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Forecast, F8

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In surprise meeting, pope hears from sex-abuse victims

After saying Mass before 46,000 at a stadium, Pope Benedict XVI speaks and prays with a small group of victims of pedophile priests.

BY JOHN E. MULLIGAN
JOURNAL WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON—After his third call in as many days for the healing of those damaged as children by the “evil” of sexual abuse by priests, Pope Benedict XVI yesterday made an extraordinary gesture of reconciliation himself: He met and prayed privately with several of the victims.

The pontiff gathered at least five victims, middle-aged men and women, at the papal ambassador’s home, along with Cardinal Sean P. O’Malley, the archbishop of Boston. News stories about the

priestly abuse in that diocese spurred a church scandal in 2002 that eventually spread across the nation, sapped the finances of many dioceses — including Providence — and plunged the American church into the worst crisis of its 200-year history.

Three of the participants spoke emotionally about the meeting in an interview on CNN, each saying that he or she drew hope and some optimism from it.

“I basically told him I was an altar boy in the sacristy praying to God... and it wasn’t just sexual abuse, it was spiritual abuse,”

said Bernie McDaid of Lynn, Mass., who was one of more than a dozen parishioners of the late Rev. Joseph Birmingham, who sexually abused boys in parishes outside Boston between 1961 and his death in 1989.

“I told him,” McDaid said, “he had a cancer in his church” that he needed to address.

Olan Horne, another Boston-area victim, said the 25-minute meeting was unscripted and that they were allowed to tell the pope anything they wanted. He said he didn’t think he needed another hollow apology from the church, but that the pope

SEE **POPE, A9**



AP / LAWRENCE JACKSON

Pope Benedict XVI meets with Saman Hussain in Washington yesterday, part of his effort to establish an interreligious dialogue with members of other faiths.

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Extra: What does the pope’s visit mean to you? To respond, and for the latest on the pope’s visit, and live streaming video, go to projo.com

This year’s graduating class, the largest in U.S. history, has met with an extra dose of disappointment in its quest for first-choice schools



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / BOB THAYER

Emily Arthur, 17, of Barrington, hoped to attend the University of Delaware, her first choice. But with a record number of high-school graduates this year, schools are rejecting students they would have admitted in previous years. Emily will be attending URI in September.

Getting crowded out of college

BY JENNIFER D. JORDAN
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

A sense of dread hit Emily Arthur the moment she saw the thin envelope waiting for her at home this month.

The Barrington High School senior knew it contained the words she least wanted to read: “On behalf of the Committee, I am sorry to tell you that we will not be offering you admission into the University of Delaware.”

“My heart just dropped,” said Emily, 17, “because that was like my number-one school.”

Emily, as countless graduating seniors before her, had pinned her hopes on getting into her first choice for college — and her teachers and guidance counselor

told her she had the qualifications to get there.

Her student profile seemed to fit the bill. She’s a good student with B+ grades and decent, if not great, SAT scores. Her application also included a strong essay and varied extracurricular activities — varsity volleyball, photographer for the school newspaper, women’s choir.

Perhaps another year, Emily would have been accepted to the University of Delaware. But Emily, through a fluke of demographics, is part of the largest group of graduating seniors in U.S. history — almost 3.4 million. For the high school Class of 2008, getting into college — almost any college — has never been harder.

The University of Delaware told Emily

that nearly 25,000 students applied for 3,550 freshman spots, making it “far and away the largest applicant pool in our history,” as well as the most competitive “as measured by high school grade point averages, class rank and SAT and ACT scores.”

This year marks the high point of 14 consecutive years of steady growth in the number of high school graduates nationwide, according to the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, which monitors and predicts demographic trends. A gradual decline in numbers is expected to begin in the coming school year, falling to a low point in 2013-14, before slowly rising again, the commis-

SEE **COLLEGE, A6**

Stress takes heavy toll on Afghan, Iraq vets

The independent study reports that nearly 20 percent of the troops who have served in the current conflicts are suffering symptoms of depression or posttraumatic stress.

BY JULIAN E. BARNES
LOS ANGELES TIMES

WASHINGTON — The latest and most comprehensive study of veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars has concluded that nearly one in every five veterans is suffering from depression or stress disorders and that many are not getting adequate care.

The study shows that mental disorders are more prevalent and lasting than previously known, surfacing belatedly and lingering after troops have been discharged into civilian and family life.

An estimated 300,000 veterans among the nearly 1.7 million who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan are battling depression or post-traumatic stress disorder. More than half of those people, according to the study conducted by the Rand Corp., are slipping through the cracks in the bureaucratic system, going without necessary treatment.

SEE **TROOPS, A4**

For the times they are a-changin’ at folk festival

This summer’s lineup of artists stretches traditional definitions of the musical genre.

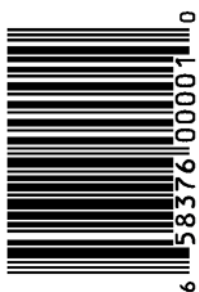
BY BRYAN ROURKE
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Folk music will be broadly defined at this summer’s Newport Folk Festival. The three-day lineup of performers announced yesterday may cause some fans to say “Huh?”

Some of the performers don’t seem so folksy. Celebrated trop-rockers Jimmy Buffett, who made “Margaritaville” his anthem, will perform; so will the blues rockers The Black Crowes, and the reggae tag team of Stephen and Damian Marley, sons of the late, great Bob Marley.

Marley’s reggae music is really Jamaican folk music, maintains Jay Sweet, editor of *Paste*, a music magazine, who’s coproducing the 49-year-old festival for the first time this year. “Our festival is not the American folk festival,” he

SEE **FESTIVAL, A6**



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DISPUTE OVER DEBATE

One day after a debate between Democratic presidential candidates Hillary Rodham Clinton and Barack Obama, it’s the moderators, Charles Gibson and George Stephanopoulos of ABC News, who come in for the most intense criticism. **A5**

MANNY SHOWS HIS METTLE

Manny Ramirez hits two homers off Yankee starter Mike Mussina to lead the Red Sox to a 7-5 victory in Yankee Stadium. **D1**

STAYING ALIVE

The Boston Bruins avoid elimination from the first round of the Stanley Cup playoffs by beating the Montreal Canadiens, 5-1; the Bruins now trail in the Eastern Conference quarterfinals 3 games to 2. **D3**



MAN GUILTY OF KILLING 8-YEAR-OLD

Joshua Davis, of Woonsocket, pleads guilty to charges of kidnapping, molesting and murdering 8-year-old Savannah Smith in 2006. **B1**