



BRIEFS



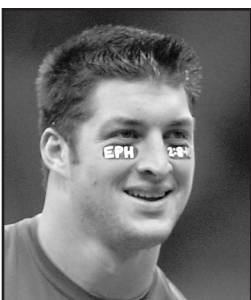
U.S. PROFESSOR AND FAMILY MEET POPE AT THE VATICAN — Pope Benedict XVI greets John Mortensen, his wife, Beth, and their four children during a private audience in Clementine Hall at the Vatican Jan. 28. Mortensen, an associate professor of theology and philosophy at Wyoming Catholic College in Lander, Wyo., received the Prize of the Pontifical Academies Jan. 27 for his thesis on the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas. (CNS photo by L'Osservatore Romano via Catholic Press Photo)

Wyoming theologian honored as pope encourages Catholic scholars

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — A young theologian at a new Catholic college in Wyoming received a papal award for his outstanding research on the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas. John Mortensen, associate professor of theology and philosophy at Wyoming Catholic College in Lander, Wyo., received the Prize of the Pontifical Academies for his thesis "Understanding Analogy in Aquinas" at a ceremony Jan. 27. The 34-year-old U.S. scholar also joined members of the seven pontifical academies Jan. 28 for an audience with Pope Benedict XVI, who encouraged Catholic scholars to model their work on that of St. Thomas Aquinas, who used faith and reason to respond creatively to new questions. Speaking at the ceremony where Mortensen was awarded the prize and a \$28,000 stipend, Archbishop Gianfranco Ravasi, president of the Pontifical Council for Culture, said the pope's decision to give him the prize is a "testimony that theology is not only for clerics, but is also being developed by and for laypersons." Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, Vatican secretary of state, who presented the prize in the pope's name Jan. 27, said Mortensen's doctoral thesis was recognized for its "beauty and elegance" in explaining difficult, significant and important aspects of Aquinas' writings. Mortensen wrote the thesis while earning his doctorate in 2006 at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome.

Pro-life ad featuring college quarterback to air during Super Bowl

NEW YORK (CNS) — An ad scheduled to air on CBS during the network's broadcast of the Feb. 7 Super Bowl has generated criticism from groups such as the National Organization for Women because of its pro-life message. The 30-second spot will feature recent University of Florida graduate Tim Tebow, the Gators' star quarterback who graduated in December. The 2007 Heisman Trophy winner led his team to victory in the Sugar Bowl Jan. 1. Sponsored by Focus on the Family, a Christian advocacy group based in



Colorado Springs, Colo., the ad reportedly will highlight Tebow's mother, Pam, who decided against medical advice not to abort him. Pam suffered from a dangerous infection during a mission trip to the Philippines, and doctors recommended that she terminate her pregnancy, fearing she might die in childbirth or the child might be stillborn. A spokesman for the organization said the theme of the ad is "Celebrate Family, Celebrate Life," but he would not comment on the content of the ad. Several women's groups have complained to CBS about the ad, urging that it not air, but the network released a statement Jan. 26 saying it was standing behind the ad. The network said it has revised its policies on advocacy ads in recent years as have other media outlets. NOW and other women's groups, such as the Women's Media Center, an organization that says it works "to make women visible and powerful in the media," have called the ad divisive and inappropriate for the setting.

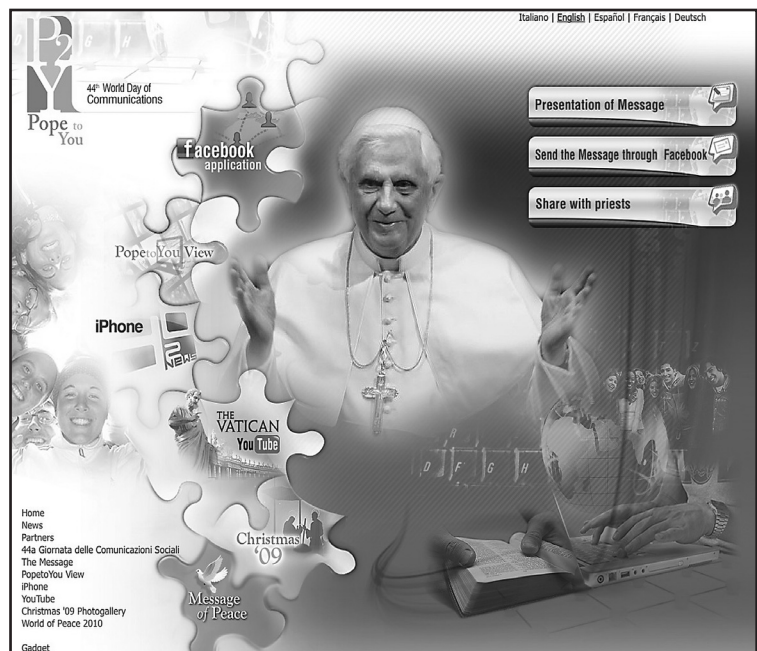
Canadian bishops condemn trafficking expected at Olympics

OTTAWA (CNS) — Members of the Canadian bishops' justice and peace commission have called for prayers for victims of human trafficking, noting that they expect it to be a problem at the Feb. 12-28 Olympics in Vancouver, British Columbia. A pastoral letter issued Jan. 26 said major sporting events often see "systems put in place to satisfy the demand for paid sex." "As pastors of the Catholic Church in Canada, we denounce human trafficking in all its forms, whether it is intended for forced labor (domestic, farm or factory work) or for sexual exploitation (whether it be prostitution, pornography, forced marriages, strip clubs or other)," the bishops wrote. "We invite the faithful to become aware of this violation of human rights and the trivialization of concerns about prostitution." The bishops urged Catholics to become aware of human trafficking, so "we can share in the suffering of the victims and change the behaviors and mentalities that foster institutionalized violence in this new form of slavery."

Archbishop praises Knights for their part in building culture of life

NEW YORK (CNS) — Jesus can change the most stubborn of hearts from the culture of death to the culture of life, Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan of New York told hundreds of Knights of Columbus assembled at St. Patrick's Cathedral Jan 17 for the annual pro-life Mass of their New York state council. He welcomed more than 600 Knights of Columbus, Knights and Ladies of the Holy Sepulcher, Dames of Malta, members of the Constantinian Order of St. George and the Sisters of Life. He said the Mass was an annual "gathering in a spirit of reparation and recommitment ... on the Sunday prior to the anniversary of the tragic Supreme Court decision allowing the taking of the fragile life of the baby in the womb." Archbishop Dolan followed 175 caped, robed and plume-hatted Knights in the processional. To the strains of "The Church's One Foundation," he passed under their raised swords on his way to the main altar. In his homily, Archbishop Dolan called Jesus the greatest teacher who ever lived. He described Jesus' first miracle, changing water into wine at the wedding feast of Cana, as a teaching occasion. "Jesus came to transform, to change and to convert," he said.

From the Vatican...



VIEW OF HOMEPAGE OF VATICAN WEB SITE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE — This is a screen capture of the homepage of the Vatican's Web site for young people, www.pope2you.net. A link on the site enables young people to send Pope Benedict XVI's recent communications day message to their pastors. The pope's message urges priests to take advantage of digital media. (CNS photo by the Vatican)

By Catholic News Service

In a message embracing the evangelizing potential of digital media, Pope Benedict XVI asked priests around the world to use **Web sites, videos and blogs as tools of pastoral ministry**. "The world of digital communication, with its almost limitless expressive capacity, makes us appreciate all the more St. Paul's exclamation: 'Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel,'" the pope said in his message for the 2010 celebration of **World Communications Day**. "Priests stand at the threshold of a new era: As new technologies create deeper forms of relationship across greater distances, they are called to respond pastorally by putting the media ever more effectively at the service of the Word," he said. The pope's message, released at the Vatican Jan. 23, was tailored to the current **Year for Priests**, focusing on the theme: "The priest and pastoral ministry in a digital world: New media at the service of the Word." World Communications Day will be celebrated May 16 in most dioceses. The pope said that while priests should not abandon traditional methods of pastoral interaction, they cannot afford to pass up the opportunities offered by **digital media**. He said "the recent, explosive growth and greater social impact of these media make them all the more important for a fruitful priestly ministry."

Calling **St. Francis of Assisi** "an authentic giant of holiness," Pope Benedict XVI said the 13th-century saint continues to be a model for living simply, respecting God's creation and entering into dialogue with people of other religions. Continuing a series of **talks about theologians and saints** of the Middle Ages at his weekly general audience Jan. 27, the pope said St. Francis offers a clear demonstration that "the saints are the best interpreters of the Gospel" for people of every age. Early in his process of conversion, the pope said, Francis was praying in the crumbling church of St. Damian in Assisi and heard Jesus speaking from the cross, telling him **to repair the church**. He carried out the work with his own hands. "The ruinous state of that church was a symbol of the dramatic, disturbing situation of the entire church of that age with its superficial faith that did not form and transform people's lives and with a clergy that was not zealous," the pope said. The church "was decomposing from within," he said. St. Francis dedicated himself to living the Gospel in a radical way, preaching its message far and wide and renewing the whole church, the pope said.

Marking **International Holocaust Remembrance Day**, Pope Benedict XVI prayed that honoring the memory of the six million Jews who died in the **Nazi death camps** would lead everyone to greater respect for each human being. "Deeply moved, we remember the innumerable victims of the blind racial and religious hatred, who suffered deportation, prison and death in those repugnant and inhuman places," he said Jan. 27 at the end of his weekly general audience. Reading his prepared remarks in both German and Italian, the pope told the estimated 5,000 people at the general audience that Jan. 27 marked the 65th anniversary of the liberation of the **Auschwitz** death camp at Oswiecim, Poland, and the rescue of "the few survivors." "That event and the testimony of the survivors revealed to the world the heinous crimes of an unheard-of cruelty that were committed in the extermination camps created by Nazi Germany," he said. Holocaust Remembrance Day, he said, is a time to "remember all the victims of those crimes, especially the planned annihilation of the Jews, and to honor those who, risking their own lives, protected the persecuted, opposing the homicidal madness."

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