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“Now, however,” the statement continues, “we as a nation face the threat of The Freedom of Choice Act or FOCA. This law will effectively sweep away all of the pro-life gains that have been made over the past 36 years and force taxpayers to fund abortions.” The Respect Life Office asks Catholics to check their parish bulletins or contact their parishes regarding the FOCA postcard campaign.

“These postcards,” the announcement says, “will ask our U.S. Representatives and Senators to oppose FOCA or any similar measure, and retain laws against federal funding and promotion of abortion.” For further information contact your parish or Chanacee Ruth-Killgore, Director of Respect Life for the Diocese of Fort Worth, at (817) 560-3300 ext. 257.

Bishop Vann to celebrate Respect Life Mass at St. Patrick Cathedral, 7 p.m. Jan. 16

The Respect Life Ministry of the diocese invites all to join Bishop Kevin W. Vann Friday, Jan. 16, at 7 p.m. for the annual Respect Life Mass at St. Patrick Cathedral, 1206 Throckmorton St. in downtown Fort Worth. The diocesan liturgy each January marks the anniversary of the Roe vs. Wade Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion. The landmark ruling striking down all state laws restricting abortion was handed down Jan. 22, 1973. A candlelight procession will be held in remembrance of the millions of deaths that have occurred as a result of abortion, adding that if it were not for St. Benedict’s, people would be “smoking crack on the corner.”

Since opening St. Benedict’s Mission Dec. 3, the friars have gotten to know many of the homeless who populate the East Lancaster neighborhood near downtown Fort Worth. Many of their new friends turned out Jan. 3 to watch Fort Worth Bishop Kevin Vann bless the concrete building that now stands as a milestone for the Diocese of Fort Worth. Over the years, many Catholic groups have made sandwiches or volunteered at the Presbyterian Night Shelter down the street, but the Church has never operated its own ministry in the area.

“This is the first visible, institutional presence of the church here in terms of mission outreach, so it’s a very important milestone,” Bishop Vann told the North Texas Catholic. “Thank you to the friars and our U.S. Representatives and Senators to oppose FOCA or any similar measure, and retain laws against federal funding and promotion of abortion.” For further information contact your parish or Chanacee Ruth-Killgore, Director of Respect Life for the Diocese of Fort Worth, at (817) 560-3300 ext. 257.

Bishop Vann dedicates St. Benedict’s Mission, the CFR’s new ministry to Fort Worth’s homeless

Story and Photos by Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

Correspondent

“Every time I come in here, I feel the presence of God.”

That’s how Larry, a frequent resident of the Presbyterian Night Shelter, describes his daily visits to nearby St. Benedict’s Mission. Three times a week the unemployed Fort Worth man and other homeless poor are invited into the unassuming, single story dwelling operated by the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal for some strong, mid-morning coffee and a simple noon meal. The welcoming presence of the bearded men in gray-robess has eased the hopelessness that blankets Cypress Street.

“They feed us here and have fresh coffee. That’s important for people who don’t have anything to eat. It’s a blessing,” said Samuel, another homeless person served by the mission, adding that if it were not for St. Benedict’s, people would be “smoking crack on the corner.”

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

We begin the New Year with a continuation of our celebration of the Christmas Season. While the current liturgical calendar officially brings the Christmas Season to an end with the celebration of the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, on Jan. 11, it was not always so.

Many Catholics around the world celebrated 40 days of Christmas and brought the season to a close on Feb. 2, the Feast of the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple, also known as Candlemas, or the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Even to this day, at Vatican City, the manger scene in the center of the square is not taken down until after the Feb. 2 celebration.

It is in this spirit that I invite all Catholics to continue to reflect and meditate on the wonderful mysteries of the Christmas Season, which still continues.

During these final days of the Christmas Season we concentrate our reflections not so much on the Birth of Jesus but on his infancy. A key mystery of Jesus’ infancy which we celebrate is the Epiphany. The word “epiphany” is from the Greek language, meaning manifestation. Thus, the love of God is shown to all, regardless of national origin. This bond of grace, this communion, we have in, with, and through Jesus Christ is stronger, and of more value, than the bonds we have by nationality or even blood.

After the visit of the Magi, who had traveled from distant lands, the Holy Family leaves the comfort of their own nation and also travels and seeks refuge in the land of Egypt; today they would be considered immigrants or political refugees.

It is in connection with this that the Catholic Church in the United States will be celebrating National Migration Week from Jan. 4, Epiphany, to Jan. 10.

The Catholic Church in the United States has a long history of active pastoral and social ministry for immigrants from all nations. The vast majority of us are descended from migrants from all nations. The vast majority of us are descended from immigrant families, myself included. The Catholic Church has also been actively involved in the promotion of a reformulation of the immigration laws in the United States. In recognition of this fact, the FIDES News Agency, an instrument of the Vatican Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, published on Nov. 29 of this past year a dossier on The Question of Immigration for the Evangelization of Peoples, a reformation of the immigration laws in the United States, in recognition of this fact, the FIDES News Agency, an instrument of the Vatican Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, published on Nov. 29 of this past year, a dossier on The Question of Immigration for the Evangelization of Peoples, a reformation of the immigration laws in the United States, in recognition of this fact, the FIDES News Agency, an instrument of the Vatican Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, published on Nov. 29 of this past year, a dossier on The Question of Immigration for the Evangelization of Peoples, a reformation of the immigration laws in the United States.

As we approach the end of the Christmas Season, may we see in the Holy Family, on their way to Egypt, the best example of an immigrant family, and may we see Christ in every immigrant who has come to live among us. A very blessed new year to all of you. Thank you for your witness to our Faith, and from that witness, the love you show to all of the family of God.

God bless you always.

+ Most Reverend Kevin W. Vann
Bishop of Fort Worth

Immigration is often categorized as a political issue. In reality this is truly an issue of faith. These late days of the season of the birth of Christ help us to see the faith dimension of this reality. Do we see each and every immigrant as our brother and sister in Christ? Do we see Christ in every immigrant? How were our own ancestors received in this country?

Our Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI, in his message for the 95th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, which is also celebrated this month, reminded us of how Saint Paul is a great example of a disciple who evangelized immigrant Gentiles by his life and word. Pope Benedict reminds us that…

This is the mission of the Church and of every baptized person in our time too, even in the era of globalization; a mission that with attentive pastoral solicitude is also directed to the variegated universe of migrants — students far from home, immigrants, refugees, displaced people, exiles — including for example, the victims of modern forms of slavery, and of human trafficking. Today too the message of salvation must be presented with the same approach as that of the Apostle to the Gentiles, taking into account the different social and cultural situations and special difficulties of each one as a consequence of his or her condition as a migrant or itinerant person.

As we approach the end of the Christmas Season, may we see in the Holy Family, on their way to Egypt, the best example of an immigrant family, and may we see Christ in every immigrant who has come to live among us. A very blessed new year to all of you. Thank you for your witness to our Faith, and from that witness, the love you show to all of the family of God.

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The Epiphany is the manifestation of Jesus as Messiah of Israel, Son of God and Savior of the world. The great feast of Epiphany celebrates the adoration of Jesus by the wise men (magi) from the East, together with his baptism in the Jordan and the wedding feast at Cana in Galilee. In the magi, representatives of the neighboring pagan religions, the Gospel sees the first-fruits of the nations, who welcome the good news of salvation through the Incarnation. The magi’s coming to Jerusalem in order to pay homage to the king of the nations, who welcome the good news of salvation through the Incarnation.

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In the Epiphany, we see each and every immigrant as our brother and sister in Christ. Do we see Christ in every immigrant? How were our own ancestors received in this country?

With regard to tougher measures taken in recent years to regulate the immigration, an emblematic case is the situation in the United States—Mexico border, where the latest strategies of closure culminated in the approval by the U.S. Congress of a proposal to build a 700-mile wall along the border. The United States Catholic Bishops’ Conference, together with the whole local Catholic community, has firmly condemned the inhumanity and violence of these measures. For many years the Catholic Bishops of the United States have strenuously fought for migrants and against systems of repression, actively involved in promoting immigration reforms, which encourage legality and respect for human rights.

Immigration is often categorized as a political issue. In reality this is truly an issue of faith. These late days of the season of the birth of Christ help us to see the faith dimension of this reality. Do we see each and every immigrant as our brother and sister in Christ? Do we see Christ in every immigrant? How were our own ancestors received in this country?

As disciples of Christ, do we limit our involvement with all immigrants to only their social or political needs, or do we also share the Good News of Jesus Christ with them? This is not an either/or question: we are called to do both, and we must be careful to never abandon either. We should consider immigration issues in light of the one who will be king of the nations. The messianic light of the star of David, which still continues. The magi’s coming to Jerusalem in order to pay homage to the king of the nations, who welcome the good news of salvation through the Incarnation.

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To reach young, church must explain core beliefs, says Fr. Augustine DiNoia

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — If the church wants to reach young people today, it must avoid the temptation to “fudge” on core Catholic beliefs in an effort to make them more agreeable to contemporary tastes, a Vatican official said.

Instead, it should confront with courage the major barriers in modern evangelization, including cultural resistance to the proclamation of Christ as the unique savior, said Dominican Father Augustine DiNoia, undersecretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

“No one in his or her right mind will be interested in a faith about which its exponents seem too embarrassed to communicate forthrightly,” Fr. DiNoia said.

“We have to be convinced that the fullness of the truth and beauty of the message about Jesus Christ is powerfully attractive when it is communicated without apologies or compromise,” he said.

Fr. DiNoia made the remarks in the Carl J. Peter lecture delivered Dec. 7 at Rome’s Pontifical North American College. His speech took its theme from Pope Benedict XVI’s talk to U.S. bishops last April, when the pope said they could best help people meet God by “clearing away some of the barriers to such an encounter.”

Fr. DiNoia said these barriers are in part intellectual, and can be remedied by robust preaching and teaching that responds to the younger generation’s openness to discussion and debate.

“In our conversations with young people, we have to avoid the temptation to fudge — to adapt the Catholic faith so as to make it palatable to modern tastes and expectations,” Fr. DiNoia said.

“This so-called ‘accommodationist’ approach generally fails, and it fails doubly with young people. There is a risk in this approach that the Catholic message becomes indistinguishable from everything else on offer in the marketplace of secularized religious faith,” he said.

Fr. DiNoia examined what he said were the three biggest obstacles to evangelizing young people today. The first, he said, is “the notion that it is arrogant to claim that Jesus Christ is the unique mediator of salvation.” He said that in confronting this barrier the church needs to first make clear that faith in Christ’s uniqueness does not devalue other religions, which are worthy of respect and study as “monuments to the search for God.”

“But what makes Christianity different is that it is principally about ‘God’s search for us’ and God’s desire to give human beings a share in divine life, he said.

“Given that salvation in the Christian sense of the term involves both reconciliation of dimensions and their realization in fully persons to a new kind of life, it cannot come from within this world. Saviors are a dime a dozen when one fails to grasp what’s really at stake. We need to be delivered not just from error, or suffering, or desire, or injustice, or poverty,” he said.

“God desires nothing less than to share his life with us,” he said. Only Jesus Christ could accomplish that, he said, and Christians need to affirm that in bringing salvation for them and for others, Jesus is “not just any savior.”

Fr. DiNoia identified a second barrier to the evangelization of young people in the mistaken and predominant belief that being a Christian means giving up one’s freedom and replacing it with conformity to an external set of rules.

“It is true that Christian faith requires conformity to Christ, he said. But this is not a “slavish conformity”; it presupposes the full realization of the unique human person, not his suppression, he said.

The third major barrier, Fr. DiNoia said, is the idea that the church’s moral teachings are more or less arbitrary, allowing or forbidding certain things regardless of one’s real relationship with human goodness. Young people need to know that the church rejects this “culture of legalism” in theology, and that Catholic teachings are aimed primarily at fostering virtuous, not rules-based, living. Like an athlete’s exercise and diet regime, which prepares him for a good performance, the church’s moral teachings are designed to lead the person to goodness and happiness, he said.

For me personally, 2008 was a bumpy road that just wouldn’t end. I spent the month of December reassessing my balance, or rather imbalance, of family time, prayer, priestly ministry, weekend ministry in parishes, vocational work, and down time. I have a lot to improve upon in each category, believe me, but something very strong arose in the midst of my prayers in December that had everything to do with the imbalance I experienced throughout 2008.

I spent this Advent preaching on the topic — “Christ our Eternal Joy has come.” As Christ fed us each week through the Holy Eucharist, and as we each received our Lord’s joy, I challenged my parishioners to share this joy. Each week I challenged my parishioners to welcome someone back to their family (or parish) by way of visit, phone call, or e-mail, someone who had gone astray, was isolated, or had separated because of a past hurt.

As lots of names popped into their minds, I then asked them to turn to the Lord in prayer and Paul’s letter to direct their prayer and their heart to determine who that person might be.

As we neared Christmas, many parishioners had taken that challenge to heart, and they had amazing stories of reconciliation or of renewed friendships through the spirit of the Lord.

This led me to reflect on my years away from my own family — over 20 years. I began to remember some older traditions that few families have kept alive. That is to say, if we are not actively being a family, then we will soon begin to drift apart and not be a family. All the more, we are not just family, rather we should be able to say that we are part of a joyful Christian family.

So what are some essentials to being a member or extended member of a joyful Christian family?

A family needs to be attentive to one another, having regular gatherings or long distance phone calls that draw us back to the center of life: Christ and family or Christ and Church. And, as in any house of prayer, at prayer time; at other times they may arrive for the food and the joyful social reconnecting with family. Either way, they know that they have a place to call home where they are loved.

So, part of my struggle in 2008 was being separated too long from a joyful Christian family. I have neglected my family. So, how important is extended family? It likely means everything in the world, the sparkle of joy, that many if not most members need more frequently.

I do hope for myself, my family, and yours, that 2009 will be a time to put family and extended family first by establishing regular family gatherings. A family that prays together stays together. Peace and joy to you in the year 2009 of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Father Kyle Walterscheid, director of the Office of Vocations, is shown walking out of Sacred Heart Parish in Muenster following his ordination to the priesthood in May 2002. Even then, he appeared to be inviting people to ask if they were being called to a vocation.
Though Bishop Kevin Vann will be the guest speaker, Bishop Kevin Vann will celebrate a Mass for the 23rd Annual “Celebration of Life for Martin Luther King, Jr.,” following the Mass, a reception will follow the Mass. The annual celebration held in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. takes place on the Monday nearest Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. Martin Luther King, Jr.” will present the Catholic teaching of the foundation of the sacraments, and Catholics wishing to enhance one’s participation in the Mass and sacramental life must pray for wisdom and support the priest conducting the Mass. The Mass will be celebrated at 7 p.m. on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. The homily will reflect on the significance of the sacraments in the life of the Church and the importance of the priest in the celebration of the Mass. The Mass will be bilingual, and the homily will be delivered in both English and Spanish. The homily will focus on the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and matrimony.

The Mass will be followed by a reception, where attendees will have the opportunity to meet and greet the bishop and other church leaders. The reception will include refreshments and a special prayer service, led by the bishop, to give thanks for the efforts of the Catholic community to promote social justice and equality for all people.

For more information, contact Deacon Xan Chen (817) 326-0500 ext. 305 or xander@fedoc.org.

Ministry with gay, lesbian Catholics to meet Jan. 22

The Fort Worth diocesan Ministry with gay, lesbian Catholics, also known as the Diocese of Dallas Ministry with gay, lesbian and bisexual Catholics, will meet on Jan. 22, 2010. The ministry offers support and resources to the Catholic community to promote acceptance and inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender individuals.

The meeting will be held at the Catholic Center in Fort Worth, and will begin at 6:30 p.m. There will be a potluck dinner following the meeting, which will include an open discussion and a brief presentation by the ministry leaders.

For more information, contact Matthew Revell at (817) 927-5383 or Doreen Rose (817) 927-5383.

Theology professor to speak about Catholic perspective on Rapture

Sister Dorothy Jonaitis, OP, will present “The Left Behind Alternative: A Workshop on Apocalyptic Literature” on Jan. 23, 2010, at the Catholic Renewal Center at 5451 St. Fort Worth. The presentation will explore the different perspectives on the end times presented in the Bible, with a focus on the Left Behind Alternative. The presentation will be open to the public, and there is no charge for attendance.

For more information, contact Sister Dorothy Jonaitis at (817) 927-5383 or Doreen Rose (817) 927-5383.
Catholic Committee on Scouting awards Bishop Vann, other adults

On Dec. 5, the Catholic Committee on Scouting for the Diocese of Fort Worth held its annual Bishop’s Dinner. This event is an opportunity to provide recognition to the dedicated adult leaders who have made significant and outstanding contributions to the spiritual development of Catholic youth through scouting programs within the diocese.

The Bronze Pelican Medal, which is awarded to adults for their contributions through Cub Scout and Boy Scout programs, was awarded to Bishop Kevin Vann in recognition for his sustained support of Catholic scouting. Terry Bachman and Victor Nguyen also received the Bronze Pelican award.

Patricia Glasgow received the Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton Award for her contributions through Girl Scout and Camp Fire programs; the Saint George Emblem, given to adults who have previously received the Bronze Pelican award.

Bishop Kevin Vann, shown with other award recipients, (from left to right) John Houters, Richard Mathews, Patricia Glasgow, Victor Nguyen, Bill Bellman, and Terry Bachman, received the Bronze Pelican Medal for his contributions through Cub Scout and Boy Scout programs.

More information on the Catholic Committee on Scouting and Catholic Emblem programs may be found on the organization’s Website web www.csaccs.org.

Diocesan retreat for young adults scheduled for Feb. 27 to Mar. 1 at CRC

Members of the Diocesan Young Adult Council will sponsor “Quo Vadis,” (Where Are You Going?) a retreat designed for single or married young adults, ages 18 to mid-thirties. The retreat will be offered Friday, Feb. 27 through Sunday, March 1, at the Catholic Renewal Center, 4503 Bridge St. in Fort Worth. The cost for registration prior to Feb. 2 is $35. Registrations will be accepted at $45 per person through Feb. 16.

Retreat promotion materials ask young adults, “Are you stuck at a crossroads in your life? Do you know where you are going? And, more importantly, do you know where God is leading you?” The weekend retreat, promises organizers, “... is just what you need to help you find your way! Come join the Diocesan Young Adult Council for a weekend of prayer, fellowship, and fun. Let God be your GPS and figure out where you may be going!”

According to organizers, the retreat will include opportunities to listen to dynamic speakers, participate in small groups, enjoy prayer and quiet time, and to discuss other topics that relate specifically to young adults.

For more information, contact Shawndra Hall at Retreats@fortworthyoungadults.org or at (512) 809-6131.

A printable registration form may be found on the Web under Young Adult Ministry at www.fwdioc.org.

Knights to sponsor End of Life Issues Workshop in Arlington, Jan. 21

Terms such as “medical directives,” “health care proxies,” and “living wills” may seem confusing, but “help is on the way,” according to Jerry Hauck, a member of the Knights of Columbus, St. Jude Council #6269. The Knights will sponsor a workshop on end of life issues Wednesday, Jan. 21, from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Knights’ Council Hall, 2625 S. Cooper St. in Arlington. Father Tom Kennedy, associate pastor at St. Michael’s in Bedford, will lead the workshop.

The event is free.

Fr. Kennedy, an experienced hospital chaplain, will offer workshop participants the opportunity to work through the information in San Antonio Archbishop Jose H. Gomez’s brief book, A Will to Live: Clear Answers on End of Life Issues. Participants will be provided copies of the book, and copies of the National Catholic Bioethics Center publication, A Catholic Guide to End-Of-Life Decisions.

According to Hauck, Fr. Kennedy will lead participants in working with the forms all Catholics should possess in case of a medical emergency. “Every attendee will leave the seminar with a witnessed health proxy [form] and an Advance Medical Directive that takes into account Catholic faith,” said Hauck. “As Catholics who respect life, we not only care about the beginnings of our lives, we care about the end of our lives here on earth. One of the things we can easily prepare for is the eventuality of not being able to make decisions about our own health care. We do not want to end up without documentation that is in accordance with our Catholic teachings.”

The “living will” is specifically designed to give medical instructions while a hospital patient is still able to make critical decisions, Hauck explained. “The proper terminology for Catholics is an Advance Medical Directive. This is a witnessed document that gives general and specific instructions to any care provider about your medical well being. You can add the specific instructions as you desire,” said Hauck.

A witnessed health proxy document, also known as a “durable medical power of attorney,” provides a loved one with instructions for care in the event of an emergency. For more information about the workshop, contact Chanae Ruth-Killigore, diocesan director of the Respect Life office, at (817) 560-2452 ext. 257, or e-mail cruth-killigore@fwdioc.org.
Fr. Skeldon installed as OLG pastor in Wichita Falls

By Nicki Prevou
Editorial Assistant

Bishop Kevin Vann told parishioners that he was “honored and delighted” to preside at the 10:30 a.m. Sunday Mass celebrated at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church (OLG) in Wichita Falls on Dec. 14. Father John Robert Skeldon, who has presided at Masses at the parish since January of 2007 and has served as parochial administrator since June of 2007, was officially installed as pastor at the Dec. 14 liturgy.

“Your are fortunate to have such a talented priest to serve this community,” the bishop told the congregation. “Be sure to take good care of him!”

The parish community has indeed appreciated Father Skeldon’s presence with them, said Jo Ann Parker, who serves as a part-time secretary at OLG. “His Spanish is very good,” she said, noting that parishioners attending Spanish Masses are enthusiastic about Fr. Skeldon’s appointment. “We all talk about how smart he is and how we love his teaching ability. He has a beautiful singing voice, and that’s something we all really enjoy.”

Fr. Skeldon, a native Texan from San Antonio, was ordained in 2000. He will also be the keynote speaker for the Diocese’s Ministry Formation Day Jan. 10 at Nolan Catholic High School.

He holds a bachelor’s degree from the University of Dallas and a master’s in divinity from the University of St. Thomas in Houston. He is also an instructor at the Biblical School of the School of Ministry at the University of Dallas.
Bishop installs Fr. Mathew as new St. Thomas pastor

Story and Photo by Joan Kurkowski-Gillen
Correspondent

Acknowledging the fruits of past leadership and promising to give the parish new life and direction, Father Antony Mathew, TOR, officially became the new pastor of St. Thomas the Apostle Church and Holy Trinity Mission during a Dec. 7 installation ceremony.

Parishioners in the packed sanctuary watched Fort Worth Bishop Kevin Vann conduct the rite during the 10 a.m. Sunday Mass. The bishop described the responsibilities a pastor assumes in a parish: the catechetical formation of children and adults, fostering works of social justice, ensuring the Holy Eucharist remains the focal point of parish life, reaching out to the un-churched, and helping families live faith-filled lives, along with other duties. The installation of a new pastor is a time of transition, he told the gathering.

“Sometimes a lot, but a pastor does it always with the love of God, the presence of Jesus Christ, and the workings of the Holy Spirit,” Bishop Vann explained. “As Catholics we belong to a larger reality where God calls pastors at different times to different people to share their talents and gifts. That’s what we are celebrating today.”

Fr. Mathew, a native of Kerela, India, follows other Third Order Regular Franciscans as pastor. Bishop Vann thanked the order for their continued service to the parish and reminded the congregation to pray for their new leader.

Addressing the faith community, Fr. Mathew said he is looking forward to his first appointment as pastor of a church in the Diocese of Fort Worth. “Both communities have a great past, but now we are looking toward something new and that’s where I come in,” he said. “I’m looking forward to taking both communities to where the Spirit leads us, so we can become instruments of God’s kingdom.”

Theologian and environmentalist to speak at TCU; art competition offered

Mary Evelyn Tucker, Ph.D., a theologian and environmentalist, will speak at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 4 at Ed Landreth Hall at Texas Christian University (TCU). The auditorium is located at the corner of South University Drive and Cantey Street in Fort Worth. Tucker’s presentation, “A New Way Home,” will be offered through TCU’s annual Brite Divinity School’s Roman Catholic Lectureship.

Tucker, a lecturer, author, and research scholar at the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies in the Religious Studies Department at Yale University, is co-founder and co-director of the national Forum on Religion and Ecology.

Tucker will speak about the ethical dimensions of the environmental crisis. In conjunction with her lecture, Brite Divinity School is sponsoring an art and photography competition. According to materials promoting the competition, “We invite you to take an original photograph or create a work of art that can encourage humans to become a healing, helpful presence on the planet. Our hope is that your artistic endeavor will help us rethink the relationship between humans and our Earth home.”

Competition participants are invited to submit a photograph or image of their artwork in “.jpg” format, along with a completed entry form, by e-mail to britephotos@tcu.edu by Jan. 14. Entry forms may be found on the Brite Divinity School Web site at www.brite.tcu.edu.

Prizes of one $100 award and two $50 awards will be presented in each of the following categories: Pre-K to fourth grade; fifth to eighth grade; ninth to 12th grade; undergraduate students; graduate students; and the general public. Winners will be notified by Jan. 30. Winning entries will be presented in a slide show at 5:30 p.m. Feb. 4, prior to the lecture offered by Tucker at 7 p.m.

Student tickets to the lecture are free with a valid student ID; general admission is $15 per person. Reserved seating with parking and admission to the reception prior to the presentation is $35 per person. For additional information about the competition, contact Mary Jo Kaska at (817) 257-7575. For more information about the lecture, contact Toni Craven, Ph.D., at (817) 257-7575 or at t.craven@tcu.edu.

Holy Cross Church completes furniture remodeling project

Members of Holy Cross Church in The Colony celebrated the completion of their project of remodeling the church with a Mass of Blessing held Saturday, Dec. 20.

The 5 p.m. Mass included a blessing rite for the new altar, pews, and other altar furniture, led by Holy Cross Pastor Father Michael Holmberg.

Beginning in July, the renovations are now concluded with the addition of the permanent furniture.

“I’m excited about the new pews and how much more reverent our worship area has become. I am not a cradle Catholic, so my entire worship experience has been without kneelers. Now my children and I will have the chance for the first time to worship in a more traditional setting,” said parishioner Melani Sonnier, who serves as a cantor and member of the parish choir.

Masses that weekend offered the first chance that most parishioners had to see the new pews and altar furniture, something they had anticipated for quite a while.

Parishioner Richard Anderson also approved of the church’s new look. “Walking in and seeing the beautiful new altar, pews, all the wood — it just made Mass more reverent and dignified, and at the same time, more warm and welcoming to all,” he said.

Bishop Kevin Vann installs Father Antony Mathew, TOR, as the new pastor of St. Thomas the Apostle Church and Holy Trinity Mission in Fort Worth.

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and everyone else who helped, we’re here, and that’s a great achievement, especially now.” Job losses and home foreclosures could force more people to live in the night shelter. Talk of expanding St. Benedict’s has already started.

“There are definite dreams, thoughts, and prayers of expanding the ministry of the mission, but we’ll have to wait to see what that is,” the bishop said.

According to Brother Peter Westall, CFR, his order began working to set up an apostolate for the homeless since arriving in Fort Worth in July 2007. The charism of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal is two-fold, he explains. Members are challenged to serve the materially poor and to preach the Gospel through evangelization.

“Working with the poor is always something we do,” he said. “We began researching to get something off the ground as soon as we could.”

St. Benedict’s Mission is housed in a building leased to the diocese by the Presbyterian Night Shelter. Initially, the gutted, 800-square-foot structure had no ceiling, interior walls, or electricity. Volunteers organized by Deacon Len Sanchez, director of Community & Pastoral Services, remodeled the eyesore to create a small but homey room that can comfortably accommodate a small group. The hospitality house is open 24/7 and is hoping to expand into the East Lancaster area, so much a part of the mission outreach, so it’s a very important milestone. Thanks to the friars and everyone else who helped, we’re here, and that’s a great achievement, especially now.”

— Bishop Kevin Vann

“In tradition of St. Francis, local Friars of the Renewal dedicate their Mission to the Poor

Brother Patrick Croley, CFR, hugs one of the participants in the dedication ceremony. The downtown resident is a frequent guest at St. Benedict’s Mission.

“This is the first visible, institutional presence of the church here in terms of mission outreach, so it’s a very important milestone. Thanks to the friars and everyone else who helped, we’re here, and that’s a great achievement, especially now.”

— Bishop Kevin Vann

Young adults from St. Michael the Archangel in Garland, interested in learning more about the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal, prayerfully participate in the dedication ceremony.

After the dedication ceremony, Bishop Vann speaks with one of the visitors to the mission.

Gospel choir members from Our Mother of Mercy Church (OMM), led by OMM pastor Fr. Jerome LeDoux, SVD, sing a rousing hymn at the conclusion of the mission’s dedication ceremony. The Friars worked closely with the parish when they first moved to the diocese.

Br. Crowley speaks at the conclusion of the ceremony, thanking participants for attending and inviting them to enter the newly-remodeled building for refreshments.

Br. Crowley, joined by mission supporters, chats with a visitor.

St. Benedict’s Mission is the work of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal, and was created to serve the homeless in the downtown area.
Bishop Kevin Vann has announced a special pilgrimage to Italy in 2009 to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth. Pilgrims from the diocese, led by the bishop, will travel in Italy Nov. 10 – 16 and will have the opportunity while in Rome and Assisi to enjoy several days of worship, sightseeing, and a papal audience. Travelers will also have the option to spend three days and nights before or after the pilgrimage visiting other Italian cities with significant Catholic histories, including Venice, Florence, Verona, Padua, Milan, and Turin.

The Diocese of Fort Worth was established by Pope Paul VI on Aug. 9, 1969, as a separate entity from the Diocese of Dallas. Bishop John J. Cassata, a native of Galveston and auxiliary bishop of the Diocese of Dallas-Fort Worth, was installed Oct. 2, 1969, as the first bishop of the diocese, which includes 28 counties in North Central Texas. The diocese is currently comprised of more than 550,000 Catholics in 90 parishes, which are administered by 110 priests and deacons.

Father J. Michael Holmberg, pastor of Holy Cross Church in The Colony, has been appointed by Bishop Vann to direct the pilgrimage.

“The anniversary pilgrimage to Rome will be a deeply spiritual experience,” Bishop Vann told the North Texas Catholic. “It will give me a unique opportunity to travel with our pastors and the faithful of our diocese during this special year of grace and prayer,” the bishop said. Bishop Vann will preside at Mass during each day of the pilgrimage.

“Rome, home to St. Peter and his successors, including our current Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, is one of the most important cities in the Christian world, and is the second most visited site in Christendom after Jerusalem,” said Fr. Holmberg. “It contains the precious relics of the two great apostles St. Peter and St. Paul as well as relics of many other significant saints.”

According to Fr. Holmberg, Bishop Vann will lead the pilgrims in departing from DFW International Airport on a flight to Rome on Monday, Nov. 9, arriving in Rome on Nov. 10. Upon arrival, the group will experience a broadly ranging tour of Rome before checking into a first class hotel near the Vatican and St. Peter’s Basilica. In the late afternoon, Bishop Vann will celebrate Mass for the pilgrims in the Basilica of St. Peter Outside the Walls.

“During the next five days, the group will visit the major sights of Rome, including St. Peter’s, the Vatican Museums, Michelangelo’s renowned Sistine Chapel, and the Basilicas of St. John Lateran and St. Mary Major,” said Fr. Holmberg. “The group will also attend the weekly papal audience, during which Pope Benedict XVI will bless the assembly, followed by a visit to the Christian Catacombs.”

Pilgrims will also have the opportunity to kneel on the Holy Stairs — the 28 marble steps of Pontius Pilate’s Palace in Jerusalem that Jesus climbed during his Passion, added Fr. Holmberg. A special aspect of the pilgrimage will be the group’s travel to Assisi, the ancient holy village where St. Francis lived and preached. The itinerary will include St. Francis’s Basilica, the Porziuncola and the Church of St. Claire. The group will also visit the Duomo di Orvieto, a large 14th-century Catholic cathedral in the town of Orvieto in Umbria, located in central Italy.

Pilgrims will also be offered an option to visit Montecassino, the second home of St. Benedict, and Pompeii. The pilgrimage will end with a tour of Rome by night.

The cost of the pilgrimage is $2,799 per person with double occupancy, said Fr. Holmberg. He noted that this price includes roundtrip airfare and taxes from Dallas to and from Rome, six nights in a four-star hotel with a private bath and a daily buffet breakfast and dinner. The price also includes all transfers in Italy and applicable sightseeing and entrance costs, daily motor coaches, gratuities for drivers, guides, and escorts. Each motor coach will have its own coordinator from the Diocese of Fort Worth, in addition to a local escort and driver throughout the journey.

Medical and cancellation insurance is also included in the package price, as well as a special commemorative T-shirt, luggage tags, and a detailed information booklet with all program details, destination information, contacts, terms, conditions, and maps.

Interested Catholics are asked to make arrangements to participate through their individual parishes. Additional information may also be obtained through Barbara Boone, diocesan pilgrimage coordinator, at (972) 721-4118 or at ministry@udallas.edu or by contacting Fr. Holmberg at (972) 625-5252.

**Diocesan**

Diocese plans pilgrimage to Rome for 40th anniversary

LEFT: Pope Benedict XVI gives the faithful his blessing “urbi et orbi” (to the city of Rome and the world) in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican April 8, 2007. (CNS photo/L’Osservatore Romano)

ABOVE: A large glass disc painted with gold shows Sts. Peter and Paul. The glass is part of the Christian Museum collection in the Vatican Museums. (CNS photo/courtesy of the Vatican Museums)

This is an August 2000 file photo of a statue of St. Paul at the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls in Rome. (CNS photo by Nancy Wiebeck)

Pope Benedict XVI celebrates the Mass of the Lord’s Supper at the Basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome April 5, 2007. (CNS photo/Tony Gentile)

The 20th annual Intergenerational Prayer Meeting for Peace concluded in Assisi, Italy, Sept. 5, 2006. A joint appeal for peace was delivered in front of the Basilica of St. Francis, seen in this photo. (CNS photo/Daniele Colarieti, Catholic Press Photo)

Make the spiritual investment of your lifetime

Join Bishop Kevin Vann
On a Journey to Rome, Italy
Nov. 9-16, 2009

To Celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the Diocese of Fort Worth

Spend 6 nights in Rome — the Eternal City
Walk in the footsteps of the Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul

Enjoy Mass daily with Bishop Vann at some of the most holy sites of the Christian world:
• St. Peter’s Basilica
• St. Mary Major
• St. Paul Outside the Walls
• St. John Lateran
• St. Francis Basilica — Assisi
• Orvieto Cathedral

This unique Anniversary Pilgrimage led by Bishop Vann includes the weekly Papal Audience in Rome, a visit to the Vatican Museums including Michelangelo’s awesome Sistine Chapel, a day in Assisi visiting the holy sites of St. Francis and a day in Orvieto and Bolsena. In Rome, visit the Christian Gatacemas and a chance to kneel at the Holy Stairs at the Chapel opposite the Basilica of St. John Lateran.

Space is limited — to avoid disappointment, sign up now

The Pilgrimage is open to all members of the parishes of the Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth.

Contact your Pastor and/or his designated Rome Pilgrimage Coordinator for the detailed itinerary, price, registration form, and all the inclusions — air and taxes from DFW, 6 nights first-class hotel near the Vatican, Rome, breakfast and dinner daily, fully escorted, all applicable sightseeing, shopping, transfers, and insurance.

Or call the Diocesan Pilgrimage Coordinator Barbara Boone at 972-721-4118 or Pilgrimage Director Father J. Michael Holmberg 972-625-5252.
By Lucas Pollice

One of the wonderful feasts that we celebrate during the season of Christmas is the feast of the Holy Family that is always celebrated the Sunday after Christmas. This feast calls us to reflect upon the fact that the Savior of the world was born into a human family where he was formed, nurtured, protected, and educated. Most profoundly, Christ, through the Holy Family, redeemed and sanctified the human family and placed the family at the heart of both society and the Church.

Most of us are accustomed to seeing very peaceful and serene pictures of the Holy Family on Christmas night surrounded by the angels and the shepherds. While this does accurately depict the wonder and miracle of the first Christmas night, we also need to remember that the Holy Family experienced the everyday joys, concerns, and sufferings of life that every family throughout history experiences.

We must remember that Mary and Joseph were called while Mary was with child to go on a long and difficult journey to Bethlehem for the Roman census. Imagine their concern and fright when Mary was in labor and census. Imagine their concern and journey to Bethlehem for the Roman census. We must remember that Mary and Joseph felt once they found him! The Holy Family is not just some untouchable mystery, but it is also the “vital cell of society.” The family has a master’s degree in Pastoral Theology of Ave Maria University. Lucas holds a degree in theology from the Franciscan University of Steubenville and has a master’s degree in Theological Studies from the Institute for Pastoral Theology of Ave Maria University. He is an adjunct professor of theology with the Cardinal Newman Institute in Fort Worth. Lucas and his wife, Mary, have five children, Cecil, Nicholas, Timothy, Christian, and Julia.

The family is the Church becomes “incarnate” in society. As John Paul II states:

The Church thus finds in the family, born from the sacrament, the cradle and the setting in which she can enter the human generations, and where these in their turn can enter the Church.

– On the Christian Family in the Modern World, Familiaris Consortio, 15

Thus, families are also indispensable in forming new and fruitful vocations in the Church. In reality, the recent vocations crisis in the Church is a crisis of the family. The decline in the traditional family and the breakdown in families through divorce and other cultural and moral factors have led to the rapid decrease in vocations. In many ways, the family is the first and original “seminary” in which the seeds of vocations are nourished and brought to fruition, especially through family prayer, catechesis, and involvement in parish life. The future of vocations in the Church rests squarely with the holiness of families today.

The family also has an indispensable role in society as the living witness of faith, hope, and charity in an often dark and hostile world. It is within holy families that children first learn the basic virtues of justice, charity, forgiveness, and generosity. It is within this framework that these virtues and lessons of life are first introduced, lived, and taught. Thus, citizens of good will, working for the common good, are formed for society. Therefore, not only is the family the “domestic church,” but it is also the “vital cell of society” on which civilization itself depends. As Pope John Paul II states:

Therefore, as we continue to ponder the mystery of the saving power of Christ through his Incarnation, may our own families be inspired by the witness and example of the Holy Family and continue to grow in holiness to become in a unique and powerful way a “sacrament” of life and love bringing the light and love of Christ more powerfully into the world. This is indeed a tall order, but nothing is impossible through the grace of Christ and the Church, and the world indeed stands on the strength and holiness of families today.

Lucas Pollice is director of Catechesis and Adult Faith Formation and RCLA for the diocese. Lucas holds a degree in theology from the Franciscan University of Steubenville and has a master’s degree in Theological Studies from the Institute for Pastoral Theology of Ave Maria University. He is an adjunct professor of theology with the Cardinal Newman Institute in Fort Worth. Lucas and his wife, Mary, have five children, Cecil, Nicholas, Timothy, Christian, and Julia.
Ending Poverty
not the poor

Currently, the Mexico City Policy prevents our taxes from funding non-governmental organizations that perform or promote abortion as a method of family planning abroad. We must urge President-elect Obama to not rescind the Mexico City Policy by executive order, as more than 60 pro-abortion groups are calling him to do.

A s we begin a new year, Pope Benedict XVI challenges each of us to confront the issue of global poverty.

In his 2009 World Day of Peace Message, “Fighting Poverty to Build Peace,” the Holy Father repeats the observations of his predecessor, Pope John Paul II. “Our world,” he wrote, “shows in an aggravating manner another grave threat to peace: Many individuals and indeed whole peoples are living today in conditions of extreme poverty. The gap between rich and poor has become more marked, even in the most economically developed nations. This is a problem which the conscience of humanity cannot ignore, since the conditions in which a great number of people are living are an insult to their innate dignity and as a result are a threat to the authentic and harmonious progress of the world community.”

Pope Benedict then points to misguided ways that some powerful nations and organizations attempt to solve worldwide poverty. He states that: “Poverty is often considered a consequence of demographic change. For this reason, there are international campaigns afoot to reduce birth rates, sometimes using methods that respect neither the dignity of the woman, nor the right of parents to choose responsibly how many children to have; graver still, these methods often fail to respect even the right to life. The extermination of millions of unborn children, in the name of the fight against poverty, actually constitutes the destruction of the poorest of all human beings.”

While this approach is addressed to the entire world, it also poses a profound challenge to Americans as we prepare for a new administration and a new Congress. Will America regress to “exterminating millions of unborn children, in the name of the fight against poverty?” Tragically, there is already great pressure to do so.

Currently, the Mexico City Policy prevents our taxes from funding non-governmental organizations that perform or promote abortion as a method of family planning abroad. We must urge President-elect Obama to not rescind the Mexico City Policy by executive order, as more than 60 pro-abortion groups are calling him to do.

They are also demanding that our new president restore funding to the United Nations Population Fund. Under the Kemp-Kasten Amendment, the president has the authority to deny funding to any organization that performs or promotes abortion as a method of family planning abroad. We must urge President-elect Obama to not rescind the Mexico City Policy by executive order, as more than 60 pro-abortion groups are calling him to do.

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Let us pray for and encourage our nation’s leaders to build peace by fighting poverty, while respecting the lives of the poorest, especially the child in the womb.

Tom Grenchik is the executive director of the Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). To learn more about the bishops’ pro-life activities go to www.usccb.org/prolife. Prior to his appointment as director, Grenchik served as the founding director of the Pro-Life office of the Archdiocese of Washington.
The diocesan celebration of the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe was set in a brilliant display of color, blend-through a cross section of the people of the local church. It seemed to be a near perfect representation of the family of God.

The diocese of Fort Worth acknowledges the patronage of Our Lady of Guadalupe and celebrates the feast day Mass each year with a special event. In 2009, the celebration was held on December 12th.

The event was attended by members of the Ballet Folklorico de Fort Worth, Mariachi Aguilas de Mexico, and a number of other groups and performers. The program included performances of traditional dances, including the “Danza de Ofertorio” by the Ballet Folklorico de Fort Worth, and music by the Mariachi Aguilas de Mexico.

The liturgy itself began at 6 a.m. with the full force of the cathedral’s organ, followed by a few moments of silence. The first reading was taken from the Gospel of Luke, and the homily was delivered by Father Joseph Joy, the cathedral rector.

During the hour of prelude music, a young man appeared on stage to announce the arrival of the Blessed Mother. The procession began, led by the Mariachi Aguilas de Mexico, and proceeded up the center aisle, dancing forward, some in traditional folklorico gowns, with huge circular skirts in brilliant color.

The procession continued with the traditional “Manañitas.” A group of young children, grandparents, parents, musicians, and dancers all gathered at the Cathedral of St. Patrick before dawn. The procession ended at the cathedral’s main altar, where the Blessed Mother was greeted with joyful songs.

As harmoniously as the music was presented, it became not just a performance, but respectful praise, emanating from the instruments, but even more intensely from the faces of the musicians.

The apparition, and the reti- for the story by Juan Diego, 57 years old at the time, was repub- ordered for the celebration of literally millions of indigenous people throughout the Americas. Devot- tion has continually increased, and the basilica, now on the site, is one of the most revered holy places in North America. Juan Diego was canonized in the summer of 2002.

In his homily at the feast day Mass, Bishop Vann said the ap- pearances of the Blessed Mother to Juan Diego had become a message of Christ not only for the indig- enous people of Mexico, but for all of the world today.

In those days of economic uncertainty and political transition of all sorts,” he suggested people “turn to Our Lady of Guadalupe as the Star of the New Evangeliza- tion, as the patron of the unborn, and the mother of all of us.”

He said she represents the faith in her Son that knows no frontiers or boundaries, and that “all indeed are welcome under her mantle, and welcome here! The opening for the Gospel that she became for Juan Diego and the people of Mexico so many years ago, is truly a gift now for all of the Americas and the entire Church!”

Looking around the Cathed- ral, a cross section of the faithful of all ages sat, some with baby- shaped cradles in blankets. Bishop Vann said to his own life, he has found Our Lady of Guadalupe to be everywhere.

“I never fail,” he told the people, “in moments of con- sum and reflection, of challenges, or when I am waiting. I see her image. This is both its moments good and difficult. I look back on her looking at me, almost as if she was speaking the words to me that she spoke to Juan Diego so long ago. What great consolation this is to me as it gently reminds me of her care and protection back to her.”

In like spirit, the program for the feast day Mass concluded with a quote taken from the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City: “If you wish me to be with you? Do not let your hearts be troubled. Do not let your hearts be troubled.”

Enjoying the mariachi singers on her feast day, as the singers serenade the Virgin of Guadalupe, is Fr. Thomy, mother, Guadalupe Flowers (far right), who is named after Our Lady of Guadalupe.

For the first time in five years, people from throughout the Diocese rise early to honor Our Lady of Guadalupe

Children, grandparents, parents, musicians, and dancers all gathered at the Cathedral of St. Patrick before dawn. The procession ended at the cathedral’s main altar, where the Blessed Mother was greeted with joyful songs.
Fr. Wilson’s legacy continues in the life of the local Church

Among those attending the vigil service were Gail Schatzman, founder and director of the Catholic Renewal Center in Fort Worth. The center, the first retreat facility in the United States to be run by members of the laity, was established in 1972 with the help of Fr. Wilson. Schatzman had known and worked with him since 1966 when she was a parishioner at St. Cecilia Church in Dallas and he was a priest in residence there, she said.

“We worked together on a youth program called ‘The Happening,’ out of a building on the University of Dallas campus,” said Schatzman. “We expanded into programs for the laity at the Renewal Center. [The center] wouldn’t have existed without him. It was because of him that I went back to school and got my master’s degree in counseling.”

Dr. Dan Luby, STD, who holds the Tschoepe Chair of Homiletics at the School of Ministry at the University of Dallas, worked with Fr. Wilson for nearly 40 years. During those years, Luby served in continuing education and adult formation within the Diocese of Fort Worth and as the diocesan director of Christian Formation.

“Fr. Wilson had a vision about engagement with the mission of the church that was very expansive, very generous,” said Luby. Fr. Wilson, who earned his graduate degree in psychology in 1964 and his doctoral degree in educational psychology in 1974, believed in the value of professional counseling and, while serving as pastor of St. John the Apostle Church, made sure that counseling services were available through the parish, said Luby.

“When you live in a place with a distinct landmark — like a mountain, or a body of water — you can always orient yourself by that landmark,” he added. “He has been an important part of my life, in the lives of my family members, for so long. Now, we feel the absence of that landmark. We will miss him.”

Memorial gifts in honor of Fr. Wilson can be sent to the Rev. Robert W. Wilson Semi- nary Fund, 800 W. Loop 820 South, Fort Worth, Texas 76108.

In this 1999 photo, Fr. Wilson (at right) poses before a concrete block house being built to replace housing lost in Hurricane Mitch, the spur for the partnering of our diocese with the Honduran Diocese of Juticalpa. (L. to R.) Ralph McCloud, then-director of social justice ministries, Bishop Joseph Delaney, second bishop of Fort Worth, and Juticalpa Bishop Maurus Muldoon, OFM.
Fr. Robert Wilson’s well-lived life is remembered fondly at his funeral at St. Patrick Cathedral

By Kathy Cribari Hamer
Correspondent

Seventy-three priests and four bishops processed into St. Patrick Cathedral Dec. 29, offering a massive demonstration of respect for Father Robert Wilson, who had died four days earlier, leaving a painful vacancy in their ranks.

The clergy were gathered to celebrate a Mass of Christian Burial for Fr. Robert Wilson whose Christmas Day was heartbreaking for his family and the diocesan family, but had symbolic relevance, and was, as Bishop Kevin Vann said in his remarks, “a proclamation of faith in eternal life.”

“Just think,” he said to the packed sanctuary gathered from the area, the state, and even from outside the U.S., “does not the wood of the manger point to the wood of this part of his life, not lead beyond that to the resurrection?”

“Fr. Robert Wilson was allowed to go to the Lord on Christmas Day,” Bishop Vann said. “For all of us it’s a powerful reminder, in the midst of grief, of proclaiming the Gospel, which is always to be lived to eternal life with Christ in our view.”

Bishop Vann was joined by three other bishops who celebrated Mass for their good friend. Concelebrating were Bishop John McCarthy, retired bishop of Austin; Bishop William Dendinger, of Grand Island, Nebraska, a longtime “ski buddy”; and Bishop Maurit Muldohn, OFM, of the Diocese of Juticalpa, Honduras.

Fr. Wilson’s friendship with Bishop Muldohn was based on his instrumental role in helping establish the diocese’s extensive mission outreach to the Diocese of Juticalpa and through the connection of Immaculate Conception Parish in Juticalpa, with their sister parish, Holy Redeemer in Aledo, where Fr. Wilson, as pastor, was overseeing completion of their first sanctuary.

“All of his ministries through the years,” Bishop Vann said, “I think he was most grateful and proud of this mission outreach. It was not only being able to a new parish ... but helping bring together a new family of God, Holy Redeemer.”

The bishop commended Fr. Wilson’s work in Honduras, saying he made faith in the Gospels an integral element in mission work. “These trips,” he said, “were...about helping strengthen and build another local church, another family of God, connected with us here in North Texas.”

Significant to the people of Holy Redeemer was Fr. Wilson’s involvement in building their church, including finishing touches, said art and environment committee member Carolyn Pass. Fr. Wilson worked on designing the stations and tabernacle, which would be carved from Honduran mahogany.

“On Fr. Bob’s last trip to Honduras, just a few weeks ago,” Pass said, “he worked on sketches all the way to the woodcarver’s remote studio. The stations will be one of the most cherished pieces of art our parish will proudly display — designed by Fr. Bob and carved in a country he dearly loved.”

Holy Redeemer’s new sanctuary is scheduled for dedication April 25.

“I already have the invitation for his dedication,” said Monsignor John F. Meyers, SAC, in his homily at the funeral Mass, “I received it in the mail just a few days before he died.”

“He was always considerate and thoughtful,” Msgr. Meyers said, speaking extemporaneously, casually reflecting about the friend he knew so well. He mentioned the long list of Fr. Wilson’s assignments, adding wryly, “He also was involved in lots of other things,” then naming Fr. Wilson’s doctoral degree, educational and diocesan positions, and his involvement in Centering Prayer.

“All this was in his spare time,” Msgr. Meyers said slowly, emphasizing each word.

“And then, of course, he was chosen to have a role for [over 20 years], and he worked together with Father Joe Schumacher all that time,” Msgr. Meyers said.

Holy Redeemer parishioner and diocesan candidate Scott France expressed profound grief at Fr. Wilson’s death, calling him the second most important person in his life, “next to my father.”

“Fr. Wilson was instrumental in France’s vocation. It was he who suggested, ‘I want you to go to the Light of Christ Institute,’ France recalled. ‘Fr. Bob could recognize things in people and get them involved when they had no inklings they wanted to be involved,’ he said.

“Some of us skied, but Bob didn’t,” Msgr. Meyers said of the “ski buddies.” “He took skiing lessons, somewhere in Fort Worth in the summertime... But then the night before he was to get on a plane to come to Colorado where we were, you would believe he had gone far, and slipped on a little bit of ice and broke his wrist.”

“When he called, we said, ‘We’re sorry about your wrist, but you still have to come because we need a fourth for bridge.’

“I don’t know what you thought of the saying ‘Boy lying there in the coffin,’” Msgr. Meyers said, fondly. “But I thought he had just enough of a curve on his lips that he was sort of saying to all of us, ‘I’ve done it; I’ve been there; I have succeeded.”

“We all loved Bob,” the homilist concluded, “and now if we really want to be faithful to him, you might well know that he would like you to do something — basically things he has already done for us. He wants us to pray and worship the Father. He wants us to continue our education. He wants us to promote vocations, and he wants us to respond to the needs of others regardless of what country they happen to be in.”

Survey finds most people support some restrictions on abortion

WASHINGTON (CNS) — A new online survey conducted for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops finds a majority of participants support at least some restrictions on abortion. The survey conducted online Dec. 10-12 asked 2,341 people how they would favor or oppose legal abortion and about what kind of regulations of abortion they would support or oppose. Among its findings were that 78 percent favor requiring abortions be performed only by licensed physicians and that 72 percent favor requiring women seeking abortions be told of the potential physical and psychological risks and about alternatives such as adoption. It found 11 percent think abortion should be illegal in all circumstances and 38 percent said it should be legal only under limited circumstances, such as for cases of rape or incest or to save the life of the mother. Forty-two percent said abortion should be legal for any reason. The USCCB news release noted that Harris Interactive, which fielded the study for the USCCB, said the data was weighted using a propensity scoring system to be representative of the total U.S. population on the basis of region, age within gender, education, household income, race/ethnicity, and propensity to be on the Internet. Harris said no estimates of sampling error could be calculated, according to the USCCB release.

Cardinal Dulles remembered as ‘priest’s priest’ at New York funeral

NEW YORK (CNS) — Cardinal Avery Dulles was remembered as a theologian, mentor, counselor, and “a priest’s priest” at his funeral Dec. 18 at St. Patrick Cathedral in New York. At the request of Pope Benedict XVI, Cardinal Edward M. Egan of New York was the principal celebrant of the Mass. Five other cardinals, 20 archbishops and bishops, and more than 125 priests concelebrated. Among the mourners were Archbishop Demetrius, primate of the Greek Orthodox Church in America, and representatives of ecumenical organizations. Cardinal Dulles died Dec. 12 at the age of 90. Since 1988, he had been a professor of religion and society at Jesuit-run Fordham University in New York. In 2001, the Jesuit priest was the first American to be named a cardinal without first being a bishop. Cardinal Egan, who was elevated by Pope John Paul II at the same consistory, said Cardinal Dulles’ life story mixed triumph with suffering.

Coalition pushes debt relief for poor countries as economic stimulus

WASHINGTON (CNS) — With all that President-elect Barack Obama has facing his new administration regarding the economy, a coalition of religious, human rights, and labor advocates hopes that one concern won’t be relegated to the bottom of the list: debt relief for the world’s poorest countries. The Jubilee USA Network recognizes that debt relief’s profile has declined dramatically from its high point just a few years ago. But the 80 organizations that make up the network know just as well that their advocates hope it will not be.

The coalition takes its name from the Jewish tradition of forgiveness every 50 years, as told in Chapter 25, Verse 10, in the Book of Leviticus: “It shall be a jubilee for you.” Neil Watkins, Jubilee USA’s executive director, said no estimates of sampling error could be calculated, according to the USCCB release.

“F. Robert Wilson was allowed to go to the Lord on Christmas Day. For all of us it’s a powerful reminder, in the midst of grief, of proclaiming the Gospel, which is always to be lived to eternal life with Christ in our view.”” — Bishop Kevin Vann in remarks at Fr. Wilson’s Mass of Christian Burial

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NEWSBRIEFS

NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL

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Pope says Christians must resolve to trust God and help others in 2009

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Christians should not fear what the continuing financial crisis will bring in 2009, but they should trust in God and resolve to help one another in the new year, Pope Benedict XVI said.

Leading an evening prayer service in St. Peter’s Basilica Dec. 31 to thank God for his blessings in 2008, the pope said people must be grateful first of all for the gift of time, which is a “precious opportunity for doing good.”

The prayer service ended with adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and the singing of “Te Deum,” a traditional hymn of praise and thanksgiving for the gift of salvation in Christ.

“In our days, marked by uncertainty and concern for the future, it is necessary to experience the living presence of Christ,” the pope said.

“This year closes with the awareness of a growing social and economic crisis, which now involves the whole world; it is a crisis that requires of everyone more moderation and solidarity, especially to help people and families in greater difficulty,” he said.

Catholic parishes, organizations and aid agencies already are preparing to help record numbers of people in the coming year, the pope said, “but the collaboration of everyone is necessary.”

Pope Benedict XVI prays at the Nativity in St. Peter’s Square following an evening prayer service Dec. 31.

At the service in St. Peter’s Basilica, the pope thanked God for his blessings in 2008. (CNS photo/Emanuela De Meo, Catholic Press Photo)

“Even if on the horizon more than a few clouds are gathering over our future, we must not be afraid,” Pope Benedict said.

“Our greatest hope as believers is eternal life in the company of Christ and the entire family of God,” he said. “This great hope gives us the strength to face and overcome the difficulties of life in this world.”

Pope Benedict asked the young adults present to “respond quickly” if God calls them to church work and to live lives that witness to the values of the Gospel.

The world needs people who are not focused only on their own needs and desires, “because, as I said on Christmas Day, if people look only to their own interests, our world will certainly fall apart,” he said.

On the eve of the feast honoring Mary, Mother of God, the pope said Catholics were placing in Mary’s hands “the expectations and hopes as well as the fears and difficulties that dwell in our hearts as we bid farewell to 2008 and prepare to welcome 2009.”

Before going to visit the Nativity scene in St. Peter’s Square, the pope told people at the prayer service that, while “we stop to contemplate the baby Jesus, our gaze cannot help but turn with recognition toward his mother, who with her ‘yes’ made the gift of redemption possible.”

Mary made it possible for the Word of God to be born on earth, to live among us, and to show us that our final destiny is to be with God in heaven, the pope said.

“It is Mary, the star of hope, who leads us to him,” the pope said.
there? If you exist, then you have to tell me what to do.”

This Sunday’s readings bring us another story with similar words. St. Paul’s first words to Jesus were “Who are you, sir?” and “What shall I do, sir?” In Acts we learn that on the road to Damascus, where he was going to persecute Christians, St. Paul heard a voice calling out from a bright light, “Why are you persecuting me?” He replied, “Who are you, sir?” Then he heard, “I am Jesus the Nazorean whom you are persecuting.” Upon hearing this Paul said: “What shall I do, sir?”

St. Paul had been persecuting Jesus and the early church. His encounter with Jesus was his moment of conversion. My wife says that she was persecuting Jesus every day with her choices. The shock of surviving the air show tragedy propelled her to her conversion.

Conversion is the starting point of faith.

QUESTIONS:
What is your conversion story? Who are the people who have helped you grow in faith?

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Al llegar a la culminación de nuestra época navideña, debemos considerar asuntos de inmigración a la luz del evangelio

Monseñor Kevin W. Vann
Obispo de Fort Worth

Estimados hermanos y hermanas en el Señor,

Comenzamos el año nuevo con una continuación de nuestra celebración de la época de Navidad. Mientras que el calendario litúrgico oficialmente trae cierra a la época de la Navidad con la celebración de la fiesta del bautismo del Señor, el 11 de enero, no ha sido siempre así.

Muchos católicos alrededor del mundo han celebrado 40 días de Navidad y finalizaron la época navideña el 2 de febrero, la fiesta de la Presentación del niño Jesús en el templo, también conocida como la fiesta de la cancelei. Sin embargo, en este día, en la Ciudad del Vaticano, después de las celebraciones del 2 de febrero, se baja la escena del pesebre de la plaza central.

En este momento que invito a todos los católicos a que continúen reflexionando y meditando en los maravillosos misterios de la época de la Navidad que todavía continúa.

Durante estos días finales de la época de la Navidad concentraríamos nuestras reflexiones no tanto en el nacimiento de Jesús sino en su infancia. Un misterio dominante de la infancia de Jesús que celebramos es la Epifanía. La palabra “Epifanía” es de la lengua griega y significa manifestación. Así, el amor de Dios se manifiesta al mundo entero y vivificante del Hijo Encarnado de Dios es ofrecida a todos, sin importar origen nacional. Este lazo de gracia, este comunión que tenemos en, y, y por Jesucristo es más fuerte, y de más valor, que los lazos que tenemos por nacionalidad o aún de sangre.

La Epifanía es la manifestación de Jesús como Mesías de Israel, Hijo de Dios y Salvador del mundo. Con el bautismo de Jesús en el Jordán y las bodas de Caná, la Epifanía celebra la adoración de Jesús por unos “magos” venidos de Oriente. En estos “magos”, representantes de religiones paganas de pueblos vecinos, el Evangelio ve las primicias de las naciones e hijas del mismo Dios y que la salvación unificadora y vivificante del Hijo Encarnado de Dios es ofrecida a los, sin importar origen nacional. La Iglesia Católica también ha estado activamente envuelta en la promoción de una reforma de leyes migratorias en los Estados Unidos. En reconocimiento de este hecho, la agencia de prensa FIDES, un instrumento de La Congregación para la evangelización de los pueblos localizada en el Vaticano, publicó este pasado 29 de noviembre, un dossier sobre La cuestión de la inmigración en los Estados Unidos de América. Le ofrecemos una pequeña porción de las observaciones preliminares del dossier.

Con respecto a medidas más duras tomadas en años recientes para regular la inmigración, un caso emblemático es la situación en la frontera de E.E.U.U.—México, donde las últimas estrategias de encierro culminaron en la aprobación del Congreso de los E.E.U.U. de una propuesta para construir una pared de 700 millas de larga en la frontera. La CONFERENCIA DE OBISPOS CATÓLICOS de los Estados Unidos, junto con toda la comunidad católica local, ha condenado firmemente la ineficacia y la violencia de estas medidas. Por muchos años los obispos católicos de América han luchado vigorosamente por los inmigrantes y contra las estupideces del encierro. La Iglesia y de todos los bautizados, incluyendo las que son víctimas de las esclavitudes modernas, como por ejemplo en la trata de seres humanos. También hoy es preciso proponer el mensaje de la salvación con la misma actitud del apóstol de los gentiles, teniendo en cuenta las diversas situaciones sociales y culturales, y las dificultades particulares de cada uno como consecuencia de su condición de inmigrante e itinerante.

Al acercarnos al final de la época navideña, que veamos en la sagrada familia — en su viaje a Egipto, el mejor ejemplo de la familia inmigrante, y que veamos también a Cristo en cada inmigrante que ha venido a vivir entre nosotros. Les deseo a todos un nuevo año lleno de bendiciones para todos. Gracias por su testimonio de fe, y también compartimos la buena noticia de Jesucristo con ellos. Esto no es una pregunta para seleccionar una u otra opción; tenemos que hacer ambas, y debemos tener cuidado en nunca abandonar cualquiera de ellas. Nuestro santo padre, el Papa Benedicto XVI, en su mensaje para la 95ª jornada mundial del emigrante y del refugiado, que también se celebra este mes, nos recordó cómo San Pablo es un gran ejemplo de un discípulo que evangelizó a gentiles inmigrantes por medio de su vida y su palabra. El Papa Benedicto nos recuerda que…

También en la actualidad, en la era de la globalización, esta es la misión de la Iglesia y de todos los bautizados, una misión que con atenta solicitud pastoral se dirige también al variado universo de los emigrantes —estudiantes fuera de su país, inmigrantes, refugiados, etc., los que que cruzan fronteras y viajan de un país a otro. El hecho de que Jesús se manifieste a estos sabios de oriente nos recuerda de la universalidad del amor y la redención de Dios. También nos recuerda que todos somos hijos e hijas del mismo Dios y que la salvación unificadora y vivificante del Hijo Encarnado de Dios es ofrecida a todos, sin importar origen nacional. Este lazo de gracia, esta comunión que tenemos en, y, y por Jesucristo es más fuerte, y de más valor, que los lazos que tenemos por nacionalidad o aún de sangre.

La inmigración se categoriza a menudo como tema político. En reali-
La celebración diocesana de la fiesta de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe se llevó a cabo con la bril-lante y colorida participación de clero y feligreses, representando la diver-sidad de la iglesia local. Tanto así que parecía un retablo casi perfecto de la familia de Dios.

Niños, abuelos, padres, músicos y bailadores se reuni-eron en la catedral —el padre Richard Flores—, donde se sentaba el rector de la catedral, el padre Patricio (St. Patrick’s Cathedral). En su sermón durante la misa de celebración, el obispo Kevin Vann, quienes celebraron la misa, dijo que ella representaba la "misa latinoamericana". "Nunca falla", relató a los feligreses, "que en momentos de inquietud o reflexión, o de sa-ñosos, o cuando estoy caminando, veo su imagen. Esto es igual en buenos momentos como en tiempos difíciles. Miro hacia arriba y la veo mirándome, casi como si estuviera contándome esas mismas palabras que le repitió a Juan Diego hace tanto tiempo. ¿Qué gran consolación es esto para mí, ya que me recu-erda gentilmente de su atención, y me señala otra vez más hacia su Hijo".

En este espíritu, el programa de la Misa festiva concluyó con una cita tomada de la basílica de Nuestra señora de Guadalupe en la ciudad de México: "¿No estoy yo aquí que soy tu madre? ¿No estoy bajo mi sombrero y resguardo? ¿No soy yo tu salud? ¿No estás por ventura en mi regazo? ¿Qué más has de menester?"

El obispo Vann acepta una sarape y un rebozo de Mario García (a la izquierda) y Jaeklyn Montelongo, bailarines del Ballet folclórico de Fort Worth, posan para una foto con el obispo Kevin Vann y el padre Richard Flores.
La oficina Respeto por la vida anuncia campaña contra la FOCA

La oficina Respeto por la vida (Respect Life), de la diócesis de Fort Worth, acaba de anunciar una campaña de tarjetas postales para combatir a la FOCA (Freedom of Choice Act, o la Ley de libertad para escoger), o cualquier legislación parecida que intente revertir las ganancias de los últimos 36 años para proteger al aborto.

La campaña será los últimos 36 años para proteger al aborto en los Estados Unidos. Afortunadamente, a través de una labor perseverante y una legislación sólida se han hecho avances significativos para limitar el aborto, por medio de leyes requiriendo el consentimiento de los padres y demandando limitaciones para abortos tardíos.

“Sin embargo, ahora”, continua la declaración, “nuestros enfoques para enfrentar la amenaza de la Ley de libertad para escoger, o FOCA. Esta ley efectivamente desechará las leyes que conserven las leyes contra el aborto, por medio de leyes que legalizan el aborto”. La oficina Respeto por la vida les pide a todos los católicos que revisen los boletines de sus parroquias o que se pongan en contacto con las mismas en relación a esta campaña postal contra FOCA.

“Estas tarjetas postales”, informa la oficina, “les pedirá a nuestros congresistas de la cámara de representantes y del senado que ‘opongan a FOCA a cualquier ley semejante, y que conserven las leyes contra el financiamiento federal y la promoción del aborto’”. Para más información, contacte a su parroquia o a Chanacee Ruth-Killgore, directora de la oficina Respeto por la vida de la diócesis de Fort Worth, al número telefónico 817-560-3300 Ext. 257.

Misa celebrando ‘Respetemos la vida’, 16 de enero, en la catedral San Patricio

Hará una Misa el viernes, 16 de enero, a las 7 p.m., en la catedral San Patricio en Fort Worth, marcando treinta y seis años que la Corte Suprema legalizó el aborto. Todos están invitados a asistir. Su presencia y participación ayudará a animar a aquellas personas que trabajan duro para proteger al viejo indefenso — el que no nació, el incapacitado, el anciano y el enfermo. Para más información, hable con Suzanna Ordóñez al (817) 560-3300, ext. 256.

Históricamente, todas las naciones que legalizaron el aborto a los últimos 36 años, y forzaron a todo contribuyente de impuestos a financiar el aborto”. La oficina Respeto por la vida les pide a todos los católicos que revisen los boletines de sus parroquias o que se pongan en contacto con las mismas en relación a esta campaña postal contra FOCA.

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Centro Diocesano de Cursillos

Estás cordialmente invitado a pasar un fin de semana de retiro —pláticas, reflexión, orientación, encuentro con el Señor y con otros buscadores de la verdad — en el Centro de Cursillos de Fort Worth 2221 N.W. 26 th, St., Fort Worth

Matrimonios
Todas clases de parejas, enero 30, 31 y febrero 1 comenzando a las 7 p.m. Para información o reservación, llame a Sergio o Dulce Morataya: (817) 733-3143

Mujeres
Entre los 16 y 30 años, febrero 27, 28 y marzo 1 comenzando a las 7 p.m., para información o reservación, llame a María Quereá: (817) 624-4911

Muchachos
Entre los 16 y 30 años, marzo 6, 7 y 8 comenzando a las 7 p.m., para información o reservación, llame a María Quereá: (817) 624-4911

Adultos
Hombres y mujeres, un día de retiro de cuaresma, domingo, marzo 15, desde las 8 a.m. a las 5 p.m. Para información o reservación, llame a Martha Galvan: (817) 770-6522

Todos estos retiros son en español

También se puede llamar para toda clase de información al Centro de Cursillos (817) 624-9411 o mandar correo electrónico a cursillocnt@aol.com.

Estamos para ayudarle en nombre del Señor y de nuestra diócesis.

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Mecanismos para reportar la conducta sexual inapropiada

Si usted o alguien que conozca es víctima de conducta sexual inapropiada por parte de cualquier persona que trabejue para la iglesia, sea voluntario, empleado, o miembro del clero, puede reportarlo de las siguientes maneras:

- llamar a Judy Locke, Coordinadora de asistencia para víctimas, al número (817) 560-2452, Ext. 201, o mandarle correo electrónico a jlocke@fwdioc.org
- llamar al número de emergencia para el abuso sexual: (817) 560-2452, Ext. 900
- o llamar al Centro Católico al número: (817) 560-2452, ext. 102 y preguntar por el canciller/moderador de la curia, el padre James Hart

Mecanismo para reportar abuso

Llamar al Ministerio de familias de Texas Servicios de protección (Servicios de protección de niños) al número: (800) 252-5400.
On Christmas, pope calls for peace, help for the world’s children

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI celebrated Christmas with a call to peace and a plea on behalf of the world’s children.

In the face of violent conflicts, child exploitation and economic woes, the pope said, the birth of Jesus brings a light that “breaks through the gloom” and urges a mentality of solidarity with others.

In his Christmas message, the pope said a more generous and sharing attitude was essential to overcoming global problems, including terrorism, human rights violations and apprehension about “an increasingly uncertain future ... even in affluent nations.”

“If people look only to their own interests, our world will certainly fall apart,” he said.

The pope spoke from the central balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica, delivering a blessing *urbi et orbi* (to the city of Rome and the world) and pronouncing Christmas greetings in 16 languages.

In English, he said: “May the birth of the Prince of Peace remind the world where its true happiness lies; and may your hearts be filled with hope and joy, for the Savior has been born for us.”

The 81-year-old pontiff looked fit and sound dressed as he made his way rapidly through the multilingual salutations, which included Chinese, Arabic, and Swahili. He had been up late, celebrating a midnight Mass in St. Peter’s Basilica that ended at 2 a.m.

In his Christmas message, the pope said it was important to remember that Jesus came with saving grace not for a few “for all: Jews and Gentiles, religious, cultural and/or ethnic communities in a Dec. 18 statement.

But she added that Catholics are not the only ones who oppose “a deliberate destruction of nascent human life.”

“All health care providers should be free to serve their patients without violating their most deeply held moral and religious convictions in support of life,” McQuade said.

The Planned Parenthood Federation of America is organizing opposition to the rule, saying it threatens patients’ rights and would restrict health care access.

“We look forward to working with President-elect Obama and leaders in Congress to repeal this disastrous rule and expand patients’ access to full health care information and services — not limit it,” said Cecile Richards, Planned Parenthood president, in a Dec. 18 statement.

Conscience regulations to become law just before Obama takes office

WASHINGTON (CNS) — With their Dec. 19 publication in the Federal Register, regulations that protect the conscience rights of health care providers are scheduled to become law two days before President-elect Barack Obama takes office.

The regulations are designed to ensure “that Department of Health and Human Services funds do not support coercive or discriminatory policies or practices in violation of federal law,” according to the title of the final rule.

Deirdre McQuade, assistant director for policy and communications in the Office of Pro-Life Activities at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, praised the regulations in a Dec. 18 statement.

“Individuals and institutions committed to healing should not be required to take the very human life that they are dedicated to protecting,” she said. “The enforcement of the new conscience protections will ensure that all health care providers will be able to exercise their freedom of conscience in support of life.”

But she added that Catholics are not the only ones who oppose “the deliberate destruction of nascent human life.”

“All health care providers should be free to serve their patients without violating their most deeply held moral and religious convictions in support of life,” McQuade said.

The Planned Parenthood Federation of America is organizing opposition to the rule, saying it threatens patients’ rights and would restrict health care access.

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Pope prays for families, especially those in difficulty

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Christmas celebrations underscore the importance of the family in people’s lives, but for many it also is a time when wounds caused by one’s family become more painful, Pope Benedict XVI said.

Reciting the Angelus Dec. 28, the feast of the Holy Family, Pope Benedict prayed for families in difficulty and for family members who are sick or out of work.

“Christmas is the family celebration par excellence,” the pope told visitors in St. Peter’s Square. “This is demonstrated by many traditions and social customs, especially gathering together as a family to share festive meals and exchange best wishes and gifts.”

But, he said, it is also a time “when the discomfort and pain caused by certain family wounds are amplified.”

“The family certainly is a grace of God, which allows us to see who he is: love,” Pope Benedict said.

“Dear families, do not let your love, your openness to life and the incomparable bonds that unite your home diminish,” he said. “Constantly ask the Lord for this; pray together so that your plans may be enlightened by faith and strengthened by divine grace.”

The pope said he is close to all the world’s families, “praying to our Lord especially for every family who has greater need for health, work, comfort, and companionship.”

“We entrust to the Lord every family, especially those most tried by the difficulties of life and by the wounds of misunderstanding and division,” he said.

He also asked people to pray for the success of the Sixth World Meeting of Families, which will take place in Mexico City Jan. 14-18. The Pontifical Council for the Family is organizing the event.

Mexican church and government leaders had invited Pope Benedict to Mexico to preside over the celebration, but his doctors advised against the trip because of the city’s high altitude, said Cardinal Ennio Antonelli, president of the council.

Catholic health care providers will especially welcome this mark of respect for the excellent life-affirming care they provide to all in need.”

—Deirdre McQuade
Office of Pro-Life Activities, USCCB
Farmers ‘pay down’ world hunger by donating to Foods Resource Bank

WAUKON, Iowa (CNS) — On a typical crisp fall day in November, a group of farmers gathered in a ridge-top cornfield between Waukon and Churchtown to harvest a ripe field of corn. A combine donated by a local farm implement dealer rolled its header like a giant electric razor through more than 15 acres of corn, leaving stubble in its wake and stopping occasionally to unload its hopper into one of a continuous stream of grain trucks.

After bringing their grain to market, the farmers deposited the earnings into a bank — but it’s no ordinary bank to help pay bills or mortgages. Rather, it’s one that will help pay down world hunger.

The group of farmers in the field that day represented Corner of Hope, a growing project organized under the aegis of the humanitarian agency Foods Resource Bank. With members of participating area churches — including St. Patrick Catholic Church in Waukon, Old East and West Paint Creek Evangelical Lutheran, Zalmona United Presbyterian, and Zion United Church of Christ in Waukon — Corner of Hope has raised almost $700,000 for various overseas agricultural programs since 2005, with $32,000 of that from the 2008 harvest alone.

 Begun in 1999, Foods Resource Bank has been providing funds for agricultural programs in the developing world through the donations of farmers, businesses and churches in the U.S. The organization describes itself on its Web site (www.foodsresourcebank.org) as a “Christian, nongovernment, human rights organization committed to providing food security in the developing world through sustainable small-scale agricultural production, thereby allowing hungry people to know the dignity and pride of feeding themselves.”

According to Joan Fumetti, a member of Foods Resource Bank’s Midwestern regional field staff in Dubuque, there are 41 growing projects like Corner of Hope in Iowa.

With 15 member organizations — including Catholic Relief Services, Lutheran World Relief and Church World Service — Foods Resource Bank is a grass-roots operation with little overhead, allowing for a more efficient management of funds. Fumetti said. After the agency receives profits from community growing projects, the money is held until the growing project directs the funds to a specific member organization.

“FRB is not re-creating any services that are already out there,” she said. “For example, if you’re Catholic, you’re already paying for CRS to exist. So FRB simply encourages groups to do a mission through CRS or other member organizations.”

Each group — such as Corner of Hope and its sister project in Winneshiek County, Community of Hope — decides for itself which charitable groups to send its funds to, Fumetti said. The donations fund a range of agricultural training programs, including agricultural economics, basic agricultural skills, and water and soil improvement, she added.

According to project chairman John Prestemon, Corner of Hope has the double benefit of being both a faith-based and community-based project.

“We’ve found it one of the most exciting and charitable ventures we’ve been in and a pretty remarkable success,” he said.

A member of Zion United Church of Christ in Waukon, Prestemon also points to the cooperation among different churches as an attractive part of the work.

“It’s been such a wonderful ecumenical experience,” he said, explaining that every monthly meeting has at least 15 to 20 people showing up from Catholic, Lutheran, United Church of Christ, and other participating churches.

“Everyone’s excited about the project, everyone’s enthusiastic — so we don’t have to twist arms to get things done — the whole group is willing to do their part, which makes it go that way without a lot of effort.”

Dennis Byrnes, a parishioner at St. Mary’s Parish in Hanover, with a 200-acre farm in the Hanover area, has been working with Corner of Hope since 2006. Each year, he said, he had donated some of his own land to the project.

“It so happened I rented a farm from my neighbor and told (the Corner of Hope organizers) I would give them seven acres,” he said. Altogether, he said, Corner of Hope harvests close to 50 acres for world hunger.

With seven children and 19 grandchildren, Byrnes sees Corner of Hope as his response to an issue which hits home — world hunger.

“When my grandchildren visit and they’re hungry, you feed them,” he said. “So you see the satisfaction on their faces. These children are no different from children in Saudi Arabia or Guatemala, or anywhere else in the world. I think it’s just terrible that a young child goes without food. This … was the driving factor for me in joining Corner of Hope.”

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North Texas Catholic, January 9, 2009

Diocesan / International

Hammer…

FROM PAGE 11

15 minutes of laughter on someone else’s glory.

Today, this day, I am proud of my article in that magazine, not because of its questionable quality, but because of whose it was near.

Today, this day, I am extremely sad because the moments of sharing that coincidence are over, as is my proximity, yours and all of ours. It takes only seconds to lose someone you had for quite awhile — and it is not necessarily going to be sad. Of course we’ve been in and a pretty remarkable success,” he said.

“Then he decided to make a casket for himself,” Msgr. Meyers said, “and people were curious — what kind and how beautiful would it be?” The artist worked for months and eventually had an unavailing and a lot of people showed up to see the design.

“The card said, ‘return to sender.’

“So today,” Msgr. Meyers said, “we celebrate the sending to his creator of our friend Fr. Bob Wilson.”

Hearing those words made me indescribably sad, although I understood what the homilist said next:

“I know a number of people may be sad. Of course we’ve enjoyed having Bob with us for quite awhile — and it is not a surprise God would want Bob with him hereafter.”

He added, “I have to tell you it was Bob’s desire that his death be a happy occasion.”

Today, this day, I am happy about a few things: that I got to be acquainted with this man who did so much for so many people all around me; that I was there to witness his good- ness and quality, and many times I was there to write about it.

Today I am proud that decades before I met him, we
RACHEL MINISTRIES
Rachel Ministries, a program that offers a safe, judicious, and supportive envi-
ronment to those struggling with abortion’s aftermath, is expanding its outreach to include programs and services in Spanish. The expanded outreach program is currently seeking volunteers who can read and speak Spanish. To get involved, please contact the ministry at (817) 737-6768 ext. 105.

The ministry is also seeking Spanish-speaking licensed counselors to volunteer during the ministry’s evening hours. There are also opportunities for volunteers to be included on the referral list. Training will be provided prior to volunteering. If you are bilingual and is interested in this ministry is asked to contact Betsy Koper at (817) 924-4750 or by e-mail to fowlerb@rci.net.

PASTORAL CARE TRAINING
St. Michael Church at 3713 Harwood Rd. in Bedford will offer a training session for new extracurricular programs and activities at the diocesan level. The training will be divided into five sessions from 8:45 a.m. to 1 p.m. Jan. 31 and Feb. 7. Participants from outside St. Michael will be charged a fee of $8 to cover the costs and refreshments will be provided. To RSVP, contact Martin Peña at (817) 283-8744. Deadline for registration is Jan. 19.

HOMESTEADING MENTORS
Catholics interested in homesteading their children are invited to an information meeting that will provide an overview of the different philosophies of homesteading, the different Catholic curricula available, and help attendees focus on their own priorities and goals in home ownership. Experienced homesteaders will be available to answer questions as well as share detail materials and information. For more information, contact Carmen Monte at (817) 924-6581. The meeting will take place in the college library from 7:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 28.

CELEBRATE CATHEDRAL SCHOOLS
The 22nd Annual Celebration of Catholic Schools will be held Saturday, Jan. 31 at the Fort Worth Convention Center. The Stephen J. Breen Memorial Foundation will receive the Diocesan Leadership Award. The evening will include a social hour followed by dinner. Sister Carol Cimino, a national consultant for the Williams Institute in New York, will be the keynote speaker. Bishop Kevin Vann will be present and will be in attendance. Reservations are $75 per couple and $40 per individual. Everyone is encouraged to attend and show their support and commitment to Catholic schools. For more information and to secure reservations, call St. Michael Cathedral Schools Office at (817) 560-3300, or e-mail rsvp@fwisd.org.

EDUCATE THE CHILDREN
Bishop Kevin Vann will be the guest speaker at the Fifth Anniversary Gala for Friends of Education: Children 6:30 p.m., Friday, Feb. 13 at the Tarrant County College Northeast Campus at 828 Harwood Rd., in Hurst. The Gala will feature silent and live auctions. For more information contact Linda Flores at (817) 560-3300 ext. 112 or lflores@fwisd.org.

SPAIN AND PORTUGAL PILGRIMAGE IN THE SPRING
Msgr. Charles King, pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish in Denton, is leading a group to Spain and Portugal departing DFW on April 12 and returning April 27. The group will enjoy the services of an English speaking guide. The group will tour each church throughout the trip. Some of the highlights will include visits to Madrid, Seville, Granada, Cordoba, Compostela, Porto, Lisbon and Fatima, just to name a few of the destinations. For more information, see the itinerary and contact Bob Wolfe at (817) 788-9833.
Father Robert Wayne Wilson, who served as chancellor and moderator of the curia for the Diocese of Fort Worth from 1986 to 2006, died on Dec. 25. Fr. Wilson, who celebrated his 51st anniversary of ordination on May 25, 2008, and served as pastor of Holy Redeemer Church in Aledo for the past seven years, suffered a heart attack in his home Dec. 23. He was 76.

Born Oct. 23, 1932, in San Antonio, the son of Finis Alexander Wilson and Willie Fae Guthrie Wilson, Fr. Wilson was raised in Fort Worth and attended St. Mary of the Assumption School and Laneri High School. He graduated from St. John Seminary, now Assumption Seminary, in San Antonio, and was ordained by Bishop Thomas Gorman at St. Patrick Co-Cathedral in Fort Worth in 1957 to serve within the Diocese of Dallas-Fort Worth.

Fr. Wilson’s first assignment was at St. Monica Church in Dallas. He went on to serve at Sacred Heart Church in Wichita Falls; as dean of students at the University of Dallas; and as diocesan director of Vocations for the Diocese of Dallas-Fort Worth.

In 1967, Fr. Wilson was appointed to serve in parishes to the west of Fort Worth, including St. Rita in Ranger, St. John in Strawn, St. Francis in Eastland, and Holy Rosary in Cisco. After the Diocese of Fort Worth was established in 1969, he went on to serve as pastor of St. John the Apostle Church in North Richland Hills; as diocesan director of pastoral planning, as superintendent of Catholic schools, and as pastor of St. John the Baptist Church in Bridgeport and at St. Mary Church in Jacksonboro. He was appointed chancellor and moderator of the curia for the diocese by Bishop Joseph Delaney in 1986; and also served as sacramental minister and canonical pastor for Good Shepherd Church in Colleyville.

A deeply respected spiritual leader, who served as a mentor, advisor, and close friend to many fellow priests and members of the laity, Fr. Wilson was lovingly remembered at a vigil service held at Aledo High School on Dec. 28. Monsignor Joseph Schumacher, former vicar general for the Diocese of Fort Worth and a longtime friend of Fr. Wilson’s, presided at the service, which was attended by hundreds of family members, friends, colleagues in ministry, and by the parishioners whose lives the beloved priest touched during his years of pastoral ministry.

“There are many of you here who go a long, long way back with Fr. Wilson,” Msgr. Schumacher reflected in his introductory remarks. “He was a very good listener, and he was also very concerned with prayer. His training in psychology taught him to get along well with others, and he did a good job of helping other people to get along with each other…. We praise God, in faith, for the life that [Fr. Wilson] led and for bringing him home to heaven, for life in heaven is truly a gift from God.”

Msgr. Joseph Schumacher in comments at the Vigil Service for Fr. Wilson Dec. 28