicionados, abandonados por amigos, condenados y puestos a una muerte física? Para unos de nosotros, la respuesta pueda ser que sí. Pero para todos nosotros, la pasión a la cual somos llamados a compartir debe reflejar la Pasión de Jesús en una manera que, quizás no tan concreta, sin embargo es tan real.

Somos llamados a compartir la pasión de soltar de los deseos egoístas, de agarrar, de ser pretencioso, de usar mascarar. La Pasión de Cristo nos llama a ser vulnerable como Jesús era vulnerable, de tener corazones abiertos y generosos, en lugar de buscar venganza, a llamar y trabajar por la totalidad y la paz y no la división, y a dar nosotros mismos totalmente a la vida.

Para vivir la Pasión de Cristo quiere decir que nosotros adoptemos la actitud, la mente y el corazón de Jesús en tratar con los demás. Nosotros aprendemos la actitud de Cristo dando mas tiempo a la meditación, la oración, reflejando en la palabra de Dios en la Sagrada Escritura, y celebrando los sacramentos.

Lo que motivó a Cristo a pasar por su Pasión fue su amor inmenso por Dios y la compasión por la humanidad. Para completamente vivir la Pasión de Cristo significa

see "PASIÓN" page eleven

The Bishop's Schedule



March 2000

March 1: San Angelo, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Personnel Board, 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

March 2: San Angelo, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Presbyteral Council, 10:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

March 3: San Angelo, Mass at Carmelite Monastery at 8:00 a.m.

March 5: St. Lawrence, St. Lawrence, Confirmation at 10:30 a.m.

March 6-7: Little Rock, Arkansas, Installation of New Bishop

March 7: San Angelo, Holy Angels, 6:30 p.m. Presentation

to the RCIA

March 8: San Angelo, Cathedral Church of the Sacred Heart, Ash Wednesday Mass at noon

March 9: Brownwood, St. Mary, Presentation to the RCIA at 7:00 p.m.

March 12: San Angelo, Cathedral Church of the Sacred Heart, Rite of Election, 1:30 p.m. and 4:00 p.m.

March 13: San Antonio, Texas Bishops' Meeting at MACC, 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

March 15: San Angelo, First Christian Church, Speak at Lenten Service at noon

March 16: Midland, Our Lady of San Juan, Lenten Night of Prayer for the Priests, Sisters, Deacons and Wives of the Mid-

land-Odessa Deanery

March 18-19: Dallas, Wedding March 20-21: San Angelo, Christ the King Retreat Center, Presentation and Reception for Diocesan Fiscal Management Conference

March 21: Andrews, Our Lady of Lourdes, Meet with Pastor and Pastoral Council at 7:00 p.m.

March 22: San Angelo, Christ the King Retreat Center, Staff Retreat 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

March 23: Abilene, Sacred Heart, 7:00 p.m. Lenten Night of Prayer for the Priests, Sisters, Deacons and Wives of the Abilene Deanery

March 25: San Angelo, Cathedral Church of the Sacred Heart, 10:30 a.m. Special Jubilee Year 2000 Mass for Women. Stanton, St. Joseph (and Lenorah), 6:00 p.m. Confirmation

March 26: Big Spring, Sacred Heart Church at 10:00 am.

March 28-31: Bishop's Private Lenten Retreat

March 31: San Angelo, Christ the King Retreat Center, Lenten Night of Prayer for the Priests, Sisters, Deacons and Wives of the San Angelo Deanery

APRIL 2000

April 2: Rowena, St. Joseph, Confirmation at 9:30 a.m.

April 4: San Angelo, Holy Angels, Confirmation at 7:00 p.m.

April 5: San Angelo, St. Mary, 12:00 Noon, Speak at Soup and Sermon

April 6: Abilene, Dyess Air Force Base, Confirmation at 6:30 p.m.

April 7: Midland, Our Lady of Guadalupe, 7:00 p.m. meet with Pastor and Pastoral Council

April 8: Midland, St. Ann, Catholic Schools Commission meeting at 9:00 a.m.

April 9: San Antonio, Blessing and Dedication of New MACC Building 3:00 p.m.

April 10: San Antonio, MACC Board Meeting 9:30 a.m.

April 11: San Angelo, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Chrism Mass at 11:00 a.m. Meeting of the Presbyteral Council 1:30 p.m.

April 12: Ballinger, St. Mary, Confirmation at 6:30 p.m.

April 13: Ozona, O.L. of Perpetual Help, Confirmation at 6:30 pm.

April 14: San Angelo, Diocesan Pastoral Center, 8:30 a.m. Mass for staff. Staff Meeting at 11:00 a.m.

April 16: San Angelo, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Palm Sunday Mass at 9:45 a.m. Holy Angels Seder Meal at 5:30 p.m.

April 18: Austin, Meeting of Executive Committee of the Texas Conference of Churches, 10:30 am. to 2:00 p.m.

April 19: San Angelo, Holy Angels Campus, Angelo Catholic School Earth Day Prayer Service at 11:00a.m. Hospice Board Meeting at 12:00 Noon

April 20: San Angelo, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Holy Thursday Mass at 7:00 p.m.

April 21: San Angelo, Way of the Cross, 1:00 p.m. at St. Margaret's. St. Joseph Church, 7:00 p.m. Good Friday Service

April 22: San Angelo, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Easter Vigil at 8:30 p.m.

April 23: San Angelo, St. Margaret, Easter Sunday Mass at 10:00 a.m.

April 24: San Angelo, Easter Dinner for Staff at Bishop's Residence at 6:00 p.m.

April 26: San Antonio, Oblate Renewal Center, Texas Conference of Churches Meeting, 10:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

April 27: Midland, St. Ann, Confirmation at 6:30 p.m.

April 28-30: Rio Grande Valley, Wedding Anniversary Mass for Cousin

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Bishop Fiorenza Urges President To Propose A Suspension Of All Federal Executions

WASHINGTON – The President of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops of United States Catholic Conference has urged President Clinton to propose a suspension of all federal executions.

“As you know, the Catholic bishops in the United States have long called for an end to the death penalty,” Bishop Fiorenza said. “Today, I write to add my voice to others who have called for a suspension of federal executions. In the wake of Governor George Ryan’s courageous step to stop executions in the State of Illinois, I pray that you will use your office to put a stop to this brutal and unnecessary punishment.”

The Illinois moratorium, announced last week, was the result of several wrongful convictions of death row inmates that have come to light in recent months.

A copy of Bishop Fiorenza’s letter was sent to Attorney General Janet Reno.

In the letter, Bishop Fiorenza called attention to recent actions and
see “FIORENZA”, page eleven

Catholic Bishops Call For A Moratorium On Executions

by Richard Daly
Texas Catholic Conference

The Catholic Bishops of Texas have called on Governor Bush to halt executions in Texas so that a study of the criminal justice system could be undertaken to assure all Texans that no innocent persons are executed by the state.

“It is essential that if the state is going to impose the ultimate punishment that there be no margin of error.” The bishops stated in their letter.

The Death Penalty Information Center in Washington, D.C. has released data, which shows that 85 individuals who have been condemned to death have been released from death rows since 1975. Seven of those individuals have been released from death row in Texas.

A spokesperson for the governor had stated that the Texas Constitution does not permit the governor of the state to temporarily halt executions.

It has been pointed out however that the governor and the Board of Pardons and Paroles, who are gubernatorial appointees, could suspend executions on a case-by-case basis while a study is conducted.

In their letter the bishops informed the governor that they would collaborate with other anti-death penalty groups to urge the legislature to mandate a moratorium and a study next year, but they would prefer that immediate action be taken to halt executions.

In their letter to the governor, the bishops also noted their concern that there is significant evidence of racial bias in sentencing and a significant lack of adequate legal defense for poor defendants in Texas.

The concerns of the bishops were expressed to the governor by the Texas Catholic Conference, the public policy arm of the Catholic Bishops of Texas.

Letter to Governor Bush

Dear Governor Bush,

As President of the Texas Conference of Churches, with support from the American Bar Association and many Church leaders of our state, I call upon you and the members of the Board of Pardons and Paroles to issue a general death penalty moratorium, or to suspend all future executions on a case by case basis and conduct a thorough examination of the judicial system by which condemned persons in Texas are executed.

In the United States eighty-five once-doomed men who were fortunate enough to have their cases taken up have been saved from the death chamber. Seven of these have been released in Texas. If the state is going to impose the ultimate punishment there is a grave obligation to make sure that innocent people are not executed.

By taking the above action, you would truly fulfill your claim to be a compassionate conservative, and would follow the lead of Republican Governor George Ryan of Illinois. He has halted all executions in his state, after concluding the system was “fraught with error”.

Texas leads the nation with 463 sentenced to death, and there are strong claims that some of these have not had full access to the courts. It is well known that there are currently three people on death row with strong claims of innocence, Odell Barnes, Jr. (executed on March 1, 2000), Gary Graham, and Darlie Routier.

The post-conviction review office needs to be reinstated, and the state needs to provide quality public-defender service. Justice is not served when some defense lawyers can sleep through part of a critical trial. Poor lawyering in Texas prompted our legislature to unanimously pass a bill to improve counsel for indigent defendants. This bill was vetoed by the governor.

I will join with other Church leaders of Texas and anti-death penalty groups during the next legislative session to attempt to legislatively mandate a moratorium on executions in Texas while a serious study is made of the judicial process for condemned persons. There is significant evidence of racial bias in

see “LETTER”, page ten

The Vocation Circle

(Editor’s note: when we introduced Fr. Barley in the January Angelus and then began the “Vocation Circle” in February, we stated that “you would come to know the spiritual journey taken by our priests and religious through the sea of life prior to their ordination and acceptance of vows; and in the many joys, and perhaps sorrows, they experience while bringing Christ to us.” The following article which contains Bishop Pfeifer’s reflections on priestly life, I believe, is an excellent way to begin the series.)

Reflections on Priestly Life

by Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer, O.M.I.

While priests become fewer in number, the Diocese of San Angelo has been and is blessed with very dedicated, generous and self-sacrificing priests. In this reflection, I share some thoughts on the life of our priests today. Many of my reflections are taken from a fine article on priestly spirituality entitled, “Men of Faith,” by Father Stephen F. Rossetti.

On reflecting on the current state of spirituality of the Catholic priesthood, it might be tempting to immediately launch into a discussion of what is wrong with the spiritual lives of today’s priests. The last few years have witnessed a public exposure of priestly sins, particularly in the area of sexual misconduct. While there are indeed some sad cases of priestly failure, they by no means tell the whole story.

Rather, I believe the place to begin is by pointing out what is right with our priests. Highlighting failings and sins bring more publicity. It has been said, “It is easier to preach the bad news than it is the good news.” I want to preach the good news about the Catholic priesthood and offer some reflections so that all can help our priests be happy, healthy and holy.

FAITHFUL MINISTERS

In spite of their failures and brokenness, priests universally have a faith, courage and spirit of service which is uplifting and inspiring. The strength of the spirituality of our priests lies in their faith and commitment to Christ. When all is said and done about analyzing our priests’ spirituality, one can surely say, “They are men of faith” - men of God.

In 1993, the National Federation of Priests Council (NFPC) surveyed 1,186 priests in the United States. Part of the survey asked about the overall satisfaction and morale of priests. It found that 91% of priests said they were utilizing their important skills and abilities in their ministries. The NFPC also found that only 7% were thinking of leaving the priesthood.

When asked what aspects of priesthood they found most fulfilling, the priests said the greatest source of satisfaction was: “administering the sacraments and presiding over liturgy.” The next greatest source was: “preaching the Word and the opportunity to work with many people and be a part of their lives.”

The best definition of the spirituality of a parish priest is to say that he lives among the people, preaches the Word, celebrates the Eucharist, administers the Sacraments, is a part of the lives of people, and shares their joys and sorrows. Our priests maintain a vital contact with the core of their priestly spirituality. It helps to keep them spiritually and psychologically alive, and their spirits are nourished.

The NFPC survey results confirmed that priests are faithful ministers who find much satisfaction in their daily work. They sit with the dying, they visit the sick, they celebrate the Sacraments, they care for the abandoned and the poor, counsel the troubled, inspire the young, and they preach the Word. Simply put, when there is a time of need, the priests are there, and priests find much gratification in their work, better said, in their ministry.

There are an increasingly number of ways in which commitment to Catholic priesthood is counter-cultural. Some of these ways include the call to priestly chastity in a society that glorifies sex, to work for justice and equality in a culture that often is neither, and to stand firmly for the sacredness of life in a world that is becoming increasingly violent.

The people served by dedicated and generous priests are encouraged to support their priests and to thank them for their faithful ministry.

A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST

For a priest to be happy, it is essential that he develop a personal relationship with Christ. Priests need to talk more about their intimate relationship with God. It has been said that priests have a difficult time speaking openly about their sexuality. While this may be true, it seems that

see “VOCATION”, page ten



Editor's Desk

(Thank goodness I believe that I do not suffer from "ego illness" and therefore have very little pride of authorship. I will from time to time pluck a piece of paper off my cluttered desk, recognize it as a gem of an article, and decide to print it under this heading. A high school sophomore who happens to be the grandson of a friend of mine wrote the following. I would hope that a certain percentage of readers of the Angelus are high school students and that parents would pass on the Angelus to their children to read after they have digested its contents. You may find that we will be leaving this Democracy in good hands after all, regardless of what the nay Sayers prophecy. PNM)

Columbine As Catalyst: Teens Discover New Leadership Roles

by Nathan Black

I'm the type of kid who wouldn't be caught dead at a student-council meeting. I just don't have enough passion to get up so early in the morning.

But sometimes we stumble into things. While covering an announcement of an upcoming statewide education conference, I accidentally signed up for a role on the Core Leadership Team - a group of students that sits down with Joe Rogers,

the Lieutenant Governor of Colorado, to help with organizing the conference. The planning sessions are important to me personally, since they have gotten me interested again in government.

I used to want to be president, but after watching Bill Clinton's private life being put on public display, I became disillusioned. To me, politics had lost its honor.

I was not alone, either. I know only one person at my high school who wants to be president. A teacher who asks who wants to go into politics usually gets no positive response at all.

But recently, new kinds of leadership opportunities have emerged for high-schoolers.

It's unfortunate that a major catalyst for these opportunities was a tragic occurrence in my hometown - the fatal shootings at Columbine High School in April 1999. But the incident has opened the door for teenagers who need to have their voices heard. Suddenly, adults are open to - and sometimes insistent upon - listening.

Since last April, for instance, I have attended four small meetings of my local and state government. The first was at the sheriff's office and related directly to Columbine. But the other three (the planning meetings for the Lieutenant Governor's conference) dealt with issues that are relevant far beyond

Littleton, such as literacy and the dropout rate.

For a politician, Lt. Gov. Rogers is awfully quiet at the meetings. He interjects sometimes to answer a question or clarify an issue, but the content of the discussion is controlled by the students, and decisions are made by consensus or majority vote.

Many of my peers on the core leadership team are from backgrounds similar to mine - they are ordinary people, not involved in traditional leadership activities, who stumbled onto this unprecedented opportunity. There is a huge push at every meeting to make sure schools bring not just the members of their student councils to the conference in April.

We believe it is imperative that the forum be open to all sorts of people, including dropouts and home-schooled teenagers.

It is important for adults to continue to solicit the ideas and opinions of their successors through various gatherings like these. But it's also important for teens not to lose faith in the power they can hold. By getting involved in world affairs now, our generation can make a difference.

(Nathan Black is a sophomore at Arapahoe High School in Littleton, CO.)

Message Of Hope And Healing

Several parishes throughout the Diocese were host to a special presentation by the Life Foundation on the important messages of the DIVINE MERCY, OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE, and THE SHROUD OF TURIN. The mission of the Life Foundation is to promote prayer for priestly and religious vocations, for an end to abortion, for the healing of marriages, for family unity, and for peace in the world.

The Life Foundation also announced that the Apostle of Divine Mercy, Blessed Sister Faustina, will soon be canonized a saint, due to a second miracle which occurred after invoking her intercession.

A First Class relic of Blessed Faustina was present for veneration at the St. Lawrence presentation, thanks to Pastor David Espitia.

From October-February, these were the hosting parishes: St. Thomas - Miles, St. Charles - Eden, St. Patrick - Brady, St. Joseph - Rowena, St. Boniface - Olfen, St. Joseph - San Angelo, St. Lawrence - St. Lawrence, St. Joseph - Odessa, Holy Redeemer - Odessa, St. Marys - Ballinger.



Mission Statement, WT Angelus

Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer has appointed an Advisory Board to assist him and the editor of the Angelus. The Board was established to enunciate a mission statement for the paper and to set some realistic goals. The Board met with the editor on Feb. 19th and the following mission statement and goals were prepared. The Board members are: Fr. Mark Woodruff, Fr. Timothy Guthridge, Sr. Joan Markus, Mrs. Mary Knox, Mr. Jimmy Patterson, and Mr. Joe Munoz.

The mission of the *West Texas Angelus* is to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ through the publication and distribution of a Catholic Diocesan Newspaper. The *West Texas Angelus* functions to inform and educate the Catholics in the San Angelo Diocese through accurate and responsible reporting of Church news on a diocesan, national, and international level.

Its goals are:

To make available to every parishioner in the diocese a copy of the monthly publication of the *Angelus*.

To publish stories and news items that will be of interest to as many demographic segments of the parishes as is possible within the limits of the paper, e.g. religious, parents, teenagers, RCIA and ethnic groups.

Well Done Diocese

Dear Bishop Pfeifer:

Thank you for your diocesan check for \$41,978.14 which has been deposited in the Retirement Fund for Religious account. This brings your total diocesan contributions for all of the years of the collection to \$466,908.77. The money has been recorded as part of Appeal XII for 1999 and will be used to provide retirement grants to eligible religious institutes of women and men in June 2000. Your support and the support of your Retirement Fund for Religious coordinator, pastors, parish priests and deacons are essential to the Fund's success and we are grateful for all you do. You can be assured of the prayers of retired religious across the country for this generous response from your people for their needs.

The grant money will continue to assist our religious institutes in reducing their current unfunded retirement liabilities as well as plan for future retirement needs. All of these efforts have helped the members of these institutes in their endeavors not only to care for their elderly and infirm members but also to continue their active service for the Church.

My sincere thanks to you and your people for helping in this effort to care for the retirement needs of our elderly and infirm religious.

Gratefully,

Sister Mary A. Leahy, SP
National Director

Advocate Training Session

On January 29-30 Fr. Bill DuBuisson, OMI, JCL and Fr. Tom Barley, JCL presented another Advocate Training Session. This session, the fourth time this training has been presented, was held at St. Ann's Parish in Midland. The following parishes were represented St. Ann's, St. Stephen, Our Lady of Guadalupe, and San Juan of Midland, St. Joseph of Stanton, and Holy Family of Abilene. Of the twenty people attending this session, nine were serving as advocates in their parishes. Many of the other attendees have stated that they intend to apply to be approved as advocates. Each participant's pastor must approve the person for the training. Then, after the training the pastor recommends the participant's application to become an advocate. The

Bishop, through the Judicial Vicar, Msgr. T. Murphy, assigns the person as an advocate.

Looking back over the three previous presentations, thirteen parishes and missions have sent thirty-nine representatives to learn about canon law as it relates to marriage and the annulment process. Seventeen of these attendees have applied for and been approved as advocates. This includes six from St. Joseph, San Angelo, three from St. Mary, Odessa, two each from St. Joseph, Rowena and St. Thomas, Miles, and one each from St. Margaret's, San Angelo, Our Lady of Peace, Goodfellow AFB, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Winters, and Holy Redeemer, Odessa. The people who attended a session and decided not to become advocates are involved in teaching RCIA, marriage preparation, religious education or as secretaries. These individuals are now able to help determine when someone is in need of the services of the Tribunal. They can then refer the person to a field advocate in their parish.

The next Advocate Training Session will be offered in Fort Stockton on March 24-25. For more information contact the Tribunal at (915) 651-7500 or the parish offices in Fort Stockton. Early registration is appreciated. The session begins on Friday at 8:00 p.m. This presentation deals with a 'job description' of the duties of an advocate, the rights of the parties involved, and the process of a case. The Saturday morning presentation deals with the part of canon law that pertains to marriage and the annulment process. The session ends before lunch. The session is free.

What does this mean for you if you do not want to become an advocate? If you or someone you know who lives in one of these parishes has had a divorce or a civil marriage and wishes to marry, contact the church office and ask to be put in contact with an advocate. The advocate is able to explain the applicable law and the Tribunal process. The advocate will guide and assist

see "ADVOCATE", page eleven



House Approves Congressional Gold Medal For Cardinal O'Connor

By Patricia Zapor
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) — With just one dissenting vote, the House voted Feb. 15 to bestow the Congressional Gold Medal on New York Cardinal John J. O'Connor "in recognition of his accomplishments as a priest, a chaplain and a humanitarian."

In bringing the measure to a vote, Rep. Vito Fossella, R-N.Y., lauded Cardinal O'Connor for his commitment to education for all, his care for the sick, elderly and disabled, his involvement in interfaith understanding and his long career as a Navy chaplain, bishop and archbishop.

Senate approval and the president's signature are necessary before the medal may be awarded.

Cardinal O'Connor, 80, was praised by members of the House for his pro-life activities, his contributions to the Irish peace process and his sense of humor.

Rep. Christopher Smith, R-N.J., said Cardinal O'Connor is "a good and holy priest who radiates Christ and the healing power of God to believers and nonbelievers alike."

Smith praised the cardinal for working "tirelessly and effectively to bring an end to the culture of death."

Rep. Spencer Bachus, R-Ala., said in recognizing Cardinal O'Connor with the Congressional Gold Medal, the House honored "all those men and women who each day put their faith into action."

The same day, the House also approved a measure to bestow the Congressional Gold Medal on the late Charles M. Schulz, the cartoonist who created the comic strip "Peanuts."

In both votes, Rep. Ron Paul, R-Texas, cast the lone dissenting vote.

Paul said in a statement about the vote that he opposed spending \$30,000 for such a medal.

"Appropriating \$30,000 of taxpayer money is neither constitutional nor, in the spirit of Cardinal O'Connor, who dedicates his life to voluntary and charitable work, particularly humanitarian," the statement said.

Paul said he invited colleagues who asked for his vote to match his contribution of \$100 toward the cost of the medal.

"To me, it seemed a particularly good opportunity to demonstrate one's genuine convictions by spending one's own money rather than that of the taxpayers, who remain free to contribute at their own discretion to the work of Cardinal O'Connor as they have consistently done in the past," Paul said. None of the members he approached took him up on his offer.

In 1997, Mother Teresa received a Congressional Gold Medal. And one has been approved but not yet awarded to Holy Cross Father Theodore M. Hesburgh, former president of the University of Notre Dame.

President Clinton in December signed the law authorizing the honor for Father Hesburgh. That medal is likely to be presented in an early summer ceremony, said Chris Mehl, spokesman for Rep. Tim Roemer, D-Ind., who sponsored the legislation to honor Father Hesburgh.

Mehl said it typically takes about six months to design the individual gold medals and have them cast.

There have been times when the recipient is honored before the medal is ready, however. Mother Teresa attended a June 1997 ceremony honoring her with the gold medal within weeks of the bill's approval. Her medal was presented to the Missionaries of Charity in September 1998, about a year after her death.

In the past, some medal awards ceremonies have been held in the Capital Rotunda, and others at the White House. Mehl said secondary presentations near the recipient's home also are common and that Father Hesburgh would probably have one at Notre Dame.

In addition to the legislation for Cardinal O'Connor and Schulz, bills have been introduced that would bestow gold medals on Pope John Paul II and a wide range of Americans.

Possible recipients include: the Apollo 11 astronauts; Gen. Henry Shelton, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; 1960 Olympics three-time gold medal-winner Wilma Rudolph; civil rights activists Jesse Jackson and Rosa Parks; former Presidents Reagan and Ford and their wives; and John Walsh, victims' rights advocate and host of the TV show "America's Most Wanted."

Some of those bills have languished more than a year without action. The House bill to honor Cardinal O'Connor was introduced Jan. 31. Both House and Senate versions of the bill honoring Schulz were introduced Feb. 10, two days before his death and three days before his last original "Peanuts" strip ran in Sunday newspapers.

At Bob Jones University, in response to the political furor, its Web site explained the school's positions, including that "if there are those who wish to charge us with being anti-Catholic, we plead guilty. But we are not Catholic-haters."

It added, "All religion, including Catholicism, which teaches that salvation is by religious works or church dogma is false. Religion that makes the words of its leader, be he pope or other, equal with the Word of God is false. ... We love the practicing Catholic and earnestly desire to see him accept the Christ of the Cross."

Bob Jones III's late father, former university president Bob Jones Jr., was known for calling the Catholic Mass "blasphemy" and referring to the papacy as "the religion of the anti-Christ" and "a satanic system."

A third Republican candidate,

Texas Program For Learning Disabilities Gets National Attention

By Enevelia J. Obregon
Catholic News Service

AUSTIN, Texas (CNS) — An educational program at St. Michael's Academy in Austin that helps students with learning disabilities is receiving nationwide recognition.

Susan Maher, director and founder of the high school's Learning Center, will make a presentation on the center's success at the National Catholic Educational Association conference in April.

Maher has made similar presentations at the association's regional conference earlier this year and to individual schools throughout the state.

The center, in its second year, has made a big difference for the 410 students at the school in southwest Austin.

While about 50 of St. Michael's students are diagnosed with a learning disability or some disability that interferes with learning, the center is open to all students who may need to brush up on study skills and time management.

"These are life strategies they'll take to college and the rest of their lives," Maher told The Catholic Spirit, newspaper of the Austin Diocese.

For senior Adrienne Smith, the program has made a difference between struggling and being able to learn, despite her problem with auditory processing.

"This year I'm having trouble with math," Smith said. "Coming here (to the Learning Center) has helped me figure out learning strategies and test-taking tips. It's less stressful."

School principal Jack Kennedy said the center enhances the school's mission to encourage diversity while maintaining the school's high stan-

former Ambassador Alan Keyes, spoke at the university Feb. 14 and challenged his audience to reject racial and religious bigotry. Keyes, who is black and a Catholic, noted that "there are folks who don't think I should be talking at Bob Jones University."

But just as his speech "put the lie to that," Keyes said, "we are, all of us, enjoined to put the lie to it by what we do, and what we pray for, and how we act, and how we love."

dards as a college preparatory school. Last year, all the graduating seniors were accepted to college.

The center also has reduced the attrition rate from 15 percent to 8 percent, Kennedy said.

"We're not watering down anything," Kennedy said. "We have the same expectations. Some students just need a little more help than others. So we throw out some ropes to help them swim. Some ropes are just a little longer than others."

It was the high attrition rate among students with disabilities and concerns from parents that alerted Maher.

Because it is a private school, St. Michael's does not receive federal dollars for special programs that public schools do. And while faculty and parents were concerned, they wanted to maintain the school's high academic standards.

In the spring of 1998, Maher decided she would use her educational background as well as her experience in teaching at Catholic schools to develop a program at St. Michael's.

Maher, who did graduate work in special education and was a diagnostician in Houston, had moved to Austin four years earlier and was working at Southwest Texas State University in nearby San Marcos.

She had taught in Catholic schools in Houston, but left because there were no programs in place to help students with learning disabilities. And there was no money for implementing one.

At the state university, there was a program to accommodate students' disabilities. Maher took that model and, with the help of faculty and staff, adapted it to meet the needs of St. Michael's students.

Because the school had no money to pay her a salary, Maher did the job for free. This year, she is being paid with funds made available through foundation grants.

Maher now sits on the admissions committee to ensure that students with disabilities are considered on the same basis as other students.

"A disability does not mean inability," Maher said. "They must meet the admissions criteria. But students are not excluded from St. Michael's just because they have a

BUSH

from page one

meeting with Bush last year, he should know that the accusations of anti-Catholic views leveled against Bush are "unfair and unfounded" and such views "are personally offensive to me."

Bush noted that his brother and sister-in-law — Florida Gov. Jeb Bush and his wife — "are both Catholics." He said he has "profound respect for the Catholic Church — a sympathy beyond mere tolerance."

Cardinal Maida's post-primary critique of campaign tactics also was directed at calls made in Michigan by Michigan Right to Life. The organization made recorded calls urging voters to support Bush, whom the National Right to Life Committee has endorsed. The calls report-

edly challenged McCain's commitment to the pro-life cause.

Mercy Sister Monica Kostielney, president of the Michigan Catholic Conference, which represents the state's bishops on public policy issues, told Catholic News Service that no church entities were involved in any of the calls to voters there.

"The Catholic Church is not involved in any way, we didn't publicize or support anything in any way," she said.

Detroit archdiocesan communications director Ned McGrath issued a statement saying he told callers that Catholic Voters Alert — the name of the group which made the anti-Bush calls — is not affiliated with the archdiocese.

"The reality is, the word 'Catholic' isn't copyrighted," McGrath said. "It can be used and misused."



Vatican Rejects Some Claims Of Best Way To Celebrate Mass

By Jerry Filteau

Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) — In a letter to a U.S. bishop, the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments has rejected arguments that priests should give preference to Eucharistic Prayer 1 and should stand at the altar with their back to the people when they celebrate Mass.

The letter, responding to inquiries by Bishop David E. Foley of Birmingham, Ala., was sent to all U.S. bishops and was made public Feb. 22.

Also sent to the bishops were copies of detailed new norms Bishop Foley has issued for the proper celebration of any televised Masses produced in his diocese. Accompanying the norms was a second letter from the Vatican worship congregation, praising the norms and commending Bishop Foley for producing “a most useful pastoral instrument for the regulation of telecasts of the sacred liturgy.”

While the norms apply only to televised Masses produced in the Birmingham Diocese, they have global import because that is the home of Mother Angelica’s Eternal Word Television Network.

EWTN airs a live Mass daily at 8 a.m. Eastern time and reruns the tape at noon, 7 p.m. and midnight Eastern time. The telecast can be seen across the United States and in numerous other countries where EWTN is carried. It also can be picked up worldwide on the Internet at www.ewtn.com.

Father Richard E. Donohoe, Birmingham diocesan secretary for liturgy, told *Catholic News Service* that Bishop Foley is supportive of Mother Angelica’s work and appears personally each week on EWTN’s “Pillars of Faith” program.

The televised Mass norms “are not going after her, but they are intended to make her work even better,” he said in a telephone interview. He said the bishop sent the norms to priests of the diocese and discussed them personally with the priests who celebrate the televised Masses before making the norms public.

The two Vatican letters to Bishop Foley were signed by the worship congregation’s prefect, Cardinal Jorge Medina Estevez, and secretary, Archbishop Francesco Pio Tamburrino.

Father Donohoe said Bishop Foley’s exchange with the congregation about the eucharistic prayers and the status of which way the priest faces during Mass stemmed from a talk given by a priest last year criticizing the second, third and fourth eucharistic prayers and arguing that the only true perennial tradition of the church was for the priest and people alike to face “ad orientem” — “toward the East” — during the eucharistic sacrifice.

Someone sent the bishop a transcript of the priest’s talk and asked him why the Birmingham Diocese did not have its priests following the more correct way of celebrating Mass, Father Donohoe said.

In a letter to Cardinal Medina Bishop

Foley posed the two questions and asked for “an authoritative clarification on these most contentious matters.”

On the priest’s orientation Cardinal Medina answered that “the rubrics of the Roman Missal, and in particular the ‘Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani’ (General Instruction of the Roman Missal), foresees that the priest will face the body of people in the nave while leaving open the possibility of his celebrating towards the apse.

“These two options carry with them no theological or disciplinary stigma of any kind,” Cardinal Medina continued. “It is therefore incorrect and indeed quite unacceptable that any one affirm, as Your Excellency sums up this view, that to celebrate towards the apse ‘is a theologically preferable or more orthodox choice for a priest who wishes to be true to the church’s authentic tradition.’”

Of the four eucharistic prayers provided by the Roman Missal in the reforms following the Second Vatican Council, the first is the Roman Canon, which, with minor exceptions, had been the sole eucharistic prayer allowed throughout the Latin Church for centuries before the council.

Father Donohoe said the talk sent to Bishop Foley cast suspicion on the other three eucharistic prayers, suggesting that they were innovations whose development after the council was not in accord with the council’s own norms of liturgical reform.

Cardinal Medina answered that Eucharistic Prayer 1 “is a venerable text which deserves all respect,” but “the other three eucharistic prayers are also in one way or another ancient and in any case are worthy of the veneration and deep respect of priests and faithful. To suggest otherwise is at the least erroneous and irresponsible.”

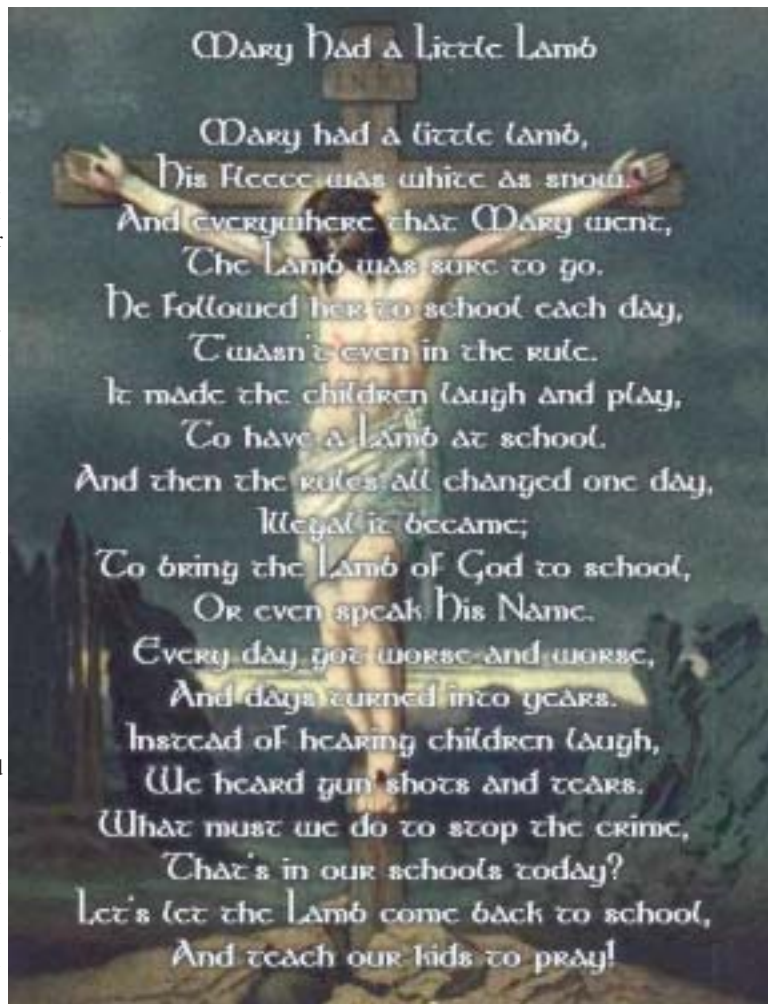
He said the notion that Eucharistic Prayer 1 is somehow “more orthodox” than the others “is without any foundation.” If someone holds that priests ought to use only that prayer, he said, “it must be said firmly that such a view is in direct conflict with the position of the Holy See.”

In his second letter Cardinal Medina thanked Bishop Foley for consulting with the congregation before publishing the norms for televised Mass and commented, “The text is sensitive to the essential

meaning of the sacred liturgy, to the requirements of correct liturgical celebration as defined by the liturgical books, to the human needs and circumstances of those who benefit spiritually from such celebrations and their televised transmission, and the technical features linked to the medium.”

Among the norms was a reaffirmation of Bishop Foley’s decree last fall that when the priest is standing at the altar during a televised Mass, he is to face the people. In that decree he said the almost universally adopted custom of celebrating Mass facing the people “is in accord with the desire of the church to promote the active participation of the faithful in the liturgy” and presenting a different model in televised Masses “causes wonderment and dissension.”

The new norms also cover such things



as church furnishings, music, participation of the assembly and appropriate and inappropriate use of the cameras televising the Mass.

Before last fall’s decree, EWTN regularly featured Mass telecasts in which the priest at the altar faced away from the people.

Father Donohoe said those Masses, however, were celebrated in the old chapel of Our Lady of the Angels Monastery, where the priest would have his back either to the people in the nave or to the Poor Clares of Perpetual Adoration behind the cloister grill in the apse. Since then the monastery has completed a new chapel, in which the nuns’ cloister is to the right side of the altar and the priest celebrates Mass facing the people.

Father Donohoe said Bishop Foley would withdraw last fall’s decree once the new norms for televised Masses are implemented, since the norms are more comprehensive and include regulation of the priest’s orientation.

Israel Criticizes Vatican-PLO Accord, But Says Pope Still Welcome

By Catholic News Service

JERUSALEM (CNS) — As a diplomatic controversy continued over the signing of a Vatican-Palestinian accord, Israeli officials criticized the Vatican move but said Pope John Paul II would still be a welcome guest in the country in March.

“Israel views the upcoming visit of the pope in the region as an important historical mission,” said Israeli Foreign Ministry Director-General Eytan Bentsur.

“We are expecting a message of peace and conciliation that will not include any pre-determination of the results of the negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians,” Bentsur said Feb. 16.

The Israeli official spoke after an hour long meeting with the Vatican’s apostolic nuncio to Israel, Archbishop Pietro Sambi, who was summoned to hear Israeli criticism of the agreement.

Archbishop Sambi said the encounter had been productive in clarifying the “different interpretations” of the Vatican-PLO document. He repeated the Vatican’s position that the accord did not touch upon the political situation in Jerusalem.

The agreement, signed at the Vatican Feb. 15, rejected as “morally and legally unacceptable” any unilateral decisions or actions that would alter the status of Jerusalem — wording widely seen as a reference to Israel’s annexation of the eastern part of Jerusalem.

The Vatican-PLO accord also called for an internationally guaranteed statute to protect religious rights in Jerusalem, which Israel has rejected.

The Israeli Foreign Ministry called the agreement a “regretful intervention” in the Arab-Israeli peace talks. It said Israel had done a good job protecting freedom of conscience and free access to holy places in Jerusalem and preserving the religious character of the city.

“Therefore, Israel flatly rejects the reference to Jerusalem in the aforementioned document. Jerusalem was, is and shall remain the capital of the State of Israel, and no agreement or declaration by these or any other parties will change this fact,” a Foreign Ministry statement said.

Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls sought to downplay the controversy, saying the Vatican-PLO agreement “does not enter into questions of territory or sovereignty that affect the two interested parties, Israelis and Palestinians.” He said the principles stated in the agreement had already been expressed by the United Nations or in previous Arab-Israeli accords.

The 79-year-old pope, who has been anticipating his Holy Land visit for years, was to visit sites in Israel and the Palestinian territories from March 21-26.

Shimon Peres, a Cabinet minister in the Israeli government, was among those criticizing the Vatican-PLO agreement. But he told reporters that the diplomatic flap would not affect the papal pilgrimage.

“We shall receive the pope as a spiritual leader, one of the greatest spiritual leaders of our time,” Peres said Feb. 16. He credited the pope with standing up against anti-Semitism, supporting the peace process and visiting Jews in a synagogue.

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, who met with the pope after the agreement was signed, hailed the accord as “an important and historic agreement” for the Palestinian people and for peace in the region.

International Jewish organizations described the agreement as counterproductive and ill-timed.

“We would hope that the Vatican would attempt to play a role supportive of the peace process. Instead this document demonstrates unhelpful interference into the ongoing bilateral negotiations,” Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith, said in a statement Feb. 16.

The ADL said the Vatican-Palestinian agreement made no mention of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, which have been held since 1993.

“There is no mention of Israel, of security, of the need for normalized relations between Israel and Palestinians,” said the ADL statement. “In calling for ‘international guarantees’ on Jerusalem, the agreement disregards final status negotiations, which include the status of Jerusalem. Furthermore, the text fails to mention the fact that these safeguards are already guaranteed by Israel law.”

American Jewish Congress President Jack Rosen said the Vatican-PLO agreement “could not have come at a worse time” and represents “a clumsy and unwarranted intrusion into the most sensitive area of the prospective negotiations: Jerusalem.”

In a statement Feb. 16, Rosen called the accord “gratuitous” and “premature,” saying that it deals with religious freedom in “an eventual Palestinian state” whose existence and precise nature must still be determined.

He said he hoped the pope’s visit would “correct the impression” that the Vatican is pro-Palestinian.



Abilene Deanery Youth Event



by Sr. Hilda Marotta

World Vision For Justice And Peace: Blessed Are The Peacemakers was the theme for the Abilene Deanery Youth Event January 29, 2000 held at St. Vincent Parish Hall. Dennis Mahaney, a dynamic and imaginative presenter from the St. John Eudes Center in W. Seneca, NY who enjoys mixing stories, media, activities and song to communicate the Living Word was the keynote speaker. As Dennis led the youth through various activities and stories throughout the day, youth were challenged to respond to the question "Are we many or are we one?" They also gathered as parish groups to determine on-going service and justice activities. The day included time for prayer, community building, food and dance. Bishop Michael Pfeifer was the presider for the Eucharistic Celebration.

The three Deanery Youth Events, scheduled this year for high school age youth, focused on themes of *Catholic Social Teaching*. Over 650 high school age youth and their adult leaders throughout the diocese heard about their responsibility to carry out the mission of Jesus through the works of charity and justice. Food items collected as part of each event were distributed to outreach services in each deanery.

The Diocesan Youth Event will be held October 14, 2000 at the San Angelo Convention Center.

Seminarian Support

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

On the weekend of February 5-6, 2000, a special collection was taken in our Diocese for the support of our seminarians. With great joy and gratitude, I am happy to announce to you that this collection has produced so far \$32,434.00. This generous offering will be a great assistance to help cover the \$187,750.00 that the Diocese will spend this year on the training and education of our seminarians.

I am deeply grateful to all the people of our Diocese for your generous financial contributions for this special collection. As I thank you for your financial assistance, I also thank you for the spiritual support that you give our seminarians, and I encourage all to keep praying and working for more vocations for priesthood and religious life. God's peace.

Your servant in Christ and Mary,
Most Rev. Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI
Bishop of San Angelo

P. O. Box 1829, San Angelo, Texas 76902

Dear Bishop Pfeifer,

To help fund the formation of leaders for the future, please accept my donation of _____.

Please use it for:

- _____ Seminary Burse
- _____ Adopt-a-Seminarian
- _____ Diaconate Program

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

Second Cycle Of LIMEX Begins

by Sr. Joan Markus

The second cycle of the LIMEX program began at the San Angelo Center in January with ten students. The students from parishes in the Abilene and San Angelo deaneries are Leslie Mueller (St. Ambrose, Wall), Rebecca Benes (Holy Angels, San Angelo), Deborah Michalewicz (St. Therese, Carlsbad), Tracy Baker (St. Joseph, San Angelo), Linda Dye (St. Therese, Carlsbad), Sammy Alvarez (Immaculate Heart of Mary, Sweetwater), Kay David (Our Lady of Grace, Abilene), Greg Vidal (Holy Family, Abilene), Phyllis Duboski (St. Joseph, San Angelo), Mary Ann Lewis (St. Ambrose, Wall). The students are presently studying the *Introduction To Prac-*

tical Theology. Two additional courses of study this year will be *Jewish Roots Of Christian Faith* and *Christian Origins*.

The LIMEX program is a four-year graduate program for persons who have limited access to Catholic educational resources, offered on-site, leading to a master of religious education or master of pastoral studies degree with focus areas in small Christian community formation, pastoral life and administration, religion and ecology, marketplace ministry and Christian spirituality for pastoral ministry.

Ten of the courses are taken in learning groups; each course is led by a LIMEX certified facilitator. Certified facilitators in the diocese

are S. Joan Markus, S. Hilda Marotta and Deacon Gerald Schwalb. Sessions for each course employ a design in which lectures in printed form and other required and suggested readings are correlated with the participant's experience by means of reflective processes. Students also choose two additional courses in their focus area or religious education. In these courses, a multimedia course packet is provided to the students. The packet guides the students through a learning process that combines independent study and peer group sharing.

Another LIMEX group is forming in the Midland/Odessa deanery. The orientation session to begin the program will be held at St. Ann's Parish, Midland, TX on August 22, 2000. If anyone is interested in participating in the program, please contact S. Joan Markus, LIMEX Liaison Administrator, at 915-651-7500.



(l. to r.) Leslie Mueller (St. Ambrose, Wall), Rebecca Benes (Holy Angels, San Angelo), Deborah Michalewicz (St. Therese, Carlsbad), Tracy Baker (St. Joseph, San Angelo), Linda Dye (St. Therese, Carlsbad), Sammy Alvarez (Immaculate Heart of Mary, Sweetwater), Kay David (Our Lady of Grace, Abilene), Greg Vidal (Holy Family, Abilene), Phyllis Duboski (St. Joseph, San Angelo), Mary Ann Lewis (St. Ambrose, Wall)

Frequently Visiting Priest Dies



By Fr. Jerry Mc Carthy, M.S.C.

Fr. Michael A. Bablitch passed away peacefully in a Stevens Point hospital in Wisconsin on January 29th 2000. We knew him as the kind older priest who came to visit us every winter for a few weeks, concelebrated Sunday Mass in all our missions, and loved to speak with the people and the little children. He fussed about our needs and in his generosity helped us out in so many ways. Fr. Michael was a dioc-

esan priest of the Green Bay Diocese. He was 88 years old and a priest for 62 years, the second oldest priest in his Diocese where he spent all his priestly life in little rural parishes that he loved.

He came from a family of six children and was the second youngest. All have now passed away and he was the last waiting anxiously to join them all in heaven.

How did we get to know him? Let's say it was by accident. All his priestly life he worked with and for the poor and the few vacations he ever took as a young priest he went either to New Mexico, Arizona, or Texas. He got to know many Mexican people who went North each year to harvest the crops, and he wanted so much to do something special for them as they worked so hard and showed such great faith and love for God in their travels.

Once he purchased a large house in the Lake District and repaired it and took holidays there and rented it to many friends for summer vacations. When it was paid for, he sold it, and that money he gave to the San Angelo Diocese for the building of the Church of San Juan

in Midland. Later he helped some of our smaller Missions to get religious education supplies and to educate our Catechists. That was how I got in contact with him in 1985 and I invited him to come on vacation to the Diocese. He first visited us in 1988 and stayed as our guest in the Cathedral for a week during which time I took him to many parts of the Diocese to see our Churches and Missions and to meet many of our priests.

When I became pastor in Eldorado he could not wait to come and see it. We badly needed an Education Center and he told me that he would see what he could do; no doubt he contacted many of his nephews and nieces to get funds to help us build up Our Lady of Guadalupe parish. He sent \$50,000 to the Extension Society for us. He also provided \$10,000 to help with the Church and School in Mertzon, and he placed another \$10,000 with the Extension Society for St. Peters; but if we do not build within five years the money will go to Food for the Poor.

see "PRIEST", page eleven



The "Life Of The Mother" Exception For Abortion Is Bogus

Presidential Candidates Challenged To Face The Facts

Washington, DC – Is abortion ever necessary to save the life or prevent the death of the mother? American Life League's medical advisors say the answer is a simple, unequivocal "no" and any claim to the contrary is bogus. And many other doctors across the country agree.

Within the past two weeks, American Life League has circulated a statement concerning this position to a select number of doctors around the country. Already, nearly 100 physicians have signed the statement including former abortionists Bernard Nathanson and Beverly McMillan and it is anticipated that hundreds more will sign in the coming weeks.

The statement reads, "I agree that there is never a situation in the law or in the ethical practice of medicine where a preborn [unborn] child's life need be intentionally destroyed by procured abortion for the purpose of saving the life of the mother. A physician must do everything possible to save the lives of both of his patients, mother and child. He must never intend the death of either."

"This statement contradicts the popular political thinking that such an exception is needed. It reflects the ethical thinking and practice of many physicians, and is based on empirical data provided by physicians over the past thirty years," said American Life League president Judie Brown.

"The 'life of the mother' exception has become standard fare for politicians and legislative proposals claiming the pro life label. This is why ALL began the campaign with physicians and we are continuing this campaign by, today, challenging every major presidential candidate to face the facts and denounce the life of the mother exception.

"In fact the language is archaic, it does not reflect current medical experience, and it is nothing more than a loophole for the abortionist. The language is a lie."

The statement and updated list of physician signers are available on American Life League's website at <http://www.all.org/news/lomproc.htm>.

American Bishops' Overseas Appeal

My dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

In the Gospel story of Jesus' anointing at Bethany, he told his disciples, "The poor you will always have with you." Neither history nor human progress in the 2,000 years since the Lord walked among us has changed this. But those who have few resources and material possessions need not be forgotten nor be condemned to stay impoverished.

"Provide hope in the new millennium" is the theme for this year's **American Bishops' Overseas Appeal**. This collection, which will be held in your parish on Sunday, April 2, 2000, expresses our solidarity with powerless and poor people all over the world. Programs funded by the appeal give hope and comfort to hundreds of thousands of displaced people who are victims of natural disasters, war and famine. ABOA-funded programs give them the tools to improve their lives while creating more just societies.

The transformative power of this aid is truly gratifying:

Catholic Relief Services, the Church's overseas relief and development agency, last year gave shelter and sustenance to refugees fleeing war and persecution in Sudan, Kosovo and elsewhere. CRS also helped almost 1 million victims of Hurricane Mitch with food, medicine and rehabilitation aid. The U. S. Catholic Conference of Bishops, through its diocesan resettlement program, has enabled more than 4,000 Kosovar refugees to establish new and productive lives in the United States. The pastoral care network provides a welcoming haven for newcomers and people on the move, such as migrant farm workers and seafarers who are far from home. It also works to promote fair immigration and refugee policies on behalf of at-risk newcomers.

The U. S. Catholic Conference of Bishops is an effective voice in shaping international policies that give hope to the world's poor and marginalized people. Its work in the area of debt relief to Third World countries, an international ban on landmines, religious freedom abroad, and negotiated peace in warring countries transforms the Gospel message of justice and reconciliation into action.

see "APPEAL," page ten

The Pope and the President Interviewed

Bishop Pfeifer was recently interviewed by a reporter from the Texas Catholic.

By MIKE KOLLER
TEXAS CATHOLIC

SAN ANGELO – Oblate of Mary Immaculate Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer of San Angelo, 62, takes what some might consider a distinctive view toward his tenure as bishop, which lasts until retirement at age 75.

"Usually, as a member of a religious community, we got changed around every six years. I kind of liked that. But this (serving as bishop of San Angelo) is for the rest of my life," he said. "I personally think that after 10 to 12 years it's good to bring in a new ordinary to a diocese to bring in new ideas and new thinking. But the church doesn't necessarily operate that way. The pope does not name you for a certain number of years."

In San Angelo, Bishop Pfeifer strives to keep his mandate fresh by reviewing the goals for the diocese and identifying new challenges that arise.

"When I first came to this diocese, I realized I needed to establish and commit to a common vision for the people of the diocese, or to update the vision," he said. "At the end of the first year, we created a Diocesan Day of Listening which gave people a way to list their concerns for the diocese.

It took a year to analyze the responses from that outreach effort, he said. From the final analysis, he crafted an updated vision statement for the diocese.

"We saw an urgent need to provide the best possible pastoral leadership for the diocese in view of the fact that there are fewer priests," he said. "We devised a process to have good and constant pastoral leadership in the community. We now have more lay people involved."

In many cases, women religious and lay people are leading communities in San Angelo. Each community is canonically linked to a pastor.

Bishop Pfeifer also made a renewed effort to promote vocations. "Currently we have 10 seminarians, which is quite good for our diocese," he said, referring to the vast territory and its limited Catholic population.

The Diocese of San Angelo contains about 85,000 Catholics spread across an expanse of West Texas land the size of Ohio, making it the largest, geographically, of the state's 14 dioceses.

"We have the space and distance, and they have the numbers," said Bishop Pfeifer, referring to the Archdiocese of San Antonio and the dioceses of Dallas

foundations of our society. The question is not "Whose party or religion will prevail?" The question, rather, is, "Do we or do we not stand on the foundation that every human life deserves protection and is equal in dignity?"

May God grant us national leaders who will say Yes.

and Houston. To help ease the shortage of priests, the diocese campaigned to recruit clergy from abroad. Over the past four years, eight priests have come from India, Africa and the Philippines.

Bishop Pfeifer grew up as one of 11 children in the heavily Hispanic-populated Rio Grande Valley town of Alamo.

Later, he spent 16 years in Mexico, in the state of Oaxaca, as a missionary priest where his only brother has served as a missionary for 37 years.

Along with his other exploits, Bishop Pfeifer has twice traveled to missions in Africa. In 1981, he was made provincial of the United States Southern Province and served four years in that role. During that time, he twice visited Zambia, Africa, to open missions for the Southern Province.

In 1985, he was made bishop of San Angelo. Five years ago, when he celebrated his 10th anniversary as bishop of the diocese, he arranged for another Day of Listening series in each parish. From the responses, the diocese again renewed its vision.

The end product was the "Statement Declaring and Living Our Vision," which spells out the diocese's mission statement and goals.

Bishop Pfeifer said that because there will never be enough clergy, there is an effort to work on a new model of shared decision-making within the church. He said that in many ways, this situation is not all bad.

"A hidden positive is that it brings more people into the life of the church and into the decision-making in the life of the church," he said. "We are trying to stress principles of consultation, collaboration and cooperation. Linked to that, we realize the necessity of providing the opportunity for training and education for these gifts to develop."

Bishop Pfeifer said this philosophy falls in line with the church's Jubilee celebration. "As I look at the third millennium, we're (the church) giving strong emphasis to working for social justice and unity, or ecumenism," he said. "We need to approach this new millennium year in a spirit of gratitude, joy and hope."

He said in this new time, the churches of the world should renew efforts to reverse the divisions among Christians that marked the past millennium.

"I think there's a new call and a new grace being offered to the church at this time to be followers of Christ. It's a moment for new participation in the church and a new dialogue with people of different faiths," he said.

Note: The texts of both Mother Teresa's speech and the Pope's letter can be found on the Priests for Life website, www.priestsforlife.org

Contact Priests for Life at PO Box 141172, Staten Island, NY 10314; Tel: 888-PFL-3448, 718-980-4400; Fax: 718-980-6515.



Cultural Survival Depends On Marriage Challenged

Preserving Marriage

By Catholic News Service

DENVER (CNS) — Preserving the status of traditional marriage as a union between a man and a woman is “a matter of cultural survival,” Archbishop Charles J. Chaput said in a column published Feb. 27 in the Denver Rocky Mountain News.

“The ‘tradition’ in traditional marriage, after all, is not some dead habit of the past,” the Denver archbishop wrote. “It’s the voice of learned and re-learned experience. Alternative arrangements don’t work.”

Archbishop Chaput opened the column by expressing the church’s support for “appropriate legislation which would class violence against homosexuals as a ‘hate crime’ involving special penalties.”

“Whatever the content of a person’s behavior, he or she never loses the right to be free from violence motivated by hate,” he said. “The law can legitimately seek to ensure that.”

But the Catholic Church also must support “legal efforts to define

marriage as a unique relationship between one man and one woman; to protect and advance marriage’s privileged status in society; and to exclude other types of relationships from sharing in that status,” the archbishop said.

That support derives from the fact that marriage’s unique legal status “exists largely to protect the children who depend on marriage to thrive.”

“Tinkering with the identity of marriage tinkers with the welfare of children,” Archbishop Chaput wrote.

“If the last few decades have shown us anything, it’s this: When ‘traditional’ marriages dissolve, the children of those marriages suffer,” he said.

“That doesn’t mean blended or single-parent families will fail their children,” he added. “It does mean that in those contexts, the task of parenting becomes harder, and the children involved will have more numerous and serious obstacles to overcome.”

Society’s response to the “extraordinary pressures” facing married couples today should be to “focus on easing those pressures and reinforcing our support for marriage, not redefining it or establishing parallel structures which erode marriage by sapping its special status,” Archbishop Chaput said.

The Colorado Legislature is considering a bill that would define marriage as the union of one man and one woman and exclude the possibility of legalizing same-sex marriages in the state.

In Vermont, Bishop Kenneth A. Angell of Burlington has been at the forefront of an effort to defend traditional marriage and to keep the state Legislature from approving same-sex marriages or domestic partnerships.

The state Supreme Court in December ruled that Vermont laws discriminated against gay and lesbian couples and ordered that state laws be changed to give same-sex couples the same legal protections and

see “SURVIVAL”, page eleven

Catholic Family Planning

By Fran Brezina, R.N., B.S.N.

Natural family planning (NFP) is a method of birth regulation based on a woman’s observations and charting of her own body’s fertility patterns each month. The timing of marital relations to either the fertile phase or non-fertile phase of the woman’s cycle allows the couple to either achieve or avoid pregnancy each month. Husband and wife share the responsibility of this decision equally each month.

NFP does require periodic abstinence (also called marital chastity) but periodic abstinence is also necessary at some time or other in every marriage (during times of illness, travel, crises, childbirth, etc.)

so one does not have to be of super human virtue to practice this method. Because no artificial, mechanical or chemical products are used, this method is very cost-effective, is a great asset to a women’s gynecological health and can be used during all phases of her reproductive life.

The Catholic Church teaches that marriage is a Sacrament (an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace) that it is a sacred bond lasting until death and that the purpose of this union is both unitive and procreative. Concerning the procreative aspect of marriage, the Church states that every act of intercourse must be open to new life. It fully recognizes

God as the author of life and defends the dignity of every human being from conception until natural death. The Church has always spoken out forcefully against artificial birth control. (Read Pope Paul VI’s “Humanae Vitae.”)

By using natural family planning, the couple adheres completely to the teachings of the Church, thus their obedience becomes a source of great grace in their marriage.

For information on NFP classes in your area call 1-301-896-9323 or toll free 1-888-637-6371.

(Fran Brezina is a Certified Instructor of the Billings Ovulation Method.)

Catholic Couple Picked As Longest Married In Nation

By Catholic News Service

DRUMS, Pa. (CNS) — Susan and Andrew Lechman, who will celebrate their 76th wedding anniversary in May, have been honored for having one of the longest marriages in the nation.

Worldwide Marriage Encounter recognized the couple on World

Marriage Day in February, as did the Diocese of Scranton, where they live.

Each year Marriage Encounter groups conduct an annual search for the longest married couple and the Lechmans had the longest union of all couples nominated.

“The Diocese of Scranton is

thrilled that Mr. and Mrs. Lechman are being cited by Worldwide Marriage Encounter,” said Mary Ann Paulukonis, diocesan director of family life in the Office of Parish Ministries. “We have been blessed by their efforts of nearly 76 years to model love that mirrors God’s un-failing love.”

by Catholic News Service

Responding to editors’ requests for a regular sampling of current commentary from around the Catholic press, here is an unsigned editorial titled “Marriage still under challenge” which appeared in the Jan. 6 issue of The Catholic Messenger, newspaper of the Diocese of Davenport, Iowa.

It has been a mark of modern times that the most progressive societies are those which saw the rise of a strong middle class. And a mark of the middle class was adherence to an ideal of family life which required formal marriage — sanctioned either by the church or civil authorities. Development of this middle-class stability was crucial in the remarkable spread of personal security and prosperity during the 20th century.

At the same time, rising prosperity made it possible for the multitudes to feel free of those middle-class constraints. Was a particular sexual mating desirable? Why complicate it with marriage? Did a girl desire to have a baby? Marriage hardly seemed necessary. Did a boy feel pressure to prove his virility by making a baby? Marriage was a bother. Was a spouse no longer interesting? Or hard to adjust to? Walk away and look for a new coupling. Divorce was easy.

The institution of marriage has become degraded in the Western societies we like to call “advanced.” That is a clear legacy of the 20th century. And as marriage suffered, so have children. Studies in the United States have repeatedly shown that the children of marriage fare far better than those who grow up in single-parent — typically fatherless — homes. This holds among the poor as well as the middle class.

If traditional marriage is so important to a healthy society and the well-being of new generations, as we believe the evidence shows, why is there no general alarm as it suffers abuse and decline? Why, instead, is traditional marriage under further attack — and being ignored or dismissed as the basic building block of society? A great part of the reason must be the conflicting desire for individual liberty. Close behind, in the modern advanced societies, is the ease with which the consequences of individual actions may be shifted to society at large.

Marriage as a distinctive institution given unique protection in society is also under direct attack by homosexual groups. The effort to gain equal status for homosexual couples, under way for more than a decade in some parts of the country, is now gaining momentum and spreading nationwide — and worldwide. France made that move last year, granting all the benefits available to married couples to any cohabiting pair who register with a court clerk in a “civil solidarity pact.” The “solidarity” is acknowledged to be of the loosest sort, however, since such pacts may be easily and simply revoked by either party with three months’ notice.

The Supreme Court of Vermont last month ruled that homosexual couples are entitled to the same benefits available in law to married couples, but the sticky question of what kind of coupledness we are talking about, and of what duration, is left hanging. The implication of the court’s judgment is that homosexual coupling should have equal status with marriage. In California, voters will decide in March whether to declare that marriage is exclusively the union of a man and a woman. We may expect that even if those voters show common sense, the issue will come back in some way — as it surely will in Iowa, the rest of the states and in federal legislative and judicial halls.

Marriage, its distinctive meaning and value, will certainly be one crucial contest of the 21st century.

The Lechmans, who live in a nursing home in Drums, were born in the Freeland area; Andrew was born in 1903 and Susan in 1907. Andrew, a member of St. Mary’s Byzantine Church, married Susan at her church, St. John Nepomucene in Freeland, in 1924.

After enduring the hardships of the Great Depression, they moved to Baltimore with their only child, Helene, during World War II. While there, they were active in the establishment of a new parish, Most Precious Blood. In addition, Mr. Lechman became a member of the

Santa Maria Council of the Knights of Columbus and Mrs. Lechman became a member of the Catholic Daughters of the Americas.

Upon Mr. Lechman’s retirement, the couple returned to Pennsylvania, and are still active. Last summer he finished a term as resident council president at their nursing home, while his wife continues to serve as vice president of the council.

Helene and her daughter, Barbara Kasecamp, and several grandchildren have actively led worship at the home and shared music with the see “COUPLE”, page eleven



LETTER

from page three

sentencing and the inadequacy of legal counsel for poor defendants in Texas. I oppose the death penalty in all cases.

I thank you for reflecting on my views on this matter and I ask God's blessing upon you and the service you give our state.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI

Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of San Angelo

President of the Texas Conference of Churches

TEXAS

from page five

disability. Once they are in, we are obligated to allow them equal opportunity for learning."

Maier said the Learning Center advocates making accommodations that help students as called for in the 1993 American with Disabilities Act.

This means, for example, that if a student has a hearing problem, the student may get a listening device or is allowed to have a note-taker in class, Maier said.

Also, students can test separately from the class where there is less noise and distraction or they may

get extra time to finish a test. Students must have documentation to prove their disability, Maier said.

Part of the learning process at the center, she added, is to help students realize their strengths and weaknesses and how they can use those strengths to overcome the weaknesses. Sometimes it just means teaching the students how to speak up on their behalf.

Students also learn general skills such as outlining and note taking, memory techniques, test-taking strategies and basic word-processing skills.

The center is a repository of information for students and has computers and video and audio equip-

ment to help them study.

Maier said that having the center has prompted more students to admit they have a disability and talk about their needs.

Students' attitudes about learning disabilities are also changing, she said.

"It's who they are," Maier said. "I tell them, 'You may learn differently than others. But that doesn't mean you can't learn.'"

APPEAL

from page eight

In giving from the heart to the **American Bishops' Overseas Appeal**, you become part of the time-honored tradition of Catholics in the United States who defend those living in poverty, support charitable institutions, and promote justice. As I thank you for your past generosity, I ask you to please participate in this year's ABOA collection and give as generously as your means allow. Let us pray for our brothers and sisters in other parts of the world who are in great need. God bless you.

Your servant in Christ and Mary,
Most Rev. Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI
Bishop of San Angelo

*Pray for
Vocations*

VOCATION

from page three

there is one subject which is even more difficult for priests to discuss in public, and one that is more intimate to a priest than his sexuality. That is, his inner relationship with Christ.

To have this intimate relationship with Jesus Christ requires facing and telling the truth. When priesthood does not go well, it is very often because a priest has not given sufficient time to this primary relationship. This means that the priest first and foremost must be a man of prayer, he must be in communion with God, the great eternal High Priest, Jesus Christ. A priest simply cannot grow in a personal relationship with Christ without consistent recourse to private prayer. Praying honestly necessarily involves facing one's inner "demons," and also accepting the goodness that God has placed in each priest and building up that goodness through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Spending time in daily private prayer puts one in contact with Christ, the one who is the Truth and brings clarity to inner conflicts. An honest prayer life will lead the priest to reform his life. Priests stop praying when they are afraid of the Truth or when they have lost touch with the Truth. The priest who stops praying is in danger and begins living a lie.

Often parishioners do not recognize the need for the priests' personal prayer life. They want their priests to be available at all times and in all circumstances. During the private prayers of priests, they include the needs of their parishioners as well as their own.

PRAYING FROM THE HEART

Having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ means praying from the heart. Praying from the

heart means, praying from the place within where Christ dwells. Many men who weaken in priesthood cannot find the "heart" because they are stuck in their "heads." Priests, as a group, are very bright men. By their education and training, priests have developed their intellectual skills well. However, developing a personal relationship with Christ involves an important task of moving prayer and dialogue out of the "head" and into the heart. In touching his inner heart, the priest makes himself vulnerable to God and to others. This can be a challenging and even a terrifying prospect.

A priest must constantly remind himself that the Holy Spirit is there to help him in his weakness and to help him in his prayer. Praying from the heart means being vulnerable to God and others. It means praying from one's brokenness. Often it is hard for priests to accept that they are broken, much less to learn to pray out of this brokenness. Priests are usually very compassionate with the failings of others, but often harsh and unforgiving of themselves. As priests seek forgiveness, parishioners need to forgive the mistakes of their priests and offer them a helping hand in moments of need and vulnerability.

THE SUPPORT OF FRIENDS

To develop a healthy, wholesome and holy life, the priest not only needs to have a personal relationship with God, but also needs the support and encouragement of friends and family. The ability to make lasting, intimate relationships is a "sine qua non" of psychological health. The isolated priest, especially from his peers, has placed himself in a precarious situation. Priests need the friendship of their fellow priests, as well as the friendship and support that comes from family, and from male and female friends. True and trusted friends are a great support

to priests.

Priests cognitively realize that they should have friends. They know they need this support to maintain a vibrant spiritual and ministerial life. Priests need to realize that ministering can provide a series of acquaintances that can masquerade as intimacy. In the absence of human intimacy, priests might turn to destructive alternatives to satisfy this inner craving. What often takes the place of intimacy for these intellectually bright men is an empty series of platitudes and a life lived solely in the intellect. Sharing one's faith with a trusted friend can be a powerful source of support for priestly life.

The demands and stress on parochial ministry today are formidable and relentless. To be surrounded by hundreds of people who look to a priest for spiritual sustenance requires a high level of psychological and spiritual health.

CHOOSE LIFE OR DEATH

For a priest who is active in ministry, there are many supports currently available. Spiritual direction and the Sacrament of Reconciliation can help priests face the truth and to learn to pray from the heart. Priests need to have a spiritual director and to celebrate often the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The diocese does provide sabbaticals for priests, and psychological assistance is offered in those cases where it is necessary.

A priest needs to be faithful to some type of daily prayer life, and the Liturgy of the Hours is the best format for consistency. Priests need to take advantage of the spiritual opportunities for renewal that are offered them, like days off, the annual retreat, workshops and other renewal experiences.

Simply reducing the workloads of priests is unlikely to keep priests from burnout. Very often the healthiest priests are those who are the busiest and the most committed. What

is more important than the amount of work, is the sense that a priest finds the work meaningful and that he feels some control over his life. The quickest road to burnout is an overburdened life style combined with a feeling that one is trapped in this life style and at the same time one derives no meaning from it.

In the priesthood, there will always be those who do not do well because in their daily decisions of life, they choose badly. Free will is a constant operative in priesthood as well as in other vocations in life. In the priesthood, as in any other vocation, there are those who find life and those who do not. Church leaders try to present priests quality resources for living a vibrant, spiritual life so that priests will choose meaningful and helpful ways of living out their priesthood. Priests, like other people, are faced with choices. Some choose to use the means that will help them to be faith-filled priests, while others will end up as bitter, angry, old men. Priests, like others, take responsibility for their personal choices.

Parishioners and friends should encourage our priests when they are discouraged, praise them when they have done well, call them to accountability when they have erred, and always pray for them and love them.

A SPIRITUALITY OF JOY

How can a priest tell what path in life he is choosing? The best place to begin is to look in the mirror. What does the face one sees in the mirror communicate? The expression in one's face, especially in the eyes, will depict whether or not one finds joy in priesthood, or is dissatisfied.

Priests have been entrusted with the preaching of the "Good News" of Jesus Christ. They are called first to live that Good News in their own lives. Those who accept the Good

News find a sense of joy in their lives. Joy is a spiritual reality that is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Joy springs from the Spirit dwelling in one's heart. Joy does not wipe away struggles, sorrow and pain, in fact it can co-exist with much suffering. In a priest, the joy of the Spirit gives strength, radiates through a priest to give healing to others and remains a precious gift to the friends of God. If there is one sign of a priestly life well-lived, it is the presence of joy.

In the end, priesthood and celibacy are primarily spiritual realities. If priests do not live in the Spirit, they cannot be healthy and happy priests. If they do not live in the Spirit, they certainly will never find life in a celibate existence. And if celibacy is not eventually internalized in a positive way, there is little hope that it will be authentically lived.

It is the spirit of Christ in a priest that not only helps a priest to survive in a celibate ministry, but enables the priest to find satisfaction and joy. A priest who lives by the Spirit eventually comes to realize the truth as given by St. Paul, "It is not I who live, but Christ Who lives in me."

To close my reflections on priestly life, I share with you some of the reflections on priesthood by Pope John Paul II in his inspiring little book, "Gift and Mystery."

"The story of my priestly vocation? It is known above all to God. At its deepest level, every vocation to the priesthood is a great mystery; it is a gift which infinitely transcends the individual. Every priest experiences this clearly throughout the course of his life. Faced with the greatness of the gift, we sense our own inadequacy. A vocation is a mystery of divine election - we realize that human words are insufficient to do justice to the mystery which the priesthood involves."



¿QUE ES EL JUBILEO? (Principio del Nuevo Milenio)

Por el Obispo Miguel Pfeifer, OMI

El Jubileo, el principio del Nuevo milenio, es una invitación extraordinaria a comprender mejor el misterio de la Encarnación: Recuerda que Dios te ama y que por amor tuyo Jesucristo, hace 2000 años, se hizo hombre; recuerda por eso que has de amar a todas las personas como Cristo nos ama: "Traten a los demás como ustedes quieren que ellos los traten. En esto se resumen la ley y los profetas." (Mt 7,12).

Toda persona – con ocasión del Jubileo, aniversario del nacimiento de Cristo – esta invitada a meditar en este Dios que es Amor. El amor te conduce a El y a la seriedad contigo mismo.

Tu, que eres cristiano – es decir, seguidor de Jesucristo – ¿has sabido encontrar un momento de silencio interior para preguntarte el porque de este gran acontecimiento? "Ahora es el momento favorable; ahora el día de salvación" (2 Cor 6,2).

El Jubileo o Año Santo es:

*el año del renacimiento espiritual;

*el año del encuentro personal con Jesucristo

*el año del amor generoso de Dios y a Dios, del amor generoso de los hermanos y a los hermanos.

PASSION

from page two

that allows the good in us, and others, to blossom. Compassion allows us to see the immeasurable goodness that God has placed in all of us. This goodness comes out in surprising ways. Scrooges become benefactors, enemies become friends, hatred turns into love, gossip becomes good news on our lips and curses become blessings. We become pliable, adaptable, and subject to change.

As we go through our Lenten spiritual pilgrimage, Christ gently invites and commands us: "Follow me!" Our following the example of Christ gives us vision, direction, and the strength to go through our passion so that we can arrive at Easter, our own resurrection with the risen Savior.

PASIÓN

from page two

que nosotros seamos dispuestos a tomarnos el espíritu de compasión que Jesús enseñó por la debilidad humana y su perdón por la inconstancia humana.

En imitación a Cristo, la compasión crea el ambiente de amor y aceptación que permite lo bueno en nosotros, y otros, a florecer. La compasión nos

permite ver la inmensa bondad que Dios ha puesto en todos nosotros. Esta bondad sale en maneras sorprendentes. Tacaños se hacen bienhechores, enemigos se hacen amigos, el odio se hace el amor, el chisme se hace buenas noticias en nuestros labios y las maldiciones se hacen bendiciones. Nos hacemos flexibles, adaptables, y abiertos a cambiar.

Como vamos por nuestra peregrinación Cuaresmal espiritual, Cristo nos invita suavemente y nos ordena: ¡"Sígueme!" Siguiendo el ejemplo de Cristo nos da visión, dirección, y fuerza para pasar por nuestra pasión para que lleguemos a la Pascua, nuestra resurrección con el Salvador resucitado.

FIORENZA

from page three

statements by Pope John Paul II which highlight the Church's aversion to capital punishment. He noted that during the Pope's visit to St. Louis in January, 1999, the governor of Missouri spared the life of a condemned man at the Holy Father's request.

"And recent statements by the Holy Father demonstrate his continuing conviction that there are better ways to protect society that are more in keeping with the dignity of all people, even those who have taken the life of another," Bishop

Fiorenza continued. "The Pope has said that because of our ability to keep society safe from aggressors, the need to execute individuals has become 'rare if not practically non-existent.'"

Practical reasons to be against the death penalty, according to Bishop Fiorenza, include its arbitrary application, its cost, inadequate counsel, the possibility of executing wrongly convicted people, and racial disparities. "We use such arguments in our efforts to convince Catholics and others to stop supporting this practice," the Bishop wrote "But we also condemn the death penalty because of what it does to us as a society. We believe that the death penalty, along with legalized abortion and assisted suicide, contributes to a culture of death by saying that some lives are expendable. Such a message is in stark contrast to Jesus' message of love and life. As we said in our Good Friday Appeal to End the Death Penalty (April 2, 1999).

"Increasing reliance on the death penalty diminishes us and is a sign of growing disrespect for human life. We cannot overcome crime by simply executing criminals, nor can we restore the lives of the innocent by ending the lives of those convicted of their murders. The death penalty offers the tragic illusion that we can defend life by taking life."

"We urge you to propose a suspension of all federal executions in light of these arguments," Bishop Fiorenza wrote.

There are 21 people on federal death row at the present time. No one has been executed at the federal level since 1963 but at least one execution is expected in the relatively near future. Juan Raul Garza, convicted in 1993 under the federal drug kingpin statute for murders committed in Brownsville, Texas, was recently moved to a facility in Terre Haute, Indiana, which houses the new federal lethal injection chamber.

SURVIVAL

from page nine

benefits as married couples.

At a Feb. 17 clergy rally at the Vermont Statehouse in Montpelier, Bishop Angell said people sometimes ask, "What would Jesus do?" about same-sex marriages.

"I believe that he would rule on the side of 'love,'" the bishop said. "He always does, but he would also rule on the side of law, the law of God who loves us beyond our comprehension."

He added, "As loving as Christ was, and as important as the com-

mandment to love is, he also taught us that love includes obedience to the laws of God."

Bishop Angell expressed distress about the differences among some Christian clergy on the issue and about "the pain of our gay brothers and lesbian sisters."

"I know some feel misunderstood by their church, deserted by their pastors, abandoned by their fellow parishioners," he said. "We want what is right and just for them but we do not want to redefine marriage in the process."

Bishop Angell expressed hope that "Vermonters will demand a constitutional amendment to protect and preserve 'traditional marriage' between one man and one woman."

COUPLE

from page nine

other residents.

Nursing home administrator Marjorie Bell said the Lechmans are "faithful and faith-filled" and they "exemplify the joy and love of the Lord."

The Lechmans are also members of Good Shepherd parish in Drums, where Father Gerard Safko, pastor, helped the couple mark their 75th wedding anniversary with family members last year by celebrating a special Mass.

The Lechmans have four grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

In addition to the Lechmans, two other couples who have been married 70 years or more were nominated for the longest marriage by the Scranton Diocese.

Rose and Joseph Sileo of Peckville, married six months after the Lechmans in 1924, have three children and several grandchildren and great-grandchildren. The couple, who are in their 90s, are parishioners at St. Anthony's Church and reside in a nursing home in Peckville.

According to Colleen Murphy, the activity director at the nursing home who nominated the couple, the Sileos say "you need a lot of patience and faith in God" to sustain a marriage for as long as they have.

Anna and John Ruspi of Clarks Green, married in 1930, are parishioners at St. Gregory in Clarks Green. They have one child and two grandchildren.

World Marriage Day is observed on the second Sunday in February. Originating with the Worldwide Marriage Encounter movement, it honors married couples for their love for each other and their example to the church.

SINAI

from page one

had to move carefully toward the goal of unity.

"Unity is possible, but it will take a miracle," he said.

Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls said the pilgrimage had a powerful effect on the pope, who has marked out a series of biblical sites to visit during the jubilee year.

"There is an enormous personal factor here for the pope: he is coming to a place where God entered human history. He was very moved at the place of the burning bush, because this is where God defined himself for humanity," the spokesman said.

The site draws thousands of pilgrims each year, many of whom make the three-hour trek up the mountain to see the sunrise from the spot where Moses is said to have received the Ten Commandments.

ADVOCATE

from page four

the person who is in need. This makes the process, unfamiliar to many people, easier to go through. Most other parishes also have advocates. Since they are willing to help, do not hesitate. Take a moment of prayer and then use their services. Any time is a good time to explore this time of healing and grace in one's life. Maybe this time of the Jubilee Year 2000 is the right time to open the door of our lives to Christ in this special way. Maybe its time to help someone return to the sacraments. A call to the Tribunal at (915) 651-7500 will not hurt. It may even help.

PRIEST

from page seven

Fr. Michael's last visit to us was in 1996; after that he could not travel anymore. Many of us who knew him very well will miss his kindness and his enthusiasm for the spread of the Gospel.

Fr. Michael we will miss you very much and your sound counsel and advice. We will miss too your many kind gifts, but we will remember you as we drive through the many little towns in West Texas where you were God's instrument in building up so many Catholic Missions. May your good soul rest in peace and may we all take example from the holy good life you lived. Goodbye Fr. Michael; we loved you and we miss your visits to Texas.



Region X Diocesan Youth Ministry Leaders Meet

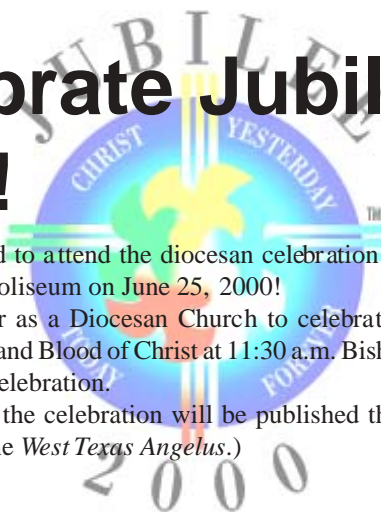
Diocesan Youth Ministry Leaders from Region X gathered February 15-17 at Christ the King Retreat Center in San Angelo.

Region X, which includes Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas is comprised of seventeen dioceses. Participating from the Diocese of San Angelo was Sister Hilda Marotta, OSF.

Among the various items on the agenda was the planning of the Region X Youth Conference which will take place in Arlington, TX November 17-19, 2000.



Celebrate Jubilee 2000!



You are invited to attend the diocesan celebration of Jubilee 2000 at the San Angelo Coliseum on June 25, 2000!

We will gather as a Diocesan Church to celebrate Eucharist on the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ at 11:30 a.m. Bishop Michael Pfeifer will preside at a celebration.

(Details about the celebration will be published through your parish bulletins and in the *West Texas Angelus*.)

Brownsville Nuns Forced To Hitchhike!

PROGRESO, TX - The Missionaries of the Holy Spirit and Holy Family are new to the Diocese of Brownsville, yet they have gathered hundreds of friends while hitchhiking between mission sites and praying for the donation of a vehicle. An older used vehicle was originally do-



Sisters Mercedes, Guadalupe, Veronica, Felicitas, Petra and Mother Ana Maria pray for \$20,000 to purchase a mini-van. These Missionaries of the Holy Spirit and Holy Family have been hitchhiking rides between the mission parishes of the Diocese of Brownsville. (photo: Margarita Vargas)

noted for their ministry, but the car has been costly to maintain and deemed a safety hazard. Friar Matthew Krempel, OFM, Pastor of Holy Spirit parish, hesitates to send the Sisters on the road in this vehicle and so they depend on the charity of the faithful for rides between their convent and mission parishes. Catholic Extension, the organization which supports missionary work in America, is rallying United States' faithful to raise \$20,000 for the purchase of a mini-van that will aptly meet the Sisters' transportation needs as well as cover the cost of mileage and maintenance for one year.

Mother Olivia Palos de la Torre, a member of the Josephite Sisters for many years, founded the Community in 1981 when she realized that many young women were being turned away from the convent because they lacked a dowry. In place of financial investment, the Missionaries of the Holy Spirit and Holy Family ask that aspirants to the religious life be endowed with zeal and the desire to bring souls closer to God.

The Sisters, whose median age is 23, number 130 and minister in the dioceses of Saltillo, Durango, Guadalajara, and Matamoros in Mexico. In the United States, the Sisters conduct evangelization outreach in the dioceses of Kansas City and Brownsville. It is the community of eight Sisters in the Brownsville Diocese that resorts to hitchhiking while conducting door to door visitation in four communities: Holy Spirit parish in Progreso, Saint Margaret Anne mission in Santa Maria, Cristo Rey mission in Bluetown and Sacred Heart parish in Mercedes. "The aggressive outreach of fundamentalist sects in the Brownsville Diocese is finally being countered thanks to the generous witness of these consecrated women religious," notes Raymond J. Bishop Peña of Brownsville. "The scattered, rural areas of the parishes are being visited regularly in an effort to bring the unchurched into the life of the Church."

If you would like to contribute to funds being raised for the Sisters' mini-van, please contact Dick Ritter, Vice President of Catholic Extension, at 1-888-4R-FAITH (1-888-473-2484). For general information about Catholic Extension, visit www.catholic-extension.org on the web.

KC Free Throw Winners

The Knights of Columbus of the San Angelo Diocese sponsored their annual basketball free throw contest for boys and girls aged 10 to 14 on Sunday, February 20, 2000 at the Wall High School gymnasium. 37 youth participated at this level after qualifying tournaments were held over the diocese at both council and district levels. Knight Norman Dierschke ran the meet with help from many area knights. The competition winners are:

10 year olds: Erin Hirt Council 9641 St. Lawrence, Garrison Marx Council 3071 Midland.

11 year olds: Brianna Bertelson Council 3071 Midland, Caleb Ramos Council 10609 Sonora.

12 year olds: J. B. Sosa Council 3071 Midland, Derek Wiley Coun-



cil 8572 Ozona.

13 year olds: Amy Stretcher Council 3071 Midland, Clint Halfmann Council 4316 Wall.

14 year olds: Christina Redish Council 11282 Eldorado, Brian Hillger Council 9641 St. Lawrence.

These 10 youth will advance to statewide competition at St.

Edwards University in Austin on March 11, 2000. If successful there they may move on to international competition. The Knights of Columbus Youth Free Throw Contest is the largest fraternal sponsored youth activity in the nation. Good luck in representing the San Angelo Diocese in Austin!

Diocesan Conference Day

More than 450 persons attended the Diocesan Conference Day on Saturday, February 26th at the Convention Center in San Angelo. Father Roger Karban addressed the theme of Eucharist from a Biblical perspective.

