

West Texas ANGELUS

Advent/Christmas 2007



INSIDE THIS MONTH'S ANGELUS ...

From the Bishop's Desk



In the Gospel for Christmas, we hear God's angel announce the wonderful news of that long-awaited first Christmas: "Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim for you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." / **Page 2**

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Coming to America

Pope Benedict XVI will visit Washington and New York April 15-20. Archbishop Pietro Sambi, apostolic nuncio to the United States, confirmed the papal trip and the pope's itinerary Nov. 12 at the annual fall meeting of the U.S. bishops. / **Page 5**

Advent: Time to review our lives since last Christmas

The time that has passed since last Christmas will differ for each of us. It may have been a time of joyful occasions; it may have witnessed the fulfillment of fond hopes. It may have seen some sorrow, some losses, some grieving. And it may have been a rather ordinary year. Let's reflect upon it. Where was the hand of God upon us and upon those we especially love in the past year? / **Page 4**

From the Editor



In telling the Galatians of the fruit of the Spirit, maybe St. Paul was actually saying to them: Quit being so material! You already have gifts and you are given them every day. And they are love, joy, peace, patient endurance, kindness, generosity, faith, mildness and self control. / **Page 3**

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From the Bishop's Desk

When is Christmas? It can truly happen every day of the year

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI



**Bishop
Michael D.
Pfeifer, OMI**

In the Gospel for Christmas, we hear God's angel announce the wonderful news of that long-awaited first Christmas: "Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim for you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."

My first wish for all of you, your families and friends, is for a blessed and joyful Christmas as we remember that unique moment of human history of the birth of the greatest person who ever lived, Jesus Christ, true God and true man. I pray in a special way in my Christmas Masses that the peace of the child Jesus will fill all of your hearts and that we will all come to understand the true meaning of Christmas. As we mark the birthday of the Prince of Peace, we

pray for peace in our world, for an end to war and violence, and for God's protection of our military personnel.

To understand, to comprehend, at least in some way, in as much as our tiny, human minds can, I invite you to come and meditate on the divine mystery of that wonderful child wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. Take time on Christmas, and throughout the Christmas season, to come especially as a family and spend time in prayer and meditation before this infant in the crib, and to give him praise and glory as we kneel before our little king, begging him to show us the way to peace and reconciliation. The infant, the God-man, in the crib is a sign and source of the reconciliation and healing that we need in our individual lives, in our families, in our communities, and throughout the world.

Historically, we assign a day to say when Christ was born. However, because of the wonderful mys-

tery of the sacred liturgy, through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, Christ is born in a new way in our world, our families, and our hearts, on each Christmas day, and because of the same power of the Spirit, we can say that Christmas happens, or can happen, every day of the year. Christmas is about God's love and mercy coming into our world to free us from sin and letting the Christ Child teach us by example and word how to share this love with others.

It is Christmas then, when in some part of the world, love is born or reborn in the heart of a human person. It is always Christmas when we open the doors of our hearts to those who suffer, to those who seek comfort and care. Christmas happens especially when we pardon someone who has offended us, or who has hurt us, or taken advantage of us.

It is always Christmas when we refuse to give into

(Please See BISHOP/19)

PASTORAL LETTERS: Emerging Models of Pastoral Care

November 21, 2007

Emerging Models of Pastoral Care in the Diocese of San Angelo as we prepare for the 50th anniversary of our Diocese in 2011

My dear sisters and brothers of the Diocese of San Angelo:

I am enclosing here a letter that I am sending to your Pastors and pastoral coordinator, as regards a very important document that I am asking to be studied very carefully by your pastors, with the Pastoral and Finance Councils, and all the leaders of each parish and mission of the Diocese. In the letter, I am asking that this report be given a special place on the agenda of all Pastoral and Finance Council meetings for the first four months of the new year, beginning on January 2, 2008.

When we marked the 40th anniversary of our Diocese in 2006, I formed a Committee to discuss the pastoral care of our Diocese in preparation for our 50th anniversary in 2011. The members of the Committee have worked very hard over the past

November 21, 2007

Dear brother pastors & pastoral coordinators:

I am enclosing with this letter a copy of the final report from the special Committee on Emerging Models of Pastoral Care that I established in 2006 so as to help us prepare for the 50th anniversary of our Diocese that will be celebrated in 2011.

I am asking that the enclosed report, Emerging Models of Pastoral Care, be a primary issue for the agendas of all Pastoral and Finance Council meetings of our parishes, beginning on January 2, 2008 and continuing through the first four months of the year—January, February, March and April. The good work of this Committee now needs to be studied carefully at a parish level with the appropriate leadership, and the important thing is to see how we can make this report come alive at a local level.

Enclosed with this report are some questions for reflection, and I ask that the answers to these

year and a half and have submitted their work in the statement, Emerging Models of Pastoral Care in the Diocese of San Angelo toward 2011. I thank this Committee for their good work.

Now is the time to implement this report in light of the mission statement of our Diocese from our Pastoral Plan, Into God's Marvelous Light: "We, the people of God in the Diocese of San Angelo, who have been initiated in Baptism and are nourished by the Eucharist, are called to holiness and to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. We invite all people into a loving relationship with the Triune God and unite as sisters and brothers in service to the world."

The letter that follows has been sent to the pastors and pastoral coordinator of the parishes and missions of our Diocese. For further information on this report, please check with your local pastor. Thank you.

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

questions that will come from the Pastoral and Finance Council meetings of the first four months of the year be recorded and sent to the Dean of each Deanery so that these can be collated into a report that will be given back to me.

Please bring the report of the Emerging Models of Pastoral Care to the attention of all the people of our parishes through bulletin inserts and other parish meetings. We want the whole parish to strive to work to implement this report so that we can prepare to be the best kind of people that God wants for us in the Diocese of San Angelo and the best ministers of the Lord in service as we approach our 50th anniversary in the year 2011.

I thank you for your cooperation and I ask the Holy Spirit to guide all of us as we work on this project together. God's peace.

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

EDICTAL SUMMONS

EDICTAL SUMMONS
November 12, 2007

CASE: WILSON – IRONS

NO.: SO 07/50

The Tribunal Office of the Catholic Diocese of San Angelo is seeking Johnny Blaine Irons, Jr.

You are hereby summoned to appear before the Tribunal of the Catholic Diocese of San Angelo, at 804 Ford Street, San Angelo, Texas 76905, on or before the 30th day of November 2007, to answer to the Petition of Myra Michele Wilson, now introduced before the Diocesan Tribunal in an action styled, "Myra Wilson and Johnny Irons, Jr., Petition for Declaration of Invalidity of Marriage." Said Petition is identified as Case: WILSON – IRONS; Protocol No.: SO 07/50, on the Tribunal Docket of the Diocese of San Angelo.

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

Given at the Tribunal of the Diocese of San Angelo on the 13th day of November, 2007.

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

December 2007

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THIS MONTH In the Diocese

December

- 9 -- SAN ANGELO**, Fort Concho – Christmas Mass at 11:00 a.m.
- 10 -- ABILENE**, St. Vincent Pallotti – Advent Night of Prayer for the Priests, Sisters, Deacons and Wives, Deacon Candidates and Wives of the Abilene Deanery at 7:00 p.m.
- 12 -- SAN ANGELO**, Sacred Heart Cathedral – Mass for Our Lady of Guadalupe at 6:30 p.m.
- 16 -- JUNCTION**, St. Theresa – Mass and Dedication of New Church at 11:15 A.M.
- 23 -- EOLA**, St. Philip – Mass at 8:00 a.m.
- 25 -- SAN ANGELO**, Goodfellow Air Force Base – Christmas Mass at 9:00 a.m.

Spiritual direction provides companionship for the journey

By Jimmy Patterson
Online Editor



Anne
Tyson

There are as many different spiritual journeys as there are people on spiritual journeys; it's far from surprising that many people reach a point in their lives when receiving additional guidance supplementing what the Church provides them enhances that journey.

Anne Tyson, a spiritual director based in Midland, has seen people at both ends of the spectrum reach out for direction. Often, spiritual direction encourages people to explore a closer relationship with God. Busy schedules often keep people from becoming as close to God as they would desire.

"Sometimes people seek

because they may be at a place in their lives where they are looking for deeper answers in their spiritual life," Tyson said. "Some are just looking to grow in their relationship with God and in other relationships in life as well. Others want to share their discernment process and in their everyday life situations they struggle with that and how their faith comes in to it."

Other times, Tyson said, she is approached by people who

are lost, or people who have become separated from God or the Church.

For many reasons, Tyson said she feels a better name for what she does would be Spiritual Companion instead of Director. Often when people see Tyson, or others in her profession, and they know they are going to see a 'Spiritual Director,' the first thought is that someone is going to tell them what to do with their lives. And that's often not the case. Guidance and companionship, someone with whom a faith journey can be shared, is a more accurate depiction.

People who seek the help of a spiritual director don't at first seek out such advice in the

(Please See **SPIRITUAL/17**)

From the Editor

This Christmas, remember the gifts God has given us

By Jimmy Patterson

I read with interest the recent news that showed 42 percent of private school students answered "the birth of Jesus" when asked the first thing they think of when they think of Christmas. Twenty-five percent said presents. It wasn't clear what the remaining 23 percent thought of, but the fact that not even a plurality answered Jesus kind of bothered me. I turn on the TV and see the annual debate swinging into high gear about Christmas vs. Holiday and what verbiage we should use, and who we should patronize and boycott. A friend who is an evangelical pastor has written a piece encouraging Christians to boycott boycotts and his reasons are valid.

U.S. Catholic magazine's headline on its December issue screams, "HOLD YOUR FIRE: Let's call a truce in the war on Christmas!" Articles suggest the war on Christmas is a lot of hype, like my evangelical friend suggested.

It is still early enough in Advent '07 to harken back to a simpler axiom: KISS. Keep it simple, sweetie.

How simple? How about this year, we keep it simpler maybe as a response to the war on merchandising Christmas (and the war on the war.) Every year, our children tell us what they want for Christmas, and every year, many of us no doubt show our love by bestowing gifts, and as a result everyone has a blessed and material Christmas.

We ask, we receive, we give, we get.

And it's all stuff.

Quick, name three things you received for Christmas last year? Five years ago? No doubt some of you can't.

I don't suggest any of you change your Christmas traditions, but perhaps it would be good to incorporate a little remembrance in our Christmas every year.

St. Paul once wrote, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patient endurance, kindness, generosity, faith, mildness and self control."

Maybe Paul pulled those words out during one of the first Christmas seasons? Maybe in telling the Galatians of the fruit of the Spirit, he was really telling them: "*Quit being so material this Christmas! Quit standing in line at 5 a.m. at the dry goods store the morning after Thanksgiving!! You already have gifts and you are given them every day. And they are love, joy, peace, patient endurance, kindness, generosity, faith, mildness and self control.*"

No, the gifts Paul wrote about are not things that come wrapped in boxes with bright red paper. They're not things we can shake wondering what they are in the 12 days before Christmas. They are not gifts we unwrap on Christmas morning. But they are no less gifts, given us by the Holy Spirit.

We may not feel and share every one of those gifts every day of the year, but they are still given to us and we still have them. We simply must learn to use them every day

(Please See **PATTERSON/18**)



Patterson

Gifts of Spiritual Direction

- Identify and trust your own experiences of God
- Integrate spirituality into your daily life
- Discern and make difficult choices
- Share struggles, losses or disappointments
- Find encouragement and affirmation
- Grow in relationship with God, self, others and creation.

ACTS Retreat can be life changing experience

By Jimmy Patterson
The Angelus

Twenty years after its birth, the ACTS movement continues to grow at a phenomenal rate in Catholic dioceses, particularly in Texas but increasingly spreading into other states.

Combining adoration and the sacraments with a deep

feeling of community and service, ACTS (Adoration, Community, Theology, Service) is a spirit-filled weekend experienced by parishioners in a retreat center setting.

Founded through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and birthed from the Cursillo movement at Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Selma,

Texas (Diocese of San Antonio), the 2007 ACTS Retreat calendar has had over 400 retreats, according to ACTS Missions' executive director Tom Peterson, from his San Antonio office.

"We know that number is not comprehensive," Peterson said, "because we haven't been able to reach every single parish."

Peterson said he knows of 250 parishes that actively participate in the ACTS movement.

In addition to reaching all dioceses in Texas, ACTS Missions now reaches 12 states, Honduras, South Africa and Mexico.

Success of any and all

(Please See **ACTS/17**)

Del Escritorio del Obispo

Quando es la navidad?

por el Obispo Miguel Pfeifer

Escuchamos en nuestro Evangelio las buenas nuevas proclamadas por el ángel de Dios de la primera Navidad tan esperada. El ángel les dijo: "No teman. Les traigo una buena noticia, que causará gran alegría a todo el pueblo: Hoy les ha nacido, en la ciudad de David, un salvador, que es el Mesías, el Señor. Esto les servirá de señal: encontrarán al niño envuelto en pañales y recostado en un pesebre."

Mi primer deseo para todos ustedes y sus familias y amigos, es que tengan una Navidad ben-

dicada y alegre mientras recordemos ese momento único en la historia humana del cumpleaños de la persona más grande que ha vivido, Jesucristo, verdadero Dios y verdadero hombre. Rezo en una manera especial en las misas Navideñas que la paz del niño Jesús llene a todos sus corazones y que podamos llegar a un mejor entendimiento del verdadero significado de la Navidad.

Mientras conmemoremos el cumpleaños del Príncipe de Paz, rezamos por la paz en el mundo, por el fin a la guerra y violencia, y por la protección de los que sirven en nuestras fuerzas

armadas.

Para entender, comprender, en alguna manera, en cuanto nuestras mentes pequeñas puedan, les invito a ustedes a buscar y meditar sobre el divino misterio del maravilloso niño envuelto en pañales y acostado en el pesebre. Tomen tiempo en el día de Navidad, y durante la temporada Navideña, para venir, especialmente en familia, y pasar un tiempo, para meditar—orar—pensar—sobre este niño en el pesebre, y para alabar y glorificarlo mientras nos arrodillemos antes nuestro

(Mira **OBSIPO/16**)



Obispo
Miguel Pfeifer
OMI

DIOCESAN DATES**Bishop's Calendar****DECEMBER**

8 -- ODESSA, St. Mary – Mass and Blessing of New Classrooms at 4:00 p.m.

9 -- SAN ANGELO, Fort Concho – Christmas Mass at 11:00 a.m.

10 -- ABILENE, St. Vincent Pallotti – Advent Night of Prayer for the Priests, Sisters, Deacons and Wives, Deacon Candidates and Wives of the Abilene Deanery at 7:00 p.m.

11 -- SAN ANGELO, Bishop's Residence – Christmas Staff Party

12 -- SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral – Mass for Our Lady of Guadalupe at 6:30 p.m.

13 -- SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center – Presbyteral Council Meeting 2:00 p.m.

Christ the King Retreat Center – Annual Christmas Party for Priests, Sisters, Deacons and Wives at 5:30 p.m.

15 -- SAN ANGELO, Downtown Children's Christmas Festival starting at 11:00 a.m.

16 -- JUNCTION, St. Theresa – Mass and Dedication of New Church at 11:15 A.M.

17 -- ROWENA, St. Joseph – Penance Service at 6:30 p.m.

18 -- SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral – Penance Service at 7:00 p.m.

19 -- SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center – Staff Mass at 8:30 a.m. and Staff meeting at 11:00 a.m.

20 -- SAN ANGELO, Visit and Lunch with Seminarians at 11:00 a.m.

23 -- EOLA, St. Philip – Mass at 8:00 a.m.

24 -- SAN ANGELO, Tom Green County Jail – Mass at 9:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m.

Sacred Heart Cathedral – Christmas Vigil Mass at Midnight

25 -- SAN ANGELO, Goodfellow Air Force Base – Christmas Mass at 9:00 a.m.

26-28 -- Rest and Prayer

JANUARY

1 -- SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral – Mass for Mother of God at 9:00 a.m.

4-6 -- HOUSTON – Wedding

7-11 -- SAN ANTONIO - Bishops' Retreat

12-14 -- LAREDO, Meeting of Texas/Mexican Bishops

19 -- Midland, St. Ann –

Diocesan Schools Commission Meeting at 9:00 a.m. _

20 -- Menard, Sacred Heart - Mass at 9:00 a.m.

21 -- **SAN ANGELO**, Sacred Heart Cathedral – Ecumenical Service in honor of Dr. Martin

Luther King at 12:00 noon

22 -- SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral – Pro Life Mass at 12 noon

22 -- MIDLAND, Life Center – Service at 7:00 p.m.

23 -- SAN ANGELO, Christ the King Retreat Center – 11:30 a.m., – Luncheon for all the Priests of the Diocese to honor Father George Varakukala

25 -- SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral – Ecumenical Service for Christian Unity at 12 noon

26 -- SAN ANGELO, Annual Celebration of Santa Angela at 11:00 a.m.

27 -- SAN ANGELO, Holy Angels – Mass for Bread of Life Retreat at 10:45 a.m.

29 -- SAN ANGELO Holy Angels – Presentation to the RCIA at 6:30 p.m.

Christ the King Retreat Center

7-9 -- Diaconate Training Program

10 -- Heart of Mercy Prayer Group

11 -- Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament 5-6 p.m.

13 -- Bishop's Christmas Party

15 -- Diocesan Vocation Team Meeting

17 -- Heart of Mercy Prayer Group

18 -- Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, 5-6 p.m.

24-25 -- Office Closed for Christmas.

31 -- Heart of Mercy Prayer Group

NECROLOGY JANUARY

10 -- Rev. Francis Beazley, OMI (1992)

13 -- Rev. Joseph Walter (1989)

16 -- Rev. Cyril Lange (1971)

16 -- Msgr. Timothy Murphy (2004)

18 -- Rev. Patrick Ryan, OMI (1975)

19 -- Fr. Robert Kelly (1999)

26 -- Deacon D. J. Goetz (2003)

26 -- Deacon Jack Peterson (1987)

Advent: a time to review lives since last Christmas**By Bishop Michael Pfeifer**

The time that has passed since last Christmas will differ for each of us. It may have been a time of joyful occasions; it may have witnessed the fulfillment of fond hopes. It may have seen some sorrow, some losses, some grieving. And it may have been a rather ordinary year.

Let's reflect upon it. Where was the hand of God upon us and upon those we especially love in the past year? What blessings has our God showered upon us? What

challenges and trails has "his horn of saving strength" enabled us to get through?

Then let's look to the future, the time that will pass between now and this coming Christmas. What darkness do we hope and trust that the Dayspring's light of the Holy Spirit will shine upon? What shadows of death do we hope to be delivered from? What way of peace do we hope to be guided into? Advent is a new time of hope and new beginning as we open our hearts to God's abundant mercy and love.

**Faith like a child**

Roman Reeves, young son of David and Candace Reeves, show his adoration for Christ at St. Stephen's Catholic Church in Midland.

PHOTO BY DENNIS ROBSON

Coming to America: Pope to visit NY, Washington in April

By Carol Zimmermann
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Pope Benedict XI will visit Washington and New York April 15-20.

Archbishop Pietro Sambi, apostolic nuncio to the United States, confirmed the dates of the papal trip and announced the pope's itinerary in remarks Nov. 12 at the beginning of the annual fall meeting of the U.S. bishops in Baltimore.

"Peter, the rock on which Jesus founded this church, will be among us in the person of his

successor, Benedict the XI," Archbishop Sambi told the bishops.

The official title of the upcoming papal trip is "Apostolic Visit to the United States of America and to the Seat of the United Nations."

According to the archbishop, the pope will arrive in Washington April 15 and will receive an official welcome at the White House April 16. That afternoon, coincidentally his 81st birthday, he will address the U.S. bishops.

The following day he will celebrate Mass at the new Washington Nationals baseball stadium

in Washington. Later that day he will meet with directors of Catholic universities and colleges and diocesan educational leaders at The Catholic University of America in Washington and then he is to attend an interreligious meeting at the Pope John Paul II Cultural Center.

On April 18, the pope will be in New York to address the United Nations in the morning and attend an ecumenical meeting in the afternoon. The following day, the third anniversary of his election as pope, he will concelebrate Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral in the morning and meet with youths and seminarians in the afternoon.



Pope Benedict

'Golden Compass' author anti-Christian

By Denis Grasska
Catholic News Service

SAN DIEGO — To all of those Christian critics who have denounced the "Harry Potter" series as a subversive effort to lure unsuspecting children into the occult, Baylor University professor Perry Glanzer warns: Quit crying wolf.

In a commentary appearing in early August in the Austin American-Statesman daily newspaper, Glanzer noted that while social critics have blasted J.K. Rowling's tales of Harry Potter and his seven years at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, they have uttered nary a word about British writer Philip Pullman's "His Dark Materials," which Glanzer and others say is an overtly anti-Christian trilogy of fantasy novels for young adults.

The trilogy includes "The Golden Compass," "The Subtle Knife" and "The Amber Spyglass."

"I think that as long as people are agitated about whether Harry Potter makes you into a satanist, they're not going to be very bothered with me," Pullman said in an interview with Amazon.com. "So, I'm happy to (take) shelter under the great umbrella of Harry Potter."

A film adaptation of "The Golden Compass," starring Nicole Kidman and Daniel Craig, is set to debut in theaters Dec. 7. The Aug. 24 issue of Entertainment Weekly reported that the film will make no direct references to the Catholic Church.

The article also quoted Kidman, who recently reconnected with her Catholic faith, as saying, "The Catholic Church is part of my essence. I wouldn't be able to do this film if I thought it were at all anti-Catholic."

The Academy Award-winning actress also said that the material "has been



Nicole Kidman, left, in "The Golden Compass"

watered down a little" in the transition from page to screen.

Critics of Pullman include the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, which said its position is not "that the movie will strike Christian parents as troubling," noting that it is based "on the least offensive of the three books."

But, the league said in an Oct. 9 statement, viewers of the film "may very well find it engaging and then buy Pullman's books for Christmas. That's the problem." Glanzer also pointed out that Pullman told The Washington Post that through his work, "I'm trying to undermine the basis of Christian belief." But those who praise his work say he is not attacking Christianity itself, but criticizing dogmatism and how religion is used to oppress people.

"His Dark Materials" recounts the adventures of Lyra Belacqua, a 12-year-old girl in an alternate universe that resembles our own. With the assistance of several other characters, she sets out to overthrow the Authority. The novels depict him as a weak, false god and, in the final book in the trilogy, he actually dies. Also, an angel informs one of the main

characters that "God, the Creator, the Lord, Yahweh, El, Adonai, the King, the Father, the Almighty" are really all just names the first angel gave himself in an attempt to set himself up as a divine being.

The novels also take a harsh view of the church, which is called the Magisterium and is depicted as an oppressive institution that appears to have fallen for the Authority's ruse.

The church's minions are the books' principal villains, who are obsessed with a substance called Dust, which is connected to original sin. They are not above kidnapping and performing experiments on innocent children.

One character states that, since its beginning, the church has "tried to suppress and control every natural impulse," and that all churches share the same fundamental goals: to "control, destroy, obliterate every good feeling."

"His Dark Materials" has amassed a collection of prestigious awards, including the 1995 Carnegie Medal for children's literature in the United Kingdom, which he earned for "Northern Lights" (published in the United States as "The Golden Compass").

Pope designates 23 new cardinals from 14 countries

By John Thavis
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — In a liturgy that emphasized the church's cultural diversity and its unity of mission, Pope Benedict XI created 23 new cardinals from 14 countries.

The group included U.S. Cardinal John P. Foley, grand master of the Knights of the Holy Sepulcher, and Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston.

The pope, presiding over his second consistory, told the new cardinals he had chosen them to be the "closest advisers and collaborators" of his ministry in Rome, the church's traditional center.

At the same time, he said, the cardinals' geographical variety reflects Catholicism's global expansion and the fact that today the church "speaks every language of the world."

International groups of pilgrims who packed St. Peter's Basilica for the Nov. 24 consistory added emphasis to the pope's words, applauding, cheering, ululating and even waving national flags when the new cardinals' names were announced.

The pope made a special appeal for peace in Iraq and said his naming of Cardinal Emmanuel-Karim Delly of Baghdad, the Chaldean patriarch, was a sign of his closeness to the country's Christian population.

"They are experiencing in their own flesh the dramatic consequences of an enduring conflict and now live in a fragile and delicate political situation," the pope said.

"Together we want to reaffirm the solidarity of the entire church with the Christians of that beloved land and ask prayers for the beginning of the hoped-for reconciliation for all the peoples involved," he said.

During the consistory, each cardinal knelt as the pope placed on his head a red three-cornered hat, called a biretta. The pope told them the color was not only a sign of the cardinal's dignity, but also a visible reminder of their readiness to act with courage "even to the point of shedding your blood."

Adviento

Tiempo de espera y esperanza cristiana

por el Obispo Miguel Pfeifer, OMI

El Adviento es una temporada de espera y esperanza cristiana. La temporada de Adviento nos prepara para la gran fiesta de la Navidad, el nacimiento del Niño Jesús. Es un tiempo para preguntarnos, ¿en qué ponemos nuestras esperas y esperanzas? ¿Cómo captamos los signos de esperanza en nuestro mundo?

En el tiempo de Adviento, Cristo nos dice: "Velen, pues, y hagan oración continuamente, para que puedan escapar de todo lo que ha de suceder y comparecer seguros ante el Hijo del hombre". (Lc21, 25-28, 34-36)

Comparto con ustedes una reflexión sobre el tema de la espera y esperanza que viene del Misal Mensual para el primer Domingo de Adviento. No es lo mismo espera (lo que llega es debido al esfuerzo humano) que esperanza (lo que adviene nos sobrepasa humanamente). Pero tampoco hay que contraponerlas: la esperanza cristiana pasa a través de genuinas esperas humanas. A veces nuestro pueblo tiene una gran esperanza y pocas esperas humanas. Los acomodados viven únicamente pendientes de las esperas cifradas en el dinero, el poder, la comodidad, etc. Los pobres y marginados esperan siempre una sociedad nueva, un reparto de bienes y oportunidades, un Reino de Dios con libertad y justicia. Esto entraña que se derrumben muchos "mundos" viejos, muchas esperas falsas.

Podemos distinguir tres

'FABULAS' (Tabalenguas)

Fábulas fabulosas hay en fabulosos fabularios, fabuladores y fabulistas hacen fábulas fabulosas; pero la fabulosidad de las fábulas del fabulista no son fabulosas si no hace un fabulario de fábulas.

-- el Obispo Miguel Pfeifer, OMI

niveles de espera, según necesidades y deseos: la espera pasiva de los no comprometidos; la espera interesada del burgués a su favor; y la espera creadora de los activos a favor del pueblo. La esperanza es el entramado de la vida. Según como esperamos, así somos: impacientes o tranquilos, afirmativos o escépticos, comprometidos o desganados. Algunos profetas de calamidades sólo ven la "mala noticia", no la "buena nueva". La persona que espera de verdad tiene confianza en el cumplimiento de las promesas de Dios.

Jesús esperó activamente la venida del Reino. Y, porque esperaba, encontró lo esperado: una nueva vida de resucitado. El cristiano debe esperar, al modo de Jesús, la plenitud del Reino, a pesar de los fracasos, de los "signos" catastróficos, de "lo que se nos viene encima". Espera con firmeza quien espera la "liberación", para lo cual es necesario tener una actitud básica: la "vigilancia", con objeto de ver en el tiempo de los signos los signos de los tiempos.

¿En qué ponemos nuestras esperas y esperanzas? ¿Cómo captamos los signos de esperanza en nuestro mundo.

The Church calls for a different kind of political action, social involvement

By Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI

Unfortunately, politics in our country is too often a contest of powerful interests, partisan attacks, and personal ambition. The Church calls for a different kind of political engagement: one shaped by the moral convictions of well-formed consciences, and focused on the dignity of every human being, pursuit of the common good, and the protection of the weak and the vulnerable. The Catholic call to faithful citizenship affirms the importance of political participation and insists that public service is a worthy vocation. As Catholics, we must be guided more by our moral convictions, than by our attachment to a political party or interest group. When necessary, our participation should help transform the party to which we belong; we should not let the party transform us in such a way that we neglect or deny fundamental moral truth.

The Church helps members to address political and social questions by helping them to develop a well-formed conscience. Catholics have a serious and life-long obligation to form their consciences in accord with biblical principles, human reason and the teaching of the Church. Conscience is the voice of God resounding in the human heart, revealing the truth to us and calling us to do what is good while shunning what is evil. Conscience always requires serious attempts to make sound judgments about moral ques-

Prudential judgment, guided by the Holy Spirit, is needed in applying moral principles to specific policy choices in the areas such as abortion, euthanasia, housing, health care, immigration, and many other life issues. This does not mean that all choices are equally valid, or that the guidance of Church leaders is just another political opinion or policy preference among many others.

tions based on the values of our faith.

The purpose of politics is to advance the common good, by defending the sanctity of human life from the moment of conception until natural death. In doing this, we must always be clear that a good end does not justify an immoral means. We must recognize that not all possible courses of action to address a situation are morally acceptable. We must carefully discern which public policies are morally sound. In the field of politics, Catholics may choose different ways to respond to compelling social problems, but we cannot differ on our moral obligation to help build a more just and peaceful world through morally acceptable means, so that the weak and vulnerable are protected and human rights and dignity are defended.

Decisions about political life are complex and require the exercise of a well-formed conscience aided by prudence. This begins by recognizing that laws that violate human life or weaken its protection must be opposed outright. Voters who know-

ingly, willingly, and directly support public policies or legislations that undermine fundamental moral principles, cooperate with evil — and will be held accountable by God.

Prudential judgment, guided by the Holy Spirit, is needed in applying moral principles to specific policy choices in the areas such as abortion, euthanasia, housing, health care, immigration, and many other life issues. This does not mean that all choices are equally valid, or that the guidance of Church leaders is just another political opinion or policy preference among many others. Rather, Catholics must listen carefully to the Church's authoritative teachers when they apply Catholic social teaching to specific political and social issues.

Participation in political life in light of fundamental moral principles is an essential duty of every Catholic and all people of good will, and requires much study, being informed on the Church's official teaching on many life issues, and most of all praying for the light and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

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Making Sense Out of Bioethics

Getting it right on the morning after

By Rev. Thad Pacholczyk

The "morning-after" pill, also known as "Plan B," is often provided in hospital emergency rooms to women who have been sexually assaulted. It is typically used within 72 hours of the rape, and appears to prevent pregnancy in one of two ways. First, it can prevent ovulation (the release of an egg from a woman's ovary), and for this reason, it is commonly termed "emergency contraception." While this action of blocking the release of an egg is the most likely mechanism by which it routinely prevents pregnancy, another mechanism may also be operative under certain circumstances.



Fr. Pacholczyk

This second mechanism of action involves altering the lining of the uterus so it becomes less hospitable to the arrival of an embryo from the fallopian tube. In other words, if an egg has already been released from the ovary, and it has been successfully fertilized, the morning-after pill may be able to prevent that arriving embryo from implanting into the uterine wall.

Controversy exists as to the likelihood and frequency of this second mechanism of action, but even the Food and Drug Administration (the agency which gives official approval for the use of the drug) acknowledges the possibility on its website: "Plan B may also work by... preventing attachment (implantation) to the uterus (womb)." The package insert for the drug from the manufacturer (Barr Pharmaceuticals) uses identical language when explaining how Plan B works.

Significant ethical concerns are raised by this second mechanism, namely that "emergency contraception" may actually work as "emergency abortion" as well. When these ethical concerns are coupled with new state laws (notably in Connecticut and Massachusetts) mandating that the morning-after pill be provided by hospitals to all victims of sexual assault who request it, it becomes clear that medical professionals may have to confront situations of dramatic conscience violations because of this immoral form of legislative coercion by the state.

(Please See **BIOETHICS/19**)

Local youth 'Discover The Way' to Christ

The Angelus

COLUMBUS, Ohio -- Eighteen youth and their adult leaders made their way to Columbus, Ohio along with S. Adelina Garcia, OSF and Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI to attend the biennial National Catholic Youth Conference November 8-11. The theme "Discover the Way," was touched on throughout the weekend as the speakers shared their struggle to find the way to Christ. Twenty thousand participants from across the country gathered to listen, pray, laugh, cry and celebrate their faith.

Below are some comments made by the youth from St. Ann in Sonora and St. Joseph in Odessa:

"NCYC was an amazing experi-

ence. There were so many gifted Catholic youth and speakers there, and the talks/workshops really spoke out to me. Jason and Crystalina Evert were there and gave a "Romance without Regret" workshop. It has changed my personal outlook on boys and dating. I bought some books from their booth.

I'm going to give them to my friends so they may also learn what I learned at NCYC about our Catholic beliefs on dating.

"The theme was "Discover the



Youths from the diocese and sponsors who attended the National Catholic Youth Conference in Columbus, Ohio.

Way." By the end of the conference I

(Please See **NCYC/17**)

Planned Parenthood: A great choice, for those who don't want to deal with their pregnancy

Editor's Note: The following article was submitted by Dustin Sanchez, a student at Greenwood High School. It provides a 16-year-old's outlook on Planned Parenthood.

By Dustin Sanchez

What could be more wrong. That was not even a question, but rather a statement. The harsh reality of abortion is that there is no reality past abortion. Neither the child, nor the parent can have one after the act of abortion is performed. Abortion not only ends the life of the child, but it also practically ends the life of the parents. For the parents in the audience, think of your child. Yes, it's easy to think about aborting a pile of cells, that one can not see, but when it's a whole person, it becomes another matter. There's a fine line between

having to "deal with that problem" and murder. A fine line, which abortion plays heck with.

Of course we have to mention the Bible. Of course we have to mention that it says that all life is sacred. And, all life is. But at what point, one needs to ask, does life begin? Does it begin at conception? Does it begin whenever the woman finds out? Does it begin when you go to the doctor, and listen to the first heartbeats of the unborn? Life begins, when it begins. That may not make much sense at first, but think about it. How can one get rid of something that one says is not there? If life does not exist, then getting rid of something when it isn't supposed to exist in the first place just does not make sense. It simply does not add together why one would get rid of something that would not

matter. Surely, it should not be so hard to get rid of something if it does not turn into something. Or at least that would be the rational behind it. But, as much as science says that a fetus is nothing, inconsequential, we have to remember, they try to hide the stuff that is in plain sight. Look at the children around you, no, look at anyone around you. Abortionists try to use fancy words, to use logic to stop you from realizing that everyone around you, everyone that you love, was once a baby. And every child was once a fetus, safe and warm in his mother's stomach. Or, at least that is how it is supposed to be.

People get abortions, because they do not want to deal with a child. A CHILD. It is not that a woman does not want to deal with a small mass of

(Please See **STUDENT/16**)

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Drug Court to become reality in Midland Co.

By Jimmy Patterson
The Angelus

Midland County Judge Mike Bradford told a briefing room filled with dignitaries, law enforcement and judicial officials in November that the drug court concept will soon be reality.

"We will have a drug court in Midland County in 2008," Bradford told those assembled for the Nov. 27 meeting of Bishop Pfeifer's Drug Taskforce, held at the Midland County Detention Center.

Those in attendance, all of whom have expressed encouragement in or helped with the Bishop's taskforce, were further encouraged after hearing from Tom Green County Court-at-Law Judge Penny Roberts, who said she has seen families reunited and individuals changed because of the one-on-one attention given to those who progress through the drug court.

In attendance were Midland interim police chief Price Robinson, MISD police chief David Colburn, Midland County Court-at-Law judges Al Walvoord and Marvin Moore, and district judges Jody Gilles and Dean Rucker.

A Midland County jail offender and confessed ex-meth user spoke to the crowd, saying he wished he had had the option of a drug court when he was using. Adam Cooper, 27, said, "(Not receiving) personal attention from the court is what I've been stressed about lately."



The Basilica at Lourdes

Lourdes plans for busy year in 2008

By Alexandra Morris
Regina Tours

December 8 begins the Jubilee Year of the Sanctuaries at Lourdes, in the Pyrenees of Southern France. This Jubilee celebrates the 150th anniversary of the Apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary to Bernadette Soubirous.

What happened in Lourdes in 1858? In the 19th century, Lourdes was one of the main areas in the district with more than 4,000 people. Situated on the banks

of the river Gave de Pau, mills were plentiful; many were situated around the outside of the town, and in one of these, the Boly Mill, Francois and Louise Soubirous lived happily for 10 years with their four children. The eldest was baptized Marie-Bernarde but called Bernadette. She was born January 7, 1844.

In 1854 the Soubirous family was reduced to extreme poverty because an

(Please See **LOURDES/16**)

Pope to visit Lourdes in '08

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Officials confirmed Pope Benedict XI will visit the Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes in France to mark the 150th anniversary of the Marian apparitions there, but said the exact time period of the papal visit was not yet known.

Bishop Jacques Perrier of Tarbes and Lourdes, who is in charge of the preparations for the jubilee celebrations, said the papal journey was "a sure

Please See **POPE/16**

Odessa church begins Project Gabriel, a parish-based Crisis Pregnancy program



ODESSA – When St. Elizabeth Ann Seton parishioner Jose Mayans returned from a trip to Houston, he told his pastor Fr. Mark Woodruff about seeing a sign on a Catholic Church lawn. The sign read, "Pregnant? Need Help? Call the Gabriel Project at this parish." Mayans asked, "Why don't we have something like this here?"

Fr. Woodruff made calls to the Respect Life Office of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston and learned that the Church Gabriel Project is a program reaching out to women in crisis pregnancies. The goal of the project is to assist pregnant women obtain all the help they

need, physically, spiritually and emotionally. It offers them the support of a faith community. It also encourages networking and collaborative ministry between professionals and volunteers in the parish. The goal of the Gabriel Project is to provide alternatives to abortion for women in need.

St. Elizabeth's Parish Pastoral Council studied the project and decided to make it part of the parish's pro-life program.

"We cannot oppose abortion, and then abandon those who feel their spiritual, material and emotional needs offer no other solution," Woodruff told them.

Once the decision to adopt the Gabriel Project was made, Deacon Alan Neff, Pastoral Associate at St. Elizabeth's, spearheaded the organization. Volunteers were gathered. Galveston-Houston Respect Life coordinator Dr. Marcella Colbert came from Houston for their training. The St. Elizabeth's Knights of Columbus Council #8773 donated a sign placed on the church lawn inviting women in need to call the church at 432-366-2717 (exclusive-ly for the Gabriel Project.)

Among the volunteers are a nurse,

(Please See **GABRIEL 18**)

November 20, 2007

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

I am happy to present to you in an abbreviated form the Diocese of San Angelo's financial report for the most recent year ending June 30, 2007 as prepared by our outside auditors, Carneiro, Chumney & Co., L.C. This audit has been carefully studied by the Presbyteral Council, the Diocesan Finance Council, the Diocesan Finance Officer and myself.

You will want to note that this year the diocese had a profit from operations of \$73,759 (which was largely attributable to the sale of some ITFS/TV frequencies). Total net assets, however, reflected a \$1.4 million adjustment to comply with a new Financial Accounting Standard Board requirement (issued by the official accounting regulatory board) whereby, effective this year, organizations must recognize the outstanding liability for (the priests') benefit plans as if no future contributions were ever made (for instance, if the diocese were to cease to exist tomorrow). Obviously, the church plans on continuing to exist and each year we have and will continue to fully budget and fund for this future liability for our priests. Nevertheless, this new FASB 158 presentation is required, and hence it appears within this year's official audit presentation.

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

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

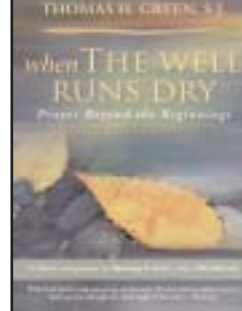
THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND PROGRAM OFFICES OF THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SAN ANGELO			
STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION			
JUNE 30, 2007 AND 2006			
ASSETS			
	2007	2006	
Current Assets:			
Cash and cash equivalents	6,699,808	4,373,417	
Cash investments restricted for horse fund	1,418,516	1,313,461	
Accounts receivable	783,580	333,600	
Grants receivable	--	158,000	
Parish notes receivable	751,839	1,932,838	
Prepaid benefit cost	3,266	124,285	
Other prepaid assets	640,127	54,982	
Property and equipment, net	3,253,952	3,146,183	
Intangible asset	--	393,920	
Total Current Assets	13,551,108	12,022,686	
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS			
Liabilities:			
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	517,664	378,646	
Accrued pension plan liabilities	1,272,678	129,873	
Due to cemetery	373,819	349,215	
Parish collections for designated purposes	18,408	10,818	
Parish savings deposits	7,341,816	5,795,476	
Total Liabilities	9,523,325	6,663,248	
Net Assets:			
Unrestricted	2,181,606	3,655,410	
Temporarily restricted	428,261	390,567	
Permanently restricted	1,418,516	1,313,461	
Total Net Assets	4,028,383	5,359,438	
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	13,551,108	12,022,686	
The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.			
-			

Financial Report for the Diocese of San Angelo

Year Ending June 30, 2007

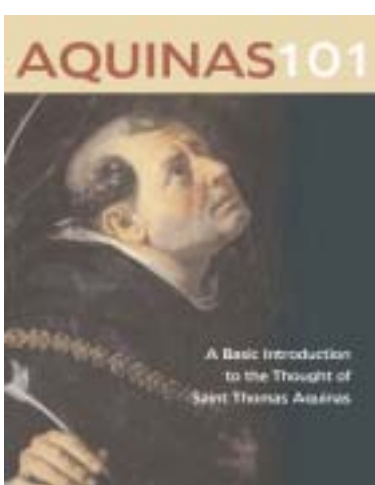
THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND PROGRAM OFFICES OF THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SAN ANGELO				
STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES				
YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2007				
	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	Total
Revenues, Gains and Other Support:				
Contributions	231,029	23,050	105,055	359,134
Parish assessments	1,941,716	--	--	1,941,716
Interest and dividends	400,018	66,713	--	466,731
Grants	117,600	150,000	--	267,600
Gain on the sale of assets	85,200	--	--	85,200
Other income and fees	530,875	--	--	530,875
Net insurance premiums	6,381	--	--	6,381
Amounts released from restriction	202,069	(202,069)	--	--
Total Revenues, Gains, and Other Support	3,514,888	37,694	105,055	3,657,637
Expenses:				
Program:				
Seminarians education	103,603	--	--	103,603
Vocations	15,370	--	--	15,370
Clergy medical and assistance	447,656	--	--	447,656
Continuing education of clergy	69,692	--	--	69,692
Permanent diaconate	121,311	--	--	121,311
Women religious	2,091	--	--	2,091
Christ the King Retreat Center	439,195	--	--	439,195
Religious Education and Formation	289,343	--	--	289,343
Communications and paper	127,755	--	--	127,755
Contributions and assessments	196,137	--	--	196,137
Tribunal	158,376	--	--	158,376
University Apostolate (Newman Center)	89,403	--	--	89,403
LIMEX	14,669	--	--	14,669
Liturgy office	13,820	--	--	13,820
Superintendent of schools	13,733	--	--	13,733
Criminal Justice Ministry	33,604	--	--	33,604
Victims assistance	64,947	--	--	64,947
Parish insurance	5,735	--	--	5,735
General and Administrative:				
Administrative office	479,877	--	--	479,877
Business services	446,407	--	--	446,407
Bishop's residence	31,860	--	--	31,860
Capital renewal and replacement	24,689	--	--	24,689
Interest	394,282	--	--	394,282
Other	323	--	--	323
Total Expenses	3,583,878	--	--	3,583,878
Change in Net Assets	(68,990)	37,694	105,055	73,759
Cumulative effect of change in accounting principle	(1,404,814)	--	--	(1,404,814)
Net assets, beginning of year	3,655,410	390,567	1,313,461	5,359,438
NET ASSETS, END OF YEAR	2,181,606	428,261	1,418,516	4,028,383
The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.				
-				

Book Ideas for
Christmas from
St. Anthony
Messenger Press



Three titles on PRAYER, including "May I Have This Dance," by Joyce Rupp; "Behold the Beauty of the Lord" by Henri Nouwen and "When the Well Runs Dry," by Thomas Green.

"AQUINAS 101: A Basic Introduction to the Thoughts of St. Thomas Aquinas" is shown below. All four are available in paperback from St. Anthony Messenger Press. catalog.americancatholic.org.



Advent 2007

Taking stock of all there is to be done this season

By Douglas W. Kmiec
Catholic News Service

The Advent season is upon us. A new liturgical year begins and the calendar year soon ends. Vestment colors of purple remind us of penitence — a time to take stock both as citizens of our respective countries and as Catholics.

There is much to do!

Here is a short list:

1. End the war in Iraq. This has been the national instruction at least since the 2006 mid-term election; yet, the dying continues with both political parties paralyzed in parliamentary maneuver.

Stop it.

Remember, this is a government "of the people!" As this is written, there are around 3,870 U.S. soldiers killed and 28,500 seriously wounded. The economic cost of the war is edging past \$600 billion with the president requesting yet another \$200 billion for 2008. Our daily spending is over \$270 million, with the cost of deploying one U.S. soldier for a year in Iraq roughly \$390,000.

Think of the schools, hospitals, homes and businesses not being built with only a fraction of the money being spent for war. True, one cannot build in chaos, but as the Army Corp of Engineers has learned, even basic services promote peace. Respectably substituting reconstruction for military expenditure while bringing significant troops home is overdue.

2. Seriously commit to ending our dependence on oil.

Electricity is less expensive and cleaner than petroleum, and electricity can be generated domestically independent of the global oil market. It makes no sense in the name of our national security to buy \$100 barrels of oil from those who in turn use this vast revenue to promote hate and religious distortion.

3. Confront terrorism with international understanding.

A year ago, 38 Islamic scholars authored an open letter of religious common ground to Pope Benedict XI within a month of his Regensburg lecture. The number this past fall grew to 144 from 44 nations, belonging to the different currents of Muslim thought — Sunni, Shiite, Ismaili, Ja'fari, Ibadi. Some among the signatories have in the past praised terrorist suicide missions.

The letter, by contrast, aims to make the love of God and neighbor the "common word" between Muslims and Christians.

The Vatican, under the learned hand of Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, is preparing a response. While the good cardinal is appropriately cautious, on the terms stated, an apt answer would be "Amen."

Presidential debates have come and gone with little or no recognition of this positive development. The church must lead.

4. Confront terrorism with the international rule of law.

In fairness to the United States, it has been bearing the singular responsibility for the world's defense against terror far too long. Whomever Americans choose as our next president must work with his or her foreign counterparts to unify and more equitably share the duties of both military defense and containing terror.

Investigating, prosecuting, detaining and keeping under surveillance those who threaten the world order must reflect worldwide commitment. Keeping true to the promise of the international rule of law, including the Geneva Conventions, means not extending them without sensible modification to address the dangerous or, as Aquinas wrote, perfidious men who strike at the community.

Gitmo (Guantanamo Bay) may close when there are well-managed alternatives in foreign venues.

5. Get our own house in order in the U.S. It's time to remind young people of the importance of forming families and raising children well.

In addition, part of the happy calculus of reducing the dependency on oil will be strengthening our stewardship of natural resources, and frankly, just reducing excess consumption.

Tax burdens on intact families ought to be lightened and simplified so that education and health care decisions are made in the genuine spirit of Catholic subsidiarity — from the bottom up. The last thing America needs is more excuses, and new, centralized bureaucracies are usually excuses.

Yes, there is much to do — not out of fear or apprehension but with hope and optimism. "Be not afraid," Pope John Paul II said. "We are God's people, and the challenges we face can be taken up cheerfully as a continuation of the mission of Christ Jesus, whose birthday once again can remind a world much in need of his peace that the real Christmas story is true."



The man who put the Christmas message in a timeless story

By Antoinette Bosco / Catholic News Service

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

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

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

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

His words had me reflecting on Dickens' story and remembering that he himself once said he hoped it would "pleasantly haunt the lives" of his audiences; and it has, generations of them.

As for why, it certainly is because Dickens dealt with the two ultimate themes of existence -- life and death -- and

with human failing. That failing, of course, is the love of money which so easily carries one to the extreme of crowding out all the really good things in life.

When money becomes one's "god," the next logical need is to have power. For without power, you cannot protect your money.

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

Cratchit, a man who values fidelity to his family, accepts this exploitation in order to keep his job and support those who are dependent upon him. He also bears a cross -- knowing he cannot provide the medical care needed by his son Tiny Tim. Thus the child faces an early death.

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

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

But that's the seduction of "A Christmas Carol." By undergoing his symbolic death, Scrooge realizes how he lost his life, and he asks for forgive-

ness and another chance. It is a wish that is granted to him.

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

I got the sense that I was supposed to write about Charles Dickens this Christmas because when I put down Chesterton's book I picked up another small book that had numerous biographies of men of science and literature. There I found some personal writings of Charles Dickens, a father of nine, who died suddenly at age 58.

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

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

His message is beautifully appropriate for Advent!

MACC: Over 50,000 have participated in center's programs in 3 1/2 decades

(From 20)

Jan. 17, 2005.

The archbishop is most widely known for his tenure earlier this decade as president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, during which time national policies concerning the church response to the sexual abuse crisis were developed.

Archbishop Gregory began by summarizing the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, a document completed in October 2004 at the behest of Pope John Paul II.

"It contained the principles of the most important teaching of the past century," the archbishop said.

The Compendium evaluates and judges issues of justice and peace, and articulates how faith impacts social doctrine. Archbishop Gregory explained that, in the Industrial Revolution, services became available at an incredible rate, and at the same time it also made the lives of workers vulnerable to the cycles of industry.

"The church stressed the dignity of the human person as the focal point of rights and justice," said the archbishop. "The individual person is the only creation God fashioned in his own image."

He added that some of those same social forces are operating today, but none being more prominent in the Western World than immigration and the movement of peoples.

Archbishop Gregory noted, sadly, that "the rhetoric accompanying the issue provides more heat than light. Some will say the solutions to these challenges are simple and obvious, but nothing could be further from the truth."

He continued by saying that the discussion about immigration touches on the economy, security, rights of families and the dignity of the human person.

The archbishop praised MACC for the pivotal role it has played in educating people to the gifts and aspirations of the immigrant community, and also encouraging Hispanics to respond to the multicultural nature of the United States.

"But their pastoral care in local churches is the primary focus of MACC," he added. "Pastors of souls and people engaged in ministries have benefited."

The culture represented by Hispanics embody many different nations, indigenous cultures, and languages, said Archbishop Gregory. "The tendency to consider language as the barrier to culture is so much more complicated than language difficulties. The entire Spanish-speaking world is hardly captured by a single heritage, neither are the English-

speaking world or African-Americans."

The newest immigrants bring more advantages than challenges to this country, the archbishop emphasized. "They bring the precious heritage of our Catholic faith. The challenge of this moment centers around legal documents, but whatever terms are used, the constant struggle is for human dignity and justice."

He closed by saying that MACC advances the understanding of Hispanic people and the wide breadth of the gifts they bring through the bi-directional activities they provide, such as respecting and recognizing Latino heritage and training Hispanic leaders — cleric and lay — to become spokespersons for dialogue for a world smaller and more fragmented.

"MACC has been working to apply Catholic social teaching for a hopeful tomorrow for us all," concluded Archbishop Gregory.

The archbishop's address was followed by the presentation of the Humanitarian Awards. In his remarks, Archbishop Gomez called MACC a blessing for the archdiocese, and accepted recognition from the organization on behalf of all Hispanic priests in the United States. "Hispanic priests have been a blessing for the United States," he said.

Greg Souquette, H-E-B senior vice president/GM for the San Antonio Region, accepted the honor on behalf of the grocery store chain by saying, "We embrace MACC's goal of developing leaders in the community and improving the lives of people throughout the United States and Mexico."

The Guadalupanas of the archdiocese were represented by Rosario Peña, who told the audience, "We are honored to be here tonight and thank you for what you do for the church."

A surprise special presentation was then announced by Ruben Escobedo, secretary/treasurer of the MACC Board of Directors. Sister María Elena González, RSM, former president of MACC, received an original framed bas relief of Our Lady of Guadalupe by artist Erik Christianson.

After a standing ovation and sustained applause, Sister María Elena said, "Jesus knew his mission was to speak to those who are uncomfortable, and I believe this is what MACC's vision is all about. The last 14 years have been challenging and profoundly meaningful, and I have loved serving the poor."

In three-and-a-half decades of service, 50,000 people have participated in MACC's programs and its staff has conducted workshops on four continents.

Bishop Michael Pfeifer is on the board of directors of the Mexican American Cultural Center.

Family

Recalls make us think outside the box this Christmas

By Maureen Pratt

The recent spate of product recalls during the busiest toy-buying season of the year leaves many adults confused and worried about what gifts they will give their children and other loved ones. As alarming as the current state of toy safety is, it also provides an opportunity for people to exercise creativity and extra thoughtfulness in what presents they put under their Christmas trees and into their loved ones' hands.

Here are some gift suggestions that may appeal to all age groups and maturity levels:

▶ The whole family can enjoy season passes to the local children's museum, an aquarium, zoo

or museum of general appeal. At Christmas, these passes can be wrapped up with a guidebook to the locale or a video of a virtual tour. (Most of these venues also have Web sites the family can explore beforehand.)

▶ Visits made throughout the year will promote family togetherness, learning for all, and might even spark career interests or a desire to volunteer.

▶ Children interested in sports can be given a piece of equipment, lessons (golf, tennis, swimming) or tickets to a professional sporting event along with a book about the history of the sport and those who play it.

▶ Children who like music might enjoy a musical instrument and lessons. The mental and physical dexterity they develop will apply not only to their artistic pursuit but to many other facets of their lives too.

▶ Spiritual health can be nurtured through gifts of books on faith. Young children are often fasci-

nated by stories of the lives of the saints. Older children can appreciate faith-based books and family heirlooms -- perhaps a guide to saying the rosary along with a rosary that belonged to a grandparent.

▶ Creative thinking is important at any age and can be nurtured in even the youngest children by the gift of a simple set of building blocks (that are not so small that they present a choking hazard). Older children might benefit from building airplane or ship models, drawing or painting sets or a telescope with a guide to the sky.

▶ Many families have a rich ethnic heritage demonstrated in needlework, pottery, dance, music and other creative forms. Some are expressed in different languages. Besides serving as an excellent gift for a child at Christmas, giving instruction in specific heritage manifestations creates a bridge from one generation to another, ensuring that beautiful, meaningful traditions endure.

▶ A faith-centered family might decide that the most memorable, meaningful Christmas they could have would be to volunteer their time as a family at a local shelter, food collection drive or other community event. Or the family could make a commitment to contribute financially throughout the coming year to a missionary organization, church or community agency that serves others.

▶ To explore local, national and international opportunities for service, contact your local diocesan office of missions, Catholic Charities (www.catholiccharitiesusa.org) or the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (www.usccb.org) and click "Evangelization & Outreach".

Given the rapid pace of unfolding safety problems, however, perhaps this is the Christmas to think outside the ordinary Christmas box and give gifts that promote health, education, charity and a deep and active expression of our faith.



Pratt

Bill & Monica Dodds

The myth of the perfect Christmas

By Bill and Monica Dodds
Catholic News Service

It's hard not to get caught up in the myth of the perfect Christmas -- in the unfounded and foolish belief that "this year!" everything will fall into place. No unpleasant surprises, no budget problems, no hassles at work, no squabbles among relatives.

No way.

The Gospels tell us that even the first Christmas had its challenges when it came to traveling and accommodations. Fast-forward a couple of thousand years and, let's be honest, it really seems like Christmas when:

1. Someone knocks over the tree.
2. A batch of cookies ends up "extra-crispy."
3. The checkout line snakes its way to the back of the store.
4. Attendance at the "just-for-fun" office party is declared mandatory.
5. You end up with a drippy, sneezy cold.
6. "The" toy or electronic gizmo is out of stock until mid-February.
7. Every radio station seems to be playing "Holly, Jolly Christmas."

8. Blown fuse: in the house.
9. Blown fuse: in the family.
10. None of the above matters because: It's Christmas!

Catering Just Got Easier

Want to avoid cooking that giant meal for Christmas or New Year's? This Thanksgiving the two of us were invited to an extended family dinner that had been prepared by a local Safeway grocery store.

Yes, someone had to pick it up; yes, it took some prep time to heat up the items; yes, the hostess added some vegetables to the basic menu, but we -- and the other guests -- were amazed at what a wonderful meal it was. And, costing less than \$40, not only a great time-saver (and stress-reducer) but a bargain, too.

No doubt other major grocery store chains have a similar offer. (Including a choice of ham or prime rib instead of turkey.)

On the Web: Cranberry Hootycreeks

Looking for something different to put in that traditional, homemade, "ingredients-in-a-jar" gift? How could a cookie named "cranberry hootycreeks" not be a hit? You'll find the recipe and a few reviews at: www.christmas-cookies.com/recipes/recipe378.cranberry-hootycreeks.html.

Click the "Gifts in a Jar" link at the top of the page to see some other choices. Warning: Do not view when hungry.

Three Things Not to Say ...

At your spouse's office Christmas party:

-- "You're sure a great boss. Letting her use sick leave like that so we could go on vacation."

-- "Are you the Tim who steals office supplies or the Tim who never cleans up after himself in the lunch room?"

-- "So ... what? They decided not to let you go until the end of the year?"

A Gift for Yourself

How is it possible that Advent can blow by so quickly? That all those good intentions you made only a few weeks ago have fallen by the wayside? If you're looking for a great way to make the upcoming holy day better for you and your family, take the time to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation. (Or, in more traditional language: Go to confession!)

As we've written before, the Knights of Columbus have an online resource to help a person prepare to go to confession. Go to www.kofc.org, click on "Publications and Resources"; then "Catholic Information Services"; then "Devotional Resources"; and, finally, "Guide to Confession."

Bill and Monica Dodds are the founders of the Friends of St. John the Caregiver (www.FSJC.org) and editors of My Daily Visitor magazine. They can be contacted at BillandMonica@BillDodds.com. Their Web site is www.BillDodds.com.



Bill and Monica Dodds



Answers

1. Matthew
- 2 Acts
3. Romans
4. Galatians
5. Ephesians
6. Titus
7. Philemon
8. Jude
9. Revelation



READ MORE ABOUT IT Matthew 2 Q&A

1. Why did Herod summon the Magi?
2. Why was Jesus taken to Egypt?

BIBLE ACCENT

In Bible times, a family was considered blessed by God if it had many children, especially sons. The firstborn son was the most important child.

The family home was the center of learning, playing and working. Children studied the Scriptures and attended Sabbath services with their parents. They were also expected to help with farm work and care for the animals. Boys often learned the trades of their fathers.

Abraham was one of the most important Bible figures who did not have children. He prayed faithfully, and even though Abraham and his wife, Sara, were very old, God blessed him with a son, Isaac. The 12 original tribes of Israel were named after the children of Isaac.

SPOTLIGHT ON SAINTS St. Thomas Becket

Thomas Becket was born in London. He studied under religious teachers, and by the time he was 25 he was working in the household of Theobald, the archbishop of Canterbury.

Less than 10 years later, Thomas was the archdeacon of Canterbury and King Henry II named him chancellor. Thomas continued to rise to power and influence. When Theobald died, the king

insisted that Thomas replace him as archbishop.

Thomas rose early to pray and read the Scriptures. He visited the monks in the nearby cloister regularly; he encouraged young men to consider a vocation to the priesthood.

Conflicts arose when Thomas refused to obey certain orders of the king. He fled for his life, and the king took away some of his lands and possessions.

In the end he was able to return. But misunderstandings with the king continued. Thomas was murdered in his cathedral at the end of the year 1170 by four knights who thought they were doing the king's will.

We remember Thomas on Dec. 29.

BIBLE TRIVIA

Which two Gospel writers were not among the first apostles of Jesus? (Hint: Matthew 10) Answer: Mark and Luke.

PUZZLE

The following books of the New Testament are out of order. Can you put them back as they appear in the Bible?

Acts
Ephesians
Titus
Philemon
Jude
Galatians
Revelation
Matthew
Romans

JUST 4 KIDS

King Herod angered at news of birth of the baby Jesus

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem, Magi from the East began asking, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to give him our respect."

When King Herod, who did not have any newborn sons, heard who the Magi were looking for, he became angry and jealous. He called for his chief priests and scribes, who read to him a prophecy made by Micah:

"And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; since from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel."

Herod immediately sent a messenger to the Magi. He asked them to tell him about the signs they had seen. He did not tell them about his true feelings, but he tried to trick them by pretending to be kind. "Go," he said, "and search carefully for the child. When you have found him, bring me word, that I too may go and give him praise."

The Magi left King Herod and once again saw the star that they had been following. They followed its light and found Jesus with Mary. The Magi gave the child expensive gifts they had brought with them: gold, frankincense and myrrh. Later that night the men had dreams warning them not to tell Herod what they had found and to go home by a different route.

Joseph also had a dream that night. An angel of the Lord appeared to him and said: "Rise, take the child and his mother to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to kill him."

Joseph did not wait until morning. He awakened Mary. They packed and took Jesus to Egypt. Since Herod did not know which newborn boy might become the next king, he killed all boys less than 2 years old.

Later, after Herod had died and his son had taken over the kingdom, another angel spoke to Joseph in a dream: "Rise, take the child and his mother and go back to Israel, for those who wanted to kill the child are now dead."

Joseph took his family to Galilee and made a home in the town of Nazareth.

U.S. Bishops Annual Meeting

Papal visit, Iraq statement, Cardinal George vote top USCCB meeting

By Catholic News Service

BALTIMORE — The announcement of dates and locations for Pope Benedict XVI's U.S. visit next year highlighted the first day of the U.S. bishops' Nov. 12-15 fall general meeting in Baltimore. The April 15-20 trip will include visits to New York and Washington and an address at the United Nations.

On Nov. 13, for the first time in 36 years, the bishops elected a cardinal — Francis E. George of Chicago — as their next president.

The same day, with the approval of the body of bishops,

a new statement on Iraq was issued in the name of the bishops' president, Bishop William S. Skylstad of Spokane, Wash. It says that some U.S. policymakers "seem to fail to recognize sufficiently the reality and failures in Iraq and the imperative for new directions."

The statement bemoans a "political and partisan stalemate in Washington" that parallels a "dangerous political stalemate" that blocks reconciliation in Iraq. "As pastors, we have called for bipartisan action for almost two years," it adds. "Our country needs a new direction to reduce the war's deadly toll and to bring

our people together to deal with the conflict's moral and human dimension."

On Nov. 12 the bishops were briefed by the staff of the New York-based John Jay College of Criminal Justice on an ongoing study of the "causes and context" of clerical sexual abuse.

Researcher Karen Terry told the bishops that early research seems to indicate that the patterns of sexual abuse within the church are consistent with the experience of society as a whole.

Among the "clusters of hypothetical factors being studied" to

(Please See USCCB/16)



Francis Cardinal George, newly elected president of the U.S.C.C.B.

Bishops' Conference approves document on politics

By Nancy Frazier O'Brien
Catholic News Service

BALTIMORE — In what several bishops called "a watershed moment" for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the full body of bishops overwhelmingly approved a document intended to help Catholic voters form their consciences on a variety of issues before the 2008 elections.

"Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility From the Catholic Bishops of the United States" was approved by a 221-4 vote Nov. 14, the last public day of the Nov. 12-15 USCCB fall general assembly in Baltimore.

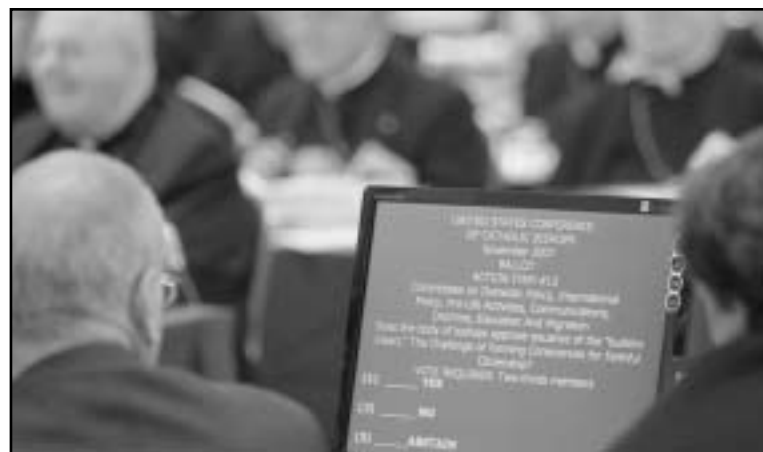
The bishops also endorsed a shorter document, designed as a parish bulletin insert, by a 221-1 vote.

Prepared by a task force made up of the chairmen of seven USCCB committees, the document underwent more than a dozen drafts and was still heavily amended during the meeting and immediately before the Nov. 14 vote.

The longer document rejects politics based on "powerful interests, partisan attacks, sound bites and media hype" and calls instead for "a different kind of political engagement."

That engagement must be "shaped by the moral convictions of well-formed consciences and focused on the dignity of every human being, the pursuit of the common good and the protection of the weak and vulnerable," it says.

Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio of Brooklyn,



Bishops study documents before voting at the recent USCCB November annual meeting.

N.Y., introduced the documents Nov. 12, saying that he spoke not only as chairman of the bishops' Committee on Domestic Policy but as "the leader of an unprecedented, extensive and some would say endless consultation" among seven USCCB committees.

"This document is a summary of Catholic teaching; it is not a voter guide," Bishop DiMarzio said shortly before the Nov. 14 vote. "It calls us as bishops to help form consciences for political life, not tell people how to vote."

But he also said "Faithful Citizenship" clearly distinguishes between "intrinsic evils like abortion and racism that can never be supported and the related, but different, moral obligation to serve 'the least of these,' seek justice and pursue peace."

In deciding how to vote, "there may be times when a Catholic who rejects a candi-

date's unacceptable position may decide to vote for that candidate for other morally grave reasons," the longer document says. "Voting in this way would be permissible only for truly grave moral interests, not to advance narrow interests, or partisan preferences or to ignore a fundamental moral evil."

The bishops admit that "Catholics may feel politically disenfranchised, sensing that no party and too few candidates fully share the church's comprehensive commitment to the dignity of the human person."

"As Catholics, we should be guided more by our moral convictions than by our attachment to a political party or interest group," the document says. "When necessary, our participation should help transform the party to which we belong; we

(Please See CONFERENCE/18)

USCCB Highlights

BALTIMORE (CNS) — At the U.S. Conference of Catholic bishops' Nov. 12-15 fall general meeting in Baltimore, the bishops:

■ Received details of Pope Benedict XVI's April 15-20 visit to the United States.

■ Authorized a new statement on Iraq that says some U.S. policymakers "seem to fail to recognize sufficiently the reality and failures in Iraq and the imperative for new directions." The statement was issued in the name of the outgoing USCCB president, Bishop William S. Skylstad of Spokane, Wash.

■ Elected Cardinal Francis E. George of Chicago as their new president, and Bishop Gerald F. Kicanas of Tucson, Ariz., as vice president. They had been USCCB vice president and secretary, respectively.

■ Heard a briefing from staff of the New York-based John Jay College of Criminal Justice on an ongoing study of the "causes and context" of clerical sexual abuse, with the early research suggesting that patterns of sexual abuse within the church are consistent with the experience of society as a whole.

■ Voted to draft a brief policy statement on embryonic stem-cell research and a pastoral document on reproductive technologies.

■ Approved a \$147.7 million budget for 2008 and a 16 percent reduction in the diocesan assessment to fund the USCCB.

■ Issued the 2008 version of their quadrennial "Faithful Citizenship" election statement, which rejects politics based on "powerful interests, partisan attacks, sound bites and media hype" and calls instead for "a different kind of political engagement," and approved a bulletin-ready insert summarizing its main points.

■ Gave their approval by a 221-7 margin to legislation specifying when a bishop must get the consent of his diocesan finance council and college of consultors before making certain financial transactions or commitments. The legislation now awaits Vatican approval.

■ Approved several liturgical agenda items: a document on liturgical music, 183-22, with three abstentions; an English-language version of a document on weekday celebrations of the Liturgy of the Word, 190-18, and a Spanish-language version, 188-16, with five abstentions; and revised readings during Lent, 199-6, with five abstentions.

■ OK'd a curriculum framework for developing catechetical materials for high school students, 117-97, with one abstention.

■ Approved an English-language version of a document on stewardship and teenagers, 198-6, and a Spanish-language version, 202-5.

■ Approved a 21-page set of guidelines on catechetical instruction on chaste living for students from kindergarten through 12th grade.

Culture

‘Enchanted’ just that: enchanting, fun, family fare

By John P. McCarthy
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — In the delightful musical “Enchanted” (Disney), the studio that built its reputation on animated fairy tales gently and cleverly spoofs its own canon by injecting the magical principles of the cartoon realm into the live-action world.

Self-reference in family filmmaking is taken to a winsome new level, and the film is careful never to obscure the traditional values and perennial charms of irony-free fairy tales, such as “Snow White,” “Cinderella” and “Sleeping Beauty.”

The story follows maiden Giselle (the sparkling Amy Adams) from her old-fashioned animated milieu, where she and suit-or Prince Edward (James Marsden) are singing an intentionally gooey duet, “True Love’s Kiss,” into contemporary Manhattan where she falls in love with divorce lawyer Robert (Patrick Dempsey of “Grey’s Anatomy”).

Evil Queen Narissa (Susan Sarandon), liable to lose her throne if Edward marries, instigates this crossover by shoving Giselle down a wishing well. The pretty redhead emerges into the “real world” via a Times Square manhole cover and is rescued from the streets by single dad Robert and his 6-year-old daughter, Morgan (Rachel Covey). Bombastically chivalrous Edward soon follows into the real world, as does Narissa’s lackey, Nathaniel (Timothy Spall), armed



Amy Adams stars as Princess Giselle in the Disney Film “Enchanted,” currently in wide release.

with poison apples to ensure Giselle stays out of the picture.

Although Robert is on the verge of proposing to his girlfriend, Nancy (Idina Menzel), Giselle’s rosy outlook slowly conquers him, though at first he tries to temper her naive dream of ideal romance. Likewise, it takes a little time for the movie’s spell to overtake the viewer, but the film’s charms eventually get the upper hand of one’s defenses.

Director Kevin Lima and his team exe-

cute everything with affection and wit. The visual effects are good, the fish-out-of-water humor isn’t overdone, and there’s a big, smiley production number in Central Park that manages to evoke both golden-age musicals and theme-park parades.

Original songs by Disney stalwarts Alan Menken and Stephen Schwartz fit the bill.

Someday, this movie’s greatest claim to fame might be as the vehicle that launched Amy Adams’ star. Because Disney set the standard for anthropomorphizing animals,

it’s fitting that a hilarious chipmunk named Pip is the only character that threatens to upstage her. And unless you’re a germophobe, the scene in which Giselle enlists local wildlife — pigeons, rats, flies and roaches — to clean Robert’s apartment is an instant classic.

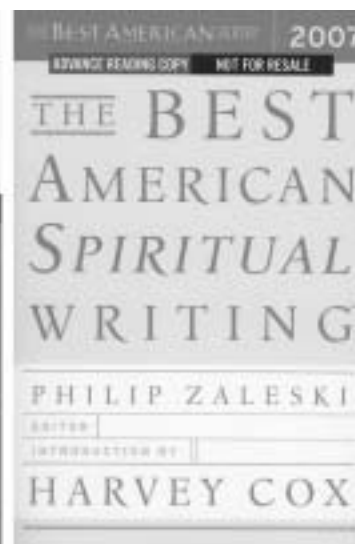
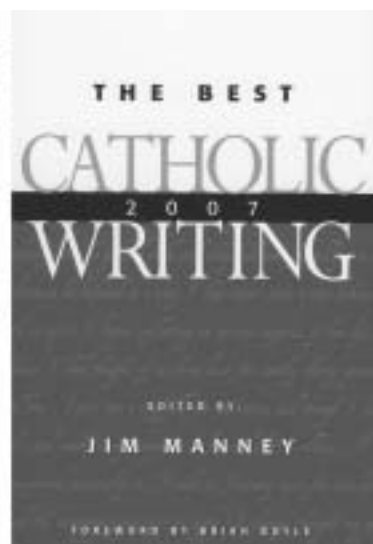
For those who crave a little action, there’s even a dragon during the climactic costume ball. Having the creature ascend a skyscraper a la King Kong also provides the opportunity for a gender role reversal, with a male character needing the rescue.

That’s as subversive as the movie gets. A happily-ever-after ending is guaranteed, and Giselle’s giddy magic even touches a couple in the midst of divorce negotiations.

The film contains a few scary images, some sexual innuendo and a brief instance of scatological humor. The USCCB Office for Film & Broadcasting classification is A-I — general patronage. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG — parental guidance suggested. Some material may not be suitable for children.

McCarthy is a guest reviewer for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Office for Film & Broadcasting. More reviews are available online at www.usccb.org/movies.

Three lively anthologies definitely worth reading



“One Hundred Great Catholic Books: From the Early Centuries to the Present,” by Don Brophy. BlueBridge (New York, 2007). 222 pp., \$16.

“The Best Catholic Writing 2007,” edited by Jim Manney, foreword by Brian Doyle. Loyola Press (Chicago, 2007). 241 pp., \$14.95.

“The Best American Spiritual Writing 2007,” edited by Philip Zaleski, introduction by Harvey Cox. Houghton Mifflin (New York, 2007). 306 pp., \$14.

Reviewed by Maureen Daly
Catholic News Service

Three new collections of short selections, each with a slightly different focus, have been released this year.

“One Hundred Great Catholic Books: From the Early Centuries to the Present” is the book I plan to buy for my college-educated nephews and nieces. A generation educated in public schools and secular universities knows literature and philosophy but is unfamiliar with Catholic culture. This book can lead them through the centuries, identifying who “the greats” are and why.

The 100 most important Catholic books were chosen by Don Brophy, a former editor for Catholic book publisher Paulist Press. Brophy wrote the two-page descriptions of each book. In a final short essay he briefly describes 50 more books that nearly made the

(Please See BOOKS/18)

STUDENT: We must define when a human is a human

(From 7)

cells. You do not need to care so much for a small mass of cells. But that is not what a woman does not want to deal with. What this person, no this less than a person does not want to deal with is a child. If this abortioneer knows that a child will come of a pregnancy, then "aborting the fetus" is just another way of dancing around saying "killing the child". No, it's not even that. It is not just killing the child, it is denying that child the right to grow, and the right to learn, and the right to love. It is denying that child the right to breathe her first breaths of air, to feel the gentle warmth of the sun, and to never even know what it feels like to be held in her mother's arms. After all, how would you feel if you were aborted? You would not. You would never have been able to love, never met one who made your heart beat just a little bit faster than it usually does. You would never have seen the sun, or tasted your favorite snack, or even been able to tell your mom you love her. Just as an aborted child

would have turned into an adult, how is that child's life any different than the life that you, dear reader, hold so dear? The mortality of it, the truly evil that is felt behind it, is noticed whenever it happens to you. Imagine a funeral, yours if you wish, where no one shows up. No one grieves, no one cries, no one even acknowledges that you died. A funeral in which you are not even granted a coffin, but a plastic bag, and is thrown out with the rest of the trash. It's a tragedy when it happens to you, isn't it? Not so much so when it happens to a "mass of cells," though. Hard to remember that we all came from that same kind of "mass of cells."

One may say, that "It hurts no one, who can feel it?" Search as we did, though, we could never find any creditable information that said they could not feel the pain of being ripped out of their parents, of being squashed and clenched, as their mother, their entire world to them, decides that it does not want the child that trusts it, who it feeds, and who it shields. Ah, and then, of course we have to consider those who survive. The mother, who was

genetically built to carry that child, and the most emotionally attached to it, carries the guilt of killing her own child, and that guilt does get carried, even longer than she would have carried "her little problem". Many women actually suffer so much emotional agony, that they commit suicide. They can no longer live with themselves over what they did. So yes, abortion does hurt people who can feel it.

We must, as humans define when a human is a human, and when a human is nothing more than a mass of cells and blood. We, as a staff have no answer to that question. We cannot give you a straight answer. We cannot tell you what to believe, your decision is your own, and one paper probably is not enough to change that. Our opinion, though, must be voiced. To clear our consciences, we must tell of how truly horrible of an injustice, no, not even that, a tragedy, that this really is. If you want to heed us, to believe as we believe, even to change, well then we cannot tell you no. Please, just do what you think is right.

POPE: Exact date of visit still unknown

(From 8)

thing."

The bishop and others spoke to journalists during a Nov. 13 Vatican press conference, unveiling details of the yearlong jubilee celebrations.

Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, head of the Vatican press office, said the papal trip "most probably" would have Lourdes as its sole destination and for now would not include stops in other cities.

Bishop Perrier said he is often asked if the pope will arrive at Lourdes for one of the "significant moments" for the church, such as Feb. 11, the day the apparitions began and also the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, or Aug. 15, the feast of the Assumption.

LOURDES: City in south of France mysterious, miraculous

(From 8)

accident at work blinded Francois in one eye, and he was falsely accused of having stolen two sacks of flour and causing the bankruptcy of the mill. Finally 38 people died of cholera in Lourdes. Bernadette was stricken by cholera and tuberculosis, and she suffered the consequences the rest of her life. The poor family had to leave the mill and in 1857 took refuge in a disused prison cell called "the Cachot."

At age 14, unable to read or write, not having made her First Communion, Bernadette, bruised by all these life events, was to have an extraordinary experience. On 11 February 1858, Bernadette, her sister and a friend went looking for firewood in the cave called Massabielle, beside the river Gave.

While the girls were gathering firewood, Bernadette heard a sound like a gust of

wind. "Lifting her head, she saw in the crevice of the rock, a young girl, surrounded by light, who looked at her and smiled." That was the first apparition; 17 more were to follow.

A pilgrimage is a journey that leads us out of ourselves in the wish to change. If this process is a personal action with a group of pilgrims it is a manifestation of the local Church, where we have personal spiritual responsibility. Since February 11, 1858, the day of the first Apparition, the number of pilgrims coming to the grotto has never ceased to increase and is now numbered in the many millions per year.

"Go drink of the spring and wash yourself there" is what the Blessed Virgin Mary asked of Bernadette Soubirous on February 25, 1858. The Gospels recount the following scene: Tired after the journey, Jesus sat beside a well. A woman came to draw water. Jesus said to her: "anyone who

drinks the water that I shall give will never thirst again: the water that I shall give will turn into a spring within them, welling up to eternal life." (John 4:14).

"Lourdes is the spring where the conscience becomes clear and clear again." John Paul II

The water of Lourdes is the symbol of this "living water" that Jesus gives us

Lourdes is situated in the south-west of France, in the Department of Hautes-Pyrénées. It is known as the Bigorre region. It is a mainly rural area, but Hautes Pyrénées is renowned for its thermal springs and its mountain leisure (ski, excursions, white water sports) Half-way between Tarbes and Pau, Lourdes and its 17,000 inhabitants welcome some 6 million pilgrims each year. The town has a large hotel and camping industry. The area is incredibly beautiful!

Each day, pilgrims carry out actions that are important to understand. They are both a looking back to the story of the Apparitions and a recalling of the teaching of the Bible. They are the landmarks of a history we follow and of a faith we hand on. Drinking water from the Spring, touching the Rock, lighting a candle are actions which show the faith of the pilgrims who follow the footsteps of Bernadette. They are also the Signs of Lourdes. Pilgrimage is something we do with our feet, and the work is done within us – not by us.

"Lourdes is mysterious; it is not superstition. Lourdes is miraculous; it is not hysterical. Lourdes has survived endless attempts to undermine its authenticity. Even today it represents for millions a place where divine power and providence operate through the sacred shrine of the Holy Virgin and the humble peasant girl kneeling at her feet."

-- Fr. Benedict Groeschel

USCCB: Bishop finance committee recommends annual parish audits

(From 14)

explain the incidence of sexual abuse are social changes of the 1960s and '70s, such as social movements, social stratification and changes in the church after the Second Vatican Council and how those influenced priests' attitudes and behavior, she said.

Another cluster of possible factors is how seminaries recruited candidates and trained

them; job-related stresses for priests such as isolation; and structures of dioceses and church leadership. A third cluster is the changes in parish activities, the growth of youth ministry, and changes in the living situations and responsibilities of parish priests. She also said there is a cluster of structural and legal factors, including economic and statutory changes and law enforcement. Meanwhile, the bishops' Ad Hoc

Committee on Diocesan Audits recommended annual reporting by every parish as well as exercising caution about the tradition of presuming church employees view their work as ministry and do not need oversight. Such a "trusting environment" can be exploited by a dishonest worker, the committee's report said.

"While the vast majority of our pastors, parish finance councils and staff does excel-

lent work in managing very limited resources to the maximum advantage, we have all seen reports of occasional financial mismanagement in parishes," said Bishop Daniel F. Walsh of Santa Rosa, Calif., chairman of the committee.

It was Archbishop Pietro Sambi, apostolic nuncio to the United States, who announced the details of the papal visit during his remarks to the bishops.

SPIRITUAL: Companionship for the journey

(From 3)

same way someone having emotional problems seeks out a counselor or therapist, although people can at first be moved by the need for a greater presence with God.

"The most essential part of sitting down with someone as a spiritual director is an openness to the Holy Spirit," Tyson said.

Listening, and hearing from the heart, are two of the director's most important tasks during spiritual direction sessions.

Scripture passages may lead to prayer passages and "assignments for the week," if you will, given to the person seeking guidance.

Many pastors are able to provide limited spiritual direction to parishioners but because of sheer numbers of those in the church, long-term visitations are often difficult. Spiritual directors such as Tyson can often pick up where pastors must leave off because of the volume of their responsibility. Exceptions, though, are made in some cases where pastors can arrange for longer-term direction with individuals, but it is uncommon.

Tyson has an undergraduate degree from St. Scholastica College in Duluth, Minn., and a master's in pastoral ministry from St. John's University in Collegeville, Minn. Her professional experience includes serving as a pastoral associate for 10 years in the Diocese of Marquette, Mich. She would later study for three years in a spiritual

director's preparatory program at the Franciscan Spirituality Center in La Crosse, Wisc.

"Spiritual direction is all about those who are seeking," she said. "It doesn't matter your faith practice; I've even had non-believers come seeking help in their journey."

Tyson receives her foundation for spiritual direction in the Scripture, supplemented by a list of spiritual texts "as tall as I am," including Henri Nouwen, the late author, priest, servant to the disabled and source of inspiration to hundreds of thousands.

"All individuals are at a different place in their spiritual journey," Tyson said, "and people come for different reasons. One person might have a sense of disconnectedness, almost desperateness, and another might have the very opposite, and feel tremendously connected and want to go farther and deeper and understand more about this relationship they have with God. There are those examples, and everything in between.

"With most people, spiritual direction is not casual, it's either one way or another. They either come alive in their faith or they are really struggling with their faith to find that meaning. In the course of time that changes, too, just because of daily life and how it enters in to the picture. Every part of our every day life is sacred, I believe."

For more information on spiritual direction, email Anne Tyson at act1940@sbcglobal.net or call 715-587-1840.

NCYC: Youth from around diocese felt Holy Spirit at annual conference

(From 7)

had found "the way", he is Jesus! He's always been there and he's not planning on leaving anytime soon! -- **Alexis Cortez (St. Joseph/Odessa)**

"Experiencing the love of God is always an awesome experience. Although NCYC was different from any of my past experiences it was still fun. I was basically in awe of how many young Catholics are in this world and aren't afraid to admit it. From the very moment we arrived God spoke to me. Hearing speakers such as Tony Melendez, Fr. Tony Ricard and Renee Bondi helped me to appreciate my life a whole lot more. Here I am stressing out about physical looks and grades and here they are facing many great trials in their lives and yet they still show their love for Jesus freely and happily. I have never been one to turn my back on the Lord and now I know I never will because regardless of how big or little my problems, God will always get me through them. "With God all things are possible." -- **Samantha Rivera (St. Joseph/Odessa)**

"This weekend was amazing. The speakers were so powerful and inspiring that I took time to reflect and absorb their message in my daily life. Part of my time was spent as an Ambassador, which was something new to me, but I really enjoyed greeting people. Renee Bondi's story and her strength to overcome her disability gives me the strength to overcome any obstacles I may face, no matter how big or small. Overall, I can honestly say God's presence was spiritually felt by the thousands of people there. — **Roxanne McGuire (St. Joseph/Odessa)**

"We all just want to thank Larry Cortez, our youth minister for taking us, Sister Adelina for making all the arrangements to get us there and we especially thank Bishop Pfeifer for going all the way over there to support us and represent us.

Letter to Bishop Pfeifer from youth in Sonora

Your Excellency,

May the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you! I hope this letter finds you in a great place. I would like to start off by first thanking you for your presence in Ohio and taking the time to meet with us. I always find great joy when I am able to speak with you or even just to meet with you. I have come to realize just how blessed I truly am to call you my bishop.

You asked us in Ohio to collect our thoughts

and write to you a letter telling you of our experiences. I had trouble trying to figure out just what I wanted to share with you and the diocese, but I think I have found just the right thing. Often times I feel that we take advantage of all of God's blessings. I come from a privileged background and sometimes wonder why God has been so good to me. This weekend I watched a man with no arms play the guitar, I watched a quadriplegic sing when doctors told her that would never happen, and I watched a priest who had such confidence in God even when his church had been ravaged by hurricane Katrina. I watched all this and I couldn't help but shed tears because I know my God is powerful and to hear these stories just shook me.

Tony Melendez has no arms yet he still is able to play the guitar. I have a guitar sitting in the corner of my room. I have refused to play it because it is "too hard." This man has no arms, no hands and I with perfectly working arms and hands claim that the guitar is "too hard." Who am I to say "it is too hard" when I know that through Christ nothing is too difficult and that was the message Tony was sending. Tony wanted to be a priest growing up, but because of his disability he was unable to do so. So he began to minister in a different way. After 10 years of this he was playing guitar for Pope John Paul II and the pope stepped off the stage and kissed Tony saying "Tony, you are truly courageous." I was astounded by this. Pope John Paul II kissed him! How crazy is that! I sat in the presence of a man who the pope himself deemed "courageous." My heart was so full of joy and guilt I could do nothing but cry.

Fr. Tony Ricard was the next speaker to take the stage. His congregation had been ripped apart by Katrina. He got on stage and told us that at first he couldn't figure out how he was going to recover from this, but then he realized that with Christ nothing is impossible and he prayed on it. Soon things got back together and he was preaching again.

Again with Christ, nothing is impossible.

The final speaker was Renee Bondi, a former choir director. She had had the best day of her life, when in her sleep she suddenly fell and broke her neck. She explained that nothing in life is a coincidence. She said that she broke her neck in the higher vertebrae. It affected her trachea. The doctors told her she would never sing again or gain use of her limbs. She said that not only would she ask Jesus for the strength to walk, she would also

(Please See NCYC/20)

ACTS: Potential for major movement

(From 3)

ACTS Retreats is dependent on the intervention of the Holy Spirit, Peterson said.

"At every ACTS Retreat we have an opportunity for the expression of love for the Father and the Son and vice versa," Peterson said. "It just seems a little piece of Heaven for those who make a retreat weekend. It is so awesome to gain just a little glimpse of the power of that love; people continue to want to experience it. When ACTS weekends are over we have to tell people it's time to come down the mountain and go back to work."

Peterson said, half jokingly, that after his first ACTS retreat, it took him nearly two weeks to even notice common everyday rude behavior in other people.

Peterson, an employee with EWTN

before being approached about heading up ACTS Missions, which oversees the retreats, says slowly but surely he sees ACTS as being a major force of evangelization for Catholics.

"Two bishops on our board have expressed a fervant hope that it will become a centrist movement in the Catholic Church," he said. "We are committed in helping that along in whatever way we can. We'll just keep throwing pebbles into the water and hope the ripples will continue to touch others. We know we're not reaching great masses but you never know what these seeds will do and what fruits they will bear once they're planted. I think ACTS will serve as a revitalizing movement of the church and serve to unite folks and rekindle their desire to serve their parish community."

PATTERSON: Giving God's gifts this Christmas Day

(From 3)

since they are there for us. We just have to visualize them, especially at this time of year, for what they are: gifts.

Certainly, love comes in all forms and is perhaps the easiest of all these gifts to identify and the most valuable to feel and to use.

Imagine opening a small box containing a key, and then being led to a picture window

with a new car in the drive way. Imagine instead being given one gift -- joy -- and then being led by it to another gift: personal peace. The two go hand-in-hand like key and new car. And while the advertisers will tell you differently, peace and joy will get you a lot farther in life than a car whose warranty will soon expire.

Kindness and mildness are two more of the gifts Paul spoke of that go hand in hand.

Two gifts that others know you have or don't even before you do.

As for faith, only you know if you have this gift.

Of all the gifts St. Paul mentioned, we have been told that the greatest is love and I of that have no doubt. One more gift we have been given by God though is a vital part of our peace, our joy, our happiness and our kindness: the gift of generosity.

This Christmas, in addition to your traditions, begin another: Be generous. Give God's gifts to others. How often are we reminded that it is better to give than to receive? Passing on God's gifts of love, peace, joy, kindness, mildness, faith, patient endurance and self control to others multiplies your generosity, magnifies the love you receive and helps bring you the peace and joy born on Christmas Day.

GABRIEL: Babies a free expression of God's unfailing love

(From 8)

several teachers, and a housewife. Personnel from Medical Center Hospital of Odessa, Texas Tech and a local baby doctor have all agree to offer their services. An attorney who attends St. Elizabeth's has also offered to assist where needed.

The Gabriel Project volunteers have

become "Gabriel Angels." When the need arises, one volunteer will be assigned to take a specific interest in the pregnant woman and will, with Christian presence and friendship, walk with her through the difficult decisions she must make leading to the birth of her child. The volunteer will act as a go-between by coordinating the spiritual and practical help she needs.

Many in the parish, including doctors and lawyers, have offered their assistance.

Perhaps the following statement, adopted by the parish and posted by its pro-life monument, explains why the parish has initiated the Gabriel Project in Odessa: "We, the members of this church community, see in the birth of each baby a fresh expression of God's unfailing love. For the love of

God and each and every one of His children, we offer immediate and practical help to any woman faced with what might seem to be a crisis pregnancy. The only condition is that the child be allowed to live."

Within the first few days of the commencement of the Gabriel Project, volunteers had already received several calls.

CONFERENCE: All practicing Catholics, regardless party, are 'getting our message'

(From 14)

should not let the party transform us in such a way that we neglect or deny fundamental moral truths."

It is part of a series of documents that have been issued before every presidential election for more than 30 years. But the 2007 version underwent a wider consultation at the committee level and is the first to come before the full body of bishops. In past years, the documents were approved by the Administrative Committee, made up of the executive officers of the USCCB,

elected committee chairmen and elected regional representatives.

The panel that drafted this document was made up of the chairmen of seven USCCB committees — domestic policy, international policy, pro-life activities, communications, doctrine, education and migration.

The joint committee accepted 26 pages of amendments to the document at the start of the fall meeting and rejected 10 other pages of proposed amendments, Bishop DiMarzio said.

The goal of the joint committee was to create a document that "anyone could read

without having to consult a dictionary or a book on moral theology," he added.

The document does not address a topic raised during the 2004 presidential campaign — giving Communion to Catholic politicians who support keeping abortion legal. Archbishop Raymond L. Burke of St. Louis already has said he would not give Communion to former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, who is, according to recent polls, the leading Republican presidential candidate.

In response to a question during discussion on the document, Bishop DiMarzio said the Communion issue would not be

addressed because the conference had dealt with it earlier in two other documents and because "Faithful Citizenship" is "directed at Catholic voters, not Catholic politicians."

At the meeting's closing news conference Nov. 14, one reporter asked Bishop DiMarzio if he thought Catholics who belong to the Democratic Party — which is on record as supporting legalized abortion — were "listening to the voice of the bishops" on political matters.

"Catholics who are practicing the faith and coming to the Eucharist each week are listening to our voice and getting our message," he said.

BOOKS: 'Catholic', 'Spiritual' collections run wide array of topics

(From 15)

list. You could not ask for a more intelligent, accessible and informed guide than Brophy. Here is a witty, knowledgeable friend.

For younger Catholics a book like this can quickly clear up who certain famous names are and why they are famous. It puts in context, for example, writers like Sts. Thomas More, Ignatius Loyola, Teresa of Avila and Therese of Lisieux.

Even well-read Catholics might hesitate to attempt less accessible writers such as Meister Eckhart and Hildegard of Bingen. Brophy gives good advice on where to begin.

Brophy is also helpful in suggesting the

one book out of an author's body of work that he believes should be read before any other. For the late Father Henri Nouwen, he recommends "The Wounded Healer," while for the prolific Father Andrew M. Greeley he suggests "The Great Mysteries."

Most of the books he recommends are from the 20th century, which makes the reading list less daunting. Younger readers may be surprised to find that many great contemporary writers were grounded in a Catholic worldview. The 20th-century writers include English novelists J.R.R. Tolkien and Graham Greene, of course, but also economist E.F. Schumacher, essayist Annie Dillard, short story writer Andre Dubus and American novelist Alice McDermott.

This is a charming and valuable book.

"**The Best Catholic Writing 2007**" is edited by Jim Manney with a moving foreword and final selection by writer and editor Brian Doyle. Manney, a senior editor at Loyola Press, covers the range of contemporary American Catholic writing, including a few good poets among the many fine essays. I particularly enjoyed Robert Ellsberg's thoughts on editing the late Father Nouwen, Jim Cullen's essay on Bruce Springsteen as the greatest Catholic poet of our time, and Therese J. Borchard's impassioned blog entry on the suffering of depression.

Official speeches are rarely honored as good writing, but Manney includes two in this collection: Pope Benedict XVI's

address at Auschwitz and a brief Easter sermon by Anglican Archbishop Rowan Williams of Canterbury.

"**The Best American Spiritual Writing 2007**," edited by Philip Zaleski, includes selections by writers from many American religious traditions. I especially was taken by Robert Louis Wilken's thoughts on the late Jaroslav Pelikan and Garry Wills' fine essay, "What Jesus Did."

The collection includes Marilynne Robinson's scathing dissection of what she calls Richard Dawkins' "hysterical scientism." It was a pleasure to read her cogent attack on Dawkins' flimsy arguments in his mean-spirited best-seller, "The God Delusion."

OBISPO

(Para 3)

pequeño Rey y rogándole que nos muestre el camino hacia la paz y reconciliación. El niño—el hombre Dios—en el pesebre es un signo y una fuente de la reconciliación y sanación que necesitamos en nuestras vidas individuales, en nuestras familias, y en nuestras comunidades y en todo el mundo.

Históricamente, asignamos un día para decir cuando nació Cristo. Sin embargo, por el misterio maravilloso de la sagrada liturgia, por el poder y presencia del Espíritu Santo, Cristo nace en una manera nueva cada Navidad, y por el mismo poder del espíritu, podemos decir que la Navidad pasa, o pueda pasar, cada día del año. La Navidad se trata del amor y misericordia de Dios viniendo a nuestro mundo

para salvarnos de nuestros pecados y dejando al niño Jesús enseñarnos por su ejemplo y palabra como compartimos ese amor con otros.

Es Navidad siempre cuando en alguna parte del mundo nace o renace el amor; es navidad cuando siempre abrimos las puertas de la casa o del corazón a los que sufren o piden ser confortados; siempre que perdonamos a quien nos ha herido, ofendido o pisoteado. Es Navidad siempre que renunciamos al egoísmo, sirviendo con generosidad; es navidad siempre que sonreímos a alguien, aun cuando estamos cansados; siempre cuando enjugamos alguna lagrima de un rostro atribulado. Es Navidad siempre que extendemos la mano a una persona necesitada; siempre que hacemos un favor a quien nos pide ayuda.

Siempre Es Navidad cuando callemos una crítica

destruktiva y animamos a nuestros hermanos. Es Navidad siempre cuando luchamos por la verdad, sin pactar con la mentira; siempre que un acto de comprensión y consideración, de caridad o de estima nos hermanan.

Siempre Es Navidad cuando encendemos una vela, sin maldecir la oscuridad; es navidad cuando el sermón de la montaña y las lecciones del niño de pesebre de Belén sean parte de nuestra vida diaria mientras sigamos a cristo en vida como adulto.

La Navidad no morirá si nosotros no la dejamos morir. Ella será diaria, constante, cuando podamos decir con San Pablo:

“Ya no soy yo el que vivo. Es Cristo que vive dentro de mí.”

BIOETHICS: Many of our actions come with a certain amount of risk

(From 7)

Some have argued that it may be immoral for Catholics to provide any contraceptive measures at all to a woman who has been raped. Such a view is incorrect, however, because a woman who has been sexually assaulted is clearly entitled to protect herself from the attacker's sperm. The Church teaches that rape is not a unitive act that requires openness to procreation. It is rather an act of violence against another person, and the woman is allowed to take steps to prevent the possible fertilization of her own egg(s). It is permissible, then, for Catholic hospitals to provide their patients with morning-after pills if the following four conditions are met:

The woman is not already pregnant from prior, freely-chosen sexual activity. The woman has been sexually assaulted. The woman has not yet ovulated (i.e. has not released an egg from her ovary into the fallopian tube where it could be fertilized by the attacker's sperm). The morning-after pill can reasonably be expected to prevent her from ovulating.

When a woman arrives to an emergency room following a sexual assault, a simple urine test for leutinizing hormone (LH) can be used to gain information about whether

she is ovulating. If it is determined that her LH levels have spiked and she is ovulating, the morning-after pill will not be able to block the egg's release from her ovary. If it were to be administered under these circumstances, the morning-after pill might function to prevent the implantation of any newly conceived embryo(s), which would be the moral equivalent of an abortion. Under these conditions, therefore, the morning-after pill should not be administered.

The young boy or girl conceived through sexual assault is an innocent bystander, and he or she should never become a “second victim” of rape through chemical abortion. Women who conceive a child after sexual assault deserve full and loving support throughout and following their pregnancy. In follow-up studies where children are born from sexual assault, both mother and child frequently express satisfaction at not having adverted to the deadly answer of abortion.

Appropriate care for rape victims should thus include efforts to assess whether a woman may have ovulated (and thus possibly conceived) by taking her menstrual history, doing an LH test, and performing any other tests or interventions which, in the judgment of the physician, help establish prudential certitude that emergency contraception, if it were provided to the victim,

would properly function as a contraceptive and not as an abortifacient.

The new laws in Connecticut and Massachusetts which mandate the provision of the morning-after pill are clearly misguided and unethical. They effectively prohibit health care professionals from doing appropriate medical tests to determine whether a particular treatment (administering Plan B) is suitable and medically appropriate for a patient. These laws meddle in the affairs of doctors and nurses in emergency rooms, where their professional and competent medical judgments should not be short-circuited by overzealous state legislatures beholden to pro-abortion ideologies and agendas. Such state laws require health care professionals to cooperate in actions that may, in a foreseeable way, result in the death of very young human beings within their mother's bodies. Unjust mandates of this kind forcibly violate the consciences of those health care providers who wish to use the art of medicine to heal rather than destroy.

To provide the morning-after pill without considering a woman's ovulatory state thus crosses an important moral line. Choosing to act in a way as to possibly cause the death of another human is not generally a good moral choice. When we have uncer-

tainty about the presence of a human in the bushes during a hunting trip, for example, we ought not shoot into the bushes. By doing ovulation testing, on the other hand, we can begin to address the question of whether a human may be “hidden within”, and reasonably exclude the choice for a possible death-dealing effect of the drug.

Many actions we choose to engage in carry a certain risk to human life, and as the risks become greater, we must take stronger measures to minimize them. Hence we use child safety seats and restraining belts whenever we travel in a car, and ovulation testing can similarly serve as a kind of “safety net” to assure that we do not indiscriminately subject any newly conceived child to risk when the morning-after pill is administered.

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

BISHOP: If our attitude, intent is right, it can be Christmas every day of the year

(From 2)

our pride and our egoism, and when we reach out in service to others in generosity. Christmas happens when we smile at someone even when we are tried, even perhaps when we dislike a certain person. It is always Christmas when we wipe the tears of a suffering child or from the face of someone who is troubled. Christmas hap-

pens in a special way when we extend a hand to a person in need and when we do a favor for someone who asks for help.

It is always Christmas when we stifle destructive criticism and try to encourage a brother or sister who is discouraged. It is Christmas when we fight for the truth without ever entering into a pact with untruth, or taking part in a lie or deception. It is Christmas when we show understanding

and consideration for the opinion and feeling of another person, and when we perform an act of charity which shows that we are in solidarity with the other person.

It is always Christmas when we light a candle without cursing the darkness. It is especially Christmas when the sermon on the mount is the guiding force of our life, and when the lessons that we learn here at the crib of this infant become part of our

daily living as we follow this Christ in his adulthood.

Christmas will never die in us if we do not let it die. Christmas will happen every-day and constantly, in the Eucharist, in our acts of love, in service, and when we say with St. Paul, “I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me.” (Gal.2:20)

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DIOCE-SCENES

San Antonio



Celebrating the 35th anniversary of the Mexican American Cultural Center (MACC) are, from left, Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer, OMI, of the Diocese of San Angelo and a MACC Board member; Sister María Elena González, RSM, former president of MACC; Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory of the Archdiocese of Atlanta, keynote speaker at the event; and Dr. Arturo Chávez, current president of MACC. (Photo by Ruben Alfaro, Today's Catholic)

Rowena



The Children's Liturgy Group from St. Joseph's Church in Rowena recently prepared 12 shoe boxes for Operation Christmas Child.

Mexican American Cultural Center celebrates 35 years of service to church, world

By Jordan McMurrough
Special to The Angelus

SAN ANTONIO – To celebrate the Mexican American Cultural Center's (MACC) 35 years of national service in leadership formation and language studies, preparing leaders for service in Hispanic and multicultural communities, the organization held an anniversary celebration Oct. 11 at the Omni San Antonio Hotel. MACC presented its Humanitarian Award to Archbishop José H. Gomez, H-E-B, and the Guadalupanas of the archdiocese, but the highlight of the evening was the presentation by the keynote speaker, Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory of Archdiocese of Atlanta.

Archbishop Gregory was ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Chicago on May 9, 1973. After having served as a member of the faculty of St. Mary of the Lake Seminary in Mundelein and as master of ceremonies to Cardinals John Cody and Joseph Bernardin, he was ordained an auxiliary bishop of



Sister María Elena González, RSM, former president of the Mexican American Cultural Center (MACC), receives from Bishop Michael Pfeifer, OMI, of the Diocese of San Angelo, an original framed bas relief of Our Lady of Guadalupe by artist Erik Christianson at the organization's 35th anniversary celebration in San Antonio.

Chicago on Dec. 13, 1983. On Feb. 10, 1994, he was installed as the seventh bishop of the Diocese of Belleville, Ill., where he served for the next decade.

On Dec. 9, 2004, Pope John Paul II appointed Bishop Gregory as the sixth archbishop of the Archdiocese of Atlanta. He was installed on

(Please See MACC/11)

NCYC: Conference opens eyes of youth to many needs in the world

(From 17)

run! Soon she began to gain use of her arms, then someone asked her to sing. She began to cry and said she couldn't do it, but then she tried and began to sing the words, "Be not afraid, I go before you always..."

After the speakers I went back to my hotel room where I was told to prepare to discuss this weekend with the Bishop. As I sat there I couldn't think just what to say. I had experienced so much. I asked myself, "Why do I have arms? What can I walk? Why has God laid so much in front of me? I have amazing parents with good jobs, college offers from everywhere, and a bright future. Why am I so lucky? As I pondered this I began to realize two things. First, who am I to say I couldn't make a difference in this world? I have two arms, two legs, I can walk and talk. Who am I to say, I'm just one person. What is stopping

me from doing what they were doing? And further, why did tragic things have to happen in order for us to realize God's power? Why can't we just change because change is needed not because something awful happened and we need God to be there for us?" It is important to realize that God was behind the good things too. Second, I was the one with the burden, not Renee, not Tony. I wanted to trade places with them. You may say, "What? You're crazy!" But no, I finally get it. They are able to realize God's blessings and see them for what they are. I often lose track and don't appreciate what I have. They were the ones who are truly blessed. God had chosen them to endure those hardships because they could handle it. So I asked myself, "Why them? Why not me?" After I pondered this, the words of Mother Teresa came to me. Princess Diana asked Mother Teresa, "Why did those people suffer instead of me? Why am I so blessed?"

And Mother Teresa said, "You are not worthy of such suffering, because those people didn't take a single thing for granted. They thank God for everything they were given." This is when I realized that I am not worthy of such things. I have more to overcome to get to heaven than Tony did. I have everything to take for granted and I have to prove myself too.

This weekend was extremely enlightening. I'm thankful to all those who helped make this trip a reality. I am so thankful for you help, Bishop Pfeifer. As I previously said, God has truly blessed me to have you as my bishop. I hope that you enjoyed my letter and truly can see where I'm coming from. I have so much to learn about this world and how my God is truly an awesome God! I just can't wait!

*¡Viva Cristo Rey!
Chelsea Martinez
St. Ann, Sonora*