

*"For as the heavens are high above the earth, so surpassing is [the Lord's] kindness toward those who fear him."*

Psalm 103:11

# Northwest Indiana Catholic

March 7, 2010

SERVING THE COUNTIES OF LAKE, LAPORTE, PORTER AND STARKE • VOLUME XXIV, NUMBER 9 • 75 CENTS

LANDMARK STUDY

## 'Accurate picture of US parish life'

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Researchers are working on an in-depth study of Catholic parish life in the United States.

The study is being conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, based at Georgetown University in Washington, on behalf of the Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership Project.

"This research will provide the U.S. church with the most comprehensive and accurate picture of parish life" since a Notre Dame study of parishes was conducted in the 1980s, said Mercy Sister Mary Bendyna, CARA's executive director and senior research associate.

"Among other things," she said the study will "examine the new models and new structures for parish ministry that are emerging as parishes are reorganized and the people

(See Study, Page 4)



Representatives from five parish choirs perform as one group at the conclusion of the St. Cecilia Choral Festival at St. John the Evangelist in St. John, Feb. 28. (Tim Hunt photo)

Heavenly voices

## For first time, church choirs 'hear each other'

ST. JOHN — One choir member from the St. Cecilia Choral Festival commented afterward, "This is what heaven must sound like."

Some 150-160 voices came together Sunday, Feb. 28 at St. John the Evangelist for the first such combining of choirs. Singing

were choirs from the host parish, as well as St. Thomas More, Munster; St. Michael, Schererville; Ss. Peter and Paul, Merrillville; and Nativity of Our Savior, Portage.

Each choir performed three or four songs, after which the five choirs combined for three final selections. Afterward, several

hundred audience members gave their choirs a standing ovation.

Laura Monteen, choir director at Ss. Peter and Paul, expressed a view shared by others. "This was really great, because we

(See Choirs, Page 4)

FOURTH IN A SEVEN-PART SERIES

## Shelter the homeless — provide sense of basic respect, dignity



Men sleep on the floor and a couch at a shelter, which is filled beyond capacity, in Tijuana, Mexico, Nov. 9. (CNS photo/David Maung)

MICHIGAN CITY — Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta is quoted as saying, "We think sometimes that poverty is only being hungry, naked and homeless. The poverty of being unwanted, unloved and uncared for is the greatest poverty."

On a cold night in February, two seemingly distinct ministries from Queen of All Saints Parish came together to reflect on how Christians are called to shelter the homeless. While they minister to different groups of people, the tie that binds is the need for respect, dignity and human connection.

Couples Sherry and Sam Pezzuto and Lynn and John Higgenbotham are part of a parish group that ministers to a local nursing home and assisted living facility.

"As Christian Catholics, we are called to be as charitable as possible to everyone we encounter," Sam Pezzuto explained. "The people we visit have lost their homes in a very real sense. They're homeless and displaced, not by choice but because this is where they must be now."

The care ministry visits residents weekly, offering a friendly smile, a willing ear, prayer and the Eucharist. "We also try to extend ourselves to people of any faith who might feel shut off from the world," Sam continued. "We want to bring them a sense of belonging and a spirituality they might need, especially at this time in their lives."

On the other hand, Rick Richards and Margaret Esper work with a community group that provides shelter nightly for up to 25 homeless men at rotating churches in the area. The program provides a warm evening meal, a pad to sleep on with a blanket and pillow and breakfast before the men are ushered out again at 7 a.m.

"We're not there to preach but to help," he said. "We don't do it out of pity but because we want to see them get back on their feet."

In spite of their dire circumstances, in Richards' experience, the men they serve still struggle to maintain as much pride as they can.

(See Shelter, Page 8)