Pope's first encyclical nearing release, say Vatican officials

The archdiocesan deacon formation program is designed to help the 25 deacon candidates come to know the sacramental identity that they will take on if they are ultimately ordained. According to the Holy See's 1998 Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons, ordination to the diaconate confers those ordained "to Christ who made himself the deacon, or servant, of all" (7).

Benedictine Father Bede Cisco, director of the archdiocesan Office of Deacon Formation, oversees the formation program in which the deacon candidates participate and thinks that it will help them gradually take on this identity.

The program has four interrelated components dealing with human, intellectual, spiritual and pastoral formation. In pastoral formation, the candidates participate in different ministries in archdiocesan parishes, agencies and other places, such as hospitals or jails.

"It begins to build a knowledge base for them in the practice of ministry," Father Bede said. "They're, by and large, practically oriented men so they want to know how to do different [ministries]. By doing them and having some help from their pastor or supervisor, they get some direction on how to do that."

Deacon candidate Steve Hodges, a member of St. Francis and Clare Parish in Greenwood, has experienced how his current pastoral ministry assignment at the Johnson County Jail in Franklin is related to his intellectual formation.

"It's helped me take some of the things that we've been taught and apply them in a practical way instead of just repeating things back," he said.

Father Bede also spoke about how the candidates' ministry assignments are connected to their human formation, saying that it helps them to become more "compassionate and attentive ministers to people in different situations."

Hodges said that his ministry of leading jail Communion services has helped him both appreciate those whom he is serving and grow in his own right.

"Sometimes I'm really humbled when I come out of that prayer service at the faith that these men have," he said. "They're kind of at wits' end, and they're kind of hanging on to the end of the rope. It's amazing how many of these guys have hope, and they're leaning on Christ to get them through it."

Deacon candidate Tom Ward, a member of St. Simon the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis, who makes Communion calls as part of his pastoral formation for the diaconate, said that in the ministry he finds "great joy in bringing Christ" to the Catholic residents of group homes in the parish.

"It enhances my appreciation for the Eucharist," he said. "When I get to visit with [them], and I can see these people who are seriously disadvantaged and see them have even slighted degradation."

The complete text of the encyclical was expected to be published as a supplement to Italy's most popular Catholic magazine, Famiglia Cristiana, in its Jan. 25 issue.

On Jan. 23, the Pontifical Council Cor Unum, the Vatican agency that coordinates charity activities, was hosting a major Vatican conference that was expected to examine Catholic charity operations in light of the papal encyclical.

German Archbishop Paul Cordes, president of Cor Unum, was said by sources to have had a key role in preparation of the encyclical.

Pastoral ministry assignments help deacon candidates grow

By Sean Gallagher

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Driving legislation for immigrants to be addressed

By Bridg Curtis Ayer

As immigrants pour into Indiana to fill the labor shortfall, the Indiana General Assembly will consider legislation granting driving privileges to the undocumented immigrants driving privileges—legislation the Indiana Catholic Conference has marked as a priority issue this year.

Rep. John Aguliera (D-East Chicago), chairman of one of the driving privileges proposals, said the purpose of House Bill 1357 is to create a new category of driving privileges in Indiana known as a driver’s certificate.

“It is primarily for those who are undocumented—with or without a Social Security number—but who live and work in our state. It does not allow them to board a plane. It does not further the immigration status,” Aguliera said.

The reality of this issue is we have an immigrant community working and paying taxes in our state,” he continued. “This bill simply gives them a way to move here to our state. We’re really trying to take care of a public safety issue.”

House Bill 1357 is modeled after Utah’s driving privilege law and, if passed, the driving privilege would only be valid in Indiana.

“It became clear when the federal government enacted the Real ID Act that immigrants would not be able to get a driver’s license without a Social Security number,” said Aguliera, who is a member of St. Stanislaus Parish in East Chicago, Ind., in the Gary Diocese. The Real ID Act sets guidelines for undocumented immigrants regarding driving privileges.

When asked about opposition to the legislation, the representative said, “Those who are anti-immigration feel this is a step furthering immigration status, but that’s a federal issue, not a state issue. While undocumented immigration controls, Indiana’s not a border state.

“We’re just dealing with reality and trying to tackle a state issue by giving those already living here a valid way to drive,” Aguliera added.

Rep. Mike Murphy (R-Indiana) has authored a similar driving privileges proposal—House Bill 1310—which attempts to do two things.

“First, to recognize the reality of the many immigrants we have here working in our community and, therefore, not have the legal documentation to obtain a driver’s license to drive to work,” said Murphy, who is a member of St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis.

Secondly, it is to solve a problem by providing an opportunity for Guardsmen for a driving certificate as long as they first take a written and driving test and have a valid drivers license.

Regarding opposition to the driving privileges concept, Murphy said, “You’re always going to have opposition to a group of people who look different or speak a different language. This is a classic example of the ‘Nothing’ thinking of the 1850s. There will always be a remnant of this ‘Know Nothing’ mentality. Even though we are a country of immigrants, there will always be a group of people who will do anything to make the immigrant have no welcome.”

House Bills 1310 and 1357 have been assigned to the House Committee on Crime Prevention and Homeland Security. Rep. Bill Ruppel (R-North Manchester) chairs the committee. Murphy said he is hopeful the bill will pass this year.

Benedictine Sister Karen Duralt of the one faith community of the Evansville Diocese which serves the Hispanic community, said, “she knows there are a lot of people who can’t obtain a driver’s license because they are not legal immigrants.

“The driver’s certificate program would be a great help to those who need to drive to work, to enter a second language class or to take their children to school,” Sister Karen said.

Real ID Act set guidelines for undocumented immigrants, which the Indiana Catholic Conference and its legislative updates, log on to www.indianaconference.org.

(Bridg Curtis Ayer is a correspondent for The Criterion.)

Correction

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most sympathy for the families of their victims, but the men on death row are not monsters. They are human beings entitled to a life and we owe it to them because they are the precious children of their Creator.”

Father McNally said he spent time with three of those death row inmates immediately before their execution and witnessed two executions.

“Almost all three cases,” he said, “the men have shown not only courage in the face of their impending death, but obvious signs of repentance for what they have done. During their long years on death row, they have more than enough time for conversion of heart, and many experience exactly that.”

To consider the true cost of the death penalty, Deacon Lunsford said, people must also remember the hardship that it places on the offender’s family.

“Not only is the Department of Corrections employees and other inmates. The data and cents, it’s much more reasonable and much less expensive to create a group that is receiving a legal form of the offender’s family, as well as a group of people who look different or speak a different language. This is a classic example of the ‘Nothing’ thinking of the 1850s. There will always be a remnant of this ‘Know Nothing’ mentality. Even though we are a country of immigrants, there will always be a group of people who will do anything to make the immigrant have no welcome.”

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**By Mary Ann Wyand**

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis is sending four busses of high school students, seminarians, and adults to the 33rd annual March for Life in Washington, D.C. The pilgrimage begins with Mass at 5 p.m. on Jan. 21 at St. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis. The group then departs at 7 p.m. from the Archbishop O’Meara Catholic Center in Indianapolis.

On Jan. 22, the pilgrims will arrive in Washington at about 8:30 a.m., then tour historic sites and participate in the National Mass for Life at 8 p.m. at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception adjacent to The Catholic University of America. On Jan. 23, they will begin the day at 8 a.m. with Mass at the Franciscan Monastery in Washington, then participate in the noon rally at Seventh Street and the National Mall followed by the 1 p.m. march to Capitol Hill.

**Criterion Web site grows during first year, launches new blog**

By Brandon A. Evans

In the year since The Criterion Online Edition was launched on Jan. 13, 2005, many new features have been added, and another major component has just been created. During its first year, the online edition has garnered about 75,000 visitors who have collectively looked at more than a quarter million pages.

The Web site has served as a place for access to more local photos and videos, an option for breaking news stories and as a place for an abundance of photos, all of Catholic news stories from last year as well as an abundance of photos, all of Catholic news stories from Indiana, and legal abortion. One way we do this is through the intercessory of Mary. When we are united in praying the rosary, we implore God with our Mother to hear our prayers. There is real power in this form of prayer.

Sister Diane said Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein will not be able to participate in this year’s march and rally in Washington due to a scheduling conflict. He has said two seminarians from De Paul University in Chicago, and one from Marian University in Indianapolis, will serve as bus captains.

Sister Diane said the archdiocese at the Rally and March for Life in Washington, D.C., is most important because it trains them to assume an active role in ushering in a culture that supports and respects human life from the moment of conception. Sister Diane said: “The pilgrimage experience includes prayer, sacrifice, supplication and celebration of the sacraments during the trip. These spiritual experiences reinforce the idea that the battle against the culture of death and legalized abortion must first be waged on the spiritual plane.”

The pro-life pilgrimage begins with Mass at 5 p.m. on Jan. 21 at St. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis. The group then departs at 7 p.m. from the Archbishop O’Meara Catholic Center in Indianapolis.

Again this year, Right to Life of Indianapolis will sponsor an interdenominational Memorial Service and Walk for the Unborn at 2 p.m. on Jan. 29 at the auditorium of the Indiana War Memorial, 431 N. Meridian St., in Indianapolis. The service is free and open to the public.

“We hope to provide an opportunity to commemorate [the lives of] all the unborn who have died since Roe vs. Wade,” said Holy Rosary parishioner Lauren Senes of Indianapolis, the office manager of Right to Life of Indianapolis, who is coordinating the annual pro-life memorial observance.

To view our online edition, log on to www.criteriononline.com. Any questions or comments may be e-mailed to webmaster@archindy.org.^

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**Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House**

A Businessman’s Luncheon

“Christ-Centered Leadership”

Presenter: Bruce Scifres

February 3, 2006 12:00-1:30 p.m.

Bruce Scifres is a six-time state champion football coach from Roncalli High School and author of the book, Beyond the Goal Line.

Coach Scifres will be speaking on the merits of Christ-centered coaching and keeping success in perspective, and how these same concepts apply to the business world.

Cost is $20.00 per person. Call 545-7681 to register!
Stem cell research

A researcher handles culture trays containing human embryonic stem cells in a lab at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

T he scientific world, as well as those who have been campaigning for the use of embryos for stem-cell research, was shocked back in December when Dr. Hwang Woo-suk admitted that some of his research had been fabricated.

The South Korean veterinarian had become a national hero when he claimed last March, in *Science* magazine, that he had created 11 stem-cell lines genetically identical to human embryonic cells. He followed that up in the June 17 issue of the magazine with the claim that he had created 11-stem cell lines genetically linked to his patients.

Dr. Hwang has been disgraced, and the whole episode shows how eagerly some people have been for some kind of breakthrough that might result in the use of embryonic stem cells to cure all kinds of diseases, such as Parkinson's and diabetes. The South Korean government had given Hwang a $25 million grant, and he apparently felt that he had come up with something after 10 years of research.

There has been a race among scientists to be the first to prove that embryonic stem cell cloning can result in those medical breakthroughs that they are convinced are possible. It's the same belief that convinced voters in California to approve what was known as Proposition 71, an amendment to the California constitution and a $3 billion bond measure to support embryonic stem-cell research.

The fact is that there remains no proof that embryonic stem cells are the panacea that many people think they will be. The Catholic Church opposes this research because it always results in the death of the embryo. The Church accepts the biological truth that an embryo is human life and it teaches that all human life is sacred.

Meanwhile, there have been numerous advances in research using what are known as adult stem cells, including those taken from bone marrow and umbilical-cord blood. These experiments don't result in the death of an embryo. It would seem natural that this is where efforts should be made. It was encouraging, therefore, that Congress approved, and President Bush signed, legislation that established a national program to promote the use of stem cells from umbilical-cord blood.

The U.S. House of Representatives approved the bill last May by a vote of 431-1 and the Senate approved it by unanimous consent on Dec. 16. There is also the possibility that another approach might work. Dr. William Hurlbut, a bioethicist at Stanford University, proposed what he called “ooocyte-assisted reprogramming—a variation on Hurlbut's proposal. Catholic, Protestant and Jewish theologians have promoted their proposal.

We hope that, now that Hwang has been discredited, research in the future would be done without the killing of embryos.

—John F. Fink

Letters to the Editor

Why latest Vatican instruction was needed

This letter is in response to the two letters that were published in the Dec. 9 issue of *The Criterion*. Both letters made a good point. It is not the purpose of the Vatican-issued document, “On Priesthood and Those With Homosexual Tendencies,” to promote same-sex relationships. Nor is it to control how religious leaders control their homosexual desires. Those who have passing moments of temptation, but do not entertain immoral thoughts, would be considered “in control.”

So why is there a need for this document? Perhaps the reason it bears such importance is this: A homosexual priest who acts on his desires not only breaks his vows of celibacy, but also violates the natural order of sexuality. If priests are meant to be our spiritual fathers and, therefore, an example to all biological fathers, ought not their desires be naturally ordered for their ministry to be most successful? A priest must be able to relate properly to both sexes. As the document outlines, homosexuality, since it is disordered, affects, in some way, this ability to relate to others fairly.

One of the letters also stated: “I continue to be confused... that homosexual acts are sinful because they are ‘closed to the transmission of life,’ at the same time putting approval on sexual acts involving infertile couples.”

Abraham’s wife, Sarah, and Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist, were both thought to be barren. However, “nothing will be impossible for God” (Lk 1:37).

Even if an act is seemingly sterile, there may still be a possibility, if it is within the gift of fertility cannot be exchanged or sold. Both letters made a good point. It is not the purpose of the Vatican-issued document, “On Priesthood and Those With Homosexual Tendencies,” to promote same-sex relationships. Nor is it to control how religious leaders control their homosexual desires. Those who have passing moments of temptation, but do not entertain immoral thoughts, would be considered “in control.”

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Even if an act is seemingly sterile, there may still be a possibility, if it is within God’s will, for a couple to conceive that is a man and a woman. The sexual act must be open to the “transmission of life,” as the letter addles to. It is obvious that this does not mean that an act must yield a child. An infertile married couple that does not result in a new life despite their fertility is not a sinful act. The Vatican document, “On Priesthood and Those With Homosexual Tendencies,” is not aimed to control the transmission of life has only partially to do with the fertility of the couple.

So why is it mean to open to the transmission of life? This does not mean that the couple must be fertile, only that they do nothing to hinder the fertility of the act. A homosexual act, by its very nature, is closed to life because it is not between a man and a woman.

*Humanae Vitae*, Pope Paul VI wrote, “[Married love] is a love which is total.” This means the gift of self that occurs when a sexual act must be complete. An infertile couple still exchanges all that the two have with one another. A homosexual act cannot be a complete gift of self because the gift of fertility cannot be exchanged between the individuals.

Great credit are in, Haste

Letters to the Editor

Letters from readers are welcome and should be informed, relevant, well expressed, concise, temperate in tone, courteous and respectful.

The editors reserve the right to select and edit the letters based on space limitations, pastural sensitivity and content. Letters must be brief; but, for serious reasons, names may be withheld.

Send letters to “Letters to the Editor,” The Criterion, P.O. Box 1717, Indianapolis, IN 46206-1717. Readers who access e-mail may send letters to criterion@archindy.org.
**Thanks to all who volunteer their services to the Church**

I respect more Colts paraphernalia was part of last Christmas’ gift exchange than in previous years. But I doubt that more than one Colts emblemized bishop’s mitre was produced and presented as a Christmas gift! Needless to say, there will never be an appropriate liturgical ceremony where it could be worn. It has taken its proud place in my unusual hat collection. I appreciate the ingenious spirit behind the gift.

Some weeks before Christmas, I wrote about my mom’s pineapple caramels and wondered if anyone had a recipe for it. The son of a mother who never wrote down a recipe, of course, would never think of doing a search on the Internet. But other folks did, and I am grateful. One woman sent a handwritten recipe that sounds very much like my mom’s. I think I figured out why mom no longer made the caramels in later years. The recipe calls for lots of white sugar and brown sugar! The kind woman who sent the recipe to the editor of The Criterion also wrote: “Good Paper!”—which I appreciate. I send a special thank you to all of you who took the trouble to come to my assistance. The recipes are now part of my collection.

In recent months, more than usual, I have been at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House in Indianapolis for various meetings, prayer days and dinners. In every event, the experience was a pleasant one. The staff were not more accommodating. I also want to say how many people volunteer to help at meals and also help with housekeeping. I am impressed. Needless to say, these folks are not looking for public praise and recognition, but they deserve it.

I was particularly touched that a dad brought his children—a daughter in high school and two boys of grade school age—to help serve an evening meal. I think parents who do that are not only helping a good spiritual cause, but they are also teaching their family to serve others and they lead by example as well. What a good family to share together to praise all of you volunteers, young and old and in all ages.

If we were able to catalogue all the people who serve our parishes, schools and agencies as volunteers, I know the numbers would be truly amazing. Often, this aspect of Christian stewardship—the giving of time and talent—is unsung.

The service offered may be that of helping in the school cafeteria. It may take the form of cleaning the church or chapel. It may be a service of decorating the church for special occasions, or serving as greeters orushers, or taking up the collection. Some folks faithfully count the Sunday collection. Some make sure that the altars, altar linens, altars and servers’ cascos and surplises are kept in good order. Some folks show up to shovel snow or rake leaves. Some fix meals for the pastor. Some volunteer for youth ministry.

Giving time in prayer is also a wonderful service to the parish. I think of those who faithfully spend an hour before the Blessed Sacrament in church or an adoration chapel. Hundred of people pray for us in the name of all of us. Some do so in the wee hours of the night.

Who can estimate the good that is done by women’s and men’s clubs in our parishes? How about those who volunteer to help with bingo? Or those who invest countless hours in preparation for the annual social? The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is notable for its volunteer service all around the archdiocese. Some folks volunteer for direct service to the poor. Some work in the warehouses in the background. All play a part in serving Christ in the poor.

The various councils of the Knights of Columbus not only give time and talent to promoting the cause for human life, but also participate in various other projects that benefit the poor. They deserve our support as well. Recently, representatives of the Indiana Knights made a contribution to the Bishop Bruté House of Formation at Maran College in Indianapolis. It is only one example of many gestures of service.

The Serra Club gives a lot of time to promoting religious and priestly vocations most notable is the time they give to prayer for vocations.

In naming groups, I risk leaving out some that are just as notable for their generous gifts of time and talent. I am thinking of all of the parish and archdiocesan committees, commissions and task forces. I pray frequently and gratefully for all of you—those known and unknown—who serve Christ among us in unsung ways. You are truly gifts for God and for our Church! May God bless you a hundredfold!

**ARCHIBISHOP/AZOBISPO DANIEL M. BUECHELIN, O.S.B.**

**SEEKING THE FACE OF THE LORD BUSCANDO CARA DEL SEÑOR**

Gracias a todos aquellos que prestan sus servicios voluntarios a la Iglesia

**ARCHIBISHOP Buechlein’s intention for vocations for January**

*Parents: that they may remain faithful to their vocations and encourage their children to consider God’s call to serve in the Church, especially as priests and religious.*

Visión de la vida humana, sino que también participar en numerosos proyectos que benefician a los pobres. Ellos también merecen nuestro apoyo. Recientemente, representantes de los Caballeros de Indiana realizaron una contribución a la Casa de Formación del Obispo Bruté en el Maran College de Indiana. Se trata tan solo de un ejemplo de sus miles de gestos de servicio. El Club Serra dedicó mucho tiempo a la promoción de las vocaciones religiosas y sacerdotales y lo más resaltante es el tiempo que dedicamos a la oración por las vocaciones.

En la tarea de nombrar grupos, es el caso de olvidar algunos que son igualmente dignos de su generosa dona tiración de tiempo y talento. Me refiero a todos los comités, comisiones y grupos de trabajo arquidiocesanos y parroquiales. Rezo frecuentemente y agradecidamente por todos ustedes, los conocidos y los desconocidos, que sirven a Cristo entre nosotros de manera inadvertida. ¿Ustedes son verdaderos obsequios para Dios y para nuestra Iglesia? Que Dios los colme de bendiciones!

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Mondays
St. Thomas the Apostle Church, 523 S. Merrill St., Fortville. Perpetual adoration. Information: 317-485-4102.

Our Lady of the Greenwood Church, Chapel, 335 S. Meridian St., Greenwood. Perpetual adoration. Information: 317-888-2601.

St. Roch Church, 3600 S. Pennsylvania St., Indianapolis. Holy hour: 7 p.m. Information: 317-784-1763.

Marian Center, 3356 W. 30th St., Indianapolis. Prayer group, prayers for priests and religious. 9 a.m. Information: 317-257-2569.

Cordifonte House of Prayer, 3610 E. 46th St., Indianapolis. Monday silent prayer group. 7 p.m. Information: 317-543-0154.

Tuesdays
St. Thomas the Apostle Parish, 2605 St. Joe Road W., Speedway. Shepherds of Christ, rosary after prayer. 7 p.m. Mass.

Holy Name Parish, 89 N. 17th St., Beech Grove. Prayer group. 2:30-3:30 p.m. Information: 317-784-5454.

St. Joan of Arc Parish, 4217 Central Ave., Indianapolis. Bible sharing. 7 p.m. Information: 317-283-5038.

St. Luke Church, 7537 Holliday Dr. E., Indianapolis. Marian Movement of Priests prayer cenacle, Mass. 7-8 p.m. Information: 317-842-5580.

Holy Spirit Church, 7243 E. 10th St., Indianapolis. Eucharistic Adoration. Holy hour and Holy Hour. 7 a.m. Information: 317-533-9040.

Cordifonte House of Prayer, 3610 E. 46th St., Indianapolis. Tuesday silent prayer hour. 7 p.m. Information: 317-543-0154.


St. Francis Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health Center, 650 E. Southport Road, Suite C, Indianapolis. “Teens Growing Teens” therapeutic program for high school students grieving from the loss of one or more teenage friends. 7-8 p.m. Information: 317-783-8173.

Wednesdays

Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, 5962 Central Ave., Indianapolis. Marian Movement of Priests for holy prayer cenacle. 1 p.m. Information: 317-253-1678.


St. Rita Church, 1733 Dr. Andrew J. Brown Ave., Indianapolis. Young adult Bible study. 6:15-7:15 p.m. Information: 317-632-9349.

St. Thomas Aquinas Church, Chapel, 46th and Illinois streets, Indianapolis. Perpetual adoration for peace. 6:30-7:15 p.m. Information: 317-253-0451.


St. Francis and Clare Church, 5091 Olbrie Branch Road, Greenwood. Mass. 6:30 a.m. adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, 7 a.m. rosary and Divine Mercy Chaplet. 1 p.m. Meditation, 8 p.m. Information: 317-859-7700.

Our Lady of the Greenwood Church, Chapel, 335 S. Meridian St., Greenwood. Holy Hour. 7 p.m. Information: 317-837-7700.

St. Thomas More Church, 1200 N. Indiana St., Mooresville. Mass. 6 p.m. Information: 317-851-4142.

Thursdays
St. Mary Parish, 89 N. 17th St., Beech Grove. Faith-sharing and Bible study. 7 p.m. Information: 317-282-5008.


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Help people cope with traumatic loss

By Mary Ann Wyand

Retreat for separated and divorced Catholics focuses on forgiveness

**The Criterion Friday, January 20, 2006**

Bereavement ministry can be daunting at times because each loss is unique and each person grieves in a different way.

That’s why the archdiocesan Catholic Cemeteries Association began offering an annual “Mission Day” four years ago for pastors, parish staff members, funeral directors, cemeteries staff members and lay volunteers who provide grief ministry at archdiocesan parishes.

Steven Tibbetts of Minneapolis, a psychotherapist, educator and funeral director, is the keynote speaker for the association’s fourth annual “Mission Day” on Feb. 1 at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., in Indianapolis.

Tibbetts, who teaches at the School of Mortuary Science at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, will discuss “Understanding and Responding to Traumatic Loss—Understanding the Assumptive World” and “Interventions for Traumatic Loss—How to Be Supportive, Do’s and Don’ts.”

He also is a board member of the National Catholic Ministry to the Bereaved.

The traumatic loss of a loved one is extremely stressful for survivors, Tibbetts said, who are immobilized by shock.

“Everyone has assumptions about the things that they think could possibly happen in their world and the things that they think could possibly never happen,” he said.

“Then something comes along that is a violation of that assumptive world, and the greater the violation, the greater the trauma” experienced by survivors.

People in shock over the sudden death of a loved one often have limited coping skills, techniques and experience in dealing with that kind of loss, Tibbetts said.

It is normal to have a difficult time accepting the fact that a loved one died because of murder, suicide, an accident, sudden infant death syndrome or other unexpected health problems.

“It’s so unimaginable,” he said.

“There’s no time for goodness, no time for preparing people.”

Especially when a loved one is murdered, he said, people feel overwhelmed and don’t know where to turn for help in their time of grief.

“It’s important for people to understand that denial is very necessary,” Tibbetts said.

“Denial is a very important part of the grief process, and it’s OK when people experience denial … before accepting the reality of what has happened.”

He recommends that people in ministry help grieving people take enough time saying goodbye to a loved one by spending more time with the person’s body during the wake and funeral service.

Tibbetts said research indicates that the more time survivors spend with the deceased person’s body, the better they seem to adjust to the bereavement process.

Father Patrick Beidelman, pastor of S.S. Peter and Paul Cathedral Parish in Indianapolis and part-time director of liturgy for the archdiocesan Office of Worship, will discuss “The Funeral Rites from a Liturgical Perspective.”

The program also includes a small-group discussion on “Applying Our New Skills in Our Respective Workplace” as well as prayer, breakfast and lunch at the archdiocesan retreat house.

It concludes at 4 p.m. A free-will offering will be accepted to cover expenses.

Msgr. Joseph E. Schaeckel, vicar general and pastor of Holy Rosary Parish in Indianapolis, and Marilyn Hess, associate director of healing family ministries for the archdiocesan Office of Family Ministries, will begin the Mission Day at 9 a.m. with morning prayer followed by an introduction to the program and its purpose.

“It promises to be a day of reflection, insight and group activities,” Msgr. Schaeckel said. “The idea to have such a day grew out of the increasing realization on the part of our cemeteries’ staff that their work was more than just ‘work.’ It is really a ministry. It is one of the Church’s corporal works of mercy to bury the dead.

“This is true not only for the Church’s official ministers, but for everyone involved—from the sales counselors in the office to the groundskeepers,” he said. “I was so touched by the stories [that] our maintenance folks shared with me about their encounters with people grieving in our Catholic cemeteries. As a staff, we wanted time to reflect on our ministry together. Then came the idea to invite our funeral directors who partner with us in this corporate work of mercy. Many parishes that I have visited said they [and we] have included them as well.”

Msgr. Schaeckel said “it is a privilege for a parochial priest and a charity to work with families during their time of grief at the loss of a loved one. Hopefully through our annual Mission Day, we can support and help one another in this wonderful work for the people of God.”

(For more information or to register, call Mary Williams at Our Lady of Peace Cemetery in Indianapolis at 317-574-7438.)
Supreme Court rejects federal effort to prohibit physician-assisted suicide

WASHINGTON (CNS)—In a 6-3 ruling, the Supreme Court on Jan. 17 upheld Oregon’s physician-assisted suicide law, rejecting the U.S. attorney general’s attempt to use federal drug control laws to stop doctors from prescribing lethal doses of medicine to people who are terminally ill.

Writing for the majority, Justice Anthony Kennedy said although the federal government may apply drug laws to states the “authority claimed by the attorney general is both beyond his expertise and incongruous with the statutory purposes and design.”

If the attorney general’s argument were to stand, the government could apply the same logic to other types of medical judgments, Kennedy wrote.

“He could decide whether any particular drug may be used for any particular purpose, or indeed whether a physician who administers any controversial treatment could be” barred from practice, Kennedy wrote. The attorney general would have such power even though the law limits his authority to the registration and control of drugs “and despite the statutory purposes to combat drug abuse and prevent illicit drug trafficking,” he said.

Kennedy was joined in the majority opinion by Justices John Paul Stevens, Sandra Day O’Connor, Stephen Breyer, David Souter and Ruth Bader Ginsberg. Justices John Paul Stevens, Sandra Day O’Connor, Kennedy wrote. The law took effect after a 1997 voter initiative to repeal the statute failed.

Since the law was enacted, about 200 people have committed suicide by following its provisions. The provisions apply to people in the final stages of terminal illness and require a second doctor to confirm the diagnosis. Doctors do not administer the drugs; they only prescribe them.

In 2001, then-Attorney General John Ashcroft issued a directive saying that prescribing drugs limited by the Controlled Substances Act for the purpose of assisted suicide would violate the federal law. The case reached the Supreme Court just as Ashcroft’s resignation was announced in 2004, and current Attorney General Alberto Gonzales continued the case when he took over the office.

The Supreme Court in 1997 upheld the right of states to pass laws prohibiting physician-assisted suicide, but this is the first time it has ruled on Oregon’s statute. Oregon remains the only state to permit physician-assisted suicide.†

Hodges has also come to wonder if his role in the business world, owning a marketing company, is intimately linked to his call to the diaconate.

Perhaps the reason I was chosen for the deacon program was because of my business,” Hodges said. “Maybe God wants me out there because I do travel throughout the state and meet a lot of people. “Maybe he wants a traveling deacon,” he said jokingly.

Ward, who retired shortly before the start of the deacon formation program, recently began working again part time in investment planning.

Despite his multiple commitments, he has found his involvement in his deacon formation ministry assignments a source of great happiness.

“It starts out as a service ministry,” Ward said. “But before long, it’s a joyous ministry and it is a great joy to do it. “I think maybe that’s the joy of the deacon candidacy. It doesn’t take long in virtually anything that I do to find out what a thrill it is to be involved in it.”†

†"Superior cause”—understood though not necessarily named as God—to explain supposed shortcomings of evolutionary science. But that’s not how science should work, the article said.

THE new directory contains up-to-date information about parishes, pastors, parish staff, schools, school staff, religious education staff, archdiocesan administration, offices and agencies, telephone numbers, Mass times, addresses, e-mail addresses, photos of and biographical information about pastors, parish life coordinators, religious women and men ministering in the archdiocese, Catholic chaplaincies, hospitals, colleges and other institutions.

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Ecclesial lay ministry was started 25 years ago

By Sr. Amy H oey, R.S.M.

At their November 2005 meeting, the U.S. bishops approved a statement titled “Called and Gifted: The American Catholic Laity,” they said, “Ecclesial ministers, i.e., laypersons who have prepared for professional ministry in the Church, represent a new development in the life of the Church.”

The document’s concluding paragraph notes that “usually a master’s degree or at least a bachelor’s degree in an appropriate field is preferable.”

“Where do prospective lay ecclesial ministers receive such formation?” The 2005 Catholic Ministry Formation Directory published by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate lists 289 programs in 143 dioceses and 46 states. These programs are sponsored by dioceses, Catholic colleges and universities, seminaries and schools of theology. Some are co-sponsored by dioceses and academic institutions, many are offered at multiple sites, and some are offered online.

“Depending on where they are based, programs offer certificates, associate, bachelor’s and graduate degrees. Wherever located, most programs offer some opportunities for specialization, for example, in religious education, youth ministry and pastoral counseling.”


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## Dioceses help train lay ministers

This Week’s Question

As a lay ecclesial minister, what do you do in your Church ministry? How did you prepare for this role?

“I was trained in a three-year diocesan study program covering theology, ministry and teaching, and I do continuing monthly education.”

(Prof. Marlene Reisenauer, Dickinson, N.D.)

Lend Us Your Voice

“Men and women wait to receive certificates from the bishop during a service marking their completion of the lay ministry program in the Diocese of Gary, Ind. The term lay ecclesial ministry can be applied to a variety of specific roles, such as those of pastoral associates or directors of religious education, youth ministry, liturgy, pastoral music and campus ministry.”

At their November 2005 meeting, the bishops noted. It is “ecclesially relational,” so “ministry is diverse and at the same time profoundly relational.”

The text emphasizes that “lay ecclesial ministers are best positioned to discern local needs and to set standards accordingly, seeking always to provide what best will serve a given pastoral setting.”

It explains that “usually a master’s degree or at least a bachelor’s degree in an appropriate field is preferable.”

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“Depending on where they are based, programs offer certificates, associate, bachelor’s and graduate degrees. Wherever located, most programs offer some opportunities for specialization, for example, in religious education, youth ministry and pastoral counseling.”

The document’s chapter on formation is followed by a chapter on the authorization process, which includes the recommendation that “prayer and ritual can be significant for the lay ecclesial minister and for the community, highlighting the new relationships that the person is beginning in the life of the community.”

“Co-Workers” concludes with a chapter on the ministerial workplace, noting that “lay ecclesial ministers—and indeed all Church employees and volunteers—function in a workplace that shares both the characteristics of a faith community of co-workers as described by St. Paul and the characteristics of a modern organization.”

The document’s concluding paragraph begins: “We are blessed indeed to have such gifted and generous co-workers in the vineyard of the Lord to which we have all been called.”

(Mercy Sister Amy H oey serves on the staff of the U.S. Bishops’ Secretariat for Family, Laity, Women and Youth.)
Cornucopia/Cynthia Dewes

It's a terrible thing to be childless

One of these generations, we'll get it right. That's what makes children, in their hands. And 'grows' and 'grows' their children. They are: They give us more chances to be grateful. It is even when we have the paradigm of the Holy Family an example. Of course, they got it right the first time.

Frankly, I feel sorry for those who choose to be childless because I believe their life options are limited. Sure, they buy their expensive electronic games and doodads, they take on exotic vacations and pretend to listen to hip hop or rap —in other words, they embarrass even their adult peers. But, after all, that's the easy part.

Are they there when everyone's down with chicken pox or very hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, welcomed the stranger, clothed the naked, cared for the ill and visited prisoners. Jesus identifies himself with those in need. He says that those who do such things will do them for him and thus will inherit the kingdom, while those who do not do them will go off to eternal punishment.

In his meditations on the Way of the Cross, the late Pope John Paul II, when writing about Veronica wiping Jesus's face, reminds us, “The Savior leaves his imprint on every single act of charity, as on Veronica’s handkerchief.”

Throughout his public life, Jesus taught us to love our enemies and pray for those who have injured us, and to do others whatever we would have them do to us. And the second greatest commandment, after love of God, is to love our neighbors as ourselves. It should come as no surprise, then, that he is now telling us, at the end of his public life, that we will be judged on how well we treat others.

Does that mean that anyone who has worked in a soup kitchen or welcomed an immigrant or visited a prisoner will be condemned to eternal punishment? I mean, it doesn’t seem like a serious trouble. Let’s hope that Jesus was exaggerating a bit in order to make a point. Nevertheless, he does expect us to see in the needy and to treat them as we would treat him.

In Jesus’s words, the accuser will depart “into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. This is the way to receive the sentence, which has been given, of the picture of hell with devils tending the flames with pitchforks. Jesus doesn’t spell it out specifically, but it sounds like hell, I mean his reference here is to the First Book of Enoch, a Jewish writing but not one that made it into the Old Testament. In that book, it is said of the evil angels and their leader, Semyaza, “In those days they will lead them into the bottom of the fire—and in torment—in the prison [where] they will be locked up forever.”

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Sylvia van der Graaff, Pia di Solenni, Order of Carmelites of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, of Fort Wayne-South Bend Bishop John M. D’Arcy, Alex Jeh, Mica Cayton, Michael Scaperlanda and Erica Bova. Their biographies prove the richness and quality of their backgrounds, and many of their topics are available at The Edith Stein Project.

Additional information can be obtained by contacting one of the following Edith Stein Project organizers: Madeleine Klysan (madeleineklysan@nd.edu) or Catherine Long (clong@nd.edu). Last year’s conference—the first of its kind—was named after a recent one was done in 2005, and the finding is contained in Lay Parish Ministers, written by David DeLambo.

NPLC’s findings point to a number of challenges:

- More Catholics, but fewer priests and fewer parishes—In 1990, the Official Catholic Directory (OCD) reported that there were 55 million Catholics, 52,535 priests and 19,620 parishes. Now there are more than 51 million Catholics, only 42,528 priests and 19,206 parishes.

- Some number of registered parishioners per parish—In 1990, there was an average of 2,351 registered parishioners per parish. That average has not changed much; it is now 2,332. Dell also indicated that this is the increasing number of Hispanics (who are not as likely to register as Anglo Catholics) and that those in parishes also not as likely to join a parish.

- Fewer, larger Masses—With the decreasing number of priests, there has been a reduction in the number of Masses offered each weekend and an increase in the average attendance of Masses. In 1990, the average weekend Mass attendance per parish was 1,099. Now it is 1,326. Dell also indicate that parishioners are responding to these challenges. They are stepping into leadership roles making improvements in their parishes.

- Increased number of lay ecclesial ministers—Over half of nearly all employed lay people who worked at least half-time in parish ministry. Now, two-thirds of all lay ministers also has risen, from 21,569 in 1990 to 29,146 in 1997 and 30,632 in 2005. As the percentage has increased, there has declined (from 41 percent in 1990 to just 16 percent in 2005, the percentage who are lay women has increased (from 44 to 64 percent), as has the percentage of lay men (from 14 to 20 percent).

- Increased planning—Over the past 10 years, parishes seem to be doing more planning.

- One indication of this is that the percentage of parishes that now have an average of 92 percent.

- More use of computers—With all of these changes and the availability of new technology, parish councils are increasingly turning to computers for help. In 1990, 6 percent of parishes had an Internet connection. Now, 55 percent do. In 1997, 78 percent of parishes used computers to manage their revenues and personnel information.

- A shrinking number of priests and decreasing number of priests. But lay men and women are addressing these challenges and using modern technology as they plan for the future.

James D. Davidson is professor of sociology at Purdue University in West Lafayette. 

Faithful Lines/Shirley Vogler Meister

Our Dame project helps redefine feminism

How can the dignity and the vocations of women be fullfilled and lived out in the modern world? An opportunity to better understand this question and its answers will be available at a symposium, The Edith Stein Project: Redefining Feminism on campus at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Ind.

Through presentations and discussions, this intercollegiate conference will look at how the Catholic Church is under attack in our culture. It will address the issues of eating disorders, violence against women, abortion and other pertinent topics, and it will approach how women can better live their vocations in the 21st century.

The Edith Stein Project, organized by a group of Notre Dame undergraduates, faces today’s issues from a Catholic perspective, but also provides an opportunity to be involved with a student group called “The Identity Project.” This promotes the dignity of all people, women. It receives support from Notre Dame’s Right to Life Club and the Center for Ethics and Culture.

As many readers know, Edith Stein (1891-1942) was a respected educator and Christian philosopher who was beatified as a martyr (1891-1942) was a respected educator and Christian philosopher who was beatified as a martyr and using modern technology as they plan challenges.

Another sign of increased planning is the growing number of priests, which has reached an all-time high of 92 percent. Another sign of increased planning is the growth of mission statements in 1990, only 29 percent of parishes had mission statements. By 1997, half did. In 2005, 78 percent did.

- More use of computers—With the increasing number of priests, there has been a shrinking number of priests. But lay men and women are addressing these challenges and using modern technology as they plan for the future.
The reading speaks of Jonah’s visit to Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire, located roughly in the region of modern-day Syria. He was unprepared for God’s command to preach conversion. Preaching conversion in Nineveh was a tall order, and the Jews who first heard this reading knew exactly how difficult the assignment was there. No city on earth had a worse reputation for bloodlust and cruelty. Yet the climax of the story was there. No city on earth had a better opportunity to change. No city on earth had a greater assignment.

The City of Conversion

Over the centuries, many neighboring powers invaded and overpowered the Holy Land. However, none of the invaders matched the Assyrians for bloodlust and cruelty. Yet the story of the city is the conversion of the city.

For its second reading this weekend, the Church offers us a passage from the First Epistle to the Corinthians.

Paul had a challenge in leading the Corinthian Christians to a fully devout Christian life. The city was in reality what Nineveh was symbolically to the ancient Jews. Corinth was known around the Roman imperial world as a center of vice and licentiousness. It was a noteworthy distinction, since vice and licentiousness prevailed throughout the empire.

The Apostle calls upon the Christians of Corinth to remember that time passes quickly and that life is short. They have before them two options.

The first option is life in Jesus, a life that is everlasting, but it requires fidelity of the Jews. The Gospel of Mark provides the last reading. It is the story of the Lord’s calling of Andrew, Simon Peter, James and John to be Apostles. This story has a parallel in Matthew, Chapter 4.

The first early Christians found stories of the Twelve especially important. It was from the Apostles that the Gospel of Jesus was spread far and wide. The Apostles were the links with Jesus. Therefore, it was vital to assure and present their credentials to people. They were called by Christ, had heard the message of Christ and had remained loyal to Christ.

The condition of the call is interesting. The Apostles mentioned in this reading were unprepared. The call was sudden. Yet it touched them so deeply that they instantly and fervently responded in the affirmative.

Reflection

During Advent, the Church called us to celebrate the birth of Christ. Two weeks later, it led us to the celebration of the feast of the Epiphany of the Lord. A day later, it offered us the feast of the Lord’s baptism by John in the Jordan River.

All these celebrations, among the greatest of the Church’s year of worship, teach critical lessons about Jesus. He is human, the son of Mary. He is the Son of God. He is the Savior, assuming our sins even though Jesus was without sin.

Now the Church moves into the process of asking us to respond. It tells us that Jesus called certain persons for particular roles. He calls us. Whatever the role, the knoelse must be faithfulness to the Gospel.

No one is too sinful to be beyond redemption if they sincerely choose to be redeemed. To an extent, we all live in Nineveh. Yet the Lord reaches out to us in mercy and love.

It is to our advantage to respond affirmatively. Death is the other option. The choice belongs to us.

My Journey to God

Epiphany

You can begin anew. The old regrets, the misplaced hope, can be as if they never were. I promise you.

You bear a weight of misery. Of squandered time and choices lost, of failure and of worthlessness. It need not be.

I do not see you so.

My eyes behold a precious thing:

I do not see you so.

My child, beloved, called into being.

I would not have it so.

I assure you. Can be as if they never were.

The past is gone. I see it not.

(Linda Abner is a member of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Indianapolis. An icon painting by Belgian Oblate Father Wilfred Joyce shows a woman with outstretched hands.)

Prelate’s coat of arms indicates episcopal status

Prelate’s coat of arms is a vestige of a custom that began in a militaristic, political context. Insignia on military dress and equipment became customary in the 12th century. When war and its administration began to grow sophisticated, a single emblem was needed to distinguish one commander from another. Soon the blazon design appeared also on seals, for example, as evidence of authenticity of documents.

As you note, Catholic prelates, who often held political and religious as well as military authority, adopted the use of coats of arms and related seals, not only for their value in battle. Prelatial coats of arms served to indicate episcopal status and ecclesiastical approval for such things as books, vestments and church buildings. Gradually, they also served as devices in architecture and other art forms.

The number and color of tassels on the “shields” denote the prelate’s rank as bishop, archbishop or cardinal. Coats of arms, whether for Catholic or secular use, have a complex history, going through numerous evolutions. As the New Catholic Encyclopedia notes, however, after nine centuries of existence ecclesiastical heraldry is alive and will continue flourishing. Whatever its origins, apart from the decorative attractiveness, its function today is primarily juridical, relating to law and its administration.

Our family would like to know why the white cloth is placed on top of the casket at a funeral Mass.

I told them that when our Lord was taken from the cross and laid in the grave, his body was wrapped with a white cloth.

Is this the reason? (Maryland)

At that may be one interpretation, but the primary reason has to do with baptism. When the deceased Catholic was baptized as an infant or adult, water was poured, of course, and a white cloth or dress was placed on the body.

The ritual with the cloth is inspired by the words of St. Paul, “For all you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Gal 3:27).

Ceremonies at the beginning of the funerary liturgy are intended to recall that event, which begins our Christian life, to thank God for his goodness and to remind everyone present of our own baptism commitments as we continue our life journey.

The words suggested to accompany these rites focus on this meaning. As the water is sprinkled on the casket, the priest says, “In the waters of baptism [this man or woman] died with Christ and rose with him to new life. May he/she now share with him eternal glory.”

As the pall is placed over the body, the ritual has suggested words like this: “On the day of baptism, he/she put on Christ. In the day of Christ’s coming, may he/she be clothed with glory.”

(Q a free brochure describing basic Catholic prayers, beliefs and moral precepts is available by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Father John Dietzen, Box 5515, Peoria, IL 61612. Questions may be sent to Father Dietzen at the same address or by e-mail in care of jdietzen@aol.com.)

Readers may submit prose or poetry for faith column

The Criterion invites readers to submit original prose or poetry relating to faith or experiences of prayer for possible publication in the “My Journey to God” column. Seasonal reflections also are appreciated. Please include name, address, parish and telephone number with submissions.

Send material for consideration to “My Journey to God,” The Criterion, P.O. Box 14, 517 W. Main Street, Indianapolis, IN 46206 or e-mail to criterion@archindy.org.
Bishop Gumbleton says priest abused him when he was a teenager

WASHINGTON (CNS)—At a legislative hearing and a press conference on Jan. 11 in Columbus, Ohio, Auxiliary Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton of Detroit said he was sexually abused by a priest when he was a teenage seminarian.

He called for passage of pending legislation in Ohio that would open a one-year window for civil lawsuits against the Church for clergy sexual abuse of minors that occurred many years ago.

The bishops of Ohio oppose the one-year window although they support other parts of the bill, including a longer statute of limitations for lawsuits based on claims of childhood sexual abuse.

Bishop Gumbleton, 75, did not name the now-deceased priest who molested him some 60 years ago when he was a freshman or sophmore at Detroit’s Sacred Heart Seminary High School. He called the abuse “very inappropriate” behavior by the priest but said it was “minor” compared with the kind of abuse many other victims have suffered.

He said that on two or three occasions the priest, a faculty member at the seminary, took him and another seminarian to a cabin and would start wrestling matches with them. When he and the priest wrestled, “he would put his hand in my pants,” he told the Detroit Free Press shortly before he flew to Columbus to testify in favor of the Ohio legislation.

Bishop Gumbleton said he did not feel traumatized or psychologically damaged by the priest’s actions.

“Mainly, I didn’t realize what was happening. I was very naive at the time,” he told the Free Press.

The bishop, who is noted for his peace activism and extensive involvement in social justice issues, is believed to be the first bishop to state publicly that he had been abused by a minor by a priest.

In his prepared testimony before the House Judiciary Committee of the Ohio General Assembly, he urged passage of a bill, previously approved by the Senate, that would amend Ohio law on abuse and neglect of minors in several ways.

It would include clerics as mandatory reporters of known or reasonably suspected abuse of a minor. It would extend the statute of limitations for suits on damages caused by childhood sexual abuse, currently two years past the age of 18, to 20 years past the age of 18.

In addition, for one year from its effective date, the new legislation would open a window for lawsuits over past abuse going back as far as 35 years. Claimants would be able to introduce new suits for which no claim was previously made or reintroduce suits previously filed that had been dismissed because of the current statute of limitations.

In testimony on behalf of the Ohio Catholic Conference last December, Bishop Frederick F. Campbell of Columbus said the bishops supported an earlier version of the bill that did not have the one-year “look-back” window, but they oppose the window provision.

“It undermines the fundamental right to a fair and just defense, it is bad public policy that undermines the stability of law and it does not protect children,” he said.

The conference represents all the state’s bishops.

In his Jan. 11 testimony, a copy of which he provided to Catholic News Service, Bishop Gumbleton told the committee he spoke not in any official capacity but only as a man with 50 years of pastoral and administrative experience as a priest, including 38 years as a bishop.

“I also speak from my experience of listening and attempting to be responsive to the tragic stories of victims of sexual abuse,” he said. “Finally, I speak out of my own experience of being exploited as a teenager through inappropriate touching by a priest.”

He told the committee that he believes that “some perpetrators have not yet been brought to account. That is why I support the one-year civil window. I do believe that the abusers need to be exposed. I also believe that this can only be assured if the possibility exists to bring these matters into a civil court of law.”

He also argued that “by bringing these cases to full exposure and full accountability, we have a better possibility of restoring credibility in Church leaders as moral teachers and guides.”

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He acknowledged that bringing old cases to court “may cause pain, embarrassment and sacrifice for our Church” but suggested that settling all such cases is “the only way to protect children and to heal the brokenness within the Church.”

In a statement responding to Bishop Gumbleton’s testimony, the Catholic Conference of Ohio said, “Ohio’s bishops continue to staunchly support all provisions of Senate Bill 17 with the exception of the look-back provision, which they believe is retroactive legislation specifically prohibited by the Ohio Constitution.

“Healing is not achieved by lawsuits but by working with those who have suffered abuse, ministering to them pastorally and helping to meet their individual needs,” the statement added. “This is what Ohio’s dioceses and its bishops are doing and will continue to do.

In Detroit, Cardinal Adam J. Maida said he was especially saddened to learn that Bishop Gumbleton was apparently an abuse victim many years ago. “The Detroit Archdiocese was never made aware of this,” he said.

Msgr. Ricardo Bass, Cardinal Maida’s delegate for clergy matters, took the occasion to urge any victim of clergy abuse in the Detroit Archdiocese to contact the archdiocesan victim assistance coordinator.

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Pope condemns efforts to offer abortion pill, urges family protection

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—In a talk that touched on controversial election-year issues in Italy, Pope Benedict XVI condemned efforts to introduce the RU-486 abortion pill and urged steps to protect the traditional family based on marriage.

The pope made the remarks in a speech to civil officials of the Rome region. His comments prompted an immediate flurry of reactions across the political spectrum in Italy, where general elections will take place in April.

The pope began by thanking the officials and the population of Rome for the strong religious sentiments they showed during the death and funeral of Pope John Paul II last year. That kind of spiritual intensity, he said, should bear fruit in the civil arena, especially on family issues. In particular, he said, young couples and their families need support—for example, in paying for housing, nursery schools and kindergartens.

Such assistance for the traditional family should not be seen as a concession to Catholic morality, but as respect for “elementary truths regarding our common humanity,” he said.

“It is a grave error to obscure the value and functions of the legitimate family founded on marriage, attributing to other forms of union an improper legal recognition for which, in reality, there is no real social need,” he said.

Romano Prodi, head of Italy’s center-left coalition, recently came out in support of legal rights for long-term unwed couples, provoking a storm of objections by the Vatican and Italian Church leaders. Italy has resisted legal recognition of homosexual marriage, which has been adopted in some European countries.

Prodi, who will oppose Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi’s ruling center-right coalition in the April elections, said the issue was not gay marriage as such, but the need for “elementary truths regarding our common humanity,” he said.

“Nearly 10,000 Italian couples who have lived together for years without social benefits.”

New Jersey passes death penalty moratorium measure

TRENTON, N.J. (CNS)—Archbishop John J. Myers of Newark praised the New Jersey Legislature for passing a death penalty moratorium bill, calling it “a giant step” toward finding another way to punish criminals and protect its citizens.

“The state of New Jersey took a giant step in affirming what the bishops have long stated: that a developed and civil society should examine alternative processes for protecting its citizens and punishing effectively those who have committed grave wrongs,” he said.

The archbishop, who is also president of the state’s Catholic conference, issued his statement after the bill passed the state Senate by a vote of 30-6 in December. New Jersey Gov. Richard Codey signed the bill Jan. 12.

The bill suspends executions while a task force studies how the death penalty has been applied in the state. New Jersey would become the third state to enact such a moratorium.

Under executive orders, Illinois and Maryland previously suspended executions while similar studies were conducted. Although there are 10 prisoners on New Jersey’s death row, the last state execution took place in 1963.

A task force now has until November to study whether the state’s capital punishment law serves a legitimate public purpose, how its costs compare to other sentences and whether it is imposed fairly. They also could make recommendations about whether alternatives would protect public safety and address “social and penological interests,” such as the interests of victims’ families. *

In his address to the political leaders, the pope called for protection of the unborn. He said it was especially important for the state to provide concrete forms of assistance to pregnant women who face financial and other difficulties. Furthermore, he said, the state should avoid introducing “drugs that hide in some way the serious nature of abortion” as a “choice against life.” The pope was referring to attempts in Italy to introduce RU-486 on an experimental basis, which has also surfaced as an election issue.

The pope’s comments brought praise from Italian Health Minister Francesco Storace, who last year blocked some regions from experimenting with the RU-486 drug and who wants pro-life groups to be allowed to counsel women seeking abortions.

Leaders of Italy’s Communist Refoundation Party said the pope was interfering in political questions.

“No one wants to question the value of the family. Instead, the legal recognition of civil unions aims to respect the family in all its forms,” said Ivan Tedeschi, a leading official of the party in Rome. *

Pope Benedict XVI looks on during a meeting with political leaders of the Rome region at the Vatican on Jan. 12. The pope spoke out against abortion and urged steps to protect the traditional family based on marriage.
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