



Third Sunday of Advent

The crowds asked John the Baptist, "What should we do?" He said to them in reply, "Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise." Even tax collectors came to be baptized and they said to him, "Teacher, what should we do?" He answered them, "Stop collecting more than what is prescribed." Soldiers also asked him, "And what is it that we should do?" He told them, "Do not practice extortion, do not falsely accuse anyone, and be satisfied with your wages." Now the people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Christ. John answered them all, saying, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." Exhorting them in many other ways, he preached good news to the people.

Luke 3:10-18

Scripture reflection with Bishop Braxton set Sunday, Dec. 21

LAKE CHARLES – Bishop Edward K. Braxton will offer a reflection on the Scripture readings for Advent and Christmas from 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 21, in the Daily Mass Chapel of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. All are welcome to attend.

The informal presentation and discussion will provide the opportunity for attendees to ask Bishop Braxton questions about the

meaning and interpretation of scripture passages and their relevance to daily life. Participants may also ask questions about the teachings and practices of the Catholic Church that they may not understand.

Bishop Braxton hopes that this time of reflection on the Word of God will help people to prepare themselves and their families to celebrate the true meaning of Christmas.

English translation of Roman Missal off to "excellent start"

VATICAN CITY - Work on the English translation of the latest Roman Missal is off to an "excellent start," says an episcopal commission advising the Holy See.

The Vox Clara Committee met for the fourth time from Nov. 18-20 in the offices of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments in Rome, according to a press statement issued by the dicastery.

This committee of senior bishops from around the English-speaking world was established in July 2001 to advise the congregation on translations of Latin liturgical texts into English, and to strengthen cooperation with episcopal conferences in this regard.

"In the course of their meeting the committee sought to advise the congregation on ways in which to expedite the completion of an English-language edition of the 'Missale Romanum,' 'editio typica tertia,'" the press statement states.

"The committee heard reports concerning the October 23, 2003, meeting in Rome of Cardinal Francis Arinze, prefect of the congregation, with the presidents of English-speaking conferences of bishops, the recent approval of the statutes of the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) by the congregation, and ICEL's plans for the translation of the 'Missale Romanum,'" it adds.

"Having examined sample ICEL translations from the 'Missale Romanum,' the committee expressed its gratitude for the excellent start made by the mixed commission in translating the 'Missale Romanum' in an English style which is in conformity with the spirit and the specific provisions of the instruction 'Liturgia Authentica,' approved by the Holy Father on March 20, 2001," the statement continues.

"The committee, likewise, made numerous recommendations to the congregation in regard to specific strategies by which all parties might focus more closely on the completion of the Roman Missal for the English-speaking world," it explains.

"These strategies involved processes for the review of translations of the Roman Missal in segments by conferences of bishops and the Holy See, the development of explanatory materials, the timetable for the completion of the Roman Missal, and the relationship of the Roman Missal to other ICEL projects," it explains.

The next meeting of the Vox Clara Committee, chaired by Cardinal George Pell of Sydney, Australia, is scheduled for the spring.

Diocese of Lake Charles faithfully following U.S. Bishops' mandate

LAKE CHARLES -- The Most Reverend Edward K. Braxton, Bishop of Lake Charles, on Friday, Nov. 28, 2003 issued the following statement:

"The Bishops of the United States committed themselves during their meeting in Dallas on June 14, 2002 to a Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People in order to respond effectively to cases of sexual abuse of minors by clergy and other personnel. In the Diocese of Lake Charles we have faithfully followed the mandate of the Charter.

We have established a local Review Board, appointed Fr. Whitney Miller as our coordinator for victim's assistance, provided safe-environment for children training for diocesan clergy and completed FBI background checks on all clergy. (The training program and FBI checks for other person-

nel will be completed shortly.) We were audited Aug. 11-14 for compliance with the standards of the Charter by the Gavin Group, an independent investigative agency, and received a favorable evaluation. We were given a commendation because of my letter on this topic published prior to the Dallas meeting.

The results of this national audit are scheduled to be released on January 6, 2004. In late February, John Jay College will release a study the Bishops commissioned them to make to provide an accurate picture of the extent of this problem over the past 50 years. To my knowledge no other institution has done a similar study.

Although the John Jay Study will contain collective national numbers without reference to specific dioceses, I believe that it is best to share with the priests and

the general public the results of the Gavin Audit here in Lake Charles before the publication of the John Jay Study.

The Diocese of Lake Charles was erected by Pope John Paul II on April 25, 1980 when it was separated from the Diocese of Lafayette. As a result our figures pertain only to the twenty-three years of our existence and not a 50-year period. Since 1980, there have been ten allegations against eight members of the clergy serving in the Diocese of Lake Charles. Three of these were diocesan priests. No one found to be guilty of these allegations is currently serving in the Diocese. \$293,921 have been expended from diocesan funds for financial settlements, psychological counseling and legal fees. Every effort has been made to reach out to the victims and their fami-

lies with compassion and support.

On April 7, 2002, before the meeting in Dallas, I said in a letter to the Diocese, "I share your shock amazement, anger, sorrow and distress about the terrible harm done to innocent children and their families by priests who betrayed the trust of those for whom they should have shown the greatest concern." Today, I repeat those sentiments and make my own the words Pope John Paul II spoke at World Youth Day in Toronto on July 28, 2002. "Do not be discouraged by the sins and failings of some of the Church's members. The harm done by some priests to the young and vulnerable fills us with a deep sense of sadness and shame. But think of the vast majority of dedicated and generous priests whose only wish is to serve and to do good!"

Non-cooperation with Abortion Mills

By Rev. Frank Pavone
National Director
Priests for Life

In the April 8, 2002 edition of this column, I called for "conscientious objection" on the part of businesses of all kinds that might be called upon to service abortion facilities. In June of that same year, Pastoral Life magazine published a longer version of the same article, and I preached about it on EWTN.

These articles pointed out that businesses, and the individuals employed by them, should simply refuse to provide their services to the maintenance of a killing center. The legality of abortion does not create the obligation to participate in it. I called upon plumbers, electricians, office supply companies, delivery services, printing companies, lawn and garden companies, snow removal services, computer consultants, office machine

repair services, sanitation workers, roofing companies, taxi drivers, security companies, lock and key companies, cleaning and maintenance services, sign and fence companies, food services, exterminators, and every other conceivable business, to simply say no to any request to service an abortion facility.

That is why I, along with so many others, are so encouraged to see what is happening in Austin, Texas. The proposed construction of an abortion mill by

Planned Parenthood is at a standstill because plumbers, concrete suppliers, and other workers refused to take part in the project. Eventually, because of this lack of cooperation, the general contractor had to pull out as well. Chris Danze, and "Texas Contractors and Suppliers for Life" have found broad support in the

local community and the Churches, who have helped to implore businesses not to get involved and have told them that they in turn would not do business with those who are involved.

It is, in the end, all a matter of free choice. That's what makes the reaction of Planned Parenthood's president, Gloria Feldt, so odd. She describes this whole effort as "bullying" and "fascist tactics." She says they are "repugnant to democracy" and constitute "strong-arming everybody else into adhering to [anti-choice] ideology." But if free choice is valued in our society, why should those who oppose abortion be forced to participate in it?

Pro-abortion groups defend abortion as an exercise of "conscience." But how is it that "conscience" can justify having an abortion, but can't justify refusing to cooperate

in helping others have one?

Moreover, refusing to participate in building or servicing an abortion mill is not only an exercise of choice, it is a moral obligation. To work in any way for a facility whose purpose is to perform abortions is morally wrong.

Pope John Paul, speaking of laws allowing abortion, insists that "there is a grave and clear obligation to oppose them by conscientious objection" (The Gospel of Life, n.73). The US Bishops write that such laws "cannot...be supported, acquiesced in, or recognized as valid" (Living the Gospel of Life, n. 33). If we think that because abortion is legal we have to service the facilities that commit it, we have "acquiesced in" abortion laws.

Let the People of Life arise, then, and let a new chapter of pro-life activism begin!

Bishops' Office urges FDA to reject OTC "emergency contraception"

WASHINGTON -- The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has urged the Food and Drug Administration to reject a proposal to switch the status of emergency contraceptives from prescription to over-the-counter.

The FDA recently announced a meeting of the Nonprescription Drugs Advisory Committee and the Advisory Committee for Reproductive Health Drugs, December 16, to consider a proposal to make Plan B, or levonorgestrel-only "emergency contraception" ("EC"), available without a prescription. The agency invited

written comments.

The USCCB, through its Office of General Counsel, filed comments against the proposal December 5. They said, in part:

"The FDA has no mandate to promote and facilitate ways of preventing pregnancy that may cause the death of developing human life already conceived.

Making EC available over-the-counter will reverse the legal and medical trend toward greater recognition and protection of human embryonic life, by making chemical agents that can destroy life so easily obtain-

able."

Moreover, the comments continued, because the drug has been advertised and promoted as a "contraceptive," countless women are being misled.

The comments noted that making "emergency contraception" available without a prescription would eliminate critical clinical monitoring and follow-up to address the risk of ectopic pregnancy, a potentially fatal complication. It would also make the drugs available to minor girls without the involvement of their parents or a family physician.

According to Cathy Cleaver Ruse, Director of Planning and Information for the USCCB Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities, "women are being misled about this drug, and putting it on the shelves of a drug-store would only exacerbate the problem. This proposal would put their health at risk and remove important protection for minor girls. And it would further coarsen the culture to the dignity of early human life."

"A review of these considerations should lead the FDA to reject this reckless experiment," she said.

Vocation retreat set Jan. 16-18

A vocation retreat, jointly sponsored by the Dioceses of Lake Charles, Alexandria Shreveport and Baton Rouge, is scheduled for Jan. 16-18, at the Rosaryville Spirit Life Center in Ponchatoula, La., located in the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

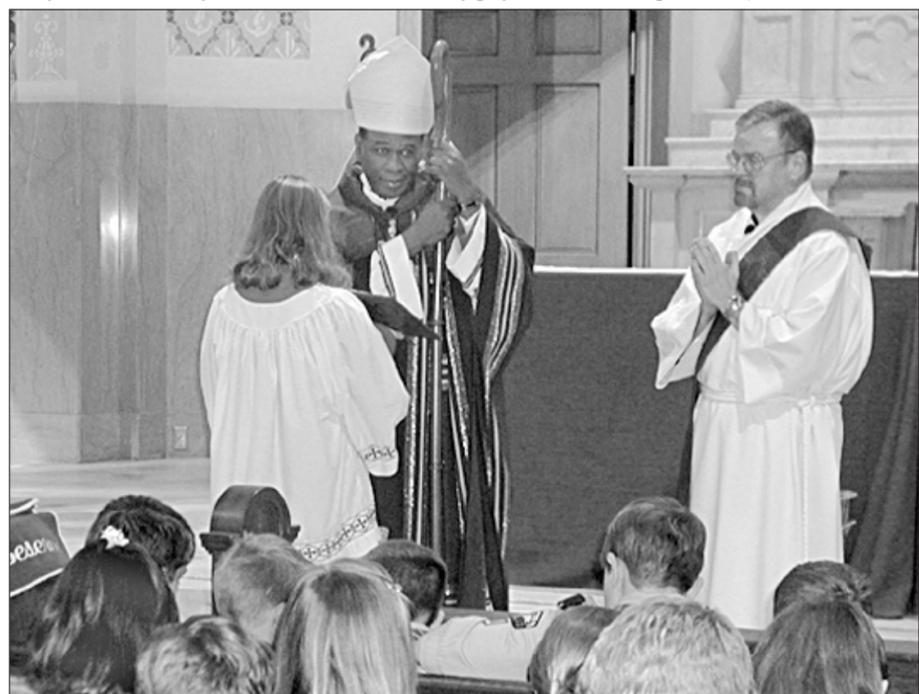
The retreat is intended for young men, 16 years and older, who are discerning God's will in their lives.

It invites participants to look at their spiritual journey in light of the Lord Jesus' call to a life of personal holiness.

The retreat will help a young man to reflect on and judge how best to respond to God's call, in priesthood or the religious life.

Bishops of the dioceses as well as vocation directors are scheduled to attend. The retreat is staffed by seminarians of the dioceses. Involved.

For more information contact your church's pastor or call the Vocation Office, 337-439-7426, Ext. 17.



Bishop Edward Braxton makes a few comments, prior to the final blessing, to the young scouts, both boys and girls, following the Award Ceremony for Scouts held on Sunday, Nov. 30, the First Sunday of Advent, in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. Deacon Michael Mathews stands at right. The Bishop handed out religious scouting medals to 00 boys and girls. The Rev. Fontenot, Pastor of St. Raphael Church in Iowa, is the chaplain for the Catholic Committee on Scouting of the Diocese.