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Feeling threatened



The Dialog/Don Blake

Savannah Bradley checks her insulin with nurse Christine Zimmerman at Christ the Teacher School on Monday. Delaware's Catholic schools are facing a proposed cut in the state subsidy for school nurses. For the story, click the picture.

By Joseph Ryan

Assistant editor

Forget the image of a grandmotherly woman in white who dispenses Band-Aids and sugar pills. Nurses in Catholic schools care each day for students with a range of chronic illnesses from allergies to cancer.

[Read the full story.](#)

Feeling threatened: Proposed budget cuts create worries over funds for school nurses

By Joseph Ryan
Assistant editor

Forget the image of a grandmotherly woman in white who dispenses Band-Aids and sugar pills. Nurses in Catholic schools care each day for students with a range of chronic illnesses from allergies to cancer.

That's why Cheryl Bradley worries she might have to take her daughter out of Catholic school if the Delaware legislature passes a proposed cut in the state's annual subsidy for nurses in private schools, which would mean some Catholic schools won't be able to afford a full-time nurse. Bradley's daughter Savannah, a fourth-grader at Christ the Teacher School in Glasgow, uses an insulin pump to treat her diabetes and sees the school nurse there three times a day to monitor it.

When Savannah was diagnosed, her mother recalled thinking that with a nurse at Christ the Teacher her daughter would be well taken care of.

Last Thursday, Bradley and her husband, Mark, drove from their home in Holy Family Parish in Newark to a meeting of the Delaware Alliance of Catholic School Parents (DACSP) at St. Ann's Parish in Wilmington to hear elected officials talk about the challenges of the budget and to tell Lt. Gov. Matt Denn, Rep. Greg Lavelle and Rep. Gerald Brady their feelings on the possible cuts in school nurse funds, transportation



The Dialog/Don Blake

Savannah Bradley checks her insulin with nurse Christine Zimmerman at Christ the Teacher School on Monday.

and driver's education subsidies.

Bradley said she couldn't imagine not having the choice of sending her daughter to a Catholic school "because of a budget cut." Noting she didn't have a vested interest in Catholic school issues before her daughter was diagnosed, Bradley said her mission now was to go back to tell Christ the Teacher's parents that one

day, if their child becomes chronically ill and the school doesn't have a nurse, "they will realize their choice for a religious education is now gone."

Personal contact in Dover

During the meeting at St. Ann's, more than 40 DACSP parents, nurses and administrators heard the state officials describe the problems of the state's \$780 million deficit. Each

official said personal contacts and personal letters to legislators worked best in lobbying and cautioned that form letters or e-mails are less effective.

"We have to balance the budget. That's a legal requirement," Denn said. When asked if legislators realize the accomplishments of Catholic schools and their graduates, Denn said lawmakers face 30 to 40 bills involving public schools each session and are "trying to deal with the schools they're actually responsible for."

Catholic school funding such as the nursing subsidy, transportation reimbursements and driver's education funds weren't cut to target Catholic schools, Denn said. "Virtually every program across the board has been cut in some way."

Cooperating to save money

Cathy Weaver, superintendent of diocesan Catholic schools, told DACSP members she was scheduled to testify before the House Education Committee on May 6 and intended to ask that the nursing subsidy be restored to last year's level. Given the size of the deficit, Weaver said, it's not reasonable to expect cuts in the driver's ed and transportation subsidies to be restored this year.

"We want to give the message that we thank [the lawmakers] for their service" and ask them to think about ways Catholic schools and the state might work together creatively,

Weaver said.

The current annual state subsidy for nurses at Catholic schools is about \$350,000, according to Weaver, an amount that's been raised by only \$59 since the 2000-01 school year. The state's proposed budget includes a \$50,000 cut to the current subsidy, which represents much of an overall proposed cut of \$67,000 to the nursing subsidy for all private schools in the state.

Weaver planned to tell the House Education Committee this week that the proposed cut "may preclude some schools from providing a school nurse in the coming year."

The actual cost to provide nurses in Catholic schools

is closer to \$800,000 per year, Weaver said. "We have not asked for additional funding due to the budget challenges."



Cathy Weaver

State funding partially supports salaries for nurses in 18 diocesan schools, according to the diocese.

Most of the nurses work full-time, but six are funded for four school days a week, which some schools spread over five days at reduced hours, Weaver said.

Weaver said Catholic schools save the state at

least \$144 million each year by educating approximately 12,000 students. She cited one estimate that it costs public school districts in the state an average of \$14,000 per year to educate each student. "Most of our tuitions are significantly less than that." At the average state cost per student, Weaver said, it would take only five students transferring to public schools because of a nursing reduction at Catholic schools for the state's costs to exceed the \$67,000 savings proposed by the budget cut.

The nursing subsidy cut "is so short-sighted," Weaver said. "We have to do a better job in helping them understand this is really about saving them

money."

Joe Fitzgerald, lobbyist for the Diocese of Wilmington, said after the DACSP meeting that the budget process in Dover might extend into the summer, perhaps in a special session of the legislature. Noting that there are many compelling services that face budget cuts, Fitzgerald said Catholic school nurses are "a public health imperative. They're at the front line of public health. There are children with chronic conditions and worse — diabetes, autism, cancer."

School nurses are "also on the front line for detecting things like neglect in the home and worse," he said. "They're a critical resource. You can't do without them."

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Missionary mentality: Man who will be ordained first black priest for diocese recalls spirit of Irish priests from his youth in Nigeria

By Joseph Ryan
Assistant editor

Long before he was ordained a deacon a year ago, Idongesit Etim delivered his first homilies, at his home parish in Obio-Offot, Nigeria.

Although English is Nigeria's official language, some parishioners at St. Mary's Church only understood Ibibio, one of the country's major languages, so young Idongesit was called on to interpret the words of the Irish missionary priests that staffed the parish. "I joke that I'm black Irish," Etim says.

The 31-year-old Etim spoke about his journey



The Dialog/Don Blake

Idongesit Etim greets Dan Benarcik after Mass at Christ Our King Church last month. Etim will be the first black priest ordained for the diocese.

from Nigeria, a country with about 17 million Catholics, to Wilmington, where he will become the first black priest ordained for the diocese in its 141-year history when Bishop Malooly ordains him May 16 at the Cathedral of St. Peter. In the final days of his year-long diaconate spent in ministry at Wilmington's Christ Our King Parish, Etim said it was the missionary spirit at St. Mary's that first stirred his interest in the priesthood.

"I was always moved by the joy and the ability of missionaries to leave their country, learn another person's way of life and become a part of them," he said.

One of six children of the late Augustine Etim, a dentist, and Elizabeth, a seamstress, Etim said he enjoyed growing up in Obio-Offot, where many people were Catholic and much of his childhood revolved around the parish.

"You'd have the priest coming around in school — 'Good morning, Father.' He'd smile and would speak the language, though he didn't speak it well. Everyone knew Father's car, who Father was. There was always this fun."

Despite years of Catholic education and catechetical classes, Etim's curiosity about church teachings was spurred in his teens by questions on religion that non-Catholics asked him. "I started questioning so many things I couldn't understand."

His oldest brother, Joseph, had become a priest for the Missionary Society of St. Paul. "So I read some of his philosophy books, because I really wanted to answer ques-



The Dialog/Don Blake

When his father died, Idongesit Etim discovered how many lives his father had touched through his generosity. Etim says he took it upon himself to find a way to put the needs of others first.

tions about my faith."

Priesthood was a consideration, Etim said, but he had his doubts. "I thought, 'Look, your brother's vocation is not your vocation; we are all called differently.'" But while Etim was studying to be an electrician his father died, and his resistance to the thought of priesthood died, too.

"My dad went to morning Mass every day before he went to the office. At his burial, the church was packed." Mourners told Etim how his father had paid their bills. "I realized the number of people whose lives he touched. It became a challenge to me to do something beyond thinking about myself."

The road to Dover

After considering the diocesan priesthood, he turned to the Josephite Fathers, the religious order that serves in African-American communities. He became a member of their first seminarian class in Nigeria. Following college

there, the Josephites sent Etim to Dominican House of Studies in Washington, D.C., for graduate work. In Washington Etim again considered the diocesan priesthood; he was attracted by a desire to serve integrated parishes.

When he visited a friend in Dover, he attended Holy Cross Church and became interested in the Diocese of Wilmington. Still a Josephite seminarian, he decided to leave the order and become a lay student. After he discussed his continuing interest in Wilmington with Father Dan McGlynn, pastor of Holy Cross, Etim met with other diocesan priests, including vocations director Father Joseph Cocucci.

Eventually he met Bishop Michael Saltarelli, who he remembers telling him,

"If you open up for God, you will always want for nothing. God has a plan." That plan included Etim's joining the diocese and attending St. Mary's

Seminary in Baltimore, where he will graduate two days before his ordination. He will celebrate his first Mass at Christ Our King on ordination day and will celebrate Mass the next day at Holy Cross.

David Balcerak, grand knight of the Knights of Columbus's Dover Council 4182, recalls Etim working the concession stands at Dover Downs to raise money for the knights. He didn't know it, but the Dover knights were putting aside their tip money for the seminarian.

"He was very well liked throughout his time here," Balcerak said. "He needed a vehicle and one of our knights got him a used car."

Etim has cherished his time preparing for the priesthood and the people he has met along the way. "I love home visitations, where you take Communion to people. I met great people of faith. You give Christ to them and you leave with Christ. You could go and visit a sick person and leave sad. I never did. You meet them and hear their stories, you see God's hand in their life."

He said his time in Nigeria and America has taught him that Christianity takes the shape of each culture. Catholicism, he said, "does not condemn our culture, but it elevates it, raises it up to a different standard."

On the threshold of the priesthood, Etim said he's been raised to an understanding of his call. "Ministry is about recognizing Christ in other people and sharing that living Christ in you and the Christ in them. I truly believe that in giving you receive."

Bishop Malooly reports on settlements of cases related to child sex abuse

Dialog report

The Diocese of Wilmington has paid more than \$7.68 million in settlement costs and legal expenses related to sexual abuse of minors by clergy since the 1980s, based on figures Bishop Malooly reports in this issue of The Dialog. The diocese

expects to have paid at least another \$1.5 million in legal expenses for abuse cases before the current fiscal year ends June 30, and 44 abuse-related lawsuits involving the diocese were pending as The Dialog went to press Tuesday.

An accounting of the diocese's costs related to child sexual-abuse cases

appears in an addendum to Bishop Malooly's letter to the people of the diocese.

"Every abuse of a child by any person is a shocking and reprehensible crime and a grave sin," the bishop writes, "but when perpetrated by priests or other church personnel, it is even more grievous. It repre-

sents a fundamental breach of trust and goes directly against everything we believe as Christians."

Also in the print version of this issue, the diocese releases its annual accounting of expenses and funding in all diocesan departments for the fiscal years ended June 30, 2008, and June 30, 2007.

Letter from Bishop Malooly on settlements

My Dear People:

In this edition of The Dialog is the annual report of income and expenses for the Diocese of Wilmington for Fiscal Year 2008 (July 2007 through June 2008). In the report you will note two expense items about which I would like to offer comment; the cost for childhood sexual abuse settlements and related legal expenses. In fact, the publication of this annual accounting offers me the opportunity to not only comment on these two items, but also to report to you the efforts of our diocese to settle cases of childhood sexual abuse, to help victims and their families cope with the devastating effects of abuse, to promote reconciliation, and to educate the public as well as our young people about sexual abuse.

Every abuse of a child by

any person is a shocking and reprehensible crime and a grave sin, but when perpetrated by priests or other church personnel, it is even more grievous. It represents a fundamental breach of trust and goes directly against everything we believe as Christians.



From the Bishop

Since early 2002, the abuse of children by Catholic priests has been a major story in the media. The revelation of that scandal has shaken the Catholic Church in the United States, has tarnished the priesthood, and has caused a loss of trust in bishops. While the church as an institution has been shamed by these revelations, nothing compares to the devastating suffering endured by victims and their families. In response to these terrible crimes, the bishops of the United States pledged to listen to the profound pain endured by victims and to reach out

to them and their families to bring about healing and reconciliation, and to create a safe environment for children within the church. These pledges are spelled out in detail in The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People published in 2002. I had the privilege of serving as a founding member of the Bishops' Special Committee which drafted and implemented the charter. Based upon additional studies, research and experience, the charter was revised in 2005 and stands as the absolute commitment of bishops of the United States who have the responsibility of shepherding God's people to continually work to heal the unimaginable hurt caused by abuse and to bring about reconciliation and restoration of trust.

Here in the Diocese of Wilmington, my predecessor, Bishop Michael Saltarelli, implemented the charter with energy and true purpose. In addition to his own, personal efforts to reach out to victims and their families, the bishop

established a Victim Assistance Coordinator's position as required by the charter. The Victim Assistance Coordinator's primary responsibility is to secure and coordinate assistance for the pastoral care of persons who have been sexually abused by clergy or church personnel. That care includes providing counseling, spiritual assistance, and other social services. Bishop Saltarelli set up a Review Board of 11 competent laypersons, some non-Catholic, and one priest to assist the bishop in the development of policies and procedures to deal with sexual abuse, to assist in the assessment of any allegation of sexual abuse of minors, and to help the bishop determine the suitability for ministry of those accused of committing the crime of sexual abuse of minors.

A comprehensive policy titled "For the Sake of God's Children," which provides explicit directives to all parishes, schools, and other church institutions to create safe environments for children and young peo-

ple and to provide education about childhood sexual abuse to parents, young people, clergy, church employees, and volunteers, has been in place since 2002. The diocese continues strict enforcement of its policy that all church personnel, including clergy, religious, lay employees, and volunteers who work with children and young people, must have a criminal background check renewed every five years. Recently, this policy was expanded to require background checks of all resident priests and religious, even if retired. Written ethical standards of behavior for all church personnel and volunteers were adopted. Ongoing education and training about appropriate behaviors with children and the signs of childhood molestation are conducted at both parish and diocesan levels.

The diocese has also cooperated with civil authorities. In April of 2002, Bishop Saltarelli gave the Delaware Attorney General the names and information the diocese had about any diocesan priest who had been accused of sexually abusing minors since the 1950s. The same type of

information was given to States Attorneys in Maryland. And in an effort to be open and transparent about sexual abuse of minors, in November 2006 the bishop released the names of diocesan priests about whom there was "admitted, corroborated, or otherwise substantiated" allegations of childhood sexual abuse during the previous 50 years. In releasing those names and listing the parishes where the priests had been assigned, Bishop Saltarelli hoped that other victims might come forward.

As I stated in my installation homily last September, I vow to continue the work of Bishop Saltarelli to bring healing to all victims and families and to try to restore the trust that was broken when these crimes were committed. I have asked to meet each and every victim who desires such a meeting with me. I want to hear what they want me to hear and I want to work closely with each victim to learn how best the church can be part of bringing healing to all victims. There is no greater priority of mine, no greater responsibility, than the safety of those entrusted to our care. But as a bishop, I have a particular responsi-

bility for the "ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor 5:12), which God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, has given me. I, therefore, recognize that the process of reconciliation with victims is not only an apology and pastoral outreach that can in no way make up for the crimes committed against them, but also some reasonable financial assistance, fully recognizing that no amount of money can make up for the crimes committed. No amount of money can restore shattered trust or loss of faith or innocence.

It is the policy of the Diocese of Wilmington to acknowledge the harm done to victims of childhood sexual abuse by priests and church personnel, to apologize for those deplorable crimes, to reach out to victims and their families, providing pastoral, spiritual, and counseling assistance, to pay for past and current expenses incurred because of the harm inflicted, and to reach a reasonable monetary settlement as part of the healing and reconciliation process. Even though the diocese has been sued in dozens of cases, it is not our desire to litigate and possibly cause added pain, but to reach out in the name

of Christ and bring about healing.

We also want to be transparent and keep you informed about the number of cases filed in court, our efforts to settle, and the costs related to settlements. With that in mind, at the end of this letter you will find such an accounting.

I continually pray for the welfare of the abuse victims and, in particular, I pray that those who have been driven away from the church by these crimes can find their way back to the church. I encourage, again, those who have been abused to come forward. Let us do what we can to bring about the healing and reconciliation you and the church need.

In the months ahead our local church will continue to be tested as the legal process continues to unfold. I ask you to join me in praying that the Holy Spirit will guide all involved in this process to bring healing to victims and that our church will emerge purified and renewed.

Sincerely in Our Lord,



**Most Reverend
W. Francis Malooly
Bishop of Wilmington**

■ Suits

- Since 2002, 35 suits alleging abuse of minors by diocesan priests have been filed in the courts naming the diocese as a defendant. Currently there are 28 cases pending in the courts.

- Since 2002, 18 suits naming religious order priests and their communities as defendants were filed. The diocese is also named as a defendant in these cases. Sixteen of these cases are pending before the court.

- Fifteen parishes have been named as defendants as well as the diocese.

- In November of 2006 the diocese named 18 diocesan priests and two priests from other dioceses who had served here as having “admitted, corroborated, or otherwise substantiated” accusations of sexual abuse over a 56-year period. Eight of those priests are named in suits; six are deceased and the two who are living have been laicized.

- Six religious order priests, not priests of the Diocese of Wilmington but who at the time of the

alleged offenses worked in local, private Catholic schools or institutions, have been named in suits. One of the named priests was employed for a while as the Religious Education Director in a local parish. As noted above, the diocese is a named defendant in these suits.

- There are three suits naming a former lay teacher at a private, non-diocesan school as allegedly abusing minors. The Diocese is named in those suits.

■ Settlements

- Since the late 1980s the Diocese of Wilmington has settled 19 cases out of court. Eleven of those cases were settled before the national scandal burst upon us in 2002.

- The costs for the 11 settlements before 2002 were \$1,594,718, with insurance paying \$656,500. Funding for the costs not covered by insurance (\$938,218) came from the unrestricted or undesignated funds of the diocese.

- Between 2002 and the present, eight more cases were settled. Settlement costs were \$6,216,120,

with insurance paying \$475,000. Funding for the costs not covered by insurance (\$5,741,120) came from unrestricted and undesignated funds of the diocese.

- In 2008 and 2009, four of the eight cases referenced above were settled through mediation; one case was settled without a filing of a complaint in the courts.

■ Legal Expenses

- As noted in the fiscal year 2008 financial statement, \$378,834 was paid in legal expenses; \$245,014 was for abuse cases.

- Between the fiscal years 2003 and 2008 the diocese spent \$763,500 on legal expenses for abuse cases.

- Expenses for legal services have greatly increased in the current fiscal year (2009) largely because of the passage of legislation suspending the statute of limitations for two years. We expect that in the current fiscal year (2009) legal expenses will exceed \$1,500,000.

- The costs for legal services have been paid out of diocesan unrestricted and undesignated reserves.

■ Unrestricted and Undesignated Reserves

What are the unrestricted reserves of the diocese? Where did they come from? Basically those reserves constitute an emergency fund. Beginning in the 1970s any unrestricted gift left to the diocese and not needed for budgetary support was deposited in a reserve fund and invested. Careful investing resulted in good to excellent growth in the fund. The purpose of the fund was and is to meet any unforeseen emergency anywhere in the diocese. Proceeds from the sale of diocesan properties were also deposited in the same fund. In recent years, draws from this fund included special assistance to parishes and schools in distress.

The diocese is fortunate to have these reserves to assist in settling abuse cases. However, the fund will not be enough to settle all the pending cases. That presents a great challenge to us and we anticipate sale of certain hard assets to meet the eventual total liability.

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Elkton man to become permanent deacon Saturday

Dialog report

Michael A. Truman will be ordained a permanent deacon for the Diocese of Wilmington by Bishop Joseph A. Galante of Camden, N.J., on Saturday at 10:30 a.m. at Incarnation Church in Mantua, N.J.

Truman, 57, studied for the permanent diaconate in the Camden diocese until he moved to Elkton, Md., because of a job transfer. Officials in both dioceses allowed him to continue formation in Camden and to be ordained with his classmates for service in the Wilmington diocese.

Truman and his wife

Roberta, have an adult daughter, Andrea, and are active members of Immaculate Conception



Michael A. Truman

Parish in Elkton. He earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio, and master's degrees in corrections from Xavier and in criminology from Florida State University in Tallahassee, Fla.

Truman retired in August 2008 after more than 30 years with the Federal Bureau of Prisons.

"We are blessed to welcome Michael to ministry on our diocese," said Bishop Malooly. "He will be a great addition to the wonderful men who serve the faithful of Maryland's Eastern Shore and Delaware as permanent deacons."

After ordination, Truman will be assigned to a parish where he will assist at Mass by proclaiming the Gospel, distributing Holy Communion, witnessing marriages and presiding at funerals and baptisms.

"Michael has completed

an extensive spiritual, theological and pastoral formation program with the Diocese of Camden and has demonstrated an enthusiasm to serve the people of our diocese," said Deacon Harold D. Jopp Jr., director of the diocesan Office for Deacons. "We celebrate with Roberta, Andrea and Michael's family and friends as he begins his ministry as deacon."

More information about the diaconate program in the Diocese of Wilmington is available by calling the Office for Deacons at 573-2390.

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Neumann College now Neumann University

Dialog report

ASTON, Pa. — Neumann College is no more. But students will continue to attend the private, Catholic school under its new name: Neumann University.

More than 250 members of the Neumann community gathered at the campus Friday morning for the announcement that the Pennsylvania Department of Education had approved its application to operate as a university.

The new status "will be a catalyst for enhancing scholarship, research and service to your community," said Rosalie Mirenda, president. "At the same time, Neumann's commitment to its mission, core values and personal attention to our students will remain the same."

Universities must provide arts and sciences at the undergraduate level, at least five professional programs at the graduate level, a doctoral program, and

access to cultural facilities and opportunities for the community. Neumann meets those requirements, with doctoral programs offered in education and physical therapy.

Neumann's board of trustees decided to pursue university status in 2007 after a year of research and discussion that included a study on how the school is perceived. Neumann said the study, which included Philadelphia-area students who never inquired about

Neumann as well as those who inquired but never applied, found that significantly more students believed a university is more challenging and prestigious and offers stronger majors and better career preparation than a college.

The Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia founded Neumann as Our Lady of Angels College in 1965. The school opened with 115 students. Slightly more than 3,000 students are enrolled today.

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In case of flu, some parishes prescribe a dose of precaution

By Gary Morton
Staff reporter

Some churches throughout the diocese took precautions against the swine flu at weekend Masses while others celebrated liturgies as usual during the worldwide outbreak in which 33 cases of the flu strain in Delaware, most at the University of Delaware, had been confirmed as of Tuesday.

While the risk and severity of the spreading flu virus was debated, some parishes suspended use of the Communion cup, distributed the Communion host only to the hand, and let parishioners know that they did not have to shake hands during the sign of peace — all suggestions made in a memo issued to pastors by the diocesan Office of Worship last Friday.

The diocese also urged people to follow “common sense recommendations” such as washing their hands frequently, covering their mouth while coughing or sneezing, and staying home if they felt sick; requested that eucharistic ministers sanitize their hands before Communion; and suggested that parish officials clean and spray disinfectant over holy water containers before refilling them.

“We hope that these safeguards will help to insure that our churches do not contribute toward the



The Dialog/Don Blake

Parishes such as St. Paul’s in Wilmington (above) offered the Communion cup as usual on Sunday while others suspended the practice during the flu outbreak.

spread of the swine flu and that these measures will only need to be in place for a short time,” the memo stated.

Meanwhile, Catholic schools monitored their students and stayed abreast of swine flu developments in the region. As of Monday, none had reported flu-like illnesses. “We’re fine,” said Kathy Connor, principal at Corpus Christi School in Elsmere. Nearby Baltz Elementary, a public school, closed for three days this week after a student there was suspected of having swine flu.

At St. Thomas More Oratory on the UD campus in Newark, at the center of concerns about the swine flu in Delaware, more than 150 people attended the 11:30 a.m. Mass Sunday with no visible concern about the flu beyond masks worn by two people. The congregation was slightly

smaller than normal, according to oratory officials, who suggested that a steady rain may have diminished the numbers. During the sign of peace, almost all freely extended their hands to those around them.

The oratory, home to the university’s campus ministry, does not offer the Communion cup at Sunday Masses because of space constraints, said Dominican Father Stephen Alcott, associate pastor. Use of the cup at daily Mass was suspended last week after the flu cases were confirmed.

Robert McCargar, who works in UD’s chemistry department, wore a mask to Mass. “I take this stuff very seriously,” he said. “One can never be too careful.”

The flu is not a big concern for most students, said graduate student Tony Manzella. “People still go

out on Main Street,” the popular strip that cuts through campus. Some students were annoyed, he said, that the university canceled activities over the weekend even though it had not canceled classes.

Senior Christy Corrigan said the flu dominated discussion at a Bible study she attended last Thursday, the day health officials confirmed the first four cases of swine flu on campus. Most students were bemused by the situation. “It’s kind of incredible how some people react,” with fear for their safety, she said, noting that the flu’s effect on infected students was mild enough that they could be treated at home. “On some level I understand why people are concerned, but we’re probably the best population for it to hit: we’re young and we’re healthy.”

Others were not so confident. Father Tom Flowers, pastor of St. Polycarp in Smyrna, decided to take precautions two days before he received the suggestions from the diocese. “Rather than wait until there is a large-scale infection, I have decided to once again suspend the sign of peace and the Communion cup,” he wrote in an April 29 letter to parishioners. St. Polycarp has suspended use of the cup and the sign of peace from November through March the past four years as a precaution against any flu strain, he said.

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Wilm. attorney to receive Thomas More Society's award

WILMINGTON — Wilmington attorney Thomas P. Sweeney will receive the Msgr. Paul J. Taggart St. Thomas More Award from the St. Thomas More Society at the society's annual dinner May 17.

The speaker at the dinner, which will be held at the Greenville Country Club, will be Kevin "Seamus" Hasson, founder and president of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty. The Becket Fund works to protect the free expression of all religious traditions.

Sweeney has long been active in charitable organizations. He is a former president of the advisory board of Catholic Social Services and in 1996 was chairman of the Tee-Off for Kids golf tournament, which benefited Catholic Charities' group homes. He continues on the committee for the golf tournament. He was honored in 1999 with the Msgr. Thomas J. Reese Award from Catholic Charities for his community service. In 2005, at the recommendation of Bishop Michael A. Saltarelli,

Sweeney received the Pro Ecclesia Et Pontifice medal, the church's highest honor for a lay person.

Sweeney is also active in the Ulster Project, which works for peace in Northern Ireland by bringing together Catholic and Protestant teenagers from that country in Delaware each summer. His family hosted teens in the 1980s and has hosted adult leaders several times over the past 20 years. He is on the board of the Ulster Project and is involved in fundraising.

Sweeney worked for 40 years at the Wilmington law firm Richards, Layton & Finger, where he was director and past president.

The St. Thomas More Society is an association of those in the legal profession.

Tickets are available by sending a check for \$95 payable to the St. Thomas More Society, Diocese of Wilmington, P.O. Box 1320, Wilmington, DE 19899-1320. The deadline to RSVP is Monday. For more information, call Ryan Newell at 888-6434.

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Star of the Sea at Gate of Heaven: 10-foot statue of Mary installed at Sussex County cemetery

A 10-foot statue of Mary, Star of the Sea is the latest addition to Gate of Heaven Cemetery. The statue was installed at the diocesan cemetery in Dagsboro, Sussex County, last Thursday.

Designed by Lyn Durham of Conrad Pickel Studio in Vero Beach, Fla., which also created the sculpture, the statue depicts Mary as a calming figure on an active sea, according to Catholic Cemeteries executive director Mark Christian. Mary is shown standing in the midst of rolling waves.

"Because Gate of Heaven serves the beautiful coastal region of our diocese, it's a perfect place to honor the Blessed Mother under her title of Mary, Star of the Sea," Christian said.

Christian and Msgr. Joseph Rebman, director of cemeteries for the diocese,

helped Durham modify her design into its final form.

A full-scale, three-dimensional clay model was begun in Ortisei, Italy, before the bronze was started in Florida. It was created using the "lost wax system," a 4,000-year-old method that involves pouring layers of wax into a mold, then burning and removing the wax through rods inserted into the wax. Eventually, bronze is poured into the voids left by the "lost" wax. The statue was completed in sections, which were hand-polished and treated with chemical patinas to achieve the desired color.

The statue sits on a 4-foot-by-4-foot granite base in a developed section of the cemetery and is visible from Vines Creek Road (Route 26), which fronts the cemetery. Land-scaping is under way to accentuate the statue, Christian said.

The statue will be officially unveiled and blessed by Bishop Malooly on Aug. 15, the feast of the Assumption.

Gate of Heaven opened in November 2002 and is the first diocesan cemetery in the southern part of the diocese. The 62-acre cemetery includes three free-standing columbaria for cremated remains and a garden mausoleum.



The Dialog/Don Blake

The statue is installed April 30. It will be blessed by Bishop Malooly on Aug. 15, the feast of the Assumption.

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Padua hoping for playoff success in softball

By John Knebels

Three years ago, six Padua Academy athletes celebrated the rare feat of making the varsity softball team as freshmen.

Three years later, the same six players are looking for their first state tournament victory.

"We have run out of chances," said senior pitcher Erika Szymanski. "There is no longer a question as to 'what degree' it is important to win a playoff game. It's the biggest degree ever."

Through Monday, Padua had an 8-3 record. While the core group of seniors has figured heavily in the Pandas' early success, Szymanski has been the undisputed leader of the pack for first-year coach Pete Boyer.

"Every time we go on the field, Erika gives us a chance to win no matter who we're playing," said sophomore infielder Paige Lloyd, one of only three underclassmen in Padua's starting lineup. "Not every team can say that. She has great control of her pitches, so the defense is always alert."

An all-state hurler as a sophomore who played much of last season with a broken thumb, Szymanski has already wrapped up a collegiate scholarship at the University of Rhode Island. Although she is excited at the prospect of playing college softball, Szymanski said she can't shake the gnawing frustration associated with Padua's inability to reach the state tournament quarterfinals.



The Dialog/Don Blake

Padua's Emily Cushing applies the tag to Caitlin Papili of St. Elizabeth during a meeting between the two teams last week. The Pandas, 8-3 through Monday, are relying on a senior-heavy lineup as the state softball tournament nears.

For more photos, go to www.cdow.org/gallery.

Last year, Padua played a typically rugged schedule, finished a misleading 10-10, and was a 15th seed. The Pandas' postseason reward was a date with perennial juggernaut Sussex Central in the first round. The Pandas almost defeated Central, but their 5-2 defeat came courtesy of one disastrous inning in which Central took full advantage of some sloppy Padua defense to score all of its runs.

The fact that Sussex Central eventually won the state title did little to assuage the ultra-competitive Szymanski.

"I look at it like we had a chance to beat the top team, which means we had a chance to go really far," said Szymanski. "They are the types of teams you want to play. Sussex Central,

Caravel, Sussex Tech. When you are able to compete with them, you know you belong with the top teams."

As much as she desires playoff success for herself, Szymanski said she feels particularly responsible for helping five of her teammates with whom she has played since little league.

Second baseman Maria Gallo and catcher Danielle LaVere were Szymanski's teammates at St. Mary Magdalen; twin sisters Kory and Kelly Nesci, a first baseman and centerfielder, respectively, are products of Holy Rosary; and left-fielder Victoria Limmina attended Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Those six, along with first-year senior player Jess Ward (IHM), should join their teammates in this

year's state tournament. But just making the tourney won't elicit the same sense of accomplishment it did the previous three seasons.

"A lot of how we feel will be determined by how well we play," said Kory Nesci. "If we go out and play a great game but lose, there isn't much we can do about that."

Also a field hockey player, Nesci said Padua's formidable schedule should pay dividends. "We don't have too many easy games. When you play a team like Caravel, it doesn't figure to get much tougher than that. It all comes down to playing your best, and maybe getting a couple breaks along the way."

John Knebels can be reached at knebs@aol.com.

Holy Places

Chapel at Picpus Cemetery, Paris

A quiet spot of monumental significance

By Joseph Ryan

Dialog assistant editor

PARIS — There's an inconspicuous wooden doorway in Paris at 35 Rue de Picpus that's easy to miss, even for a tourist looking for it. Those who find the entrance, opposite a Renault dealership in the 12th arrondissement neighborhood far from more famous Parisian sites, discover a small chapel facing a quiet courtyard.

The modest little church has a big story. It's a monument to victims of the French Revolution and it also marks the gravesite of an American hero.

The chapel of Picpus Cemetery was founded at the site of two mass graves of those guillotined during "the Terror" from June 14 to July 27 in 1794. The Revolution's victims during those weeks, about half the people executed during the Terror, died at Place de la Nation, a short distance from Rue de Picpus. Their bodies were carted to the secret gravesite at night until the guillotine was moved to another location.

Common folks, nobles, soldiers, priests and nuns from 14 to 90 years old were killed. Sixteen of the victims were Carmelite nuns of Compiègne, who had been expelled from their convent but later condemned for maintaining their religious life. The sis-



Susan Kirk Ryan

ABOVE: An American flag in the Picpus Cemetery marks the grave of the Marquis de Lafayette, a hero of the American Revolution, including the Battle of Brandywine.

RIGHT: The Picpus Chapel honors victims of the French Revolution.

ters, beatified in 1906, went to the blade singing hymns and became the subject of Francis Poulenc's 1957 opera "Dialogues of the Carmelites."

The names, occupations and date of death of the 1,306 people buried in the two pits are inscribed on the walls of the Picpus Chapel.

Visitors can walk through a gate next to the chapel and find a quiet tree-lined garden that looks simply like a contemplative area for the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Mary and Jesus

who lived by the chapel. To the right at the end of the garden, another gate leads to a cemetery with familiar tombstones and memorials. This section of Picpus cemetery contains the remains of the people who raised the money for the chapel and persuaded the Sacred Hearts nuns to staff it. The area was originally purchased and walled by a princess of Hohenzollern,



whose brother was among the revolution's victims.

The secret mass graves had been located by three sisters named Noailles, whose mother, grandmother and sister were also execut-

ed. One of the Noailles sisters was the wife of Gilbert du Motier, better known as Marquis de Lafayette, the wealthy young Frenchman who befriended George Washington and became an American general during the American Revolution.

Both Lafayette and his wife, Marie Adrienne Francoise, are buried at the far corner of Picpus Cemetery, the area closest to the mass graves, so Marie Adrienne could be buried near her family.

Lafayette was said to be buried in soil from his beloved United States; his grave is marked by an American flag, a distinction that continued throughout the Nazi occupation of

Paris because the Germans didn't know it was there in the out-of-the-way neighborhood.

When General John J. Pershing arrived in Paris in 1917 with the American Expeditionary Force during World War I, his first stop was at Lafayette's grave, where he reputedly proclaimed, "Lafayette, we are here."

Nearby, there's a stone listing the names of the Carmelites buried in the pits that are outlined by gravel in an enclosed space.

One last thing — inside the chapel there's also a portrait of a priest sporting a straw hat by the sanctuary. It's based on a photo of Blessed Damien de Veuster

of Molokai, the Belgian missionary of the Sacred Hearts of Mary and Jesus order (also known as the Picpus Fathers), who cared for people with Hansen's disease in Hawaii — but that's another story.

As for Paris experiences, neither the engineered beauty of the Eiffel Tower nor the artistic treasures of the Louvre offer visitors a richer opportunity for contemplating human mortality or the turns of history than the Chapel at Picpus Cemetery.

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SEND US YOUR TRAVEL PHOTOS: *Traveling often means visits to Catholic or other religious sites outside the diocese,*

from local parish churches to tourist-friendly shrines and cathedrals.

If you return home with photographs or postcards of religious places you visited, send them to The Dialog along with 150 words or less describing your visit and your memories of the site. If you have pictures from previous trips, we'll consider them too. We'll print some of your submissions and post others on our Web site.

Send pictures to news@thedialog.org or to The Dialog, Religious Travel Pictures, P.O. Box 2208, Wilmington, DE 19899-2208. Include your name, where you live and how you can be reached.

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Holy Cross School singers entertain in Washington

Dialog report

DOVER — Students from Holy Cross School traveled to Washington, D.C., recently to share their musical talents in the nation's capital.

On April 24 music teacher Jane Grudzina led a group of 65 seventh- and eighth-grade choral students, who sang outside in the Upper Senate Park and in the rotunda of the Senate Office Building. The students are members of the school's 120-member seventh- and eighth-grade choir.

Grudzina said Holy Cross received an invitation thanks to a friend with "some connections."

About 20 to 25 senators and various aides came out of their offices to see

Student News

who was singing, said Grudzina, who has taught at Holy Cross for the past six years.

Neither of Delaware's senators, Tom Carper and Ted Kaufman, was in Washington that day, which came during the Senate's spring break, Grudzina said.

Holy Cross's singers also have a chance to show their talents on a larger scale this summer. The 17 students who were selected for the all-state choir are eligible to take part July 16-18 in the Broadway Rising Star Youth Vocal Competition in New York City. The top five in each age category will have the opportunity to register for a national competition.

The top New York Rising Star will receive a walk-on role in the

Broadway musical "Wicked," which tells the story of the witches of "The Wizard of Oz" before Dorothy arrived from Kansas.

"The big thing is that the kids are reaching a level of music where they get these opportunities," Grudzina said.

Ursuline senior gets service award from governor

WILMINGTON — Christina O'Brien, a senior at Ursuline Academy, received a Governor's Youth Volunteer Service Award for her work on a series of family activities at Hagley Museum.

O'Brien was one of 11 students who planned and implemented six family programs at Hagley as part of the museum's Creek Kids Youth Leadership Program.

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UD to host abortion debate

NEWARK — Two philosophy professors at the University of Delaware will debate whether abortion is permissible tonight at an event sponsored by the Catholic Scholars of Delaware. "Is Abortion Permissible? A Debate" takes place beginning at 7 p.m. at 115 Purnell Hall on the Newark campus.

This is the final event of the spring series, "Catholic Ethics for the 21st Century."

The participants are Kate Rogers and Richard Hanley. Rogers' area of expertise is medieval philosophy and the philosophy of religion, while Hanley concentrates on philosophy of language, metaphysics, mind, fiction and ethics. The debate is scheduled to run an hour, with a question-and-answer session and refreshments to follow.

For more information, contact Rogers at 831-8480 or Rae Stabosz at 731-7692.

St. Edmond's Academy to honor retiring brothers

WILMINGTON — St. Edmond's Academy will honor two Holy Cross brothers who collectively have 85 years of service at the all-boys school. One is retiring and moving to New York state, while the other will be on campus, but not in the classroom.

Brother Edward Quintal, who has spent 40 of his 50 years as a Holy

Cross brother at St. Edmond's Academy in Wilmington, will retire at the end of the academic year. Brother Edward has been a fourth-grade teacher and moderator of the school's Women's Guild.

He arrived at St. Edmond's in 1964 and stayed for 15 years. He returned in 1984 and has been at the school since. Brother Edward will live in Valatie, N.Y., at the Holy Cross Brothers' retirement community.

The school community also will honor Brother Thomas Meany, who is celebrating his 50th anniversary as a Holy Cross brother. Brother Thomas has taught science at St. Edmond's since 1964 and is also known for his model train collection on display at the school. He is retiring from teaching but will continue to work on campus in non-teaching assignments.

The Mass will take place May 17 at 9:30 a.m. in the Rollins Center on the St. Edmond's campus, located at 2120 Veale Road. A reception will follow. For more information, call St. Edmond's at 475-5370.

Benedictine School raises half a million at spring gala

RIDGELY, Md. — Benedictine School's annual Spring Benefit, held April 25 in Cambridge, Md., raised more than \$509,000 to help fund the school's programs for people with special needs. More than 360 people attended the event, which also

marked the school's 50th anniversary.

Among those honored was Sister Jeannette Murray, director of Benedictine Programs and Services, for a half-century of service. Sister Jeannette presented the organization's Cornerstone Award to the family of Charles and Catherine Knott, lifelong benefactors of the Benedictine School. Builder Henry Knott's company constructed many of the school's original buildings, and others were added during Charles Knott's 30 years of service to the school.

The keynote speaker for the evening was Timothy Shriver, chairman of Special Olympics and the son of Special Olympics founder Eunice Kennedy Shriver.

Vincentians receive \$4,000 for endeavors

WILMINGTON — The St. Vincent DePaul Society's St. Ann's Conference has received a \$4,000 grant from the Lawton Trust Commission of Red Clay Presbyterian Church, Wilmington. The conference is associated with St. Ann's Parish in Wilmington. These awards supplement funds received from a parish collection, the poor box, conference members and parishioner donations.

Last year St. Ann's Conference received 717 calls for help and donated \$29,000 on behalf of the poor and needy of Wilmington. The 13 active members volunteered more than 2,400 hours to the conference's activities over 12 months.

St. Ann's Conference is one of 33 in the Wilmington Diocese Council.

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The need to stay attached to the vine

Turning a faucet on is one of the first skills a child learns, once the legs and arms are long enough. One hopes that the little engineer has also learned to open the drain, or there will be a major flood. In my experience as a city child, water was always available.

Some of us are just learning about conservation. But a month in Israel/Palestine last June taught me a lot. I can't imagine a day walking in those dry lands without the water bottle that we were reminded over and over to carry and to refill at every stop.

So when I now read that Jesus talked about grapes and vines, it has new meaning. In a country where water is scarce, grape is king.

When Jesus asked us to think of himself as the vine, and ourselves as the branches who should stay attached to the vine, I thought of this as something I should really try to do, like a Lenten resolution.

I would get spiritual brownie points. God would be pleased with my efforts. Backward thinking if ever there was.

What kind of branch would think it had a chance to live if it weren't attached to a vine? And how else would anyone get juicy

about thirst. Or life. Yes, there were some wells, but one had to dig very, very deep to come to water.

The older Bibles, Catholic and Protestant, translated Jesus' word as "abide in me" rather than "remain in me." Abide sounds comforting, I think. But I think

see. We see the good suffer and the nasty enjoying life and wonder if there is any justice. Is there anyone up there?

And as for loving one another, that's fine on the good days, but there are some people who don't seem to deserve my love. How did those Amish people reach out in love to the families of the men who killed their children? How did Cardinal Joseph Bernardin and Nelson Mandela forgive? And how do parents get up for the third time during the night for a crying infant?

We remain at-tached to the vine, we live in faith and we love, at least we try. And even if our hearts tell us that we haven't gotten it perfect yet, "God is greater than our hearts."

Ursuline Sister Jeanne Hamilton, a judge in the diocesan Tribunal, lives in Wilmington.

Readings for May 10, Fifth Sunday of Easter

Acts 9:26-31; 1 John 3:18-24;
John 15:1--8

grapes? To stay attached to the vine is not a good deed, it is good sense. It is responding to a generous offer from an incredibly generous Lord. It is an offer of life.

The people Jesus was talking to probably had a vine or two, or saw one on a more prosperous neighbor's property. Realistically, no vine, no wine. This isn't about having a good time with wine at a party. This is

remain may be a stronger word. It sounds as though it may take more effort. What we do to remain in the Lord is pretty well set out in the second reading: believe in Jesus, the Christ, and love one another. Neither one is easy.

It seems that the most profound Christians have had terrible times of struggle with faith. Is this so strange? We believe in someone whom we cannot

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Commentary

Father Ron Rolheiser



Face your dragon by confronting the grandiosity in your life

Every so often a book comes along that is truly important. I had that sense reading Robert L. Moore's, "Facing the Dragon: Confronting Personal and Spiritual Grandiosity." This is no ordinary book to be read, enjoyed, and put away. It is a book to be studied many times over.

Moore is professor of psychoanalysis, culture, and spirituality at the Chicago Theological Seminary and founder of the Institute for Spirituality in Chicago. What he does in his research and teaching is bring together spirituality, anthropology, history and psychology to create a unique vision within which people can be understood, particularly in terms of the human struggle with sin and grace, inflation and depression, violence and greatness.

I first heard him speak nearly 20 years ago. A lot of thinkers are brilliant, but what I heard from Moore contained something else, decades of hard research all tied together in a rare balance. There was no liberal or conservative ideology coloring things, no piety or iconoclasm that was shadow-boxing with its past or with the culture, and no religious or anti-religious bias. I felt like I'd found a

mentor.

I bought every book and lecture-tape by Moore that I could find and during the next half-dozen years, spent hundreds of hours listening to his lectures on tape. I also began to integrate his thought and his structure into my own writings and lectures. Whenever I would introduce students to his thought they would eagerly inquire what books they could read to pursue his ideas further. Unfortunately, at that time, Moore's books were not as fertile as his oral presentations.

That changed with the release of "Facing the Dragon: Confronting Personal and Spiritual Grandiosity." Now we have a book that brings together his key insights and does justice to his thinking.

Moore asserts, as do our Scriptures, that each of us is born with an incurable, innate grandiosity and, because of that, we have larger fantasies and wishes for ourselves than our real life experiences can support. We want, most days, to jump out of our own skins because our lives seem too small for us.

But there is an adequate reason: We each have within us the image and likeness of God. This is more

than just a beautiful icon stamped inside us; it is a fire and an energy that, like God, has no boundaries. We come into this world with the imprint of God stamped in us and that dignity and energy create a godly grandiosity inside us.

That grandiose energy spawns appetites that are not easily held in check. When we look at the roots of the greed, ambition, addiction, bitterness, violence and pathological restlessness, we see there can be no real understanding of these until we first understand that fiery grandiosity inside each of us.

Simply put, when you have six billion people on small planet and each of those people is secretly nursing a god or goddess inside, then it is no accident that we often have violence and war. All of us carry a dangerous and a pathological pride.

For Moore, the failure to recognize this grandiosity as the root of our struggles constitutes perhaps the most dangerous naiveté of all. The modern fantasy, he writes, believes we are better off without God and the churches, but that fantasy does not take into account "the rise of the culture of narcissism with its worsening epidemic of pathological

grandiosity"

What's his solution? Humility. But can there be genuine humility, given our innate grandiosity?

Yes, we can attain genuine humility, and indeed it is our only hope. But, for him, genuine humility consists in two things: Knowing your limits and getting the help you need.

For Moore, it is never a question of "Am I dangerously proud?" But only a question of: "How do I get the help that I need to deal with my grandiosity?"

For him, that help ultimately lies in a relationship with God which lets us healthily accept and use our divine energies even as it makes clear that we may never identify with those energies. We are not God, albeit we need to use divine energy.

Our life-long struggle between depression and inflation is, in essence, a struggle to pray properly. To ignore this struggle is, as he puts it, to "continue arranging unconsciously our own last rites."

Oblate of Mary Immaculate Father Ron Rolheiser is president of the *Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas.* Contact him at www.ronrolheiser.com.

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Gun issue is part of divided church

I agree completely with the letter writer in the April 23 issue who stated that gun control is a life issue, too, and he never hears any pro-life groups advocate for gun control.

I was dismayed to read the two rebuttals in the April 30 issue, one from a priest, advocating for guns and giving the usual tired National Rifle Association rhetoric. There are too many guns in this country and too many killings by guns, but hiding behind the Second Amendment without working to change the gun-support mindset in this country will only exacerbate the problem. I doubt Jesus would be a gun owner.

Sadly, there is a great divisiveness in our church today between the conservative Catholics, who focus

solely on criminalizing abortion and embryonic stem-cell research, and those with a more liberal bent who realize there are also other very important life issues. Many of these conservative Catholics also want the bishops to deny the Eucharist to pro-choice politicians and to extend the excommunication to those Catholics who voted for pro-choice candidates.

I believe the divisiveness started when the Christian right, which has always derided Catholics for not being "true" Christians, decided to embrace Catholics in order to advance its own political agenda. Now we have a very vocal element in our church that parrots the Christian right, including its support of the Iraq war and guns. But, also like the Christian right, they're silent on other subjects, such as poverty, homelessness, children without health

insurance or access to good health care, and a multitude of other social and life issues that impact millions of people every day.

Is it any wonder church attendance is dwindling? Those not part of this narrowly focused, conservative element have been chased out.

**Carolyn Matkowsky
Wilmington**

Guns produce one result: destruction

Regarding the two letters in favor of the possession of guns that appeared last week:

Guns are instruments of death. There is no other reason for their existence. Bullets fire quickly and easily. They give the shooter unequal power over the living and a comfortable sense of distance from the

victim. And the result is destruction.

The easy availability of guns is a terrible thing. Think of the loss of life we have suffered in our country ... the husband who shoots his wife and children because he has lost a job, the man who takes down as many people as possible at his former work place for the same reason, children who kill as many classmates and teachers as possible because they hold a grudge, the young mother who is shot in crossfire on a city street, or the child who kills a sibling accidentally with Daddy's gun.

As for self-defense, I don't know whom to fear except somebody who owns a gun, and I have to wonder if we have become a kill-or-be-killed society.

What are guns doing in the hands of Jesus Christ's disciples?

**Anne d'Auray Tracy
Ocean View**

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Panelists disagree on when conscience exemptions should be allowed

By **Beth Griffin**
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — Legislation in a democracy generally mirrors public consensus, but individuals who disagree with a law on moral grounds should be allowed to claim an exemption to it, according to panelists at a recent forum on “Matters of Conscience: When Moral Precepts Collide With Public Policy.”

Four attorneys with often-divergent viewpoints engaged in a lively debate in front of an audience of 180 people at Jesuit-run Fordham University in New York. They disagreed on the extent to which conscience claims should be allowed to restrict access to lawful goods and services, including abortion, contraception and same-sex marriage.

Marc D. Stern, acting co-executive director of the American Jewish Congress, said there is a growing gap between the two ways our society determines morality: pure rationality and revealed truth.

“Between where reason leads you and whether revelation has any place in a setting is a huge gap and getting wider day by day,” he said. “There is a clash between visions that emphasize personal liberties and visions that emphasize equalities.”

Stern predicted that same-sex marriage will be “universal” in 10 years and said there should be broad conscience exemptions, particularly for individuals and small businesses.

For example, he said, a self-employed photographer should not be considered discriminatory if he chose not to photograph a legal same-sex wedding, but a newspaper should not be allowed to exclude same-sex weddings from its wedding coverage.

Nadine Stossen, professor of law at New York Law School and former president of the American Civil Liberties Union, said freedom of conscience may be limited only if the limitation is necessary to protect other basic rights such as health and safety.

With respect to abortion and contraception, she said sectarian institutions should not be required to provide services contrary to their beliefs, but they must give candid notification of their policy and make referrals to alternate providers. She said they should also provide the service if there is no other provider, especially in the case of an emergency.

Stossen maintained that the panelists, while disagreeing on a number of points, all supported “giving infinitely more

protection to freedom of belief than the Supreme Court has done in the last 18 years.”

Douglas Kmiec, a professor of constitutional law at Pepperdine University in Malibu, Calif., and former law school dean at The Catholic University of America in Washington, said laws are based on “someone’s concept of good”, which is generally traceable to religious belief. Disputed concepts of good are reconciled in the United States by persuasion and the democratic process, he said.

The Catholic Church is not necessarily guided by this process, because it claims that a democratic outcome can never trump the truth, he said, although truth claims are always disputed.

“The modern church has defined itself not in terms of the conversion of the heart, but in terms of its political victories,” he said. This puts the church in an awkward position to ask for exemptions from generally applicable laws, he said.

Kmiec said there should be a presumption against giving institutional exemptions to laws, but a great sensitivity to granting individual exemptions.

Robert Vischer, associate professor at the University of St. Thomas Law School in Minneapolis, said that in cases “where values clash, the default position for a society that takes conscience seriously” should be to “resist temptation to use state power to close down the conversation,” rather than “see which side can harness state power to its chosen value.”

Vischer advocated letting competing interests live out their convictions in the marketplace. He cited pharmacies as an example. Rather than compel pharmacists to fill prescriptions they find objectionable or allow them to refuse to do so, the state could allow pharmacies to “craft their own particular conscience policies in response to the demands of their employees and customers.”

Although access is a potential impediment to a market solution, Vischer said, “Access cannot be trotted out as the boogeyman every time you have a morally distinct organization that wants to stake out a claim that defies what the majority’s norms are for that state.”

He said the result of a market approach would likely be a more nuanced, contextual understanding of conscience and its role in public life.

The April 28 discussion was sponsored by the Fordham Center on Religion and Culture and was moderated by Russell Pearce, who holds the Bellet chair in legal ethics, morality and religion at Fordham University School of Law.

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Obama says FOCA is not his ‘highest legislative priority’

By Patricia Zapor
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama in his April 29 press conference said the Freedom of Choice Act was not his “highest legislative priority” and that he is instead focusing on reducing unwanted pregnancies.

“I believe that women should have the right to choose,” he said, “but I think that the most important thing we can do to tamp down some of the anger surrounding this issue is to focus on those areas that we can agree on.”

Some organizations that support legal abortion as well as some pro-life groups, including the Catholic Health Association and Democrats for Life, have said the Freedom of Choice Act, known by its initials as FOCA, was unlikely to move in Congress.

FOCA has not been introduced in the current Congress. Versions of it had been introduced in nearly every session of Congress for the last 20 years. Only once, in 1993, did the bill make it as far as being considered by committees. It has never reached the floor of either the House or Senate.

Obama said at the press conference that he wants “to reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies that result in women feeling compelled to get an abortion or at least (are) considering getting an abortion, particularly if we can reduce the number of teen pregnancies, which has started to spike up again.”

Chicago Cardinal Francis E. George, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said in a May 1 statement that he welcomed the president’s words that “the Freedom of Choice Act is not his highest legislative priority.”

The cardinal stressed that many people have been “working tirelessly to express their concerns about FOCA and FOCA-related legislation” and that “many people of different religious faiths or none will continue to work respectfully and insistently not only to reduce abortions, but to eliminate them.”

During the press conference, Obama said a task force operating under the Domestic Policy Council “is working with groups both in the pro-choice camp and in the pro-life camp to see if we can arrive at some consensus on that.”

According to White House spokesman Shin Inouye, various White House offices — the Domestic Policy Council, the President’s Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships and the White House Council on Women and Girls — have been “working together on

developing strategies to reduce unintended and teenage pregnancies, support maternal and child health and reduce the need for abortion.”

“As part of their work,” he said in an April 30 e-mail to Catholic News Service, “they are conducting outreach to stakeholders on all sides of these issues.”

An analysis of the most recent version of FOCA by the USCCB legal counsel warned that it would wipe out existing state restrictions on abortion and impede states’ ability to regulate abortion.

According to a fact sheet distributed by the National Committee for a Human Life Amendment, which has ties to the USCCB, the legislation as introduced in the 110th Congress “declares that it is the policy of the United States that every woman has the ‘fundamental right’ to terminate a pregnancy.”

“The act prohibits government at every level (federal, state and local) from ‘interfering’ with a woman’s right to choose, and from ‘discriminating’ against the exercise of this right,” it adds.

A nationwide postcard campaign against FOCA and other abortion-related issues was sponsored earlier this year by the USCCB. It asked members of Congress to “oppose FOCA or any similar measure, and retain laws against federal funding and promotion of abortion.”

Many pro-life organizations have focused their concerns about FOCA on a reply Obama gave to a question during a July 2007 campaign appearance before a Planned Parenthood group, when he said signing the bill would be “the first thing I’d do as president.”

In response to the question at the April 29 press conference about that comment, Obama also elaborated on his views on abortion.

“I think abortion is a moral issue and an ethical issue,” he said. “I think that those who are pro-choice make a mistake when they — if they suggest — and I don’t want to create straw men here, but I think there are some who suggest that this is simply an issue about women’s freedom and that there’s no other considerations. I think, look, this is an issue that people have to wrestle with, and families and individual women have to wrestle with.

“The reason I’m pro-choice is because I don’t think women take that position casually,” Obama said. “I think that they struggle with these decisions each and every day, and I think they are in a better position to make these decisions ultimately than members of Congress or a president of the United States — in consultation with their families, with their doctors, with their clergy.”

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Activists fighting poverty see more hospitable political times

By Patricia Zapor
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — With videotaped greetings from President Barack Obama and a panel discussion by senior White House staffers highlighting the first full day of the Mobilization to End Poverty conference April 27, it was clear the political climate had shifted for the faith-motivated campaign.

The effort that started with getting churches to organize in fighting poverty has picked up great momentum since the first such gathering in 1996, said the Rev. Jim Wallis, president and CEO of Sojourners, the network of churches and faith-based organizations that was the prime sponsor of the event.

What Rev. Wallis started as an interfaith movement to bring attention to poverty, named Call to Renewal, has grown from that first meeting of dozens of people in a Washington church to the 1,100 who registered for the Mobilization to End Poverty conference, held at the Washington Convention Center.

“Sometimes I pinch myself, because poverty is now on the agenda of the churches,” Rev. Wallis said in a plenary session opening the event. Fighting malaria, HIV and AIDS, and hunger on a global scale also have become targets of the efforts among a wide range of churches, he said.

“And now, we have a president and a Congress who want to make a change,” he continued. “We have friends now in high places.”

Rev. Wallis joked that “this White House keeps wanting to put us on task forces,” a marked change from past difficulties getting the ear of anyone in power in Washington on the topic of poverty.

Rev. Wallis and others in the faith-based anti-poverty movement have long argued that “budgets are moral documents.” He told about recently participating in a conference call of one of those task forces connected to the White House during which “the question of how the budget will impact low-income families kept coming up.”

“I was on a conference call about policy with tears running down my cheeks,” he said.

He cautioned, however, that despite such support many anti-poverty efforts “will be opposed by powerful forces that want to keep things the same.”

All the access being extended to the anti-poverty move-

ment “won’t matter unless the facts change,” he said.

The next day, more than 800 participants in the mobilization converged on the Capitol for a day of lobbying, visiting the offices of more than 200 House members and 82 senators.

In videotaped greetings April 27, Obama thanked participants in the mobilization and said “we need your commitment more than ever.”

In a panel discussion, Joshua DuBois, director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships; Martha Coven, director of the White House Office of Mobility and Opportunity; and Van Jones, White House special adviser for green jobs, enterprise and innovation at the Council on Environmental Quality, described collaborations they hope to have with the mobilization participants.

Coven, who formerly worked for the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, noted that she spent most of the past decade fighting poverty, trying to provide more affordable housing and working on other such issues. As she ticked off goals and accomplishments so far in the Obama administration — such as expanding the availability of food stamps and welfare and signing a children’s health insurance law — she paused to comment on the audience’s supportive reaction.

“I love that these issues are applause lines,” Coven said.

Jones, author of “The Green Collar Economy: How One Solution Can Fix Our Two Biggest Problems” and founder of Green for All, a job-creation organization, urged the participants in the mobilization not to be complacent.

“You’ve got your Barack Obama signs and bumper stickers and pins,” he said, “but who has yet to make one phone call to Congress? You’ve got to tell Congress there is a constituency that wants change.”

The conference also included sessions with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi; Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga.; Rep. Rosa DeLauro, D-Conn.; and several other members of Congress. Other speakers included Catholic, Baptist, Evangelical Lutheran, Reformed Church and African Methodist Episcopal church leaders. Daily worship services focused on justice as an act of worship.

Besides the Sojourners, sponsors included World Vision, ONE, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Oxfam America, the Wesley Theological Seminary, Convoy of Hope and the National Ministries of the American Baptist Churches.

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'Angels and Demons' fails to generate Vatican outrage

By John Thavis
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — On the eve of its world premiere, "Angels and Demons" was a film in desperate search of controversy.

At a press conference in Rome May 3, director Ron Howard tried to pick a fight with the Vatican, suggesting that the long arm of the Holy See was somehow behind unspecified problems in shooting the film, a pseudo-religious thriller based in Rome.

The Vatican wasn't taking the bait, though. The only real criticism in Italy on the eve of the film's premiere came from a 102-year-old Italian bishop — not exactly the kind of publicity storm that marketing gurus dream about.

Tom Hanks, the film's star, put his finger on the problem at the press conference when he was asked if the movie's marketing people might try to exploit potential conflict with the Vatican.

"Every movie is exploited by the marketing people. There's no such thing as a movie that is not exploited by the marketing people," Hanks said.

"The marketing department of any studio would love to be able to create controversy over their films. But they can't do it on their own; they need a partner," he said.

The movie, based on a novel by Dan Brown, was set to premiere in Rome May 4, and was to open in the United States May 15. It tells the tale of a secret society that kidnaps papal candidates at the start of a conclave, forcing the Vatican to turn to the mystery-solving symbologist Robert Langdon, played by Hanks.

Howard began the press conference with a string of vague accusations against the Vatican. It seemed, he said, that "sort of through back channels and so forth, the Vatican had exerted some influence" to prevent the crews from shooting scenes in a couple of areas where a particular church was in the background.

"I suppose we could have contested this. We didn't," he said.

He added that a screening of the film — or a reception, he wasn't quite sure — was moved away from a venue near St. Peter's Square, "and I suppose the Vatican had some sort of influence over that."

"Was I surprised? No. Am I a little frustrated by it at times? Sure," Howard said.

The Vatican spokesman, Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, declined to comment on Howard's accusations, saying they were merely designed to generate publicity for the film.

Howard also cited the case of retired Italian Bishop Antonio Mennonna, 102 years old, who has signed a legal complaint saying the movie is full of historical inaccuracies and misrepresentations of Christianity.

Howard said his company had earlier offered to screen

the film for some bishops and others, but that the invitation was never taken up. In any case, he said, if anyone feels the film will be offensive to them, they shouldn't see it.

That prompted Hanks, who had tongue in cheek throughout the press conference, to interject: "No, no, don't even go! Stay away please! We beg of you!"

Hanks had fun with other inquiries designed to provoke debate with the church. After a reminder to keep questions germane to the film, one reporter asked Hanks if he were a spiritual person and what he thought about the recent controversy over the pope and condoms.

Hanks responded: "Oh, that's germane to the film. I am a spiritual man and because I'm happily married for 21 years, I really don't know what a condom is anymore."

Howard, who directed "The Da Vinci Code," also based on a Dan Brown novel, said that, whatever church leaders may think of these books and films, many people find that it gets them thinking about what they believe. As a result, he said, church attendance swells and Bible study groups spring up.

"I think that's a positive and constructive thing," he said.

Brown, who made a rare public appearance at the press conference, said he first got the idea for "Angels and Demons" while on a tour near the Vatican. The tour guide mentioned that popes once had to flee along a Roman passageway to escape their enemies, and that got Brown thinking about the scientific "enemies" of the Vatican, which he said "seemed like too good an idea to let go."

In the book "Angels and Demons," modern members of a secret society called the Illuminati plan to destroy the Vatican with antimatter. The Illuminati were a group formed in Bavaria in the late 1700s that historians say survived for only nine years. Conspiracy buffs have speculated that the Illuminati exist yet today, secretly controlling world events.

Brown was asked whether he really believed the Illuminati still exist.

"Did they ever?" he said abruptly. Then he added a defense of his approach to his novels.

"These are fictional stories built around real-world topics. And these stories, it is my hope, spark a lot of interest and research on people's own, to figure out what in these stories is fictional, what is real," he said.

Several weeks ago, Archbishop Velasio De Paolis, president of the Prefecture for the Economic Affairs of the Holy See, signaled that the Vatican would not be jumping into a debate over "Angels and Demons." He said people should be cautious about "the boomerang effect" of calling for a boycott because it could translate into unintended publicity for the movie.

He said the Vatican wasn't worried about people of faith falling for the book and movie's anti-Christian inventions. The Vatican believes Christians are strong — inoculated by centuries of persecution and testimonials of faith," he said.

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Walk across America aims to change the hearts of young people

By **Jessica Roxburgh**
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Since March 1, Jon Leonetti and Jesse Weiler have been walking across America to call on young Catholics and people of all faiths and none to live life in a new way.

Leonetti and Weiler have been speaking at churches, schools and youth gatherings, encouraging young people to turn away from the false messages offered by the popular media and turn their lives toward Christ through a life of prayer.

Leonetti, who once thought he would become a priest, later came to believe he was being called to follow a different path. "I felt inspired to do this walk in order to really touch the hearts of youths, parents and friends," he said in a telephone interview with Catholic News Service.

When he first told Weiler, a fellow graduate of Loras College in Dubuque, Iowa, about his plan to walk across the country, "Weiler's response was no way, that he had too many things to do," Leonetti said.

Three days later, Leonetti received a call from Weiler saying that he couldn't get this idea out of his head, and that he wanted to join Leonetti in the walk.

Leonetti and Weiler, both 23, intend to walk nearly 3,600 miles across America through 12 states. They left Los Angeles March 1 and hope to reach Ocean City, N.J., sometime in August.

Housing arrangements vary day to day. Although they raised enough money to stay in motels, "we typically stay with anyone willing to open their home to us, and we have spent nights in our car" and in tents, said Leonetti.

During the journey, Leonetti said he and Weiler have witnessed brokenness and alienation from God in the lives of many.

"Walking to Mass on Easter Sunday, we were offered drugs," he said. After he and Weiler told the young man who they were and what they were doing, the man quickly apologized and spoke about the Book of Job.

"He knew the entire story and said that despite the life he

is living, he knows that Jesus is the light of his life," Leonetti said. "We just sat there and listened and sometimes that's all you can do."

Leonetti and Weiler have received endorsements from Bishop Robert E. Pates of Des Moines, Iowa, and Jesuit Father Jim Kubicki, U.S. director of the Apostleship of Prayer. In Denver they met with Auxiliary Bishop James D. Conley.

Leonetti and Weiler post blogs almost every day about their journey, triumphs, hardships and experiences with people, especially those in need of a spiritual lift.

"There is no doubt in my mind that this MTV generation is as prominent as ever," Leonetti said. "They're doing an excellent job in telling us that we are inadequate if we don't take the next drink, the next drug, have certain types of clothes and so on.

"Jesse and I are strong believers that it's destroying our young people, dragging people into depression and hopelessness," he added. "We're out here walking to let people know we're going to stand against this MTV generation by raising awareness that this is not the life originally intended for us to lead."

Every day is filled with surprises. "We understood the physical toll this walk would have on us but we underestimated the mental difficulty like loneliness," Leonetti said.

Since Leonetti took a serious fall near the California-Arizona border that resulted in a dislocated knee cap, the two decided after serious prayer and on the advice of doctors that they would walk in shifts. While one is walking, the other drives Leonetti's car.

"This was a very difficult decision to make, but one that needed to be done," Leonetti said. And it's had an unexpected benefit.

"It is often during those periods of walking alone that we find ourselves being drawn closer to God," Leonetti said.

You can follow Weiler and Leonetti as they walk across the country on their blog at www.soulywalking.com. To send a prayer intention, e-mail them at soulywalking@catholic.org.

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Economy affects decisions of Catholic college graduates

BALTIMORE — While the nation's troubled economy has some college seniors worrying about getting a job after graduation, many graduating seniors are facing important decisions about going to graduate school or finding employment. Lakeisha Moore-Mathews, assistant director of the Career Center at Loyola College in Maryland, said articles from the National Association of Colleges and Employers and other newsletters have been saying that some people may decide to go back to graduate school and ride out the recession. However, she said, that is not necessarily the case with Loyola students because many want to look for work before making that decision. Employers who have spoken to students through Loyola's Career Center have offered some hope to graduating seniors who plan to look for work, Moore-Mathews said. Although the employers have said it may take more time and people may have to be more aggressive in how they find a job, all is not lost. "The good news that we're trying to get out is that there are jobs out there," she said. "You just need to be connected and figure out where they are."

Some Middle East Christians face restrictions in efforts to see pope

JERUSALEM — Middle East Christians hoping to see Pope Benedict XVI during his May 8-15 pilgrimage to Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian territories faced some travel restrictions. One week before the pope's May 11 arrival in Israel, some 250 Christians from the Gaza Strip were still waiting to hear about their travel permit requests. Msgr. Manuel Musallam, pastor of the only Catholic parish in Gaza, said although the requests were made several weeks earlier, by May 4 he had received no response from Israel's Civil Administration authority about the permits. Most residents have been unable to leave the Gaza Strip for nearly two years since Israel closed border crossings after the Islamic militant group Hamas took over the area. Wadie Abunasser, head of the communications committee for the pope's visit, said that because the pope is unable to go to Gaza the church has asked that Christian Gazans be allowed to participate in the May 13 Mass in Bethlehem, West Bank. He expected about 11,000 West Bank Christians to have permits for the visit to Israel.

Iraqi violence decreases but problems remain, says Baghdad archbishop

WASHINGTON — Although the situation in Iraq has improved recently, challenges for Catholics remain, said Latin-rite Archbishop Jean Sleiman of Baghdad, who met May 4 with U.S. church officials in Washington. "The situ-

ation is improving generally ... violence has really decreased ... but for me, the problem is still there because the violence is still there," Archbishop Sleiman said. Calling violence "the language of politics" in Iraq, the archbishop said many political problems — new and old — have not been resolved. The new freedom that Christian churches' have experienced since the fall of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein has caused conflict and confusion as well because "many Iraqi churches are not accustomed to freedom," he said. At the same time, Archbishop Sleiman added, it remains difficult for Christians and Muslims to work together. "It is easier for Christians to be open to Muslims than the contrary," he said. "They (Muslims) have the psychology of a majority and do not understand the problems of a minority."

Poll shows Catholics have mixed reaction to Obama's Notre Dame invite

WASHINGTON — In a nationwide poll, half of U.S. Catholics overall supported the University of Notre Dame's decision to invite President Barack Obama to address college graduates while 28 percent opposed it. But when the Catholics polled were divided into categories of those who attended weekly Mass and those who did not, the numbers shifted. Thirty-seven percent of those attending weekly Mass supported the Indiana university's decision while 45 percent opposed it. The poll, conducted by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life, was released April 30. It was based on telephone interviews April 23-27 with 2,003 adults and has a margin of error of plus or minus 2.5 percentage points. The overall Catholic response to the survey was similar to the nationwide views on the issue: 48 percent approved, 25 percent disapproved and 27 percent said they didn't know. Of Catholics who attended Mass less than once a week 23 percent found fault with the university's decision and 56 percent favored it.

Jack Kemp dead at 73, shared political views of many Catholics

WASHINGTON — Jack Kemp, a Presbyterian Republican politician who championed causes important to many Catholics, died in his Bethesda, Md., home May 2 at the age of 73, following a battle with cancer. Kemp was praised by President Barack Obama, who offered condolences to his family. The former congressman, GOP vice-presidential nominee, secretary of Housing and Urban Development and longtime professional football player was diagnosed with cancer in January and was surrounded by members of his family when he died, according to a statement issued by Kemp's family. Kemp's political positions tended to be aligned with the U.S. Catholic bishops. He opposed abortion, supported school prayer, sought

outreach to minorities, urged compassion for the poor and pushed for immigration reform, including a guest-worker program and regularization of the status of illegal immigrants already in the country. “Jack Kemp was a man who could fiercely advocate his own beliefs and principles while also remembering the lessons he learned years earlier on the football field — that bitter divisiveness between race and class and station only stood in the way of the common aim of a team to win,” Obama said in a May 3 statement released by the White House.

Souter’s court legacy mixed on abortion, First Amendment cases

WASHINGTON — As Justice David Souter prepares to retire this summer after 19 years on the Supreme Court, he leaves a mixed legacy of jurisprudence: not so friendly to pro-life perspectives on cases involving abortion, but sometimes strong for religious interests in First Amendment areas. Souter, 69, plans to retire in late June, various news organizations reported April 30. His departure would create the first vacancy on the court since 2005, when Chief Justice William Rehnquist died shortly after Justice Sandra Day O’Connor announced her retirement. Chief Justice John Roberts and Justice Samuel Alito replaced them. When Souter was nominated to the court by President George H.W. Bush in 1990, many observers predicted he would be a conservative vote on issues such as abortion restrictions, government aid to public schools and religious expression in schools and public places. His actual record turned out to be different from those predictions.

Religious freedom commission recommends US monitor Venezuela, Cuba

WASHINGTON — A U.S. government commission has recommended that President Barack Obama’s administration place Venezuela and Cuba among the countries that should be monitored closely for their violations of religious

freedom. In its annual report, released May 1 in Washington, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom also recommended that 13 countries — including Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, China and Pakistan — be designated as “countries of particular concern.” This designation is reserved for countries with the most egregious violations of religious freedom and for governments that tolerate such abuses. The commission, an independent body, makes its recommendations to the president, secretary of state and Congress. During the press conference to release the report, Talal Eid, an imam from Boston and a member of the commission, said Venezuela has steadily increased its tolerance of abuses against Catholics, Jews and U.S.-based Protestant groups in the country. Although there are no official restrictions against religious freedom, he said, the Venezuelan government’s “strong rhetoric” and impunity have created a “hostile environment” for Catholic and Jewish citizens.

Philippine bishop leads prayer campaign for former President Aquino

QUEZON CITY, Philippines — A Philippine bishop is leading a prayer campaign for the complete healing of former President Corazon Aquino’s colon cancer. In a letter sent to media April 30, Bishop Socrates Villegas of Balanga invited Catholics to pray the rosary and receive Communion for Aquino each day from May 1 to May 13. The Asian church news agency UCA News reported on the letter. Bishop Villegas called for the prayers after learning that Aquino might have surgery sometime in May, according to the Manila Archdiocese’s communications director, Corazon Yamsuan. Bishop Villegas wrote in his letter: “I personally know how devoted President Cory is to the rosary and Our Lady of Fatima. Let this prayer crusade be our expression of love for her and our expression of faith in the Lord.” May 1, the date of the prayer campaign’s launch, marks the feast of St. Joseph the Worker. It ends on the feast of Our Lady of Fatima, who appeared to three shepherd children in Portugal in 1917.

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Movie Reviews

“The Boys: The Sherman Brothers Story”

Poignant biography of Walt Disney Studios' most famous songwriter team — Richard Sherman and Robert Sherman — whose cheery songs for such films as “Mary Poppins” and “The Jungle Book” belied a fractious personal relationship. Directed by their sons, Jeffrey C. Sherman and Gregory V. Sherman, the well-crafted documentary (unobjectionable though probably not for the kiddies) — which includes interviews with Julie Andrews, Dick Van Dyke, Angela Lansbury and other luminaries, as well as friends and family members — attempts to trace the roots of the conflict between these two disparate personalities, and also illuminates the mutual respect and love beneath the strained surface. *USCCB classification is A-I — general patronage. Not rated.*

“Ghosts of Girlfriends Past”

A heartless womanizing bachelor (Matthew McConaughey) is visited by the ghosts of his playboy uncle (Michael Douglas) and those of his jilted girlfriends (Emma Stone, Noreen DeWulf and Olga Maliouk) on the eve of the wedding of his brother (Breckin Meyer), and he comes to realize the depth of his feelings for his childhood sweetheart (Jennifer Garner). Though there's ultimately a wonderfully



Warner Bros.

Lacey Chabert and Matthew McConaughey star in “The Ghosts of Girlfriends Past,” in which a heartless bachelor faces the spirits of his jilted girlfriends.

redemptive outcome and a strong affirmation of marriage and fidelity, along with a couple of superlative scenes for McConaughey, director Mark Waters' “A Christmas Carol” retreat is marred by far too much crude and smutty humor before getting there. *Crass sexual talk and innuendo, some crude language and fleeting profanity, premarital sexual situations and a drug reference. USCCB classification is L — limited adult audience, films whose problematic content many adults would find troubling. Rated PG-13.*

“Obsessed”

Competent but forgettable suspense yarn in which a temporary office worker (Ali Larter) becomes fixated on a happily married executive (Idris Elba) eventually causing his wife (Beyonce Knowles) to suspect an affair. Director Steve Shill's feature debut, essentially a rickety star vehicle for Knowles, showcases marital fidelity, but dallies with vigilantism as the police — led by Christine Lahti as a detective — prove helpless. *Moderate action violence, brief nongraphic sexual activity, a suicide attempt, some crude and crass language, a few sexual references and half a dozen uses of profanity. USCCB classification is A-III — adults. Rated PG-13.*

“X-Men Origins: Wolverine”

Lavish and flashy action-packed prequel to the popular “X-Men” series exploring the origins of conflicted superhero Wolverine (Hugh Jackman), including his defining childhood, turbulent relationship with his brother, Victor Creed (Liev Schreiber), role in a team of fellow mutants (Ryan Reynolds, Will.i.am, Kevin Durand, Dominic Monaghan) led by the duplicitous Col. Stryker (Danny Huston), and tragic romance with schoolteacher Kayla (Lynn Collins). Director Gavin Hood tries not to lose sight of the human elements with Wolverine generally demonstrating moral conscience, though the kinetic action and violence necessarily predominate. *Intense action violence, killings, explosions, patricide, fleeting rear nudity, premarital habitation, some crude expletives, crass expressions and brief profanity, limiting its appropriateness to mature teens and up. USCCB classification is A-III — adults. Rated PG-13.*



Fox

The origins of conflicted superhero Wolverine (Hugh Jackman) are explored in the action-packed “X-Men Origins: Wolverine,” a prequel to the popular series.

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