New staffers promote the catechetical ministry

FORT WAYNE — This weekend, parishes across the United States celebrate Catechetical Sunday, a day in which directors of religious education and religious education teachers are recognized for their work within their parishes.

“The Catechetical Sunday is a special Sunday for all those involved in teaching the faith,” says diocesan director of catechesis Sister Jane Carew. “It is the recognition of the ministry of the catechist. There are so many in the diocese who give so generously of their time and teach the faith to children.”

On Catechetical Sunday, many parishes will ask their religious education teachers to stand and be recognized at a designated Mass or several Masses and then offer a special blessing. Each year has a special theme, and the theme this year is “The word of God in the life and mission of the church.”

Over the years, workers in the diocesan Office of Catechesis have contributed to the growth of the faith throughout the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. They have strengthened the religious education programs for both children, youths and adults. Joining the Office of Catechesis recently are three new staffers who work from the South Bend and Fort Wayne offices.

Meggan Young works at the South Bend catechetical office. She has moved to the area from Iowa, where she had worked at a large

Pope Benedict XVI prays at the Grotto of the Apparitions at the Marian sanctuaries of Lourdes, France, Sept. 13. The pope traveled to Lourdes to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Mary’s appearances to St. Bernadette Soubirous.

Pope tells Lourdes pilgrims Mary leads to Christ

LOURDES, France (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI celebrated Mass for 150,000 international pilgrims at the Marian sanctuaries of Lourdes and told them that humble prayer to Mary was a true path to Christ.

The pope said Mary had appeared at Lourdes to invite everyone who suffers, physically or spiritually, to “raise their eyes toward the cross of Jesus and recognize a love that is stronger than death or sin.

“The power of love is stronger than the evil that threatens us,” he said Sept. 14.

The pope traveled to Lourdes, a town in the French Pyrenees, to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Mary’s appearances to St. Bernadette Soubirous, a 14-year-old peasant girl.

After days of rain and cool weather, sunshine broke through the clouds over the pilgrims who filled a grassy field near the sanctuaries. They applauded as the pontiff processed to an altar covered with a sail-shaped canopy.

In his sermon, the pope placed himself among the pilgrim population, saying he, too, had come to pray at the feet of Mary, “eager to learn from her alongside little Bernadette.”

Then he made a point he has consistently emphasized when speaking of Marian devotion: that Mary turns one’s gaze to Christ.

He noted that Mary’s first gesture to St. Bernadette was to make the sign of the cross — an initiation into the mysteries of faith in Christ, he said.

“Mary comes to remind us that prayer which is humble and intense, trusting and persevering, must have a central place in our Christian lives,” the pope said.

“Prayer is indispensable if we are to receive Christ’s power,” he said.

LOURDES, PAGE 3
Bishop celebrates 125th anniversary of St. Mary of the Presentation Parish in Geneva

**St. Mary of the Presentation, Geneva**

This parish has always been close to my heart. I went there many times in my early years as bishop for one thing or another. It has not been easy to provide a priest for this parish. They are 26 miles from the nearest parish to the north; namely, St. Mary’s, Decatur. Currently, they have 80 families registered. It is a small church, but beautiful, as you approach it after turning left at the flashing light in Geneva — and finding yourself in the midst of beautiful rolling farmland.

Most of all, it has a history. I was there this past Sunday to celebrate the 125th anniversary of this church, which is in an area called Irish Settlement. It was settled by Irish farmers, and you do see names like Moran, Kenney and Finetry on the headstones in the nearby parish cemetery behind the church. Later came farmers from Germany. The church was built by the early settlers who first came in 1860s. Thomas Moran, whose great-granddaughter was married to us, came in 1865 from Galway. More on that later.

We were celebrating the 125th anniversary of the building of the church, in 1883, which was considered the founding of the parish. It was a superb day for this; the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

The Basilica of the Holy Cross on the place where Jesus was crucified, was rebuilt after being attacked and burned on two occasions. So also, the humble farmers in Irish Settlement had to twice rebuild their church when it burned.

**A seminarian from Geneva**

From this little parish has come, I think for the first time in its history, a candidate for the priesthood for the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. That would be Ben Muhlenkamp, who spent this past summer working at St. Charles Parish, Fort Wayne. Ben gives much credit to this little country parish for nourishing his vocation, along with St. Vincent’s, Fort Wayne, and their youth program; and the example of Msgr. Ed Hession, the late beloved pastor of St. Charles, Fort Wayne.

Ben recently drove me back and forth to South Bend for the Annual Bishop’s Appeal dinner; telling me along the way about the various kinds of corn and soybeans that were growing in the area. He spent several days this summer repairing the farm equipment for his parents, who are dairy farmers in Geneva.

**A special link**

My beloved parish church in Brighton, Mass., sitting atop of what one priest who served there called “that green Irish hill,” is also dedicated to Our Lady of Presentation. In both churches this refers not to the presentation of the child, Jesus, but to the presentation of Mary in the temple as a young child, brought by her parents, Anne and Joachim. Ben Muhlenkamp was with us, and so was Father Dave Voors, the vicar for the area and pastor of St. Mary’s, Decatur, who concelebrated with us, along with Father Paul Wohlden of the Congregation of The Precious Blood, who helps out on various kinds of corn and soybeans that were growing in the area. He spent several days this summer repairing the farm equipment for his parents, who are dairy farmers in Geneva.

Some very special families

Over the years, I have come to know Nancy and Gene Subler. They are in the concrete business, and they have five sons, and now four grandchildren. Nancy has been a catechist for many years, and through the coming and going of many priests, she and her husband, Gene, along with Mary Agnes Muhlenkamp and her husband, Gary, have maintained a strong, quiet, and gentle, and very humble position in the parish. Their heart and soul, and that of other families, brings a service of love to the parishioners.

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There are small parishes a few miles north of other families, brings a service of love to the parishioners.

**The Basilica of the Holy Cross on the place where Jesus was crucified, was rebuilt after being attacked and burned on two occasions. So also, the humble farmers in Irish Settlement had to twice rebuild their church when it burned.**

**Pope John Paul and the small parish**

Pope John Paul, as you know, was a distinguished poet, indeed, a romantic. He once wrote a beautiful poem entitled, I believe, “On Giving Confirmation in a Mountain Parish.” I don’t have his poetic ability, but this little piece is my tribute to all those who kept this parish going, and to the spirit of the many families in Geneva who make sure that the children learn the faith, that the sick and dying are visited, and is also written to support their wonderful priest, Father Bosco-Perera, in making sure that the work of Christ continues. I also met Ben Muhlenkamp’s sisters, and one of them is studying religion and communications at Purdue University. She hopes to work in youth ministry in a parish when she graduates. I told her that we would try and find a place for her in one of our parishes. A splendid day in a parish that is certainly close to Our Lady and her Son, and close also to the lead bishop.

I am looking forward to a continuing education session with our priests at Pokagon.

It will be on preaching — helping our priests to preach more effectively. Keep it in your prayers.

My beloved Red Sox are one game out of first place, with 13 to play. I think they will win the division; at any rate, they will be in the playoffs in October, which is always a beautiful month anyway. October nights will be strengthened by some good ball games.

See you all next week.
Lourdes

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

At Lourdes, he said, Mary also revealed herself as the Immaculate Conception, a person conceived without sin. In this way, she is “beauty transfigured, the image of the new humanity,” he said.

This special grace inspires people by reminding them that they are “marked by sin but saved in hope,” the hope of salvation that allows them to face daily life, he said.

“This is the path which Mary opens up for man. To give oneself fully to God is to find the path of true freedom,” he said.

Many came to the papal Mass in wheelchairs or on stretchers, part of a perennial pilgrimage of those who have traveled to Lourdes for spiritual or physical healing.

The assembly was multicultural and multilingual, and the liturgy featured readings, prayers and responses in 10 languages, including Chinese.

Two young Catholic pilgrims from Myanmar said they had traveled halfway around the world to see Pope Benedict when he arrived in Lourdes Sept. 13 and were back for a prime spot at the Mass the next morning.

She said her impression of Pope Benedict was that of “a very spiritual man” who shared their devotion to Mary. She said the pope may seem a bit remote at times, but those who spoke to him quickly, “I think he’s lovely.”

At the Angelus blessing following mass, the pope spoke about the many millions of pilgrims who had traveled to Lourdes every year. The main reason, he said, is that they feel closer to Mary. He said he shared their intimate thoughts.

“That which many, either because of embarrassment or modesty, do not confess to their nearest and dearest, they confide to her who is all pure, to her Immaculate Heart, without fear, without frills, in truth,” he said.

“Before Mary, by virtue of her very purity, man does not hesitate to reveal his weakness, to express his questions and his doubts, to formulate his most secret hopes and desires,” he said.

Arriving in Lourdes following a two-day stop in Paris, the pope immediately entered the grotto pilgrimage to mark the 150th anniversary of the apparitions at St. Bernadette Soubirous.

There, he kissed her rosary and said a prayer.

Next the pope went to the grotto at the base of a rocky cliff, where Bernadette experienced 18 apparitions of Mary from Feb. 11 to July 16, 1858. Like millions of pilgrims each year, he paused to take a drink of water from the spring she discovered there, a spring said to have miraculous powers.

Later that night, the pope closed a torchlight evening procession in Rosary Square. Addressing the overflow crowd of pilgrims, he paid tribute to simple devotion.

“Let us put into practice the faith of our forebears. Let us be convinced that faith is not a passing phenomenon, but a powerful reality,” he said.

The next day, after celebrating Mass for a larger-than-expected crowd in Paris, he went to Lourdes and showed another side of his role as universal pastor — a Marian pope.

“It’s no secret that, as a theologian and bishop, Pope Benedict was not always comfortable with Marian devotion and claims of apparitions,” the pope said. “But over the years he has widened his views, saying in 2002 that, “the older I am, the more important the mother of God is to me.”

So at Lourdes pilgrims heard the scholarly pope preach the value of “humble and intense prayer” like the novice. He told his listeners that devotion to Mary was not a form of “pious infantilism” but an expression of spiritual maturity.

When he took a drink from the Lourdes spring that many pilgrims believe to be the font of miraculous cures, he was demonstrating that the Christian lives by simple signs and symbols as well as by theological ideas.

The pope’s trip to Lourdes was bound to be compared to Pope John Paul II’s moving visit to the shrine in 2004. Ailing and unsteady, the late pope had to ask for help on his litter; it was his last foreign trip.

Pope Benedict was not a personal witness to suffering like his predecessor, but he left no doubt that ministry to the sick is a benchmark of Catholicism.

In France, Pope Benedict shows the many dimensions of his ministry

BY JOHN THAVIS

Lourdes, France (CNS) — Being pope is not a one-dimensional job, a fact that was clearly evident during Pope Benedict XVI’s four-day visit to France.

Arriving in Paris Sept. 12, the pope first engaged in an important political encounter that attempted to build on the new openness shown the church by President Nicolas Sarkozy.

Next, in a brief meeting with Jews, he managed to capitalize in 20 grateful moments the church’s respect for Judaism and its firm rejection of anti-Semitism.

That evening, the pope slipped into his academic role and delivered a lecture on monasticism’s influence on Western civilization to 700 scholars and intellectuals.

He then switched gears and led vespers in Notre Dame Cathedral with priests and religious, emphasizing that while their ranks may be thinning the role in the church has lost none of its value and, indeed, is irreplaceable.

Finally, he stepped outside and energized a torchlight crowd of 40,000 young people, drawing roars of approval when he said the church had a mission and has confidence in them.

It was a whirlwind beginning and demonstrated a remarkable pastoral versatility on the part of the 81-year-old pontiff.

The next day, after celebrating Mass for a large, unexpected crowd in Paris, the pope returned to Lourdes and showed another side of his role as universal pastor — a Marian pope.

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Pope Benedict was not a personal witness to suffering like his predecessor, but he left no doubt that ministry to the sick is a benchmark of Catholicism.

At his Mass with thousands of sick people Sept. 15, the final day of his visit, he thanked Cardinal Cantalamessa and all over the world who volunteer their time and effort to help the infirm.

That highlighted a key theme of Pope Benedict’s pontificate, one he has underlined in encyclicals but which is sometimes overlooked: that personal charity is love in action — is the ultimate expression of faith in Jesus Christ.

Another difference between Pope Benedict and Pope John Paul was Paul’s surface during the French Catholic Church. He returned to the pontiff.

The pope took a softer approach, alluding to pastoral problems but keeping the focus on the positive — for example, the enthusiasm shown by 240,000 people at his Paris liturgy. In his final talk to French Catholics, he praised them for their “firm faith” and said he had been like-wise encouraged by the strong turnout of youths at a Paris vigil.

Where he offered more instructional was in his talk to French bishops. He touched on a sore point when he urged the bishops to show flexibility toward traditionalists who want to take advantage of his 2007 rule change on the use of the Tridentine rite, the Mass rite used before the Second Vatican Council.

As a whole, though, the pope framed his message in optimistic terms. Whether talking to politicians, pastoral workers, scholars, the sick and the young, he emphasized that the church is at home in France, and its voice — including the voice of prayer — must continue to be heard.
Residents urged to be patient, kind as all cope with aftermath of Ike

By Carol Zimmerman

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The retired archbishop of Galveston-Houston told a small congregation gathered for Mass Sept. 14 at Sacred Heart Co-Cathedral in Houston to stay calm in the aftermath of Hurricane Ike and to be friendly to one another, especially as they cope with the challenge of living without electricity.

Archbishop Joseph A. Fiorenza also told them to be grateful the storm, which made landfall Sept. 13, had not taken as many lives as was feared. The Category 2 storm killed 30 people in its path across eight states.

“This calls us in times of great distress to have patience and kindness with one another, to realize we are going to have a long time of endurance and great inconvenience,” the archbishop said, according to a report in the Houston Chronicle daily newspaper.

“But with good humor and God’s grace our public officials hopefully the time of great endurance won’t be too long,” he said.

When Hurricane Ike swept across the Texas coast with its 100 mph winds, battering waves and torrential rains, it damaged thousands of homes, submerged huge sections of Galveston and left at least 2 million people without power.

While the height of the surging water did not reach the expected 20 feet, it still caused extensive damage, washing away roads and flooding homes. Houston, without power and with many of its streets covered with glass shards from broken skyscraper windows, was placed under a weeklong curfew.

Galveston Island and other coastal areas took the brunt of the storm that left homes in splinters, downed trees and power lines, and submerged roadways.

Authorities estimate that 140,000 people did not follow the mandatory evacuation orders. The day after the storm officials rescued 2,000 people.

Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston were closed Sept. 15 and were to reopen “according to their readiness and safety,” said an announcement on the archdiocesan Web site. Only essential departments at the chancery offices were open Sept. 15.

Archdiocesan spokesmen also said Catholic schools in the Diocese of Beaumont, Texas, were closed until further notice because of a lack of electricity.

The pastoral center was similarly closed, according to a message on a temporary Web site set up for the diocese.

Catholics in the Beaumont Diocese were not required to fulfill their Sunday Mass obligation during the Sept. 13-14 weekend.

Catholic Charities agencies set up mobile food centers and community resource sites in southern Texas after the storm to provide food, water, ice, hygiene kits, tarps and cleanup supplies.

They also provided gas cards and other aid to assist stranded evacuees in their return home as well as crisis counseling and case management.

Kim Burgo, director of disaster response for Catholic Charities USA, noted that it typically costs $1,000 per family to evacuate their home during a disaster.

“We are always mindful of the poor who do not have the extra resources and arrive at (the diocesan offered) the best way to meet the needs of the Hispanics,” Sister Jane says.

The program will be the equivalent of (the diocesan offered) Education for Ministry program.

Father Virgilio Elizondo, from San Antonio, Texas, who works in Hispanic ministry at the University of Notre Dame, who works in Hispanic ministry at the University of Notre Dame, will launch the program with a special talk to the Hispanic people at St. Patrick Parish in December. The program will involve study of the new catechism for adults in Spanish.

In the South Bend catechetical office, Danielle Abril recently joined the team. She and her husband relocated to South Bend. Her husband is a student in the master’s in theology program at the University of Notre Dame.

The program will be the equivalent of (the diocesan offered) Education for Ministry program.

She has a number of responsibilities: one of them is liaison with Catholic elementary schools, Sister Jane says. “They also is helping to write the curriculum.”

Since arriving, Abril wrote the grade 6 Old Testament Curriculum revisions and is working now on a segment for junior high. She will also organize the two institute days for Catholic schoolteachers.

“The three of them are very gifted,” Sister Jane says. “They represent that love of the church (which Pope John Paul II predicted as a new springtime of the church) with their talent and gift- edness. ... They have a focus on the catechetical ministry. They love it. And they just have an incredible devotion to it.”
Pro-life Advocates in South Bend launch groundbreaking 40 Days for Life campaign

BY TOM UEBBING

SOUTH BEND — “On Sept. 24, South Bend area pro-life advocates will join together with people of faith and conscience from many other communities from coast to coast to kick off the area’s own version of the groundbreaking 40 Days for Life campaign,” said Mary Akre, spokesperson for the South Bend 40 Days for Life campaign. The campaign will be held at several parishes and parish pro-life groups across the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.

40 Days for Life is an intensive pro-life initiative that focuses on 40 days of prayer and fasting, 40 days of peaceful vigil at abortion facilities, and 40 days of grassroots educational outreach. The 40-day time frame is drawn from examples throughout Biblical history where God brought about world-changing transformation in 40-day periods.

“As people here in South Bend join with others from across the country to pray and fast and take courageous action for 40 days to end the tragic violence of abortion, we look forward to seeing what kind of active in local pro-life efforts. Churches of different denominations worked together to work for an end to abortion in their cities. Many post-abortion women begin programs to heal from the pain caused by previous abortion experiences. With such a strong track record of results, we are excited to see what God has in store for this fall.”

“We are expecting great transformation God will bring about in our city and throughout America,” said Akre. “40 Days for Life has already generated proven lifesaving results in cities across America,” said David Bereit, national campaign director for 40 Days for Life. “During the fall of 2007 and spring of 2008, dozens of communities joined together for nationally coordinated 40 Days for Life campaigns. The efforts of thousands of people of faith helped make a tremendous difference. Numerous cities reported a significant drop in abortions. Some abortion facilities either closed altogether or scaled back their operations during the campaign. New volunteers got

Students at Most Precious Blood School in Fort Wayne stand, ready to release balloons commemorating the school’s 110th anniversary on Sept. 12. The Boy Scouts presented the flag and the student body, teachers, alumni and staff enjoyed eating birthday cake.

Catholic Church embraces organ donation

BY LAUREN CAGGIANO

FORT WAYNE — “You have the power to donate life.” Though often taken for granted, organ and tissue donation is crucial to the modern health care system and embraced by the Catholic Church.

Organ and tissue donation in and of itself is a selfless act encouraged by both religious and civic leaders. The Indiana Organ Procurement Organization (IOPPO) is a statewide initiative aimed at advancing organ, tissue and eye donation in Indiana.

From a civic point of view, Sam Davis, director of professional services and public affairs, offers some insight into the topic. Davis said that most Christian denominations, including Catholics, support organ and tissue donation, as it promotes the sanctity of life.

“The decision to donate, or at least the concept of organ and tissue donation, is something considered while one is still living ... from a practical point of view, once you’ve died no additional (bodily) harm can come to you, so donating allows valuable lifesaving resources to be used rather than burned,” he said.

“It’s important that people talk about their attitudes toward donation and assuming they are in the majority ofAmericans and Hoosiers that support that donation, they should tell their family members,” he said. “When the decision is known, it makes things easier for those left to answer questions.”

Lisa Polhamus, a biology teacher at Bishop Dwenger High School, echoed Davis’ comments about the morality of organ and tissue donation. Polhamus said that high school anatomy and physiology class is a “good time to talk about organ donation.”

Polhamus stresses that organ or tissue donation is an opportunity to give a part of yourself to someone else, “I stress that (organ and tissue donation) are altruistic acts and vary much in line with Jesus’ teachings,” she said. “Students need to talk to their families about their wishes.”

Gwyn and Julio Garcia, parishioners at St. Vincent de Paul in Fort Wayne, are among the 700 organ recipients and 130 organ donors in Indiana. Julio was suffering from acute arthritis and was in dire need of a healthy kidney. Like many facing hard times, Julio turned to his family.

“Gwyn seemed like a likely donor, as her blood type was compatible. Gwyn said Julio did not consider his children as potential donors, as the operation can be risky even for those in good health.”

The transplant took place Feb. 27 at Lutheran Hospital in Fort Wayne. The Garcias were backed by a strong support network, Gwyn said. “During the doctors and nurses, to her children, all were supportive of the decision. In fact, as Gwyn recalls, one nurse commented that she would hope her family would be as supportive as Gwyn was in a similar situation.

Gwyn said her faith helped her and her husband get through tough times.

“Trust in the Lord that he’s going to watch over you,” she said.

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“We are expecting great things for our local 40 Days for Life campaign,” said Akre. “It is exciting for our city to be a part of something that can have such lifesaving impact, and we can’t wait to begin.”

To learn more about 40 Days for Life campaign, visit: www.40daysforlife.com. For information about the South Bend campaign, please contact them at (574) 807-1991, or sign up to participate at www.40daysforlife.com/south-bend.
Bishop Malooly says sanctity of human life ‘crucial’ to just society

WILMINGTON, Del. (CNS) — The new bishop of the Diocese of Wilmington said he intends to “build a supportive and trusting friendship” with U.S. Sen. Joseph R. Biden Jr., Delaware attorney general and other public officials to help them and all citizens “understand how crucial the sanctity of human life is to a just society.”

Bishop W. Francis Malooly made the comments in a statement Sept. 10 after leaders of the U.S. bishops’ conference had issued their own statement in response to Biden’s comments Sept. 9 on “Meet the Press.”

In the response to Biden’s comments Sept. 9 on “Meet the Press,” the U.S. bishops’ conference had said: “The baptismal commitment of the faithful to the sanctity of human life is to be one of the most significant challenges facing our country and the world today.”

Biden, the Democratic vice-presidential nominee, responded to a similar question on the program Sept. 10 when he said: “We have a choice to make between a country that believes every life is sacred and a country that believes that the value of human life is to be determined by the marketplace.”

The Vatican and the Holy See have been asked to comment on Biden’s remarks by critics of his pro-choice views.

Jewish leader says Pope Pius XII has been demonized falsely

ROME (CNS) — Pope Pius XII has been demonized and his legacy of helping Jews during World War II has been poisoned by inaccurate documents, accounts, said the Jewish founder and president of Pave the Way Foundation.

“The problem of illegal immigration to this country — they simply appear without any cost of these raids are immeasurable — but there is no cost to those who who died in the Sept. 13 bomb blasts in New Delhi.

Philadelphia pastor ordained as new bishop of St. Thomas

PHILADELPHIA (CNS) — The new bishop of the Diocese of St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands said he has been welcomed by the Catholic community there with “open hearts and open arms.”

“They certainly are people filled with faith, filled with joy,” Bishop Herbert A. Bevard told The Catholic Standard & Times, Philadelphia’s archdiocesan newspaper, in a telephone interview Sept. 8.

“Those white people, there is a wonderful and beautiful people of God,” Bevard said.

“People of St. Croix are wonderful people,” he said.

Philosophy professor says Pope Benedict’s speech was ‘anti-feminist’

SAN FRANCISCO (CNS) — A philosophy professor says Pope Benedict XVI’s recent address to cardinals on the Vatican’s doctrinal warn against the dangers of relativism does not go nearly far enough.

In a symposium on “The Catholic Church and the Challenges of the Modern World,” Father Frank Pavone, who was originally ordained as a priest of the New York Archdiocese, was incardinated in the Diocese of Amarillo in March 2005 and became the first member of the new Missionaries of the Gospel of Life the following year. He will remain a priest of the Amarillo Diocese, he said.

Pope sends e-mail to more than 30,000 World Youth Day participants

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI sent a brief e-mail to more than 30,000 young people who attended World Youth Day in Sydney, Australia, and have expressed their hope for more about the experience. In the Sept. 8 message, the pope greeted the young people, offered his prayers for them and asked them to pray for the young people of France as he prepared to visit their country Sept. 12-15.

The message was sent through www.XI3.com, a social networking Web site established with the World Youth Day participants in touch, converse with one another online and meet others who were in Sydney.

The text of the papal message read: “Fifty days ago we were together for the celebration of Mass. Today I greet you on the birthday of Mary, Mother of the Church. Empowered by the Spirit and courageous like Mary, your pilgrimage of faith fills the church with life! Soon I am going to visit France. I ask you all to join me in prayer for the young people of France. May we all be rejuvenated in hope!”

Pope names Australian cardinal to replace Indian as a synod president

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI has named Cardinal George Pell of Sydney, Australia, to replace Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi of Italy as president of the world Synod of Bishops on the Bible.

The Vatican seized the appointment of Cardinal Pell would serve in place of Cardinal Oswald Gracias of Mumbai, India, who is unable to attend the Oct. 5-26 gathering. The Vatican did not elaborate.

In June, the pope had named the Indian cardinal as one of three delegate presidents; the other two are U.S. Cardinal William J. Levada, president of the Pontifical Council for the Doctrine of the Faith, and Brazilian Cardinal Odilo Scherer of Sao Paulo. Although the pope has expressed his desire to visit the Synod, the three cardinals will take turns presiding over the gathering’s daily sessions.
South Bend’s Christ the King School learned last week that it was named a Blue Ribbon School. Christ the King Principal Steve Hoffman will join other representatives from the 2008 Blue Ribbon Schools for an awards ceremony in Washington, D.C. There, Hoffman will receive a plaque and a flag signifying Christ the King’s status as an award-winning school. The students enjoy the blue-frosted cookies the entire student body received in celebration after winning the prestigious Blue Ribbon Award.

**Symposia offers scholarships to students**

FORT WAYNE — The School of Arts and Sciences at the University of Saint Francis is hosting a symposium for high school sophomores, juniors and seniors on Friday, Oct. 17. The event will give students the opportunity to do scientific research and humanities studies at the college level and earn a USF scholarship.

The science symposium has three topics for students:

- Forensic Chemistry: students will examine and analyze criminal evidence with a professional forensic investigator.
- Marine Biology: students will explore the undersea and participate in a research project on a Coral Reef.
- Math Puzzles and Games: students will apply mathematical strategies to solve puzzles like Sudoku.

The humanities symposium will offer two topics:

- Mindfulness 101: Politics, Propaganda and Parody: students will examine political ads and create their own parody of one.
- Catholics and Politics: From Emperor Constantine to Pope Benedict XVI: participants will discuss the mixture of religion and politics.

Students interested in more information are available online at www.sfu.edu/science-symposium. For more information, contact Carolyn Exner at 260-399-8067.

**Columbia City parish offers financial series**

COLUMBIA CITY — St. Paul of the Cross Parish will offer a six-week series on how to plan, protect and provide for your family in a fundamentals financial course offered at the parish. The series begins Sept. 24 and runs through Oct. 29.

Each week offers a different guest speaker exploring practical steps to help families and individuals stay on target with their financial goals regardless of their current financial situation. Sessions are 60 minutes each Wednesday evening immediately following the evening Mass. The sessions begin at 7 p.m. and refreshments will be served.

Sign up for the series in the church narthex or call the church office at (260) 244-5723 for information.

**Walk for hunger slated Sept. 27**

FORT WAYNE — Hunger Walk VI will be held Saturday, Sept. 27, beginning with registration at 9 a.m. The 2.2-mile walk to raise funds for local hunger will take place at Lawson Park in downtown Fort Wayne. The walk will begin with departures at 9:45 a.m. and the presentation of the Father Tom O’Connor Awards. The walk itself will begin at 10 a.m. and will be along the River Greenway.
Witness the power of diversity

BY KAY COZAD

FORT WAYNE — A new and innovative project has recently come to life at St. Henry Parish on the southeast side of Fort Wayne. The St. Henry Community Center opened for business less than two months ago and is already picking up momentum.

The nonprofit community center is the brainchild of Director Elaine Bakle, who grew up in the area as parishioner and student of St. Hyacinth. After researching the demographics, Bakle found a clear sampling of the diverse array of ethnic communities within the area and with St. Henry pastor Father Dan Durkin and the parish council to “pitch the idea” of a community center. Within months she found herself being handed the keys to the former Benoit Academy building to begin her endeavor.

“Father Dan supported the idea and helped me get started. Now I have to make it work,” says the determined director.

Due to the number of youth centers already in the area, Bakle has chosen to offer a wide variety of services for all ages and cultures. Many programs and activities that she hopes will eventually be offered will be in partnership with other agencies. Currently the community center is partnering with the Eagle’s Nest Youth Center in hosting a basketball league utilizing the school building gymnasium. The Literacy Alliance offers English classes to the Burmese community at the center two mornings a week as well.

Another beneficial program that will be offered Oct. 1 is the volunteer run “After School Special,” where children will attend three one-hour structured sessions from 3-6 p.m., including homework, arts and movement and physical activity. Parents have the option of paying the standard monthly fee or volunteering seven hours each month to cover the cost of their child’s participation.

Bakle hopes to develop future programs with the assistance of area agencies and organizations, such as the Fort Wayne Ballet Company that would host dance classes at the center, East Allen County Schools for English-as-a-second-language classes for adults and area higher education institutions for art, sewing, music, computer and home décor classes for all ages. Sports instruction, counseling and conflict resolution training will also be offered on site as well as emergency food and clothing subsistence.

“By offering these things to people in general, they may find part of themselves they have lost,” says Bakle hopefully, adding, “And by sharing themselves with others, they can complete themselves.” Bakle’s dream for the center is to provide “social capital” for the various cultures within the area, which she describes as “getting to know each other and building on relationships.” Strength in the community will allow its members to be more willing and able to assist with meeting each other’s needs; a networking within cultures.

“The thing I noticed is the need in this area hits every single ethnic group. They all have needs but are not recognizing each other’s culture.” Bakle hopes to acquire other health and social service organizations and ministries that will rent space in the building to help offset the center’s costs. Facility opportunities include classroom and meeting space, gym, playground and an overnight stay facility for retreats and trainings. Private and corporate donations, grant money and fundraisers will also assist in securing the life of the center.

Fund-raising activities that are in the works to subsidize this worthy program have truly been a community effort and began this month with a rummage sale and barbecue on the grounds of the community center.

“So many donations have come in for the rummage sale, including from Catholic Charities,” says Bakle, adding that the Eagle’s Nest Youth Center secured the catering service for the barbecue as well. During the month of October, Bakle is planning “A Blend of Cultures,” a fundraiser which will offer a variety of culturally diverse live-band music groups along with foods and beverages corresponding to each culture. The Bishop Luers High School Key Club will be serving at the event. And the center hopes to organize a craft sale with cookie walk in November, with December dedicated to the volunteers.

“I hope to have a nice Christmas party for the wonderful volunteers,” says Bakle, as she sings the praises of the volunteers who have devoted their time and talent to getting the center up and running. According to Bakle, the center’s volunteer base first stemmed from St. Henry Parish, but soon volunteers from all over the city began offering their services, “all by word of mouth,” she says.

For more information about volunteering at or donating to the center, located at 3029 Paulding Rd, contact Elaine Bakle at (260) 447-5121, ext. 124.
Celebrating the 125th year of its founding, St. Mary of the Presentation, an isolated but vibrant parish in rural Geneva, combined a jubilee Mass with confirmation, a reunion of old friends, parishioners and a full house luncheon. On the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, Bishop John M. D’Arcy urged the confirmandi to love, serve and follow Jesus Christ, who gave us the Eucharist from the cross. Those confirmed are, from left, front, Jennifer Miller and Tiffany Deitsch; second row, Joel Hawbaker, Christ, who gave us the Eucharist from the cross. Those confirmed are, from left, front, Jennifer Miller and Tiffany Deitsch; second row, Joel Hawbaker, Christ, who gave us the Eucharist from the cross. Those confirmed are, from left, front, Jennifer Miller and Tiffany Deitsch; second row, Joel Hawbaker, Christ, who gave us the Eucharist from the cross. Those confirmed are, from left, front, Jennifer Miller and Tiffany Deitsch; second row, Joel Hawbaker, Christ, who gave us the Eucharist from the cross. Those confirmed are, from left, front, Jennifer Miller and Tiffany Deitsch; second row, Joel Hawbaker, Christ, who gave us the Eucharist from the cross. Those confirmed are, from left, front, Jennifer Miller and Tiffany Deitsch; second row, Joel Hawbaker,}

**Backwards and forwards**

*BY LINDA FURGE*

**Opening prayer**

Dear God, in this moment draw me to yourself. Enfold me in your love and infuse me with quiet. Open my mind to your words that I may learn to reflect with wisdom and gratitude and to hope with optimism and joy. Gather me to be with you, confident that you are always close to me, now and forever. Amen.

**Scripture:** Eph 2: 17-19

**Commentary**

Last time in Ginny Kohrmann’s article, “Counting our summer blessings,” she wrote about the events of her summer months. It immediately brought to mind how often, in the first week of school, teachers had us write something about “How I Spent My Summer Vacation.” Ah ha! I wondered (as the proverbial light bulb lit up over my head!) if they did this on purpose to help us reluctant students leave our fun-filled summer days behind and focus on the important task of learning for another school year.

**Backwards**

My mental train then moved on to another of summer’s rituals — class reunions, both high school and college — and how some who attend seem to have never gotten beyond those long ago years. They seem to be “lost in time,” nostalgically wishing, even decades later, that they could return to their “glory days.” It’s almost like the past holds more for them than the present or future. They constantly relive the past to feel happiness, almost as if the present or the future cannot possibly offer the same — or comparable — joy. But looking backwards can be a very good thing. As the old saying goes, history that’s forgotten is bound to repeat itself. There is much wisdom in that sentence. If we neglect to consider the past and the lessons it offers, we can make the same mistakes again and again. The past offers a unique perspective to judge the effectiveness of our decisions and actions. Serious and honest reflection can be an invaluable guide in making good decisions that positively impact the future. We actually need to look backwards even as we look forward.

**Forwards**

Human nature instinctively anticipates the future. We expect that tomorrow, next week, next Christmas will come. And, as Christians, we look beyond our human existence to an eternal life with the One who created us. This instinctive anticipation is, for me, one of the most compelling arguments for the existence of God. Looking backwards, reflecting, we see evidence all around us that the things of this life cannot bring complete satisfaction and happiness. We are always anticipating, looking forward to — or for — something more. We believe that the Something that will finally satisfy the “to” in eternity and that which will completely satisfy the “for” is God. “Our hearts are restless until they rest in you, O God,” said St. Augustine a very long time ago. His words ring just as true today as they did in the Middle Ages.

In Pope Benedict’s latest encyclical, “Spe Salvi,” he eloquently writes about our human hopes within the context of this great hope:

> “Let us say once again: we need the greater and lesser hopes that keep us going day by day. But these are not enough without the great hope, which must surpass everything else. This great hope can only be God, who encompasses the whole of reality and who can bestow upon us what we, by ourselves, cannot attain. The fact that it comes to us as a gift is actually part of hope: God is the foundation of hope: not any god, but the God who has a human face and who has loved us to the end, each one of us, and who has loved humanity in its entirety. His kingdom is not an imaginary hereafter, situated in a future that will never arrive; his kingdom is present wherever he is loved and wherever his love reaches us. His love alone gives us the possibility of soberly persevering day by day, without ceasing to be spurred on by hope, in a world which by its very nature is imperfect. His love is at the same time our guarantee of the existence of what we only vaguely sense and which nevertheless, in our deepest self, we believe to be a life: that is “truly” life.” — Spe Salvi #31.

**Sharing Faith**

Living in the chaotic world of the 21st century, we should take Pope Benedict’s words to heart. We should make an effort to look both backwards and forwards, learning from the past and hoping for the future. We should let these two complementary attitudes, reflection and hope, bring us ever closer to the great hope that is Jesus Christ.

**Closing Prayer**

May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, grant you a spirit of wisdom and insight to know him clearly. May he enlighten your innermost vision so that you may know the great hope to which he has called you, the wealth of his glorious heritage to be distributed among the members of the church, and the immeasurable scope of his power in us who believe. — Eph 2:17-19.
St. Robert Parish celebrates 50 years

BY LAUREN CAGGIANO

NORTH MANCHESTER — St. Robert’s Bellarmine Parish in North Manchester has grown from a humble shop building to a strikingly modern church.

But the outward appearance is not necessarily indicative of the faithfulness of the flock.

Today’s Catholic archives indicate that as far back as 1880s, Mass was celebrated in North Manchester by Father John Bathe in the home of John Ennis.

The parish was founded on Aug. 3, 1938 as a mission of St. Patrick Church, Lagro. Father Raymond Balzer was the pastor. The first site for St. Robert Church was a storefront in downtown North Manchester.

According to a 1965 writeup in Our Sunday Visitor, when St. Robert’s was established, it was a mission of St. Bernard Parish, Wabash, and the new parish was organized by Father Robert J. Zahn, the Wabash pastor at the time.

At its dedication, April 25, 1965, of the present church, located on the east side of North Manchester on State Road 114, Bishop Leo Pursley said, addressing the parishioners, he had “no better wish for you than to hope that this new church becomes completely inadequate.” He told the congregation that their new church represents the “presence of God among you,” and called it a “dispensation of his grace” and as described in the Mass of dedication, it is a “a Gate of Heaven.”

Father Ramenaden said it’s a challenge to remain strong in a “non-Catholic environment,” as North Manchester’s population comes from a Protestant background. Despite the challenges, he said he strives to make the parish more united and welcoming.

“I encourage them to put Christ first,” he said.

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The parish, which has grown slightly over the years, is comprised of teachers and farmers, he said.

The priest said his goal is to “build up good relationships with everyone.” In particular he wants to focus on the loyal base of about 30 to 35 Manchester College students.

Always focusing on outreach, he said he tries to go out and talk to (the students).

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The parish will celebrate its 50th anniversary Sunday, Sept. 21.
South Bend schools make strides in helping students with disabilities thrive

By Diane Freeby

SOUTH BEND — Despite a climate of belt-tightening, Catholic schools aren’t cutting corners when it comes to the needs of special education. Remaining true to the Gospel, some area Catholic schools simply see a need and meet it.

South Bend’s Corpus Christi School is one of many schools linked to Saint Joseph’s High School, named a Blue Ribbon School just a few years ago. With its high academic standards, Saint Joseph’s can appear out of reach to students struggling to get through grade school. But teachers at both Corpus Christi and Saint Joseph’s work hard to ensure everyone who wants a Catholic education can receive one.

Preschool teacher Peggy Foldenauer knows it’s important for special needs students to feel good about themselves and have a “can-do” attitude.

“Our classroom is part of a family,” she explained. “If I have a child who grasps things quickly, I might pair that child up with another child who has special needs. Children often learn better from each other, and at this age they don’t notice the differences yet. All they know is we are part of a family.”

According to Assistant to the Principal Maggie Mackowiak, Corpus Christi accepts anyone they feel they can help. To her knowledge, nobody has ever been turned away.

“It’s our job to find the way the child learns best,” said Mackowiak. “If one method doesn’t work then we try another. After Dorian was able to do a walk-through of the school before orientation, she e-mails him questions and helps him understand what’s important.”

Samuels stresses the importance of parents to get a better grasp of how they can help, and help you get through the day. “Now I’m in a high school, and I love it.”

Mary Nolan, once taught by Samuels, transitioned into Saint Joseph’s High School and is now a student at the prestigious Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome.

Dorian, who is also Saint Joseph’s head football coach, sees progress in the five years he has worked as a resource teacher.

“We try to look at the individual first, not at their disability,” he said. “This year we have two students with Asperger’s. We never had a student with Asperger’s before, so we met with the grade school teachers and their parents to get a better grasp of how we could help.”

Downey works with students battling a wide range of disabilities. All require individual attention, including everything from academic guidance to tailored education plans.

Linda Skwarcan’s daughter, Dorian, is a freshman at Saint Joseph’s. Cerebral palsy makes it difficult for Dorian to move as quickly as other students, but thanks to Downey and his support staff, her mom says Dorian is having a great year.

“Mr. Downey has been wonderful,” said Linda Skwarcan. “Dorian was able to do a walk-through of the school before orientation. She e-mails him questions and he gets back to her. Dorian is able to have a locker on each floor, and two sets of books so she can keep one set at home and at school. She is happy and that’s what’s important.”

Skwarcan started at Corpus Christi with Samuels, whose bulletin board sums up the philosophy of many Catholic school special needs teachers. It reads: “First God ... then family.”

Samuels stresses the importance of a Catholic education.

Sometimes God’s the only one who can make kids feel better. I try to remind them to pray. Ask God to take away all your worries and help you get through the day.

Give it up to God!”

By Diane Freeby

At Corpus Christi School in South Bend, Chris Samuels-Wade has been the resource teacher for 20 years. She just returned to her position as a representative on the Council of Teachers, which conveys educational needs and concerns directly to Bishop John M. D’Arcy.
Catechetical resources for persons with disabilities

The Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend Office of Catechesis has a renewed interest in welcoming and assimilating children into its faith community and has initiated the Catechetical and Informational Resources for Persons with Disabilities library. The lending library is an assembly of resources for priests, DREs, catechetical Teachers and parents who are interested in assisting or learning more about various disabilities.

An interest in Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Anxiety, Asperger Syndrome, Autism, Bipolar Disorder, Depression, Disorders funded by a grant for special needs children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The initiative is based on the National Directory for Catechesis and the bishop’s statement on disabilities and hopes to empower parishes to include members with disabilities into the liturgical community. Resources may be checked out for three weeks at a time.

As a result, the Engler Center in South Bend is partnering with the diocese to answer any questions on disabilities that are posed.

For information in Fort Wayne, contact Janice Martin at (260) 399-1411 or e-mail janice@diocesefw.org. In South Bend, contact Meggan Young at (574) 299-9994 or e-mail myoung@diocesewb.org, or visit the diocesan Web site at www.diocesefw.org/OC. Resources available are:

- Religious education

The Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Program to Improve Catholic Religious Education for Children and Adults with Disabilities developed by the Diocese of Pittsburgh, Department for Persons with Disabilities. The program is funded by a grant from the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation offers a comprehensive curricular approach with lesson plans for special needs children and adults. For use in a parish, family, institution or group home setting and is available in English and Spanish.

- ADD/ADHD

“The ADD & ADHD Answer Book” by Richard A. Ash, PhD. Offers practical answers to questions that parents of children with ADD or ADHD have, including checklists and questionnaires to assist with doctor appointments and evaluations. “A Guide for Parents and Teachers: Managing Your Child’s Behavior with ADD/ADHD” by Harvey C. Parker, PhD. A practical guide for understanding and teaching treatment for a depressed child.

- Anxiety


- Autism


- Bipolar disorder

“New Hope for Children and Teens with Bipolar Disorder,” by Boris Birmaher, M.D. Offers the latest information on causes of bipolar disorder and ways to assist children and teens live full lives.

- Depression

“Helping Your Depressed Child: A Step-by-Step Guide for Parents,” by Martha Underwood Barnard, PhD.

- Asperger syndrome

“Unlocking Your Child’s Potential,” by Michael D. Powers, Psy.D., and Janet Poland. Offers comprehensive answers to the most common questions parents have about Asperger Syndrome and includes stories of children who live full lives on their own condition.

- Sensory integration disorder

“A Complete and Authoritative Guide to Sensory Integration” by Sandra F. Rief. A resource for parents and teachers offering practical strategies to improve reading, writing, and academic performance in children with ADD/ADHD.

- Obsessive-compulsive disorder

“Talking Back to OCD,” by John S. March, M.D. with Christine M. S. Hamer. Offers children and youth a way in which they can begin working toward a life that is not controlled by their obsessive-compulsive disorder.

- Sensory integration disorder

“The Out-of-Sync Child: Recognizing and Coping with Sensory Processing Disorder” by Carol Stock Kranowitz, M.A.

Offers insights into a common, but frequently misdiagnosed problem in which the central nervous system misinterprets messages sent from the senses.

- Sign language


- Disabilities resources

“Helping Kids Include Kids with Disabilities,” by Barbara J. Newman. Offers assistance on teaching children to reach out to their peers with disabilities, as well as how to help welcome the child with disabilities into a classroom.


- Life skills activities


“I’ll Do It My Way!” by Darlene Mannix. A resource with practical lesson plans on reading, writing, spelling, math and more.

- Family activities


“A Guide for Parents and Teachers: Managing Your Child’s Behavior with ADD/ADHD” by Harvey C. Parker, PhD. A practical guide for parents and teachers on teaching children with ADHD.

- ASMR

“A Quiet Reference” for parents and teachers seeking insights into guiding children with ADHD. “Teaching Young Children with ADHD,” by Richard A. Lougy, Silvia L. DeRuvo and David Rosenthal, M.D. Provides general educators with an understanding of ADHD that includes clarifying inclusive classroom strategies to work with children with attention disorders.

- ADHD

“The ADHD Handbook for Schools: Effective Strategies for Identifying, Teaching, and Supporting Students with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder,” by Harvey C. Parker, PhD. An “everything at your fingertips” resource for teacher or parent assisting a child with ADHD.

“ADD in the young child: A Guide for Parents and Teachers of Children with ADD,” by Cathy Reimers, PhD. and Bruce A. Gersten. A practical solutions guide to common problems associated with ADHD. The appendix offers reproducible black line masters to use in a variety of situations.

“The ADHD Workbook for Parents: A Guide for Parents of Children Ages 2–12 with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder,” by Harvey C. Parker, PhD. A guide to assist parents in understanding the “at home” struggles faced when raising a child with ADHD, while also being their child’s advocate for medical treatments and at school.

“Teenagers with ADD and ADHD: A Guide for Parents and Professionals,” by Chris A. Zeigler Dendy, M.S. A resource for parents in understanding diagnosis and treatment options for teens with ADD or ADHD.

“How to Reach and Teach Children with ADD/ADHD: Practical Techniques, Strategies, and Interventions,” by Sandra F. Rief. A resource for parents and teachers offering practical strategies and suggestions to improve understanding, social performance and academic performance in children with ADD/ADHD.


- Depression

“Helping Your Depressed Child: A Step-by-Step Guide for Parents,” by Martha Underwood Barnard, PhD.

- Bipolar disorder

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- Autism

“The Out-of-Sync Child” by Lindsey Biel, M.A., OTRL and Nancy Peske. Provides guidance to parents about strategies and resources to assist their child in life.

“I’ll Do It My Way!” by Darlene Mannix. Offers assistance on teaching children to reach out to their peers with disabilities, as well as how to help welcome the child with disabilities into a classroom.


“Classroom Language Skills for Children with Down Syndrome: A Guide for Parents and Teachers,” by Libby Kumin, PhD., CCC-SLP. A resource on gross motor development, including activities with milestone checklist that encourage gross motor activities to be used with infants and children through age 6.

“Fine Motor Skills for Children with Down Syndrome: A Guide for Parents and Professionals,” by Patricia A. Winders, PT. A resource on gross motor development, including activities with mile-
Two men with post-polio syndrome; two different paths of ministry

By Deb Wagner

Fort Wayne — According to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, Post-polio syndrome (PPS) is a condition that affects people who survived polio years after recovery from an initial acute attack of the poliomyelitis virus. PPS is mainly characterized by new weakening in muscles that were previously affected by the polio infection and in muscles that seemingly were unaffected. Symptoms include progressive muscle weakness, joint stiffness, lack of stamina and perhaps muscle atrophy.

Gary Johnson

Fatigue does not slow Gary Johnson, who has worked for Wabash Technologies, Inc. in Huntington for 15 years and is now manager of advanced development. He is also the manager over two engineering laboratories where he is responsible for developing new technologies that can be incorporated into products, managing intellectual property assets and holds 11 of those patents himself, as well as being responsible for the engineering laboratory, which builds prototype parts and performs all product qualification testing. Brady, a 5-year-old black Labrador Retriever, often accompanies him to work and lies in his cubicle until asked to pick up something or assist in the movement of his manual wheelchair. Brady is very much accepted by the employees.

Fran and Gary Johnson from St. Peter and Paul parish in Huntington have helped with various activities associated with the annual church festival.

Johnson said, “The one day I did not take him to work because he was sick, everybody asked about him.” “Parishioners have been very supportive (of Brady). Brady’s been no problem whatsoever. She was blessed at the feast of St. Blaise and she is often blessed at Communion time.”

Gary Johnson and his wife, Fran, have been helping with the annual fall festival at St. Peter and Paul Parish in Huntington for the past five or six years. They plan to continue this service as long as they continue to receive the phone call asking for their help.

Bob O’Dell

Bob O’Dell, a retired GTE network planner became a volunteer at Redeemer Radio a few months ago where he edits tapes. A once fallen-away Catholic, O’Dell says, “My life has been when times are tough, I went to church; but when it’s not, I don’t.”

While hoping his relationship with the Catholic Church lasts longer than in previous years, he admits that he is involved with the church now because “he is alone and lonely after his divorce several years ago.

To deal with these feelings, O’Dell has also joined the charismatic men’s group Rekindle the Fire, began the process of becoming a member of the Knights of Columbus chapter at St. Vincent de Paul Parish, Fort Wayne, and wants to attend the next Christ Renews His Parish weekend there.

Serving the church

Gary and Fran have been parishioners at St. Peter and Paul Parish for nearly 15 years. Their two oldest children went to school there through eighth grade and their youngest child through the fourth grade.

The invitation to volunteer at the fall festival began when Fran worked at the public elementary school when they first moved to Huntington and a paraprofessional at the school asked for their assistance.

Since that time, Fran and Gary have helped with various activities associated with the festival. “One year they had wine tasting (for the adults) and I poured the wine,” says Gary. Cooking the 30 pans of lasagna for the diners is the Johnsons’ all-time favorite.

Both Gary Johnson and Bob O’Dell give credit to their parents for molding them to chase their dreams and try new things in order to expand their horizons.

Accommodation allows Deb Wagner to be active in ministry

By Tim Johnson

Fort Wayne — Deb Wagner has never been one unwilling to accept a challenge. Born with cerebral palsy and using a wheelchair or crutches at the time, Wagner attended Sacred Heart, St. Henry schools and Bishop Luers High School. And she has a great love for her Catholic faith. “I had a good support system,” Wagner says. Her Irish Catholic mother and father were among the first lay charismatic ministers in their parish. Her mother proclaimed, and her parents were involved in Holy Name and Rosary Sodality.

And Wagner also feels that need to be involved in ministry in many ways with the church at Bishop Luers, at the age of 16, she became a eucharistic minister. That ministry continued through college at Ball State University and even today.

Participation in a ministry, “depends on the pastor of the parish at the time or the people in charge of a particular (ministry) as to what things I am able to do, or permitted to do, and what things I have to forego,” Wagner says. “Sometimes I choose a parish community based on the willingness of a pastor and the staff at that time to allow me to do things.”

Today, she is a eucharistic minister at Most Precious Blood Church in Fort Wayne, where she can distribute both body and blood of Christ and also ministers as a proclaimer there. One may also see Wagner taking assignments as a freelance writer and photographer for Today’s Catholic.

“I think the church in different areas is growing with acceptance of people with disabilities,” Wagner says. It depends on the parish and the people who make up a particular parish. “In general, “I think (the church is) growing at rate much slower than society in their acceptance of people with disabilities and their acknowledgment of what they are capable of doing.” Wagner says. “So I would say (the church is) probably a decade or two behind what they had to listen and not just hear,” Wagner says.

Based on her own experiences, “usually I have to beg and plead to be a lector or be a eucharistic minister,” she says. And once she convinces a pastor that she can do it, it will often take a few months to get scheduled.

The changes may be a simple accommodation: “when I lector, most of the ambo are a few steps from the main level. I lector from the floor,” Wagner says. At another parish, Wagner was recognized by the children as “the voice from church” because they could hear her, but they couldn’t see her. “And they had to pay attention more because they had to listen and not just look,” Wagner was often told by parents.

“So there are some benefits of changes that have to be made for me to be a minister of anything,” she says.

“I think there is a reluctance to change, and I think that is it,” Wagner says. A lot of the members, “just haven’t had the exposure that lay people have had with people with disabilities. They are used to caring for them more than seeing them as an equal capable of giving.

“I don’t think that we are improving because the younger people — who have been exposed to people with disabilities through school — see what we are capable of doing, they are a lot more willing to allow us to try new things.”

With assistance from a working service dog named Scarlet, Wagner is greatly assisted with mobility difficulties. Service dogs such as Scarlet “help people with physical disabilities accomplish things that either they cannot do on their own or, by having an assistance dog do the task for you, you are conserving your energy so you use that for another task,” Wagner says.

She is working with Scarlet to become certified as a therapy dog that could visit nursing facilities and hospitals. “So she will be giving back to the community that way,” Wagner says.

Scarlet was trained as a service dog by prisoners in the Toledo Correctional Institute. Wagner and Scarlet recently visited prisoners at the Westfield correctional facility in northwest Indiana. They were part of the Catholic contingency of the Christmas Behind Bars team that visits prisoners and provides cookies, candy, etc., to inmates.

Read the prison story in next week’s issue.
Room for all his table

As Catholics we all are called to worship and serve at Christ’s table. In his offering of self at the altar we find not only salvation but community as well. Jesus calls the rich and destitute, the young and the old, the healthy and the disabled — all are welcome there.

However in our fast-paced, over-scheduled culture, taking time to get to know others within our church community, especially those with differences, is sometimes complicated. Many times those with disabilities are completely overlooked. But with the integration initiative in our country, we, as moral Christians, are called to reach out to those who by the very nature of their disability may feel isolated or unloved.

We can take our initiative from Jesus, who is the ultimate model for integration. He lovingly broke bread with sinners, mingled with the lepers and welcomed the little children.

Typically, those with disabilities who wish to participate and serve within the church have been met with extraordinary challenges. Structural limitations hamper those in need of wheelchair access while those with special intellectual needs get lost in the shuffle. In this diocese there are efforts quietly being undertaken to assist those Catholics in meeting their faith development and service needs.

On Saturday, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, called Room at the Table, invites all those who are disabled or support those challenged with disabilities to gather each month to discuss and initiate positive ways the church can meet a standard of integration for this special population.

As loving acceptance of all persons is the goal of integration it is imperative, but many times difficult, to offer appropriate activities and opportunities for groups of varied levels of ability. One dynamic religious education program for students with disabilities called The Amazing Apostles offered at Our Lady of Good Hope Parish, Fort Wayne, is addressing the catechetical needs of some special students there, including meeting with the regular religious education classes periodically to add the all important image and for a special purpose. As in the stories featured in this issue, there is an opportunity for all of us in the Catholic community. Men, woman and children are one of us in the Catholic community.

Time to retreat

Another opportunity for special catechesis is a bi-annual retreat for the disabled, offered by the diocesan Office of Catechesis, where young adult and adult disabled Catholics come together for a day of fellowship and worship.

There is even a newly forming support group for moms of special needs children in the St. Matthew Cathedral, South Bend, and St. Pius X, Granger, area.

These are just a few of the initiatives Catholics in the diocese are implementing to gather all people to his table. But so much has yet to be done.

As Christians, we believe that we were created in God’s image and for a special purpose. As in the stories featured in this issue of Today’s Catholic, it is evident there is a place for each one of us in the Catholic community. Men, woman and children with physical limitations as well as intellectual challenges are serving as volunteers at festivals, at the altar as acolytes, in choirs, as well as participating in Bible studies, retreats and organizations like Knights of Columbus. Their deep faith and steady service enriches our faith communities.

The need for integration is ageless and the desire to belong and participate constant. There should be no limit to opportunities for all levels of ability to participate fully in worship, fellowship and service within our church. But it takes caring hearts, ties for all levels of ability to participate fully in worship, fellow

Article lends air of legitimacy

The editorial page of the Sept. 7 issue of Today’s Catholic contains the following story: “Sen. Joe Biden’s voting record does not reflect consisten-cy with the church’s teachings on abortion, keeping it legal and its federal funding.”

The Senate, Sen. Biden and his bishop continue their dialogue on this issue.

Another Mass this weekend (Sept. 7), the first reading is Ez 33:7-9. The Gospel reading is Mt 18:15-20.

They both have to do with admonish-ing people who need correcting. In all charity, firmness and humility, I dare to suggest the following thought.

When confronting serious digressions from the teachings of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, would the first bishops, St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, St. John, etc., have chosen to “dia-logue” with the person in need?

Catholics perceive no serious threat to their souls, they will simply choose the necessary means to con-tinue the “dialogue” indefinitely. Meanwhile, what about all the scal-ding and serious spiritual damage to the souls of countless members of the flock?

Then, on page 4 of the same issue of Today’s Catholic, there’s a lengthy article about Barack Obama — “Obama invokes American spirit, echoes ‘Faithful Citizenship’ themes” — complete with wonder-ful family photo. I would expect a pure justice, or many liberal, politically correct newspapers, but I was deeply dis-satisfied.

Catholic. What a waste of valuable space, lending an air of legitimacy to somebody who so deeply, pub-licly, and profoundly anti-life.

Anthony J. Stein South Bend

Politics and abortion: What’s the choice?

Responding to editors’ requests for comments on recent political commentary from around the Catholic press, here is an editori-al titled “Politics and abortion.” Written by Frank Wesseling, the paper’s retired editor.

Very smart politicians have their weaknesses, just like the rest of us. They tend to be vulnerable where they’ve been compromised by the need for money and for 51 percent approval in the electorate. How do we recognize such weakness? We ponder about certain things.

For example, we don’t neces-sarily know how Barack Obama and John McCain would answer a question about abortion if they were in a secure room with one other person and a guarantee that what they said would never become public. All we know is what they say and do in their pub-lic personas as political officeholders — and now as candidates for the highest office.

When asked in a recent public forum about abortion, both men, both smart and experienced men, performed predictably. Both also left unanswered questions when that issue was brought up by the Rev. Rick Warren during his Aug. 17 televised joint interview. Why did Obama sound as if he was not prepared? Why was McCain not called on his inconsistency?

Obama did not seem ready for Warren’s question on when human rights are compromised with eva-sions about “whether you’re looking at it from a theological per-spective or a scientific perspective,” and pleaded ignorance because the answer would be “above my pay grade.”

Perhaps Obama thought that McCain pointed that question so badly. He certainly has had to think about it and cope with it more than once. As someone looking for success in the Democratic Party, he surely knows how tender and sensitive the issue of abortion is for many people when they consider voting for Democrats. The party hooked its fortunes to the abortion “choice” script decades ago.

Every Democrat since has had to walk the minefield between an activist pro-choice wing in the party — along with its money — and the wavering Catholic vote that once favored Democrats for their social conservatism but now feels homeless.

Perhaps Obama was groping for a fresh way to avoid a direct answer on the question of when human life begins. It’s a hard one to answer honestly when you have a militancy constituent on your back insisting on a pregnant woman’s “choice” to kill a fetus. If you say, yes, human life is sure-ly present when human sperm and ovum are joined, and that life should be considered in the orbit of human rights, then it’s very hard to explain why that life does not deserve full protection in our law. The easier way is to fudge and fuzz and declare the answer unknowable.

McCain spoke up with an orthodoxy “at the moment of con-ception.” But while he talks the right talk on the issue, he falls off the walk when it comes to action.

McCain is on record as favoring government assistance for pregnant women when they consider voting for Democrats. The party hooked its fortunes to the abortion “choice” that makes unborn life invisible. Conscientious voters won’t feel comfortable in either camp, although many individual candidates offer better value than the standard for either party.

The politics of this country will not allow an end to abortion, or even significant limitation. Wishing adoption services, that well-documented reality. The Republican Party has had years of opportunity to actually move in that direction with nothing to show for it. The Democratic Party wears blunders. Even if the unlikely occurred, Roe v. Wade were overturned by a future Supreme Court, legalized abortion would still be demanded by a majority of Americans. Political battling would spread among the states while few, if any, lives would be saved.

Neither party deserves our trust as a true pro-life carrier of values.

Politics and abortion are the choice we come down to whether we prefer tolerat-ing the status quo on abortion in favor of more attention to distribu-tive justice, or allowing some to be played out in the political arena. It is a choice for all of us in the Catholic community.
The unlimited mercy of God

25th Sunday in Ordinary Time Mt 20:20-16a

The last section of the Book of Isaiah concludes with its first reading. Virtually none of the prophets of ancient Israel wrote when times were good, or at least when the prophets perceived the times to be good. Certainly, the author of the section of the Book of Isaiah from which this weekend’s reading comes hardly regarded the times to be good. There was an added dimension to the story of the unhappy plight then being endured by God’s people. They had returned from Babylon, where they and their ancestors had been in exile for four generations. They had greeted the news that their exile was over with great rejoicing, convinced that God had provided for them and had rescued them.Eagerly, and with great expectation, they had returned to their homeland. When they arrived, they found only want and despair. It is easy to imagine their anger. They were furious with God, and this prophet had to call them back to trusting God.

In this reading, Third Isaiah warns the people not to put their trust in scribes and scholars. Instead, the prophet tells the people to call upon God. In God alone is true strength, regardless of fleeting appearances to the contrary.

For this weekend’s second reading, the church offers us a passage from the Epistle to the Philippians.

The Apostle Paul, in this Epistle’s soaring language, proclaims the divinity of Christ, the savior, the son of God. Paul continues to explain the intimate, inseparable link between the Lord and true disciples. Come what may on earth, a disciple will never die, if the disciple wants to be with the Lord, but because we bear the burden of guilt or doubt. We think that our self-created distance from God is too great to bridge. Emphatically, in these readings, the church reassures us of the unlimited mercy of God. God is the source of life. He lavishly offers it to us.

Whatever our sin, if we repent, even at a late hour, God’s loving forgiveness awaits us. However, we must choose to be with God, to be disciples. No one is dragged, kicking and screaming, into heaven. Discipleship requires faith. Paul’s words call us to faith with the reminder that without God all is folly, all is impermanent, and all is death. God alone offers life.

READINGS
Sunday: Lk 5:21-32, Mk 2:1-11b, 12-16a
Monday: Prv 30:18-20a, 25-27a
Tuesday: Prv 7:1-9a, 10-19, 24-27a
Wednesday: Prv 30:5-9a, 11-16a, 19-20a
Thursday: Eccl 1:3-11 Ps 90:1-3, 4-6
Friday: Ez 3:1-11 Ps 144:1-5b, 12-14, 17b
Saturday: Ecl 11:9-12b Ps 90:3-6, 12-14, Lk 13:23b-45b

1. Scruples refer to
a. worries that one has sinned when one has not.
b. a small piece of cloth worn by some Catholics.
c. small pancakes, usually maple, served to welcome new parishioners.

2. Secularism is
a. a pathfinder, showing today’s disciples that they need to find new ways to translate the Gospel message into different cultures and generational divides.
b. a view that religion should be excluded from society.

3. The Scala Sancta, the steps Jesus ascended for trial, were in Jerusalem but are now in
a. Palestinian controlled territory.
b. Rome.
c. London, in the British Museum with other purloined items.

4. This type of work is forbidden on Sundays, except as necessary for family or society:
a. servile work.
b. service at a church.
c. selling or buying.

5. This object is thought by many to have covered the body of Jesus:
a. sacramental cloth.
b. the Shroud of Turin.
c. the Sewn Garment.

6. Shrove Tuesday (Mardi Gras) derives its name from “shrive” meaning
a. to give absolution.
b. to condemn for sin.
c. to cook up pancakes.

7. The term sanctuary refers to a part of a church, but also this concept:
a. the special privilege the clergy get in Catholic countries.
b. the invisibility of churches when used as refuge.
c. the area in Notre Dame where the bells are rung.

8. The Great Schism divides these churches:
a. The Catholic and the Protestant.
b. The Roman Catholic and the Eastern Catholic.
c. The Catholic and the Orthodox churches.

9. Sabbatarianism was a 17th and 18th century movement based on enforcing Old Testament laws concerning Sunday observance. Its logical flaw was
a. it could only apply to areas under the influence of Calvinism.
b. it was not able to determine which Old Testament laws applied to Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath.
c. it could only apply to areas under the influence of Calvinism.

10. Simony is the forbidden practice of buying or selling spiritual things. Its name is derived from
a. the type of religion one gets when one parts from the Catholic Church.
b. a small piece of cloth worn by some Catholics.
c. the Shroud of Turin.

ANSWERS:
1.a, 2.c, 3.b, 4.a, 5.b, 6.a, 7.b, 8.c, 9.c, 10.b, 11.a, 12.b, 13.b, 14.c, 15.a
Mary is assumed to speak throughout Scriptures

Besides finding Jesus in the temple and the wedding at Cana, were there any other times when the Blessed Virgin Mary spoke? R.M., South Bend

Mary spoke at the Annunciation in Nazareth when the angel Gabriel told her she would bear Jesus. Mary responded: “How can this be since I do not know man.” The angel replied this conception will happen through the power of the Holy Spirit. Mary responded: “I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say.”

Mary spoke at the Visitation in Ain Karim outside of Jerusalem when she visited her kinswoman Elizabeth. Elizabeth told Mary she was blest among women because of her approaching birth.

Mary then responded with the canticle called the Magnificat: “My soul doth magnify the Lord; and my spirit doth rejoice in God my savior.” During the public life of Christ, we see Mary leaving the wedding feast at Cana and going with Jesus to Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee where she could have spoken with Jesus’ disciples and even St. Peter’s mother-in-law. We also see Mary and the relatives of Jesus trying to get Jesus’ attention among the crowds so they could speak with him.

The Way of the Cross devotion shows Jesus meeting Mary white, carrying cross. Here Mary could have spoken to Jesus. Although this episode is not mentioned in the Bible, it makes sense because the Gospel of John does place Mary at the foot of the cross. Mary would be speaking to St. John the Apostle and the other women at the cross.

Father J. Delaney says it is believed that Mary was present at the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, but this is not in the Bible. We do, however, see Mary present in the upper room in Jerusalem at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles.

Father Richard Hare, pastor of St. Martin de Porres Parish, Syracuse, answered this week’s question.

How ‘alt.’ lost the kingdom — and why it matters

B ack in the day, before the parish repertoire was expanded to accommodate the hymn sandwich (the “opening hymn” and “closing hymn”), the “offertory hymn,” and the almost-never-sung-by-parishioner “communion hymn,” Catholics in the U.S. didn’t know a lot of hymns. Everyone knew “Holy, Holy, Holy, Thou Name” — disfigured by those baroque trills (”In-fi-ih-neh-ett thy vast do-oh-maah”) that aren’t in the score, but the American Catholic fight song, nonetheless.

Then there were the Marian standar din, of which the treacly confections (“Bring Flowers of the Fairest, Bring Flowers of the Rarest”) were more prevalent than the little classics (“O Sanctissima”).

And there was “Lord, Who at Thy First Eucharist,” which I may have learned for my first holy Communion in 1958, but which was certainly a standard long before then. In an era of theologically thin hymn-texts, it was a eucharistic hymn chock-full of theology. It centered the church’s identity and unity in the Eucharist. It reminded Catholics of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. It closed with an image of the supremacy of the Lamb, in the kingdom-to-come?

As the fathers of the Second Vatican Council taught in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, the celebration of the Eucharist here-and-now is one key factor in our post-Vatican II liturgical language. If the reformed liturgy has failed to do what two generations of liturgical reformers expected it to do — equip the people of God for a new evangelical Pentecost in the world — that may have something to do with too intense a focus in our prayer and song on us, and on now.

The answer: Catechetical preaching on the kingdom-dimension of the liturgy is essential. And I suggest the proper authorities consigning hymns defaced by the arch-wreckovator, “alt.” to the parish dumpster.

May we be one with all Thy Church above,
One with Thy saints in one unbroken peace,
One with Thy saints in one unbounded love;
More blessed still, in peace and love to Thee.
One with the Trinity in unity.

“Alt.”? breaks into hives whenever he encounters “Thy” was not content to wreckovate that into Eliza Doolittle English. No, “alt.” had to flatten “infinitesimal” time-beyond-time that is God’s time, trinitarian time. To diminish the kingdom-sense is to diminish an essential element of the Eucharist.

As I’ve argued in this space before, losing a sense of the Kingdom-to-come is one key factor in our post-Vatican II liturgical language. If the reformed liturgy has failed to do what two generations of liturgical reformers expected it to do — equip the people of God for a new evangelical Pentecost in the world — that may have something to do with too intense a focus in our prayer and song on us, and on now.

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COUGARS OVERCOME WEATHER, HAWKS Weather and the Quincy University football team conspired to ruin the University of Saint Francis (USF) road trip to Quincy, Ill., but the fourth-ranked Cougars prevailed 21-0 on Saturday afternoon. By about 5 p.m. CST; nearly 1.5 inches of rain had inundated the Quincy region and the Cougars were loading up the busses and trying to dry out. The Cougars traveled to Taylor University in Upland on Saturday, Sept. 20, starting at 1 p.m.
Bioethics book is a good resource guide covering life issues

BY YORK YOUNG

The dignity that human life deserves is so often ignored nowadays that society can’t see that new technologies and scientific progress are used to damage our relationship with God and one another.

For example, over the last decade, progress in the field of genetics has moved forward so rapidly that procedures are being implemented without any consideration of the consequences. Genetic testing is so advanced now that it is possible to screen for hundreds of genetic anomalies in preborn babies. Unfortunately, any results that show a defect, no matter how minor, are often used to abort that baby.

Meanwhile, at the opposite end of life, that of the aged, euthanasia is being promoted — legal in the state of Oregon — under the guise of compassion and “dignity,” endangering the lives of the ill and disabled.

To help us deal with these and other life issues, William May has compiled and presented detailed and in-depth analysis of the Catholic perspective in “Catholic Bioethics and the Gift of Human Life” (Our Sunday Visitor, $19.95, second edition). Actually, this is a book few will sit down with and read from front to back. Instead, it serves as an extensive resource for those who are working in professions that confront these issues, and can be a good reference book for every day Catholics dealing with a host of problems struggling to conceive, taking care of an Alzheimer’s relative, considering organ donation from a dying family member, and more.

May uses years of study and training in these issues and multiple resources from the church (including papal documents, the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, teaching of the Church Fathers, etc.) to explain church teaching.

His eight chapters focus on (1) major issues in Catholic bioethics; (2) true moral judgments; (3) marriage and reproductive technologies; (4) contraception; (5) abortion; (6) human experimentation; (7) euthanasia; (8) organ transplants and defining death.

Perhaps the most difficult chapter for everyday readers is the third, looking at couples who desire to have a baby, but are having trouble conceiving. Since 1978, when the first in vitro fertilization success was announced — the headlines call her the “test-tube baby” — couples have had an option of creating children outside the womb, then implanting the embryo in the mother for development and delivery.

This has become common enough that many Catholics don’t see any problem with this — sort of like contraception (another area where Catholics join the culture in attitudes, seeing nothing wrong with it) — but these acts say that attitudes, seeing nothing wrong with them, are often used to abort that baby.

Sometimes, life gives us situations in which doing the right thing is difficult. When Jesus told the rich young man to sell all he had and “then come, follow me,” — Mt 19:21 — he was talking to all of us.

For life issues, May’s book helps us see the way to follow him.
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, P.O. Box 11169, Fort Wayne 46856; or e-mail: fthogan@fwdiocesefwbs.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 at (260) 456-2842 to purchase space.

FUNDRAISERS

Knights plan spaghetti dinner
South Bend — The Knights of Columbus Council 5521, 6153 S. Ironwood Dr., will give a spaghetti dinner on Friday, Sept. 19, from 5 to 7 p.m. Adults $7, children (5-12) $3. Dinner includes spaghetti, salad, garlic toast and coffee. Carry-out available.

St. Hedwig chicken dinner
South Bend — St. Hedwig Parish will have a chicken dinner at the Hedwig Memorial Center, 331 S. Scott St., Sunday, Sept. 28, from noon to 2 p.m. Advance tickets only. Deadline is Sept. 22. Adults $9, children 6-10 $5 and children 5 and under free. Call (574) 799-1194, (574) 287-4821 or (574) 232-6546 for information.

Card party planned
South Bend — The Altar Rosary Society of St. Casimir Parish is sponsoring a card party at the parish annex, 1308 W. Dunham St., on Sunday, Sept. 28 at 1 p.m. Lunch and dessert will be served. Cost is $4 (advance sales only). Bring your own cards and/or dice. Gentlemen are welcome. To purchase tickets contact Theresa at (574) 291-9131 or Fides at (574) 289-2059.

Rummage and bake sale supports rosary society
Fort Wayne — Most Precious Blood Parish, 1515 Barhold Ave., will have a Rosary Society rummage and bake sale Thursday, Oct. 2, and Friday Oct. 3, from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. and on Saturday, Oct. 4, from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. in Moler Hall.

Sigma Alpha Chi Sorority pasta bake, silent auction and wine tasting
Fort Wayne — Sigma Alpha Chi Sorority will host the Sigma Alpha Chi Sorority event Thursday, Oct. 23, from 5-9. Dan and Krista Stockman, wine critic from the Journal Gazette will attend. Dinner is $8 for adults, $5 for children 4-12 and those under 4 free. All proceeds benefit local charities.

MISC. HAPPENINGS

Seniors 50 and over invited to lunch
Waterloo — St. Michael Parish will host the Sigma Alpha Chi Sorority event Thursday, Oct. 9, beginning at 10:30 a.m. with the rosary. The 11 a.m. Mass will be followed by a country-style home-cooked meal, entertainment and door prizes. Tickets are $8 and need to be reserved by Wednesday, Oct. 1, to Mary Ann Heitz at (260) 857-7420.
Thumbs up for ‘Fireproof,’ opening Sept. 26

BY LISA EVERETT

It is not often that a major motion picture does more than mesmerize its viewers for 90 minutes, leaving little impact on their lives once they exit the theater. That is why moviegoers are in for a pleasant and potentially life-changing surprise when the film “Fireproof” open across the country on Sept. 26.

I was able to watch the movie during a prerelease screening in South Bend this summer to which Catholic and other Christian leaders were invited. My family and I had seen and loved Sherwood Pictures’ previous film, “Facing the Giants,” and I hoped that “Fireproof” would have the same high production quality and moving story line that would give it the uncanny ability to both entertain and evangelize.

The movie begins seven years into the struggling marriage of Caleb and Catherine Holt. Caleb is the captain of the local fire department and a hero to everyone but his wife. Catherine is the public relations director of a hospital and finds herself becoming attracted to a doctor on staff who pays more attention to her than does her husband.

Both spouses are embittered and on the brink of divorce when the sitcom “Growing Pains” actor Kirk Cameron, former star of the film “The Prince of Persia,” and his wife, former Star Trek: The Next Generation actress Erin Bethea, signed on to play Caleb and Catherine in Albany, Ga.

“We were praying for months for the next story line for a movie, and we had a lot of ideas that we were batching around,” recalls Stephen. Alex recounts that the answer came unexpectedly: “I was running around the block one day and the Lord impressed on me to focus on marriage, which is not what I was inclined to do.” Following the Lord’s lead, the brothers decided to delve into the question, “What does it really mean to love your spouse?”

Alex describes the basic scenario with which they wanted to begin: “We want to take a marriage that is in the midst of the daily struggles that most people say, ‘For better or for worse,’ they really only mean ‘for better.’”

What follows is the moving story of how Caleb discovers how to put out the fires that are destroying his marriage and win back the heart of his wife. Needless to say, “Fireproof” surpassed my expectations as I found myself alternately laughing and crying, drawn into this realistic, poignant and powerful drama of a marriage on the rocks that is rebuilt on the rock of Christ.

Perhaps as remarkable as the film itself is the story of how it came to be produced. Like “Facing the Giants” before it, “Fireproof” is the fruit of the faith and prayer of brothers Stephen and Alex Kendrick, who serve as associate pastors of Sherwood Baptist Church in Albany, Ga.

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Following the Lord’s lead, the brothers decided to delve into the question, “What does it really mean to love your spouse?”

Alex describes the basic scenario with which they wanted to begin: “We want to take a marriage that is in the midst of the daily struggles that most people can relate to that are married, the selfish tendencies that we sometimes have, the blandness that can occur in a marriage, and start there — how do you put life back into that marriage?”

Stephen knew that a story like this could strike a universal chord: “Couples struggle with the same things all over the world. They don’t know how to communicate, they don’t know their roles, they don’t know how to love each other unconditionally.”

The Kendricks realized that the question of how to really love your spouse could not be adequately answered without reference to the greatest love story of all time, in which Christ, the bridegroom, laid down his life for his bride, the church. It is this “great mystery,” in fact, which St. Paul says marriage is supposed to point to and make present.

“Just like we don’t always deserve God’s love, our spouse doesn’t always deserve love. But you still love anyway,” Alex points out.

And as St. Paul emphasized in his letter to the Ephesians, husbands in particular are called to show this sacrificial love to their wives. Following the heart of Christ: “A husband is supposed to represent Christ to his bride,” remarks Stephen. “He is supposed to lay down his life for her.”

This is the lesson that Caleb ultimately learns in “Fireproof”, and it is a lesson that our culture needs now more than ever.

Kirk Cameron, former star of the sitcom “Growing Pains” who plays Caleb, comments on the power of this film to change lives: “We show the truth about real love: it’s a decision, a commitment. It’s a choice to love even when you don’t feel anything. When a man loves a woman that way, with God’s help, she’ll bloom, even if he’s neglected her.”

In this age which proffers so many attacks on authentic love and the institution of marriage, take the time to see this inspiring movie.

Lisa Everett is the co-director of the Office of Family Life for the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.

Father Joe Gaughan, pastor of Most Precious Blood Parish in Fort Wayne, blesses a statue of Mary outside the church after Mass on Sunday, Sept. 14. Parish families volunteered their time to rebuild the statue’s base and landscape the area around it.