Bishop D'Arcy noted that the fire department’s activities to visit school properties and make sure the properties as well as the children are safe.

In his prayer, Bishop D’Arcy mentioned the heroic efforts of the 9/11 emergency responders who gave their lives.

And Fort Wayne Fire Chief Tim Davie said he was thankful that the department did not lose any firefighters in a very dangerous magnesium fire that hit an industrial plant on Fort Wayne’s north side in August.

Lynn Rager, the widow of the firefighter Michael Rager — the last Fort Wayne firefighter to lose his life while on duty March 22, 1972 — spoke of the fraternal relationship of the firefighters even 54 years after her husband’s death. Firefighter Rager’s brothers-in-law, at the rededication of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception on Sept. 9, at the downtown fire station, included an invocation by Bishop John M. D’Arcy.

The fire department is dear to Bishop D’Arcy. His brother-in-law, Hugh Sheridan, is a firefighter. Before the invocation, Bishop D’Arcy recalled how his father taught him not to ever take for granted how towards the flame willing to risk and give their life. Blessed is he who is willing to lay down his life for a friend.

The bishop also noted the fire department’s efforts to save what could be saved from St. Mary Church in Fort Wayne when a fire caused by lightning destroyed the grand church Sept. 2, 1993.

The bishop said these brave people run towards the flame willing to risk and give their life. Blessed is he who is willing to lay down his life for a friend.

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Lynn Rager, the widow of the firefighter Michael Rager — the last Fort Wayne firefighter to lose his life while on duty March 22, 1972 — spoke of the fraternal relationship of the firefighters even 54 years after her husband’s death. Firefighter Rager’s
Migrant workers, firefighters and birthdays fill a bustling week

A special night in Geneva

Not Geneva, Switzerland, but Geneva, Ind. Every year, those known as migrant workers come to Indiana. Formerly, I found them near Bluffton and would celebrate Mass in their camps. In recent years, they work for the Red Gold Company near Geneva. Traditionally, they worked in the fields packing tomatoes. Some still do other parts of the country. Here they work mostly in the canning factories. So, early on a Sunday evening, with the help of our outstanding director of ministry to Hispanic Catholics, Enid Roman-Delias, I celebrated Mass with them at St. Mary of the Presentation Church in Geneva. There were 35 to 40 in attendance at this small country church.

It is always special to go to Geneva for several reasons. It is one of our smallest parishes, about eight miles off the main road. Take a left at the blinking light and you will find it. Founded in 1883, it has always meant a great deal to the farmers in the area. Many come from Ohio to attend Sunday Mass. Also, it is St. Mary of the Presentation Church. I grew up in a parish called Our Lady of the Presentation, now, sadly, closed. No Mass has been celebrated there for over two years.

This night was joyful. I celebrated Mass in Spanish, with Isaac McDonald, the deacon reading the Gospel in Spanish. Two women from among the migrant workers did the other readings. Remember, these are United States citizens who come from south Texas, deep in the Rio Grande Valley not far from Brownsville. Their children go to school here while they are in this area. It was a joy to celebrate with them. Next year we must do our best, including religious education for their children.

Deacon Isaac brought clothes from the parish of St. Mary, Decatur, and they were gathered up immediately. After the Mass, our diocese presented them with a lovely religious education for their children.

I thought of her while celebrating Mass in the downtown chapel in South Bend on the feast day. Mary was so real to her. Who was the human instrument of this? Was it her own mother? Her father died when she was a baby. Her mother raised the children and drove the cattle miles many to the town of Belmont to sell them. Mom knew sacrifice, love and unsentimental at an early age, and I thought of her and my dad on her special birthday. I think she would be 110 years old. She often talked about carrying her shoes in her hand over the mountain and then putting them on when she went into church. She is in heaven praying for her children and grandchildren.

Odds and ends

Like a good citizen, I had my time at the Bureau of Motor Vehicles renewing my license. It took an hour and a half. From what you read, that was small compared to some. Fortunately, I brought some reading with me.

I celebrated Mass on the Sunday of Labor Day weekend at St. Martin de Porres Parish, Syracuse. What a joy to see the beautiful extension of the church and the new catechetical center. Congratulations to Father Terry Place who has overseen all of this despite his serious illness.

The Irish looked strong against Penn State and the legendary Joe Paterno. Now comes Michigan. I hope to be there.

See you all next week.
Pope visits sanctuary where he prayed as child

BY JOHN TRAVIS

ALTOTTING, Germany (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI retained his childhood pilgrimage steps, visiting Bavaria’s most famous Marian shrine, the Altotting sanctuary, Sept. 11. The German-born pontiff’s visit to Altotting was a mixture of private prayer, personal reminiscences and liturgical celebrations with flag-waving believers.

In a homily the pope said the essence of true prayer is giving God a place “in the world, in our lives and in how we spend our time and our activity.”

Pope Benedict has said some of his most beautiful memories were those of his family pilgrimages to the Altotting sanctuary.

He returned there for the first time as pope, stopping in an octagonal chapel to pray before a much-venerated statue of the “Black Madonna.” The small linen wood statue, darkened by candle soot and surrounded by votive medallions, has been revered for more than 500 years.

The Altotting sanctuary is known as the “heart of Bavaria,” in part because the hearts of Bavarian kings and princes are preserved in silver urns inside the church. Through the centuries, all of them swore special allegiance to Mary.

The image of Mary, decorated with jewels, was later moved to an outdoor altar platform where the pope celebrated Mass.

He dedicated his homily to the figure of Mary, saying she inspires “Social issues and the Gospel of the Kingdom.” There, he said the liturgy and prayers are what “Jesus and Mary hold sacred.”

While Saturday morning Mass was “He who believes is never alone,” the pope emphasized that liturgies and prayers are what “connect the Catholic community together in a special way.”

The pope said Christ must be known and hearts must be converted “if progress is to be made on social issues and reconciliation,” and if, for example AIDS is to be combated by realistically facing its deeper causes.

“Social issues and the Gospel are inseparable. When we bring people only knowledge, ability, technical competence and tools, we bring them too little,” the pope said.

The pope drew on his experience in dealing with African and Asian bishops to make a wider appeal to the world’s bishops, saying they must work “in harmony and receive Mary’s love and support.”

The pope also expressed a general criticism of some African bishops who have told him that German church organizations are happy to open purse strings for social projects, but are less than tolerant that “includes the fear of God” and respect for what others hold sacred.

In his homily, translated into Spanish on site by Rome’s De Jesus, Bishop D’Arcy said that since the workers were far from home, working long hours for little pay and living in difficult conditions, that Christ was particularly close to them, as the Scriptures emphasized Christ’s “preferential love for the poor and disadvantaged.” He also noted that Scripture “The Son of Man has no place to lay his head,” another way in which Jesus identifies with the migrant workers.

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Bishop tells migrant workers that Christ walks with them

BY DON CLEMMER

GENEVA — Bishop John M. D’Arcy told migrant workers gathered for Sunday evening Mass that he had come to St. Mary of the Presentation Parish in Geneva. The Mass is an example of what Bishop D’Arcy calls the church’s responsibility to show the migrant workers that Christ walks with them in their plight.

Unfortunately, only a fraction of the migrant workers were able to make it to the Mass because the 12-hour shifts they work kept some of them from attending.

After Mass, Bishop D’Arcy joined the workers, their families and members of the parish community for a Mexican dinner in the parish hall. Also available at that time were food and clothing items that had been collected as part of a summer youth project at St. Mary of the Assumption Parish in Decatur. Deacon Isaac McDonald, of that parish, brought the items and celebrated Mass with Bishop D’Arcy. Deacon McDonald is originally from Lubbock, Texas, but has been ministering to the migrant community in this diocese for about five years.

“It’s to show that the church cares and is with them,” Bishop D’Arcy said of the Mass. “It’s like the pope said, that the church can no more neglect the ministry of charity than it can the word of God or the sacraments, but in this little visit you’re able to do all three — the word of God, the sacrament of the Eucharist and also the mission of charity, to feed them.”

Masses for the migrant workers will continue at St. Mary of the Presentation Parish every Sunday night through Oct. 15.
St. Vincent School students look back 125 years

BY KRISTI WARD

ELKHART — Girls in beribboned bonnets and long dresses giggled and chattered as they stood in circles. Boys in knickers and caps chased each other around the playground. A teacher stepped forward and rang a large hand bell — and lines formed as children started another school day ... with a historic twist.

“This day is in remembrance and celebration of 125 years of education at St. Vincent School,” said Donna Quinn, principal for eight years and a teacher at the school for 27 years. “We started Sept. 5, 1881, in an old rookery on this property.”

To mark the anniversary, current students and staff dressed in 1881-style clothes and reenacted teaching activities from that era, even using slate boards and chalk.

Past students and former teachers and administrators were honored at a breakfast before the ribbon cutting, where the St. Vincent devotees laughed and shared stories of former school days.

“I have really happy memories of St. Vincent,” said Sister Joan Elizabeth Johnson, CSC, who taught sixth and seventh grades at St. Vincent School from 1956-59. “One person told me what they remembered about me was they knew I really loved them — and I said ‘oh, that’s the nicest thing anybody ever said’ because you really don’t know what kids remember.”

The trip to the past brought to mind other things from the days of nuns in full habits.

“Paper plates, fried eggs, rising sun — we had all kinds of names,” Sister Johnson said with a chuckle. “Bonnie Master was principal of the school from 1976-87. She remembered how St. Vincent School families would pull together — especially the time code regulations required every classroom in the three-story school to be moved to a different floor.

“That was a wonderful thing that the parents did — in two days they moved every one of the classrooms,” Master said.

Quinn said that family sense of cooperation and love is still part of St. Vincent.

“It’s a wonderful place,” said Quinn. “When you walk in, I think you can feel the spirituality — a lot of people still say when they walk in they can feel this place is full of love.”

As students gathered at the front steps of the school, St. Vincent pastor Father Phil DeVolder gave thanks for the school and asked God’s continuing blessings.

Then Elkhart Mayor David Miller stepped forward to speak to the students.

“Thank God, he raised up a father and some sisters to come to this place and care about children like you,” Miller said. “On behalf of the city, thank you for caring for the children and investing so much of your time and energy for their future — not just their minds, but their hearts.”

And then as the students, teachers and honored guests looked on, Ed Wenzel — graduate of St. Vincent in 1933 and past Alumni of the Year, cut the golden ribbon with the help of student Matthew McDonough.

And another year of love and learning at St. Vincent School began.
Catholicism Revealed on tap at St. Vincent de Paul Parish

BY BONNIE ELBERSON

FORT WAYNE — A unique new adult program, which is the brainchild of parishioner Kathy Fean, is slated to begin early next month at St. Vincent Parish in Fort Wayne.

Fean emphasizes that Catholicism Revealed will not be adult education, catechesis or formation, but the revelation of the Catholic faith by excellent speakers in conjunction with active participants.

The six-session series will kick off Monday, Oct. 9, with “Are You Catholic Enough?” Speaker for the evening will be prolific local author and reviewer of “The DaVinci Code,” Amy Wellborn.

“The DaVinci Code” is well known for its charges against the Catholic Church and the teaching of the church’s teachings. It was recently announced that a companion film to the novel will be released in December.


The purpose of the program is to answer the questions that teenagers and adults have about their faith. Wellborn said that she will take the time to clarify and respond to any questions she or other participants have. She will bring her knowledge of the Bible and the church as well as her theological background to this evening’s session.

“Are You Catholic Enough?” is the first presentation in the series, which will continue until the end of the year.

Fean emphasizes that Catholicism Revealed will not be an adult program, but will be of benefit to all ages. The six-session series will start on Monday, Oct. 9, and continue on Monday, Oct. 16, “Five years after the terror attacks” on 9/11, he paid homage to all the victims of terrorism and appealed for an end to terrorism in all its forms.

“Just try it,” she urges St. Vincent parishioners and others who are interested.

No registration is needed and the format will be casual, with breaks and time for questions. Each session is independent of the others, she says, so people may attend as their schedules permit.

The program will run for six Mondays beginning on Oct. 9 from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at St. Vincent’s Spiritual Center. An optional prayer time will be held each week at 6:30 p.m.

Then in a pre-Lenten series beginning Monday, Jan. 8, Catholicism Revealed will resume for another six weeks. Fean concedes that one speaker who has already confirmed his participation is the popular Father Michael Heynitz, rector at St. Matthew Cathedral in South Bend.

FOR ALL THEIR HEROIC ACTIVITY, THEY SOMETIMES FIND THEMSELVES ALLOTING LESS AND LESS TIME FOR PRAYER. THEY LOSE THE INNER STRENGTH THAT SUSTAINS THEM, HE SAID.

The program is open to everyone, says Fean, that she hopes for something similar for adult Catholics. He told her to put together a team, flesh out the idea and present it to him for consideration. With the assistance of core committee members Dorothy Schaeffer, Rose Hillman, Ann Gray, Howard Fischer and Marilyn Fehl, all of whom Fehl calls “well-rounded in their faith,” the approval of Father John was won and work began in earnest to bring their plans to fruition.

Fean notes that the discussion will begin where the participant is in his faith life, whether that person is a young Catholic looking to reconnect with the church, a brand new Catholic seeking further instruction in the faith or a good Catholic wanting to deepen his faith.

Planning for the series began several months ago when Fean approached St. Vincent pastor Father John Kozimich with her program idea, unsure what type of venue would be appropriate. The parish boasts such a strong youth program, says Fean, that she hoped for something similar for adult Catholics. He told her to put together a team, flesh out the idea and present it to him for consideration.

Catholicism Revealed will both informational and inspirational, says Fean enthusiastically. “Just try it,” she urges St. Vincent parishioners and others who are interested.

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FORT WAYNE Firefighter Michael Rager was born on March 22, 1972. His widow, brother and sister-in-law made a presentation at the memorial. The event is an annual memorial held near the anniversary of 9/11.

Bishop John M. D’Arcy, at the podium, leads the invocation at the Fort Wayne Fire Department’s Fort Wayne-Allen County Fall Firefighter Memorial Service on Sept. 9 in downtown Fort Wayne. The families of 16 fallen firefighters were honored for their sacrifice and loss of a family member. In the photo seated are Captain Casey Cassidy and chaplain Bishop Vince Cuestas. The last firefighter who lost his life while on duty was firefighter Michael Rager on March 22, 1972. His widow, brother and sister-in-law made a presentation at the memorial. The event is an annual memorial held near the anniversary of 9/11.

Pope prays for world peace on Sept. 11 anniversary

ALTOTTING, Germany (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI prayed for world peace on the fifth anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the United States.

The reference to the attacks came during the prayer of the faithful at a papal Mass in the Bavarian pilgrimage center of Altottting.

“Five years after the terror attacks on the World Trade Center in New York, we pray for peace in the entire world,” said the prayer intention read by a German laywoman.

The prayer intention also asked for peace among countries, families and generations.

The pope, on a six-day visit to his native Germany, did not directly mention the Sept. 11 anniversary during his Mass for about 65,000 people in Altottting. Pope Benedict has condemned terrorism in all its forms on several occasions. Last year on Sept. 11, he paid homage to all victims of terrorism and appealed for an end to hatred and for renewed dedication to peace.

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Council members question ethical aspects of prenatal gene testing

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Prenatal testing for gene-transmitted diseases, with ramifications of “toxic knowledge,” “micro-eugenics” and “eugenic abortion,” was under discussion at the 24th annual meeting of President’s Council on Bioethics. Another issue raised is whether prenatal gene testing violates the rights of an unborn person who, by such testing, is deprived of the right to make the decision for himself or herself once old enough to understand what is at stake, they said. The members were commenting on some of the ethical issues raised by gene testing, especially when it involves diagnosing an illness that normally does not occur until late in a person’s life. The bioethics council, which advises President George W. Bush, has been commissioned to paint a portrait of the president for its Sept. 8 meeting in Washington.

SANTIAGO, Chile (CNS) — Chilean Catholic Church leaders have criticized government guidelines authorizing public health centers to distribute free contraceptives, including the morning-after pill, to minors without parental consent. In a statement Sept. 7, the Chilean bishops’ conference said promoting contraceptives “will lead to the downfall of motherhood.” The bishops said, “These regulations represent a fundamental change imposed during totalitarian regimes that had the state regulate people’s private lives with authoritarian criteria” without their consent and “disregarding people’s dignity.” The Health Ministry resolution was announced Sept. 2 and immediately criticized by Catholics, the conservative opposition and the Christian Democratic Party, a member of the ruling coalition. Those opposed to the morning-after pill consider it配套设施 of abortion. The guidelines make the morning-after pill Postinor-2 available for free, but require a prescription after counseling in primary health centers.

TNASVILLE, Tenn. (CNS) — Looking out the front picture window of his home, Igor Babailov takes in the sweeping view of the rolling green hills below. “The best artist in the world is God; look at this beauty,” he said. “The design of all this is total harmony.” Babailov, a Russian native and Tennessee resident who has been commissioned to paint a portrait of Pope Benedict XVI, said his goal is to project truth and beauty through his realistic paintings. “Art should carry a strong message beyond just pretty pictures,” he said. “Without a message, art is more than a candy wrapper; there’s plenty of candy wrapper all over the place.” To capture the essence of his subjects, Babailov will spend up to a year completing a portrait. With a few rare exceptions, Babailov insists upon an in-person sitting with his subject, where he will draw pencil sketches and take photographs for reference. In his studio, he will complete a series of compositional studies before starting the final oil painting.

The 20th annual Interreligious Prayer Meeting for Peace concludes in Assisi, Italy, Sept. 5. Sponsored by the Sant’Egidio Community, the meeting was attended by more than 150 religious leaders and included numerous round-table discussions and separate religious rituals. A joint appeal for peace was delivered in front of the Basilica of St. Francis, seen in this photo.

The Milwaukee Archdiocese has reached a $16.65 million out-of-court settlement in 10 child sex abuse cases in California involving two former archdiocesan priests. The Diocese of Davenport, Iowa, meanwhile, has decided to go to trial in civil suits, one of which involves a retired bishop, rather than negotiate settlements. Davenport Bishop William E. Franklin said mediation efforts so far had failed because plaintiffs were seeking monetary damages that would deplete diocesan resources. About half of the Milwaukee settlement, $8.25 million, will be paid by the archdiocese with $8.4 million paid for by insurance companies. With the settlement, the archdiocese avoids going to trial in the civil suits. The first trial had been scheduled for Nov. 6. The settlement also avoids the possibility that the Milwaukee Archdiocese would declare bankruptcy protection if juries returned hefty awards to the plaintiffs.

Retiring secretary of state’s book highlights Vatican’s world role

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Nearly one week before Italian Cardinal Angelo Sodano was to retire, he published a book highlighting key addresses he made during 15 years of service as the Vatican secretary of state. Titled “The Leaven of the Gospel. The Presence of the Holy See in the Lives of Peoples,” the 138-page hardcover volume is a sort of memoir meant to show the Vatican as an advocate promoting and protecting human dignity and trying to solve woes. The book, released Sept. 7 at a Vatican press conference, is written in Italian and contains 12 speeches the Italian cardinal made representing the pope and the Vatican at various national and international venues, including the United Nations. The book is dedicated to Pope John Paul II and Benedict XVI, the popes under whom Cardinal Sodano, 78, served. The author also gives a word of welcome to his successor, Italian Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, who takes over Sept. 15.

Bishop urges civil debate in South Dakota abortion referendum

RAPID CITY, S.D. (CNS) — Bishop Blase J. Cupich of Rapid City has called for civil and open public debate as South Dakota voters face a Nov. 7 referendum on legislation that would outlaw most abortions. “The coming referendum presents an opportunity for South Dakota to model for the nation the manner in which substantial public debate regarding this volatile moral issue can be carried on with respect, honesty and conviction,” Bishop Cupich wrote in the Sept. 11 issue of America, a national Catholic magazine published by the Jesuits in New York. The referendum was initiated by supporters of legalized abortion after the South Dakota Legislature adopted a law that would ban all abortions except those necessary to save a mother’s life. Gov. Mike Rounds signed the legislation in March. In mid-June, less than two weeks before the law was to take effect, it was suspended because enough voters had signed petitions to force a popular referendum on it.

Leaders should be humble, compassionate servants, pope says

CASTEL GANDOLFO, Italy (CNS) — Church and government leaders should be humble, compassionate servants for their people and they should be capable of being both contemplative and proactive, Pope Benedict XVI said. St. Gregory the Great, even though he lived in the Middle Ages, is still an important example for today’s priests and public administrators, the pope said before praying the noonday Angelus prayer Sept. 3, the feast day of the sixth-century pope and doctor of the church. The early Roman saint was unique, the pope said. Early in his life, when he was prefect of the city of Rome, he stood out for his “administrative ability and moral integrity,” said the pope. Despite holding an important and prestigious public office at only 30 years of age, St. Gregory decreed his calling was monastic life, the pope said. On Sept. 3, 598, over Gregory’s objections, St. Gregory was torn away from his life as a monk and abbot when — much against his will — he was consecrated pope. “He tried everything to avoid his election, but in the end he had to surrender,” the pope said.

Capuchins elect Swiss provincial to head order for next six years

ROME (CNS) — Representatives of the Capuchins overwhelmingly elected the Swiss provincial, Father Mauro Johri, to head the Order of Friars Minor for the next six years. The 59-year-old friar replaces Canadian Father John Corriveau, who is leaving as Capuchin minister-general after serving the maximum tenure of two six-year terms. More than 170 representatives of the religious order took part in the Sept. 4 vote during their three-week general chapter in Rome. Father Johri garnered 157 votes in the final election round. Born in the Swiss canton of Grison in 1947, Father Johri entered the Capuchin novitiate when he was 17 years old. After being ordained in 1972, he completed his doctorate in theology at the University of Luzerno, Switzerland. He taught religion at a public school and later taught dogmatic and fundamental theology at the University of Lugano in southern Switzerland. He also served as a member of the Swiss bishops’ conference commission on pastoral planning and is successor of the Capuchins’ Italian region of Switzerland.

Tanzanian bishop tells religious to share heritage with Americans

COLLEGE PARK, Md. (CNS) — Tanzanian Bishop Augustine Shao of Zanzibar encouraged African clergy and religious to share their heritage and traditions with the church in the United States. Bishop Shao, who is president of the African Conference of Catholic Clergy and Religious in the United States, spoke Sept. 1 to a national Catholic magazine at their seventh national convention at the Holy Redeemer Parish compound in College Park, Md. The convention brought together African priests and nuns working and studying in the United States.
Installation of officers, Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus, took place at a Mass celebrated Aug. 17 at St. Joseph Church in Garrett. Father Daniel Leecu was celebrant and installed as Faithful Friar, along with new Faithful Navigator Gayelor Campbell. Pictured left to right are Earl Regen, Lady Pat, Gayelor Campbell, Father Daniel Leecu, Lady Dottie and Robert Lynch, master of Fourth Degree, State of Indiana.

A $10 offering for the workshop is appreciated, which also includes snacks, refreshments and handouts. Preregistrations are recommended. Registration forms may be obtained at the Victory Noll Ministry Center, 1900 W. Park Dr, and the Huntington County Visitors & Convention Bureau, 407 N. Jefferson St.

For more information or to register by phone, please call Jan Parker at (260) 356-0268 ext. 128 or e-mail at ministryctr@olvm.org.
The sacrament of MARRIAGE

Smoothing the way

Wedding coordinators make wedding day smooth as silk

BY KAY COZAD

FORT WAYNE — Who doesn’t love a wedding? Most in attendance are deeply moved by the ceremony steeped in beautiful church tradition. But few know the effort required for preparing this special day. Few, but the bride and groom, and at St. Charles Borromeo Church in Fort Wayne, the wedding coordinators.

Three charming and enthusiastic women there are known as the wedding coordinators. They each joined the wedding team for different reasons and each brings her own style to the mix.

Veteran Martha Stefanek has been assisting brides with their special day as coordinator for nine years at St. Charles, where she and husband Joe and their three children are parishioners. She came to the job quite naturally. “Joe and I were married in 1996 and the coordinator of our wedding asked me if I would be interested in doing it. I’m very detail oriented,” she says with a smile.

She adds unabashedly that initially she was not happy to learn it was required to enlist the services of the planner to be married at St. Charles. But after discovering all the intricacies involved in putting her ceremony together, she was pleased to have the coordinator by her side. The church initiated the requirement of enlisting a wedding coordinator in 1995.

Six years ago, after the birth of her second child, Pam Ley was encouraged by her husband to try the position offered through the church. She enjoys working with the other coordinators and finds it fun to help the brides as they prepare for the big day. She and her husband Larry and two children have been members of St. Charles since 1995.

The rookie of the team is Kathy Steenport, who joined the others two years ago at the request of friend Stefanek. Hailing from Ohio, Steenport and husband Davis with their two children have been parishioners of St. Charles for six years.

The three wedding coordinators work together two times each year, in August and February, when they host the planning meetings open to all parishioners who are anticipating a wedding within the year. Weddings at St. Charles must be scheduled six months in advance and the three coordinators are provided with a quarterly schedule from which they divide the wedding dates between them. For each coordinator, some years require planning for up to 10 weddings.

Following the initial meeting with the parish priest, each couple is given a wedding pamphlet, which is investigated in detail at the planning meeting. “We take questions and give the couples hints at the meeting,” says Stefanek.

Understanding the time consuming preparation and stress associated with planning a wedding the St. Charles coordinators reassure each bride to be married at St. Charles that most of the planning of the wedding day, these women attend to details ranging from holding crying babies to running out in search of new shoes after an all important heel has broken. Checking on the bride and the groom is part of the job in preparation to set the procession in line and signal the commencement of the ceremony. Working with florists and photographers also keeps the day running smoothly.

“We think it’s important to balance the thought of the wedding, reception and marriage as a commitment,” says Steenport.

During the phone conversation, questions are fielded concerning their role in the wedding planning process. “I love when it all comes together and I get to light the mood or just be present in quiet,” says Stefanek. “We don’t want to take any more of the bride’s time than is necessary,” says Stefanek.

“Some to six months before the wedding date, the coordinator, with check list in hand, records specifics, such as, wedding party numbers and seating arrangements. During the phone conversation, questions are fielded concerning Catholic tradition on appropriate music, altar candles and other arrangements. A final phone call is made the Wednesday before the wedding to verify the details.

Amidst all the preparation Stefanek and her team offer some sound advice for the couple saying, “Keep it simple. It is a sacred day.”

In addition to assisting in the planning of the wedding day, these coordinators are in charge of the rehearsals as well. Church policies involving location of the photographer and understanding the solemnity of the occasion are discussed along with placement of attendants, floral arrangements and other instructions. Focus on details is paramount to the job, but it’s also important to understand people, suggests Stefanek, referring to knowing when to “lighten the mood or past be present in quiet” during the preparation.

On the wedding day itself, these women attend to details ranging from holding crying babies to running out in search of new shoes after an all important heel has broken. Checking on the bride and the groom is part of the job in preparation to set the procession in line and signal the commencement of the ceremony. Working with florists and photographers also keeps the day running smoothly.

St. Charles priests are most grateful for their assistance. Msgr. John Suelzer, pastor, feels the coordinators are extremely helpful, saying, “For years I did the rehearsals and the weddings by myself. These women take care of the nitty-gritty of the weddings. We are blessed to have them. They are wonderful!”

It’s evident, after all is said and done, that these three women take great pride in their work as they express their deepest hearts concerning their role in the wedding preparation process. “I love when it all comes together and I get to share the sacrament of marriage with the couple as if I were invited to the wedding.

It rekindles the memory of my own wedding,” says Steenport. Ley agrees saying, “I hope for each couple what I have in my own marriage. It pleases me to play a little part in helping them get their marriage started.”

Stefanek adds thoughtfully, “We think it’s important to balance the thought of the wedding, with all its details, as only one day and marriage as a commitment made up of many years of joys and sorrows.”
Exuberant wedding connects continents

BY JILL BOUGHTON

SOUTH BEND — Susan Ranaghan, director of Dungarvin, interviewed the soft-spoken young man, recently arrived from Kenya to join his family. Little did she imagine that hiring Matthew Gichohi Kui to care for people with disabilities would be the first step in a courtship that culminated last May 7 in an exuberant wedding liturgy incorporating many colorful elements of Kikuyu culture. Mass lasted one-hour and 45 minutes.

After dating for three years, Matthew visited “Papa Susan” and “Mama Susan,” Kevin and Dorothy Ranaghan, to ask for her hand. Kevin, a permanent deacon assigned to St. Bavo, Mishawaka, gave Matthew his blessing. Since Matthew’s father is deceased, he also had to ask permission of his older brother and the tribal elders to marry before his brother.

Matthew’s four older sisters had also strictly observed this rule, with the eldest getting married first.

Matthew and Susan became engaged in Mishawaka’s Japanese garden on Sept. 11, the 10th anniversary of Susan’s first departure for a House in Rome, where she lived in community with persons with disabilities.

The wedding took place at Little Flower Church in South Bend. Not only had Susan and Matthew joined that parish, where Matthew’s mother Mary was already a member, but it’s where Kevin and Dorothy and Susan’s two older sisters, Anne and MaryFaith Hall, were married.

Their vows were witnessed by Holy Cross Father Tom Smith. Father Smith has served as a missionary in Kenya for 15 years, and he is also president of the board of A’arche.

Mass was 11am, the bride and groom recited two men with disabilities as altar servers for the wedding Mass. Sure enough, Father Smith was able to keep his cool when one of the nervous servers upset a vase of flowers. Before the wedding, a large group of Kenyan women and children showed up at the Ranaghan home singing and inviting the bride to come out.

Traditionally on this occasion, the bride’s family demands more dowry before releasing her. For example, they may say they’ve lost the key to the house and need money for another before the bride can get out. Or they may pretend not to be able to hear the singing. “This is to show how precious Susan is,” explains her new husband.

At times, it is also the best man’s responsibility to make sure to fetch the intended bride and not let her family, including a sister, Matthew’s cousin altered the tradition by asking Susan if she was fully willing to come. After signing the marriage register, the couple stayed in the limo, the women hurried to arrive at Little Flower ahead of them, the process began, with everyone singing “Come, Let Us Sing.” First came 16 nieces, nephews and young cousins, ringing bells, then six bridesmaids in rich red gowns in different styles. The reading from Jer 29 — “I know the plans I have in mind for you ...” — was proclaimed in English by Charlotte from A’arche, while 2 Pt 1:3-7 — “Supplement your faith with love” — was read in Swahili, the language common to all the tribes in Kenya. The wedding Gospel was Mt 6:25-34 — “Consider the lilies ... Seek first the kingdom.”

After the couple exchanged vows and rings, there was another joyous Kikuyu song punctuated by clapping. There was also a special song after the formal signing of the marriage license. It included gemi, a sound the women make with their tongues on the roof of their mouths.

Traditionally this sound is used to communicate news of a birth to the men waiting outside, who respond with more guttural noises. At childbirth, four clicks announce a daughter and five a son, so there were four clicks at this part of the wedding ceremony to welcome Susan as a new daughter in the family.

In the old days, once the dowry was paid, the bride was owned by the groom’s family. Father Smith made sure everyone understood that this is mutual in Christian marriage. After the wedding ceremony, everyone gathered around to pray over the couple.

At the offertory, the older nieces and nephews who hadn’t taken part in the entrance procession brought forward gifts symbolic of the life-giving fruitfulness, joy and hospitality desired by the couple.

At the offertory, the older nieces and nephews who hadn’t taken part in the entrance procession brought forward gifts symbolic of the life-giving fruitfulness, joy and hospitality desired by the couple.

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Calm seas part of anniversary celebration

BY MAY LEE JOHNSON

SOUTH BEND — A stroke a few years ago means he can’t do fast dancing anymore, but Wilber (Mac) McDougal still was able to keep up with the group on a recent cruise he and his wife took.

Mac and Mary McDougal have been married 34 years. They are both retired — Mary from the South Bend Public Library and Mac from the South Bend Community Schools Corp., as an engineer.

In June they celebrated their anniversary by taking a Royal Caribbean Alaskan cruise.

“It was an enlightening, unforgettable experience I’ll never forget,” said Mary. “It was one of the best and most restful times in our lives and the scenery was just beautiful.”

The week-long cruise was special for the McDougals for many reasons. They had a chance to take the trip while both are able to be up-and-about. They really enjoy traveling. And members of their parish, St. Augustine Church in South Bend, were able to celebrate with them. In fact, Father Charles Lavely, CSC, their pastor, celebrated a special Mass for them on the ship with more than 200 people attending.

“We had a wonderful time together, and having members of our church present made it seem like we were all one big happy family,” Mac said. “Mary looked the most beautiful I have ever seen. Everything was great.”

The McDougals were married June 17, 1972, at Sacred Heart Church at Notre Dame.

Mary remembers someone saying “that a black man and white women marrying at Notre Dame was a first.” Nevertheless they still have a strong and loving marriage.

They have a son John who is a budding movie actor and is finishing up his degree in communication at Indiana University.

Photo provided by the Royal Caribbean Cruise Line

South Bend, and Mac has three adult children from his first marriage.

Mac laughed when he was asked what advice they would give a couple hoping for a long marriage.

He said he learned all he needed when he was a young man — that’s when his mother taught him to treat women with respect. But here are the other pieces of advice they were happy to share:

• Pray your way through your problems, or you won’t make it.
• Give and take, forgive and forget. Both partners have to do a lot of that.
• Don’t stay mad long.
• Be dedicated and love each other.

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Marriage matters to children and the common good

BY MAGGIE GALLAGHER

For Catholics, marriage is a sacrament, revealing Christ’s indestructible love. The Catholic tradition has always recognized that marriage is also a natural relationship. People of any faith or none can marry, and their marriages matter to God, to each other, to their children and to the community.

A group of respected marriage and family scholars recently met to document the social science evidence that marriage matters. While there are, of course, single parents who do a splendid job of childrearing under very difficult circumstances, the scholars reached these conclusions among others:

• Marriage reduces the risk of poverty for children and communities. The majority of children whose parents don’t marry or don’t stay married experience at least a year of poverty. Fatherless households increase crime. Boys whose parents divorced or never married are two to three times more likely to end up in jail as adults.

• Marriage protects children’s physical and mental health. Children whose parents marry and stay married are healthier and much less likely to suffer mental illness, including depression and teen suicide.

• Both men and women who marry live longer, healthier and happier lives. On virtually every measure of health and well-being, married people are better off.

• Cohabiting is not the same as marriage. Couples who just live together without the commitment of marriage do not get the same boost to health, welfare and happiness, on average, as spouses. Children whose parents cohabit are at increased risk for domestic violence, child abuse and neglect.

• Parents who don’t marry or stay married put children’s education at risk. Children whose parents divorced or never married have lower grade-point averages, and are more likely to be held back a grade, and to drop out of school.

• When marriages fail, ties between parents and children typically weaken, too. In one large national survey, 65 percent of adult children of divorce reported they were not close to their fathers (compared to 29 percent of adults from intact marriages).

Any development that weakens the norms of the married family will increase all these risks to children and to the communities in which these children live.

Relatively little is known from a scientific standpoint about how children fare when raised by same-sex couples. After reviewing several hundred studies, University of Virginia sociologist Steven Nock concluded: “Not a single one of those studies was conducted according to generally accepted standards of scientific research.”

Children raised by same-gender couples remain a social experiment, about which we can say little with scientific certainty.

Marriage matters for the good of society

Reconnecting marriage with its great historic cross-cultural task of encouraging men and women to beget and raise the next generation has never been a more urgent priority. On the one hand, a large majority of modern democracies accepts and promulgates this commitment, according to generally accepted standards of scientific research.

Children raised by same-gender couples remain a social experiment, about which we can say little with scientific certainty.

Any development that weakens the norms of the married family will increase all these risks to children and to the communities in which these children live.

The good of children and society depends on strong marriages. The Respect Life Program kicks off Sunday, Oct. 1.

The family is the prime evangelizer, one of the most powerful incubators of religious faith and identity. Christianity grew from a tiny group in Jerusalem to the faith of the Roman Empire in just 300 years. Playing no small part in this rise was Christian sexual ethics which, unlike secular Roman ethics, forbade infanticide, contraception, and non-marital sexuality and discouraged family disruption and desertion.

MARRIAGE, PAGE 12

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

If the church community succeeded in finding the energy and means to transmit a Catholic vision of marriage and family only to churchgoing Catholics and their children, so that they became 10 percent more likely to marry, stay married, and have children who grow up with a similar commitment to building families, both the church and the public square would be transformed within 30 years.

We can and must inspire, re-educate, serve and protect those Catholics who want to recommit to a Catholic vision of marriage and family. The next generation is watching. They need to see us confidently defend marriage in the pews and in the public square.

In this context, the three most urgent tasks for the church are to:

• affirm the value of children in the mind of the Catholic community
• develop ministries and programs to help distressed couples avoid divorce and rebuild loving marriages
• help, support and teach Catholic parents seeking to transmit their marriage vision to their own children, in the face of an increasingly confused and hostile public square.

The task in renewing marriage is no less than to renew, for this generation and the next, faith in love. Human beings desperately want to believe that our deepest drives and longings have a purpose, that they are directing us toward love, goodness, renewal. In marriage, men and women come together in faith to make the future happen. These are not private and personal matters, but the shared urgent business of the entire community.

Maggie Gallagher is president of the Institute for Marriage and Public Policy and a coauthor of “The Case for Marriage.” This material was provided by the Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, D.C.
Pope talks to Ontario bishops about false sense of freedom, culture

BY CAROL GLATZ —

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — In a speech to bishops from Ontario, Pope Benedict XVI lamented the false sense of freedom and tolerance in Canadian culture that has led to “disturbing” trends, such as a law allowing same-sex marriage.

While the pope praised Canada for its generous commitment to justice and peace, he said “the split between the Gospel and culture, with the exclusion of God from the public sphere,” has severed basic human values from their moral roots.

The pope made his remarks during a Sept. 8 audience with the Canadian bishops at the papal residence in Castel Gandolfo, outside Rome, during their “ad limina” visit, required of all heads of dioceses every five years. The Vatican released a copy of the pope’s remarks Sept. 8.

Referring to Canada’s same-sex marriage law, the pope said, “In the name of ‘tolerance’ your country has had to endure the folly of the redefinition of spouse.”

He also criticized the continued legality of abortion, saying, “In the name of ‘freedom of choice’ (the country) is confronted with the name of ‘freedom of marriage.’

He urged the bishops and the faithful to remain firm in the defense of the family and the church’s teachings on marriage.

Referring to Canada’s same-sex marriage law, the pope said, “In the name of ‘tolerance’ your country has had to endure the folly of the redefinition of spouse.”

He assured the bishops that the church’s contribution to the education, even Catholic education, needs to fight the tide of relativism and uphold the love of truth, he said.

Relativism, which abandons a sense of there being one eternal truth, not only snuffs out “the sublime goals of life,” but it results in “lowering the standards of excellence, a timidity before the category of the good, and a relentless but senseless pursuit of novelty parading as the realization of freedom,” said the pope.

The president of the Ontario bishops’ conference, Bishop Richard Smith of Pembroke, told the pope that the bishops and Catholic lay groups would remain active in promoting life issues and defending the traditional definition of marriage.

The church was working to block attempts to legalize assisted suicide and euthanasia, he said, and would be ready when the Canadian Parliament considers reopening the debate on the definition of marriage this fall.

Bishop Smith said the bishops were especially concerned about poverty in Ontario, especially among children and native peoples. He also pointed to the need to help Catholics deepen their faith and help them be more active in church life.

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International Day of Peace needed more than ever

As the world and the United States remembers 9/11, a day that one could say changed the thinking of most Americans — yes, we are vulnerable to attacks by terrorists — and its aftermath, it is easy to recognize the need for International Day of Peace, celebrated Sept. 21, is a good day to reflect on how we can be peacemakers.

Sister Jolene Heiden, a School Sister of Notre Dame who serves the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend as the director of the Office of Spiritual Development and Evangelization, alerted Today’s Catholic that her order will join millions of people worldwide to observe this date of peace and nonviolence. “Let us recommit ourselves to the work of transformation ... to be transformed and to transform our world, bringing all to the oneness for which Jesus Christ sent,” explained the material Sister Jolene provided.

The United Nations actually established the day to be devoted and commemorated and strengthen the ideals of peace both within and among all nations and peoples in 1981. Sept. 21 was designated as the official celebration after the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States in 2001.

The School Sisters of Notre Dame list as their first thing we can do to celebrate International Day of Peace is to pray for peace.

Interestingly, Father John Corapi, a popular television and radio priest-personality, mentions the connection between the Blessed Mother and Islam in his September 2006 newsletter. In speaking of 9/11, Father Corapi says, “These are not ordinary times, and this is not business as usual. We are at a crossroads in human history and the time for Catholics and all Christians to act is now. All evil can ultimately be traced to its origin, which is moral evil.

“All of the political action, peace talks, international peacekeeping forces, etc., will avail nothing if the underlying sickness is not addressed. This is sin,” Father Corapi wrote. “One person at a time: hearts and minds must be moved from evil to good, from lies to truth, from violence to peace.”

He says Islam is an Arabic word defined as “to make peace” and that violent extremists are living a contradiction today by resorting to evil and terrorism.

He asks everyone to pray for peace by praying the rosary. That was a promise made to the shepherd children at Fatima.

Interestingly, Fatima, Father Corapi mentions that the Islamic world has a great love for Mary. She is listed 30 times in the Koran. “No other religious who will be retiring after being championed by after being championed by...,”

For Sister Jolene, this month, the October of the rosary, let us be reminded that the rosary draws us closer to Mary’s Son, Jesus. Through the intercession of Mary, may we become bearers of peace in our world and the world to us. Let us also pray for the sanctity of life — that all life will be garnered with dignity from the moment of conception through natural death.

Introducing Today’s Catholic Podcast

So often we hear from those who do not renew their subscriptions to Today’s Catholic that “we don’t have time to read.” We know that many live their lives in a state of “information overload.” It is necessary, however, to weed through the materials and focus on helpful materials. We hope that you give value to what is presented in our newscast.

Today’s Catholic Podcast can be listened to in the gym or running errands. We know many log onto the Internet while at work, so why not listen in?

This form of online broadcast, or podcast, is becoming a popular tool of communication and is a revolutionary new tool of evangelization. Let us take advantage of this new form of communication in the new millennium.

Today’s Catholic Podcast gives brief capsules of the news in the same depth as the newspaper. Therefore, for detailed information and comprehensive coverage, the Today’s Catholic newspaper is still the official source for news and events in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.

The healing hand of God

One’s life can change in the blink of an eye. Ours did.

After several weeks of flu-like symptoms and then some bruising, our daughter went to the family doctor on the morning of Aug. 7, 1998 at 11 a.m. By noon our family’s lives changed forever.

Deb was diagnosed with Acute Lymphocytic Leukemia, which normally attacks children. Deb was a 39 year old, single mother of two sons, Eric 13 and Tom 12. Their father had been killed in an auto accident due to drunk driving in 1996. What a blow for the children.

Deb was admitted to the hospital that afternoon, and the process began — bone marrow biopsies, chemo, semi isolation (we had to wear gowns and masks because her immune system was compromised).

I explained to the boys that their mom would lose her hair and eyes lashes, but for every hair that was lost, that was a cancer cell that was dead. They understood that explanation.

Months of protocol of bone marrow biopsies, daily chemo treatments and most importantly of all — lots of prayers. We had prayers from all over the world.

National Religious Retirement Office sends thanks

Dear Bishop D’Arcy,

This is to send our gratitude for your diocesan check for $149, 079.23, which has been deposited in the Religious Retirement Fund account.

This brings your total diocesan contributions for all of the years of the collaboration to $2,338,765.67.

The money has been recorded as part of Appeal XIX for 2006.

Your support and the support of your Retirement Fund for Religious coordinator, pastors, parish priests and deacons are essential to the fund’s continued success. We are most grateful for all you do!

You can surely rely on the prayers of the over 70,000 religious now over age 70 and the ever increasing numbers of religious who will be retiring very soon. May God bless you as only he can!

Sister Andrea Fries, GPS Executive Director National Religious Retirement Office

In February of 1999, my husband found out he had prostate cancer. This meant a month of radiation in May and a transrective seed implant on July 14, which was the three-year anniversary of my mother’s death. I was watching over him.

Deb went through many months of more chemo, bone marrow biopsies, central lines, remission twice, and relapse into the central nervous system. Usually there is a 3 percent chance of this happening, and she did it twice.

The local doctors sent her to Chicago to the doctor who wrote her protocol, and there was nothing more to do. We had been told about a bone marrow transplant as a last resort. Now it wasn’t being discussed.

So, I went on the Internet and found out about the University of Houston, and they showed it to the doctor and said, “Do you call, or do I?”

They called Anderson in Houston, Texas. In December of 2000, Deb and her dad went to Houston for a workup. One doctor said yes. One said no.

On March 2, 2001, Debbe had a bone marrow transplant and her donor was her brother, Bob. Her sister, Liz, wasn’t a close enough match. She wanted to do it, but it wouldn’t have worked.

The doctor told me the day of transplant that Deb wouldn’t make it.

I put all my trust in God and held on to that. After eight battle, four months in Houston, learning to walk all over again, some short-term memory loss, whooshing in her ear and great determination, we (I had to stay with her as caregiver) came back home.

It has been a battle to keep her alive, but it has strengthened our family and made us extremely close as we protected Deb and fight the enemy. Cancer. We all have been very active members of the Leukemia/Lymphoma society.

The healing hand of God has led Deb to return to work and give help from the disability act to study computer graphics. Her boys will be going on campus at a university.

The power of prayer and support of family and friends has brought us to this happy place. A public thank you to God for all of his blessings.

Blessed Mary of Jesus

1560-1640

feast – September 13

Born in Spain, Maria Lopez de Rivas was brought up by her paternal grandparents.

As a Jesuit spiritual director, and at 17 entered the Discalced Carmelites. Despite concerns about her health, she professed vows in 1578 after being championed by St. Teresa of Avila. Her long, productive life as a Carmelite, she served more than once as mistress of novices, subpriores and priores.

St. Teresa recognized the inner strength of Sister Mary of Jesus, who had special devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. She was beatified in 1576.
WASHINGTON (CNS) — After a summer of sometimes vitriolic immigration debate, the massive rallies that drew hundreds of thousands of people to the streets of Washington, Los Angeles, Chicago and Phoenix in the spring seemed a distant dream as Congress returned to work in September.

Moments from the Senate’s passage in May of a comprehensive immigration reform bill appear before us ever the summer after the House and Senate failed to reconcile their vastly different bills. That time has been largely one-sided field hearings around the country gave headlines and TV coverage to opponents of comprehensive legislation who are pushing for a bill that only deals with enforcement.

Leopoldo Luque, both the House and Senate held out little hope that any kind of immigration legislation would pass before the current adjourns for final election campaigning.

Pro-immigrant rallies around Labor Day in the same cities that had drawn half a million or more people earlier attracted but a fraction of the optimistic throngs that gathered in March, April and May. Participants and organizers of the campaign to pass comprehensive immigration legislation said this time around many people were afraid to come. But Jaime Contreras, chairman of the National Capitol Immigration Coalition, said although it was much smaller than April’s, the Washington rally Sept. 7 still showed important strides were made in bringing people together. The event drew people from as far away as Florida and Massachusetts. Sen. John McCain said.

Meanwhile, ongoing programs to register immigrant voters have been slow to bear fruit, according to an Associated Press review of registration figures from a handful of major cities. After the spring rallies and the House and Senate bill, a coalition of organizations backing comprehensive reform announced plans to seek 1 million new voter by 2008. The AP review of voter registration in cities with large immigration populations in the spring found no sign of a boom in new voters. It found a slight uptick in some places over 2005, a nonelectoral year, but no particular increase in new voters over 2004, when there were political party-run drives leading up to the presidential election. In most places, the AP review found no evidence that Latinos are registering to vote at higher rates.

Contreras pointed out it’s a time-consuming process for legal residents to become naturalized citizens and register to vote. He encouraged those who aren’t eligible to “knock on doors and get out the vote.”

Leo Anzaldua, national manager of the Justice for Immigrants campaign of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said voter registration is not specifically part of the church’s immigration campaign.

WASHINGT0N LETTER

PATRICA ZAPOR

WASHINGTON LETTER

SEPTEMBER 17, 2006

Peter responds, ‘You are the Messiah’

24th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Mk 8:27-35

This passage is one of several similar sections in Trito-Isaiah. These sections together are called the Servant Songs of Isaiah. Poetic and expressive, they figure in the liturgies of Holy Week and Good Friday because Christians have applied them to Christ, the Lamb of God.

Who was in the mind of the author of these songs? As these songs were written? Was it the author? Was it another loyal and devoted follower of God? Who faced many difficulties? Was it the Chosen People, the servant being a collective symbol for them?

In any case, the picture is complete. The servant is steadfast, hardship and oppression, the servant’s path to fidelity. But God provides strength and guidance to the one despised.

Assured of God’s help, and resolute in faith, the servant is undaunted in obeying God. For the time of the Revelation, the differing opinions regarding texts such as this reading literally caused wars. It affirms the classic Roman Catholic interpretation of Revelation. God gives us the healing and empowering grace so that we can believe.

However, we must ratify our belief in our worthy Christian conduct. It is not a question simply of following rules and regulations. Rather, it is to conduct ourselves so that in everything we replicate Christ.

In the story from St. Mark’s Gospel, Jesus and the Apostles have gone to the region of Caesarea Philippi. This region is often in the news even today, and it has been the scene of much violence in the past 30 years. In general, it is the region now called the Golant hills, territory claimed by modern Syria but taken militarily by Israel about 40 years ago. Parts of it still are under Israeli control. At the origin of the Jordan River, it is picturesque and placid. Such was the setting for this powerful revelatory reading. Jesus questions the Apostles. His identity is the issue. They respond by reporting the various proposals people put forward as to the Lord’s identity. Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, others one of the prophets.

Then Jesus bluntly asks the apostles about their thoughts as to the identity of the master. Note that Peter speaks for the group. Also note Peter’s firm answer. “You are the Messiah!”

Jesus then gives the Twelve Apostles a special lesson. It is one of many occasions within the New Testament in which the apostles appear as special students. They heard from Jesus lessons not given to the rank and file. They were special.

When Peter interprets his own, human thinking into the discussion, Jesus reprimands him.

Then Jesus tells the crowd that discipleship means crossing personal crosses. It is frank and somber. To follow Christ means the willingness to sacrifice even earthly life itself.

Reflection

Living the Christian life by active acts of love and faith, all in reflection of Jesus, always has been challenging. Certainly the martyrs, from those who died in ancient Rome to those dying today in Sudan, know very well this aspect of discipleship.

Blessedly, Americans do not face this test of discipleship. But, they face everyday the mighty attacks to the Gospel from our culture. We too must sacrifice if we wish to follow the Lord.

The fact is, however, the challenges come, overcoming opposition and being loyal to Christ results in peace in this life and joy in the life eternal.

Our example is Jesus, the crucified, the risen, so beautifully depicted as the Suffering Servant. His story is of victory, not defeat, life not death.

READINGS

24th week of ordinary time

Monday: 1 Cor 13:17-26, 33 Ps 40:7-10, 17 Lk 7:1-10
Tuesday: 1 Cor 12:17-27a Ps 100:1-5 Lk 7:11-17
Wednesday: 1 Cor 12:31-13:1 Ps 32:3-5, 12:21 Lk 7:31-35
Friday: 1 Cor 15:12-20 Ps 49:6-10, 17:1-4 Lk 8-13
Saturday: 1 Cor 15:33-37, 42-49 Ps 50:10-14 Lk 8-15

CATEQUIZ’EM

By Dominict Campillson

Sept. 19 is the feast of St. Janarius. He is most famous nowadays for his blood. This sanguinary quiz looks at blood.

1. The term blooded particularly in the Bible a. rarely, as Jews tended to avoid mention of it b. at least 400-500 times (depending on the translation of terms) c. never

2. a. As early as Genesis, Jesus was forbidden to eat meat a. which had the blood still in it. b. which was emptied of blood. c. which had at one time included blood.

3. As well as commenting on animal blood, the Lord stated “… if anyone sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed.” This is generally thought to refer to a. ritual suicide. b. causing the death (not just bleeding) of another person. c. ritual scaring as preparation for warfare.

4. This aspect of blood was apparently unknown to the Old Testament Jews: a. the fact that blood is red b. the link between blood and life. c. the circulation of the blood.

5. In Deuteronomy, who do references to “the avenger of blood” refer to? a. the next of kin of a person accidentally killed b. the government official, known as the Avenger for short c. the first known serial killer

6. In Jewish sacrifices the blood was normally a. poured around the base of the altar, or in some cases sprinkled or smeared on the horns of the altar. b. heated and baked into blood sausages and distributed to the non-Jews (aliens). c. used in the preparation of vestments and articles used in the temple.

7. In most cases the animal whose blood was to be let, had to be without this a. a brain b. any blemish c. any value

8. The Letter to the Hebrews makes reference to “… how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself unblemished to God …” Why do scholars think that here again blood refers to sacrificial death, not just actual blood? a. Because as a divine being, Jesus would had not had actual blood. b. Because crucifixion was not especially bloody, but was fatal. c. Because blood was seen as unclean and would not be mentioned in the Bible.

9. Why was Jesus’ requirement to the Jews that they had to drink his blood (the Bread of Life discourse) particularly shocking? a. Jews were expressly forbidden to consume blood by their religion, not just as a custom. b. Blood was only included in foods, which were for higher caste priests, not Jesus followers. c. The blood references 1 Hebrew were misunderstood by the Greek Speaking Jews as referring to the death penalty, which they unanimously opposed.

10. Jesus was reported to have sweated blood while contemplating this: a. the disloyalty of his disciples led by Judas b. the might of the Romans in Judea c. his imminent passion

11. When the Roman soldier pierced Jesus’ side to verify that he was dead, blood flows out, but also this: a. wine b. vinegar or “gall” c. water

12. The blood of Jesus continues to be present in: a. the Holy Grail on display in the Vatican Museum. b. the Eucharist. c. the Mandala, kept in an unknown location by the secretive Templars.

13. What conclusions have been drawn about this phenomenon? a. It is a clearly a miracle since no other explanation is possible. b. It is an obvious trick using oil and dye to fool the gullible. c. Opinion differs, some believe it to be supernatural, others natural, and some others a natural phenomenon with a supernatural cause.

ANSWERS:

1b, 2a, 3b, 4c, 5a, 6a, 7b, 8b, 9a, 10c, 11c, 12b, 13c
Couple is at odds with contraception

Zinedine Zidane vs. Jackie Robinson

Having a decided preference for sports that recognize "authenticity," Zinedine Zidane is the finest soccer player of his generation, muted down at the crucial moment? "The only explanation," according to M. Levy, is that "there was in this man a kind of recollection, an ultimate inner reverie, against the living parable, the stupid statue, the beautified monument," which he had been transformed by his performance in the 2006 World Cup. This was, Homer explains, Zidane's suspension against the saint. A refusal of the halo that had been put on his head and that he now quite logically, pulverized with a headbutt, as though saying, 'I am a living being not a fetish; a passion, not this idiotic hologram, this guru ... which soccer-mania was turning me into.' To which the only sensible reply is a French noun that begins with "in" and ends with "e" and rhymes with "scarred." Sport grasps us precisely because of its Homeric qualities: sport tests skin and muscle as well as skill. Sport loses its profound human meaning, however, when its mortal power is warped. Ted Williams, the Red Sox Hall of Famer, was the American Achilles precisely because he was flawed. Achilles and Zidane committed "a man more admiring than the pope, the Dalai Lama, and Nelson Mandela put together," a "man of promise, a scoundrel, a man who was sought out, like Achilles in his tent of grudge and rage," because he was believed to be the only one who could avert his countrymen's fated decline.

There are many good books, tapes and pamphlets on what is wrong with NFP. You can find them easily at One More Soul (www.OMSoul.com). Here is a brief list to recommend to you and your wife:

- “Birth Control and Christian Discipleship,” by John Kippley (Couple to Couple League);
- “Contraception: Why Not?” by Donald DeMarco Ph.D. (DeMarco explains how contraception separates people from their spouses, from God (in favor of their own best interests); “Physicians Healed” (personal stories of 15 years of contraceptive use); and “Rethinking Reproductive Medicine.”

To understand the moral evil of contraception, it requires a little reading and reflection. I am convinced that contraception and sterilization is the taproot of the culture of death.

Abortion destroys the physical life of the unborn. Many forms of contraception also abort human life. When a mother decides to abort her child, she is clearly thwarting God's plan for the life of her child. The soul of the aborted child continues to live. God planned for every conceptus to be born and to move along the trajectory of life. Once God gives life, he does not take it back. This applies also to stillborn babies and miscarriages. Only God understands these mysteries, and all life is ultimately in his hand. He seems to allow defects of physical nature to have their natural consequences. God provides for these premature deaths. Their souls continue to live.

Contraception prevents God from creating the full number of children he has always intended to give to a given couple. God knows how many children has he planned for every married couple. One of the evils of contraception, perhaps the greatest evil is that it prevents God from being able to create new persons. The contraception couple wants to be masters over life, instead of servers of life.

From all eternity God has planned to call each of us into existence at a given time, from a given set of parents. We are very special. We were created to cooperate with him as co-creators, as bodied persons who are fertile. That always involves free will on our part. God allows us to abuse our freedom, as in the case of contraception and sterilization. But that is exactly the nature of sin: the abuse of our freedom.

The following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for the Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle B: the hard teaching about the coming Passion. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

S: the hard teaching about the coming Passion.
M: the way he asked who do you say that i am.
H: the way he asked, who do you say that i am?
E: the christ.
T: the christ.
R: the christ.
R: the christ.
F: the christ.
E: the christ.
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BISHOP DWENGER HOSTS TAILGATE PARTY — Bishop Dwenger High School in Fort Wayne will celebrate homecoming on Friday, Sept. 15, at Zollner Stadium. A tailgate party will begin at 5:30 p.m. Cost is $7 per person or $5 for children under 10 years old. The kickoff will be at 7 p.m. for the game between Dwenger and South Side.

Cougars, Panthers remain as the undefeated ICCL teams

SOUTH BEND — After two weeks of intensive play in the Inter-City Catholic League (ICCL), both St. Anthony-St. Joseph football Panthers and the Corpus Christi Cougars popped up as the undefeated co-leaders in the schoolboy gridiron season. Corpus Christi nipped Mishawaka Catholic in a 14-8 nail biter behind the two touchdown scoring of Mario Navarette and Robbie Canil. Navarette broke away on a 23-spring. Canil tallied on a 10-yard in the closely-fought contest. Cody Webber kicked the extra point.

Ben Brewers scored on a 30-yard run for the Saints in the third period and Andrew Davidson added the two-point conversion. The fourth quarter was a nip-and-tuck tussle and neither team was able to get within scoring distance. St. Anthony-St. Joseph staved off a desperate St. Matthew attach to prevail in a typical defensive struggle, 12-7.

FORT WAYNE — This week, Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) sports includes a report on the cross country success of the Cardegles. With games beginning Sept. 9, CYO volleyball is in full swing.

CYO action heats up with cross country, volleyball and football

This year the Cardegles, made up of boys and girls from St. Charles and St. Jude, have 42 cross country runners in grades 5-8. They are coached by Dan Kaufman, Scott Reiling, Dan Leffers, Chris Kaufman, Brian Kaufman and Tim O’Connell.

With three meets under their belts, the Cardegles have been doing a fine job. Both the boys and the girls finished runner up in a Leo four-way invitational. In a dual meet with Lane Middle School, both the boys’ and girls’ teams came out on top. This past weekend in Columbia City at a 20-team invitational hosted by Indiana Springs Middle School Invitational, the boys finished sixth and the girls placed seventh.

To date, the top five runners for the boys are Andrew Eckrich, Phil Schoeckler, Billy McManus, Josh Underwood and Jacob Malmstrom. Kate Kinley, Jenny Colone, Gabrielle Ferro, Natalie Kocks and Emma Satterthwaite hold the top spots for the girls. The Cardegles are preparing to compete at the Huntington Catholic Invite and the Wabash Invitational yet this month.

Volleyball opens

CYO volleyball is now in full swing. Matches started in the area on Saturday, Sept. 9. Games were held at four locations for the seventh and eighth grade girls in three different leagues — the white (large school), blue (small school) and green (7).

In her first season as varsity coach, Jacqui Buckmaster has 11 players on her PB (Precious Blood) roster. This includes eight eighth graders and three seventh graders. In their first blue league game against Benoit, PB lost in two close games, 20-25 and 17-25. Claire Cochran had four aces in the loss and Haley Smith two.

In her first season as varsity coach, Jacqui Buckmaster said, “We are working on it.” Her father and aunt all attended Precious Blood. She is coaching the girls and three seventh and eighth graders.

In the loss, Evan Feichter threw 55 yards to Greg German for a touchdown on a wide receiver screen. Conner Friesner kicked the extra point for St. Vincent (2-1). Eagles’ touchdowns were scored by Stephen Kiermaier on an 80-yard run and seventh grader James Knapse on a 49-yard fumble recovery. Alex Sterznek hit the extra two. The Eagles are now 2-2.

Week 2 football wrap-up

In CYO football action, the Eagles from St. John, Fort Wayne-Benoit Academy-St. Joseph, Hessen Cassel (2-0) defeated Holy Cross (0-2) by a score of 30-14 in the final game of the day on Sunday, Sept. 3, at Zollner Stadium. D’Angelo Fincher had a pair of touchdowns as did Marquel Cooper. Alex Sterznek scored 3-4 extra points. After two weeks of play, three teams remained unbeaten: St. John, Fort Wayne, St. John, New Haven, and St. Vincent. But that all changed with the games from Sept. 10 at Bishop Luers field.

The Panthers lost a close one to St. John, Fort Wayne 14-8. In the loss, Evan Feichter threw 55 yards to Greg German for a touchdown on a wide receiver screen. Conner Friesner kicked the extra point for St. Vincent (2-1). Eagles’ touchdowns were scored by Stephen Kiermaier on an 80-yard run and seventh grader James Knapse on a 49-yard fumble recovery. Alex Sterznek hit the extra two. The Eagles are now 2-2.

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New York (CNS) – Following are recent capsule reviews issued by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Office for Film and Broadcasting.

“Crank” (Lionsgate)

Noisy and endlessly unpleasant action film about a Los Angeles hit man (Jason Statham) who must keep in perpetual motion after he used a substance designed to kill him within seconds if his heart rate drops. Co-writers and directors Mark Neveldine and Brian Taylor load on the bloody video-game-style action in an empty and mindless exercise. Excessive and graphic violence and gore, lewd sexual content, vulgar humor, recurring partial nudity, drug use and puerile rough and crude language and profanity. The USCCB Office for Film & Broadcasting classification is O — morally offensive. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted. Under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian.

“Hollywoodland” (Focus)

Dark speculative story about the mysterious death of George Reeves (a convincing Ben Affleck), the actor who played Superman on TV in the 1950s, as a fictional private eye (Adrien Brody) tries to determine whether the death was indeed suicide, or murder at the hands of his opportunistic starlet girlfriend (Robin Tunney), or by a studio executive with mob connections (Bob Hoskins) married to his paramour (Diane Lane). Director Allen Coulter’s film (from Paul Bembaum’s fanciful script) will be of interest to fans of the “Superman” series and those intrigued by Hollywood lore, but there are no conclusive answers, and the anachronistic expletives (the f-word and s-word were not used so commonly in the 1940s and ’50s), and overdone sleazy milieu will be a turnoff to many. Strong sexual themes, non-graphic sexual encounters including adultery, pervasive rough and crude language and profanity, some discreet violence with blood and partial nudity. The USCCB Office for Film & Broadcasting classification is L — limited adult audience, films whose problematic content many adults would find troubling. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted. Under 17 requires accompanying parent or guardian.

“The Wicker Man” (Warner Bros.)

Uninspired remake of the 1973 cult thriller, here transposed from Scotland to the Pacific Northwest, about a police officer (Nicolas Cage) who, investigating the disappearance of a young girl, becomes entangled in the strange goings-on of a secretive island community of pagans led by a mysterious matriarch (Ellen Burstyn).

Following the basic outline of the original, minus the eroticism and adding a feminist twist, director Neil LaBute generates some suspense in his cerebral approach, but overall the film is a bland and less exercise. Excessive and graphic violence and gore, lewd sexual content, vulgar humor, recurring partial nudity, drug use and puerile rough and crude language and profanity. The USCCB Office for Film & Broadcasting classification is O — morally offensive. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted. Under 17 requires accompanying parent or guardian.

For a reader’s guide of reliable and dependable sources in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend see the Service and Repair Directory.
WHAT’S HAPPENING?

WHAT’S HAPPENING carries announcements about upcoming events in the diocese. Send in your announcement at least two weeks prior to the event. Mail to: Today’s Catholic, PO. Box 11169, Fort Wayne 46856; or e-mail: fhogan@fw.dioceseofwbs.org. Events that require an admission charge or payment to participate will receive one free listing. For additional listings of that event, please call our advertising sales staff to purchase space.

St. Thomas Aquinas series
Huntington — St. Peter and Paul Parish will begin a series of talks to deepen their faith on Sunday, Sept. 17. The Art of the Rosary; Teaching the Faithful to Pray” by Dr. Esperanza Camara (from the University of Saint Francis) will speak at 3 p.m. in Gollner Hall with refreshments to follow. The talk is free. This talk will focus on the history of the rosary and the use of images in its dissemination and practice during the Middle Ages and Renaissance. It will examine how artists used their creative abilities to assist the faithful in prayerful meditation. For information call Jerid at (260) 358-0411.

Rummage sale planned
South Bend — The St. Matthew HASA will have a rummage sale on Saturday, Sept. 23, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the school gym located at 1015 E. Dayton St. For information call Michelle Quinn at (574) 233-4331 or Lisa Bramer at (574) 231-9293.

Light Weigh orientation meeting
New Haven — A Light Weigh orientation meeting will be held at St. John the Baptist Parish Center Monday, Sept. 18, at 6:30 p.m. Come learn how you can become spiritually and physically fit. For information call Pat at (260) 493-6355.

Polish heritage dinner to be held
South Bend — The Central Polish-American Organization (CENTRALA) will have a Polish heritage dinner on Sunday, Oct. 8, at 1:30 p.m. at the Z.B. Falcon Hall, 323 S. Sheridan St., for the benefit of providing medical help for Polish children. Tickets are advance sale only by Friday, Sept. 22. Adults $12.50 each and children up to age 12 years $6.00. For information contact Dolores Liwosz, at (574) 259-7001.

St. Aloysius scrapbook fundraiser
Yoder — St. Aloysius will have a scrapbook fundraiser on Sunday, Oct. 22, from 7-10 p.m. at the parish. $5 admission.

Day of Reflection
Mishawaka — A day of reflection will be held at St. Francis Convent (across from Marian High School) on Wednesday, Sept. 27, from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The theme is “Francis: Beyond the Bird Bath Image.” The cost of the day is $15 and includes lunch. Register by Friday, Sept. 22, to Sister Barbara Anne Hallman at (574) 259-5427.

First annual fall fest
Deacut — St. Mary of the Assumption Church will have a Fall Fest on the church parking lot located at Fourth and Monroe Streets on Saturday, Sept. 30 and Sunday, Oct. 1. On Saturday, Mass at 4 p.m. will be followed by fajita dinners ($7 presale call Abby at (260) 724-8794, limited quantity at door $8), food tents, beer/wine available, Texas Hold’Em (5:15-6:15 registration), a silent auction and music by “Main Street Jazz” at 5 p.m. and “Endgame” from 7-10 p.m. On Sunday, Mass at 11 a.m. will be followed by pulled pork dinner, food tents, beer/wine available, children’s games, bingo and music by L and L Karaoke from noon to 4 p.m. and “Pobble” at 4 p.m.

Single meets to see St. Elizabeth
Fort Wayne — The GAP, a Catholic-Christian singles group for men and women in their 40s through 60s will meet on Friday, Sept. 15, at 7 p.m. in St. Elizabeth Ann Seton parish hall. Group dancing. Partners are not required. There will be clogging and line dancing lessons provided by a professional dancer. Please bring a snack or drink to share. For more information call (260) 432-7454 or e-mail gap@656@msn.com.

Office of Youth Ministry hosts XLT evening
Fort Wayne — The Office of Youth Ministry will host its first diocesan-wide XLT (exalt) on Thursday, Sept. 28, at 7 p.m. at St. Mary Church in downtown Fort Wayne. Come experience “The Real Thing” with Bishop John M. D’Arcy, Frankie and the Holy Rollers, Father Mark Gurtner and Catholic friends from all around. XLT is praise and worship, dramatic reflection and time with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament with more praise and worship. XLT appeals to high school and college age Catholics to draw them into deep worship, but everyone is welcome and encouraged to come. Seeing the young people’s energy and enthusiasm for their faith is inspiring and contagious.

Fish fry and salad bar
South Bend — St. Adalbert Parish will have an all-you-can-eat fish fry and salad bar on Friday, Sept. 22, from 3:30 to 7:30 p.m. in the Heritage Center. Adults and carry-out $7, children (5-12) $3, children under 5 free.

Basic tenants of Islamic faith presented
Fort Wayne — The adult education committee of St. Jude Parish, corner of State and Randallia, will sponsor Sahab Al-Saud, of the Islamic Center to speak on the Basic Tenants of the Islamic Faith on Monday, Sept. 25, at 7 p.m. in the south hall.

Little Flower Holy Hour
Fort Wayne — Father Ron Rieder, OFM, Cap., pastor of St. Peter and Paul Parish, will celebrate the holy hour at MacDougal Chapel on Tuesday, Sept. 19, at 7:15 p.m.

WHAT’S HAPPENING? MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THE 2006 BANQUET FOR LIFE

Bristol
Linda M. Niemow, 46, St. Mary of the Annunciation
Goshen
Perla Cervantes, 11 months, St. John the Evangelist
Ligonier
Marlon L. Rohm, 87, St. Patrick
Mishawaka
Benita Rose Schultz, 82, St. Joseph
New Haven
Alfred C. Verbeke, 77, St. Bavo
South Bend
Charlene Lubawy, 54, Christ the King
Margery M. Wollmers, 80, Holy Cross

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Funeral pre-arrangements are just one way to make clear-headed decisions and still keep the finance under your control. Our numerous funeral arrangements provide a wide selection of plans to accommodate your emotional and financial needs. The Hickey family has over 70 years of experience and different circumstances in handling funeral arrangements. And we’re ready to help you at any time. We invite you to ask us about costs regarding burial and cremation services as low as $1,450.00.

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“YOUR VOTE...THEIR VOICE”
MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THE 2006 BANQUET FOR LIFE

Guest Speaker: Dan Coats
Former U.S. Senator from Indiana and Ambassador to Germany

Monday, October 9, 2006
6:30 p.m.
GRAND WAYNE CENTER
DOWNTOWN FORT WAYNE

Call 260-471-1849 for tickets
Allen County Right to Life Committee, Inc., and Three Rivers Educ. Trust Fund
Catholic Charities worker takes first hand look at refugee camp

BY KAY LOZAR

FORT WAYNE — Burma, a country located in southeastern Asia that is no larger than the state of Texas, is home to over 47 million people. Sixty-eight percent of the population is Burmese and include smaller ethnic groups such as the Karens and Shan. The government, a military junta, is an oppressive military dictatorship and many ethnic Karens flee to the border country of Thailand to escape the civil war fighting between the rebels and the Burmese troops.

According to the World Factbook, in 2005, Thailand sheltered 121,000 Burmese refugees, but was unable to accept them permanently. Several United States agencies have played a vital role in the resettlement of these refugees, including Catholic Charities in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.

The Catholic Charities Refugee Resettlement Program (RRP) of Fort Wayne offers refugees services ranging from reception and placement to job development and advocacy. Nyein Chan, once a Burmese refugee himself, is director of RRP and has worked diligently to establish between 160 and 250 refugees each of the past several years from countries like Bosnia, Vietnam, Africa and his homeland, Burma.

Travels to Thailand

After working with so many Burmese refugees, Chan chose to travel back overseas to Thailand last July to visit a refugee camp in hopes of gaining first hand knowledge of the conditions under which the Karen refugees live. Chan recalls his own life as a refugee but reports the camp he visited, Maela Refugee Camp, was much larger than the one he was retained in. Maela stands about five miles from the Burma border in hilly, Thai territory. Reportedly the largest of nine refugee camps, it shelters 48,000 of those in exile.

Upon arrival and following required security procedures, Chan was transported to Maela Camp by the Karen organization. The conditions, he reports, were far worse than he had anticipated. Row after row of one-room bamboo huts lined the dirt streets, each divided into two areas, one specified for cooking, the other for living and sleeping. The refugees slept in hammocks or directly on the bamboo floors of the cramped huts. No water or sewer systems were in place.

The stench, he says, was overwhelming. According to the testimony of a resettlement director, the stench was due to a lack of proper sanitation and hygiene measures, which were not in place.

The refugees, both young and old, survive on fish caught from the nearby river and cooked on open fires fueled with handmade charcoal. Rice, onions and other staples brought in by the TBBC are sometimes purchased at the local camp store, with money sent from resettled relatives or earned from selling the cloth the children weave to supplement the lean diet of these displaced people.

But, Chan says, these are the lucky ones, as thousands of other Burmese try to survive without work, housing, food or water outside the camps in hopes of gaining refugee status.

Upon returning to his home in America, Chan took time to reflect on all that he had seen at Maela Refugee Camp. The memory of the oppressive poverty these people endure has inspired him to begin the process of soliciting donations specifically for them. He is hopeful to partner with area churches and ministries in creating ways to ship donated clothes and other items to the displaced families there.

Nyein Chan, once a refugee himself, is praying. "I've seen them with my own eyes, how difficult it is for them to survive. I am praying for them."