

# CATHOLIC CALENDAR.

A page devoted to local Catholic interests

February 13, 2004

Vol. 30, No. 3

Lake Charles, La.

Internet Address: <http://lcediocese.org>

## Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

"Jesus came down with the Twelve and stood on a stretch of level ground with a great crowd of his disciples and a large number of the people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coast region of Tyre and Sidon. And raising his eyes toward his disciples he said:

**Blessed are you who are poor, for the kingdom of God is yours.**

**Blessed are you who are now hungry, for you will be satisfied.**

**Blessed are you who are now weeping, for you will laugh.**

**Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude and insult you, and denounce your name as evil on account of the Son of Man.**

**Rejoice and leap for joy on that day! Behold, your reward will be great in heaven. For their ancestors treated the prophets in the same way.**

**But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.**

**Woe to you who are filled now, for you will be hungry.**

**Woe to you who laugh now, for you will grieve and weep.**

**Woe to you when all speak well of you, for their ancestors treated the false prophets in this way."**

Luke 6:17, 20-26

## Lenten Regulations

Every Catholic, even children and older adults, should participate in some way in the spiritual disciplines and penitential practices of Lent in order to go up to Jerusalem with Jesus. These are the regulations in the United States.

"Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are days of fast and abstinence. This means that we do not eat meat and we have only one full meal. Concerning the Good Friday feast, the Second Vatican Council teaches: "Let the Easter fast be kept sacred. Let it be celebrated everywhere on Good Friday and, where possible, prolonged throughout Holy Saturday, so that the joys of the Sunday of the Resurrection may be attained with a clear and uplifted mind."

"The other Fridays of the season of Lent are also days of abstinence from meat. The obligation to abstain from meat binds Catholics 14 years and older. The obligation to fast, limiting oneself to one full meal and two lighter meals in the course of the day, binds Catholics from age 18 to 59. Those who are younger or older may freely embrace these disciplines.

But Lenten disciplines should never endanger your health.

"The Friday's of the year outside Lent are also days of penance. Abstaining from meat is the traditional way of observing these days of penance. However, each person is free to replace the traditional abstinence from meat with some other practice of self-denial or personal penance. It is obvious that abstaining from meat is meaningless for vegetarians, who must choose some other form of abstinence. It is equally obvious that replacing meat with a gourmet seafood meal is not in keeping with the spirit of Lent. Abstaining from meat may be replaced on Fridays during the year with abstaining from some other food. It may also be replaced with time spent reading and studying the Scriptures, special prayers, such as the rosary or visits to the Blessed Sacrament, acts of thoughtfulness and charity to those in need, or acts of personal witness to one's faith, such as teaching a religion class or speaking out on the sinfulness of abortion, euthanasia, racism, and other social ills.

"While the season of Lent is the primary period of Catholic penitential practices, these regulations are not intended to limit the occasions for Christian penance. The practice of spiritual discipline is always appropriate during periods of special need for the individual and the larger community.

The Catholic faithful should be reminded of the teaching of Pope Paul VI concerning the seriousness of being faithful to Lenten disciplines. He said that the obligation to follow these disciplines in solidarity with the Church is a serious one. However, Catholics should not become scrupulous in this regard. Failure to observe individual days of penance is not considered a serious matter. However, the faithful should look for ways to do more rather than less. Fast and abstinence on the days prescribed, and works of religion and charity on the Friday's outside Lent, should be considered a minimal response to the call of Jesus to go up to Jerusalem with Him in order that we might experience true Christian conversion in our lives.

(BISHOP'S NOTE: I write a regular column for the Catholic Calendar as well as our diocesan newspaper, The Southwest Catholic. However, in today's Catholic Calendar I am happy to welcome Archbishop Alfred Hughes of New Orleans as a guest columnist. The Bishops of the Province of New Orleans (all bishops in the state of Louisiana) meet regularly and discuss issues that concern us and the people we serve. One of the issues we recently discussed is the question of the challenges faced by people who generously serve the common good in elected positions of government. These challenges including supporting legislation and public policy that is consistent with moral responsibility and moral principles. In his essay "Co-Responsibility for Public Policy," published in his Archdiocesan newspaper, the *Clarion Herald*, Archbishop Hughes addresses this question as it applies to Catholics. I invite you to reflect on his clear summary of Catholic teaching and pray often for Catholics who serve our communities as elected officials. The Most Reverend Edward K. Braxton, Bishop of Lake Charles.)



**Bishop  
Edward  
K.  
Braxton**

## The Responsibility of Catholic Public Officials

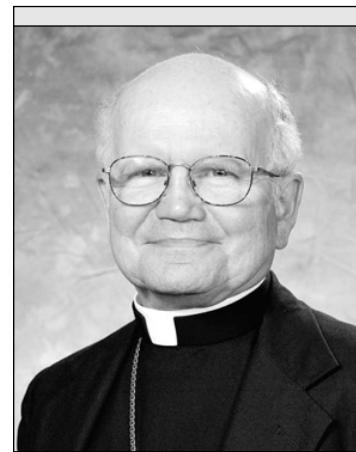
The "Catechism of the Catholic Church" makes clear that all Catholics have a personal responsibility to participate in promoting the common good in accordance with their vocation in life. Those holding public office have a special responsibility. The goal of this participation is to help shape a policy that is in conformity as much as possible with the law rooted in our nature that governs us all, no matter what our religious belief. Thus, they are called to try to ensure that the laws that govern us protect human life, respect the human person, preserve the unique nature of marriage, support family, ensure the safety of children, guarantee religious freedom and make it possible for all citizens to share in the conditions that are necessary for human living.

But Catholics also experience a certain freedom in developing legislation that is, as much as possible, in conformity with natural law. There can be different strategies for realizing fundamental values. There are going to be differences in the application of the basic principles of political theory. Sometimes the technical complexity of issues makes diverse human judgments inevitable.

What, then, is the responsibility of Catholic public officials to translate their moral convictions on the life issues into public policy? Let us first address those issues that admit of no exceptions: abortion, physician-assisted suicide, homicide, the destruction of human embryos in artificial fertilization, stem cell research and cloning. In each of these, the issues are clear-cut. We cannot do what is wrong even for good purposes.

### The Role of Prudential Judgments

Sometimes public officials have to make a prudential judgment that at a given time in human history, only imperfect legislation is possible. If the intent of this effort is to limit the evil as much as possible, no other approach to legislation seems feasible and the legislation does not eliminate the possibility of introducing more restrictive laws in a more favorable political climate, it is legitimate for public officials to support such legislation. It is always im-



**Archbishop  
Alfred C. Hughes**

*Co-Responsibility  
for  
Public Policy*

portant, however, that such public officials are publicly on record in support of legislation which is committed to the truth about the fullness of respect for human life.

Other life issues call for the exercise of prudential judgments in human situations. For instance, a pastoral judgment needs to be made whether in a particular instance capital punishment is morally justifiable. Our Holy Father and the United States Bishops have cautioned that in their judgment the situations that justify capital punishment are severely limited, if not non-existent. Another example is that with regard to war. The Church teaches that war needs to be a last resort and that very specific conditions need to be fulfilled. The "Catechism of the Catholic Church" indicates that the responsibility to make such decisions about war weighs heavily upon those who have the responsibility for the common good. (cf. CCC, 2309).

### Witness to What Really Counts

In the other life issues, it is always important to witness to what is morally correct. At the same time, we preserve the rightful freedom of individuals to make prudential judgments about the use of extraordinary means to prolong life when a person is terminally ill. In the area of artificial contraception, it may not be realistic to try to adopt legislation to make it illegal, but it is certainly possible to work for legislation to ensure the rightful freedom of conscience for medical works, health care facilities and pharmacists to abide by their moral convictions and to protect citizens from hav-

ing to pay for the provision of contraceptive services to others. When it comes to ensuring the rights of the poor, there will inevitably be conflicting strategies. It is the responsibility of public officials to devise and support those strategies that most fulfill responsibility to ensure that all people have access to the basic necessities of life.

A recent Vatican document, "A Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life," offers valuable guidance in the above issues for public figures. This document does not propose a Catholic agenda, but clarifies for Catholics those truths that are rooted in nature. The Louisiana bishops are sending a copy of this document to each of our elected Catholic public officials in Baton Rouge and Washington. When Catholic officials openly support the taking of human life in abortion, euthanasia or the destruction of human embryos, they are no longer faithful members in the Church and should not partake of Holy Communion. Moreover, citizens who promote this unjust taking of human life by their vote or support of such candidates share in responsibility for this grave evil.

Public discourse needs to be marked by civility. We need courage and honesty to speak the truth about human life. We need humility to listen to both friend and opponent. We need perseverance to continue the struggle for the protection of human life. We need prudence to know when and how to act in the public arena.

God grant us all the wisdom and courage only he can give.

## Pope's Lenten Message for 2004 focuses on needs of children

WASHINGTON -- In his annual Lenten message, Pope John Paul II expressed the hope that this Lent may "be a time of ever greater concern for the needs of children...for they are the future of humanity."

"The evocative rite of the imposition of ashes marks the beginning of the holy season of Lent, when the liturgy once more calls the faithful to radical conversion and trust in God's mercy," he said.

This year's theme, "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me," (Mt 18:5) invites reflection on the condition of children, the Pope said.

The penitential season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 25 this year. The Holy Father's message for Lent 2004 was released at the Vatican and in this country by Archbishop Gabriel Montalvo, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States.

"Jesus had a particular

love of children because of 'their simplicity, their joy of life, their spontaneity, and their faith filled with wonder,'" the Holy Father wrote. "Alongside children Jesus sets the 'very least of the brethren:' the suffering, the needy, the hungry and thirsty, strangers, the naked, the sick and the imprisoned. In welcoming them and loving them, or in treating them with indifference and contempt, we show our attitude towards him, for it is in them that he is particularly present."

"To become one of the least and 'to receive' the little ones: these are two aspects of a single teaching which the Lord repeats to his disciples in our time. Only the one who makes himself one of the 'least' is able to receive with love the 'least' of our brothers and sisters," the Pope said.

Saying that many believers strive faithfully to follow these teachings of the Lord,

the Pope praised parents "who make every effort to pass on to their children those human and religious values that give true meaning to life." He expressed admiration for "all those committed to caring for underprivileged children and those who alleviate the sufferings of children and their families resulting from war and violence, inadequate food and water, forced immigration and the many forms of injustice present in the world."

But something must also be said about the selfishness of those who do not "receive" children, the Holy Father continued.

"There are young people who have been profoundly hurt by the violence of adults: sexual abuse, forced prostitution, involvement in the sale and use of drugs; children forced to work or enlisted for combat; young children scarred forever by

the breakup of the family; little ones caught up in the obscene trafficking of organs and persons. What too of the tragedy of AIDS and its devastating consequences in Africa," the Holy Father asked. "It is said that millions of persons are now afflicted by this scourge, many of whom were infected from birth. Humanity cannot close its eyes in the face of so appalling a tragedy," the Pope declared.

"What evil have these children done to merit such suffering," he asked. "From a human standpoint it is not easy, indeed it may be impossible, to answer this disturbing question. Only faith can make us begin to understand so profound an abyss of suffering. By becoming 'obedient unto death, even death on a Cross' (Phil 2:8), Jesus took human suffering upon himself and illuminated it with the radiant light of his resurrection. By his

death, he conquered death for all," the Holy Father wrote.

"During Lent, we prepare to relive the Paschal Mystery, which sheds the light of hope upon the whole of our existence, even its most complex and painful aspects. Holy Week will again set before us this mystery of salvation in the suggestive rites of the Easter Triduum."

### Pope names new Portland bishop

WASHINGTON -- Pope John Paul II has accepted the resignation of Bishop Joseph J. Gerry, OSB, of Portland, Maine, and appointed Auxiliary Bishop Richard J. Malone of Boston as his successor.

The Pope also accepted the resignation of Auxiliary Bishop George Wirz of Madison, Wisconsin.

Archbishop Gabriel Montalvo, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, made the announcements.

Established in 1853, the Diocese of Portland comprises the State of Maine. It has a Catholic population of about 218,000 in a total population of approximately 1.3 million.

(This page paid for by the Diocese of Lake Charles.)