

Morning briefing

Thomas C. Fox | Jun. 11, 2009 NCR Today

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Catholic News Service Briefs

St. Anthony Messenger Press is 'redefining strategy,' reducing staff

CINCINNATI (CNS) -- The CEO and publisher of St. Anthony Messenger Press announced June 8 that the Cincinnati-based publishing enterprise is "redefining its strategy" and reducing staffing "to compete more effectively in the current culture and economy." Franciscan Father Dan Kroger said the changes are in response to gradual but steady changes among Catholics and "more dramatic changes" in media technology. The current economic climate also has given urgency to redefining the company's strategy, he said. It is offering voluntary early retirement to eligible employees, closing its Cincinnati telemarketing center, ceasing the use of its independent field sales force, and implementing company-wide cost efficiencies for purchasing, inventory, utilities, salaries and bonuses. According to Father Kroger, St. Anthony Messenger Press will become "a more sharply focused, market-driven provider of inspirational products and services"; will move into new markets and expand its reach to existing markets; and will strengthen its existing online evangelization and e-commerce efforts. The 116-year-old communications company, sponsored by the Franciscan Friars of St. John the Baptist Province, is one of the nation's largest providers of inspirational and educational Catholic spirituality resources. It produces St. Anthony Messenger, an award-winning monthly magazine with a circulation of 250,000; Catholic Update, a popular parish resource used in about half of U.S. parishes; St. Anthony Messenger Press and Servant Books; and newsletters, homily services, audio books and DVDs. It also has a Web site, www.AmericanCatholic.org.

Year for Priests Web site highlights international celebration

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- The U.S. bishops' Secretariat for Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations has set up a Web site to mark the Year for Priests, a worldwide celebration from June 19 of this year to June 19, 2010. Pope Benedict XVI chose to begin the Year for Priests on the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a day of prayer for the sanctification of all priests. The pope also designated St. John Vianney as the universal patron of all priests on the 150th anniversary of the saint's death. The saint, who is also known as the Cure of Ars, is the patron of parish priests. The Year for Priests Web site is www.usccb.org/yearforpriests. The site includes the pope's message for the occasion and the announcement of the plenary indulgence in conjunction with the celebration. The site also offers specially commissioned prayers for priests and laity. The pope's messages and the prayers are available in English and Spanish. Throughout the year, the secretariat also will use the site to publish

monthly articles about the priesthood written by prominent Catholic women. Other activities in the Year for Priests include a retreat on the national level and a gathering of priests in Rome for the celebration's culmination. Further details about the national retreat will be available on the site.

Bishops of Central, North America call for regional migration summit

TECUN UMAN, Guatemala (CNS) -- Bishops from the U.S., Canada, Mexico and Central America called on their governments to convene a regional summit to assess the causes of migration and to work out a regional plan for cooperation on migration and development. "We are at a pivotal moment in the history of migration in this hemisphere," said the statement, dated June 4, which was released at the conclusion of a meeting of 10 bishops from the region and two Vatican representatives. "There is no time to waste," it said. The conference, one of a series of regular meetings for the region's bishops on migration issues, was held at a migrants' center in western Guatemala, near the Mexican border. The bishops' statement described the combination of political opportunities created by the change in the White House and urgency fed by the global economic crisis and the increased role of organized crime in human trafficking. "The global economic crisis has impacted all nations and must be considered in seeking solutions to problems of illegal immigration," the bishops wrote. "An examination of global economic agreements and their impact on migration flows also must be included." It referred to the dangers faced by migrants who "suffer at the hands of smugglers, human traffickers and drug cartels" who "continue to suffer abuse and even death as they seek to find work to support their families."

Vatican visit to CERN opens new channel of dialogue for science, faith

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- A recent visit by a Vatican delegation to CERN -- one of the world's largest centers for scientific research -- has opened up an important channel of communication between science and faith, said the Vatican representative to U.N. agencies in Geneva. Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, the representative, was part of the delegation led by Cardinal Giovanni Lajolo, president of the commission governing Vatican City. The head of the Vatican Observatory, Jesuit Father Jose Funes, and a Vatican astronomer, U.S. Jesuit Brother Guy Consolmagno, were also part of delegation visiting the world's largest particle physics laboratory in Geneva June 3. The director-general of CERN, Rolf-Dieter Heuer, was interested in having the Vatican come to the world famous facility "because he wanted this visit to be a way to establish a link to the Holy See," Archbishop Tomasi told Catholic News Service by phone June 9. The idea of having the Vatican visit CERN came from Ugo Amaldi, the president of TERA Foundation, which collaborates closely with CERN in finding ways to apply atomic research in treating cancer, especially in children, said the archbishop. In an e-mail response to questions by CNS, Cardinal Lajolo said he "gladly accepted the invitation to visit CERN because of my own interest regarding the farthest limits that astrophysical science is striving to reach with proton acceleration."

Pakistani Catholic rehabilitation center gives disabled new hope

HYDERABAD, Pakistan (CNS) -- A Catholic rehabilitation center is giving new hope to people with physical or mental disabilities. John Yousaf, living with a permanent neurological disability since sustaining a head injury in a playground fall when he was 3 years old, became a teacher and a barber with the support of the center, established by Caritas Pakistan, a Catholic relief agency. "After teaching children in primary classes during the day my regular customers call on me at my house in the evening for a haircut," Yousaf, 19, told the Asian church news agency UCA News. He is one of 42 disabled young people ranging in age from 3 to 22 supported by Hayat-e-Nau -- new life in the Urdu language -- the only daycare rehabilitation center in the Hyderabad district of Sindh province. Launched in 1997, the center is one of 16 similar projects throughout the country. Hayat-e-Nau offers formal education for 23 younger patients. Older patients, such as Yousaf, are provided with free medication at home.

Church demands government end violent protests in Kashmir valley

NEW DELHI (CNS) -- Church officials in the Kashmir Valley say the government should intervene to end violent protests resulting from the rape and murder of two women, allegedly by security forces. "Justice has to be done" for the victims' families, Divine Word Father Babu Joseph, spokesman for the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, said June 10. The Kashmir Valley, in the northern part of Jammu and Kashmir state, has witnessed several violent protests since May 30 after the bodies of two women were found near a stream in Shopian district. Autopsies on Nilofar Ahmad and her sister-in-law Asiya Jan reportedly confirmed they were raped before they were murdered. Father Joseph said the church wants the government "to take steps to restore peace in the area as early as possible." Violent protests and strikes began after the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, an alliance of political parties seeking secession for Kashmir, accused Indian security forces of the crime.

Understanding Bible requires faith, intelligence, pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- Discovering the truth contained in the Bible about God and about each human person requires attentive reading and scholarship as well as a constant willingness to change one's life, Pope Benedict XVI said. "God gave us the Scriptures to teach us," the pope said June 10 at his weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square. Reviewing the teaching of John Scotus Erigena, a ninth-century Irish theologian and philosopher, Pope Benedict said Erigena insisted on the fact that the only way to understand the Bible fully was with an approach that relied on intelligence and prayer at the same time and that the final result was not understanding, but contemplation. An expert on the writings of the early Christian theologians of the East, Erigena said the purpose of the Bible is to help the human person "remember that which was impressed on his heart at the moment he was created in the image and likeness of God," an understanding of God later clouded over by original sin, the pope said. "The words of the Holy Scriptures purify our reason, which is somewhat blind, and help us remember that which we bear in our hearts as images of God," Pope Benedict said. For Erigena, the pope said, a Christian has "the obligation to continue to seek the truth until one reaches an experience of silent adoration of God."

Polish archbishop urges people to keep late pontiff's letters private

WARSAW, Poland (CNS) -- A Polish archbishop has urged people with letters from John Paul II not to publish them out of respect for the late pontiff. "If such letters are somewhere in the family, let's keep them as a great sacredness, a kind of souvenir. Let's not put them in print," Archbishop Jozef Zycinski of Lublin said. "Publishing papal letters is a sign of narcissism, a wish to be noticed. It suggests the Holy Father showed special trust in me by discussing particular problems in his letters. We can do without this," the archbishop said on Lublin's Radio eR. The archbishop was reacting to controversy over the publication of the late pontiff's correspondence with a Polish psychiatrist, Wanda Poltawska, with whom the former pope enjoyed a 58-year friendship. Speaking to the radio station, Archbishop Zycinski said the book had caused "an atmosphere of conjectures, insinuations and sharp polemics." "The pope tried to treat all his letter writers with respect. He never rebuked them or said what they'd written was immature or unserious," said Archbishop Zycinski, whose statement was carried June 8 by Poland's Gazeta Wyborcza daily.

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