In Ankara, Turkey, pope offers friendship to Muslim population

ANKARA, Turkey (CNS)—Acknowledging that his four-day trip to Turkey would be largely symbolic, Pope Benedict XVI opened his visit by paying respect to the Turkish state and extending a hand of friendship to its predominantly Muslim population.

On the plane from Rome on Nov. 28, Pope Benedict told reporters, “We must not exaggerate; one cannot expect great results in just three days. The value [of the trip] I would say is symbolic, the fruit of the encounters themselves, of encounters in friendship and respect.”

The pope’s first formal speech in Turkey came in an address at the government’s religious affairs directorate, which controls Turkey’s mosques and Muslim schools, and implements government policy on religion.

Before giving their speeches in the building’s auditorium, Pope Benedict and Ali Bardakoglu, the office’s director, met for about half an hour with members of the papal entourage and Turkish Muslim officials, including the grand muftis of Ankara and Istanbul.

They spoke calmly and warmly of their visions of the importance of interreligious dialogue and greater understanding between Catholics and Muslims.

During the conversation, the pope told his Muslim hosts: “There are so many wars, so much human blood shed every day. Religion should be a force of peace and reconciliation.”

“In the wake of continuing anger among some Muslims over the pope’s use of a quotation criticizing Islam in September, Pope Benedict used his speech at the religious affairs directorate to pay his respects to the positive values promoted by Islam and to affirm the Catholic Church’s longstanding commitment to promoting peace and understanding among religions,” the state news agency Anadolu quoted him as saying.

In a lighthearted moment, Holy Family Shelter director Bill Bickel, left, pretends to take a cracker from Tonika Mitchum, the 1-year-old daughter of Jolanda Mitchum, second from left. Tonika and Jolanda reside at the shelter. Tonika is held by Nigiy Christos, Bickel’s administrative assistant.

In Turkey, pope offers friendship to Muslim population

Parents’ example leads Bill Bickel to help homeless families

By John Shaughnessy

Some memories of childhood never leave us. They stay with us through the years, guiding the way we live our lives, the way we lead our families and sometimes even the careers we choose.

So it is with Bill Bickel. As he talks about his child- hood and his family, he paints a picture similar to the ones that the late American artist Norman Rockwell used to create.

In Bickel’s childhood memories, there is the street where he grew up, overflowing with kids who were always available for another game, another adventure. In Bickel’s childhood memories, there is his family of 10 led by his parents, who showered their six sons and two daughters with love and patience.

It was a world where faith and family mattered, where love and hope reigned. As you listen to Bickel talk about his life as a child, you begin to understand how it inspires his work as the director of Holy Family Shelter and Holy Family Transitional Housing, part of Catholic Charities Indianapolis.

The childhood influence is there when the 45-year-old Bickel talks about one of the success stories at the shelter for homeless families. It’s the story of the young mother who was born into a family of drug users, who became one herself and ended up homeless with her children because of her drug use.

“She never looked at the drugs as being the cause of being homeless until she came in here,” Bickel says. “She began a recovery program, we did a monitoring of her and she began working on the employment end. She quit drugs, she ended up employed and she now has a home. Her kids got their mother back, too.”

Bickel’s childhood influence also comes through in his story about two other residents who came to the shelter for help—a single father and his son with special needs.

“The father went through a messy divorce,” Bickel recalls. “He has custody of the child. In the midst of the divorce, the father has a car accident. He loses his job. He loses his house. He’s here for six to seven weeks. Then, in two years of living in our transitional housing program, he paid off $15,000 in debt, which was more than the accident he had. It’s remarkable how hard he worked and how hard he tried to keep his family together.”

Bickel shares each of those stories with emotion and awe—two characteristics that also mark his memories of growing up in South Bend, Ind.

“A fierce wind whips outside the Holy Family Shelter on this late autumn afternoon. The day began with a wind chill factor of temperatures in the teens—a harbinger of the bitter winter weather that Bickel knows makes being homeless an even greater hardship.

Inside the shelter, a small sign receives prominent display in Bickel’s office.

‘For the love of Christ and the Word of God’

The sign reads, “Compassion is not bending toward the underprivileged from a privileged position; it is not reaching out from on high to those who are less fortunate below; it is not a gesture of sympathy or pity for those who fail to make it in the upward pull. On the contrary, compassion means going directly to those people and places where suffering is most acute, and building a home there.”

That’s what the archdiocese did when they opened the Holy Family Shelter in November of 1984, Bickel says.

“At the time, there was no place in the community where a homeless family could remain intact,” he says. ‘Starting this shelter was a very dignified approach to helping families, page 9’

Preparin g for Christ’s birth

Advent Wreath Prayer is designed to help families, page 10
New Saint Mary-of-the-Woods scholarship honors saint

A new scholarship at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College will honor the school’s foundress, St. Theodora Guérin, and give exemplary female students the opportunity to compete for renewable scholarships valued at more than $14,000.

Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College was founded in 1840 by then Mother Theodore. An entrepreneurial leader who was dedicated to serving all people, regardless of race, religion or background, she was passionate about educating women and preparing them to become leaders.

To recognize students who embody the principles by which the saint lived and served, the college has created the St. Mother Theodore Guérin Scholarship Competition. The school will award 10 renewable scholarships, ranging in value from $13,000 to $20,000, to students nationwide who have the desire to use their unique experiences, aptitudes and abilities to make a difference in their local communities and beyond.

“For more than 165 years, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College has excelled at graduating confident women leaders,” said St. Joseph of Carondelet Sister Joan Lescinski, school president. “We created this competition to identify those students who, like St. Mother Theodore Guérin, have the knowledge, skills and determination to make an impact on the world around them.”

To be considered for a scholarship, students must submit a completed application form, a high school transcript, SAT or ACT scores, two reference sheets with letters of recommendation (one from a school official and one from a community member), and a written essay.

Any female student enrolled in grade 12 in a public, private or parochial school is eligible. Female homeschooled students in grade 12 are also encouraged to apply. All application materials must be postmarked by Jan. 26, 2007, to be considered.

Up to 25 finalists will be invited to the campus for a competition on Feb. 9-10, 2007. The scholarship weekend will include a personal interview judged by a panel of college representatives.

“We are looking for young women who have the potential to become future leaders, and we realize that a personal interview provides an opportunity to learn more about a student’s potential than a resume, grade point average and test scores can provide,” said Theresa Denton, chief enrollment services and marketing officer.

(For more information or to obtain a scholarship application, contact Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College at 812-535-5106 or 800-926-SMWC, go to www.smwc.edu or e-mail smwcadms@smwc.edu.)

Tell us how Catholic education has made a difference in a life

Do you have a short story or anecdote from your school about the difference that Catholic education has made to a student or students?

Are you a teacher at a Catholic school in the archdiocese who wants to share your thoughts about why you choose to teach in a Catholic school—and the difference you hope you are making?

Do you have a fun or light-hearted story or anecdote about life in a Catholic school?

Has your school or a student in your school achieved any kind of recognition or background, she was passionate about educating women and preparing them to become leaders.

If you can answer “yes” to any of these questions, The Criterion is inviting you to share your stories, thoughts and achievements for possible inclusion in our annual Catholic Schools Week Supplement.

Although the supplement won’t be published until January, we are accepting your stories, thoughts and achievements starting right now. And the sooner you send us your responses, the better the chance that your submission will be a part of the supplement.

Send submissions to John Shughrue, assistant editor, in care of The Criterion, P.O. Box 1717, Indianapolis, IN 46206 or send him an e-mail at jshughrue@archindy.org. Please include a daytime phone number where you can be reached.

Readers may share Christmas memories

Again this year, The Criterion invites readers to submit personal holiday memories for inclusion in the annual Christmas Supplement, which will be published in the Dec. 22 issue.

Christmas memories should be brief stories related to faith, family and friends. They may be written about humorous or serious topics.

Submissions should include the writer’s name, address, parish telephone number, and should be mailed to The Criterion, P.O. Box 1717, Indianapolis, IN 46206 or sent by e-mail to criterion@archindy.org by the Dec. 5 deadline.

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By Sean Gallagher

"Peace on earth, peace on earth, shanti, salam, shalom."

These words reverberated again and again in SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis during the seventh annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Service held there on Nov. 21, just two days before Thanksgiving.

It was the text of a sung refrain that the hundreds who gathered at the service were invited to sing after the prayers offered by representatives of seven religious communities in Indianapolis.

At the beginning of the service, Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein addressed those present.

"At this time of year, we say 'thank you' for the many blessings which we have received," he said. "As people of faith, we commit ourselves to share our gifts with others, including foreigners and those who live on the margins and are uncared for in our culture."

"We share our lives out of gratitude to God, who knows us by name and who loves us."

The prayers offered during the service included a chanted passage from the Quran, one set in a Sephardic Jewish folk song, a prayer of thanksgiving chanted by a Greek Orthodox priest and a Sikh hymn accompanied by traditional Indian instruments.

Imam Michael Saahir, the resident imam of the Nur-Allah Islamic Center in Indianapolis, gave a reflection on the religious meaning of thanksgiving during the service.

"Thanksgiving has its expression in many faith traditions: Islamic, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Jewish, Hindu and others," he said. "Every belief system must give thanks to the one Creator who created us all."

Saahir noted, however, that the "spiritual purity" of giving thanks is often lost in the midst of the secular and materialistic aspects of the days surrounding Thanksgiving.

"Having an Interfaith Thanksgiving Service is a blessing because it offers an opportunity for each faith tradition to witness how the other faithful remember to give thanks to God," he said. "Therefore, it reminds each of us of the spiritual purity that we need to remember God with sincere gratitude."

Father Anastasios Gounaris, presbyter of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Parish in Indianapolis, has been a frequent participant in the annual interfaith service.

Present this year as well, he echoed Saahir's appreciation of different prayer traditions in comments prior to the service, saying that it is important to "recognize the gifts that are contained within our brothers and sisters, and in their respective traditions."

"We all have something to learn from each other," Gounaris said. "K. P. Singh, a member of the Sikh Satsang of Indianapolis, seemed to have learned something from Indiana's first saint."

In his prayer, Singh singled out St. Theodora Guérin as one of the many "enlightened teachers [and] illumined spiritual guides" for whom he gave thanks.

"We proudly add the name of Indiana St. Theodore Guérin for her living testimony," Singh said, "and inspiration to countless millions across faith and cultural associations [and] boundaries."

"Thanksgiving has its expression in many faith traditions."
Parish communities must be stable but also in transition

Catholic parishes in the United States have experienced many changes in the past 40 years: liturgy, staffing, ministry, Mass attendance, finances, ethnic and demographic shifts. Many regions of our country, including central and southern Indiana, have witnessed parish closings and mergers. Other areas of the United States—especially in the south and west but also right here in our archdiocese—face the urgent demand for new parishes to meet the needs of shifting Catholic populations. Resources are a real challenge in every case. New parishes require more human and financial resources than most dioceses have readily available. Merged, clustered or closed parishes have facilities and other assets that must be used appropriately.

A recent communication from the Vatican to the bishops of the United States seeks to prevent the diocesan Church from making these kinds of decisions. The Church must be able to reach out to serve the faithful which once constituted that parish or parishes. The mission of every parish is to provide for the spiritual needs of parishioners. Two things stand out. First, a parish is more than the sum of its physical parts—its geography, its facilities and finances. A parish is an ecclesial community of faith that is intimately connected to a wider community, the diocese or local Church. The mission of every parish is to serve the spiritual needs of its people. If it becomes necessary for pastoral reasons to suppress a parish (to merge with one or more other parishes), the bishop has the obligation to make sure that the spiritual needs of parishioners are met even if this means the physical plant may be closed and the parish must continue to be provided for in accord with their rights in law.

What about the assets of a closed or merged parish? How are these to be dealt with?

According to Cardinal Castrillon, “the patrimony and obligations of the closed parishes must follow the faith in an equitable and proportionate fashion.” This means that the physical assets of a parish that is closed or merged must follow the parishioners to their new spiritual home. The practical implications of this clarification of Church law are obvious. No bishop can close a parish simply to gain access to its property or financial resources. But what are the pastoral implications of this view of what a parish is? What does this interpretation of the disposition and use of parish property tell us about the role of parish communities in carrying out the mission of the Church?

Let’s be Catholic. You and me. Let’s do what Catholics do. Or are supposed to do. Let’s see Jesus in other people—even that person who sometimes annoys the devil out of us. Let’s be joyful, and let’s fill others with joy, too. Let’s go to Mass every week. Let’s care for those who are hungry and for those who are homeless, and then go a step further and join with others to end hunger and homelessness.

Let’s insist that no one in our country will ever have to go without medical care or prescription drugs because they can’t afford them. Let’s neither brag about our giving nor whine about paying taxes. Let’s do stuff at our parishes. When the call goes out for help with something that sounds like we could do, let’s volunteer. On the job, let’s amaze people whose lives touch ours because we are so darn easy to work with.

Let’s comfort those who mourn. When we get the choice between conflict and compromise, let’s choose the latter.

Let’s be the kindest people in the building, the nicest neighbors. Let’s get a reputation for doing things for others without expecting anything in return.

Let’s just be still at times and have a conversation with God—and let’s listen. Let’s let God do most of the talking.

Let’s be the friends others call when they need help because they always know we will imitate the Good Samaritan.

When we have an occasion to really give somebody a piece of our mind, let’s be merciful instead.

This Advent, let’s just not put an Advent wreath out as a decoration; let’s gather the family each week of the Advent season and pray that beautiful ritual together.

Let’s invite our children, grand-children, neighbors, co-workers to activities at our parish—the spiritual programs as well as the social ones.

Let’s remember to say grace before every meal—even at restaurants. Let’s vote for candidates to elected office who most nearly reflect Catholic values. Let’s say a prayer every morning when we wake and every night as we get into bed.

Let’s be known as the most humble person everybody knows.

Let’s apply Jesus’ directive to welcome the stranger to those who come to our community—and our country—in search of freedom and a better life.

Let’s say the rosary at least once a week. When Lent comes around, let’s get ashes on Ash Wednesday morning and allow them to mark us as Catholic all day.

Let’s decide upon a Lenten sacrifice or action and let’s keep that commitment.

Let’s make time to go to the Stations of the Cross so we can walk the Lenten journey more closely with Jesus in his suffering.

Let’s not meet on Fridays during Lent.

Let’s try our best to live out the Beatitudes.

Let’s take advantage of opportunities to grow in our faith, to learn more about this God we say we believe in.

Let’s re-learn the Ten Commandments and if we can’t, let’s re-learn them.

Let’s take advantage of the cleansing power of the sacrament of reconciliation.

When the parish pledge drive comes around, let’s think not only of all the bills our parish has to pay, but let’s reflect on all that you and I have been blessed with by God and increase what we were thinking about giving this year.

Let’s visit with some elderly folks. Let’s not find fault in others. Let’s trust in God’s plan for each of us.

Let’s listen to our conscience. Let’s be the ones who stand up for and protect life at every stage.

Let’s not value money and things, but instead let’s value being respected. Let’s befriended someone—or a group of people—who no one else seems to want to even live near.

Let’s love our spouses. Let’s honor our parents. Let’s cherish our children—and everybody else’s children, too.

Let’s forgive those who have hurt us.

Let’s use our pro-active abilities the way God intended them to be used.

Let’s not gossip.

Let’s love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul and all our mind and let’s love our neighbor as ourselves.

Let’s tell other people why we are Catholic.

(Bob Zyskowski is associate publisher of The Catholic Spirit, newspaper of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis.)

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(Bob Zyskowski is associate publisher of The Catholic Spirit, newspaper of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis.)
**ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO DANIEL M. BUECHLEIN, O.S.B.**

**SEEKING THE FACE OF THE LORD**

**BUSCANDO LA CARA DEL SEÑOR**

Let Mary be a down-to-earth model for us this Advent

Recently, I was given a book of Advent readings, *A Midnight Clear: Stories for the Advent Season* (Wallace, Waznak, DeBona, *Eleva tu corazón, Paulus Press*). In the book, the author has presented a story about a little girl, Raquel, who needed help so that Joseph could be free to go to the temple to be registered with his wife, Mary. Joseph had to go to the temple because the angel announced that Mary was with child and He was the Son of God. When Joseph found out, he was shocked and his heart was moved by the angel’s message.

Raquel, who was a handmaid of the Lord, as a young woman of faith, received the message of the Archangel Gabriel and responded to it. She immediately left her home in order to assist her elder cousin, Elizabeth, in the last months of her own pregnancy. From prayer and an encounter with God’s messenger, Mary was moved to an act of charity.

Y sin embargo respondió: “Yo soy la sierva del Señor.” Mientras comenzamos la temporada del Adviento, camino a la Navidad, quiero proponer a María, la sierva del Señor como nuestro modelo práctico. María era una criada sencilla de Nazaret que cambió todo en su vida, el corazón de ella fue de su casa para ayudar a su prima necesitada. De su casa para ayudar a su prima mayor Isabel, en el último mes de su propio embarazo. De su oración y su encuentro con el mensajero de Dios, María pasa a la caridad práctica. No podemos asumir que fue un gesto fácil de su parte. Viajar sola en la Palestina de sus días era primitivo y escabroso. En lugar de preocuparse por el desafío impactante que cambió todo en su vida, el corazón de María estaba con su prima necesitada. Ella, la Sierva del Señor, representó lo mismo para Isabel.

La intención del Arzobispo Buechlein es un llamado a una nueva inspiración en nuestra fe. Se trata de una época ideal cargada con abundante gracia nueva para renovar nuestra práctica de la oración: participación en la Encarnación, así como en la oración en privado. Es una época de gracia renovada en la que podemos prestar atención a los empujones internos del corazón para realizar obras de caridad adicionales. Es una época para enseñarle a nuestros hijos que ellos puedan enseñar la fe católica a nuestros niños y puedan ayudarles a oír y contestar la llamada de Dios para ser vir en la Iglesia, sobre todo como sacerdotes o religiosos.
Events Calendar

December 1

Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Church, St. Vienna, Indianapolis. Lumen Dei meeting. Mass, 6:30 a.m., breakfast and program at Finn Hall. 30 members, 51 guests. Information: 317-453-9015, or lumen_dei@scyolglobal.org.


December 1-2

SS. Francis and Edward Parish, 5901 Olive Branch Road, Greenwood. “Why Be Catholic When You Can Be Anything Else?”, Advent semin- ar. Patrick Madrid, presenter. Fri. 7-9 p.m.; Sat. 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m., free wake-up. Information: 317-663-1117 or e-mail francisandedward@yahoo.com.

Saint Meinrad Archabbey and Convent, 200 Hill Drive, St. Meinrad. “Welcome All Wonders,” 3 p.m. Information: 800-682-0988 or e-mail news@saintmeinrad.edu.

St. Meinrad Archabbey and Convent, 200 Hill Drive, St. Meinrad. “Advent Choral Cantata,” 7:30 p.m. Information: 800-682-0988 or e-mail news@saintmeinrad.edu.

St. Meinrad Archabbey Library exhibit, “Deacon and Priestly Vocations.” Group discussion, all times CST, Mon., Thurs., 8 a.m.-noon, 1-5 p.m., 7-10 p.m., Fri. 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Sat. 9 a.m.-1 p.m., Sun. 9 a.m.-7 p.m. Information: 800-682-0988 or www.saintmeinrad.edu.

December 2

Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. “Holiday Shoppe,” 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Information: 317-788-7581 or e-mail benedictinn@yahoo.com.

December 3

St. Meinrad Archabbey Library exhibit, “Deacon and Priestly Vocations,” all times CST, Mon., Thurs., 8 a.m.-noon, 1-5 p.m., 7-10 p.m., Fri. 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Sat. 9 a.m.-1 p.m., Sun. 9 a.m.-7 p.m. Information: 800-682-0988 or www.saintmeinrad.edu.

December 4

St Mark the Evangelist Parish, 535 E. Edgeway Drive, Indianapolis. “Divorce and Beyond program,” “Coping with Divorce during the Holidays,” 7:30 p.m., first of six weekly ses- sions. Information: 317-236-8616.

December 5

Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. “Christmas Dinner,” 6:30 p.m. Information: 317-788-7581 or e-mail benedictinn@yahoo.com.

December 6

Our Lady of the Greenwood Church, 335 W. Meridian St., Indianapolis. Christmas Retreat,” 4 p.m., free admission. Information: 317-636-5571.

December 7

Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. “Divorce and Beyond program,” “Coping with Divorce during the Holidays,” 7:30 p.m., first of six weekly ses- sions. Information: 317-236-8616.

December 9

St. Mark Parish, 1437 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. “Gloria Deo;” concert of sacred Advent and Christ- mas music, 7:30 p.m. Information: 317-568-3419.

December 10

Our Lady of Peace Mausoleum and Cemetery, 1900 W. 43rd St., Indianapolis. “A Table for Three,” 6:30 p.m., $18 adults, $12 senior citizens, $8 students. Information: 317-983-6042.

December 11

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 535 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. “Christmas Dinner and Concert,” Tony Avellana, contemporary Catholic musician, dinner 6:30 p.m., concert 8 p.m., $35 per person. Information: 317-545-7681 or www.archindy.org/fatima.

December 12

St. Michael the Archangel Chapel, 335 W. Meridian St., Indianapolis. Help of God’s Precious Infants Pro-Life. Mass, 8:30 a.m., followed by rosary outside abortion clinic and Benediction at church. Information: Archdiocesan Office for Pro-Life Ministry, 317-256-5026 or 800-382-9836, ext. 1569.

December 13


December 14

St. Michael the Archangel Chapel, 335 W. Meridian St., Indianapolis. St. Michael Choir Christmas Mass, 4 p.m., freewill donation. Information: 317-923-7359 or e-mail kevin@spring4.com.

December 15

St. Nicholas Church, 4641 E. St. Nicholas Drive, Summit. Healing service and rosary for vocations. 6 p.m., eucharis- tic adoration, prayer and wor- ship, 6:30 p.m. Information available. 317-823-8007.

December 16

Lumen Dei meeting. Mass, 6:30 a.m., breakfast and program at Finn Hall. 30 members, 51 guests. Information: 317-453-9015, or lumen_dei@scyolglobal.org.

December 17


St. Meinrad Archabbey Library exhibit, “Be the Peace of Christ in the World,” 8 a.m.-noon, 1-5 p.m., 7-10 p.m., Fri. 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Sat. 9 a.m.-1 p.m., Sun. 9 a.m.-7 p.m. Information: 800-682-0988 or www.saintmeinrad.edu.

December 18


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December 22

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 535 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. “Christmas Dinner and Concert,” Tony Avellana, contemporary Catholic musician, dinner 6:30 p.m., concert 8 p.m., $35 per person. Information: 317-545-7681 or www.archindy.org/fatima.

December 23

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December 24

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December 30

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Pope urges international community to increase efforts to cure AIDS

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Benedict XVI called on the international community to increase efforts to find a cure for HIV/AIDS and to protect people infected by the virus from discrimination.

The pope made the appeal at the end of his Nov. 26 Angelus at St. Peter’s Square to mark World AIDS Day on Dec. 1. Nearly 40 million adults and children are living with HIV, and new infections are on the rise in many countries, according to a recent report by the Joint U.N. Program on HIV/AIDS and the World Health Organization. This year, 4.3 million people have weakened or nonexistence, and 2.9 million people died of AIDS-related illnesses, the report said.

Pope Benedict said he hoped World AIDS Day would awaken a greater sense of “responsibility in curing the disease as well as in the commitment to avoid all discrimination against those who have been hit” by the virus that causes the disease.

In a separate address, the pope called for all people struggling with infectious diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, to be treated with love and respect.

Illnesses such as “leprosy, the plague, tuberculosis, AIDS and Ebola evoke tragic scenes of pain and fear,” he said on Nov. 24 in an address to participants of a Nov. 23-25 Vatican conference on the pastoral approach to the treatment of infectious diseases.

People affected by such “repugnant pathologies” are often marginalized or humiliated, and their “deplorable situation” is made worse by “the inequality of social and economic conditions,” the pope said.

The indifference, exclusion and rejection that victims of infectious diseases sometimes face can also stem from people’s obsession with “the image given in the media of men and women who are mostly concerned about their own physical beauty, health and vitality,” he said.

Locking up in “one’s own little world” and fleeing from helping others is part of “a dangerous cultural trend,” the pope said.

He called on Catholics “to respond with concrete efforts” that promote dignity and help make policies more equitable and at the service of those in need.

Resources dedicated to medical research must be distributed more fairly, he said, and basic living conditions must improve to “stop the emergence and spread of infectious diseases,” Cardinal Javier Lozano Barragan, head of the Pontifical Council for Health Care Ministry, which sponsored the November conference, said the weakening of the presence of public health care was one of the many factors.

fueling unnecessary deaths caused by infectious illnesses. He told Catholic News Service on Nov. 21 that it was “truly unexplainable” how a rich country like the United States could not provide basic health care and preventative medicines to its people. He said hospitals are even penalized if they offer needed care to illegal immigrants, which he said “is an absurdity.”

In such situations, the only right these people are given is “the right to die” of a curable or treatable disease, the cardinal said.

In his Nov. 23 address at the Vatican conference, Cardinal Lozano said Catholic health care workers have the model of Jesus to emulate in reaching out to the sick with sincere love and mercy. Authentic solidarity, in fact, demands giving of oneself totally to the other despite the risks, he said.

That selfless giving does not mean health care workers should “renounce basic rules concerning hygiene”—rather, it means protecting one’s own health as a No. 1 priority, he said.

Daniel Kidd, president of the U.S.-based Guest House, which treats priests and religious with substance addictions, said he was pleased to hear the Vatican underlining the importance of health care workers taking care of themselves.

He told CNS on Nov. 23 that “compassion fatigue” easily strikes people who work in social and health services, and if they neglect their own care then it will affect their work.

“It’s good solidarity to take care of yourself because you can’t give to others what you don’t have,” he said.

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Cardinal McCarrick says education is necessary for survival of humanity

“Planting good trees” through education, morally responsible leadership and respect for the environment at home and abroad will make the world a better place now and for future generations, Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick, archbishop emeritus of Washington, D.C., told 300 people during a Nov. 21 speech in Indianapolis.

“Just as good trees are important for the land, for food and for the survival of crops, so education is necessary for the survival of the human race,” he said. “Planting a good tree and educating a person have many things in common. They are both essential for the health and welfare of our world.”

Cardinal McCarrick was the keynote speaker for the first Semler Lecture on Leadership at the University Place Conference Center on the IU-PUI campus. The program honored St. Pius X parishioner Jerry Semler of Indianapolis for his distinguished educational and leadership contributions to the Church and community for more than four decades.

The retired cardinal, who serves on the board of Catholic Relief Services, recently returned from a fact-finding visit to Lesotho, formerly called Basutoland, an impoverished and mountainous country surrounded by South Africa.

While there, he toured a village where CRS would like to build a dispensary to administer anti-retroviral medicines that combat AIDS in the population.

“The terrible pandemic of AIDS is unfortunately truly rampant in part of the world,” Cardinal McCarrick said. “AIDS has cut down, specifically, groups of people in their 20s and 30s, and life expectancy in this area is well below 40 years. The older people not only have to take care of the children, they have to make sure there is enough food to go around for everybody.”

In Lesotho, he said, “the head of a household could well be the oldest surviving child, who at 12 years old becomes the caretaker of his little brothers and sisters because his parents … have been the victims of AIDS. It’s a sad part of the world, but it’s an important part of the world because these are our brothers and sisters.”

The desert region there is unproducive, he said, and the absence of trees is a sign of the poor state of the land.

“In the place of good soil, you need a child’s imagina- tion,” Cardinal McCarrick said. “In the place of life-giving water, you need a teacher with patience. In the place of the warmth of the sun, you need a community that really cares.”

“Perhaps the most important thing it has done is given a challenge to the public school system, which has reacted well and all of progress is being made, thank God, in just about every part of the city.”

Teachers with the virtue of patience and a community that cares for the ingredients for helping children learn, he said, and grow up as responsible adults.

“It’s very much the same, I think, with good trees and good people,” Cardinal McCarrick said. “Just as it is impor- tant to have good trees, it’s important to have good leaders. … Are we educating people today to take leadership in the future? What kind of leaders are we going to have?…”

Trees with strong roots are like courageous leaders, he said, because they hold things together, give to others, provide protection and stability, take the heat, and spread beauty in the world.

“Just as good trees are important to have good leaders. … A good leader holds things together,” Cardinal McCarrick urged. “Keep doing what you’re doing here because it seems you’re doing it well.”

Father Joe Kern: Officially Retired, But Not Taking a Break

F
ather Joe Kern officially retired from the archdiocese during the summer of 2001. Now, one year later, he will celebrate his 50th jubilee of the priesthood. Today he stays busy volunteering for a variety of organizations and continuing his ministry as a priest throughout the Terre Haute area.

Thanks to the archdiocese’s commitment to its priests, Father Kern was able to retire at the age of 70. The proceeds from the Legacy for Our Mission campaign supplemented by the United Catholic Appeal provide Father Kern and all retired archdiocesan priests with a pension, health care and other benefits they deserve.

Father Kern may be retired, but he continues to give himself to many causes. He is dean of the Terre Haute Deanery and chairman of Catholic Charities Terre Haute. Father Kern also serves as a local hospice volunteer and is on call for hospital emergencies. He is involved in prison ministry at the Rockville Correctional Facility, where he visits on Saturday evenings. All the while, Father Kern continues to celebrate Mass during the absence of other priests.

“I would go crazy if I weren’t so involved. I have been working all my life. I can’t and don’t want to stop now,” Father Kern said.

Many would agree that all this activity does not define retirement, but Father Kern is adamant that is what he loves to do. “I can be as free as I want to be. This is what I want to spend my time doing,” he said.

After 16 years as pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Rockville, Father Kern still loves to celebrate Mass. He will fill in temporarily for a fellow priest who is planning a sabbatical in 2007.

“Father Kern just gets it done because he always puts himself last,” said Sue Burwin, director of the Terre Haute Deanery Pastoral Center. “He always tells me that this is why he was ordained—to serve the people.”

So what do all this really mean when archdiocesan priests retire? Every priest chooses how active he wishes to be. Father Kern is a prime example of the many priests who choose to continue serving as they always have.

Retired priests are also responsible for their own housing. Father Kern leases an apartment in Terre Haute and now pays for his utilities, rent and other expenses. Other retired priests may choose to live in an archdiocesan retirement facility, where they pay their own living expenses.

“Good priest provides … protection with the values and stability that people need so they can live a good and happy life,” the cardinal said. “… A good leader has to be a person of values, … [and] be unafraid to stand for those values and promote them with others. A good leader has to be someone who cares for others.… A good leader holds things together in good times and in bad. A good leader brings to the community beauty and class and dignity and even love.”

Keep planting good trees and bringing forth good leaders, Cardinal McCarrick urged. “Keep doing what you’re doing here because it seems you’re doing it well.”

Three challenges face the leaders who will arise from this generation, he said. They must promote civility, help the poor throughout the world and pass on a healthy environment to future generations.

“We are truly living in a world of globalization, and it must be globalization with a conscience,” he said. “As long as 2 billion people in this world must live on less than $2 a day, as long as a little less than 40 million people in the United States go hungry every day, and as long as terrible diseases and pandemics … kill thousands and thousands of people every 24 hours, we cannot afford to build for ourselves a shelter from the real world outside. We need to reach out to that real world or we will throw away the chance for lasting peace and stability.”

Leaders must take up the causes of the underdog and fight for the rights of all human beings, he said, wherever they live and whatever their race, culture or language.

“As we talk about globalization and the needs around the world, there is another area that is becoming not just impor- tant but critical as we look to the future of our civilization,” he said. “The leaders of today cannot walk away from the environmental problems of our time lest there be no one to solve them until it is too late … The greatest threat is to our children and our children’s children.”

The growing ecological crisis reveals the urgent need for a new solidarity throughout the world, he said, or the future of the human race will be endangered.

“Just as the case in planting good trees, that combination of warmth and soil and water is sometimes hard to come by in every part of the world,” he said. “Thank God it flour- ishes in abundance here in Indiana. That’s why I’m confi- dent that good trees and great leaders will also abound from this archdiocese and this country, as they must in the future, for the welfare of all of us in the years ahead.”

“Legacy for Our Mission:
For Our Children and the Future

Father Kern recently received the Career Achievement Award at the Celebrating Catholic School Values event in Indianapolis. The Catholic community honored him for his lifetime of service throughout the archdiocese. Father Kern graciously accepted the award and thanked all those who played an important role in his Catholic education.

“I would go crazy if I weren’t so involved. I have been working all my life. I can’t and don’t want to stop now.”

 legacyforomission.org
the family unit—to keep them together.”

Twenty-two years later, more than 8,300 families have made a home and started a story of hope at the shelter.

“Why they come here is wide and varied,” Bickel says. “Who comes here is wide and varied. We’ve had a couple of law students, a dentist and folks with engineering degrees, all the way down to folks who have dropped out of the eighth grade. All walks of life, all races.

“In some ways, those who serve families have a PR [public relations] problem. You have a PR problem. You have to clean the bathrooms and make the beds at a five-star hotel, you may think she’s poor, but she isn’t homeless. But she lives at Holy Family Shelter with three kids.”

Starting a journey of compassion

“As he helps those families, Bickel tries to walk in their place, firmly believing that, “There but for the grace of God go I!’”

Bickel’s journey to Holy Family Shelter began in 1992 when he returned to Indiana after working three years at a mission in the country of Peru—a time when Hispanic families were also beginning to arrive in Indianapolis at increased rates.

“My sister lived here and I was visiting her,” he recalls. “My intention was to go back to Peru, but I responded to an ad in the paper for a case manager here. I speak English and Spanish, and there were not many bilingual social providers. I also had Third World experience, which was helpful in a homeless setting.”

He spent five years as a case manager at Holy Family before joining Clarion Health’s Homeless Initiative Program in Indianapolis. Then he returned to Holy Family Shelter in 2001 to become its director. He is in his 15th year of serving the homeless.

“He works like almost 24 hours a day,” says his administrative assistant. Nigisty Christos. “He’s the janitor, he’s the director, he’s the case manager. He is kind, compassionate and very understanding of people’s problems.

“Some see the need better than others. No one knows that better than Rocio Camacho. In 2003, she was living in Denver with her then-11-year-old son, Luis, who suddenly turned seriously ill from a kidney problem. When a Denver pediatrician believed Luis needed dialysis treatments, the doctor searched for a hospital that would help Luis. The doctor found one in Indianapolis—Riley Hospital for Children.

“Seeking a place to stay in Indianapolis, the mother and son were turned away at every door until they came to Bickel’s attention. Bickel gave them a home at the shelter. He continued to provide a home while Luis had dialysis treatments twice a day for 18 months at Holy Family. He was also one of the leaders in the effort to raise the $75,000 that the mother and son needed to pay for the transplant in which Rocio gave Luis one of her kidneys in 2005.

“Rocio smiles when she talks of Bickel. She also calls him one of her angels.

Others have noticed his impact. For three years, William Moreau has worked with Bickel as a fellow board member of the Coalition for Homelessness Intervention and Prevention in Indianapolis.

“Bill’s work in helping the homeless is nothing less than extraordinary—perhaps saintly,” Moreau says. “When Bill speaks about the day-in, day-out successes—and inevitable failures—of working with our homeless neighbors, he is never paternalistic or patronizing. He speaks about them the way someone speaks about a family member or colleague.

“We have never seen any sympathy, never seeks any praise. He just lives the Christian example.”

Facing frustration, keeping hope

“You have to come in with a mindset that this is a ministry and a mission,” Bickel says. “When you’re in the human service end of things, you have to come with that first before everything else. These are fragile, vulnerable families. You have to understand that first.”

That understanding guides Bickel as he directs the shelter that has a capacity for 22 families, a shelter that is constantly full.

“What keeps him continuing his efforts for the homeless after 15 years—an extraordinary long time in a field where burnout is high—is a combination of a sense of purpose, a self-deprecating sense of humor and a sincere appreciation for the 14 staff members he leads.

“To be around people who are committed and innately passionate about working with the poor keeps me going,” he says.

“So does the hope that he can make a difference in the life of another family, from the single woman with a baby to the family with two parents and 11 children.

“We don’t want to be a Band-Aid approach,” he says. “That means advocating and educating about what can be referred to as basic life skills—appropriate budgeting skills, appropriate parenting skills. We help with housing, employment, children’s services, nutrition, substance abuse counseling and enrollment in schools.

“The goal is permanent self-sufficiency. For one person, it may be overcoming a physical issue that lets them keep employment. For a 30-year-old woman, it was getting a GED [general education degree]. For her, it’s a sense of the future.”

Bickel glances in the direction of another sign in his office. This one reads, “Lord, help me to live each day so that at the end of it there is nothing I cannot share in the care, for which I cannot give thanks.”

At the end of another day, Bickel shares his experiences with God. He also gives him his thanks. “I have worked at this for 15 years. I have turned this around to make a shelter for the homeless. I have worked for the homeless after 15 years—an extra-ordinarily long time in a field where burnout is high—is a combination of a sense of purpose, a self-deprecating sense of humor and a sincere appreciation for the 14 staff members he leads.

“Still, at the end of each day, he also has a feeling that is part frustration, part wish. “I thank God for my family and for my household,” he says. “The ability to be able to go home at night, every evening, is profound for me. It also adds to the frustration that we still have the issues of homelessness and the division of wealth in our society. You get discouraged that pervasive homelessness persists in this country. You ask yourself, ‘Why does this continue in the wealthiest nation in the world?’

“The question remains.

“So does Bickel’s commitment to giving all families a sense of the hope he first knew as a child.”
**Advent Wreath Prayer can help families prepare for birth of Christ**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parishes throughout the archdiocese have scheduled communal penance services for Advent. The following is a list of services that have been reported to The Criterion.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Batesville Deanery</strong></td>
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<td>Dec. 5, 7 p.m. at St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Aurora</td>
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<td>Dec. 6, 7 p.m. at St. Martin, Yorkville</td>
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<td>Dec. 6, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Greensburg</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec. 10, 1 p.m. at St. Maurice, Napoleon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec. 10, 3 p.m. at Immaculate Conception, Millhouse</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec. 11, 7 p.m. at St. Peter, Franklin County</td>
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**Leader:** If we could be characterized in any one way, we ought to be called a people of hope. The Bible passages that the Church has chosen for this First Sunday of Advent point out two things—that God has promised he will care for us, and that if we follow his ways, we can cope with even the most frightful events of life.

As we begin the season of Advent, the prophet Jeremiah sets the stage for hope, reminding us that God won’t forget his people. Evangelists Paul and Luke both suggest that now is a good time to be on our best behavior. Can we go this next week being blameless in holiness before our God and Father? The time to start living the right way is right now—this Advent—today.

**Closing prayer**

(Leader may read all, or others in the household may each read a segment.)

1. Dear God, help us to remain hopeful and to trust in you no matter the trials and troubles life brings. This first week of Advent, help us remember that we are your people and that you are our God. Help us get our priorities right and put the most important things first—loving God and loving our neighbor.

2. Holy Spirit, guide the choices we make throughout this week so that we choose to do what honors our Creator and what shows our love of others.

3. Father in heaven, we offer thanks to you for the many gifts and talents you have given to all the people on the earth, to our family and friends, to the neighbors we have yet to befriend.

4. Come Lord Jesus. Come into our hearts so that, when the time comes, we will be prepared to join you in everlasting joy.
Pope wants people to have personal experience of God

By Fr. Robert L. Kinast

Right from the very beginning of his papacy, Pope Benedict XVI demonstrated a special concern for the Church in Western Europe. The name he chose was used last by Benedict XV, who is considered by many to be the patron saint of Europe for his efforts to heal the divisions that led to World War I. Benedict XVI’s first visits outside of Rome were to countries in Western Europe, and his first encyclical drew heavily on the Western philosophical tradition of love, justice and charity. This is not to say that the pope is unconcerned about the rest of the world. It is rather that he regards a revitalized Church in Western Europe as a key ingredient in continuing to spread the Gospel and uplift human life everywhere. By his own admission in an interview before his September 2006 trip to Germany, Pope Benedict faces a huge challenge. The current life of the Church in Western Europe is not vibrant as measured by church attendance and adherence to Catholic doctrine. The pope believes that the problem’s primary cause is a new wave of secularization that seeks to “rebuild the world by itself,” leading to a “coldness toward God.” The pope’s strategy for overcoming this trend is not to argue his case intellectually as one might expect of a pope who also is an academically trained theologian, but to appeal to a personal experience of God as God really is. He wants people to get to know God face-to-face.

God is not remote or distant from us. As Pope Benedict’s first encyclical declared, our God is a God of love.

God not remote or distant from us. As Pope Benedict’s first encyclical declared, our God is a God of love.

To know the God of creation is to realize that the material world is not simply a collection of natural resources we may use at will. It is a gift entrusted to our care to be developed and preserved through good stewardship. This calls for changes in our current habits of consumption, and prompts us to look more earnestly for alternative sources of energy and ways to conserve.

• The Incarnation reveals God’s love. The Incarnation is an even more revealing act for in it God comes to us, initiating an intimacy and union that is both fulfilling and transcending. In Jesus, it is made clear that divine love involves an acceptance and inclusion of all people.

Coming face to face with the implications of the Incarnation means we cannot harbor personal biases toward others or a sense of superiority about ourselves. Rather, we are challenged to find ways of reaching out in understanding to all others, including those who are different from us.

• Liberation reveals God’s love. God’s liberating love frees us from sin and its entanglements, and also allows us either to remain free to encounter the real God or to hold on to erroneous and worn-out images.

Knowing God as a freedom-loving God means we can never give simply nominal assent to our religious affiliation and go through the required motions. God’s liberation compels us to affirm deeply and deliberately that we have been invited into a loving relationship that only grows as we freely commit ourselves to it. We are free to make such a commitment.

These truths are timeless, but constantly need to be refreshed in order to stimulate and deepen a vital relationship with God. This is what Pope Benedict is promoting, and Advent is a perfect time to reflect anew on the change this flow from knowing the God who so loves this world that he gave his only son to embrace and perfect.

(Father Robert L. Kinast is director of the Center for Theological Reflection in Prairie Village, Kan.) †

Create an Advent chain of hope

By Leisa Anslinger

My plan for this Advent is for our family to create a hope chain, a list of the ways that we are living as people of hope in this time and this place as well as the ways that God is present among us. Each item on our list will be placed on a slip of paper and a chain will be created by leaving the slips together. We will hang the chain on our Christmas tree on the fourth Sunday of Advent as a visible linking of Advent and Christmas as well as a reminder that, in Christ, we are called to radical hope.

After all, Advent hope is eternal. But Advent is also challenging, theologically and in practice. It isn’t always easy to believe that God wants to walk among us, share our skin and bear our burdens. But God never will abandon us.

The Advent season is about returning as well: Christ will return, and now is the time for us to prepare. Christ is with us always, yet there is more to come. I need to pause occasionally to consider how I am allowing God to continue to transform me, and to recognize how I am or am not proclaiming God’s reign through my life. Advent is a time to take stock of my life and invite God into my heart. And it is a reminder that, despite life’s trials or difficulties, there is always hope.

(Leisa Anslinger is the pastoral associate for evangelization, catechesis and stewardship at Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Cincinnati, Ohio.) †

Discussion Point

Families share Advent traditions

This Week’s Question

What will you do at home to bring the Advent season to life this year?

“We will have an Advent wreath, and on Sundays when we have family dinner we will say prayers from a special book before lighting the candles. Also, our family will go to church for the posadas, which is like a novena, the nine days before Christmas Eve. People act the roles of Mary and Joseph.” (Pam Garcia, Espaňola, N.M.)

“Every year, on the first of December, I start to decorate. I have a collection of miniature Nativity scenes. I put out those first because I have two young grandchildren and I want them to understand that this is not just a ‘season’ but this is Jesus’ birthday. ... Other decorations can be put up later.” (Carmen Morales, Tucson, Ariz.)

“We have a large family. We gather at Thanksgiving and draw names, and start praying and doing special things for our secret pal. At Christmas, we gather again and give that person a present. Otherwise, we don’t exchange gifts, except sometimes for the youngest children. We also start decorating the house in the first week of Advent and gradually add things, finishing up on Christmas Eve.” (Alice Fry, Bakersfield, Calif.)

Lend Us Your Voice

An upcoming edition asks: Does sacrifice characterize your life—sacrifice of time, money, interests? How?

To respond for possible publication, send an e-mail to gagne@catholicnews.com or write to Faith Alive! at 3211 Fourth St. N.E., Washington, D.C. 20007-1100. †

The image is thought to be the oldest surviving icon of Christ.
First of two columns on prayers of petition

( Eighth in a series )

Until now, I’ve written seven columns about prayer without mentioning prayers of petition. I’ll remedy that by writing two columns to prayers of petition.

Some prayers are, undoubtedly, the most common—perhaps too common. What the Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us is that everyone shares in God’s saving love, understanding that every need can become the object of prayer (2733, emphasis in the catechism).

That may be true, but I can’t help but wonder at times. When Notre Dame and Boston College are playing each other in football, and both teams are praying for victory, what’s the good Lord to do?

Prayers of petition are undoubtedly for the wisdom to know God’s will for us, and the courage and ability to do the things we believe we need in life to make us happy. Perhaps such prayers are not as exalted as prayers of adoration, but so what? We are acknowledging our relationship, our dependence, upon God, and asking him confidently for what we want.

Do prayers of petition really do any good though? Are we supposed to believe that God is so omnipotent and knowledgeable of all from eternity that is going to happen, is going to change his mind because he knows, from all eternity, that we are going to ask him, to believe that he will grant it. God hears, and answers, our prayers before we ever say them.

To Augustine tackled this problem. He wrote: “Why [God] should ask us to pray, when he knows what we need before we ask, may perhaps be understood if we do not realize that our Lord and God does not want to know what we want [for he cannot fail to know it] but wants us rather to exercise our desire through our prayers, so that we may be able to receive what he is preparing to give us.”

Furthermore, God’s knowledge of what we are going to do in the future doesn’t destroy our freedom to decide whether or not we are going to do it. He knows our future actions to be the freely performed actions they are.

Cornucopia/Cynthia Dewes

Not to worry, help is on the way.

Thanksgiving is not long past, and it’s already doubtful that we still thankful. It seems strange, but when we think of a world, isn’t it? We have people killing each other while they’re holding their own—cheating, stealing, lying, you name it— in the news every day.

People don’t just diagram “we” and “us,” other than to destroy the other. Countries invent new and better weapons to eliminate themselves or the name of religion, in the name of God! Politicians, parents, teachers, Scout masters, in fact, nearly all people in authority, are routinely revealed to have feet of clay.

Rather than good people who work hard, put their Wheaties and tithe, they’re shown to be child molesters, extortionists or wife beaters. It’s hard to believe that the newspapers, it’s so unrevealing. We think who are these people? They don’t sound like anyone we know.

The worst thing is, if we think about history, this phenomenon is not new. It seems the world has been trying to go to hell since it began, with civilizations rising and falling, and despots appearing and disappearing readily. Somehow, ordinary people are being caught up in the middle of every event. Stepping along in innocent pursuit of daily bread, hoping for a little love and a little fun thrown in now and again.

Imagine living in Roman times as a lowlypeon in some wretched countryside, captured by the barbarians. After all, as they sing in A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum, Rome continually “raped Titus.”

We pray for good health, for success in school or in our profession, for a happy marriage, for those things we believe we need in life to make us happy. Perhaps such prayers are not as exalted as prayers of adoration, but so what? We are acknowledging our relationship, our dependence, upon God, and asking him confidently for what we want.

Not to worry, help is on the way.

When my sister, Beverly, and her husband, John, began breakfast one day recently, she told him she had a story to share about a penny. As the executive director of Catholic Charities, oversees 15 agencies, serving the poorest of the people, I can’t help but have these thoughts when so many we are trying to serve may truly only receive an orange and a new pair of socks.

I am not saying that video games are inappropriate, but they don’t seem to be a good thing. However, I would like to invite all of us to consider how we might work, through the things that have very few to count.

People experience poverty for a variety of reasons. Sometimes it is self-inflicted: mental illness, physical handicaps, loss of a job, divorce, death of a breadwinner, or a lack of educational opportu- nities, just to name a few. As Catholic Christians, we are called by God to help those who are less fortunate than ourselves and sisters who have little. And this time of year affords us the perfect opportunity to do so.

As we enter the season of Advent in preparation for the celebration of Christmas, most of us will count numerous blessings for which we give thanks. Why not stop by the shop for gifts to give our loved ones, knowing that by doing so we are considering a blessing varies dramatically.

I was somewhat perceptive, I predict that at some point my grandfather telling me that Christmas morning was filled with joy when he spent hundreds of dollars on an entertainment device that adds nothing of value to society. I begin to worry about our priorities.

The Christmas season seeks to ease the burden of poverty throughout the year; however, during this season of sharing, we reach out in new ways. Since the work of Catholic Charities is the work of the Church, and therefore all of our work, we invite you to consider how you might partner with us this holiday season to ensure that many others will experience the joy of Christmas.

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No Catholic is obliged to observe special devotions

Q In her appearances at Fatima, Portugal, our Blessed Mother showed the children a vision of hell. I’m sorry that Sister Lucia, niece of those who shared the appearances, is not alive. She could have verified the horrible groans, moans and separation from God that she witnessed. The Church has approved these visions. You should revisit the subject and stop denying that there is a hell. The world is acting like there’s no hell, so don’t encourage it. (Mississippi)

A First, to be clear, I have not said there is no hell. I said that, according to what God has revealed, it is possible for us to turn away from God definitively at the end of our lives, which would merit eternal separation from him, but that we don’t and cannot know whether anyone is “in hell.” The Church hopes and prays that no one is.

Thousands of people have alleged experiencing visions or apparitions of our Lord, Mary or other saints over the centuries. Some of these private revelations—Lourdes is perhaps the most famous—have been officially approved by the Church.

Some, such as the reported appearances of our Lady at Necedah, Wis., in the 1950s, have been officially rejected by the Church. About most of them—including appearances and manifestations at San Damiano; Canton, Ohio; Australia; Maderia, Mexico; Medjugorje; Limpus, Spain; Rwanda and numerous others—the Church either says nothing or makes no decision one way or another.

We must remember that when the Church approves or sanctions such messages, it is saying only that there is nothing in them contrary to Catholic faith or morals, and that following these messages may be helpful in our efforts toward Christian holiness. If it enhances one’s spiritual life and one’s love of God and neighbor, that is good.

It is essential to note, however, that the Church never embraces a particular belief or practice contained in these revelations as part of Catholic teaching, obligatory for all Catholics.

The 1917 appeals for penance and prayer by all Catholics, insofar as they are already contained in traditional practices of our faith, are basic for or obligatory on any Catholic.

Apart from these, no one is required to accept or follow anything in private revelations, even though a proper respect for the fact that God can speak to us in this way is proper for the whole Church.

Church officials, including popes, have accepted that the mother of Jesus appeared to the three shepherd children at Fatima, Portugal, in 1917, urging the Gospel of peace. Fatima appeals for penance and prayer by all Christians for world peace.

Many people have been inspired in the decades since then to these spiritual good works by the message of Our Lady of Fatima.

Again, however, no Catholic is obliged to observe special devotions or prayers suggested to the children there except insofar as they are already contained in our responsibilities as Catholic Christians.

None of its events or revelations becomes a new part of Catholic teaching or faith. In that sense, Fatima, too, is considered by the Church to be a private revelation.

We have all this on pretty good authority in recent years. The contents of the so-called third secret of Fatima were published in June 2000.

In an accompanying commentary, then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, called the message a symbolic prophecy of the present struggles with evil political systems and of the ultimate triumph of good.

Like any private revelation, the cardinal said, the Fatima message offers a help for living out faith, but it creates no new obligations for Catholics. The message of Fatima, he continued, invites us to trust in Christ’s promise that the final victory is his.

(A free brochure on ecumenism, including questions on intercommunion and other ways of sharing worship, is available by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Father John Dietzen, Box 5513, Peoria, IL 61615. Persons may be sent to Father Dietzen at the same address or by e-mail to dietzenjr@aol.com)
Providence Sister Ann Patrick McNulty was an educator

Providence Sister Ann Patrick McNulty died on Nov. 19 at Mother Theodore Hall at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. She was 81. The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Nov. 25 at the Church of the Immaculate Conception at the motherhouse. Burial followed at the sisters’ cemetery.

The former Margaret Cecelia McNulty was born on Feb. 25, 1925, in Indianapolis. She entered the congregation of the Sisters of Providence on Jan. 7, 1942, professed her first vows on Aug. 15, 1944, and professed her final vows on Aug. 15, 1949.

During 64 years as a sister, she ministered as a teacher and principal for 44 years at schools staffed by the Sisters of Providence in Indiana, Oklahoma and California.

In the archdiocese, Sister Ann Patrick taught at St. Charles Borromeo School in Bloomington from 1955-59 then served as principal there while continuing to teach from 1961-66. She taught at St. Susanna School in Plainfield from 1966-67.

Sister Ann Patrick also ministered as a supervisor and consultant for the archdiocesan Office of Catholic Education from 1967-69. From 1972-79, Sister Ann Patrick served as principal at St. Matthew School in Indianapolis. She taught at the former Francis of Sales School in Indianapolis from 1979-80.

Sister Ann Patrick ministered as program manager at the Southeast Multi-Service Center in Indianapolis from 1982-83 then served as assistant director at the Adult Education Center in Indianapolis, where she assisted disabled veterans, from 1983-86.

From 1986-94, she taught at St. Philip Neri School in Indianapolis then served as a tutor there from 1994-97.

Sister Ann Patrick also served as a substitute teacher at Holy Spirit School in Indianapolis from 1997-2001.

In 1995, the Ancient Order of Hibernians in Indianapolis honored her with their President’s Award.

Sister Ann Patrick returned to Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in 2001, where she ministered in residential services and participated in the senior sisters’ prayer ministry until 2006.

Surviving are a sister, Patricia Marbaugh of Indianapolis, and many nieces and nephews. Memorial gifts may be sent to the Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, IN 47876.
Classified Directory

For information about rates for classified advertising, call (317) 236-1572.

President and Principal
Peoria Notre Dame High School, a Catholic, diocesan, co-educational high school with 800 students, located in Peoria, Illinois, is changing to the president-principal administrative model and is, therefore, seeking qualified persons for the position of President and for the position of Principal beginning July 1, 2007. Candidates for both positions must be practicing Catholic, have secondary school administrative experience, and hold at least a Masters Degree. Please visit www.cdp.org (click on Peoria Schools) for the official job descriptions as well as application materials or visit the Peoria Notre Dame website www.peorianotredame.com.

The application deadline for the President position is January 5, 2007. Interviews will take place in February. The application deadline for the Principal position is January 5, 2007. Interviews will take place in March. Interested individuals may also call the Office of Catholic Schools for the official job descriptions as well as application materials.

Principal
Maintain and develop a school strong in academic achievement, counseling and guidance services, and ample programs to meet the co-curricular and extracurricular needs of the students according to the school’s Jesuit, Catholic, Interfaith mission. Key areas of responsibility are Leadership for Mission, School Administration, Communication, Media, Public Relations, and Professional Organizations and Affiliations. Master’s degree and 5 years of teaching and administrative experience in secondary education is encouraged, but candidates with relevant administrative experience will be considered.

Director of Mission Effectiveness
This position functions in accordance with the organization’s bylaws by assisting the Campus President, the Board of Trustees and administrators in maintaining and integrating the philosophy, mission, and values of the Ursuline Sisters in all aspects of the organizational life of Ursuline Campus Schools (UCS). A successful candidate must have the ability to articulate the mission, charism and history of the Ursuline Sisters. Master’s degree preferred with back ground in theology, religious studies, ministry, liturgy, education, and related field. Must exhibit the ability to work comfortably in a consultative capacity and as a team player.

UCS is a community of five schools located in Louisville, KY: Sacred Heart Academy – all girls high school, Sacred Heart Model School – coed, K-8; Ursuline Montessori School - coed, ages 2-6; Ursuline Child Development Center, co-ed, ages 1-5; Ursuline School for the Performing Arts – serving the community at large as well as offering integrated programs to meet the co-curricular and extra-curricular needs of the students according to the school’s Jesuit, Catholic, Interfaith mission. Key areas of responsibility are Vision – clear understanding of UCS’ mission and goals and the means through which it will be accomplished; Theoretical Model – an understanding of the theoretical models that will guide and shape the implementation of the mission of UCS; Planning and Organizing – the ability to strategically develop the organizational structure required to implement the mission and goals of UCS.

The application deadline for the President position is January 5, 2007. Interviews will take place in February. The application deadline for the Principal position is January 5, 2007. Interviews will take place in March. Interested individuals may also call the Office of Catholic Schools for the official job descriptions as well as application materials.

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Prayer Requests

Thank you for your prayers…

Thank you for your prayers…

Vacation Rentals

Beachfront Condo, Madison Beach, Fl., 28b/28b, pool & spa. Relax on Intercoastal, gorgeous pool, beautiful view, fully furnished. Disney Epic, N. A. & enjoy the beach, too! Phone 366-427-5376.

New Smyrina Beach, FLA. Oceanview condo, fully furnished, 2 BR/2BA, 2 pools & tennis. Visit Disney Epic, N. A. & enjoy the beach, too! Phone 366-427-5376.


Indian Rocks Beach, FL. Private 2BR/2BA condo facing beach, on Intercoastal, gorgeous pool, secure bldg., covered parking. $650 wk. $2400 month. 317-229-3370.

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Church’s commitment to Christian-Muslim dialogue.

Bardakoglu also stressed the importance of dialogue and respect, but took to task those Christians who, under what he described as the effects of “Islamophobia,” believe that Islam is a violent faith spread throughout history by the sword.

Islam, he said, is a religion of peace, and it condemns terrorism and any taking of an innocent life.

Rising prejudice, Bardakoglu said, feeds the hatred of those who misuse religion for political purposes and invoke religion as an excuse for their violence.

Intercultural and interreligious dialogue, the pope said, “cannot be reduced to an optional extra,” but is an obligation of religious leaders.

Pope Benedict, offering a basic introduction to the Second Vatican Council’s teaching on relations with the world’s great religious traditions, pointed out that both Christians and Muslims believe in “the truth of the sacred character and dignity of the human person.”

Both faiths profess belief in one God, and both teach their followers that all human beings were created by God and that being at home with God is the goal of each person’s earthly pilgrimage.

“We are called to work together, so as to help society to open itself to the transcendent, giving almighty God his rightful place.”

—Pope Benedict XVI

This human and spiritual unity in our origins and destiny impels us to seek a common path as we play our part in the quest for fundamental values so characteristic of the people of our time,” he said.

Together, the pope said, Christians and Muslims must witness to the fact that being created by God and destined to eternity with him can give meaning to people’s lives and that when they recognize the truth of God’s existence they will live in a way that will benefit all people and the earth itself.

“We are called to work together so as to help society to open itself to the transcendent, giving almighty God his rightful place,” the pope said.

“The best way forward,” he told the Muslim leaders, “is via authentic dialogue between Christians and Muslims, based on truth and inspired by a sincere wish to know one another better, respecting differences and recognizing what we have in common.”

The pope ended his address with a prayer that Christians and Muslims would persevere along the path of dialogue: “in respect and friendship. May we come to know one another better, strengthening the bonds of affection between us in our common wish to live together in harmony, peace and mutual trust.”

Bardakoglu echoed the main themes of Pope Benedict’s speech, especially the assertion that, when followed faithfully, religious leaders are “the source of peace and well-being.”

But too often, he said, people give greater importance to belonging to a specific religion than to recognizing that all people are “the children of Adam.”

Bardakoglu said he, the pope and other religious leaders have an obligation to guide members of their communities in preserving their own traditions while recognizing that “all such religious, ethnic and cultural differences are the revelation of divine love, mercy and wisdom.”

He particularly asked for Catholic-Muslim cooperation in addressing the world’s “ethical and moral crisis,” especially as it applies to family values.

The religious affairs director hailed the pope’s visit as “a positive step” toward reconciliation and toward the building of “mutual respect, justice and equality.”

Jesuits Open World’s First High School for AIDS Orphans

St. Aloysius Gonzaga High School in Nairobi, Kenya

St. Al’s was co-founded in 2003 by Jesuit Terry Charlton and Christian Life Community. St. Al’s is a Catholic school dedicated to serving AIDS-affected youth from the Kibera slum. It gives students hope for a better life by providing a college preparatory education and support to overcome the challenges of the loss of parents along with extreme poverty.

It is estimated that Kenya has more than 2 million AIDS orphans and that the number is steadily increasing. Roughly 1,5 square miles, the Kibera slum is home to 1 million people, 10,000 of whom are AIDS orphans of secondary school age. These children are not able to continue their education due to poverty, prohibitive costs, and a lack of accessible schools.

Help us Build a Brighter Future

Our dream to build a permanent school in Nairobi is quickly becoming a reality. With your help, we plan to begin building a new 1-acre campus in January of 2007. The new campus will allow us to increase enrollment from the current 196 students to 420 students when completed.

Generous benefactors have contributed over $600,000 towards the total cost of $1 million. We hope to raise the additional funds to complete the school campus and meet ongoing operating costs by the end of 2007.

How Can You Help?

It costs so little to change a life. Three ways you can help:

• Sponsor a St. Al’s student for only $750 a year
• Help us build a new campus in 2007
• Meet ongoing operating costs as the number of students increases

For additional information or to make a gift, please contact:

Mark Maxwell
Jesuit International Ministries
607 Sycamore Street
Cincinnati, OH 45202-5212

Phone: 1-800-831-9470
Email: mmaxwell@jesuits-chi.org

Please visit the Chicago Province Jesuits at
www.jesuits-chi.org

Thank you for your generosity.

To view a 10-minute video about St. Al’s called “A School in Nairobi,” please visit the Chicago Province website at www.jesuits-chi.org and click on the red AIDS Day ribbon or request a DVD or VHS by calling Eileen Meehan at 1-800-922-5327.