

# CATHOLIC CALENDAR.

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## 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Jesus again in reply spoke to them in parables, saying,

"The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. He dispatched his servants to summon the invited guests to the feast, but they refused to come. A second time he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those invited: "Behold, I have prepared my banquet, my calves and fattened cattle are killed, and everything is ready; come to the feast."' Some ignored the invitation and went away, one to his farm, another to his business. The rest laid hold of his servants, mistreated them, and killed them. The king was enraged and sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, 'The feast is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy to come. Go out, therefore, into the main roads and invite to the feast whomever you find.' The servants went out into the streets and gathered all they found, bad and good alike, and the hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to meet the guests he saw a man there not dressed in a wedding garment. He said to him, 'My friend, how is it that you came in here without a wedding garment?' But he was reduced to silence. Then the king said to his attendants, 'Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the darkness outside, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth.' Many are invited, but few are chosen."

- Matthew 22:1-14

## U.S. Bishops' Respect Life Program begins

By Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua

Last Sunday October 6 the Catholic Church inaugurated its Respect Life Program, an annual education effort focusing on the sanctity of human life.

We unveil this year's program aware that our world has become a more dangerous place. The events of September 11, 2001 force us to acknowledge that some of our fellow human beings see no intrinsic value in human life. They believe that innocent lives are dispensable in the quest to attain political or ideological goals. As Pope John Paul II reminds us, "terrorism is built on contempt for human life" (Message for the 2002 World Day of Peace, no. 4).

It would be a mistake, however, to think that contempt for life exists only in certain parts of the world, among certain peoples. In *The Gulag Archipelago* Alexander Solzhenitsyn describes his gradual realization that "the line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either but right through every human heart and through all human hearts." The roots of contempt for life can sprout in our own hearts when we forget the God-given dignity of every human being, a dignity inherent in all from concep-

tion to natural death.

Contempt for human life can take many forms. In our technically advanced society, we are tempted to treat life as dispensable when it seems to stand in the way of individual freedom or technical "progress."

Abortion is advanced in the name of freedom, but it undermines freedom by demeaning life itself. No society can be truly free if its most vulnerable members can lose their very lives at the hands of others. And far from giving greater freedom to women, abortion leaves many women feeling trapped in a deep well of sorrow and remorse.

Ironically, the campaign for "freedom" on abortion has increasingly taken on a coercive cast. Abortion advocates support China's coercive abortion program; here at home, they try to force conscientiously opposed health care providers to be involved in abortion.

Destructive embryo research and human cloning are promoted in the name of progress. Yet they mark a regress in researchers' respect for ethical limits. They also divert resources away from morally acceptable research avenues that are at least as promising. Such abuses do not bode well for our ability to use the newfound powers of biotechnology to serve and not demean

humanity.

Ignoring the real threat to human dignity posed by human cloning, some have proposed cloning "bans" that are nothing of the sort. Rather, such proposals would allow unlimited cloning of human embryos for destructive research, while banning any effort to bring these embryos to live birth. In effect, the evil of cloning would be compounded by the evil of government-mandated killing.

These and other challenges to life are addressed in this year's Respect Life Program materials, which I encourage all Catholics to read and discuss. We must inform ourselves about these issues, understand them in light of the Gospel, and respond to them with firm commitment and healing compassion.

The Respect Life Program aims "to bring the Gospel of life to the heart of every man and woman and to make it penetrate every part of society" (The Gospel of Life, no. 80). Let us all take an active role in this urgent endeavor, helping to turn others' hearts toward a renewed reverence for human life at every stage and condition.

Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua is chairman of the Committee for Pro-Life Activities, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

## Historic Mexican-U.S. joint statement on Bishops' November meeting agenda

WASHINGTON — An unprecedented joint pastoral statement on migration by the Mexican and U.S. bishops will come before the U.S. Conference of Catholic

Bishops for a vote at their semi-annual meeting here November 11 to November 14.

Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope marks the first time the USCCB has worked jointly with another national episcopal conference to issue a pastoral statement. Members of the USCCB Committee on Migration and the Mexican bishops' Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care for People on the Move produced the document after more than a year of meetings and discussions. The

full membership of the Mexican bishops' conference is set to vote on the statement during their annual meeting, November 12-15.

The statement reviews migration in light of Catholic social teaching, including principles such as:

- persons have the right to find economic, political, and social opportunities in their homeland;
- persons have the right to migrate to support themselves and their families;
- sovereign nations have the right to control their borders;
- refugees and asylum seekers should be afforded protection by the global community;
- the human dignity and human rights of undocu-

mented migrants should be respected.

The statement enumerates a number of public policy challenges and offers responses drawn from the bishops' experiences. They recommend that policy makers address the following:

- the root causes of migration such as the need for Mexico to implement sustainable economic development policies, and the initiation of joint border development projects;
- expanding opportunities for legal immigration;
- humane border enforcement policies in both Mexico and the United States; and
- protection of human rights.

## Pastoral Visitations to all the Parishes of the Diocese to begin

In the month of October I will begin a series of pastoral visits to all of the parishes in the Diocese of Lake Charles. During these visits I will spend the weekend at each parish. In most instances, I will be the celebrant and homilist at all of the weekend masses. I will meet with the Pastor, members of the Pastoral Staff, the parish Pastoral Council, the Trustees, the Finance Committee, the Liturgy Committee and other Parish leadership. It may also be possible for me to visit some Christian faithful who are confined in their homes. This will help me, as your bishop, to come to a deeper appreciation of the life of the Christian community in each parish.

These Pastoral Visits will be a part of my overall schedule. This means that I will not be in one parish after another, weekend after weekend. I will continue to celebrate the Eucharist on Sundays at Immaculate Conception Cathedral, celebrate special liturgical events such as the installation of new pastors and participate in liturgical celebrations outside of the diocese. For these reasons I will probably do only about one Parish Pastoral Visitation a month. I will begin, appropriately, with the Cathedral Parish, October 19-20, followed by Sacred Heart (Creole), November 2-3, Our Lady Help of Christians, January 25-26, St. Philip Neri, February 1-2, Our Lady of Seven Dolors, March 1-2, St. Paul (Elton), May 17-18, Sacred Heart (Lake Charles) July 12-13. It will take several years for me to visit every parish.

The teachings of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) stress that vital, active parish communities are essential to the life of every local church or diocese. The Council Fathers (the Bishops gathered in Rome with the Holy Father) urged all diocesan bishops to manifest a direct interest in the well-being of all the parishes entrusted to their pastoral care. The Council specifically instructs bishops to make sure that teachings, practices, and new pastoral structures mandated by the Council itself are in place. Bishops are required to be particularly concerned to ensure that the Good News of Jesus

Christ as understood by the teachings of the Catholic Church is proclaimed faithfully and that the sacraments, especially the Eucharist are celebrated meaningfully and prayerfully. Therefore, during my Pastoral Visit, I will be particularly interested to learn about in programs



**Bishop Edward K. Braxton**

and activities that contribute to sacramental preparation, especially the sacraments of Christian initiation, Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.

The celebration of the Saturday and Sunday Masses are the spiritual heart of parish life. For this reason I will make every effort to encourage the full, conscious and active participation of our people in dynamic, well prepared and reverent Eucharistic Liturgies. I have given all of the parishes copies of my Pastoral Letter, "Let us Put Out Into The Deep" as well as my "Notes for a Possible Pastoral Letter on Liturgy" and asked them to share them and discuss them with appropriate parishioners. These documents will be an important part of my Visitation.

In the course of my Pastoral Visit, I will seek to foster and strengthen communication and collaboration between the Pastor and the Parish Staff as well as all of those involved in various forms of religious education and adult formation (including the school, where there is one). In this context I will place a special emphasis on meeting families, learning about the programs for all age groups and supporting vocations to the priesthood, the diaconate and the religious life. I will be anxious to support everything that increases the spirit of welcome, friendliness, hospitality and open communication in our parish communities. An informative and interesting parish bulletin can play an important part in this communication.

The parish community is not a private social club but a community of the faithful disciples of the Lord. The parish, by its nature is al-

ways reaching out to those in need within the parish and beyond the parish boundaries. It will be important for me to learn how each parish is faithfully living the Commandments and the Beatitudes, which impel all of us to participate in ecumenical and interfaith activities and to labor tirelessly for social justice and peace in our neighborhoods. In Southwest Louisiana the harmonious relationship between people of different races, economic and social backgrounds is strengthened by our authentic living of the Gospel. It is an essential part of my ministry as the one given pastoral responsibility for the whole community of faith by the Holy Father to call forth this authentic living of the Gospel, even in situations where this may be difficult and challenging.

The material resources of each parish will also be examined during my Visitation. This means learning about the condition of the buildings, the income, the expenses, the long range plans for growth or decline, the prudent stewardship of resources and the willingness of the faithful to contribute their time, talent and treasure for the good of the work of the Church.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus tells Peter, the prince of the apostles, that he must strengthen the other followers of Jesus in their faith. Today that mandate rests in a special way on the shoulders of the successor of Peter, Pope John Paul II and we who make up the College of Bishops as successors of the apostles. The primary purpose of my Parish Pastoral Visitation will be, therefore, to do all that I can, humanly speaking, to strengthen our people in their faith. I pray to the Holy Spirit each day for those in pastoral ministry (priests, deacons, religious, laity) that they may faithfully build up the Body of Christ. I, in turn ask you to pray for me as I prepare to begin my Visitations that I may faithfully carry out my ministry to teach, govern and sanctify the holy People of God entrusted to me.

## Political Loyalties

By Fr. Frank Pavone  
Priests for Life

Is there something that religion and politics have in common that make them both such sensitive topics? Perhaps the common element is that in both arenas, we express something very specific about who we are. Our identity at its deepest level is revealed.

When we pray, we say as much about ourselves as we say about God. And when we vote, we say as much about ourselves as we do about the candidate for whom we are voting. We say a lot about ourselves if we belong to a political party. We say even more about ourselves if, for years and years, we vote along the same party lines, even though we might be hard-pressed to say anything about the man or woman we are electing.

What do our voting patterns reveal about us? Our loyalties.

Presuming that we are paying some attention to where our political party's positions are on such fundamental moral questions as abortion, gay rights, homosexual marriages, and assisted suicide, a fair question to

ask ourselves is, "Is there a position that my party can take that would prevent me from voting the party line?"

Framed in another way, the question is, "Is my loyalty to the Christian faith stronger than my loyalty to any political party?"

In 1998, the United States bishops issued a strong document on our political responsibility called *Living the Gospel of Life: A Challenge to American Catholics*. They write, "We get the public officials we deserve. Their virtue — or lack thereof — is a judgment not only on them, but on us. Because of this, we urge our fellow citizens to see beyond party politics, to analyze campaign rhetoric critically, and to choose their political leaders according to principle, not party affiliation or mere self-interest" (n.34).

This document of the bishops is not so much about politics as it is about us. We are citizens of a great nation, but we are citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven first. We are free to belong to the political party of our choice, but first we belong to Jesus Christ. And belonging to Him means that there are certain

things we can no longer assent to or go along with, including in politics and the voting booth.

The bishops, in the same document, make an urgent call, which is especially noteworthy as we approach election day: "In a special way, we call on U.S. Catholics, especially those in positions of leadership — whether cultural, economic or political — to recover their identity as followers of Jesus Christ and to be leaders in the renewal of American respect for the sanctity of life."

This November 5, we Americans have the duty to go to the polls and vote. We have the opportunity, moreover, to elect public officials who will work for policies that reflect Christian teaching on life, marriage and family. Don't be in the dark about where the parties and candidates stand. And don't vote blindly. Vote as an informed Christian.

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