VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Celebrating what was expected to be the last public liturgy of his pontificate two weeks before his resignation, Pope Benedict XVI preached on the virtues of humility and Christian unity and heard his highest-ranking aide pay tribute to his service to the Church.

Jesus “denounces religious hypocrisy, behavior that wants to show off, attitudes that seek applause and approval,” the pope said in his homily during Mass at St. Peter’s Basilica Feb. 13. “The true disciple does not serve himself or the ‘public,’ but his Lord, in simplicity and generosity.”

Coming two days after Pope Benedict announced that he would be the first pope in 600 years to resign, the Mass inevitably took on a valedictory tone.

“For me it is also a good opportunity to thank everyone, especially the faithful of the diocese of Rome, as I prepare to conclude the Petrine ministry, and I ask you for a special remembrance in your prayer,” the pope told the congregation, including dozens of cardinals and bishops, filling the vast basilica.

The Ash Wednesday liturgy, traditionally held in two churches on Rome’s Aventine Hill, was moved to St. Peter’s to accommodate the greatest possible number of faithful.

At the end of the Mass, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, who as secretary of state is the Vatican’s highest official, voiced gratitude for Pope Benedict’s pontificate of nearly eight years.

“Thank you for giving us the luminous example of a simple and humble laborer in the vineyard of the Lord,” Cardinal Bertone said, invoking the same metaphor Pope Benedict had used in his first public statement following his election in 2005.

His voice cracking slightly with emotion, Cardinal Bertone described Benedict as a “laborer who knew at every moment to do what is most important, bring God to men and bring men to God.”

Following the cardinal’s remarks, the congregation broke into a standing ovation that lasted well over a minute, ceasing only after the pope, looking
The Chair of Saint Peter the Apostle

February 22nd is the Feast of the Chair of Saint Peter the Apostle. This year, we celebrate this feast just six days before that Chair becomes vacant. With gratitude and love, we pray for our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, as he ends his Petrine ministry on February 28th.

The Chair of Saint Peter symbolizes the special mission of Saint Peter and his successors, the popes, to shepherd Christ’s flock, keeping the Church united in faith and charity. It signifies also the teaching authority of the Pope. Already in the first decade of the second century, Saint Ignatius of Antioch attributed a special primacy to the Church in Rome which he called the Church which “presides in charity.” The Pope is the Bishop of Rome and, as such, the Pastor of the universal Church.

In the apse of Saint Peter’s Basilica, there is a great bronze throne sculpted by Bernini. It encloses a wooden chair from the ninth century, long thought to be Peter’s own chair. This “chair of Peter” is supported by four statues of great Fathers of the Church (Saints John Chrysostom, Athanasius, Ambrose and Augustine). Above the throne is an oval window, surrounded by angels, with the image of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. The symbolism of this great work of art is clear: the Holy Spirit guides the Church through Saint Peter and his successors, who authoritatively teach the Word of God transmitted in Sacred Scripture and Tradition.

We have been truly blessed these past eight years by the pontificate of Pope Benedict XVI. He has led the Church in faith and charity. He was 78 years old when he was elected Pope on April 19, 2005, but his age did not prevent him from exercising his Petrine ministry with great zeal. Just months after his election, he went to World Youth Day in Cologne, Germany. His presence and his words inspired the hundreds of thousands of young people on that occasion and also later, at the World Youth Days in Sydney, Australia, and Madrid, Spain. I will always remember the latter two World Youth Days which I was blessed to attend.

I met Pope Benedict in Rome during my first year as a bishop in 2005, on two occasions in 2007, during the canonization of Saint Andre Bessette in 2010, and finally that Pope Benedict visited Rome during his 2008 visit to Washington, D.C. and New York City. These are all great memories that I will keep in my heart. Pope Benedict’s warmth, gentleness, and Christ-like spirit touched me on each occasion.

Asked often in recent days about the legacy of Pope Benedict, I answer immediately “his teaching.” A brilliant theologian since the days of the Second Vatican Council, Pope Benedict’s teaching as Pope reveals a lifetime of prayerful study of the Word of God and remarkable theological scholarship. So many of us have been enriched by the Holy Father’s hundreds of beautiful homilies, audience talks, and speeches these past eight years. His three encyclicals offer profound reflections on Christian love, Christian hope, and on charity and truth as the heart of the Church’s social doctrine. His apostolic exhortations on the Eucharist (Sacramentum caritatis) and on Scripture (Verbum Domini) are also great documents for prayerful reflection. Pope Benedict’s teaching ministry, I believe, will long be remembered and will continue to help many to grow in their knowledge and love of the Lord.

As we celebrate the Feast of the Chair of Saint Peter, we remember the words of Jesus to Simon at Caesarea Philippi: You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of heaven. Simon became Peter, the rock that prevails against the destructive forces of evil. Jesus gave him a unique mission as the leader of the Twelve, a mission passed on to the Pope who heads the College of Bishops, the successors of the apostles. He gave Peter and his successors “the power of the keys”, that is, “the authority to govern the house of God, which is the Church” (CCC 553).

At Mass on the Feast of the Chair of Saint Peter, we pray in the Collect:

Grant, we pray, almighty God, that no tempests may disturb us, for you have set us fast on the rock of the Apostle Peter’s confession of faith. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

For a few weeks, the Chair of Peter will be vacant. This will be an important time for all of us to pray for another holy successor of Saint Peter. The Roman Missal contains a special Mass for the Election of a Pope that contains the following Collect: O God, eternal shepherd, who govern your flock with unfailing care, grant in your boundless fatherly love a pastor for your Church who will please you by his holiness and to us show watchful care. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

Let us continue to remember Pope Benedict in our prayers and also pray for the Cardinals who will gather in conclave to elect a new Pope. We do so with confidence that the Lord has built His Church on the rock of Peter’s confession of faith and that the gates of hell will not prevail against it. We know that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, never leaves his flock unattended. He continues to govern His Church through Peter and the other apostles, who are present in their successors, the Pope and the College of Bishops. Christ continues to pour out the Spirit to build, animate, and sanctify His Body, the Church.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of the Church, watch over Pope Benedict and intercede for the Cardinal electors!
Pope Benedict thanks faithful, asks them to pray for next pope

A sign in Italian saying “Thanks Holiness” is seen as Pope Benedict XVI begins his general audience in the Paul VI hall at the Vatican Feb. 13. The pope surprised the world Feb. 11 by announcing that he no longer has strength to exercise his ministry and will retire at the end of the month.

Papal secretary moving with pope, other announcements

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The current staff of the papal apartments, including Archbishop Georg Gaenswein, will accompany Pope Benedict XVI to Castel Gandolfo when he leaves office Feb. 28, the Vatican spokesman said.

Jesus Father Federico Lombardi, Vatican spokesman, also repeated his assertion that the conclave to elect a new pope would begin sometime between March 15 and March 20.

Correcting information he had given reporters earlier, Father Lombardi said Archbishop Gaenswein told him Feb. 14 that he would be living with the pope and with the consecrated laywomen who belong to the Memores Domini Association of the Communion and Liberation movement and serve as the pope’s domestic staff.

Archbishop Gaenswein and the women will go to Castel Gandolfo with Pope Benedict and also will move with the pope to the Mater Ecclesiae Monastery, a building in the Vatican Gardens being remodelled for their use, Father Lombardi said.

The Vatican spokesman said Archbishop Gaenswein will live with Benedict XVI but also serve the new pope as prefect of the papal household.

Asked how such a dual role could work when Father Lombardi previously had said Pope Benedict would not interfere in the papacy of his successor, the Jesuit said Archbishop Gaenswein’s job is primarily one of logistics — organizing the pope’s daily schedule of meetings and audiences — and not a job that brings him into contact with other papal decisions.

By being the first pope to resign in almost 600 years, Pope Benedict opened a whole box of questions that could not be answered immediately and kept Father Lombardi busy responding to media inquiries and making his own.

As the leaders of the College of Cardinals, canon law experts and other Vatican officials worked to gain clarity or come up with practical solutions to problems never raised before, the Vatican spokesman’s daily briefings Feb. 11-14 reflected a work in progress.

The recurring question that was asked at the daily briefings has been “When will the conclave start?” Each day, Father Lombardi tells reporters that it is up to the leadership of the College of Cardinals, but rules governing the election of a pope say it must begin no fewer than 15 days and no more than 20 days after the papacy is vacant. That would mean a conclave could begin between March 15 and March 20.

Some newspapers have reported individual cardinals suggesting an earlier start, he said, and some have pointed out the 15 days usually include a papal funeral and a mandatory nine days of memorial Masses.

However, the rules for the conclave are issued by a pope, only a pope can change them, “and that is unlikely,” Father Lombardi said Feb. 14. In fact, he said he asked in the Secretariat of State that morning and was told there was no commission working on potential changes for Pope Benedict to consider before leaving.

Asked what title Pope Benedict would use after Feb. 28, Father Lombardi had said that was a question still being studied, but it seemed to him that the most accurate title would be “bishop emeritus of Rome.”

When questioned again Feb. 14, he said it still was not clear, though many experts had been voicing their opinions in the media. One thing is certain, he said, “being a bishop is a result of a sacrament,” and that cannot be taken from the pope.

“Being a cardinal, on the other hand, is a title, not the effect of a sacrament, and so it has a different kind of value or importance,” he said.

In addition, he said, Benedict XVI “is his name ... and that won’t change.”

Asked if there would be a public ceremony for the breaking of Pope Benedict’s fisherman’s ring, Father Lombardi said he believed the act — the responsibility of Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone as chamberlain of the Holy Roman Church — would take place in private, as it does after a pope dies.
sacraments of initiation, as the catechism teaches, “lay the foundations of every Christian life.””

Echoing the words of Pope Benedict XVI, Bishop Rhoades called faith both an act of God’s grace and a human response of the mind and the heart.

“My brothers and sisters, I encourage you today to persevere in faith throughout your lives,” Bishop Rhoades said. “Never let go of this priceless gift! In order to persevere in faith, especially in times of trial, we must nourish it with the Word of God and with the sacraments. Without this nourishment, our faith will not live and grow. When we falter, as we all do, we can get up again with the grace of Confession, the grace of the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation.”

Bishop Rhoades also encouraged everyone to be faithful to Holy Mass every Sunday and holy days of obligation.

“You can be tempted to forsake the Sunday obligation,” he acknowledged. “See this for what it is: a temptation to drift away from the Lord. Every one of us needs to be nourished with the Word of God and with the grace of the Holy Eucharist, our food on the journey to heaven.”

Bishop Rhoades said to persevere in faith, it is necessary to ask the Lord to increase our faith.

“To persevere in faith means we persevere in prayer,” said Bishop Rhoades. “Prayer is what makes our faith real and concrete. Faith is not merely an acceptance of truths that can appear abstract. It involves a living relationship as children of God with our Father, with His Son Jesus, and with the Holy Spirit. It is a relationship based on love of the One who loved us first. It involves not only learning from Jesus as our Teacher, but knowing Him as our Friend and Brother. Ultimately our happiness and peace, in this life and the next, depends on this encounter with Jesus and on friendship with Him.”

Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades greets catechumens and their godparents at the Rite of Election at St. Matthew Cathedral in South Bend on Feb. 17. The Rite of Election and Call of Candidates to Continuing Conversion was held Feb. 16 at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Fort Wayne.
Low income, state economy to benefit from health coverage expansion, Church supports

INDIANAPOLIS — Improved access to healthcare coverage for low income Hoosiers is not only the right thing to do morally, but a new study shows could likely be very good for Hoosier economic development.

Two Hoosier legislative panels approved legislation to expand healthcare coverage for low income Hoosiers in the House and Senate Feb. 13. The proposed legislation closes a gap between Obamacare coverage and Medicaid eligibility provided by Indiana. The Church supports the expansion.

Indiana Catholic Conference Executive Director Glen Tebbe, who serves as the official spokesman and public policy watchdog on state and federal issues for the Indiana Catholic Church in Indiana, testified Feb. 13 in support of healthcare expansion before both the House and Senate panels.

“The Church’s approach to healthcare is shaped by a fundamental principle that every person has a right to adequate housing and healthcare. This right comes from the fact that every human being has dignity because human life is created in the image of God,” said Tebbe. “Since 1917, the Catholic bishops in the United States have consistently called for access to healthcare for all in a manner that respects life and religious freedom. As universal as our Church is Pope Benedict even talked about the importance of healthcare at a meeting with healthcare workers and indicated that good healthcare needs to be defended and achieved for all people not just for those who can afford it.”

“The Indiana Catholic Conference supports making healthcare more readily available and affordable to all Hoosiers,” said Tebbe. “At its core, healthcare choices are not just political, or economic, or technical, they are really a moral choice. They are about life and death. Because of the moral imperative, we support the author and others who are seeking to provide for these families and individuals. We ask all legislators to work together for a solution.”

Rep. Ed Clerke, R-New Albany, author of the HB 1591 to expand healthcare coverage said, “House Bill 1591 is an attempt to cover hundreds of thousands of more Hoosiers in a responsible fashion. It is a plan that-raising expectations for accountability across the entire Indiana Medicaid program and requires a cost-sharing for all folks who would be eligible under the expansion.

“Indiana has been at the forefront of innovation in Medicaid by seeking high-quality care paired with an ongoing focus on cost-savings while seeking to ensure program members understand the cost of the care they receive. Personal responsibility is the cornerstone of Hoosier values and that we should all have skin in the game when it comes to healthcare,” said Clerke.

“This proposal takes the best ideas from programs we have created so far and applies them to Medicaid members with the greatest need and also the highest costs,” said Clerke.

A similar proposal, SB 551, authored by Sen. Patricia L. Miller, R-Indianapolis, passed the Senate Health and Provider Services Committee, which Miller chairs, and was recommended to Senate Appropriations.

Both the House and Senate healthcare expansion measures received hours of testimony.

The Medicaid expansion proposals aim to cover low income Hoosiers who have an estimated annual income between $5,000 and $35,000. Clerke said the state has estimated there are 300,000 to 500,000 uninsured Hoosiers in this income category who would be helped by the healthcare coverage expansion proposal.

Tim Kennedy, representing the Indiana Hospital Association (IHA), testified in support of the expansion calling the plan an “opportunity to bring taxes we are already paying to the federal government, back to Indiana.”

A 2013 study conducted by the University of Nebraska’s Medical Center for Health Policy, commissioned by IHA, indicated a Medicaid expansion in Indiana could generate $3.4 billion in economic activity and finance 30,000 jobs for Indiana through the year 2020. These funds could result in at least $108 million in additional local and state tax revenue.

In addition to the ICC, David Sklar of the Jewish Community Relations Council, and Mike Oles III, representing the United Methodist Church of Indiana, testified in support of the measure on moral grounds.

Representatives from the medical community support the expansion. Dr. Aaron Carroll, associate professor of pediatrics and director of the Center for Health Policy and Professionalism Research of I.U. School of Medicine, said he supports the expansion because research shows that Medicaid improves the health of uninsured Hoosiers, and expansion allows medical providers to recoup some of their loss for unreimbursed medical care they provide. Leaders from the business sector testified in support of the expansion including Mike Ripley, representing the Indiana Chamber of Commerce.

Gov. Pence and Republican lawmakers have indicated they do not want to expand Medicaid under the federal Affordable Care Act unless they can do so with their current homespun Healthy Indiana Plan (HIP), and Hoosier Healthwise (HHW) Programs which provide member accountability and co-pays. To do so, Indiana must get federal approval from the U.S. Health and Human Services Administration (HHS). Indiana awaits federal approval.

Web Resources
Indiana Catholic Conference www.indianacc.org

To explore the ICC’s electronic public policy tool and join the ICC legislative network go to the ICC Web page at www.indianacc.org and click “Legislative Action Center.”

About the ICC
Since 1967, the ICC has worked to bring a consistent life ethic to Hoosier public policy making.

Visitors to the ICC Web page www.indianacc.org can join the Indiana Catholic Action Network and through an electronic Legislative Action Center can engage in a variety of grassroots political activities by a few simple keystrokes. One of the key features of the software allows visitors to quickly identify and contact their elected officials.
Archbishop asks House to extend conscience provision to HHS mandate

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The chairman of the U.S. bishops' Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty has urged the House of Representatives to extend long-standing federal conscience protections to the Affordable Care Act's new coverage mandates for private health plans. Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore made the request in a Feb. 15 letter to members of the House. Saying the tradition of conscience rights in health care "has long enjoyed bipartisan consensus, but is now under greatly increased pressure," Archbishop Lori asked in his letter to attach the conscience provision to upcoming appropriation bills for the departments of Labor and Health and Human Services.

"I urge Congress to address this problem whenever it considers budgets for continued funding of the federal government in the weeks to come," he said. "While the mandate for coverage of abortifacient drugs, contraceptives and sterilization is hailed by some as a victory for women's freedom, it permits no free choice by a female employee to decline such coverage for herself or her minor children, even if it violates her moral and religious convictions," Archbishop Lori added.

Biographer: In past six months, pope was exhausted and disheartened

OXFORD, England (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI was "exhausted and disheartened" well before his Feb. 11 resignation announcement, according to his German biographer, Peter Seewald. In an article, "Farewell to my pope," in the Feb. 18 issue of Germany's Focus weekly, Seewald said the pope held weekly Vatican meetings with the 85-year-old pontiff over the six months while preparing a new biography. He added that he had "never seen Benedict XVI so drained of energy" and "deeply disheartened". "I'm an old man and I've never seen Benedict XVI so drained of energy" and "deeply disheartened". "I'm an old man and I've never seen Benedict XVI so drained of energy” and “deeply disheartened” he said. "While the mandate for coverage of abortifacient drugs, contraceptives and sterilization is hailed by some as a victory for women's freedom, it permits no free choice by a female employee to decline such coverage for herself or her minor children, even if it violates her moral and religious convictions," Archbishop Lori added.

A sign in Latin and Italian read, "You are Peter. Stay," as Pope Benedict XVI leads the Angelus from the window of his apartment overlooking St. Peter's Square at the Vatican Feb. 17. Calling this an unusual time for him and for the Church — but not specifically mentioning his resignation — Pope Benedict XVI thanked people for their affection and asked them to continue their prayers.

Church in Illinois declares state Senate vote on same-sex marriage

CHICAGO (CNS) — The head of the Catholic Conference of Illinois decreed a Feb. 14 Illinois Senate vote to permit same-sex marriage in the state, calling it "redefinition of marriage legislation. Marriage joins a man and a woman in love to meet one another's needs, to procreate and to raise children. This is the lifeblood of any human society," said a Feb. 14 statement from Robert Gilligan, executive director of the state Catholic conference." This legislation tears at that definition with unknown consequences." The Senate's vote was 34-21 on the bill which changes the definition of marriage in state law from "between a man and a woman" to "between two persons. This legislation callously redefines a bedrock institution of our society and deteriorates the free exercise of religion in our state," Gilligan said. The bill has yet to be considered by the state House. If it passes, Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn, a Catholic, has said he will sign it. If the bill becomes law, Illinois would become the 10th state, plus the District of Columbia, to permit same-sex marriage, joining Connecticut, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Vermont and Washington state.

Migration center study shows 11.7 million undocumented immigrants in US

WASHINGTON (CNS) — A new study concludes that there are about 11.7 million of what it calls unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. 4 million more than in 2006. In a report released Feb. 15, the Center for Migration Studies, a New York-based educational institution also quantified why residents of some states, particularly in the Southeast, have perceived a significant growth in the number of immigrants among them. Seven Southern states with the fastest growing population of undocumented immigrants each saw the number of such immigrants increase by more than 11 times between 1990 and 2010. The study explained that nationwide, about 18 percent of the foreign-born population was undocumented. The percentage in those seven states was about that as well as in 1990. But in 2009, in those states about 47 percent of their foreign-born residents were unauthorized to be here, the study found. They got more immigrants overall, and a higher percentage of them were undocumented. "In 1990, the foreign-born population in the seven states was small, about 500,000, and fewer than one in five were unauthorized residents," the study published in the International Migration Review said. "But by 2010, the foreign-born population had quadrupled to 2.6 million and nearly half of them were unauthorized." The study was co-written by Robert Warren, former demographer for the Immigration and Naturalization Service and John Robert Warren, sociology professor at the University of Minnesota.
UNIVERSITY OF SAINT FRANCIS SPONSORS CHRISTIAN BUSINESS LEADERS LECTURE

FORT WAYNE — The University of Saint Francis (USF) Jesters will present their annual spring performance on March 9 at 6 p.m. and March 10 at 3 p.m. in the North Campus auditorium at 2702 Spring St. The Jesters program and this year’s performance are supported by a grant from the AWS Foundation.

The show, “And Then,” uses original poetry, instrumental and voice music, puppets, the stories of ancient Chinese philosopher Zhuangzi, tangrams, dance/movement and the art of Claude Monet to explore stories of change and transformation. The Jesters’ personal stories will be integrated into the show through the use of playback theatre. Tickets are $10. Call the School of Creative and Performing Arts (SOPCA) at (260) 399-7700, ext. 8001 for information.

Jesters is a performing arts group comprised of students and adults with special needs. The Jesters program was founded at USF in 1978 with the purpose of enhancing the quality of life for people with disabilities by engaging them in recreational opportunities to promote creative expression and positive social interaction.

Dr. Lance Richey, right, professor of theology at the University of Saint Francis in Fort Wayne interacts with students and Dr. Michael Naughton, center, at the USF Performing Arts Center Feb. 12. Naughton, from the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minn., presented the topic “From Career to Calling: The Vocation of the Christian Business Leader” to over 100 local business people. Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades offered the opening prayer. This lecture was the first in a series sponsored by the University of Saint Francis School of Arts and Sciences and Keith Busse School of Business and Economics.

Workshop offers training to care providers of veterans

HUNTINGTON — Victory Noll Center is presenting the program “Care Providers for Veterans and Families Training” on Friday, March 15, offering skills training to those who interact with veterans and their unique needs.

The program is for social service providers, pastors, spouses, parents, family members or any care provider. Facilitator Paula J. Caplan, a clinical and research psychologist, says, “The mere act of listening is often deeply healing.”

Caplan will lead the workshop to provide a better understanding of the emotional, mental and physical needs of veterans. “We are a war-illiterate nation,” she says. “And our ignorance can be obvious when civilians say to veterans: ‘Thank you for your service.’ That simple phrase might seem like the best thing to say — it strikes us as easy, respectful and appreciative — but some veterans find the ‘thank you’ disturbing, even if they realize that the speaker has good intentions.”

LUMEN DEI — LIGHT OF GOD AWARD

Grand Knight Gary Hacker of the Father Stephen Badin Council, St. Pius X, Granger, presented the council’s Lumen Dei — Light of Christ award to seven high school seniors Feb. 12. Award recipients from left are Audrey Oppman, Lauren Grocock, Denise Duggan and Mary Beth Duggan. In back are James Pratt, Christopher Brach and Michael Tripepi.
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**Quilt covers eight generations of family history**

**BY MARK WEBER**

HOAGLAND — It’s not Tweet, Facebook, blog or any other nanosecond image transmission. It’s “Q-U-I-L-T” … a soft, fluffy medium, loaded with color, done one stitch at a time, thoughtfully, lovingly, with the feeling of satisfaction found only when hand and mind produce art.

The artist in this case is Carole Sorg, a great-grandmother who began quilting when in grade school at St. Aloyisus, Yoder, who, last year stitched up her ultimate masterpiece, a “memories of the past” themed quilt depicting eight generations on the Sorg family farm, beginning on July 4, 1837 when the first ancestor purchased the land from the government.

The center of the quilt shows, appropriately, St. Joseph Church, Hessen Cassel, since the church has been the center of the Sorg family life going back to 1851 when Sorgs were charter members.

Branching out from the church are family trees, U.S. flags, the family homestead, which has survived two fires, weddings, Christmas scenes, tractors, wagons, livestock, pets and a special section devoted to a Fort Wayne radio station, WOWO, which had an early morning farm program called “The Little Red Barn” and heard by the family each morning for years.

The tale of this tapestry includes the fine spun figure of a girl reading a book, spider webs, a squirrel hole and subtle signs such as the change of colors in falling leaves to represent the change of life to death in a cemetery scene.

Spiritual symbols prevail, as do the hearty good times such as a hay wagon ride in the woods of the family farm. There is a mama cow searching for her calf, and a nearby tire swing and another swing on the front porch.

Carole Sorg is a full-time quilter. In the Sorg picturesque farm home are two large quilting frames. These are about eight feet wide, 30-inch-high double roller devices, a take-up roller in the back holds completed work, with the front roller holding unworked fabric, and the area in between showing the work in progress for the seated quilter.

These frames hold quilts Carole is sewing at home. On Mondays and Tuesdays, she works with three other ladies — Monica Johnson, Jeanette Klingenberger and Irene Shelburn. These four quilters are called the St. Joseph Quilters, H.C. (Hessen Cassel), and their work includes quilts made and donated as fundraisers for charitable groups.

On Thursdays, Carole works at St. Peter Lutheran Church as a quilting advisor.

If quilts could talk, Carole’s fabrics would tell quite a story — dots and diamond shapes of cloth represent a spread of years — in one 18-inch quilt block can be found fabric from a feed sack dress she wore as a child, next to fabric from a frock worn on her third date with the young man who became her husband. Scraps from her daughters’ dresses and cloth from other sources make up the warp and woof of family history … threads and fibers neither forsaken nor forgotten, but quietly quilted in a colorful garden of memories that continues to grow.

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GRANGER — For the past 15 years, St. Pius X parishioner Jon Housand has led a volunteer group that prepares and delivers casserole dishes to the South Bend Center for the Homeless. Begun at St. Pius in 1998 with 30 volunteers, the program has grown to approximately 180 to 190 individuals who share their time, talent and treasure with those less fortunate.

With co-leader Kelley Shrock, Housand went to then pastor Holy Cross Father Peter Jarrett, with the idea of delivering casseroles to the Center for the Homeless. After the program was given the green light by Father Jarrett, the co-leaders put up an announcement in the church bulletin and with a positive parishioner response, the program was established.

Other organizations around the South Bend area were delivering meals to the center and St. Pius was given a cookbook from a similar casserole program that was started in St. Louis, Mo. The recipes stated that they were to serve 30 people, but Housand found the recipes lacking in flavor and substance.

“There was a Chili Mac recipe and it had two pounds of ground beef to serve 30 people. I decided we wanted to do something more substantial,” said Housand. “If you are homeless and you are hungry you want something that is going to stick to your ribs so that you are not hungry in another two hours,” he noted.

Starting with a Mostaccioli and meat sauce recipe handed down by his mother, Housand, an avid cook, modified the recipe to include five to six pounds of ground beef, tomatoes, tomato paste, pasta, onions and garlic, that Housand emphasized, “tasted good.”

The cost of the ingredients for the large casseroles varies from $25 to $40. Volunteers prepare a casserole about every four months. Shopping for ingredients and preparation of the casserole takes between two and three hours. Although the casseroles are delivered to St. Pius cold, ingredients such as chopped cooked poultry and chopped vegetables are a part of the preparation.

At the beginning of the program, Housand cooked the casseroles in the parish kitchen and delivered the dishes warm. After delivering the casseroles during one visit to the center he found the casseroles were not used the day of their arrival, but usually a day or two later, so afterward the food was delivered cold.

The casserole program, in addition to the volunteers who prepare the meals, also has callers that remind volunteers of their scheduled drop-off day of prepared food, and six drivers who deliver the casseroles to the center and pick up empty pans to return to the parish.

As of Dec. 31, 2012, Housand stepped down from his leadership position in the casserole program, but still prepares casseroles and delivers them to the center. Shrock has taken over as the coordinator for the program and is appreciative of all of Housand’s effort.

“My dad was in a lot of pain with lung cancer. We called Center for Hospice Care and they admitted him to their Hospice House. Their nurses got dad’s pain under control, and he was able to go home. They taught me to be a better caregiver and gave our family the gift of time together. Don’t wait to call them.”

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MEALS
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

transitions that have occurred at the same time that he transitioned the program over to me,” said Shrock. “One of the things I had to deal with was the loss of a volunteer driver to take the cas-
seroles to the center. Jon eagerly stepped up to take over the driving for that person and indicated he would be willing to do it for as long as it took for me to find a backup,” she said.

She added, “I can’t tell you how much that meant to me since I had to juggle so many things at once. That is the type of person he is — a real team player. He is very giving and exemplifies what it means to be a Catholic foot sol-
dier for Christ.”

Peter Lombardo, director of community involvement at the Center for the Homeless, noted the impact of the St. Pius casserole program on those that come to the center.

“Our guests — 200 men, women and children plus (during the months of November through March) 30 additional men and women on weather amnesty — have been able to count on St. Pius X members several times a month for six casseroles each time,” Lombardo remarked.

“This is a great benefit for us. Obviously, we’re a private non-profit social justice/service agen-
cy, and knowing we can count on church members for those casse-
rroles helps us to control expens-
es,” said Lombardo. “These days, that’s a true blessing. But there is so much more, and we hear it here as our guests go through the line to get their dinner.”

Lombardo credits Housand for his leadership, the St. Pius volunteers for their time, and the spiritual quality of sharing meals that the program gives guests at the center.

Jon has coordinated this program for the parish for many years — he’s lined up volunteers to make the casseroles, he’s delivered them to us and he’s contributed greatly to the mission of the Center for the Homeless — to help our guests break the cycle of homelessness in which they find themselves,” said Lombardo.

“And he’s been one of the dispa-
rate groups who come together (staff, guests, volunteers, donors, and so on) to discover the worth, dignity and God-given potential of each other,” he concluded.

USF hosting traveling exhibit, “Memoria: Assisi and the Jews

FORT WAYNE — The photo exhibit, “Memoria: Assisi and the Jews, 1943-1944,” will be open for public viewing in the North Campus foyer at the University of Saint Francis (USF) from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on March 17-22.

“Memoria” will transport the viewer to Italy in 1943 during Germany’s wartime occupation of the central and northern parts of the country. Through the words, images and perspective of Don Aldo Brunacci, the exhibit recounts the dramatic rescue of several hundred Jewish refugees in Assisi.

Brunacci, a diocesan priest and later canon of the Cathedral of San Rufino in Assisi, was part of a network of Catholic clergy, private citizens and the commander of the German occupation forces, Colonel Valentin Müller, who orchestrated the rescue plan. As secretary to Assisi’s Bishop Giuseppe Placido M. Nicolini, who directed the clergy to assist Jewish refugees, Brunacci helped oversee the hiding of Jews in the convents, monasteries and friaries of Assisi.

He entrusted documents and rare objects from his personal collection to the Regina A. Quick Center for the Arts at St. Bonaventure University in New York for the “Memoria” exhibit, passing away two days after the opening in 2007.

The exhibit will occur in tandem with a lecture and book signing by Franciscan Father Andre Cirino, co-author of “Three Heroes of Assisi in World War II: Bishop Giuseppe Nicolini, Colonel Valentin Muller and Don Aldo Brunacci,” on Tuesday, March 19, at 7:30 p.m. in the North Campus auditorium. Segments of a documentary featuring interviews with Brunacci and footage of wartime Assisi during the occupation can also be viewed at the exhibit site.

Notre Dame Evangelium Vitae Medal

The Notre Dame Fund to Protect Human Life is pleased to award the 2013 Notre Dame Evangelium Vitae Medal to Mother Agnes Mary Donovan and the Sisters of Life.

The Medal, along with a $10,000 prize, is awarded annually to one who has contributed in a special and significant way to the cause for life.

424 Geddes Hall • Notre Dame, Indiana 46556 • p. 574.631.9656 • lifefund.nd.edu • lifefund@nd.edu
The art of grieving

A s I entered the cavernous gymnasium where I was to speak to a group of men and women, all of whom had lost a child to miscarriage, stillbirth or infant death, I saw the small group gathered together in the corner around a horseshoe-shaped table arrangement. Each of the participants of this daylong workshop for bereaved parents was bent over their work-space in silently working on a project.

When I spoke with the coordinator of the workshop that was designed to provide hope for grieving parents, she explained that the group was engaged in creating an ornament to honor their baby and that the process of creating these memorials was a meaningful analogy to grief itself.

I watched each participant work with glue, torn bits of paper, photos and glitter, with the realization that the coordinator was absolutely right. What was visibly apparent during this activity was the chaos of the process of creation. Each bereaved parent had to make some individual choices — choices that might represent the decisions with which they are faced, sometimes daily, on how to design and shape their own grief journey.

What shape Styrofoam ball would form their idea of memory for the ornament might parallel the ability they have to apply it to the ball might reflect the need to discover ways to express their grief. And how they would fashion the photos and glitter to create just the right look for their memorial ornament speaks to the simple acts that allow them, and hopefully gives permission to others, to mourn individually and collectively for that which they have lost.

Following each of these artful choices the participants made the decision to act in an effort to move the activity forward. The table tops were messy and littered, the hands of those grieving parents were sticky with glue, looking much like that of the disheveled spiritual landscape of any grief journey.

But in the end, after all the decisions had been made and the messy work accomplished, beautiful individually designed ornaments emerged. The fortitude it took to keep each bereaved parent on task brought him or her to a meaningful conclusion, much like the work of grief brings the bereaved in due time into a “new reality” where the memory of their lost loved one finds it’s rightful place.

My own experience with art in grief began years ago following the sudden death of my husband, Oliver. It was a time when I had reason to believe prayer need not be hard

The Book of Genesis is the source of the first reading. It is a story about Abraham, who was called by God to leave his father and mother for the land of Canaan.

Abraham is seen as the spiritual father of all who know and honor the one God, whose kinship is spiritual, not physical. In the religious traditions of Christians and Muslims.

Scholars believe that Abraham was an actual person. He is not the figment of imagination, nor a figure constructed in some literary effort. He actually lived. Several points are important in hearing, or reading, this passage. The first is that God communicates with Abraham, so God is in Abraham’s world. God’s word, however, is above and beyond Abraham’s world. So, Abraham does not relate to God as if God were an equal.

Requiring Abraham to sacrifice an offering, God establishes both the divine distance from humans, and the divine intimacy with humans. Humans must acknowledge God’s superhumanity, and so they offer sacrifice. Yet, God is with them. Abraham himself is human. He is vulnerable. The sun sets. He is terrified. Without God, he is at risk, powerless before the elements, helpless before whatever might come. Not only does God protect

Reflection

We progress in Lent. The Church offers us several important lessons to strengthen us in our Lenten resolve, and ultimately in our Christian commitment.

By focusing on meditation of how you nurture your other significant relationships. One thing you probably don’t do is read them words already prepared.

To develop a good relationship with someone we must spend time with that person and share about our lives, our joy and pain, our hopes and dreams. We talk about what is happening in each one’s life and our thoughts of that other person are not limited to our physical presence.

Why should our relationship with God be that much different? Why do we try all kinds of prayer methods? Somehow we often look at the saints and measure our prayer by theirs. We fail to recognize that much of their prayer was conversation with God. They made God the center of their lives. Many times our prayer has become monotonous or we give up. It doesn’t have to be that way. Set a realistic amount of time for prayer each day and use it. If God is the ordinariness of our lives, including our thoughts and feelings. It is our time to be honest with God. God is always with us.

Lent: a time to respond to divine love

THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

2nd Sunday in Lent
Lk 9:28b-36

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Abraham but gives Abraham, and Abraham’s descendants, the security of a land of their own when possession of land was the only guaranteed

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Prayer need not be hard

Prayer, fasting and visions — they often go together for God’s prophets. As a Lenten act, fasting can liberate us — we have extra time that we might have spent at a meal or doing a favorite activity. And it keeps us hungry — a nagging stomach can be a great reminder of the work of Lent and the greater hunger of a world that longs for justice and beauty and God’s healing presence in our lives.

The Catholic Relief Services works with impoverished Timorese people to improve their standard of living by providing care for people with HIV and tuberculosis, training and resources for farmers, and peace-building programs that help foster reconciliation and cooperation among opposing groups.

Pray

In your prayer this week, reflect on a time when your vision was clear and you had a good idea of what God was calling you to do or to be. Is that vision still in place? Does it impact your daily life? Consider how, this Lent, you can make this vision even stronger.

Fast

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This is My chosen Son; listen to Him

Timor-Leste (East Timor), an island nation north-west of Australia, is one of the world’s newest countries. Unfortunately, its struggle for independence caused violence that left many in the country poor, homeless or sick.

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Birth control debate in the public square

Yet Gov. Jindal fails to engage these core concerns, and instead retreats behind a common cultural cliché when he goes on to say, “Contraception is a personal matter—the government shouldn’t be in the business of banning it or requiring a woman’s employer to keep tabs on her use of it.”

If it is true that contraception is often harmful to individuals and families, to marriage and to women’s health, then it clearly has broader public policy implications, and is, objectively speaking, not merely a “personal matter.”

Consider just a few of the health issues: contracing women have increased rates of cardiovascular and thromboembolic events, including increased deep vein thrombosis, strokes, pulmonary embolism (blood clots in the lungs), and heart attacks. Newer third and fourth generation combination birth control pills, which were supposed to lower cardiovascular risks, may actually increase those risks, and recently there have been class action lawsuits brought against the manufacturers of Yaz, Yasmin and Ocella, because women have died from such events.

In seeking to serve the public interest, the government may determine to become involved in such matters, as it did back in 1879, through specific legislative initiatives or through other forms of regulatory oversight. Indeed, the recent deployment of the HHS contraceptive mandate, as a component of ObamaCare, reflects an awareness of the public ramifications of this issue, even though the mandate itself is profoundly flawed and ultimately subverts the public interest.

It compels Americans, unbelievably, to pay for the sexual proclivities of their neighbors, not only by requiring employers to cover costs for the Pill in their health plans, but also to pay for other morally objectionable procedures, including direct surgical sterilizations and potential abortion-causing drugs like the “morning-after” pill.

Gov. Jindal goes on to argue, “As an unapologetic pro-life Republican, I also believe that every adult (18 years old and over) who wants contraception should be able to purchase it.” Yet Gov. Jindal is really quite apologetic (and inconsistent) in his pro-life stance by arguing in this fashion.

Contraception can never be pro-life. It regularly serves as a gateway to abortion, with abortion functioning as the “backup” to failed contraception for countless women and their partners. Abortion and contraception are two fruits of the same tree, being anti-child and therefore anti-life at the root. Certain “emergency” contraceptives (like Plan B and the new morning-after pill known as EllaOne) also appear able to function directly as abortifacients. HHS’s can function similarly, making the uterine lining hostile for an arriving human embryo, and forcing a loss of life to occur through a failure to implant.

Gov. Jindal, a committed Catholic, should not be minimizing the medical and moral risks associated with promoting contraceptive use, nor lessening social vigilance by promoting “over the counter” availability. Committed Catholics and politicians of conscience can better advance public discourse surrounding contraception by avoiding such forms of circumlocution, and instead, directly addressing the medical and ethical evils of contraception and the unacceptability of the coercive HHS mandate itself.

Father Tadeusz Pacholczyk, Ph.D., is a priest of the Diocese of Fall River, Mass., and serves as the director of education at The National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia.

SCROLL down to view the Crossword solution and artwork.
CYO girls’ teams crown league champions

BY MICHELLE CASTLEMAN

FORT WAYNE — The Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) added girls’ tournament for the first time in 1968. Since then, St. John the Baptist, New Haven, has had some good teams, but claimed just one title, and that was back in 1998 — two years before Coach Steve Pepe’s players were even born. But Pepe’s team added one to the record books for the Raiders as his seventh graders captured the 2013 White League title making school history.

The No. 1 seed, his girls went undefeated in league play and had an outstanding year overall. “We had a very special season, dedicated to a very special person, a very special group of players that ended in a very special way,” explained Pepe.

The Raiders went up against a tough team from St. Joseph-St. Elizabeth for the championship — a team they had beaten twice before during the season, but not easily. “We knew it would be a good matchup and we would have to come ready to play,” Pepe added.

St. John the Baptist rallied late in the fourth quarter to take the game. “We are so proud of them. They are so competitive and filled with spirit,” said coach Dan Pepe.

The Gold League champs, the mighty Lions of MISHAWAKA — The king would be crowned at Marian High School as the Inter-City Catholic League regular season champs, the mighty Lions of St. Pius X, matched up against the only team in the league that could boast a victory against the gold-and-green clad juggernauts though a distant memory in week two.

The Blazers of St. Matthew had their own story to tell. They had stumbled a couple of times throughout the year and needed a come from behind win against Christ the King to reach the pinnacle of ICCL tournament contests.

From the opening tip, the Lions aggressively hit the glass and had four shots on their first possession. Unfortunately the attempts never found their mark as they rattled around the rim like a pinball machine.

The black-and-orange-draped conquistadors had better luck as they made trips down the floor and added points to their totals pushing an eight-point lead at the end of the first half.

Lion bucke
t was a putback by Brian Gursky at the 1:24 mark of the quarter.

The dynamic duo from St. Matthew — Nathan Marino and Justin DeClark — pushed the tempo and matched the scoring of the Lions in the second stanza by adding to the lead and going into halftime with a substantial but not insurmountable lead, 23-13.

The St. Pius faithful knew that the game was far from over.

The Lions had won the Holiday Tournament, won the regular season championship, and, in doing so, averaged more than 54 points a contest. The mark of 50 was only attained four other times throughout the entire year.

St. Matthew had other plans as they put the pedal down and attacked a defense that had held opponents to 27 per game and sprinted out of the gate knocking down shots and handling the Pius pressure and expanding their lead to 14 after the third horn.

The Blazers looked as though the game was at hand, but then it happened — the patented St. Pius press exposed by the dominate inside play of Trent Stoner and Gursky and the occasional three pointer by Reece Jackowiak.

It happened that quickly, the Lions had stalked their prey and were down just four with 5:24 left and all the momentum on their side, a blow out became a nail biter just that fast.

CYO PAGE 14
The Blazers looked ruffled in front of the full house and then their coach, Rob Sink, called a well-placed timeout to settle their nerves and the kids responded by holding on to their composure and matching the Lions’ swagger until the final ticks of the clock.

The Lions’ last opportunity came when Walter Ellis intentionally missed the second free throw with six seconds left down by two, as the ball ricocheted hard off the rim but into an awaiting Blazer grasp, final score 46-42.

“St. Pius has a tremendous team and we knew we would have to handle their uptempo game and most importantly play defense,” explained Sink. “I’m so proud of how our kids worked in practice everyday just for this moment.”

“Coach Sink does such a good job with his kids,” Michael Dunkelburger netted 11 in the loss.

The fifth-and-sixth grade leagues also crowned champions over the weekend; St. Thomas A squeaked past Christ the King A Blue, 35-33, Queen of Peace B upended Corpus Christi B, 32-29, in another close match.

The Colors Championship game between St. Joseph and Christ the King had the Eagles close out the Kings, 35-22, behind the double digit scoring of Michael Anthony.

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Saint Joseph Parish, a vibrant, Catholic, faith community of nearly 900 families and a large K-8 grade school in South Bend, seeks a full-time Director for the newly established Saint Joseph Preschool. This position advances the mission of the parish by providing a clear vision and strong leadership for the new preschool program that will serve 3- and 4-year old children. Saint Joseph Preschool will open in August 2013, and the Director will be responsible for the initial set-up and ongoing administration of this new preschool program.

Qualified applicants will be practicing Catholics with strong leadership skills and experience as an early childhood teacher or early childhood center director. Applicants must possess a bachelor’s degree and have direct experience with or a strong understanding of early childhood programs and curricula. The successful candidate will also possess strong organizational skills, communicate clearly with internal and external stakeholders, work well independently in order to meet important deadlines, have high attention to detail, and will be able to lead and supervise others. Salary is commensurate with education and experience.

Visiting www.stjoeparish.com for a complete position description.

Qualifed candidates should send a cover letter and résumé with references to Saint Joseph Parish, 226 N. Hill Street, South Bend, IN 46617.

Questions may be directed to Fr. John DeRiso, C.S.C., Pastor, at 574-234-3134, ext. 20 or jderiso@stjoeparish.com

Worship + Service + Education - In the Heart of South Bend
Preschool Director

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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 email: fhogan@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.

Lenten lecture series offered

DCCW hear about teen mission trip
Fort Wayne — The teens from the “Catholics on a Mission” trip to Costa Rica will speak Tuesday, Feb. 26, at St. Joseph Hospital in the Assembly Room during the 10 a.m. DCCW meeting. Contact Marie at (260) 622-4211 for information. Free valet parking available at the hospital entrance.

Healing Mass offered
Fort Wayne — St. Peter Parish, 518 DeWeald St., will have a healing service on Tuesday, March 5. Mass will begin at 6:30 p.m. The healing service will follow, Call (260) 744-2765 for information.

NICHE curriculum share planned
Fort Wayne — The Catholic Homeschool Support Group, NICHE, is having a Curriculum Share on Saturday, March 9, from 9 a.m. to noon at the Charles Borromeo Church, Hession Center.

Fish Fries
Fort Wayne — St. Patrick Church, 12305 Arcola Rd., will have a fish fry Friday, March 8, from 4-7 p.m. in the Parish Hall. Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches available. Adults $9, children 6-10 $4, children under 6 free and senior’s 60 plus $8. Drive-thru carryouts available.

Fish fry helps athletics
Fort Wayne — St. Therese School, 2304 Lower Huntington Rd., will have a fish fry Friday, March 8, from 4:30-7 p.m. Adults $8.50, Children (6-12) $4.50. Five and under FREE Proceeds will go to St. Therese Athletics.

Knights plan fish fry
South Bend — The Knights of Columbus Council 5521, 6153 S. Ironwood Dr., will have a fish fry on Friday, March 1, from 5-7 p.m. Adults $8, children (5-12) $3. Chicken strips for $8 and shrimp for $8.50 will be available.

Fish fry
Bremen — St. Dominic Church will host a fish fry on Friday, March 8, from 4-7 p.m. Dinners are $8 for adults, $4 for children 5-12, children under 5 are free. Fish prepared by Tyner IOOF.

Knights offer fish
Mishawaka — Knights of Columbus Council 1878, 114 W. First St., will host a Lenten fish fry every Friday from 5-7 p.m. during Lent. Tickets are $8 for adults, children 5 to 12 $5 and under 5 are free. Carryouts available.

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Brooke County Fish Fry Helps Fundraiser
Owensboro — The Knights of Columbus Council 11000 will host a fish fry on Friday, March 8, from 4-7 p.m. at St. Joseph Church, 433 E. Main St., Owensboro. Adults $8, children 5-12 $3, five and under FREE Proceeds will go to St. Joseph’s Youth Group.

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REMEMBER TO JOIN US FOR LENTEN FISH FRYS AT ST. PATRICK CHURCH, 12305 ARCOLA RD., FORT WAYNE, ON WEDNESDAYS DURING LENT. CALL MARIE AT (260) 622-4211 FOR INFORMATION. FREE VALET PARKING AVAILABLE AT THE HOSPITAL ENTRANCE.

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Tears Water the Seeds of Hope is the inspiring true story of a Wisconsin husband and wife that have been changed...
Precedent and sacrifice: Papal decision offers options for future

BY CINDY WOODEN

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — For a Catholic so aware of the importance of tradition, even traditions with a small “t,” Pope Benedict XVI had to know he was setting a precedent by resigning. “This development will offer options that may be not too obvious before this courageous decision of Pope Benedict,” said U.S. Cardinal Edwin F. O’Brien, grand master of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem.

Meeting the press in Boston, the city’s Cardinal Sean P. O’Malley agreed, saying the pope’s decision “will obviously have an effect going forward.”

Pope Benedict described his decision to be the first pope to resign in almost 600 years as the result of intense prayer and an examination of his conscience before God. Once in six centuries does not set a rule, but the understanding reception that the pope’s decision has received within the Church suggests that it will not be another 600 years before it happens again.

As head of a spiritual community that now numbers almost 1.2 billion members all over the world, the pope did not approach the decision as a secular leader would. While he obviously talked to a few people about it, the 85-year-old pope described it as a matter of personal conscience, which implies he may have discussed it with a trusted spiritual guide, but did not seek broad consultation or a consensus.

Even though Pope Benedict and his older brother, Msgr. Georg Ratzinger, are very close, the elder Ratzinger told reporters at a news conference Feb. 11 he was “very surprised” by his brother’s decision, but understood why he did it.

Confirming what the Vatican press spokesman had said, Msgr. Ratzinger told the British Broadcasting Corp. that his brother had been considering stepping down for months; he also told the BBC that the pope’s doctor had advised him not to take any more trans-Atlantic trips.

“When he got to the second half of his 80s, he felt that his age was showing and that he was gradually losing the abilities he may have had and that it takes to fulfill this office properly,” Msgr. Ratzinger told the BBC.

In prayer before God, Pope Benedict had to face important conflicting values: the tradition of a pope serving until death; the faith statement — often repeated by Blessed John Paul II — that God would relieve a pope from office when it was time, meaning the pope would die; and the practical energy needed to minister to a far-flung flock in an age of instant communication where events hit the Internet before any considered, prudent response can be formulated.

An ecumenical partner and esteemed theological colleague of Pope Benedict’s said he was not totally surprised by the pope’s decision. Anglican Bishop Rowan Williams, who stepped down in late December as the archbishop of Canterbury and head of the worldwide Anglican Communion, told Vatican Radio he and Pope Benedict spoke last March about the pope’s decision to resign and devote one’s life completely to prayer and study.

“In our last conversation, I was very conscious that he was recognizing his own frailty, and it did cross my mind to wonder whether this was a step he might think about,” Bishop Williams told Vatican Radio.

While the bishop would not release details of his private conversation with the pope, he said, “It was a sense I had that he was beginning to ask the question, ‘Is it possible to carry on with a good conscience,’ and I’m sure it must be in his mind that for all the previous pope’s immense courage and the example he set in soldiering on to the end, it might not be — now — for the best interests of the whole Church.”

Loosening the tradition of leadership until death is a matter the Eastern Catholic churches and even the worldwide Jesuit order have been coming to accept, especially since the Second Vatican Council and particularly the fact that people live longer today, even in increasing physical and mental frailty.

Jesuit Father Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, the former Jesuit superior, was required to obtain Pope Benedict’s permission to annul his intention to step down in 2008, the year Father Kolvenbach turned 80. A few days after Jesuit Father Adolfo Nicolás was elected to succeed Father Kolvenbach, the new superior told reporters it was unlikely any Jesuit leader again would feel an absolute obligation to serve until death.

In a speech to seminarians of the Diocese of Rome Feb. 8, three days before he announced his resignation, Pope Benedict made a remark that, in hindsight, could help people recognize both the sacrifice Blessed John Paul made by staying in office as Parkinson’s disease ravaged his body and the sacrifice of Pope Benedict stepping down.

“Like St. Peter, he said, ‘we, too, are called to accept the martyrological aspect of Christianity, which can take very different forms.’”

“The cross can have very different forms,” Pope Benedict told the seminarians, “but no one can avoid confronting the Crucified One, without also accepting the moment of martyrdom.”

The Light is ON for You.

Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation

This Lent, every Catholic parish in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend will have confessions available on Wednesday, March 6, from 6-8 p.m. If you have been reluctant to come to the sacrament or have been away for some time this is a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with Christ and His Church.