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TODAY'S CATHOLIC

Despite criticism, Notre Dame firm on Obama as commencement speaker

BY CHAZ MUTH



TODAY'S CATHOLIC FILE PHOTO

A statue of Our Lady sits atop the golden dome at the University of Notre Dame. The university announced President Barack Obama will deliver the commencement address May 17. The announcement has drawn criticism from across the nation.

WASHINGTON (CNS) — University of Notre Dame officials were standing firm on their choice of President Barack Obama as commencement speaker at the institution's May 17 graduation, in spite of a large number of Catholics calling on them to rescind the invitation.

The Indiana university, run by the Congregation of Holy Cross, and the White House announced March 20 that Obama would be Notre Dame's 2009 commencement speaker and confirmed he will receive an honorary doctor of laws degree at the graduation.

"The invitation to President Obama to be our commencement speaker should not be taken as condoning or endorsing his positions on specific issues regarding the protection of human life, including abortion and embryonic stem-cell research," said Holy Cross Father John I. Jenkins, president of the University of Notre Dame.

See Bishop D'Arcy's Statement. PAGE 3

"Yet, we see his visit as a basis for further positive engagement," he said in a March 23 statement.

The announcement on Obama was promptly followed by a flurry of criticism from Catholics, who said the president's support of legal abortion and embryonic stem-cell research makes him an inappropriate choice to be the commencement speaker at a Catholic university.

The Cardinal Newman Society — a Manassas, Va.-based Catholic college watchdog group — announced March 23 it had collected more than 54,000 signatures so far in an online petition that calls for Notre Dame to rescind its invitation to Obama to be this year's commencement speaker.

"We fully expected some criticism and have received it, though nothing more than we anticipated,"

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Prayer service offers healing to all victims of abuse

BY KAY COZAD

FORT WAYNE — One year ago, Pope Benedict XVI visited the United States and mentioned on several occasions the deep personal shame that he felt about the sexual abuse inflicted on children and young people.

Pope Benedict, instructing the U.S. bishops at the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., noted, "Rightly, you attach priority to showing compassion and care to the victims. It is your God-given responsibility as pastors to

bind up the wounds caused by every breach of trust, to foster healing, to promote reconciliation and to reach out with loving concern to those so seriously wronged."

The pope added that the church, having suffered and responded with prevention and healing, must place this effort in a wider context.

"It falls to you, as pastors modeled upon Christ, the good shepherd, to proclaim this message loud and clear, and thus to address the sin of abuse within a wider context of sexual mores," the pope said. "Moreover,

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TELLING OUR FAITH STORY

I love the Catholic faith because it holds people together. I love to go to Mass to celebrate the dying and rising of Christ. Also, the music we sing helps me to rejoice and praise God better. What I love the most is how everyone prays and helps each other.



Gabrielle Acree
Seventh grade
St. Charles Borromeo School

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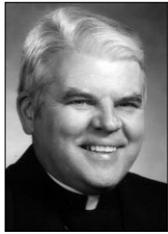
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Catholic education is important in today's culture



NEWS
& NOTES

BISHOP JOHN M. D'ARCY

High schools, theology and parish missions

I have given nights at six parish missions. Every one a joy. After celebrating the Mass in honor of St. Patrick at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception at noon, I went to St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish for the third evening of the mission, an evening devoted to repentance, reconciliation, and the sacrament of penance. Twelve of us heard confessions, each for well over an hour. A full church. Father Bill Schooler had done two nights on prayer and faith, and the final night was led by Father Mike Heintz on the holy Eucharist.

The next two days gave me special joy. I made my annual pastoral visits: first to Bishop Dwenger, and then to Saint Joseph's High School, South Bend.

In both places, you find schools that are thoroughly Catholic. Of great encouragement was my visit to the theology department in each school.

I also meet with the students, and here is where you learn so much about Catholic identity. In both of these schools, there are a number of teachers who, through our program financed by Our Sunday Visitor Institute, have received a thorough training in theology reaching a master's degree in theology or catechetics. This program in its theological content is under the exemplary leadership of Professor John Cavadini of Notre Dame.

In fact, in meeting with the students at Saint Joseph's High School, we were told, remember this is from the students, "The best department in the school is the theology department." Another student answered, "And they are the ones with the most passion."

Much credit belongs to Sister Jane

Carew and the Office of Catechesis for recruiting and screening teachers, and seeing that they receive this wonderful preparation. I visited two classrooms in each school, celebrated Mass, met with faculty and students and with the teachers in the theology department at Saint Joseph's High School; I also met with young men and women who are considering a vocation.

The economic downturn

One of the troubles of the economic downturn is whether or not we will lose students in our elementary schools and high schools because of tuition. People who do not have jobs will find it increasingly hard to pay tuition, so we will do whatever we can to help. And a visit to our high schools makes us realize how important Catholic education is in today's culture.

The fact that the young people are learning a sound response to the questions of the culture, and take those questions seriously, especially questions on ethics and faith, is so important to me as a bishop. This week, I will make my final pastoral visit to the high schools with my longtime friend, Carl Loesch, whom we recruited many years ago at Bishop Dwenger and who remains an inspirational figure. Carl told me recently in a note he sent that his work is in thanksgiving and appreciation to three people who have inspired him in Catholic education; namely, Sister Jane Carew, John Gaughan and Fred Tone. Fred is principal at Bishop Dwenger High School, and John has over 60 years in Catholic education.

The Brothers of Holy Cross

It was a privilege to attend the annual Mass at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart on the feast of St. Joseph, celebrated to honor the Brothers of Holy Cross. These men, missionaries and teachers and social workers from the Midwest province, have gone all over the world, especially to Africa, but also to Latin America and Asia, and they have been very significant in our diocese. It was a privilege to honor them with my presence and a few words.

A call from Decatur

Father Dave Voors, the exemplary pastor of St. Mary of the Assumption, Decatur, our southernmost parish in the eastern region of our diocese, with the exception, of course, of St. Mary of the Presentation, Geneva, called and asked me to celebrate a funeral Mass. He said the call came from the family of Ralph Biggs who had died suddenly.

Ralph was a home builder, and a strong Catholic, and devoted to his parish and to the diocese. He served for years on the advisory board of the Catholic Community Foundation. For a long time, he took care of his wife, Jeanie, who died some years ago. He was well regarded in Decatur as a businessman, and a few days before I had met his second wife, Christine, at the Rite of Election. It was a joy to meet her, and see her happiness at so many who are entering the church from Decatur. Alas, a few days later her husband of two years died. Christine asked me to say the Mass, and it was a privilege to do it. The whole town of Decatur was there, the business and legal communities, families, members of St. Mary Parish. Despite fatigue, after two days in our high schools, I could not turn down this request, and it was a privilege to offer the Mass before what seemed like the whole town of Decatur, and to share a few words of condolence with Christine and her sons. Among my reflections were some words about the vocation of the Catholic businessman.

While driving forth on a lovely day from Decatur to Fort Wayne, I received word that Father Jenkins, CSC, president of Notre Dame, wanted to speak with me. In another place in this paper I have given my response to his decision, which is causing great pain to so many, including to the local bishop.

This weekend, for the 25th time, I will be part of our Young Adult Retreat. This year it will be at Pokagon Inn, near the Michigan border. We have over 150 young adults signed up — Spanish and English, both — and I look forward to it.

See you all next week.

Papal social encyclical should be published in May

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI's first social encyclical is already completed and should be ready for release in early May, said a top Vatican official.

The original aim had been to have the encyclical on social justice issues ready for publication in 2007 to coincide with the 40th anniversary of Pope Paul VI's encyclical on human development, "Populorum Progressio" ("The Progress of Peoples"), said Cardinal Renato Martino, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace.

"Naturally, however, with the research and revisions necessary to create and have a text that would respond to today's current

situation, well, it got behind schedule a little bit," he told reporters March 20.

"The encyclical is already ready and we hope it will be published in early May," he said.

He said the new papal encyclical will offer "a beautiful response" to the new realities and the changes that have occurred since the last papal encyclical on Catholic social teaching, "Centesimus Annus" ("The Hundredth Year"), was published in 1991 by Pope John Paul II.

Pope Benedict's social encyclical was tentatively titled "Caritas in Veritate" ("Love in Truth") and will be his third encyclical in

four years.

Flying to Cameroon March 17, the pope said one reason for the encyclical's delay was the need to thoroughly deal with the current global economic crisis.

"We were almost ready to publish it when this crisis erupted and we went back to the text in order to give a more adequate response" and to examine what the church sees as being the real problems underlying the financial crisis, he told reporters on the papal plane.

He said he hoped the encyclical could play a part in helping the world overcome its economic woes.

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said Dennis K. Brown, a spokesman for Notre Dame. "I can't foresee us rescinding the invitation."

Brown told Catholic News Service March 23 that he has heard anecdotally that most students are pleased with this year's choice of Obama as the commencement speaker and feel honored the first black U.S. president would accept Notre Dame's invitation from among the many he has received.

The 44th president also will deliver the commencement addresses at Arizona State University May 13 and the U.S. Naval Academy May 22, White House press secretary Robert Gibbs said March 20. The U.S. president traditionally delivers a speech to graduating students at one of the U.S. military academies.

Obama will be the ninth U.S. president to receive an honorary degree from Notre Dame and the sixth to be a commencement speaker. In 2001, President George W. Bush addressed the graduating class about the importance of faith-based organizations.

The petition drive initiated by the Cardinal Newman Society called it "an outrage and a scandal" for the university to honor Obama and asked Father Jenkins to "halt this travesty immediately."

"This nation has many thousands of accomplished leaders in the Catholic Church, in business, in law, in education, in politics, in medicine, in social services and in many other fields who would be far more appropriate choices to receive such an honor," the petition says.

By noon March 24, the Web

site www.notredamescandal.com reported having received more than 60,150 signatures on the petition.

Bishop John M. D'Arcy of Fort Wayne-South Bend has issued a statement on page 3 of *Today's Catholic*.

"By inviting Barack Obama as commencement speaker, Notre Dame is telling the nation that the teaching of the Catholic Church on this fundamental matter (of abortion) can be ignored," Ralph McInerney, a philosophy professor at Notre Dame, said in a March 23 column on his Web site, *The Catholic Thing*.

"For one whose 54-year career as a member of the Notre Dame faculty is coming to an end this June, it is a bitter thing to reflect on the 2009 commencement speaker," he said.

Father Jenkins pointed out that U.S. presidents from both parties have come to Notre Dame for decades to speak to its graduates about a wide range of pressing issues — from foreign policy to poverty, from societal transformation to social service.

"We will honor Mr. Obama as an inspiring leader who faces many challenges — the economy, two wars, and health care, immigration and education reform — and is addressing them with intelligence, courage and honesty," he said.

"It is of special significance that we will hear from our first African-American president, a person who has spoken eloquently and movingly about race in this nation. Racial prejudice has been a deep wound in America, and Mr. Obama has been a healer," he said.

Laetare Medal recipient announced

Also announced over the weekend, Mary Ann Glendon, a professor at Harvard Law School who recently stepped down as U.S. ambassador to the Vatican,



MARY ANN GLENDON

will receive the University of Notre Dame's Laetare Medal at commencement ceremonies.

Established in 1883, the Laetare Medal is described as the oldest and most prestigious honor given to American Catholics. It is awarded annually to a Catholic "whose genius has ennobled the arts and sciences, illustrated the ideals of the church and enriched the heritage of humanity."

Announcing the award recipient March 22, Holy Cross Father John I. Jenkins said Glendon "has impressively served our church and our country," as both a "public intellectual" and a diplomat.

"She is an articulate and compelling expositor of Catholic social teaching who exemplifies our university's most cherished values and deserves its highest praise," Father Jenkins added.

Previous recipients of the Laetare Medal include U.S. President John F. Kennedy, Catholic Worker co-founder Dorothy Day, Cardinal Joseph L. Bernardin of Chicago, labor activist Msgr. George G. Higgins and, in 2008, actor Martin Sheen.

STATEMENT FROM BISHOP JOHN M. D'ARCY

Concerning President Barack Obama speaking at Notre Dame graduation, receiving honorary law degree

On Friday, March 21, Father John Jenkins, CSC, phoned to inform me that President Obama had accepted his invitation to speak to the graduating class at Notre Dame and receive an honorary degree. We spoke shortly before the announcement was made public at the White House press briefing. It was the first time that I had been informed that Notre Dame had issued this invitation.

President Obama has recently reaffirmed, and has now placed in public policy, his long-stated unwillingness to hold human life as sacred. While claiming to separate politics from science, he has in fact separated science from ethics and has brought the American government, for the first time in history, into supporting direct destruction of innocent human life.

This will be the 25th Notre Dame graduation during my time as bishop. After much prayer, I have decided not to attend the graduation. I wish no disrespect to our president, I pray for him and wish him well. I have always revered the Office of the Presidency. But a bishop must teach the Catholic faith "in season and out of season," and he teaches not only by his words — but by his actions.

My decision is not an attack on anyone, but is in defense of the truth about human life.

I have in mind also the statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops in 2004. "The Catholic community and Catholic institutions should not honor those who act in defiance of our fundamental moral principles. They should not be given awards, honors or platforms which would suggest support for their actions." Indeed, the measure of any Catholic institution is not only what it stands for, but also what it will not stand for.

I have spoken with Professor Mary Ann Glendon, who is to receive the Laetare Medal. I have known her for many years and hold her in high esteem. We are both teachers, but in different ways. I have encouraged her to accept this award and take the opportunity such an award gives her to teach.

Even as I continue to ponder in prayer these events, which many have found shocking, so must Notre Dame. Indeed, as a Catholic university, Notre Dame must ask itself, if by this decision it has chosen prestige over truth.

Tomorrow, we celebrate as Catholics the moment when our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, became a child in the womb of his most holy mother. Let us ask Our Lady to intercede for the university named in her honor, that it may recommit itself to the primacy of truth over prestige.

ABUSE

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by acknowledging and confronting the problem when it occurs in an ecclesial setting, you can give a lead to others, since this scourge is found not only in your dioceses, but in every sector of society. It calls for a determined, collective response."

The Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend will offer a healing service for all victims of abuse as well as their families and friends on Thursday, April 2, at 7 p.m. at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in downtown Fort Wayne.

Mary Glowaski, victim's assistance coordinator in Fort Wayne, working with Bishop John M. D'Arcy, is helping to plan this healing service for victims of abuse.

The service, says Glowaski, is offered to anyone, young and old alike, who has suffered any type of abuse.

"We have all been victimized by this terrible scandal," she says, adding, "The church has developed a deep sensitivity to those who have been abused in any form."

The simple service, led by Bishop D'Arcy, voice of the diocese and ardent advocate for victims, combines the liturgy of the word with music and prayers all focused on redemption and healing. A penitential rite is also included.

Bishop D'Arcy, in a letter to priests, writes: "This service will be prayer and penance for all those who have suffered abuse at the hands of others, especially children and their families and friends.

"This evening of prayer must be united to all the other things that have been going on in our diocese, which so many priests and laity have been involved; namely, the prevention and elimination of this terrible scourge through making the church ever more safe for children, through our safe environment practices and our careful screening. Such efforts have made great demands on parishes, and I

appreciate very much the efforts in this regard," writes Bishop D'Arcy.

The diocesan review committee, along with Father Bob Schulte, diocesan vicar general, and Brian MacMichael, director of the diocesan Office of Worship, were instrumental in supporting the creation of this service. "The committee is very pastoral," says Glowaski.

"Pastoral care," she continues, "is defined as holding the tension of the pain in others' lives. This service says that publicly... 'we want to bear this with you.' Some victims of abuse carry their pain and anger silently, leaving the church altogether or sitting in Mass, but not involved in any other way."

The church has discovered that a victim of abuse doesn't have to look a certain way or be a special type of person. Neither does an abuser. "We are not exempt because we believe in God. These are people sitting next to us in church," Glowaski says with passion.

As for the church's response to

victims and their plight, Glowaski says, "The church's unique humility says, 'I've been changed by this.' We need to stand up and say, 'We know you're out there, we love you and want you here.'" She hopes the process of forgiveness can begin in the hearts of those who attend the service.

Services, like the one to be offered on April 2, are simple social justice, says Glowaski.

"We are the heralds. Part of our conversion is to be a welcoming voice for those people of abuse," she says, adding that the church wants to find the people suffering from the pain of abuse, including those who are angry.

"This cross (the abuse scandal) as terrible as it's been, it has transformed us. ... We need to pay attention to people who have been abused and be strong advocates. We want to love them," she says, adding, "We offer this service rather than a Mass to respect the people who have left the church. We want them to come back. We want to continue to reach out to them and their families," says

Glowaski.

The Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend victim outreach offers personal meetings with Glowaski as well as with Bishop D'Arcy and Father Schulte. Assistance with counseling is also available.

Glowaski's hope for victims of abuse: "I hope they would feel our love and know that their pain wasn't in vain — it did change us. We're a better church," she says. She has seen the redemptive power of forgiveness and has faith that God will continue to teach Catholics in this diocese and those around the country how to respond to victims in love.

The healing service for victims of abuse and their families and friends is designed to be accessible to all who attend and an extension of God's love and mercy. To victims Glowaski offers, "Our church is a church of redemption. ... There is no more separation — it's 'we' in this together. ... We're a church where people can find help, safety and redemption."

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month in the U.S.

Conference explores Catholic teaching, morality of using torture

BY DENNIS SADOWSKI

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The breakdown of cultural norms regarding the dignity of every human being played a significant role in the mistreatment of suspected terrorists, a retired Army colonel said during a program at The Catholic University of America.

W. Patrick Lang said the breakdown is as significant as the legal opinions that cleared the way for the use of harsh interrogation practices that led to the mistreatment of U.S.-held detainees in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Taking a swipe at contemporary media, Lang, who spent 36 years in the armed forces followed by a stint in the Defense Intelligence Agency, said that acts of violence, torture and dehumanization that are often depicted on television, movies and video games have led to a lost understanding of right and wrong actions across American society.

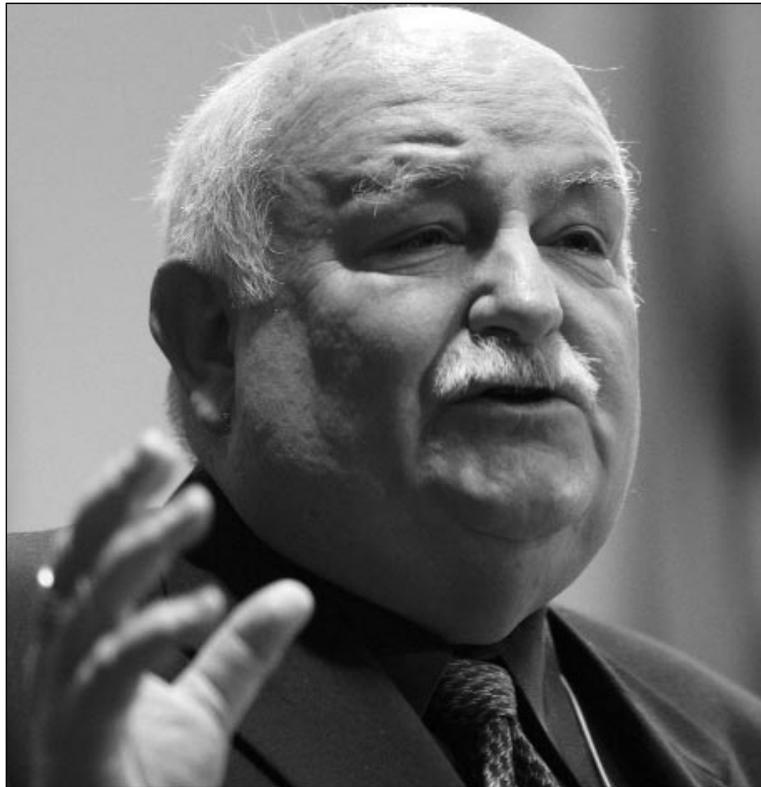
Lang was among several speakers who addressed "Torture, Conscience and the Catholic Moral Tradition" in a daylong program March 19 at Catholic University in Washington.

Three panels explored topics related to Catholic teaching on torture and the ethical responsibilities of society in the treatment of detainees in national or international military campaigns. Speakers included representatives of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, higher education and the human rights arena as well as former military leaders.

Strongly stating the Army does not teach its recruits torture, Lang decried the actions of soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq. He also placed blame for their action on officials in the administration of former President George W. Bush.

"In this war, we had people in the Army and Marine Corps who had never interrogated anybody but who had been exposed to all this rubbish in movies and on television, who were encouraged by the sitting administration, in fact, to do whatever it is you have to do to find out what we want. A more immoral thing to tell these people could hardly be imagined," Lang said.

Despite the push from Bush



CNS PHOTO/BOB ROLLER

Retired Col. Patrick Lang, president of the Global Resources Group and a former defense intelligence officer, speaks during a conference on "Torture, Conscience and the Catholic Moral Tradition" at The Catholic University of America in Washington March 19.

administration officials, Lang said commanding officers should have stopped the action of the soldiers they commanded, but did not. He also said that soldiers themselves failed to see that what they were doing was ethically wrong under Army standards.

"The issue is why didn't these officers stop this," Lang said. "The officers know the position of the Army regarding this, that there will be no torture, that it's a crime, that this is not allowed.

"They didn't stop this because something is missing in the culture, both in the upper echelons of our government and in our greater American culture as a whole, something that doesn't tell you any more that some things are right and some things are wrong, that some things shouldn't be done," he said.

The loss of values is evident as well in the excesses of Wall Street that led to last fall's financial meltdown, Lang added. He encouraged the audience to begin "clamoring" for a return to the teaching and acceptance of basic ethical values across society.

Lang's panel discussion included presentations by Margaret O'Brien Steinfels, co-director of Fordham University's Center on Religion and Culture, and Stephen Colecchi, director of the U.S. bishops' Office of International Justice and Peace.

Colecchi outlined long-standing Catholic teaching that, foremost, upholds the dignity of every person, saying torture violates that standard and is never justified. He said the church's teaching on torture has evolved since the Inquisition, in which widespread persecutions attempted to eradicate growing sects that challenged Catholicism.

The U.S. bishops specifically mentioned torture five times in "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship," the document they prepared for the 2008 election, placing it high on the list of concerns for voters to consider, Colecchi explained.

The panelists acknowledged that the church and its institutions must do a far better job of educating Catholics about the moral dangers torture poses. At the height of

the war in Iraq, polls showed that up to 63 percent of U.S. Catholics supported harsh interrogation — what many consider torture — as being necessary some times.

Several speakers called for the establishment of a "commission of inquiry" to discover how torture and secret rendition of suspected terrorists to foreign countries for harsh questioning came to become part of U.S. policy after the incidents of Sept. 11, 2001.

"Rendition" is the apprehension and extrajudicial transfer of a person from one country to another.

Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., has been the most vocal member of Congress in seeking such a commission. However, his proposal has received little backing beyond human rights advocates and torture victims.

The Rev. Richard Killmer, executive director of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture, said his organization is

coordinating a petition drive supporting Leahy's call in an effort to prevent torture from ever again becoming a tool of American military and foreign policy.

The coalition also is seeking to have elements of President Barack Obama's Jan. 22 executive order outlawing the use of torture by American forces put into law.

Colecchi offered support for such legislation, saying it fell in line with Catholic teaching on human dignity.

The program was sponsored by the Catholic Leadership Council of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture and two Catholic University programs: the Life Cycle Institute and the Center for International Social Development.

Editor's Note: More information about the National Religious Campaign Against Torture can be found online at www.nrcat.org.

New Mexico repeals death penalty after governor changes his mind

SANTA FE, N.M. (CNS) — New Mexico repealed the death penalty March 18, after Gov. Bill Richardson had a change of heart about his long support for capital punishment.

Richardson said at the press conference where he signed the bill into law that he only decided that afternoon to sign it. As he considered it that morning, Richardson, a Catholic, said he went to Mass and then to visit the state's high-security penitentiary where prisoners would serve out life-without-parole sentences in lieu of facing execution.

He said he also had met with murder victims' family members who wanted the law to remain in place and weighed the fact that few nations in the world practice capital punishment, making the United States out of step with most Western democracies.

Reports by New Mexico newspapers and television stations described an obviously unsettled Richardson relating his struggle over whether to sign the bill. Long a supporter of capital punishment, Richardson said he had been re-evaluating his beliefs and his position for six years.

He said he concluded that the way capital punishment is implemented is simply too flawed to guarantee that everyone sentenced to death deserves the penalty. Richardson said he only reached his decision at 4 p.m. on the day he signed the measure to repeal it.

"Faced with the reality that our system for imposing the death penalty can never be perfect, my conscience compels me to replace the death penalty with a solution that keeps society safe," Richardson said. Four New

Mexicans who had been on death row were among 130 people in 26 states who were later exonerated.

The New Mexico law is not retroactive. The two men now on death row could still be executed. Cases currently being adjudicated and new capital crimes committed before July 1 also are eligible for capital punishment.

One of Richardson's predecessors commuted the sentences of the five men then on death row just before he left office in 1986. Former Gov. Toney Anaya later said that as a Catholic his decision was the inevitable response to his moral and religious beliefs.

New Mexico has since executed one person, Terry Clark, in 2001.

New Jersey abolished capital punishment in 2007. The legislatures of Maryland and Kansas both considered abolition bills this session, but neither one got the necessary votes to reach the governor.

Abolition bills are still pending in Colorado, Illinois and Montana after receiving support in at least one legislative committee.

In New Mexico, Richardson said his trip to the prison helped affirm that life in prison was indeed a harsh sentence.

"I went to the prison today to look at the conditions, the death chamber," he said. "I wanted to see what imprisonment for life would look like. Those cells are worse than death."

"I believe it's the right decision. My conscience feels good, but I am still troubled," Richardson said. He told reporters his office had received nearly 12,000 calls and e-mails on the bill. More than two-thirds supported the repeal.

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at Easter (or anytime)

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Cardinal warns of despotism if conscience rights aren't protected

BY NANCY FRAZIER O'BRIEN

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Warning that a failure to protect conscience rights would move the country "from democracy to despotism," Cardinal Francis E. George of Chicago urged U.S. Catholics to tell the Obama administration that they "want conscience protections to remain strongly in place."

"No government should come between an individual person and God — that's what America is supposed to be about," said the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in a videotaped message available on the USCCB Web site at www.usccb.org/conscienceprotection and on YouTube at www.youtube.com/watch?v=6NoCRwMqVzQ.

"This is the true common ground for us as Americans," he added. "We therefore need legal protections for freedom of conscience and of religion — including freedom for religious health care institutions to be true to themselves."

The USCCB site also includes videos in support of conscience protection by a doctor, a nurse and two medical students.

Cardinal George was urging public comment by April 9 on an effort to rescind a regulation of the Department of Health and Human Services. The rule codifies several existing federal statutes prohibiting discrimination against health professionals who decline to participate in abortions or other medical procedures because of their religious or other moral objections.

HHS opened a 30-day comment period on the proposed rescission March 10. The regulation took effect two days before President Barack Obama took office.

The cardinal said the issue centers on "two principles or ideas that have been basic to life in our country: religious liberty and the freedom of personal conscience."

He noted that conscientious objection has been allowed for those opposed to participating in a war, "even though it's good to defend your country," and for doctors who do not want to be involved in administering the death penalty.

"Why shouldn't our government and our legal system permit conscientious objection to a morally bad action, the killing of babies in their mother's womb?" Cardinal George asked. "People understand what really happens in an abortion and in related procedures — a living member of the human family is killed — ... and no one should

be forced by the government to act as though he or she were blind to this reality."

He urged Catholics to tell the Department of Health and Human Services "that you stand for the protection of conscience, especially now for those who provide the health care services so necessary for a good society."

Among others speaking out in favor of the HHS regulation in separate videos were Jesuit Father Myles N. Sheehan, a medical doctor who practices internal medicine and geriatrics; Sally Sanchez, a registered nurse at Provena Mercy Medical Center in Aurora, Ill.; and Michael and Kathryn Redinger, who attend the Stritch School of Medicine at Loyola University in Chicago.

"We depend on our conscience for guidance as we work with our patients," Father Sheehan said. "For years, our government has recognized the importance of protecting conscience in a democratic society, especially in the field of medicine where human lives hang in the balance."

Sanchez, speaking in English and Spanish, said she draws on her education, her "life's experience" and her conscience in making every decision.

"If our government will not respect my right to follow my conscience, I can't be the kind of professional you want at your bedside," she said.

The Redingers, who are married, second-year medical students, appeared on their video with their infant daughter, Elizabeth.

Saying that her work as a doctor will rely on "learning from the classroom, kindness from the heart and wisdom rooted in conscience," Kathryn Redinger asked people to "let our government know that our right to live and work by our consciences must be protected."

Comments on the proposed HHS rule change may be submitted through an action alert at www.usccb.org/conscienceprotection, on the Web site www.Regulations.gov (by entering 0991-AB49 in the search box) or via e-mail to proposedrescission@hhs.gov. Attachments may be in Microsoft Word, WordPerfect or Excel, but Microsoft Word is preferred.

By mail, one original and two copies of written comments may be sent to: Office of Public Health and Science, Department of Health and Human Services, Attention: Rescission Proposal Comments, Hubert H. Humphrey Building, 200 Independence Ave. SW, Room 716G, Washington, D.C. 20201.

Women play crucial role in promoting human rights

BY CAROL GLATZ

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Women have a crucial role to play in promoting human rights, the dignity of life and the family, Pope Benedict XVI said.

"Given the distinctive influence of women in society, they must be encouraged to embrace the opportunity to uphold the dignity of life through their involvement in education and their participation in political and civic life," the pope said in a written message to participants of the Vatican's first international conference dedicated to women and human rights.

Because of their "unique capacity for the other, women have a crucial part to play in the promotion of human rights, for without their voice the social fabric of society would be weakened," said the message released March 20.

The March 20-21 conference, titled "Life, Family, Development: The Role of Women in the Promotion of Human Rights," was organized and sponsored by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations and the Rome-based World Women's Alliance for Life and Family.

The pope said that suppressing, manipulating or compromising human life — especially in its most vulnerable stages — must be "decried as a violation of human rights," and he urged participants to come up with "a positive and proactive response" to such dangers.

He asked that participants carry on the task of correcting the

misconception "that Christianity is simply a collection of commandments and prohibitions."

It is important that people recognize that the Gospel is a message of joy and that Christian faith and ethics makes spousal love "healthy, strong and truly free," he said.

The Ten Commandments "are not a series of 'no's' but a great 'yes' to love and to life," said the pope.

The conference's main aim was to elaborate on Pope John Paul II's call for a "new feminism" that upholds and respects life and has the power to transform today's cultures.

Karen Hurley, president general of the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations, said, "The new feminism is motivated by love; there is a spirit of hope and a spirit of joy," which has little to do with radical forms of feminism that seem "to be generated by bitterness and resentment."

Finding guidance and inspiration in their faith in Christ, women can come together to work to improve the lives of women, children and families in their corner of the world, she told Catholic News Service March 23.

By touching one life at a time and by putting pressure on government leaders, she said women can work to promote even basic human rights at home and abroad "so that everyone can have enough to eat, safe water to drink, be able to have education for women and for children, things that we sometimes take for granted."

Olimpia Tarzia, president of World Women's Alliance for Life and Family, said legalized abortion has spelled defeat for both

women and society.

Women, families, life and human dignity need to be the focus of the world's attention, she said in her concluding remarks to conference participants.

Today's generation can spark a new liberation movement so that no one — born or unborn — is discriminated against and so that there would be equal opportunity for everyone: the strong and weak, the rich and poor, and the healthy and the sick, she said.

Cardinal Renato Martino, president of the justice and peace council, said in his closing remarks that the women's liberation movement "was and is a landmark event that has contrasting and ambivalent meanings."

There needs to be "a constant, patient, intelligent and prudent Christian discernment in order to keep the good and overcome the bad" that has resulted from the women's liberation movement and to better promote a civilization of love that is inclusive and based on solidarity, he wrote.

The new feminism, inspired by the Gospel, must take into account different cultural contexts and, therefore, must tailor its programs and initiatives at the local level, Cardinal Martino said.

He said the new feminism must free itself "from all cultural baggage that degrades a woman's dignity and her fundamental rights as a person and impedes her authentic development and contribution to development."

The best way to open up the right road to freedom, he said, is through a well-rounded and integral education based on moral and religious values.

Also, the enormous gap between rich and poor in the world is "an unacceptable scandal" and a special concern for the promoters of women's rights, said the cardinal.

Extreme poverty affects women and children more than anyone else, he said, so the new feminism must also work for a world that is more just and responsible toward the least of one's brothers and sisters.

"The new feminism is motivated by love; there is a spirit of hope and a spirit of joy."

KAREN HURLEY, PRESIDENT OF THE WORLD UNION OF CATHOLIC WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS



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USCCB comments cite reasons for HHS to keep conscience regulation

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Rather than working to rescind a regulation that gives federal protection to the conscience rights of health care providers and institutions, the Obama administration's proper role is to enforce the will of Congress as already expressed in existing statutes, said attorneys for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Anthony R. Picarello Jr., USCCB general counsel, and Michael F. Moses, associate general counsel, filed public comments on behalf of the USCCB March 23 with the Department of Health and Human Services. HHS opened a 30-day comment period March 10 on whether it should rescind a regulation that took effect two days before President Barack Obama took office. The rule codifies three longtime federal statutes prohibiting discrimination against health professionals who decline to participate in abortions or other medical procedures because of their religious or other moral objections. "The question is not whether the policy to be pursued is the strong protection of conscience in health care — Congress has already decided that question repeatedly and decisively by a series of statutes — but how best to enforce the policy of conscience protection already expressed in those statutes," Picarello and Moses said.

Progress on human trafficking praised; more awareness of issue sought

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The United States has made important progress in the last decade in recognizing the problem of human trafficking, creating laws and systems to try to stop it and aiding victims, said witnesses at a March 19 congressional hearing. The next steps toward addressing human trafficking should start with increasing awareness of the problem, said experts from the Department of Homeland Security, from a police task force in California and from Migration and Refugee Services of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Testifying before the Subcommittee on Border, Maritime and Global Counterterrorism of the House Homeland Security Committee, Anastasia Brown, director of refugee programs for MRS, credited the recent laws and an expansion of the program approved by Congress in the fall for valuable progress. The William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act signed into law in December by President George W. Bush included new services for trafficking victims, including making them eligible for benefits without waiting periods and opening up the array of assistance available to child victims.

NEWS BRIEFS

KNOXVILLE BISHOP STIKA WAVES DURING ORDINATION



CNS PHOTO/DEACON PATRICK MURPHY-RACEY, EAST TENNESSEE CATHOLIC

Bishop Richard F. Stika waves to the congregation during his episcopal ordination March 19 at the Knoxville, Tenn., convention center. Bishop Stika, a St. Louis native, is the third bishop to lead the Diocese of Knoxville, which was founded in 1988 and is home to almost 60,000 Catholics. At left is principal consecrator Cardinal Justin F. Rigali of Philadelphia.

Bishop Cordileone, San Diego auxiliary, named bishop of Oakland

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI has named Auxiliary Bishop Salvatore J. Cordileone of San Diego as bishop of Oakland, Calif. The appointment was announced in Washington March 23 by Archbishop Pietro Sambi, apostolic nuncio to the United States. Bishop Cordileone, 52, succeeds Archbishop Allen H. Vigneron, who had headed the Oakland Diocese since 2003 until his appointment as Detroit archbishop in January. He will be installed May 5 at Oakland's Cathedral of Christ the Light. Bishop Cordileone was named auxiliary bishop of San Diego July 5, 2002, after having served as an official of the Supreme Court of the Apostolic Signature in Rome since 1995. As a bishop he has served on the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Canonical Affairs and Church Governance and on the USCCB's Task Force on Cultural Diversity. Salvatore Cordileone was born in San Diego June 5, 1956. Following elementary and secondary school, he began his formation for the priesthood in San Diego at St. Francis Seminary and then

went to Rome to study at the Pontifical North American College and the Pontifical Gregorian University. He was ordained a priest July 9, 1982.

Detroit Archdiocese urges Catholics to create 'culture of vocations'

DETROIT (CNS) — The Detroit archdiocesan Vocations Office provides a number of opportunities for parishioners to create a "culture of vocations" within parishes and their homes. The archdiocese publishes posters, newsletters and material for parish bulletins to increase vocation awareness. Vocare, the Vocations Office's quarterly newsletter, is sent to all parishes and members of the vocations committee. In the letter, the archdiocese includes advertisements for discernment weekends, which allow men and women to reflect on and learn more about religious life. These weekends take place regularly throughout the year. The office also hosts an annual Vocations Convocation for the Priesthood and Consecrated Life. A registration form, included in the newsletter, promotes the event and encourages people involved in vocations ministry to attend. The convocation includes a number of

workshops presented by priests, women religious and religious brothers.

Turtle given by Pygmies to pope will stay in Africa

LUANDA, Angola (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI and Vatican aides decided that the live turtle given to the pope by a group of Pygmies from Cameroon should stay in Africa. Although Vatican officials initially spoke about finding a home for the turtle in the Vatican Gardens, in the end they asked staff members of the Vatican Embassy in Luanda to find it a proper home, said Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, Vatican spokesman. A group of 15 Pygmies from the Baka ethnic group came to the pope's residence at the apostolic nunciature in Yaounde, Cameroon, March 20 as the pontiff was preparing to leave for Angola. They built a ceremonial hut out of leaves in the garden of the residence, and the pope came out to greet them. The Pygmies, including grandparents, parents and children, sang songs and danced to the beat of drums, then gave the pope three gifts: a basket, a cloth mat and the turtle, which is a symbol of wisdom in Cameroon. The Baka Pygmies

inhabit rain forests in southern Cameroon. A hunting and gathering people, they number fewer than 30,000.

Marriage, religious vows don't limit freedom, papal preacher says

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The unbreakable bonds of marriage and the permanence of religious vows do not place artificial constraints on the freedom to love; rather they free a person to love forever, in good times and bad, said the preacher of the papal household. Capuchin Father Raniero Cantalamessa continued his Friday Lenten meditations for top Vatican officials March 20 even though Pope Benedict XVI and his closest collaborators were in Africa. Focusing on the writings of St. Paul about the Holy Spirit, the papal preacher looked specifically at the meaning of the passage from the Letter to the Romans: "For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed you from the law of sin and death." If Christ's death and resurrection and the descent of the Holy Spirit have freed people from the law, he said, "what sense do the Code of Canon Law, monastic rules, religious vows" and the church's insistence on the indissolubility of marriage have? "Jesus said he did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it," the Capuchin said. What the Holy Spirit adds to the law is life-giving love, he said.

Israeli Foreign Ministry says pope can wear cross at Western Wall

JERUSALEM (CNS) — "In accordance with rules of hospitality and dignity," Israel will not prevent Pope Benedict XVI from wearing his pectoral cross when he visits the Western Wall, the Israeli Foreign Ministry said. Responding to what it called a "misleading quotation" in *The Jerusalem Post*, the ministry released a statement by Ambassador Mordechai Lewy from the Israeli Embassy to the Holy See March 17. When Pope Benedict visits the Western Wall during his mid-May trip to the Holy Land, "the same procedure that was applied in the papal visit of the year 2000 will be valid," Lewy said in the statement released by the Foreign Ministry. "The Israeli host will respect, as a matter of course, the religious symbols of the Holy Father and of his entourage." During his 2000 pilgrimage Pope John Paul II visited the site with his cross visible. The *Jerusalem Post* article quoted the rabbi of the Western Wall, Rabbi Shmuel Rabinovitch, as saying that it was "not fitting to enter the Western Wall area with religious symbols, including a cross."

Luers, Dwenger FBLa place in state competition

FORT WAYNE — The Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) held their annual State Leadership Conference and competition on March 14.

Bishop Luers High School FBLA students who have placed in the top 10 in competition and may be eligible to compete at the National Leadership Conference being held in Anaheim, Calif., this summer are Jeff Teeters, junior: sixth in business calculations; Shelia Hite, senior: fourth in business law and fifth in public speaking 2; Bridgette Dooley, junior: fourth in cyber security; Molly Goodwin, freshman: sixth in FBLA principles and introduction to technology concepts, fifth place in introduction to parliamentary procedures; Tyler Post, freshman: fourth in introduction to technology concepts and sixth place in word processing 1 and Bill McManus, sophomore: sixth place in public speaking 2.

The following members placed high enough to automatically qualify for national competition.

Tim Stein, junior, third place in personal finance; Emily Hayes, sophomore, second in public speaking 1; Stephanie Wyatt, junior, second in business law and Isaac Larson, senior, first place in computer problem solving, first place in networking concepts and fifth place in marketing.

From Bishop Dwenger High School, Tony Chalk, Haimanot Bluye, Nick Millhouse, Joey Houlihan, Nick Pappas, Brad Salisbury and Ryan Haines all competed and placed in the top seven in at least one event.

The following students received first and second place awards, qualifying them for nationals in Anaheim: John Carroll, first in business law and second in business ethics team with Mike Magsam; Nathan Eggleston, first in accounting I; Gretchen Winkeljohn, first in business presentation and first in client service; Brea Johnson, first in job interview and second in public speaking II; Mike Magsam, second in business ethics team with John Carroll and second in personal finance; and Chris Coffee, Andy Magsam and Steven Bartkiewicz received second in banking and financial systems team.

At the awards ceremony, Dr. Tony Bennett, superintendent of public instruction for the State of Indiana spoke to the students and extended an invitation to the State House to any participants who placed first at nationals.

Electronics recycling at the USF

FORT WAYNE — The University of Saint Francis (USF) is offering electronics recycling for the community to reflect its Franciscan values of respecting creation and being environmental stewards.

AROUND THE DIOCESE

ST. BERNARD STUDENTS HAVE WHALE OF A LESSON



PROVIDED BY ST. BERNARD SCHOOL, WABASH

Cindy Kelley and several St. Bernard, Wabash, students posed along side "Blackout," a 100-foot-long model of a blue whale on Friday, March 6. Students were able to visit the inside of the whale to learn facts about baleen and toothed whales. Blackout, who was created 14 years ago by Kelley, pre-kindergarten teacher at St. Bernard School and Huntington Catholic School teacher, Rita Disler, is on loan from Huntington Catholic School.

Bring those outdated or broken electronics to University of Saint Francis on Saturday, April 4. Collection will begin at 9 a.m. and continue until 3 p.m. or until the semi-truck is full. There are no fees, but cash donations will be accepted to fund USF student-led environmental programs.

USF will again partner with licensed and responsible companies, Recycle Force and Action Environmental, Inc. Last year, the event collected 7,293 pounds of electronics from 100 households.

All residents are invited to participate (no businesses, please). One "carload" per person.

Accepted items for recycling include personal computers, monitors, keyboards, laptops, mice, cables, computer printers, desktop fax machines, desktop scanners, desktop copiers, surge protectors, microwaves, cell phones, VHS players, DVD players, MP3s, iPods and stereo equipment (no TVs or appliances).

This year adult bicycles will also be collected to grow the fleet of the USF bicycle loaner program for students.

For more information, please contact Trina Herber at (260) 399-7700 ext. 8134.

Moderate increase in cost to attend Saint Mary's College

NOTRE DAME — With an eye on the fragile economy and its effect on families' ability to afford college, the Saint Mary's College Board of Trustees approved a moderate 5 percent increase in tuition and a 3 percent increase in room and board for the 2009-2010 academic year. The average cost to attend Saint Mary's next year will be \$38,822, including tuition, room, board and fees.

The college has worked tirelessly to manage expenses in order to keep tuition increases to a minimum and make more money available for financial aid. The president has asked all departments to closely monitor their budgets and reduce their expenses. Belt-tightening measures have included a hiring freeze for nonessential positions, eliminating travel for staff and administrators, cuts to operating expenses, and no raises for faculty, staff and administrators for the next year.

The college remains committed to maintaining its excellent liberal

arts education, while making it as affordable as possible.

Bishop Dwenger seniors recognized for commitment to service

FORT WAYNE — Bishop Dwenger seniors Katie Paladino and Joey Klinker are being recognized by the Prudential Spirit of Community Awards as recipients of the President's Volunteer Service Award. This award recognizes young Americans who have volunteered significant amounts of their time to service in their communities and their country. Paladino has worked extensively as an MDA camp counselor and Klinker has worked countless hours with Habitat for Humanity.

Bioethics chair to lecture at Notre Dame

NOTRE DAME — Dr. Edmund Pellegrino, appointed by President George W. Bush to chair the President's Council on Bioethics, and professor emeritus of Medicine and Medical Ethics at the Center for Clinical Bioethics

at Georgetown University Medical Center, will deliver a keynote lecture entitled "A Moral Foundation for the Helping Professions: Medicine, Law, Ministry, and Teaching" on Friday, March 27, at 4 p.m. in the auditorium of McKenna Hall at the University of Notre Dame.

In his lecture, Dr. Pellegrino will consider broadening the framework of the foundations for medicine and explore whether the moral grounds for medicine can sustain, not only the medical profession, but also the other helping professions of law, ministry and education.

The lecture is free and open to the public, and is sponsored by the Notre Dame Center for Ethics and Culture. For more information, contact Claire Brown at (574) 631-9656.

Allen County students win in Indiana Farm Bureau Insurance eXcel Awards state finals

INDIANAPOLIS — Allen County students Seth Boyden and Max Roesler, Bishop Dwenger High School, and Marshall Nill, Canterbury High School, won first place in the video category with their entry, "Eastford and Westley" at the Indiana Farm Bureau Insurance eXcel Awards state finals competition on March 14, at the Christel DeHaan Fine Arts Center on the University of Indianapolis campus.

"Perspective" was the topic for the 2008-2009 competition. Students entered their creative interpretation of "Perspective" in one of six categories: writing, music, two-dimensional art, three-dimensional art, video or performance.

"There is so much talent in the youth of our state," said Indiana Farm Bureau Insurance Senior Vice President of Marketing Patty Poehler. "The eXcel Awards gives them the opportunity to shine and be recognized for their talents."

The three Allen County students won this award last year as well in the same category (video) for "Pork Rinds," and also the award for Best of Show.

For the 20 years of the competition, Indiana Farm Bureau Insurance has sponsored and administered it, awarding more than \$600,000 to Hoosier students. This year, the company presented six first-place winners with \$3,000 each. Second-place contestants received \$2,500 and third-place winners received \$2,000.

School choice bill passes Senate with bipartisan support

House action uncertain

School choice in years past typically has been a partisan issue. Traditionally Republicans have supported it. Democrats have opposed it. However, recent national trends indicate that when school choice legislation is presented in tax credits rather than vouchers, lawmakers on both sides of the aisle support it. This trend is apparent in Indiana when looking at this year's school choice bill, SB 528, which has passed the Senate, Feb. 19, with bipartisan support.

The proposal, SB 528, the scholarship tax credit bill, authored Sen. Carlin Yoder (R-Middlebury) would offer a 50 percent tax credit incentive to corporations or individuals for donations made to qualified Scholarship Granting Organizations (SGO's). These SGO's would then provide grants to lower income families for school tuition or other school related costs, at the public or private school of the parents' choice.

The tax credit would allow individuals and corporations who contribute to a qualified scholarship program to deduct 50 percent of the amount of that donation from their state tax liability. For example, a donor who gave \$5,000 to a participating scholarship program would be able to claim a \$2,500 credit against what they owed in state income tax liability. The SGO program received \$5,000 in the private donation, which would then be used to fund scholarships for lower-income students. A \$2,500 state tax credit helped leverage \$5,000 in private scholarship donations.

Sen. John Broden (D-South Bend) who supported the bill said, "The focus was narrowly tailored. It really focuses on those children that are in the 200 percent of poverty category," he said. "I very much welcome the opportunity to help those families that are obviously having a very

difficult time and yet very much want the option and opportunity to send their children to a school of their choice. I like very much the way the bill was tailored to reach those working class folks," said Broden.

"I generally oppose these types of bills, like voucher bills or school transfer bills, but because this bill was so well-crafted and targeted to reach those families that really need it, is the reason why I supported the bill. It also wasn't school specific. The contributions are going to a scholarship granting organization rather than directly to a particular school," said Broden.

Sen. Robert Deig (D-Mt. Vernon) said, "The way I look at it is that the families that send their children to parochial schools pay taxes, but don't receive any benefit. This will allow lower income children to attend a parochial school. I know a number of families that would like to send their child to parochial schools, but they simply can't afford them. This bill enables those families the ability to do that," said Deig.

Prior to the beginning of the legislative session, ICC top officials met with Speaker of the House, Rep. Patrick B. Bauer (D-South Bend), to get suggestions on how to craft the scholarship tax credit proposal to make it acceptable to Republicans and Democrats alike. "The Speaker of the House was very helpful in offering ways to make the bill palatable to members of both political parties," said Glenn Tebbe, ICC executive director who was present during the meeting. "Rep. Bauer also has provided assistance this year with the scholarship tax credit by assigning Rep. Peggy Welch, as House sponsor of the bill, who is known for her ability to foster bipartisan support. We are very appreciative for the speaker's help," said Tebbe.

Despite opposition to the bill from the Indiana State Teachers Association (ISTA) and the

INDIANA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

BY BRIGID CURTIS AYER

Indiana Federation of Teachers (IFT) who testified before a Senate panel about fiscal concerns, bipartisan support in the House is growing.

Tebbe attributes the growing support for the legislation for two reasons. "People who have joined our Catholic Action Network have been very active in contacting their representatives and asking for support of the Scholarship Tax Credit Proposal. Thanks to input from the Speaker of the House on crafting the bill, many Democrats in the House are seeing the merits of the bill and how it really helps lower income families while keeping public schools intact."

Currently in Indiana there is only one scholarship granting organization in operation, the Choice Charitable Trust in Indianapolis. This group awards scholarships to families to use for one of 60 participating schools in and around central Indiana.

The fiscal report on the bill prepared by Legislative Services Agency, a nonpartisan government entity that supports the Indiana General Assembly, indicated that approximately 1,600 students could receive support from contributions of \$10 million, which is the maximum amount of contributions that would be eligible for the tax credit each fiscal year.

SB 528 has been assigned to the House Ways and Means Committee. The bill has not been scheduled for a hearing and its fate is uncertain. ICC encourages people to contact their lawmakers and ask for support the scholarship tax credit proposal.

St. Vincent de Paul workshop promotes small Christian communities

FORT WAYNE — How do small Christian communities impact our church in America today? What will the future of the church look like? These were some of the questions answered by Holy Cross Father Robert Pelton at a March 7 workshop titled, "The Future Church," sponsored by St. Vincent de Paul Church Small Christian Communities Core Team.

Over 140 people gathered to discuss the influence of small Christian communities in the Catholic Church today. Using examples from Latin American small Christian communities, attendees learned about the need to adapt the style of worship to our own particular culture and community. Just as in the early church, small groups gather together in homes, sharing their lives and faith together, building community and strengthening



FATHER ROBERT PELTON, CSC

faith. These groups, under the guidance of their parish priest, build a bridge between faith and all other aspects of life in today's society. The faith com-

munities will influence prayer, time spent and service.

The workshop also included several breakout sessions on: The Family as a Small Christian Community, The Challenge of Culture, Using the Bible in a Small Group Setting, The Call to Service, The Dynamics of an Small Christian Community and Building Community in the Lives of our Teens.



DOROTHY SCHUERMAN

Dr. David Johnson discusses ways to deal with today's culture in a breakout session at "The Future Church," a workshop on small Christian communities in the Catholic Church, held at St. Vincent de Paul Church, Fort Wayne, on March 7.



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Catholic family fraternal service group provides insurance

BY DEB WAGNER

FORT WAYNE — “We’re more than pancake breakfasts and fish fries,” quips Ed Eckersall, a 4th Degree Knight, a field agent for the Knights and member of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Fort Wayne. “We serve at the pleasure of the priests,” Eckersall says, meaning the Knights support priests and seminarians.

The councils, either at individual parishes or combined parishes, offer financial and volunteer support to parish projects.

In the Fort Wayne area, for example, Eckersall says the councils have helped renovate the rectory at St. Joseph-Hessen Cassel Parish and even restored a baseball diamond at St. Patrick, Arcola. The Knights at St. Vincent de Paul

Parish collaborate with the Scouts to care for the church cemetery.

“There’s no charge to the parish, it’s all charity,” says Eckersall.

It may surprise many to learn that the Knights of Columbus, the world’s largest international Catholic family fraternal service organization, was formed in 1882 in New Haven, Conn., by 29-year-old Father Michael J. McGivney to offer financial aid to members and their families.

Father McGivney’s founding vision for the order also included a life insurance program to provide for the widows and orphans of deceased members. The order’s insurance program has expanded substantially to serve the Knights’ growing membership more effectively.

A career change from the dental



ED ECKERSALL

and medical administrative fields to the financial field in 2004 brought Eckersall to Indiana, and he became a field agent in the Fort

Wayne area with the John J. Stackowicz Agency in South Bend. A Knights of Columbus field agent, like Eckersall, can assist with an assortment of family financial concerns. Eckersall works with members and their families on matters pertaining to managing their financial future.

These “fraternal benefits” are available to members in the form of whole life and term insurance, long-term care and annuities. Eckersall’s success in financial matters has garnered him recognition as member of the elite Million Dollar Round Table for agents in 2007 and 2008.

Joining in 2001, Eckersall says, “I joined the Knights of Columbus, like many young men not knowing much about it. I didn’t know who Father McGivney was. I did know why I joined though. I joined because I wanted to be of service ... to put my faith into action ... to work side-by-side with individuals doing good works of charity.”

Eckersall quickly moved through the Knights of Columbus ranks — as a treasurer the first year he joined, and then as a Deputy Grand Knight and then Grand Knight, the top individual in a council — within the first three years of his membership.

“I’m there to follow the vision of our founder Father Michael J. McGivney,” Eckersall says. “I really feel what I provide is an extension of our founder, Father McGivney.”

The Knights of Columbus has been called “the strong right arm of the church,” and has received praise from popes, presidents and other world leaders, for their support of the church, programs of evangelization and Catholic education, civic involvement and aid to the needy.

In the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, the diocese borrowed money from the Knights of Columbus to make funds available for building projects such as St. Pius X, Granger, St. Elizabeth Ann

Seton, Bishop Luers and Bishop Dwenger high schools possible. Eckersall says the projects could have been scaled back or delayed had the funding not been available at the time.

The Knights of Columbus welcomes Catholic men, who are 18 years of age and older, to become a member of the organization and are committed to serve their church and community.

Locally, the Knights pray for the unborn, donate blood for the Red Cross blood bank, serve food to the needy and visit the elderly and ill. They also work with highway cleanup projects, with youth and various charities.

The Knights have offered assistance for storm victims of Hurricane Katrina within days of the disaster, assisted families of 9-11 terrorist attack, provided funds to renovate the facade of St. Peter Basilica at the Vatican and funds for the bell tower at the National Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C.

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Last year the Knights contributed \$143 million to charity and 68 million volunteer hours to their communities.

To locate a Knights of Columbus insurance agent, visit www.kofc.org and click on “Find an Agent,” or contact the local Knights of Columbus council for more information.

Tim Johnson contributed to this story.

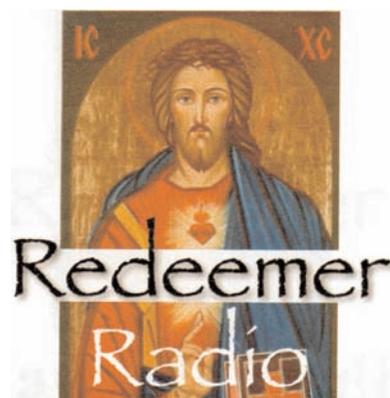
STUDENTS PRESENT NEW STREET SIGN



DIANE FREEBY

Saint Joseph’s High School student council officers, from left, Taylor Thomas, Katherine Manion, Jun Chun and Chris Bishop present Bishop John M. D’Arcy with the new street sign in his honor that will mark the high school’s main drive. Bishop D’Arcy celebrated Mass with the students, teachers and parents on March 19, the feast of St. Joseph. The students also presented him with a framed photo from the March for Life this past January in Washington, D.C. Bishop D’Arcy marched with students from Saint Joseph’s, Marian, Bishop Dwenger and Bishop Luers high schools, along with over 200,000 other pro-life advocates.

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St. Catherine parishioners get behind the cross

BY DIANE FREEBY

SOUTH BEND — “It’s one thing to profess our faith within the walls of a church. But to profess it out on the streets is quite another.”

As Jim “Butch” Murphy laced up his hiking boots, preparing to walk and pray with a group of men from St. Jude Church in South Bend, he reflected on what it means to make a pilgrimage. The men were getting ready to walk along a busy section of U.S. 31, carrying a cross, just a little over three miles from St. Jude to Sacred Heart.

The small group of hikers would then meet up with a larger group of men for a simple Lenten meal, followed by the living Stations of the Cross.

Murphy is more than up to the task of leading such a Lenten activity. The founder of Vera Cruz Communications is the product of 12 years of Catholic education, and by his senior year of high school he decided to surrender his entire life to Christ. In Spanish, “Vera Cruz” means “true cross.”

Murphy says Vera Cruz Communications exists “to proclaim the message of God’s love, evidenced by the cross of Jesus.”

Murphy himself walked from Florida to California in 1992, carrying a six-foot wooden cross in an effort of prayer and evange-

lization.

“When you make a pilgrimage,” explained Murphy, “you need to be careful it doesn’t become an endurance contest. It’s a prayerful thing ... don’t feel like you need to keep up with anyone. Praying while walking really calls us to a new challenge.”

Sponsored by St. Catherine of Sienna Adult Formation, the walk is an extension of the Lenten program Murphy has offered at St. Jude’s over the past several years. As the men gathered for the afternoon send-off, Murphy reminded them that in the eyes of the world, walking along a busy road, carrying a cross and praying during rush hour, might look foolish.

“We believe there is power in the Cross,” he said after reading 1 Cor 1: 18-25. “Some will laugh, but some will burst open their hearts. We want to proclaim the cross! As we’re walking, let’s keep your intentions in prayer.”

As the group made their way through the nearby neighborhood, the men took turns offering up particular intentions. Among the first was for those who might be unemployed or having trouble making ends meet in the current economy. Prayers were also offered up for some who recently despaired enough to take their own lives.

Leo Skelly, a high school sophomore, took the first turn at holding up the cross as they



DIANE FREEBY

Men from St. Catherine of Sienna Parish, South Bend and Lakeville, pray behind the cross as it journeys down U.S. 31. In the photo, from left, are Chad Walther, Mike Walther, Leo Skelly, Dr. Jerry Skelly and Tom Sloma.

walked and prayed the rosary. Right behind him was Tom Sloma, a husband and father of two. Sloma said he was thankful to Murphy for leading the pilgrimage.

“It’s a good thing to show our faith in preparation of Easter,” said Sloma. “I believe if you do something like this, something good spiritually will come out of it.”

Mike Walther, who heads up

the St. Catherine of Sienna Adult Faith Formation, was pleased with the turnout. He said another 20-25 men joined them at Sacred Heart for the Living Stations of the Cross, which lasted a little over two hours.

“I really appreciated the quiet time to honor and praise the Lord,” reflected Walther. “It was a very humbling experience.”

Murphy, who resides in Michigan with his wife and son,

recently held a women’s retreat at St. Jude’s. He has worked in the Catholic Church in many capacities, being involved with youth ministry on parish, diocesan, national and international levels. Among his many experiences and adventures, Murphy also on one occasion served as a body guard for Mother Teresa. For more information on Murphy’s ministry, visit his Web site at www.veracruzcm.com.

HOLY CROSS BROTHERS ON THE FEAST OF ST. JOSEPH



BROTHER CHARLES MCBRIDE, CSC

Bishop John M. D’Arcy, left, extends his hand in blessing along with members of the congregation at Sacred Heart Basilica, Notre Dame, to the Brothers of Holy Cross on their feast day, March 19, the feast of St. Joseph. Bishop D’Arcy was at the Mass concelebrated by many Holy Cross Priests. After the Mass the brothers were honored with a dinner at Moreau Seminary.

MOTHER-DAUGHTER TEA BRINGS IN DONATIONS



PROVIDED BY CHERYL HEISE

The St. Vincent de Paul Girl Scouts of Fort Wayne had a mother-daughter tea party on Feb. 15. The mothers and their daughters dressed in their finest and enjoyed an afternoon together, visiting and snacking on cookies, candy and punch. Each girl brought a donation for the Women’s Care Center to the event. Kathy Moran and her daughter Gabrielle, left, organize the donations with Pam Leach and her daughter Maggie.

On Fire with St. Paul

What Would Jesus Do

**LENTEN
FAITH SHARING**

BY JENNIFER KOHRMAN

What would Jesus do?

It was not too long ago that the phrase WWJD ("What Would Jesus Do?") became a popular motto that helped individuals make moral decisions. Paul's letters to the Corinthians challenge people to reflect with their conscience when making moral decisions. The town of Corinth had a reputation for immorality and corruptibility. Corinth was a seaport and had an influx of people from many countries who were traveling through for business purposes. Not only were there Jews who lived in Corinth but also Gentiles who contributed to the influence of pagan worship. But even Jewish Christians engaged in immoral activity.

Paul asserts that some became inebriated prior to the celebration of the Eucharist. In "Seven Pauline Letters," Peter Ellis explains that the Corinthians identified with the glorified Christ rather than the Christ who suffered and was crucified. With this kind of theology many Corinthians wanted immediate gratification, especially sexual. Why concentrate on suffering when Christ has already experienced resurrection? Furthermore, the concept of love for some Corinthians was primarily equated with promiscuous sexual gratification.

Paul knows very well the effects of sin. He persecuted the followers of Christ and wanted to put an end to those who believed Christ was the Messiah. Suddenly through the power of conversion, Paul comes to believe that Christ is truly the Son of God. Following Christ means also enduring much suffering now — with reward and glorification coming later.

Ellis wrote, in his book that

Paul believes "the true apostle of Christ manifests in his life the suffering of Christ." (page 116).

Paul's letters to the Corinthians emphasize the importance of Christian behavior. Those who call themselves Christian should behave accordingly. For Paul, Christian behavior is influenced by 1) having awareness of the spirit of God within oneself ("mind of Christ"), 2) having a greater awareness of God's plan for our salvation through Jesus' death on the cross, and 3) striving to love one another as Christ loved.

The mind of Christ

"For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ." — 1 Cor. 2: 16.

The mind of Christ is concerned with the cross (sacrifice) and service to others. Other influential scholars fascinate the Corinthians, but Paul insists they need to focus on Christ. Paul believes that, if you desire to become more like Christ, you will grow in holiness, and your capacity to love will increase. The Spirit gives knowledge from God that enables individuals to make good moral decisions.

Also, it is necessary to withstand temptations of overindulgence on bodily pleasures and to focus instead on things that are important to Christ. The Corinthians had a carefree attitude and enjoyed pleasurable experiences. Paul instructs the Corinthians to view the body as holy rather than just an object: "The body, however, is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. Glorify God in your body." — 1 Cor. 6:13-14, 20.

Paul urges the Corinthians to consider how God created the body for resurrection. For this rea-

son, the body is holy and should be treated with respect. Christians should avoid the temptation to use the body to satiate gluttonous urges. It is especially holy because the Holy Spirit dwells within each person beginning at Baptism: "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own." — 1 Cor. 6:19.

In today's world, what are the implications of proclaiming yourself a Christian? Of living as if your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit?

Salvation through the cross

Carolyn Thomas, SCN, states in "Reading the Letters of Saint Paul," "He looks upon his life and all its events, both negative and positive, as being filled with Christ, and everything Paul does is done for him." (page 102). Paul is deeply affected by the immense love demonstrated in Christ's death on the cross. Paul realizes how much God does to draw human beings into relationship with him.

Paul knows that, without Christ, human beings cannot do anything. The power of sin will prevail and lead to eternal demise. Thomas explains that Paul believes that we "cannot live a life joined to Christ and at the same time live a life of sin, which is the enemy Christ died to overcome" (page 134). Christ commanded, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." — Lk 9: 23. There is wisdom in embracing the mystery of Christ's cross.

It is important to reflect on God's great love for humanity. Pride causes an individual to look upon himself rather than God. God's righteousness saves humani-

ty from sin. Despite his intense struggles, Paul keeps his focus on Christ and spreading the Gospel.

In what ways do you see "God's great love for humanity?" How does pride influence your life and your relationship with God and others? How are taking up one's cross and the love of Christ connected?

Loving one another

"Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, it is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." — 1 Cor. 13: 4-7.

Most people will immediately associate this Scripture passage with almost every wedding they have attended. However, for a Christian, to imitate the love of Christ goes well beyond love for spouse or family. Christ calls us to love everyone — even our enemies. Imitating Christ involves sacrifice and service to others: "Love is an expression of God's own love, enabling us to act mercifully and kindly toward one another. Love in action, at the service of others, is the essential message of the Gospel" (The Catholic Study Bible 2nd Edition, New American Bible, page 457).

After Paul's dramatic conversion, he continually reflects on the love of Christ, both through the cross and through the actions of others. In Paul's letter to the Philippians, he indicates how grateful he is for their loving kindness: "For even when I was in Thessalonica you sent me something for my needs, not only once but more than once." — Phil. 4:16.

I experienced this kind of sacri-

ficial love after the December ice storm. Several large limbs fell in my yard, and I was overwhelmed with the thought of removing them. A week later while I was working on them, my neighbor and several of her family and friends asked if I would like some help. I was surprised because we were unacquainted, but I accepted her offer. Within 45 minutes they sawed, cleared and stacked the limbs in a large pile. I was so touched by their act of kindness to help me, a virtual stranger, when I really needed it. They had firmly answered the question, "What Would Jesus Do?"

How often — or how quickly — are we willing to extend a helping hand to a stranger? How easy is it for you to accept assistance from other people? How often do you experience the temptation to think, "I can do it myself!" even when a situation seems especially challenging?

Conclusion

Certainly there are times when we should devote ourselves to silent prayer. However, there are also times when Christians are called to "pray" by taking action, whether it is a simple act of charity or a situation of injustice. Paul is a perfect example of someone who spent time in silent prayer but who also took action when needed. For those of us who have a more reserved personality, it requires God's grace and courage to go outside ourselves and take action. In any given situation, we need to continually remain open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and allow the Spirit to guide our Christian response to the question "What would Jesus do?"

For the complete six-week series visit www.diocesefwsb.org/OSD

Fifth Week of Lent

BY KAY COZAD

As the fifth week of lent unfolds the Lenten journey approaches its end, culminating in Holy Week. Take time this week to renew your commitment to your Lenten sacrifice. Read and meditate on the following Scriptures each day and consider taking action. Jesus calls us to repent and reform. It's never too late to prepare our hearts for the sorrow of the Passion and the joy of the resurrection of the Lord at Easter. (Scripture taken from the New American Bible Catholic edition.)

Fifth Sunday

"Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained by virtuous living."
— Prv 16:31.

Action: Visit an elderly loved one or someone in a nursing home today.

Monday

"The Lord, your God, has blessed you in all your undertakings; he has been concerned about your journey through this vast desert."
— Dt 2:7.

Action: Discover a renewal of joy in the work or study you have today. Be productive with a positive attitude.

Tuesday

"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose, so too will God, through Jesus, bring him those who have fallen asleep."
— 1 Thes 4:14.

Action: Pray for your deceased loved ones and those who grieve.

Wednesday

"... Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." — Jn 8:7.

Action: Examine your own conscience. Consider forgiving someone from the past who has hurt you.

Thursday

"Bear one another's burdens, and so you will fulfill the law of Christ."
— Gal 6:2.

Action: Listen with an open heart to someone who is troubled.

Friday

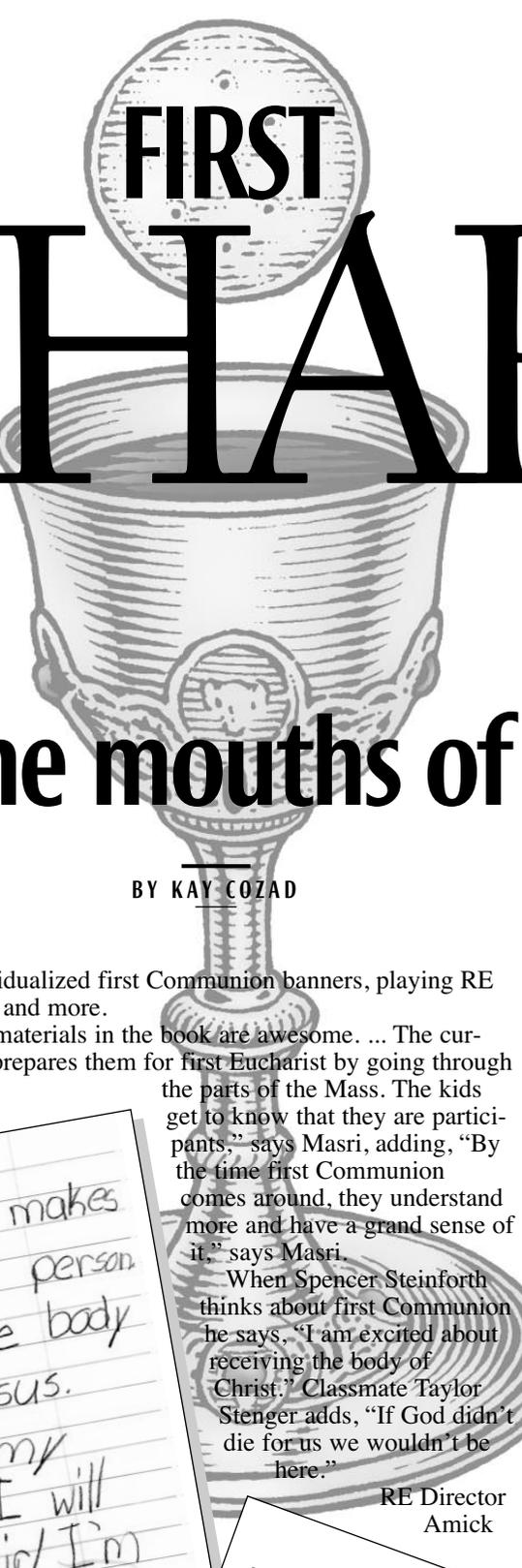
"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."
— Mt 18: 20.

Action: Gather family or friends for an evening of games and fellowship. Begin the evening with a prayer.

Saturday

"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me has not been ineffective."
— 1 Cor 15:10.

Action: Volunteer at a soup kitchen or at an event for the handicapped today.



FIRST EUCHARIST

Out of the mouths of babes

BY KAY COZAD

FORT WAYNE — Hundreds of area second-grade Catholic students have been preparing to receive their first holy Communion this year. Whether they attend a Catholic school or a religious education program (RE) at their church, each of the students anticipates this special sacramental day with fervor.

The students in St. Vincent de Paul Parish's religious education class in Fort Wayne are filled with excitement and have been learning about the importance of the sacrament in their faith life. "It will bring me closer to God," writes Joey Woenker, second-grade student in Jim and Betsy Pund's RE class there. He adds, "That will be very, very, very good!"

Fellow RE student Nathan Fuchs agrees and adds, "Going to Communion makes me remember Jesus died on the cross for us." And Drew Lomont writes simply, "It means that God loves me."

Kathy Masri, longtime parishioner of St. Vincent, is a catechist in the RE program there, and has enjoyed introducing the Eucharist to the second graders for the past two years.

Masri appreciates the small-sized classes that Director of Religious Education Beth Amick maintains at St. Vincent, where attendance is close to 99 percent. Parent volunteers are an integral part of the program as well.

Masri says of the small group structure, "It makes it enjoyable because I can get to know the kids and their parents. And we are able to have a lot of discussion with only 12 students." The discussions, she says, are not only focused on the lesson, but about what it will be like to receive the true body and blood of Jesus and the feelings associated with that.

"They like to discuss with each other what it will be like. And that helps," says Masri.

The students in Masri's class get hands-on activities to promote learning, including readings taken from the Sadlier Series curriculum booklets, Scripture study, creat-

ing individualized first Communion banners, playing RE Jeopardy and more.

"The materials in the book are awesome. ... The curriculum prepares them for first Eucharist by going through the parts of the Mass. The kids get to know that they are participants," says Masri, adding, "By the time first Communion comes around, they understand more and have a grand sense of it," says Masri.

When Spencer Steinforth thinks about first Communion he says, "I am excited about receiving the body of Christ." Classmate Taylor Stenger adds, "If God didn't die for us we wouldn't be here."

RE Director
Amick

The materials give the parents articles on the Eucharist along with activities for family participation.

The parents are also asked to write a heartfelt letter to their child, on church stationary, that encourages the child in his or her faith development. "They can share memories, their hopes and dreams and even use art," says Amick. The parents then choose when to deliver the letter to their child.

Another important aspect of the program for the students is a church tour provided again by Father Kuzmich. Amick says of the tour, "They get to see the sacred vessels, father's vestments and those things, so they know where things at Mass come from."

Combined with the tour and 1 1/2 hour weekly class meetings, the students have the opportunity to attend a eucharistic retreat, where they gather to make bread to be shared, watch a video on first Communion and create fun crafts. "They practice receiving unconsecrated hosts, so they have a chance to know what that's like too," Amick says.

The students also practice the Communion procession in church twice before the big day. And as the nervous energy grows, they chatter excitedly about the celebration parties that involve relatives and friends.

"I'm happy that my family will share this with me," says Noah Ferrier.

When the special day finally dawns, the students dress in their Communion attire and line up in church. Emily Knorr says, "My mom has already bought my Communion dress. I'm so excited!"

Father Kuzmich speaks to the group and they pray together before the sacramental ceremony.

About the sacrament Nate Steensma, Cameron Wilsey, Alyssa Kinder and Carissa Winger say they are excited to "get rid of our sins" and that "God is coming into our hearts." And Allison Bornkamp adds, "It makes you a better person."

Catechist Masri enjoys seeing her students at subsequent Masses with their families, saying, "They realize they are part of the Mass." Student Mac Schneider agrees, "I feel excited about holy Communion because I will be able to go with my parents to receive the body and blood of Christ after it." The preparation for these children is obviously worth the effort.

Allison Bornkamp
You feel better and makes
you be a better person
I will receive the body
and blood of Jesus.
When I go to my
Holy Communion I will
be a better girl. I'm
happy I'll be sharing
my Holy Communion
with my family. I'm
so excited. I love
God so much.

reports that a parent meeting before the sacrament allows for catechesis of the family.

"Father (John) Kuzmich talks to the parents. We hand out materials so they can work with their kids at home," she says.

Nathan
Going to S. Fuchs
Communion
makes me
remember
Jesus died
on the cross
for us. It also
gets me
closer to God.

If you but knew the gift of God: Receiving Christ in the Eucharist

BY SISTER JANE CAREW

FORT WAYNE — At this special time of year hundreds of children across the diocese are excitedly preparing for the reception of their first holy Communion. What is so special about this celebration? Simply stated, it is the first time a child receives Christ's very own body and blood, soul and divinity. Christ is truly present under the appearance of bread and wine.

Perhaps this year it is your grandchild, your godchild, or the fourth child in your family who will receive this gift, this most treasured gift that Christ extends to each through the life of the church. Sharing in a child's preparation for first Communion can be a grace of renewed faith in this gift of gifts.

For some parents, assisting their child in first Communion preparation will call them back to the practice of their Catholic faith. Over many years in ministry I have heard countless stories of parents' reconverting to an active faith life because they want their child to receive their first Communion. Rediscovering their faith as more mature adults, life takes on a renewed meaning and joyfulness. If each Catholic knew the gift of God in the Eucharist no one would ever allow a Sunday to go by without encountering the very person of Christ in the sacrament of the Eucharist.

The Gospel of John describes the wonderful account of the woman of Samaria, who met Jesus at the well. Jesus was weary and sitting by the well. He asked for a drink. Recognizing he was a Jew, the woman said, "How is it that you, a Jew, asks for a drink from me?"

Jesus responded, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink' ..."

This entire conversation points to the profound reality that each and every person has a deep thirst for God. Psalm 42:1 speaks of the soul thirsting for the living God. The desire is so deeply rooted in each person. Why do so many not recognize this yearning that calls for a response to God? No other being but Christ can satisfy this desire. It is the intimacy of intimacies.

The sacrament of marriage calls a man and woman to be united in Christ through a profound intimate love. In true human love, the person is actually being drawn to God, who is the ultimate fulfillment of the

longing for love. This insight reaffirms the depth of each individual's desire for God and the inability of any person to completely satisfy this desire, this thirst for God.

First Communion is a time to reflect upon this thirst only God can satisfy.

In such a busy and cluttered culture, it is a challenge to be engaged by the mystical reality of the encounter with the very person of Christ. This mystery requires quiet reflection and a heart of gratitude.

Unfortunately, we must recognize that there are many cultural distractions and other spiritualities that blur our vision. Technology has intensified this.

Oprah Winfrey is attracting tens of millions of people to a spirituality that she claims is new. This so called "New Age" spirituality encourages a seeking of the divine that is within. This religious relativism looks at energies. Oprah, a good woman in many ways, claims that Catholicism is but one of many

ways to achieve a higher consciousness. What Oprah does not understand is that Catholicism is much more than a spirituality. Catholicism is about growing in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. This is the true spiritual life.

Jesus Christ has come to us as God the Father's very revelation of himself through the grace and love of the Holy Spirit. Jesus makes himself personally present to us in the sacrament of the Eucharist. New age "energy" — a so called spirituality — cannot satisfy the thirst for our living God. Only the personal encounter with Christ is a union in love like no other, reserved for each person.

In order to grow in union with Christ, it is essential to grow in the knowledge of our Catholic faith. During this time of first Communion, I recommend the reading of a book, "How to Get the Most out of the Eucharist," by recently deceased Michael Dubruel, published by Our Sunday Visitor. This easily read book is full of profound wisdom about the Eucharist.

Parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and parishioners, remember your own first Communion and the wonder and awe of this celebration. Do not allow the grace of this encounter to be dimmed by distraction or routine. An early church father, St. John Chrysostom, observed: "How many now say: 'I wish that I could see his form, the marks of his passion, his clothes, his shoes!' But you see him, you touch him, you eat him! And you desire to see his clothes, but he gives himself to you not only to see, but also to touch and to eat and receive within yourself. Let no one approach it with indifference, no one fainthearted, but all burning with zeal, all fervent, all aroused."

Sister Jane Carew is the co-director of the Office of Catechesis for the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.

What Oprah does not understand is that Catholicism is much more than a spirituality.

Archbishop Chaput shares, commiserates with reporters

BY PATRICIA ZAPOR

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Denver Archbishop Charles J. Chaput commiserated with journalists who cover religion about the vitriolic hate mail they and he receive when they address topics such as who should receive the Eucharist.

In a March 17 round table with religion reporters sponsored by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life in Washington, Archbishop Chaput spoke candidly about both his appreciation for writers who understand their topic and his frustration with others who don't do their homework before they attempt to explain church teachings and practices.

His prepared remarks touched briefly on the advertised topic of the session — the political obligations of Catholics — which was the subject of Archbishop Chaput's recent book, "Render Unto Caesar: Serving the Nation by Living Our Catholic Beliefs in Political Life."

A question-and-answer session that followed further elaborated on Catholics in public life, a subject on which Archbishop Chaput has written and spoken frequently.

Sally Quinn, moderator of *The Washington Post's* religion blog, "On Faith," described being surprised at the quantity and level of anger in criticism that followed a column she wrote last June about receiving Communion during the funeral Mass of her good friend, journalist Tim Russert.

Quinn, who is not Catholic, said she didn't realize until later that she should not have gone to Communion and that her action might be offensive to Catholics. She said her column triggered a stunning outpouring of often highly offensive comments on the *Post's* Web site as well as attacks in press releases, such as one from the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights.

Quinn explained that she then made a point of learning more about Catholic teaching on the Eucharist and the circumstances under which Catholics should receive Communion and that non-

Catholics shouldn't. She also apologized to Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick, the retired archbishop of Washington who was the celebrant at Russert's funeral.

Considering the church's teaching that people should only present themselves for the sacrament when they are not conscious of serious sin, Quinn said, "it would seem that nobody should be able to receive Communion."

She asked Archbishop Chaput for his thoughts on her experience in light of his frequent writing and public comments about Catholic politicians who disagree with elements of church teaching but who continue to receive Communion.

Archbishop Chaput apologized to Quinn for the treatment she received. He explained that his policy is "you don't embarrass people when they come to Communion," so he does not question whether someone who presents herself for the sacrament should be there. That would apply to prominent Catholic politicians who support keeping abortion legal, for instance, and whom some bishops have said would be barred from Communion in their dioceses, said the archbishop.

He said it is up to individuals to know the church's teachings, to honestly evaluate their own actions and to refrain from receiving sacraments if their lives do not reflect how a Catholic should be living.

That unwillingness to step in and prevent people from receiving sacraments has brought him his own share of hate mail, as has his stand that people who don't live according to the church's teachings need to remove themselves from receiving its sacraments, said Archbishop Chaput.

Archbishop Chaput said the way the Internet allows people to immediately respond out of raw emotion to anything "has led to a coarsening of the dialogue" on many issues.

One difference between criticism from conservatives and liberals, he joked, is that "the conservatives are meaner, but the liberals' language is more foul."



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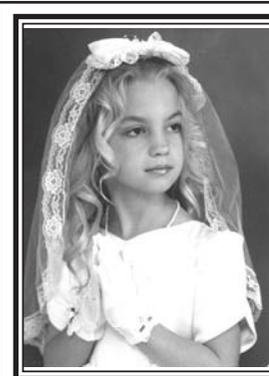
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EDITORIAL

Conscience and life in the crosshairs

On St. Patrick's Day, Cardinal Francis George, the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), met privately in the Oval Office for about half an hour with the President of the United States, Barack Obama. The meeting was not officially scheduled or even announced beforehand to the press.

Interestingly, though both men are from Chicago, this was their first substantive discussion on issues of public policy. What exactly was discussed remains a mystery. Both the USCCB and the White House released very brief statements. The USCCB stated only that "Cardinal George and President Obama discussed the Catholic Church in the United States and its relation to the new administration" and that the cardinal "expressed his gratitude for the meeting and his hopes that it will foster fruitful dialogue for the sake of the common good." However, given the nature of the meeting and recent events, it is not hard to imagine what the cardinal had to say.

In fact, only the day before, the USCCB posted a video of Cardinal George asking Catholic citizens and others of good will to write to the Obama administration in opposition to its plan to rescind regulations that were drafted by the Bush administration to ensure conscience protection for healthcare workers from having to perform or participate in an abortion. Not only this, but the church is also very concerned that Catholic hospitals may be legally pressured to perform or refer for abortions and that the Obama administration may fight to have abortion and contraception included as basic healthcare benefits in their healthcare reform plan. In the video, the cardinal is at times quite blunt:

"As Catholic bishops and American citizens, we are deeply concerned that such an action on the government's part would be the first step in moving our country from democracy to despotism. Respect for personal conscience and freedom of religion as such ensures our basic freedom from government oppression. No government should come between an individual person and God — that's what America is supposed to be about. This is the true common ground for us as Americans. We therefore need legal protection for freedom of conscience and of religion — including freedom for religious healthcare institutions to be true to themselves.

"Conscientious objection against many actions is a part of our life. We have a conscientious objection against war for those who cannot fight, even though it's good to defend your country. We have a conscientious objection for doctors against being involved in administering the death penalty. Why shouldn't our government and our legal system permit conscientious objection to a morally bad action, the killing of babies in their mother's womb? People understand what really happens in an abortion and in related procedures — a living member of the human family is killed — that's what it's all about — and no one should be forced by the government to act as though he or she were blind to this reality."

Many Catholic leaders are rightly concerned that this first salvo against the conscience rights of healthcare workers is but the beginning of a larger battle to include both abortion and contraception as federally-funded healthcare rights, regardless of the conscientious objections of millions of taxpayers and thousands of Catholic healthcare agencies. In fact, in a CBN interview on March 19, Cecile Richards, the president of Planned Parenthood (PP), discussed PP's position that the Obama administration's healthcare plan should include "full reproductive healthcare coverage" — which is a code phrase that includes both abortion and abortifacient contraception such as the birth control pill, Depo-Provera and IUDs.

Interestingly, in the interview, Richards was especially making the case for greater access to contraception, which has — contrary to the beliefs of many — been shown to actually increase abortion numbers, not decrease them. PP, of course, is the largest provider of abortions in this country — killing over a quarter of a million unborn children each year. More access to contraception leads to more abortions which then leads to more money in the coffers of PP.

The battle against this well-funded and well-planned juggernaut begins now — by protesting the Obama administration's move to rescind these conscience protection regulations. A period of public comment before a final decision is made ends on April 9. Comments may be submitted at www.usccb.org/conscienceprotection. By mail, one original and two copies of written comments may be sent to: Office of Public Health and Science, HHS, Attention: Rescission Proposal Comments, Hubert H. Humphrey Building, 200 Independence Ave. SW, Room 716G, Washington, D.C. 20201.

Today's Catholic editorial board is Kay Cozad, Fred and Lisa Everett, Father Mark Gurtner, Father Michael Heintz, Tim Johnson and Vince LaBarbera.

COMMENTARY

TODAY'S CATHOLIC welcomes letters from readers. All letters must be signed and include a phone number and address for verification. Today's Catholic reserves the right to edit for clarity and length. Address letters to: Today's Catholic • P.O. Box 11169 • Fort Wayne, IN • 46856-1169 or e-mail to: editor@fw.diocesefwsb.org

North Miami also played

On page 17 of the March 22 issue of *Today's Catholic*, you had a picture of the Bishop Luers boys basketball team. The caption stated they defeated Tipton for the championship title. I would like to make a correction to that statement. While Bishop Luers did indeed beat

Tipton, that was the first round game. The championship game was played at 8 p.m. that evening against North Miami High School.

Our family attended that game to cheer on our friend and fellow parishioner B.J. Moore and the rest of the North Miami Boys team. The final score of 74-59 in no way reflects the first three and one half quarters of the thrilling game. Both teams played well, and the score

was close throughout most of the game. North Miami earned their spot at the regional contest by winning their first sectional title in 41 years.

That being said, we would like to wish the Knights good luck in their quest for back to back state championships.

**The Ward Family
Wabash**

Caught in a crossfire of parental desires

Whenever I give a talk on in vitro fertilization, I try to explain to my audiences how new human life must be procreated in the warmth of the marital embrace and in the protective hearth of the maternal womb, not in the icy, impersonal world of the research laboratory, or the manipulative setting of a Petri dish.

On one occasion, after finishing up a talk, a married couple approached me. They had done in vitro fertilization and had several children from the procedure. They appeared to be struggling in conscience, and asked a searingly honest question: "If in vitro fertilization is wrong, are you suggesting it would be better that we didn't have our beautiful children? We can't imagine our life without them."

Imagining a world different from the one we have constructed through our own personal choices is difficult. This is because of our innate tendency to validate our decisions, even erroneous ones, by focusing on "desirable outcomes" and "good intentions." When we venture to look beyond our good intentions, however, we begin to discern other important truths that should inform the choices we make, challenging us to see the bigger plan for our lives in ways that extend beyond our own wants and desires.

I recall once speaking with a woman who had given birth to a little boy out of wedlock. She was raising him as a single mom. He was a source of endless joy and blessing to her and to her extended family of brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles. Yet in a moment of candor, she admitted, "Although I love my son dearly, and I can't imagine my life without him, I've also come to see how it would have been better if I had chosen not to have sex before marriage, even though it would mean I wouldn't have my beautiful son. I could have, and should have, followed another path."

This woman told me that, by giving herself to the man she hoped might one day be her husband, she supposed she was entering onto a path towards fulfillment. She soon came to realize, though, that her son had been deprived of the presence of a father figure, and that he was subject to various other difficulties as he grew up because of the choice she had made.

Whenever we choose to follow a path that involves intrinsically immoral choices, we necessarily mislead ourselves about the best total state of affairs that could have been ours. We usually also bring harm to others because of such choices.

For the intrinsically disordered choice of in vitro fertilization, it can be doubly difficult to see the harmful nature of the decision we are making because we direct our attention so intensely towards the baby we yearn for. Couples who do in vitro fertilization are doubtless convinced that the best total state of affairs for them would be to have a child, regardless of the steps it might require.

In the conversation with the husband and wife who attended my talk, they admitted that they could see how their own strong parental desires had gotten the upper hand in their decision-making process. They also admitted they were starting to grasp other realities involved in their decision to pursue in vitro fertilization: how a third party, an anonymous laboratory technician in a back room, had actually manufactured the kids, rather than the parents engendering them through their life-giving marital embrace; how they had misused their own bodies and sexuality, becoming little more than sex-cell donors; how pornography and masturbation stood at the origin of their own children; how they had produced a plethora of children, and had frozen some, and discarded others along the way.

Probably the most difficult truth for us to grasp fully is that even



MAKING
SENSE OF
BIOETHICS

BY FATHER TAD PACHOLCZYK

the most desirable ends, like having children of our own, cannot justify the use of inherently immoral means to achieve those ends. We can think that our desires are worthy to be achieved by any means, because we imagine that we are the ones who determine what constitutes the best state of affairs for our lives. It is but a short step to disaster, however, when our own desires become the final arbiter of right and wrong, or when our own willfulness is given center stage.

An infertile couple may suppose they have a right to children, when in truth they possess no such right, because the deeper reality is that children are always a gift. By insisting on or demanding the gift (through in vitro fertilization), the child no longer becomes a gift at all, but a kind of entitlement, where he or she becomes a means or object in the pursuit of parental satisfaction, caught in the crossfire of parental desires. Infertile couples too often may not have paused to reflect on the possibility of another path, nor fully considered the various other important and humanly fulfilling ways of expressing their marital fruitfulness, ways that might include foster parenting, teaching, becoming a "Big Brother/Big Sister" to needy children in the community or adoption.

The attraction for children can be so strong that it can prevent us from acknowledging honestly the evil aspects that may be interwoven into certain choices we make. By pursuing children in a disordered way, we end up undermining the very blessings we seek for our life and for those around us.

The need to remember

BY MSGR. THOMAS MCDONNELL

"... Take care and be earnestly on your guard not to forget the things your own eyes have seen, and do not let them slip from your memory. — Dt. 4:9-10.

Memory has always played a central role in the spirituality of the people of God — both positively and negatively. On the latter point, we might think of the description of sin in the book of Deuteronomy — the unwillingness or inability to remember.

On a more positive note, we might recall how the psalmist found personal strength through a pilgrimage back into memory: When my soul is downcast, I remember you. ... Even a cursory reading of the Old Testament would lead us to conclude that the "good news" of the people of God was based on memory — the truth of God's fidelity even in times of darkness. Mary's Magnificat is, in many ways, a prayer of memory:

"The Almighty has done great things for me." And memory continues to be a life-force in the spirituality of the people of God: "Do this in memory of me..."

Generally when dealing with the subject of memory, we should emphasize the positive. But since the grace-filled season of Lent is a time of doing penance and also a time for reparation for past sins, there is one area of our life that I believe is important for us to concentrate upon for our own spiritual growth and that is often overlooked — namely sins of omission.

The Anglican priest and poet R.S. Thomas has a poem called, "Judgment Day," in which he views his life in a mirror. In it he discovers a disconcerting truth:

*In healthy happy
Careless of the claim
Of the world's sick
Or the world's poor.*

He prays that the Lord will breathe on the sad mirror, erasing such images. Of course, such is

not possible. He ends his poem with another plea.

*Let me go back
On my two knees
Slowly to undo
The knot of life
That was tied there.*

Unfortunately, as we all know, there are records, which once played, cannot be replayed. On the other hand, our gentle God has given us the gift of time — time to pray for the grace to be sensitive to the needs of others; time to reach out in almsgiving to those who are hurting; time to "knee on two knees," to ask for forgiveness.

On a more positive note, we observed above how the good news of the people of God centered about looking back — remembering the Exodus events. Thus, for example, they could, at the time of the Babylonian captivity, look back and decode how that even in their darkest moments in Egypt God was always there —

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The cross is our victory



THE
SUNDAY
GOSPEL

MSGR. OWEN F. CAMPION

5th Sunday of Lent Jn 12:20-33

The Book of Jeremiah provides this weekend's first reading. Jeremiah's eloquence, and the length of his writings, place him among the great prophets.

A theme common among all the prophets is that despite human sinfulness, God always is merciful. Jeremiah constantly wrote with this theme in the back of his mind. As a nation, the people had turned away from God, consequently bringing chaos and misery into their lives. Their misfortune was not the result of God's indifference to them. Certainly, it was not because God deserted them. Rather, they created the problem.

This weekend's reading speaks of a new day. God will offer a new way to life, peace and joy.

The Epistle to the Hebrews is the source of the second reading. This epistle's authorship and origin are disputed. Undisputed are its compelling language and its deep insights into the person and mission of Jesus, the redeemer.

As the name implies, it is rich in Jewish symbolism, and it is abundant in the most profound of Jewish beliefs. These beliefs form the context into which Jesus came as God's son and as savior.

This reading refers to the cruci-

fixion. Jesus, the son of God, willingly accepted the awfulness of death on the cross. He was not the helpless victim of circumstances or of the scheming of others. He chose to die on Calvary. He was obedient to God's will.

St. John's Gospel supplies the last reading. An interesting incidental in this reading is that contact with Jesus is initiated through the apostles. In the early church, when this Gospel was written, the apostles were very, very important. They literally had known the Lord, the Lord's special students, and chosen to be the Lord's representatives. They acted and spoke with authority.

Jesus brings an ominous overtone to this reading. He predicts death. He speaks of a grain of wheat falling to the ground, lifeless and tiny. However, from this small piece of reality, wondrous new life springs.

He speaks of the voluntary giving of life. Remember, while these verses recall an event that occurred actually in Christ's lifetime, they are part of a Gospel composed long after the earthly life of Christ.

The first persons who heard this Scripture knew the story of the crucifixion. These persons would have instantly connected the reading with Jesus and with the death of Jesus on Calvary.

The message is clear and blunt. In the death of Jesus is life. In our own death to sin is our life.

Reflection

Next weekend, the church will celebrate Palm Sunday or Passion Sunday. In not too many days, the church will call us to mark this year's Holy Week with its magnificent, compelling triduum.

This weekend's readings set before us great drama. The most

momentous time of all human history is soon to be remembered. It is the moment of reconciliation between God and humankind. Nothing is more important for anyone than to be reconciled with God.

Through these readings, the church teaches us two lessons. One is about the uninterrupted, eternal love of God, given to us in divine mercy. Even if we stray afar from God, God never dismisses us. He never forgets us.

His greatest gift is Jesus. Jesus brings us reconciliation, and in it union with God. He is one of us, a human born of a human mother.

The other lesson is that salvation is not thrust upon us. We must accept it. We must will it. It must be our choice. It is the outcome of obedience. At times, we must be obedient even unto death, as was Jesus. At times, we must be obedient even if the cross stands before us with its threat but also with the promise of victory if we overcome it.

READINGS

Sunday: Jer 31:31-34 Ps 51:3-4, 12-15 Heb 5:7-9 Jn 12:20-33

Monday: Dn 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62 Ps 23:1-6 Jn 8:1-11

Tuesday: Nm 21:4-9 Ps 102:2-3, 16-21 Jn 8:21-30

Wednesday: Dn 3:14-20, 91-92, 95 (Ps) Dn 3:52-56 Jn 8:31-42

Thursday: Gn 17:3-9 Ps 105:4-9 Jn 8:51-59

Friday: Jer 20:10-13 Ps 18:2-7 Jn 10:31-42

Saturday: Ez 37:21-28 (Ps) Jer 31:10-13 Jn 11:45-56

CATEQUIZ'EM

By Dominic Camplison

In March we celebrate the Annunciation.

1. What is the Annunciation?

- It is from the Greek and means "bread to come" signifying that Lent is almost over.
- It means announcement (specifically, the announcement of the imminent birth of Christ).
- It refers to instructions issued to cleanse the temple before Passover.

2. How do we know it happened in March?

- from the carvings left on the side of house by Mary and her cousin
- the date is given in the Gospel of Judas as the beginning of the end for Judas
- we don't, it is an interpolation based on Christmas occurring when it does

3. Where in the Bible do we learn about it?

- Matthew's Gospel
- Luke's Gospel
- nowhere, it is a matter of tradition

4. Mary sets out on a journey. What may be unusual about this?

- She is not reported to be with anyone and is traveling in haste while pregnant
- Women were not allowed to travel in Judah
- She did not take the donkey that we see from the Nativity narrative that she owned

5. She greets this lady:

- Anna
- Elizabeth
- Martha

6. She (5 above) is also

- pregnant
- betrothed, but not married
- married to a carpenter called Joseph

7. Who will that child turn out to be?

- Herod the Great
- John the Lesser
- John the Baptist

8. What unusual occurrence is noted?

- At the sound of Mary's greeting the cock crowed three times.
- The sheep ran after Mary to get back their manger.
- Mary's cousin's unborn baby leapt.

9. Her cousin refers to Mary as

- the winner of a great prize
- the true daughter of Israel
- blessed among women

10. Her cousin makes a statement, which shows that she knows who Mary's unborn child is. She says,

- "I know who that unborn child is Mary, I sure do."
- "And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"
- "You must call him Jesus no matter what."

11. Mary then recites a prayer known usually as the

- Magnificat
- Fructus
- Jesus prayer

12. Mary acknowledges her own lowliness and, without any boastfulness, predicts

- from now on will all ages call me blessed
- many people will use the name Mary
- my son will work miracles

13. Returning to the theme of the Lord raising the low Mary contrasts this with the Lord throwing down

- the Zadokite priests who occupy the temple high priesthood
- the rulers from their thrones
- the princes and the gentile kings who rule over the Jews in the Diaspora

ANSWERS:

- 1.b, 2.c, 3.b, 4.a, 5.b, 6.a, 7.c, 8.c, 9.c, 10.b, 11.a, 12.a, 13.b

Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem in 587 B.C.

How was Jerusalem destroyed in Old Testament times?

Sennacherib (705-681 B.C.), the Assyrian king from northern Iraq, tried to capture the city of Jerusalem in 704 B.C., but was unable to do so. He returned to his capital at Nineveh where he was killed by his sons. King Hezekiah of Judah, who stood up to Sennacherib, also died and was succeeded by Manasseh in 687 B.C., who granted favor to foreign cults, like Baal and Asherah, and was a loyal vassal to the Assyrians.

Eventually Josiah (640-609 B.C.) became king of Judah. His high priest Hilkiah discovered the "book of the law" in the Temple at Jerusalem. Josiah, fearing the wrath of God, demanded that the people obey the law of God. He initiated a radical religious reform by destroying every sign of idolatry. He removed objects connected with Baal and Asherah from the Temple. He would not let the pagan priests function. He commanded the people to observe the

Passover. Then Neco (609-594 B.C.), the king of Egypt, crossed Palestine to come to the aid of the new king of Assyria Ashurbanipal against the king of Babylon.

D. Goldstein says that, as Assyria weakened, so Egypt, her traditional enemy, came to her support to prevent Babylon emerging as the dominant power. Josiah confronted Neco on the plain of Megiddo in Palestine and was killed in 609 B.C. This meant Judah was now effectively under Egyptian control and Egypt was master of the land west of the Euphrates River. Josiah was buried in Jerusalem.

Josiah's son Jehoahaz II (609 B.C.) was anointed king of Judah, but only reigned for three months and was taken prisoner by Neco into Egypt where he died. Neco appointed Jehoiakim (609-598 B.C.), another son of Josiah, as king. He taxed the people to pay silver and gold to Neco.

As Assyria was declining (625-612 B.C.), Babylon was getting stronger. Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, was taken by storm in 612 B.C. by the Babylonians from



FATHER RICHARD HIRE

HIRE HISTORY

southern Iraq and the Medes from the plateau of Iran.

A Babylonian cuneiform tablet describes the fall of Nineveh: "They carried off the vast booty of the city and the temple and turned the city into a ruin heap." The new king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar II (605-562 B.C.) defeated Neco of Egypt at the Battle of Carchemish on the Euphrates River in 605 B.C. Archaeologists have found at Carchemish a clay seal impression with the cartouche of Neco that testifies to this battle. By 603 B.C. Judah was under Babylonian control and Jehoiakim was a vassal of Nebuchadnezzar.

Neco of Egypt in 601 B.C.

invaded Judah and Jehoiakim sided with Egypt and rebelled against Babylon. This led to Nebuchadnezzar's army moving toward Jerusalem in 597 B.C., but Jehoiakim died before their arrival. Then Jehoiachin, the son of Jehoiakim, was anointed king (597

B.C.) and reigned for three months. He surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar and was deported to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar also seized the treasures of the temple.

Father Richard Hire is pastor of St. Martin de Porres Parish, Syracuse.

Four fibs and a waffle

On March 9, President Barack Obama gave my pro-life mother a nasty 95th birthday present: an executive order rescinding the restrictions that President Bush had placed on federal funding of embryonic stem-cell research. As policy, the executive order was even more an irresponsible blank check than many had feared it would be, according to Yuval Levin, who once worked on these questions at the President's Council on Bioethics. Nor did the executive order deign to even nod to the moral debate that has raged around this issue for years. The president tried to do that in a speech announcing the executive order. Yet the speech, containing four fibs and a waffle, was even worse.

Fib One: According to the president, his executive order will "lift the ban on federal funding for promising embryonic stem-cell research." But as Ryan Anderson quickly pointed out, "There never was a ban on federal funding for embryonic stem-cell research. President Bush was, in fact, the first president in history to fund embryonic stem-cell research." The Bush compromise was to order funding restrictions that prevented the further destruction of human embryos in order to obtain their stem cells. Federal funding of research using existing stem cell lines was permitted.

Fib Two: President Obama claimed that the Bush compromise was a "false choice between sound science and moral values." That is a false portrait of the choice Bush made, and of its effects; for by following the path of moral reason, President Bush pushed the science in a more fruitful direction, such that stem cells that have the same

properties as embryonic stem cells can now be obtained by morally acceptable means. Furthermore, what "moral values" inform an executive order condemning the smallest members of the human family to death?

Fib Three: The president claimed that his executive order was the first step in "letting scientists ... do their job, free from manipulation or coercion. ..." This is a favorite Obama rhetorical device: set up straw men, then huff and puff eloquently until the straw man is no more. The truth of the matter, as Ryan Anderson pointed out, is that "critics of embryo-destructive research have never been hostile to science. The dispute is not about whether stem-cell research should proceed; it is about how it should proceed."

No one who opposes the Obama policy is against listening to scientists; but since when is science absolved from moral scrutiny? Obama seems to think of scientists as secular high priests whose work cannot be questioned or subjected to the legal boundaries erected around every human activity that touches on the integrity of life. Perhaps the insightful German film, "After the Truth," in which a fictional trial explores the "humanitarian" rationale for medical "experiments" under German National Socialism, should be screened in the White House theater; I'm sure the good folks at Ignatius Press will donate a DVD.

Fib Four: The president promised that the research allowed by his executive order would be "scientifically worthy and responsibly conducted." But his policy flies in the face of the current trends in stem-cell science, where the most exciting possibilities involve



GEORGE WEIGEL

THE CATHOLIC DIFFERENCE

"induced pluripotent stem cell" technology. IPSC technologies not only avoid embryo-destruction; they hold out the possibility of creating regenerative therapies that are patient-specific through the reprogramming of a patient's own adult cells.

The Waffle: The president vowed to oppose cloning for human reproduction; he did not say he would oppose so-called "therapeutic cloning," in which clones are created and then destroyed for research purposes. But there's no need for waffling if you really know the science: at the present state of research, IPSC technology looks likely to do whatever "therapeutic cloning" would do — and do it better.

His claims to the contrary, neither the president's executive order nor his speech exhibited any serious wrestling with the arguments of those who believe embryo-destruction is immoral. The issues were misrepresented and the opponents' views caricatured; the relevant science was ignored. This is change no morally reflective person can believe in — a presidentially mandated advance for the culture of death.

George Weigel is a senior fellow of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH

Gospel for March 29, 2009

John 12:20-33

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for the Fifth Sunday of Lent, Cycle B: the price of doing the will of God. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

BETHSAIDA	ANDREW	A GRAIN
WHEAT	EARTH	IF IT DIES
FRUIT	ETERNAL	WHOEVER
SERVES ME	FOLLOW	HONOR
TROUBLED	SAVE ME	A VOICE
HEAVEN	CROWD	THUNDER
ANGEL	MYSELF	DEATH

BEARING FRUIT

P S D W H O E V E R K W
M T E T E A R T H D B L
Y H T R A E L W H E A T
S U E O V M L H T D W C
E N R U E E H H O N O R
L D N B N V S J T A N O
F E A L D A J M L J F W
O R L E I S N O E D L D
L G U D H J A G R A I N
L F A I H H T A E D J O
O I F I T D I E S L B N
W E R D N A V O I C E X

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LENT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

watching over, guiding them and, even though they did not recognize it, protecting them.

Their meditative memory also led them to surface other truths. Looking over their relationship with God they realized how merciful and forgiving he was. One needs simply to read the observations of the author of Lamentations to come to this conclusion.

*The favors of the Lord are not exhausted,
His mercies are not spent.
They are renewed each morning,*

*So great is his faithfulness.
My portion is the Lord,
says my soul,
therefore will I hope in him.*

— Lam 3, 22-24.

It is important that we cultivate the ability to remember on a personal level. We might begin by concentrating upon the natural

gifts the Lord has bestowed upon us: health, friends, family, etc. Then in our pilgrimage back, we should learn to remember the faith-gifts God has given us — the ability to believe, the sacraments, the church. And we might pray for the grace to recall times when we felt particularly close to the Lord, for example a eucharistic experience or a powerful experience of forgiveness. The effect of such will lead us to a greater appreciation of God's loving care for us.

It was the wordsmith Charles Dickens who coined the phrase, "recollect forward" (Bleak House). In our context, I believe that when we remember we are confident to face the future.

Msgr. Thomas McDonnell is a retired priest from the Archdiocese of Boston. He has dedicated his life to the urban poor and disabled. A cancer survivor, he is the author of "Walking in the Dark Valley: When Cancer is a Constant Companion." This is the third of a four-part series through Lent.

Sports

Dwenger bowlers take fourth at state



PROVIDED BY BISHOP DWENGER HIGH SCHOOL

The Bishop Dwenger High School tournament team members are Tony Henry, Tom Leffers, Brandon Bodeker, Jeff Eifrid, Brandon Smith, Andrew Lundquist and Austin Lundquist. Also shown are Rich Sarrazin, head coach, and girls' coach, Pam Heche.

BY MICHELLE CASTLEMAN

FORT WAYNE — The Bishop Dwenger Saints bowling team participated in a select group of eight schools for the Indiana State High School Bowling Finals on Feb. 21. Bishop Dwenger has not qualified since 2002. The "big show" was held at Coopers Sport Bowl in Anderson.

The State Bowling Centers Association runs the state program in which 193 schools have a bowling program that fields a boys' varsity, a girls' varsity and a junior varsity team. Both Bishop Luers and Bishop Dwenger are members of the Fort Wayne Conference, along with 16 other Fort Wayne area schools.

Rated No. 3 going into the competition, the Saints easily averaged scores over 200 during the finals. Unfortunately, Coach Rich Sarrazin explained, "So did the other seven teams."

The bowlers wound up in the step ladder finals where the top four teams bowl each other for the chance to be No. 1. The Saints finished fourth losing in a roll-off to South Bend Clay High School coming up short just 58 pins.

Sarrazin continued, "We were treated like champions the whole day, which we were. There were no sad faces because the boys knew we were in an elite group. It was a day to remember."

The team and coaches were awarded both medals and certificates.

BISHOP LUERS BASKETBALL TEAM HEADS TO STATE COMPETITION Bishop Luers will play Brownstown Central Saturday, March 28, for the State title at Conseco Fieldhouse in Indianapolis at approximately 12:30 p.m. Tickets are \$10 each, and will be sold only on Thursday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the front office. Bishop Luers defeated North Judson, 78-48, on March 21 for the Class 2-A semi-state title.

Bishop Dwenger dance team takes second in state

FORT WAYNE — The Bishop Dwenger Dance Team finished second at state in Elite Hip Hop. Members of the team include Claire Cochran, Jennifer Flueckiger, Lisa Weilbaker, Ali Ball, Natalie Riecke, Molly Schenkel, Claire Barbieri, Giovanna Lombardo, Chelsea Dumas, Annette Offerle, Grace Hartman, Nicole Dent, Leah Schoenle and Bridget Hilts. Sophomore Chelsea Dumas is the new IHSDTA State Champion in Senior Solo. Chelsea danced to the song "Eleanor Rigby" by the Beatles. The State Solo and Ensemble Competition was held at Rossville High School in Rossville March 14-15.

USF senior center selected NAIA All-American honorable mention

FORT WAYNE — University of Saint Francis senior Marie Kaufmann has been named to the 2009 NAIA All-American Team. Kaufmann, a Bishop Luers High School graduate, was an honorable mention selection.

She led the Mid-Central College Conference in scoring in 2008-09 (17.0 points per game) and also led the MCC in blocked shots (42 for an average of 1.4 per game). A 6-foot-1 center, Kaufmann also shot .550, second best in the MCC regular season, and finished No. 10 on the USF career scoring list with 1,279 points.

A first-team All-MCC selection for 2008-09, Kaufmann's 527 points this season is the seventh best single-season for the Lady Cougars. Kaufmann scored

in double figures in the first 23 games of the season including nine games with 20 or more points. She scored 35 points, a season and career high, to help USF upset No. 24 Aquinas in November. She finished 18th in NAIA field goal percentage at .526, 28th in scoring average and 35th in blocks per game (1.4). Kaufmann was a second-team MCC selection in 2007-08.

Two Bishop Dwenger football players named Indiana All-Stars

FORT WAYNE — Bishop Dwenger seniors Steve Seculoff and Brian Fogler were both named Indiana All-Stars and will play in the IFCA North-South Indiana All-Star game in July.

FIFTH GRADE WINS ICCL TOURNAMENT



PROVIDED BY ST. PIUS X, GRANGER

The St. Pius X, Granger, fifth-grade girls basketball team was undefeated this season and won the Inter-City Catholic B League tournament March 15. The Granger team defeated St. Matthew B, 34-10. Daly Sullivan had 20 points and Amelia Rodriguez 10 points in the St. Pius win. St Matthew was led by Brittany Martin with six and Megan Bonk four points.

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A MULTI-LINGUAL LESSON ON THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS



PROVIDED BY THE DIOCESAN OFFICE FOR HISPANIC MINISTRY

Enid Roman de Jesús y Lourdes Silva de la Oficina del Ministerio Hispano ayudaron a los padres, catequistas y a sus hijos durante el Vía Crucis durante esta cuaresma por una petición de Zenaida y Mario Delgado junto con otros padres, todos quienes quieren que sus hijo conserven la tradición Católica de las Estaciones de la Cruz. Los niños de herencia Mexicana y Mexicanos-Americanos leyeron las estaciones de la cruz y algunos tradujeron al español.

Enid Roman de Jesús and Lourdes Silva from the Office of Hispanic Ministry assisted parents, catechists and children during this Lenten Via Crucis by petition of Zenaida and Mario Delgado and other parents desiring to preserve the Catholic tradition of the Stations of the Cross. The children of Mexican and Mexican American heritage read the stations, some translated them, and Hispanic Ministry gave a mini instruction on each of the stations to the children. Some of the children took turns carrying the cross. St. Casimir, South Bend hosted the event.

SERRANS HONOR PRINCIPALS



ELMER J. DANCH

Saint Joseph's and Marian High School administrators Susan Richter, principal of Saint Joseph's and Carl Loesch, principal of Marian were honored by the Serra Club of South Bend on its 60th anniversary. Richard Dornbos, District 7 governor of Serra, presented the award.

Book explains 'God's purpose and plan for when life hurts'

BY YORK YOUNG

When thinking about God and how he works in our lives, one of the most confusing questions centers on why God allows suffering. This can be particularly confusing when a loved one, or ourselves, suffers a traumatic event such as serious illness, a severe accident, natural disaster or economic loss that leaves us struggling to make ends meet day to day.

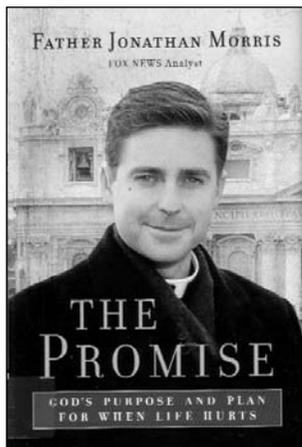
"The Promise" (HarperOne, \$24.95), a recent book by Father Jonathan Morris, helps to explain "God's purpose and plan for when life hurts," according to the cover of the book. Father Morris may be recognizable to readers as a Fox News analyst on Catholic events. Here he focuses on talking about the real hurts many people have and how they can open their hearts to God. He doesn't sugarcoat what will be tough for most of us, firing off one-liners on occasion that may sound counterintuitive, yet are realistic and helpful.

The strength of this book is its multipronged approach. Separated into three parts, each part speaks to a different audience, or, at least, to an audience that includes people at different stages of trying to accept church

teaching and God's message in the area of suffering.

In Part 1, "God on Trial," Father Morris looks at the many different ways in which people challenge God, because, in fact, most of them don't have any intention of accepting suffering as a part of life. Therefore, they look at God as a cop (he's waiting for me to mess up), or as life insurance (turning to him only in times of trouble) or even as a vending machine (expecting him to give us what we want when we ask).

Part 2, "Emotional and Spiritual Healing," addresses serious issues and presents examples of real people in real (often-times bad) situations. Father Morris gets into how people feel and respond when suffering comes our way, and reminds us about the suffering Jesus underwent for us. He breaks down the different ways we suffer, and deftly points to how God's plan is to help us to become holy. Now, to be sure, we often "make holiness hard by closing off our will to his," Father Morris writes. But God's healing grace is



always available to us, and admitting we need it is a good way to start opening ourselves to it.

In Part 3, "Principles for Freedom Living," we are encouraged to make an action plan, even literally writing down what we can do to help us overcome trying times. We are reminded that

the Apostle Paul endured torture, imprisonment, shipwreck, calumny and more, yet held forth what was more important: "For to me life is Christ, and death is gain," — Phil 1:21. The author warns us to not let sin get in the way of freedom living. (Remember, confession makes us free of sin every time.) Offending God doesn't make him angry; it makes him sad. Therefore, we should not be afraid to continue to reach out to him.

Understanding suffering will never be easy — even many of the greatest saints suffered greatly and may not have understood everything about it — but that doesn't mean we should stop trying. Father Morris may give you some insight into how to begin.

BISHOP DWENGER SHOW CHOIRS TO COMPETE AT STATE



PROVIDED BY BISHOP DWENGER HIGH SCHOOL

Both Bishop Dwenger show choirs gave outstanding performances on Saturday at the East Noble Invitational. Elegance, the women's show choir, finished in fourth place with senior Jordan Hendricks earning outstanding performer. Summit Sound, the mixed group, finished in second place in small mixed and third runner-up overall. Freshman Jimmy Miller earned outstanding performer, senior Emily Smith earned outstanding soloist in a show and the Summit Sound Band won best band. Both Elegance and Summit Sound will compete in the State Finals on Saturday at Plainfield High School.

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: fhogan@fw.diocesefwsb.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) 456-2824 to purchase space.

MISC. HAPPENINGS

Experience the Crucifixion

Fort Wayne — Mary Hilger will create a live chalk drawing Friday, April 10, at 6 p.m. at Queen of Angels Parish. Stations of the Cross will follow at 7 p.m.

Registration at St. Joseph-St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School

Fort Wayne — St. Joseph-St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School is currently registering new families for the 2009-2010 school year. Families interested in touring the two campuses and registering can call (260) 432-4001 for preschool-fourth grade or (260) 432-4000 for grades 5-8.

Easter candy and bake sale

Fort Wayne — The Rosary Society of Most Precious Blood Church, 1515 Barthold St., will have an Easter candy and bake sale Saturday, April 4, from 4-6:30 p.m. and Sunday, April 5, from 8 a.m. to noon. The Knights Council 11043 will also have a pancake breakfast Sunday, April 5, from 8 a.m. to noon.

Garage sale for youth

Avilla — The St. Mary Youth Group will have a garage sale Saturday, March 28, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the school, 232 N. Main St. All proceeds go to the St. Mary's Youth Group (Teens Living for Christ). If you would like to donate call Mike Hudecek at (260) 318-0262.

Rummage and bake sale

South Bend — The St. John Altar and Rosary Society will have a rummage and bake sale Saturday, April 4, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sunday, April 5, from 8 a.m. to noon in the church, 3616 St. John's Way. Sunday will offer a \$1 per bag sale.

Bake sale by Sisters' Auxiliary

South Bend — The St. Adalbert Sisters' Auxiliary will have a bake sale Saturday, April 4, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the Heritage Center. Lamb cakes, sweet-sour cabbage, Polish noodles and more. Call Linda at (574) 288-5708 ext. 203 for advance orders.

Eric's Promise takes donations for the St. Vincent de Paul Society

Mishawaka — The St. Vincent de Paul Society and Marian High School students will be collect-

ing food and material donations in support of a Lenten program, Eric's Promise. Donations will be taken at Martin's Supermarket at Heritage Square, SR 23 and Gumwood Road on Saturday, March 28, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Catholic Networking Offered

Fort Wayne — The Catholic Business Network will meet Friday, April 3, at the Chamber of Commerce, 826 Ewing St. Mass will be at 7:30 a.m. with Father Mark Gurtner. Meeting will follow. Mayor Tom Henry will be the keynote speaker. For information visit www.the-catholicbusinessnetwork.com

Palm weaving and brunch

Waterloo — St. Michael the Archangel Parish will have a palm weaving brunch in the parish hall on Sunday, March 29, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. A light brunch will be served. No reservations necessary. Create your bouquet of palms to bring to the Palm Sunday celebration.

Square Dance time

Columbia City — St. Catherine Parish (located 10 miles south of Columbia City on State Road 9) will have a square dance on Saturday, March 28. Doors open at 6:30 p.m., dancing from 7-10 p.m. to music by Breakaway. Cost is \$10 per person including snack and pop.

Soup and salad served

South Bend — The Ladies of the Knights of Columbus Council 553 will have a soup and salad luncheon Monday, March 30, from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Knights of Columbus Hall, 553 E. Washington St. Hungarian goulash will be served. A \$5 donation is requested.

FISH FRIES

Fish fry

South Bend — The Our Lady of Hungary Holy Name Society will have a fish fry Friday, March 27, from 5-7 p.m. in the school, 735 W. Calvert St. Tickets are \$7.50 day of sale, \$7 presale at the rectory or at Masses, \$4.50 for children 6-12 and children under 6 free.

Fish fry

South Bend — St. Augustine Parish, 1501 W. Washington St., will have a fish fry Friday,

March 27, from 4-8 p.m. Adults \$7.50, children \$3.

Holy Name Society fish fry

New Haven — The Holy Name Society of St. John the Baptist Parish will have a fish fry Friday, March 27, from 4-7 p.m. Adults \$7, children 5-12 \$3.50 and children under 5 free.

Knights host fish dinner

Plymouth — The Knights of Columbus Council 1975 will host a fish dinner on Friday, March 27, from 4-7 p.m. at the Knights of Columbus Hall, 901 E. Jefferson. Tickets are \$8 for adults and \$3 for children 4-10. Children under the age of 3 can eat for free.

Knights plan Friday fish fries

South Bend — The Knights of Columbus, 553 E. Washington St., will have fish fries on the Fridays of Lent through April 10 from 5-7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$7 per person, \$3.50 age 6-14 and children 1-5 free.

Fish fry at St. Aloysius

Yoder — St. Aloysius will have a fish fry Friday, March 27, from 4:30-7:30 p.m. Adult and carry-out price is \$8.50, ages 6-11, \$4.50 and age 5 and under free. St. Aloysius is located on Highway 1, immediately south of the I-469 interchange.

Knights plan fish fry

South Bend — The Knights of Columbus Council 5521, 61533 S. Ironwood Dr., will have a fish fry on each Friday of Lent from 5 to 7 p.m. Adults \$7.50, children (5-12) \$3. Chicken strips for \$7.50 and shrimp for \$8.50 will be available.

Jonah fish fry

South Bend — St. Matthew Cathedral will have a Jonah fish fry on Friday, March 27, from 4-7 p.m., in the school gym. Tickets are \$6 for adults, \$5 for seniors, \$4 for children and children under 6 free. Carry-outs available.

DEVOTIONS

Rosary recited

Fort Wayne — The all family rosary will be recited on Sunday, March 29, at MacDougal Chapel from 3:30-4:30 p.m. The intention is for all families.

REST IN PEACE

Arcola

Elizabeth Grabill, 49, St. Patrick

Bremen

Margaret Helen Mattern, 86, St. Dominic

Decatur

Ralph E. Biggs, 73, St. Mary of the Assumption

Fort Wayne

Jerome J. O'Dowd, 90, St. Jude

Richard A. Uecker, 76, Most Precious Blood

Martino Tran Van Quyen, 46, St. Patrick

Leroy Rudek, 79, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

Carole B. Wobler, 61, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

Karol Roy Chin, 74, St. Jude

Mary Jane Dickmeyer, 86, St. Vincent de Paul

Iraida Fernandez Ledo, 82, St. Charles Borromeo

Granger

Genevieve Kiemnec, 92, St. Pius X

LaGrange

Leona E. Beck, 98, St. Joseph

Mishawaka

Joaquin Duarte, 89, St. Bavo

Notre Dame

Brother Edward V. Courtney, CSC, 90, St. Joseph Chapel

Joseph Bobik, 81, Sacred Heart

Pierceton

Pablo De La Cruz, 83, St. Francis Xavier

South Bend

Helen J. Lukaszewski, 87, St. Adalbert

Jeffrey E. Hankins, 47, St. Anthony de Padua

Henrietta D. Glon, 93, St. Jude

Stephen Patrick Howard, 70, St. Matthew Cathedral

Larry J. Roumell, 73, Christ the King

Yoder

Pamela A. Robbins, 66, St. Aloysius

Sister Mary Adonia

Ochalek, CSSF, 90, Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Chapel, Livonia, Mich. Sister served at Holy Family, South Bend.

Sister Jean

Arkenberg, 85, Church of Immaculate Conception, St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Ind. Sister served at St. Patrick, Fort Wayne

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IN AFRICA

In Africa, pope challenges attitudes, cultural trends

BY JOHN THAVIS

LUANDA, Angola (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI's in-flight statement opposing condom distribution in AIDS prevention drew sharp criticism and was seen by many as a distraction from his main message in Africa.

But a closer look reveals that very little of what the pope had to say during his March 17-23 African journey was easy or accommodating. On issues ranging from abortion to corruption, from women's rights to economic development, he preached the Gospel in a way that took issue with common practices and prevailing attitudes.

His conviction, expressed on his first day in Cameroon, is that Christianity is the answer — the only real answer — to the chronic problems plaguing Africa. His fear is that Africa, caught up in economic and cultural globalization, will follow the secularized West and lose touch with its own best values.

Condom campaigns are, to Pope Benedict, a small but very real part of this threat. But his concern extends to virtually every area of social, economic and political life.

"At a time when so many people have no qualms about trying to impose the tyranny of materialism, with scant concern for the most deprived, you must be very careful," he told Africans in Cameroon.

"Take care of your souls," he said. "Do not let yourselves be captivated by selfish illusions and false ideals."

News accounts usually leave out the words that inevitably followed these papal warnings, but for the pope they were the most important part of his message in Africa: "Only Christ is the way of life." "The Lord Jesus is the one mediator and redeemer." "Christ is the measure of true humanism."

The transformation the pontiff asked of Africans was, as he described it, one that must begin with a radical conversion to Christ that redirects every aspect of life.

"The Gospel teaches us that reconciliation, true reconciliation, can only be the fruit of conversion, a change of heart, a new way of thinking. It teaches us that only the power of God's love can change our hearts," he said at an outdoor Mass in Angola.

The pope kept reminding listeners that, in his view, inside and outside Africa the Christian message lived to the full is profoundly intercultural.

That was eminently clear when he addressed young people in an Angolan soccer stadium, telling them that their power to shape the future was directly dependent on their "constant dialogue with the Lord."

"The dominant societal culture is not helping you live by Jesus' words or to practice the self-giving to which he calls you," he said. In fact, he said, today's "individualistic and hedonistic" values prevent young people from reaching maturity.

At his Mass the next day, the pope continued in the same vein, saying that "living by the truth" was not easy in the face of the "hardened attitudes" of selfishness that dominate much of contemporary social relations.

Abortion was very much on the pope's mind in Africa. His first speech on the continent reminded Africans of their traditional values and said the church was the institution best able to preserve and purify them — unlike agencies that want to impose "cultural models that ignore the rights of the unborn."

In a speech to foreign diplomats, he laid down a direct challenge to international organizations that, in his words, were undermining society's foundations by promoting abortion as a form of reproductive health care. The working document for next October's Synod of Bishops, delivered by the pope to African bishops, said globalization "infringes on Africa's rights" and tends "to be the vehicle for the domination of a single, cultural model and a culture of death."



CNS PHOTOS/ALESSANDRO BIANCHI, REUTERS

A nun smiles as she carries a child near a Cameroonian soldier before the start of Mass celebrated by Pope Benedict XVI at Amadou Ahidjo Stadium in Yaounde, Cameroon, March 19.



Women dance and shout as they await Pope Benedict XVI outside the National Center for the Rehabilitation of the Handicapped in Cameroon's capital Yaounde.

The pope hit hard on African wars and ethnic conflicts and repeatedly held out Christianity as the answer. If Africans grasp that the church is "God's family," he said in Cameroon, there is no room for ethnocentrism or factionalism. In effect, he presented the church as the only institution capable of bringing Africans together in a way that goes beyond political or economic expediency.

Although the pope had two one-liners about corruption, typically portrayed in the West as the quintessential "African" problem, he did not engage in finger-pointing — even in Cameroon, which is usually at the top of the corruption charts of human rights organizations. Indeed, he called Cameroon a "land of hope" for Africa.

The reason is that he knows local African church leaders are already on the front lines in denouncing political corruption. In Cameroon, for example, a year ago Cardinal Christian Wiyghan Tumi of Douala took the unprecedented step of publicly opposing President Paul Biya's constitutional meddling that allowed the president to serve yet another seven-year term — a position the cardinal reiterated during the pope's visit.

Significantly, the pope treated corruption not as a problem to be eliminated in return for foreign aid, but as a practice incompatible with the demands of the Gospel. He added, however, that Africa deserves a similar change in attitude from the developed world — not "more programs and protocols" but "conversion of hearts to sincere solidarity."

His visit to the sick in Cameroon illustrated that the church must invest its resources in love and care for the needy, but with a special focus: Human suffering can only make sense in light of Christ's crucifixion and his "final victory" over death, he said.

Even the pope's defense of women's rights in Africa was very much a "Benedict" approach, based not on human rights declarations but on the biblical account of creation. Here, too, his point that men and women have "complementary" roles will no doubt find critics.

The pope's method in Africa was not to lay down the law but to lay down a challenge, asking people to examine their own lives and their relationships in the light of the Gospel. He believes that Christianity is a perfect fit for Africa but that, in view of cultural trends, it won't necessarily be an easy fit.



CNS PHOTO/L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO VIA REUTERS

Pope Benedict XVI greets a group of pygmies from the Baka community outside the nunciature in Yaounde, Cameroon March 20. The pygmies gave the pontiff a gift of a live turtle before he left Cameroon for Angola.

Pope tells reporters he felt sense of God's family in Africa

ROME (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI said he felt a great sense of family and respect for the sacred during his weeklong trip to Africa.

Speaking to reporters aboard his plane back to Rome March 23, the pope thanked everyone involved in the visit, including the journalists who covered it.

"I was particularly struck by two things: on one hand, an impression of this friendliness, of almost exuberant joy, Africa in celebration. And it seemed to me that in the pope they saw the personification of the fact that we are a family of God," he said.

"On the other hand, I was impressed by the spirit of concentration in the liturgy and a strong sense of the sacred," he said. There was no "self-presentation and self-animation" by participating groups at Mass, but a focus on the divine presence, he said.

The pope again expressed his sadness at the deaths of two girls trampled before the start of a papal youth rally in Angola and noted that one of the girls still had not been identified.

The pope said that in Cameroon he had enjoyed a good conversation with members of a council planning the Synod of Bishops for Africa. He said he learned that some African church communities that have suffered are now in a position to help others on the continent.

For example, he said, the church in South Africa aided the country's difficult but eventually successful reconciliation process. Today, South African Catholics are helping Burundi do the same and are "trying to do something similar even with the very great difficulties in Zimbabwe," he said.

The pope took no questions in his brief appearance in the journalists' section of the Alitalia charter flight. The Vatican spokesman, Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, who accompanied the pope, wished the pontiff well as he turns his attention to his next trip: to the Holy Land in May.

— John Thavis