

# Faith

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## Journey through doubt can renew faith



Sastry Putcha

My View

My recent Tallahassee Democrat column "Faith and doubt work in tandem,"

Jan. 15) has drawn many comments from friends belonging to all the major religions and included an atheist and an agnostic.

A common theme emerged in these responses: While doubt haunts everyone at sometime or other in life, it is a journey that enriches one's outlook regardless of the outcome. Another theme was whether faith and doubt go around in an endless cycle or if they can be transcended. A lot of folks deal with these issues and they spurred this column, starting with my own "doubt-journey."

During my middle-school days, I used to witness the unfaltering faith of older aunts. They didn't eat food on any day without witnessing the sun. That was their worship of their sun-god residing up above — in the sky.

But severe problems occurred during the rainy season when the sun refused to show up seemingly for days. The aunts lived on the edge of starvation.

As youngsters we took turns to catch a slice of the sun playing hide and seek relentlessly with the clouds and rushed to hand it over to the starving aunts. We shared their faith enthusiastically and unquestioningly.

Journey continued. The days of high school arrived. The science teachers taught us from textbooks and startled us about the solar system, the planets and the sun. One teacher even said that the planets revolve

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# Say 'thank you' to a servant of the church



GLENN BEIL/Democrat files

Bishop John H. Ricard has made frequent visits to town while head of the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee. He's shown here after celebrating Mass in December 2005 at the historic San Luis Mission Church.

## Reception will honor retiring bishop

By Sharon Kant-Rauch  
DEMOCRAT FAITH EDITOR

**B**ishop John H. Ricard, who has been head of the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee for the past 14 years, is retiring due to health reasons. On Sunday, people in Tallahassee will be able to wish him well during a reception at the Co-Cathedral of St. Thomas More.

"He is a humble and wise person, a really godly man," said the Rev. Michael Tugwell, the pastor of the Co-Cathedral, who hosts the bishop during his frequent visits to Tallahassee. "His strong leadership and his willingness to be present will be missed."

Ricard, 71, was born in Baton Rouge and became a priest in 1968. He later earned a master's degree from Tulane University in New Orleans and a doctorate of philosophy from the Catholic University of America in Washington D.C. In 1997, he became

bishop of the Panhandle diocese overseeing 48 parishes, nine missions, seven elementary schools and two high schools. Catholics in the area number more than 63,000.

Ricard, who suffered a stroke in December 2009, helped open John Paul II High School in 2001, something other bishops had talked about but he was able to accomplish, Tugwell said. Ricard was also a big supporter of the Florida Catholic Conference, which lobbies against the death penalty and for pro-life causes, and the Christmas Connection, which provides food, clothing and other services to hundreds of people each year.

On the international level, Ricard has been the chair of Catholic Relief Services and the Catholic Bishops' Office of International Peace and Justice.

He has visited Tallahassee about two times a month for years, attending confirma-

### IF YOU GO

■ **What:** Reception for retiring Bishop John Ricard

■ **Where:** Co-Cathedral of St. Thomas More, 900 W. Tennessee St.

■ **When:** After the 10 a.m. and 11:45 a.m. Masses on Sunday

■ **Details:** Call 222-9630

tions, graduations and special events, such as the yearly December Mass at Mission San Luis or the blessing of the Christmas Connection warehouse.

He attended two such events at John Paul II high school recently, said school principal Sister Ellen Cronan.

"He's gracious and generous with his time," Cronan said. "He's been a positive influence on the teens, giving them support and encouragement and providing an example of leadership."

The Rev. Richard Schamber, a priest at

Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church, fondly remembers the bishop because he received the sacrament of confirmation from Ricard when he was 14. A decade later, Ricard ordained him.

Schamber still remembers the homily Ricard gave at the confirmation service about three people of the Catholic faith and how each was a unique witness for Christ.

"Nearly 14 years later, I remember the points from that homily," Schamber said.

Schamber said he would miss the stability that Ricard provided the diocese, which has had four bishops since 1975.

Tugwell said Ricard's hardworking, generous spirit also will be missed. He hopes the reception on Sunday is well-attended.

"I hope a lot of people come and say, 'Thank you' for his contribution to our area," he said. "He was such a servant of the church."

## News & Notes

■ SPECIAL EVENTS

### Church hosts ancestry workshop

"Family History Fair: Bringing Families Together," a workshop to locate and document ancestors, will be held from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. today at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 312 Stadium Drive. A free lunch is included. Questions can be directed to the Family History Center director at fhcdirector.tally@yahoo.com.

**Conference is coming up:** The Pensacola-Tallahassee Diocesan Council of Catholic Women will hold its 36th annual conference from April

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## Faith Calendar

### TODAY

**Learn to Share Your Faith Effectively Seminar:** 9 a.m.-1 p.m. \$12.50 for personal growth or \$25 for 0.25 credit. Center for Biblical Studies, 1560 Capital Circle, N.W., Suite 6. 514-3777.

**Oils of the Bible Seminar:** Experience their scents and discover their uses then and now. Bring Bible, notebook. 9 a.m.-1 p.m. \$12.50 for personal growth or \$25 for 0.25 credit. Center for Biblical Studies, 1560 Capital Circle N.W., Suite 6. 514-3777.

### SUNDAY

**Betty Rittman Missionary Society:** Annual Evening in White. 5-8 p.m. Steward Temple AME Church, 85 Woodward Road, Mount Pleasant. (850) 627-1109.

**Don Richardson Missions Seminar:** Noted missionary and author of "Peace Child" and "Eternity in their Hearts." Free; \$2 for course syllabus. 6 p.m. Calvary Chapel, 8614 Mahan Drive. 514-1927.

**Family and Friends Day:** 11 a.m. Flipper Chapel AME Church, 708

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