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In Africa, pope challenges attitudes, cultural trends

BY JOHN THAVIS

LUALA, ANGOLA (CNS)

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

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

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

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

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

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

News accounts usually leave out the words that inevitably followed these papal warnings, but for the pope they were the most important part of his message in Africa: “Only



Pope Benedict XVI greets women and children in Luanda, Angola, March 21. Angola was the second and last stop on the pope's weeklong pastoral visit to Africa.

Christ is the way of life.” “The Lord Jesus is the one mediator and redeemer.” “Christ is the measure of true humanism.”

The transformation the pontiff asked of Africans was, as he

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The Bishop's Annual Appeal: gratitude and trust

BY LORI CLARKE

A number of years ago I attended a one-man “play” that was an oral presentation of the Gospel of Mark. Mark's is the oldest of the Gospels, written closest to the actual lifetime of Christ. I remember watching the play and being

struck by how often Jesus said, “Be not afraid,” or “Peace be with you.”

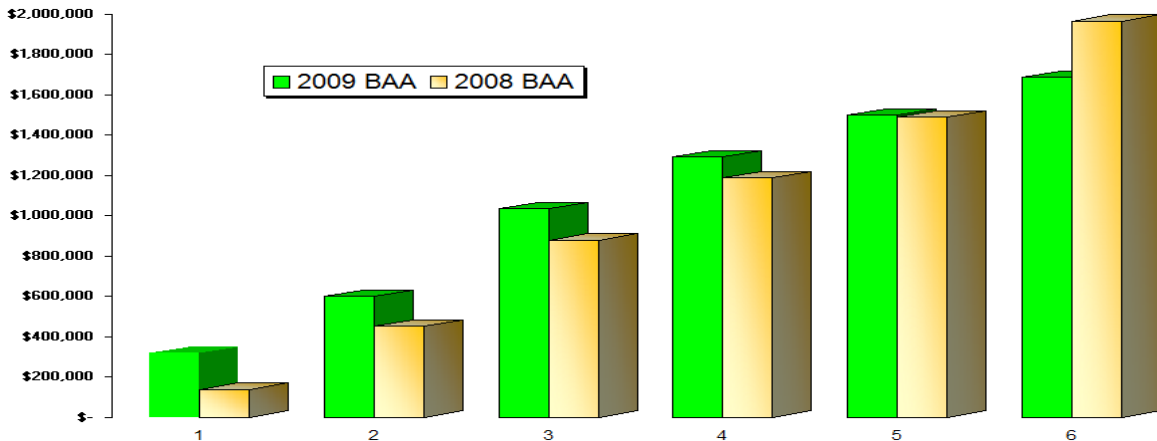
Be not afraid. Needed words for today's uncertain world. If we were to admit it, all of us are afraid of something, all of us long for inner peace. We are afraid of failure, afraid of pain,

afraid of betrayal and abandonment; afraid of rejection, afraid of death, afraid of unemployment. All of these are realities in a fallen world, yet Jesus urges us to “Be not afraid.”

What reason would we have for being unafraid in these anxious times? Jesus gives a straight answer: “Trust in your Heavenly Father, who loves us and wishes only good things for us.”

The theme of this year's Bishop's Annual Appeal is “Gratitude,” which is the heart of stewardship. All of us, even in these anxious days, have reasons to be grateful for God: grateful for the gifts of life, family, love, health, freedom, laughter, beauty. It is typical when one feels gratitude to want to give expression to it in

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Father-Daughter Dance in Warner Robins

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will foster fruitful dialogue for the sake of the common good," the USCCB statement added.

ISRAELI FOREIGN MINISTRY SAYS POPE CAN WEAR CROSS AT WESTERN WALL

VATICAN CITY (CNS)

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

OREGON SEES HIGHEST ASSISTED-SUICIDE TOLL EVER; WASHINGTON LAW TAKES EFFECT

PORTLAND, OR (CNS)

Oregon’s annual report on assisted suicide showed that doctors helped 60 patients take their lives in 2008. That marked the highest annual total since the Oregon Death With Dignity Act went into effect 11 years ago. In all, 401 Oregonians have died by the legal lethal prescriptions, which are legal only for those judged to have six months or less to live. State health officials said nearly all the patients were older, suffered from cancer and died at home. Just north of Oregon, health officials in Washington state have filed rules to guide that state’s new assisted-suicide law. The law—which closely resembles Oregon’s—took effect March 5. It protects doctors from prosecution if they help terminally ill patients hasten their deaths. The new rules include the forms doctors must complete before the deaths as well as documents for secondary doctors, psychologists and the pharmacists who fill the lethal prescription. As in Oregon, the rules say the patients must be expected to die within six months and may take the drugs themselves.

Poverty may be well grounded in the soil of society, but empowered individuals can uproot it,



allowing social justice and charitable works to blossom.

On March 13, Clarissa Ashley Price, a senior at Mount de Sales Academy, Macon, won first place in the diocesan Catholic Campaign for Human Development Art Contest with her charcoal sketch “Forget Me Not.” Her sketch will now compete for national recognition.

POPE DECLARES YEAR OF THE PRIEST TO INSPIRE SPIRITUAL PERFECTION

VATICAN CITY (CNS)

Pope Benedict XVI declared a year of the priest in an effort to encourage “spiritual perfection” in priests. The pope will open the special year with a vespers service at the Vatican June 19—the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the day for the sanctification of priests. He will close the celebrations during a World Meeting of Priests in Saint Peter’s Square June 19, 2010. The pope made the announcement during an audience March 16 with members of the Vatican Congregation for Clergy. He met with some 70 participants of the congregation’s March 16-18 plenary assembly, which focused on the missionary identity of the priest and his mission to sanctify, teach and govern. During this jubilee year, the pope will also proclaim Saint John Vianney to be patron saint of all the world’s priests. At present he is considered the patron saint of parish priests. This year marks the 150th anniversary of the death of this 19th-century saint who represents a “true example of a priest at the service of the flock of Christ,” the pope said. Saint John Vianney is widely known to Catholics as the Curé (parish priest) of Ars who won over the hearts of his villagers in France by visiting with them, teaching them about God and reconciling people to

the Lord in the confessional.

OBAMA, PRESIDENT OF U.S. BISHOPS HOLD PRIVATE MEETING

WASHINGTON (CNS)

President Barack Obama met for half an hour March 17 with Chicago Cardinal Francis E. George, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the White House and the USCCB announced. Brief statements issued by the White House and the USCCB said little more than that the two had met for a private, 30-minute afternoon session in the Oval Office. “The president and Cardinal George discussed a wide range of issues, including important opportunities for the government and the Catholic Church to continue their long-standing partnership to tackle some of the nation’s most pressing challenges,” said the White House statement. “The president thanked Cardinal George for his leadership and for the contributions of the Catholic Church in America and around the world.” The statement from the USCCB said: “The meeting was private. Cardinal George and President Obama discussed the Catholic Church in the United States and its relation to the new administration. The meeting lasted approximately 30 minutes. At the conclusion, Cardinal George expressed his gratitude for the meeting and his hopes that it

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That was the year that was: 1950, the year the diocese turned 100

A hundred candles on a birthday cake is a lot of candles, whether for an individual or for an institution. Although candles that marked the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Diocese of Savannah (later Savannah-Atlanta) flickered out almost sixty years ago, its 100th birthday celebration on October 15-16, 1950, is worth remembering.

By any standard, the world was different then. The diocese was different. Even ads in *The Bulletin of the Catholic Laymen's Association* were different. (One Atlanta restaurant advertised its "Business Men's Luncheons" for 65 cents. A laundry proudly offered "zoric, odorless dry cleaning". The Jack Rabbit Company of Spartanburg promised to print any size 6 or 8 exposure film for "forty cents in coin".)

A cardinal from Rome

The front page of the *Bulletin's* October 28, 1950 edition carried a photo of His Eminence, Eugène Cardinal Tisserant, then Vice-Dean of the College of Cardinals, who came from Rome to celebrate the 100th anniversary Mass at the Cathedral of Saint John the Baptist on October 16. Officers of the Solemn Pontifical Mass pictured with Cardinal Tisserant were Fathers Adolph Gall, SMA, and Harold Barr of Augusta and Fathers Daniel J. McCarthy and Thomas A. Brennan, of Port Wentworth and Savannah, respectively. Also visible in the picture were altar server (now Monsignor) Larry Lucree, trainbearer, Father John O'Grady of Saint Mary's Seminary, and Monsignor Joseph M. Corr of Philadelphia, master of ceremonies.

According to a feature story in the issue, almost all of the priests of the diocese were on hand for the Centennial Mass as

were many priests and religious from other dioceses. Prominent among those assembled were Archbishop Gerald P. O'Hara of the Savannah-Atlanta Diocese and Savannah-born Emmet M. Walsh, D.D., Coadjutor Bishop of Youngstown, homilist of the Mass.

Luminaries of a number of diocesan organizations added luster to the occasion, while voices of the James B. Copps Memorial Choir, directed by A. J. Handiboe and accompanied by Miss Patricia Barragan (now Patty Schreck) at the organ, filled the church.

Highlights of Bishop Walsh's homily show him dipping deeply into Georgia and diocesan history. "Catholics discovered Georgia and were the first Europeans to explore and settle here," Walsh said. "There were priests in the expeditions of Ponce de Leon and de Allyon Narvaez, explorers of Georgia, and we can safely conclude that altars were erected and Holy Mass offered here almost a century before the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth." Bishop Walsh cited explorations of



Cardinal Eugène Tisserant processes up Harris Street from the rectory to the Cathedral of Saint John the Baptist for the Mass celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Diocese of Savannah in 1950.

Hernando de Soto in Georgia, the founding of Saint Augustine in 1565, and missionary efforts of Jesuit priests on nearby islands. "In truth," the bishop said of Catholicity in Georgia, "it has been a heroic struggle of bishops, priests and religious to promote religion and worship of God."

Elsewhere in the October 28, 1950, issue of the diocesan paper, editor Hugh Kinchley inserted an editorial detailing the development of the Diocese of Savannah-Atlanta, while on the same page, the "Dixie Musings" column described the efforts of George L. Singleton, "a Protestant citizen", to obtain a court order for the removal of a statue of Mother Frances Xavier Cabrini, first American citizen to be canonized, from public property in New Orleans.

Reflecting the times

Reflective of the times, a *Bulletin* headline noted: "Colored Catholic Laymen's Association of Georgia Holds Its Convention in Atlanta". President James M. Clark of the Atlanta Branch of the CLA welcomed Auxiliary Bishop Francis E. Hyland and delegates to this October 8, 1950 convention with Edgar L. Matthews of Augusta making the response. According to another headline in the centennial edition: "Savannah Will Be Host to 35th Annual Convention of the Catholic Laymen's Association" (on October 29th).

Meanwhile, other news items informed *Bulletin* readers of Archbishop O'Hara's departure for Rome where Pope Pius XII would proclaim the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary on November 1. Also in the news were the activities of various Georgia deaneries of the Council of Catholic Women; the death of noted Catholic editor Michael Williams and the health-related resignation of Monsignor James J. May, longtime pastor of Charleston's Cathedral of Saint John the Baptist. One *Bulletin* story described a radio address by Pius XII to Catholics gathered in Wembley Stadium, London, praising "that generation of amazing heroes (English Catholics) trained in the school of a Crucified Leader to fear neither rack nor rope."

Caught for that moment, a diocesan view, a national view, and a world view of Catholicism filled the pages of *The Bulletin of the Catholic Laymen's Association* in 1950 when the Diocese of Savannah celebrated its 100th birthday nearly 59 years ago.

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On a “sharp erosion”

The recent publication of the third American Religious Identification Survey (see the Southern Cross, *Headline Hopscotch*, March 19), conducted by Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, offers a snapshot of the state of religion in this country at the present time. Two trends in particular are noteworthy and, for Catholics, a matter of concern and for reflection.

The first is what the Pulitzer Prize winning columnist Leonard Pitts calls a “sharp erosion in the number of people claiming religious affiliation.” The second is the increased percentage, among those who do claim affiliation with a religion, of “non-mainstream” believers.

The percentage of Americans who call themselves “Christians” has declined from 86 to 76 since 1990. Correspondingly, the percentage of those claiming no religion has increased from 8.2 to 15, although only 1.6 percent actually claimed to be atheists or agnostics.

In short, a growing number of Americans seem to have embraced “secularism,” a life in this world (*saeculum*) without reference to any transcendent reality. In this, they seem to be following in the footsteps of their European brothers and sisters, who have increasingly turned away from religion to the secular, from God to the world. The United States was once an anomaly, in that Americans developed a modern industrialized economy while retaining traditional Christian beliefs and practices, while Europe industrialized and lost faith simultaneously. No more.

Stephen Schneck, director of the Life Cycle Institute at the Catholic University of America in Washington, told the Catholic News Service that the trend away from religious affiliation is “accelerating at a faster rate than any of us expected.” The “erosion,” he said, “is most

noticeable with young people.”

This erosion has affected the Catholic Church, especially in the Northeast, as well as the mainline Protestant denominations (such as Methodists, Lutherans, Presbyterians and Episcopalians). Although the Catholic decline was statistically slight, it is still cause for concern.

The only increases in percentage were among non-Christian religions, Islam, Eastern religions (such as Buddhism) and “new religious movements” (such as Wicca and “pagans”).

The second noteworthy point is that what little growth there has been among Christians has come from people who identify themselves only generically as “Christian,” or “born again” or “non-denominational.”

There is likely to be considerable debate as to why religion in general and traditional Christianity in particular has been losing its appeal to 21st century Americans. The accelerating pace of the “erosion” coincided for the most part with the artificial boom of the early part of this century, when the world lured many people with its empty promises of wealth and security.

Throughout his pontificate, Pope Benedict XVI has warned of an increasing polarization between the increasingly secularized cultures of the industrialized world and the reaction against them of religious fanatics in the devel-

oping world. He initially stated this concern in his famous address at Regensburg and has alluded to it in his recent letter to the bishops and in his addresses in Africa (see page 1). The pope has rightly reiterated the classic Catholic insistence that faith and reason can and should work together for the benefit of humanity, and should not be seen as antithetical.

Although God and the world, the creator and his creation, are not the same thing and indeed are absolutely distinct, yet God so loved the world that he sent his only Son into it. The Word of God, which is God, has become flesh in Jesus Christ. In him, the secular has been assumed into the divine.

The Catholic tradition, with its incarnational theology and long practice of using the best of secular thought (for example, the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle) to express the Gospel truth has much to offer to a polarizing world. Our tradition has come to acknowledge and respect the scientific method and its accomplishments and to accord them due autonomy. In turn, we ask that science not surpass its own boundaries and speculate on what lies beyond what its methods can investigate. Thus the Catholic Church avoids much of the polarizing polemics of fundamentalists versus scientists.

And yet, one wonders how much of this “both-and” rather than “either-or” viewpoint is known, both to Catholics and to others who might reconsider the contribution that the Catholic tradition can make to the betterment of humanity, if only they were aware of it.

—DKC

How the Church understands work, money, and related issues

PART II – MONEY MAKES THE WORLD GO AROUND

BY FATHER MICHAEL J. KAVANAUGH

For starters, let's get the accurate quote from the Bible about money:

“For the love of money is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith.” (1 Timothy 6:10)

Money isn't bad, in and of itself. Wealth is not some horrible monster, nor are rich people, by virtue of their holdings, damned. It is the craving for money, a disordered desire for money and possessions, which is sinful. And that craving can exist in a person with an annual income of \$3,000.00 or \$3,000,000.00. An abundance of money (not an excess) and of possessions is sometimes seen in the Old Testament as a sign of blessing. We also must note that the

prophetic tradition roundly condemns fraud, usury, exploitation, and injustice, particularly when directed against the poor. (See *Isaiah* 58:3-11; *Jeremiah* 7:4-7; *Hosea* 4:1-2; *Amos* 2:6-7; *Micah* 2:1-2.) In the New Testament Jesus directly addresses economic sins more frequently than any other kind.

Money exists to serve humanity, and making good use of this gift is a moral requirement. Using this gift wisely is the basis for our Catholic understanding of stewardship. Using the gift of money unwisely is sinful and, as we have seen in the last six months, harmful. Saint Clement of Alexandria (died circa 215) asked in a homily (“What Rich Man Will Be Saved?”), “How could we ever do good to our neighbor if none of us possessed anything?” In this vein, Saint Basil the Great (died 379)

wrote: “A great torrent rushes, in thousands of channels, through the fertile land: thus, by a thousand different paths, make your riches reach the homes of the poor.” (*Homilia in Illud Lucae, Destruam Horrea Mea*) In a more modern phrase, Dolly Levi (“Hello, Dolly”) quotes her deceased husband: “Money is like manure – it's no good unless you spread it around.”

The Church teaches that the purpose of a salary is to provide a dignified livelihood for a worker and the worker's family on the material, social, cultural and spiritual level. (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, no. 67). Note that the Church, in supporting a “family” wage, goes in a direction here that differs significantly from that of the business community and American labor law. The teaching

on a “family” wage can also be found in the encyclical letters *Quadragesimo Anno* of Pope Pius XI (1931) and *Laborem Exercens* of Pope John Paul II (1981), as well as the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern world of Vatican II (1965). This concept is one that causes great consternation in an economic culture that is profoundly more comfortable with the idea of a “minimum wage” according to which everyone who does a certain job is paid the same amount. But, if a worker's wages are intended to provide for the needs of the worker's family, and if the size of workers' families vary, ought not the salary paid, even for the same work, also vary? A worker with five children has greater costs to bear than a worker who is single. The idea may seem odd, but our

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EVERYDAY GRACES

Simplifying life

During these troubled economic times, many Americans are struggling. While it's tempting to turn inward and nurse our wounds, we will all be better able to cope through this difficult time if we rely on each other. Some of the more positive effects of the economic crisis have been the way families have been able to spend more time together, whether because they are working less or because they are not pursuing costly time-consuming activities.

Indeed, if there's aspect of American life that I believe has been harmful to us, mentally, physically, and spiritually, it's our propensity to fill our days with too much work and constant busyness. If these tough times provide us with an opportunity to slow down, we will all be better off.

When it comes to our leisure activities, by choosing inexpensive or free recreation, our lives may be enriched. When I look back on my family life, both as a child and as a mother, the activities that cost the least were almost always the ones most memorable.

The more expensive activities

(travel, theme parks, etc.) carry with them high expectations, and if things don't go as planned or someone doesn't seem grateful enough, difficulties and quarrels easily ensue.

When my children were small, we enjoyed most the spontaneous outings that involved short distances and few supplies. We have been blessed to live near the ocean, and some of my best times with the children involved time at the beach. The best of those times involved bringing along very little stuff (no chairs, coolers, etc.). We did bring a few digging toys, a bucket, and nets for the children to try to nab minnows in the surf.

We encouraged the children to take with them no more than they could carry for the entire outing.

In addition to the beach day-trips, outings to the park were another favorite, especially if we arranged to meet our friends there. The good thing about taking these outings close by is that if things start to deteriorate, home is not far away. Finally, a simple walk around the neighborhood is wonderful recreation. To little ones, nature along

the sidewalk is just as fascinating as nature on a Grand Canyon trail. Getting to know neighbors and their pets is an added bonus of walking through the neighborhood. When spring is here, picking produce on local farms is a great way to spend time. We'd always come home with more berries than we needed, so we'd take our surplus to the neighbors. On rainy days, free or inexpensive options include visiting the local library or children's museums.

Unstructured play time is the most important gift we can give our children. They need free play for healthy development. If playing outdoors isn't an option, a box of dress-up clothes filled with discarded from the family wardrobe is enough to keep most children's imaginations active for hours. Playing board games is another way for families to have inexpensive fun. Finally, reading books, both as a family and alone, is a treasured memory from my own childhood and from my children's early years.

These choices for leisure are within almost everyone's budget, and they offer more than entertainment, they benefit children physi-

cally, intellectually, and emotionally.

For teenagers, options for inexpensive fun become more challenging to find, but not impossible. Even if they're reluctant to admit it, this age group truly enjoys serving others. Encouraging teens to spend a morning at the local food pantry or volunteering at the animal shelter or doing yard work for an elderly neighbor are activities that benefit everyone. Many teens, especially those who have a sense of fashion and enjoy vintage clothing, consider rummaging through thrift stores and flea markets an entertaining way to spend a Saturday.

Another option is sorting through family photos together. My teens were always delighted to discover long-forgotten photos of themselves as babies and toddlers. Sorting through photos also offers an opportunity for recalling fond memories. With a little technology and not much expense a teen could be inspired to put together family CDs of photos to share on-line. Another activity my teens have enjoyed is helping me cook.

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Mary Hood Hart

Directing the gaze inward

When I was a freshman in high school, I participated in a pro-life rally in our city. The rally was well attended, and included a sea of people standing for the rights of the unborn.

My ride home that day was with our neighbors, who decided to stop at the local abortion clinic to pray for a few minutes. As we stood in a circle praying the rosary, a group of protesters from the rally drove by and also decided to stop. While our group prayed, their group marched around us, shouting about choice and rights and how we should keep out of their lives.

It was my first encounter with standing against the tide, and it was not all that fun. That day I learned that taking a stand for what is right won't always earn you the admiration of those around you.

I am older now and realize there are plenty of things we do that are not always understood or applauded by the general population. Our staunch Culture of Life mentality is an example of a stand many Catholics and Christians take that is often ridiculed and misunderstood, sometimes by people who claim to share some of our beliefs.

But we do what is right, not because anyone will applaud us, but because we want to live a life pleasing to the Lord. We march for life, and wear ashes on our foreheads, and raise our chil-

dren in a way that sometimes seems counter-cultural. We don't do it to earn a pat on the back, but sometimes people notice. There are many times when following Christ involves taking a public stand.

Most of the time, however, it is about a quiet obedience, and loving God more everyday, especially when no one is watching. It is about God alone.

In "The Love That Keeps Us Sane", writer Marc Foley looks at the "little way" of St. Therese of Lisieux. At one point, Foley discusses St. Therese's desire for authenticity, a simple approach to living out her spirituality without drawing attention to it.

"One of the greatest dangers in the spiritual life," writes Foley, "is wanting to be known as holy. Not only does pride damage our souls, it is also a main source of insanity, because it feeds our fear of what other people think of us. Pride gradually transforms us into actors upon a stage who become more and more dependent upon the applause of an audience."

What a challenge we face! As followers of Christ, we are called to live a life that brings glory to God, but we should not draw attention to our desire for holiness. We want to radiate God's love, but we should not seek for a com-

ment on just how "radiant" we are.

Our path to holiness is less about large, public gestures and more about all the "little ways" we can operate out of our love for Christ.

Practically, many of these ways are an absence of something else. We "preach without preaching" by NOT gossiping, or using bad language, or being quick to judge others. It is taking great efforts to avoid sin and then avoiding the desire for someone to notice just how great you are doing with not sinning.

In my own life, the people who inspire me the most are not necessarily talking about it, but are simply doing what is right. There are those people who choose the hard road and never advertise. But I notice, and it makes me want to try harder as well to quietly cultivate a deeper love of Jesus..

"Therese chose to direct her gaze inward," writes Foley, "so that the opinion of God alone would matter to her. In doing so...she freed herself from the exhausting task of trying to win [others'] approval."

In the end, when all the noise subsides and the people go home, it is me and God. It is you and God. No one else matters.

RACHEL SWENSON BALDUCCI is a freelance writer, wife, mother of five sons and a member of Most Holy Trinity Parish, Augusta.



Rachel Balducci

Bishop blesses Good Samaritan Clinic



Photo by Jonas N. Jordan.

Bishop J. Kevin Boland blesses the Good Samaritan Clinic, Garden City, its volunteers and clients on March 18. The clinic serves uninsured adults. Since opening in October 2007, the clinic has treated 683 patients. The Good Samaritan Clinic is a partnership of Saint Joseph's Candler, the Georgia Department of Community Health, Our Lady of Lourdes Parish and the Chatham County Safety Net Planning Council.



Photo courtesy of Jennifer Spano.

Father-Daughter Dance held

On March 14, the Irish Dancers at Sacred Heart, Warner Robins, hosted their second Father-Daughter Dance. This year, due to popular demand, mothers and sons also took part. Above: Lucas Molina dances with his daughter Isabella.

Saint Peter's teams place in "Odyssey of the Mind" competition



Photo by Maria Buckhaults.

Both "Odyssey of the Mind" teams from Saint Peter the Apostle School, Savannah, placed in regional competition recently. The Division I team (Kiki Rodriguez, Ellie Randall, Kassie Harvey, Rachel Watson, Sara Kathryn Boyles, Mattie Tilton and Brennan Jones) placed second with "Superstitions" and will compete at the state level competition in Columbus on April 4. Above: The Division II team (from left, Mary Margaret McCarthy, Muriel Nave, Isabella Dobbins, Angela Nave, Mills Thompson, Maddie Lofton) placed fourth with "The Lost Labors of Hercules." "Odyssey of the Mind" is a creative, problem solving process where students get to choose a problem, create a script, costumes, sets and a solution to their problem. Saint Peter's, the only Catholic elementary school from Savannah offering Odyssey, won second place last year at the state level. Sallie Boyles and Sara Rodriguez are the team coaches.

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STAR students named in Fitzgerald and Columbus



Photo by Michael Charles Arena, Sr.



Photo by Danni Davis Harris.

The STAR program (Student Teacher Achievement Recognition) is sponsored by the Professional Association of Georgia Educators Foundation, the Georgia Chamber of Commerce and the Georgia Department of Education to recognize top students who are selected for each high school, based on grades and test scores.

Above left: Michael Charles Arena, Jr., of Saint William Parish, Fitzgerald, has been named STAR student of Fitzgerald High School for 2008-09. Arena is first in his class and has been active in theater, choir, and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. He serves Mass at Saint William Church. He has recently accepted a Presidential Scholarship to attend Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in Tifton.

Right: This year's STAR students and teachers for Muscogee County were honored on February 25 during a luncheon at the Columbus Trade Center, hosted by the Columbus Rotary Club. The STAR students select teachers who especially inspire them. This year's winner from Saint Anne Pacelli Catholic School is Chris Jacobs, who selected his English teacher, Tabitha Ginter, as the school's STAR teacher.

Appeal..

Continued from page 1

some tangible way. We show our gratitude to God by returning to him a portion of our time (in prayer and meditation); our talents (especially in acts of charity); and our treasure, in enabling the mission of the Church and the message of Jesus Christ to flourish and remain strong in a world that hungers for meaning and purpose.

As of Friday, March 13, the Bishop's Annual Appeal had raised almost \$1.5 million, or 68% of our \$2.2 million goal. Last year at the same time, however, the BAA had raised \$1.96 million, or 94% of a \$2.1 million goal. Twenty-two percent (22%) of diocesan households had made a commitment to the BAA by this time last year, compared to 16% this year. By the time the 2008 BAA appeal was finished, it had raised 23% (or \$482,000) over its goal, and 30% of our households supported the BAA.

Why the difference?

I suspect our falling behind in the 2009 BAA thus far has to do with fear: fear of what the future holds, and weakness in our ability

to trust in God's goodness to us.

There is no denying that we live in uncertain, even frightening times. Many people in our own country are without work, without healthcare, and have seen their retirement nest eggs wither in the stock market.

Bishop Boland recognized these realities when he asked the faithful of the Diocese of Savannah to try to give to the Bishop's Annual Appeal at least the same amount as they gave last year—if this is possible for them. If people are able to give more, it will certainly be much appreciated as the Church responds to the needy brothers and sisters in our midst. Of course, if people can only give less this year to the BAA, even if it is a "widow's mite," that too will be no less appreciated.

The fact is that we need God and the word of his Son in this anxious world more than ever. We need priests to minister to us, to encourage us, and to call us to more fully embrace Christian values. We need to be knowledgeable in our faith, not only for our own benefit, but to

help others who are searching for meaning, values and encouragement. We need to be able to pass on our faith to future generations so that the mission of the Church will continue in time, and the teachings of Jesus will continue to be preached. And we need to provide for the most vulnerable and needy in our midst, in works of justice and charity.

These are all the ministries that the Bishop's Annual Appeal supports, and the people of the Diocese of Savannah make possible.

Please know that you can trust in the promises of Christ, and that the Church exists to bring Christ to each of us. If you have already made your commitment to the Bishop's Annual Appeal, please know it is most gratefully appreciated. Many people have already responded generously to the BAA by significantly increasing their commitment over last year's. These people are an inspiration to us all.

If you have not yet made your commitment to the Bishop's

Annual Appeal, please prayerfully consider doing so. The Diocese of Savannah needs your support! If you have never made a gift to the BAA, make this the year of your first gift. Please consider making a pledge that can be payable in convenient, manageable installments. In this way you might make a larger gift than you originally thought was possible for you.

If it is not possible for you to give to the BAA at all this year, please pray for the Diocese of Savannah, that it might continue to minister to the many spiritual and corporal needs of people.

Gratitude to God and trust in God: these are two important pillars of stewardship. No matter what your circumstances, no matter what your response to the BAA, my prayer for you is that you always know the joy of a grateful heart, and that we are all under the watchful eye of a loving God.

Lori Clarke is DIRECTOR OF STEWARDSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT FOR THE DIOCESE OF SAVANNAH.

The fifth Sunday of Lent's compelling message

BY MARY JO PEDERSEN (CNS)

Years ago I visited the great Abbey of Montecassino in Italy with its rich marbles and exquisite Florentine mosaics. Four of the remarkable mosaics depict the vows taken by Benedictine monks who built and rebuilt this magnificent church over a period of nearly a thousand years.

The mosaics above the high altar show figures representing the vows of chastity, stability, poverty and obedience. I could identify three of these figures easily, but the fourth was a mystery to me. Instead of a kneeling monk bowing before a superior, the mosaic representing obedience depicts the face of an attentive monk with his hand behind his ear, leaning forward with a look of expectant listening on his face.

It is one of the most beautiful mosaics that I have ever seen in terms of color, texture and expression. I was so struck by its beauty that I purchased a copy of the artwork in the basilica museum. The artistic representation of obedience intrigued me.

I had always associated obedience with childhood or servitude, with bowing and submitting one's will to another out of duty or fear. My husband and I left the "o" word out of our wedding vows years ago because we regarded ourselves as equals and thought that obedience was not necessary for two adults forming a partnership of love in marriage.

As I looked into the radiant face of the mosaic monk, however, and began investigating the meaning of the word "obey," I recognized the poverty of our understanding.

The English word "obey" comes from the Latin "oboedire," which means "to hear" or to "listen attentively," like that monk.

Then I realized there are different kinds of obedience operating at different times in the unique arenas of my life.

I had outgrown the obedience-out-of-fear that characterized my childhood. It served me well as parents, teachers, coaches and other authorities took part in my education and socialization.

In young adulthood, I experienced the heady independence that allowed me to make decisions about my life based on my own good judgment and not necessarily on what my par-



CNS photo/Crosiers

"Jesus turned his ear to his Father, listening and trusting that if he followed the path laid out by his Father who loved him, his life would be safe," writes Mary Jo Pedersen.

ents told me to do. When I suffered the consequences of bad choices, I learned the value of listening to trusted people in my life.

I still obey traffic laws, tax laws and community ordinances because this is part of being a responsible citizen and makes good sense to me. Civic obedience flows from a respect for the common good that was instilled in me by my family.

But the monk in the mosaic—his obedience is a different thing.

The monk is not bowing to an external authority; he is listening to God. His expression is not one of fear but of expectancy and trust. His is the obedience referred to in the reading from the Letter to the Hebrews for this fifth Sunday of Lent.

Even Jesus had to learn obedience. Jesus turned his ear to his Father, listening and trusting that if he followed the path laid out by his

Father who loved him, his life would be safe.

In the life of faith, to obey means to do what Jesus did; to be open to and to listen to our divine parent who loves us.

This is not a blind obedience, but a generous listening that orients one's will to God.

In the Greek version of the *Letter to the Hebrews*, the word for "obedience" used in the text means "to be persuaded, won over."

As a follower of Christ in this season of Lent, I have to ask if I allow myself to be "won over" by God.

Am I open to hearing something other than my own ego-driven will?

Am I really listening when I pray or ponder the Scriptures? Or do I come to God in this season of repentance with my own agenda, holding tight to my life as I have scripted it?

Lent offers us the opportunity to open our guarded hearts, trusting our lives to God—as Jesus did.

The monk in the mosaic puts his hand behind his ear to block out noise, to listen intently. He is literally bent on listening.

In John's Gospel this Sunday, we hear the words of Jesus that say we only gain our life if we are willing to lose it, to give it away selflessly.

Do I want to listen to that message this Lent?

Am I open to self-giving love in my marriage and in my relationships with others?

If I truly listen to my spouse, my children, my co-workers, the poor and vulnerable around me, will it persuade me to be more selfless or generous, less controlling of others?

The compelling message about the meaning of obedience as turning toward God with a posture of attentive listening was the mosaic monk's message to me during my visit to the abbey, as it is now in these final days of Lent.

PEDERSEN, a veteran coordinator of marriage and family spirituality programs, lives in Omaha, Nebraska. She is the author of FOR BETTER, FOR WORSE, FOR GOD: EXPLORING THE HOLY MYSTERY OF MARRIAGE, Loyola Press, 2008.

FAITH IN THE MARKETPLACE

HOW DO YOU DEFINE "OBEDIENCE" IN YOUR FAITH (LIFE) AND IN YOUR EVERYDAY LIFE? ARE THERE DIFFERENT KINDS OF OBEDIENCE?

"To me it is obeying authority — first the pope and the church ... then mothers, fathers and your boss. Teachers too, as long as they do not interfere with our belief in God, as happened when I grew up in Croatia. ... It is important to obey authority because it represents God on earth." — Katie Bayford, Montgomery, Alabama.

"In both faith and everyday life, I think obedience is a matter of following God's laws. I don't think there's a difference." — Mike McNulty, Akron, Ohio.

"When I think of obedience, I think in a sense of freedom, because obedience and the will of God go together for me. We obey by doing his will (which is to love) — like loving our neighbors as ourselves. Being obedient makes life easier, because we know the way we act is in line with God. It's almost like a circle. Obedience brings joy, peace and happiness, and we come more and more into his image and likeness." — Mary Ann Cottone, Moorestown, New Jersey.

In a Nutshell

Lent helps us focus on the purpose of life, which is to choose to fill a God-shaped void with God — as Jesus did.

In the life of faith, to obey involves a generous listening that orients one's will to the Father who loves us.

The church teaches morality not to push us around but to protect us from ourselves.

True oppression calls for disobedience.

Obedience that is life-giving

BY CHRISTOPHER CARSTENS, M.D. (CNS)

A parent says, "He just won't listen." We have all heard that hundreds of times, yet ironically, the statement is almost always wrong. He listens just fine; he just does not obey.

Children do not like other people interfering with their choices — just like adults! We all want to listen, to consider our options and then decide for ourselves.

Especially today, obedience can seem like an archaic notion we should have outgrown. Popular culture falsely shouts that our highest good is unfettered freedom of choice.

The most obvious form of obedience is that of the soldier or the monk, who gives up his or her own freedom of choice, binding the will for a life of higher purpose. Such obedience is worthy and ennobling, but few of us are called to those lives.

A far more common form is the obedience of the student, who obeys because the parent or teacher knows better. That kind of compliance keeps children safe and guides their development. Do not let strangers in the house, a child is told, eat your vegetables and say your prayers at bedtime.

There are also times in adult life when the student's obedience provides safety and guidance. When learning to climb mountains, it is wise to do exactly what the instructor says. If you are new in Alcoholics Anonymous, listen to your sponsor and take notes, because independent decisions will frequently lead back to the bar.

Being a student is not demeaning; it is life-giving.

Following the moral precepts taught by the church also demands this sort of obedience. Pop psychology proclaims that we are each wise enough to make our own moral decisions, but the human capacity for self-delusion is virtually limitless.

Decades ago, the pope taught us that experimenting with human reproduction was morally dangerous. We did not listen. What did he know about sex, being celibate?

Now we have a divorce rate of 50 percent, 4,000 abortions a day and the "Octo-Mom."

The church teaches morality not to push us around but to protect us from ourselves.

Finally, there is the obedience of the oppressed, servile and demeaned, driven by force and fear, and always in the service of base ends. Some keep their place by driving others down. Those who obey do not choose obedience; it is chained upon them, at the cost of their dignity and often far more.

True oppression calls for disobedience. It mattered that Rosa Parks would not move to the back of the bus, but even such disobedience is only validated by obedience to a higher good.

Even in demanding justice, we must recognize that we do not know everything, we must listen and we must be led.

CARSTENS is a psychologist in San Diego.



CNS photo/Bob Roller.

Monks pray at Holy Cross Abbey in Berryville, Virginia. The men in the cloistered community live by the Rule of Saint Benedict and follow simple routines of prayer and work.

Jeremiah's hope-filled message

BY FATHER W. THOMAS FAUCHER (CNS)

A wise old Paulist priest whose classes I eagerly took in my seminary days said the only real theological objection to God's all-knowing power is his terrible record in personnel choices. Consistently, from Adam on down, it seems like the people God chose to do things often ended up making bad decisions and committing big sins.

Look in the readings for this Lenten season, for example, at this idea of a covenant in the Old Testament.

— On the first Sunday of Lent, God talks about

Simplify...

Continued from page 5

Preparing a meal or baking a dessert with one of my teens allows me a chance to bond with that child, and he or she learns helpful tips about cooking in the process.

We can ease some of the stress of these tough financial times if we relax in simple ways, sharing treasured pastimes with our family and friends. It may be that when the worst of the crisis has passed, we will have discovered our families have been enriched in ways we never anticipated.

MARY HOOD HART lives with her family in Ocean Isle Beach, North Carolina. She can be reached at mhhart@diosav.org.

the covenant with Noah and his family.

— On the second, God renews this covenant with Abraham.

— The next week God spells out to Moses the covenant in the Ten Commandments.

— Then, as always happened, the people refuse to live up to the covenant, and the destruction of God's chosen ones is depicted in the first reading of the fourth Sunday of Lent.

— What the readings for the fifth Sunday of Lent should record is God giving up and admitting his mistake in trying to have a covenant with a "stiff-necked people" like us. But, typical God, he starts all over again, with Jeremiah (normally filled with gloom and doom) giving this joyful promise that God is going to write a new covenant in our hearts.

But God is actually being very clever here, for the new covenant is really a deeper and more powerful version of the old covenant. It still spells out the same terms: "I will be your God and you will be my people." But it admits that from the very moment of creation all people have had within them a "God-shaped void." This is the place within us that only God can fill. The purpose of life, therefore, is to choose to fill that place with God.

What this means is that God intended all peoples to recognize that God loves us and that we can love God in return.

When Jeremiah says that the covenant is in our hearts, he is saying it is in our DNA! To search for our loving God is in the very basis of what it

means to be human.

So why so many failures? Because what it requires of us is a desire to be our best. This is where *Psalms* 51, the responsorial psalm for the fifth Sunday of Lent, kicks into play: "Create a clean heart in me, O God." We have to make the effort to let God into our lives. We have to choose to let this God-shaped void be filled with the grace and beauty of God.

There is no substitute for the real thing. There is no substitute for God.

God made a decision in the very beginning not to force us to be good. He made the decision to let us choose him or choose against him. He made the decision to create free will. We can decide what we want to be, and we can decide if we want God or not.

But then he made the decision to give us more than one chance. He allows us both as humanity and as individuals to make the wrong choice and then have another chance.

God's goodness and faith in us is incredible!

I suppose God could have chosen people who would never fail. But I am glad he did not. That gives me hope that there is always room for me to reform my life and choose to allow the new covenant in my heart to rule my life.

FATHER FAUCHER is pastor of Saint Mary's Catholic Church in Boise, Idaho.

Diocese

CHRISM MASS

Bishop J. Kevin Boland will celebrate the Blessing of the Oils and Consecration of the Chrism at the annual Chrism Mass in the Cathedral of Saint John the Baptist, Savannah, at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, **April 7**. All members of the diocesan family are invited to attend.

CAMP VILLA MARIE

Day camp at Villa Marie will begin on **June 8** this summer for children ages 6 to 12 in the Savannah area. Schedules and registration forms are available on the diocesan Web page (www.diosav.org) on the Family Life home page.

ABUSE HOTLINE NUMBER

To report sexual abuse of a minor by a Diocese of Savannah employee or volunteer, call the abuse hotline number at 888-357-5330 or the Office for the Protection of Children and Young People, 912-201-4073 or 912-201-4074. To read the diocesan policy on sexual abuse of minors, go to <http://diosav.org/childyouthprotection>.

Augusta Area

SERRA CLUB OF AUGUSTA

The Serra Club of Augusta is in formation. All are invited to an evening of dinner and Adoration on **April 1**. Dinner will be the Wednesday Night Soup and Salad at Saint Mary School Cafeteria at 6:00 p.m. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament will follow from 6:30-7:30 p.m. in the chapel on 1210 Monte Sano Avenue, a time of prayer and quiet reflection for vocations and the successful formation of the Serra Club. All are welcome.

Make dinner reservations by e-mailing mary.bowles@knology.net before noon on March 30 (reservations are required - \$3.00 per person). For more information, contact augustaserra1@gmail.com or call 706-737-8946.

THE DONUT MAN

Rob Evans, the "Donut Man" will present the Gospel in a way that introduces young children and their families to the basic elements of the Christian faith at Saint Patrick's Hall, Church of the Most Holy Trinity, 720 Telfair Street, Augusta, on **April 3** at 7:30 p.m. Cost is \$5 per person or \$25 per family.

For information or to purchase tickets, call the church office at 706-722-4944.

GOOD FRIDAY CROSS WALK

Augusta's Good Friday Cross Walk is a solemn remembrance of Jesus' Way to the Cross. The **April 10** walk begins at Burns United Methodist Church on Lumpkin Road at 10:00 a.m. and proceeds to Ascension Lutheran on Wells then through the neighborhood to Hillcrest Baptist on Deans Bridge, ending at Saint Joseph Catholic Church on Lumpkin Road. At each church, the Passion of Christ will be read along with music. All are invited to attend to pray and process and carry a cross. The event is sponsored by the South Augusta Pastors Alliance. At noon, all are invited to continue with the Stations of the Cross at Saint Joseph's. Transportation will be provided back to starting places.

For more information, call 706-798-1882.

SPRING CONFERENCE

The Third Women's Spring Conference will be held on **April 18** at Saint Teresa of Avila Parish, Grovetown. Two nationally known presenters, Dr. Ronda Chervin from EWTN television and Gail Buckley, Founder and Executive Director of Catholic Scripture Study International, will be the speakers. Dr. Chervin will give a two part talk on "The 21st Century Woman: Closed or Open Hearted." Gail Buckley will give presentations on "Giving God the Reigns" and "Catholicism: The Bible-Based Faith." The day will begin with 8:30 Mass, followed by breakfast snacks. The conference will be held from 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. A catered lunch and door prizes will be provided. Tickets are \$25, if purchased by April 1. (\$40 after 4/1). They may be purchased from Saint Teresa's church office (4921 Grovetown Road, 706-863-4956) or Sainly Gifts (3857 Rose Lane, Augusta, 706-863-1235).

For more information, call Jeannine Eckert at 706-854-0329 or Sharon Parr at 706-860-2977.

AN EVENING IN PARIS GALA

Saint Joseph Church, Augusta, will host An Evening in Paris Gala on **June 20** at the Marion Hatcher Center, 519 Greene Street, Augusta. Attire is Semi-formal. Cocktails will be served at 6:00 p.m. and dinner at 7:00 p.m., followed by an evening of dancing to live music by the Sassy Brass Band and a Silent Auction. All funds raised will benefit the restoration and improvement of Saint Joseph Church. Tickets: \$50 donation. Make checks and money orders payable to: St. Joseph Catholic Church, 2607 Lumpkin Road, Augusta, GA 30906-3222.

For more information, call 706-798-1920 or visit www.evening-gala.com.

Macon Area

GOLF TOURNAMENT

Sacred Heart Catholic School's Home and School Association will host a charity golf tournament **April 24** at the Landing's Golf Club in Warner Robins. For further information on registering, becoming a sponsor, or making a door prize donation please contact Kathy Louth at 478.971.4262 or email at klouth@windstream.net.

Savannah Area

SERRA CLUB HOLY HOUR

The Serra Club of Savannah Holy Hour for Vocations will be held on **April 2** at Saint James Church, 8412 Whitfield Avenue, at 7:00 p.m. All are welcome.

LIVING STATIONS

The Catholic Youth Ministry of Saint Anne Parish, Richmond Hill, will present the Living Stations of the Cross on Palm Sunday, **April 5** at 7:30 p.m. in the Parish Hall. All are welcome.

SERRA CLUB MEETING

Father Tim McKeown, Diocesan Vocations Director, will be guest speaker at the April Serra Club of Savannah meeting. This meeting will be held on **April 18** at Saint James Church, 8412 Whitfield Avenue, following the 9:00 a.m. Mass in Room B, next to the Gym. All are welcome.

Valdosta-Brunswick Area

VOCATIONS EVENT

Vocations Event '09 will be held on **April 18** from 1:00 p.m. until after dinner following the 5:00 p.m. Mass at Saint Francis Xavier Parish in Brunswick. Is God calling you to love and to serve him in matrimony or as single person, either a lay person or as a priest or religious? Hear exciting speakers and participate in the dialogue. Representatives of religious orders will be present. Presentations will be geared towards middle and high school students and their parents, but interested adults are invited. Contact Marie Schoettle at schoettl@darien-tel.net or 912-437-6799.

CLASSIFIEDS

CLASSIFIED ADS are available for \$2.00 per line. Contact the *Southern Cross*, 601 East Liberty Street, Savannah, GA 31401-5196; Phone 912-201-4100; Fax 912-234-5726; E-mail: SouthernCross@diosav.org

DANIE CAMPHER, CONTRACTOR/HANDYMAN, greater Savannah area. Honest, dependable. Free estimates. 912-663-5173.

FERNANDINA BEACH CONDO FOR RENT: rates: winter-\$1,000 a month and summer- \$100 a night. 912-Call 282-2203.

SEEKING PRINCIPAL for Catholic Elementary School in Garden City, SC for 2009 - 2010. Qualifications: practicing Catholic, Master's Degree in Administration, principal certification, five years teaching experience. Contact:

Laurence Bolchoz at (843) 222-9217 or email lbolchoz@sc.rr.com by March 27, 2009.

DAYCARE DIRECTOR St. James Parish is seeking a qualified candidate for a Director for a new daycare facility opening in August 2009. Candidates should have experience in early childhood education and be ready to build an exciting and faith-filled learning environment for 2 and 3 year old children. Prior managerial experience in daycare is a must. This is a 12 month, benefit position. Qualified candidates should hold a bachelors degree. Please send resumes to Awbrey Smith: awbrey.smith@gmail.com or bring by St. James Church office, 8412 Whitfield Avenue, Savannah.

VACATION CONDO available 3 May-10 May 2009. 2 bdrm/2bthrm.Sleeps 8.Orange Lake Country

Club,Orlando Fla. 5 miles from Disney. Amenities-Child pools;Golf;Boating;Exer. equip;t;Fishing;game room;Whirlpool/Hot tub.All units: washer/dryers;kitchens;air cond; tel;microwaves. Asking \$250 per nite/\$1750 wk; 5 star property.Call 478-396-5126 to rent.

ISRAEL: THE HOLY LAND. "In the Foot Steps of Jesus" is a ten-day tour of the Holy Land. Departure from Atlanta, November 3, return November 12, 2009. Cost includes: round-trip air from Atlanta, first class hotels, breakfast and dinner daily, all excursions, transfers and taxes. Only 20 seats available. Hosted by deacon candidate Arnie Goodman and Avia Tours. To register and for info call Arnie Goodman at 706-221-5463

Pope...



CNS photo/Alessandro Bianchi, Reuters.

People form a pictorial puzzle depicting Pope Benedict XVI during a youth rally at the Coqueiros Stadium in Luanda, Angola, March 21.

Continued from page 1

described it, one that must begin with a radical conversion to Christ that redirects every aspect of life.

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

Profoundly countercultural

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

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

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

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

Abortion was very much on the pope’s mind in Africa. His first speech on the continent reminded Africans of their traditional values and said the church was the institution best able to preserve

and purify them -- unlike agencies that want to impose “cultural models that ignore the rights of the unborn.”

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

“No” to wars and ethnic conflicts

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

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

The reason is that he knows local African church leaders are already on the front lines in denouncing political corruption. In Cameroon, for example, a year ago Cardinal Christian Wiyghan Tumi of Douala took the unprecedented step of publicly

opposing President Paul Biya’s constitutional meddling that allowed the president to serve yet another seven-year term—a position the cardinal reiterated during the pope’s visit.

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

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

Defense of women’s rights

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

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

MAY THEY REST IN PEACE

Please pray for the faithful who have died recently:

- † GISELA CHRYSTA WILLIAMS, Augusta, March 4, 2009
- † RAUL ARROYO ESPINOZA, Pembroke, March 10, 2009
- † RHONDA C. GUNTER, Albany, March 11, 2009
- † ANNA MARIE (GENTRY) LENDRUM, Warner Robbins, March 12, 2009
- † ANNA FRANCES HARVEY BUMGARDNER, Savannah, March 13, 2009
- † DOROTHY C. LAGEN, Columbus, March 13, 2009
- † JOHN THOMAS RAYNOR, Martinez, March 13, 2009
- † ELAINE KEENAN SUMMERLIN LYON, Savannah, March 13, 2009
- † LT. TED A. AMROWSKI (USN RET.), Sylvester, March 15, 2009
- † EMILIANO ALONZO BECANCIO, Sandhill, March 15, 2009
- † W. J. CHANT, Port Wentworth, March 15, 2009
- † DORIS G. ROTH, Augusta, March 15, 2009
- † WILLIAM MEINDL, Valdosta, March 16, 2009

Please pray for the following priest on the anniversary of his death:

- † REV. JOHN J. KIRBY, April 3, 1872

Bishop J. Kevin Boland’s Schedule

MARCH		
23	Baxley	St. Rose of Lima Confirmation
24-25	Charleston, SC	Ordination and Installation of Bishop Robert Guglielmone as Bishop of Charleston
28	Columbus	Deimel Legacy Ball
29	Columbus	St. Anne & Christ the King Confirmation
30	Columbus	Tri-Parish Confirmation
APRIL		
4	Savannah	Mass, St. Benedict the Moor
5	Savannah	Palm Sunday Mass at Cathedral
7	Savannah	Chrism Mass at Cathedral
9-11	Savannah	Sacred Triduum
12	Savannah	Easter Sunday at Cathedral

Money...

Continued from page 4

tax code, which allows for deductions to be based on the number of children a person has, recognizes that larger families require greater financial resources to achieve a "dignified livelihood."

Salaries, then, ought not be seen as a way of accumulating vast personal wealth. Intended to provide a dignified livelihood, the purpose of working for and receiving a paycheck is to care for one's family and to care for the needy in the community. Salaries aren't about having the ability to buy new shoes, cars, electronic gadgets, etc, when these things are not needed. Rather a person's income is to be treated as a gift and, like all gifts from God, to be used with prudence and generosity. An essential part of a worker's responsibility is saving a significant portion of his or her income in order to protect themselves from need in those times when a salary is reduced or cut off.

NOTE: This is the second in a three-part series on the Church and money.

Father Michael J. Kavanaugh is PASTOR OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES PARISH, PORT WENTWORTH.

Shakespeare's Globe Theater recreated in Savannah at SVA

BY LORETTO D. LOMINACK

On March 8 and 9, Saint Vincent's Academy, Savannah, raised the red flag on the school flagpole to denote the production of a Shakespearean comedy. The Globe Theatre was "recreated" as carefully as possible in the front courtyard of Saint Vincent's for two performances of Twelfth Night during daylight hours, as was the tradition in the time of the Bard. "Gatherers" collected one penny admission in a box, hence the term "box office." Anyone wishing to pay three pennies could have a gallery seat. Special and more comfortable seating was in the front for the "aristocracy," the school administration.

The usual bear-baiting was not allowed because of objections of animal cruelty from the aristocracy, however there were animals present at the play.

Women called "applewives" walked among the audience carrying apples for sale and, as usual, hecklers were present to give the actors a difficult time while reciting their lines. Speaking of disruptions, a "cutpurse" (thief) caused a great commotion by cutting the string on an unsuspecting victim's purse. The offender was captured and dealt with appropriately. In addition to the hecklers and cutpurse, the only other interruptions came when truck traffic on Liberty Street made the actors have to repeat their lines.



SVA seniors Erin Guirard (left) and Emily Pickles (right) enact Twelfth Night.

The play was considered a great success and no rotten fruit or vegetables were thrown at the actors.

A Shakespearean play is presented each spring at Saint Vincent's by the senior English classes taught by Edna Fox. All seniors participate in one of the following categories: actors, costume design and production, set design and production, music, stage hands, and props. The play was directed by Rick Goldman and produced by Edna Fox, with costume coordination by Mary Ann Goldman and Kim Schneider.

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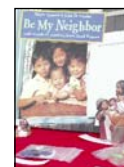


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