**MERCY SENTENCE**

**Spirituality at Carville**

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Life in prison was the sentence they received even though they had not committed murder, treason or robbery. Their “crime” was having a disease which medical science now shows that 95 percent of the world population is not susceptible to.

And for thousands, that “sentence” was served at a leprosarium in Carville, now known as the National Hansen’s Disease Museum.

Known by the name leprosy, Hansen’s disease has been feared and misunderstood throughout history. Most people’s knowledge of the disease stems from biblical references, in which those who had it were banished from their community and loved ones and labeled “unclean.”

That stigma continued to more recent times in Louisiana.

**Parish to open house for trafficking victims**

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Human trafficking has become, as one woman religious puts it, a form of “modern slavery.”

Girls averaging 12 to 13 years old are peddled like human commodities pimped out as prostitutes to eager pedophiles. The girls, whose main concerns should be fighting acne and making weekend plans, live on the street or in cars, and if they are lucky enough perhaps in seedy motels. They are often physically abused as well as sexually abused, and, according to law enforcement officials, likely involved in drug abuse.

And when their pimps deem the young girls too old, they are simply sold to another predator, continuing the cycle. There was the case of one stepfather who began sexually abusing his stepdaughter when she was 12 years old and eventually sold her when she turned 15 because, quite simply, she was too old for him.

“It is the modern slavery of our era,” said Sister Norma Nunez HSM. “(The girls) are being deceived and exploited. I don’t wish for anyone to do that.”

Perhaps equally as disturbing as the human exploitation is...
As May approaches, many churches are making plans for the crowning of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Father Wilfred Knoblock, then pastor at St. Jules Church in Belle Rose, is shown with St. Jules students during a May Crowning in 1946. Photo provided by the Archives Department of the Diocese of Baton Rouge.
By Rachele Smith
The Catholic Commentator

At a time when one out of every two American marriages ends in divorce, when television and technology replace family conversation, and when personal needs and goals are somehow idealized more than giving selflessly to another, several local Catholic lay ministers contend Pope Francis’ recent document “Amoris Laetitia” or “the Joy of Love” was timed perfectly.

The more than 250-page apostolic exhortation, released April 8, comes at a time “when there are significant threats to the institution and the reality of marriage and the family,” said Barry Schoedel, associate director of the diocese’s Office of Evangelization and Catechesis.

Signed on March 19, the Solemnity of Saint Joseph, who is the patron saint of families and the Diocese of Baton Rouge, the apostolic exhortation draws together the results of the two synods on the family assembled by Pope Francis in 2014 and 2015. The document also cites letters and teachings of past pontiffs, including St. John Paul II, and draws references from other sources, such as various episcopal conferences from around the world and the writings of significant historical figures, including Martin Luther King and author and 20th century psychoanalysis Erich Fromm. In addition, Pope Francis uses the document to reflect his own catechesis on the family, even using great detail at times, such as discussing disciplinary and moral and ethical formation of children.

“I see it (the document) as two-fold. It’s both theological in that there is reflection on the deeper Christian meaning of family and marriage, and there is the practical or you could say pastoral part of how to support people to realize and live out the vocations of family and married life in the fullest sense,” Schoedel said.

Rather than establishing new rules or canonical laws for the institutions of family and married life, Schoedel said the document reaffirms church teachings, family life, sees the “Joy of Love” as an opportunity for the church to “restate the beauty of marriage and family life” based on Scripture and church teaching through the centuries.

But that’s just the beginning.

“The pope is also exhorting theologians, pastors and lay leaders to continuously think through how we can apply the church’s teaching to real life situations people deal with today.

“He’s not setting hard and fast rules. He’s asking, ‘Let’s do more thinking; let’s do more discussing; let’s be open to the Holy Spirit to see how we can apply the church’s teaching to contemporary situations,’ ” said Ducote.

Some of those situations, however, can be “sticky,” according to Ducote.

Topics such as divorce and remarriage, which Ducote emphasized the pope clearly stated does not mean excommunication, and others, including annulments, reproduction and technology and same-sex attraction mean the church has “to walk with people” wherever they are and help them on these difficult paths, he explained.

Ducote noted the pope’s approach, which is clear in the document, is to include rather than exclude, offering a welcome to all.

“The fact that we are imperfect is not a disgrace,” said Ducote.

“The church offers us an ideal, and while we strive for that, God’s grace helps us deal with those situations, even if it is imperfectly,” he said.

Jason Romero, director of Christian formation at Our Lady of Mercy Church in Baton Rouge, also read the document as a summary of church teaching on marriage and family life.

He was most impressed with the practical ways Pope Francis offered for family members to interact and highlighted the pontiff’s call to use three words on a daily basis, “please,” “thank you” and “sorry.”

“The pope takes the church’s teaching and simplifies it in a way, so as you read it, you can see his personality,” Romero said.

“He talks about how growing up in family is not always easy. He defines it in a theological way but it is very practical, like he’s giving advice to your average family. He shows how the family is not only the bedrock to the church but also to society as well,” added Romero.

Romero’s colleague, Amelia Gallagher, director of youth formation at Our Lady of Mercy, believes the pope’s words are hopeful and can encourage young people to have a deeper connection with Christ.

“Thirty of them are trying to determine their vocation, but whatever vocation is best is the one God is calling you to,” she said.

Gallagher explained that some youth believe a religious vocation is somehow higher or better than another, yet “God can call you to married life, and if he does, you can still reach the heights of mystical union. He (Pope Francis) says that in this document.”

For Gallagher, reiterating that there was nothing new about church teaching in the document is important, but there was also something she especially found inspiring.

“He (Pope Francis) kicks off his apostolic exhortation by diving into Scripture. He really upholds our tradition and the sacredness of Scripture,” said Gallagher, adding with a smile, “Yes, go Pope Francis!”

Pope Francis embraces Humberto and Claudia Gomez, who are married civilly but not in the church, during a meeting with families at the Victor Manuel Reyna Stadium in Tuxtla Gutierrez, Mexico, Feb. 15.

Pope Francis’ post-synodal apostolic exhortation on the family, “Amoris Laetitia” (“the Joy of Love”), was released April 8 with reaction from Catholic lay leaders from around the world, including locally. The exhortation is the concluding document of the 2014 and 2015 synods of bishops on the family. Photo provided by Paul Haring | Catholic News Service

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Bishop Muench announces pastoral appointments

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Bishop Robert W. Muench announced the following pastoral appointments effective July 1.

• Father Paul Gros, pastor at St. Philomena in Labadieville. Father Gros will continue as pastor at St. Anne in Napoleonville and Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Plattenville.

• Father Andrew Merrick, vocational director and parochial vicar at Christ the King and Catholic Center in Baton Rouge. Father Merrick’s appointment as vocational director is effective for four years.

• Father Matthew Dupré, director of vocations and seminarians for a two-year term. He will remain as pastor at St. Patrick in Baton Rouge.

• Father Matthew Graham, administrator at St. Elizabeth in Paincourtville and St. Jules in Belle Rose.

• Father Juel Kandulna IMS, parochial vicar at St. Philomena, St. Anne and Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

• Father David Allen, temporary administrator at St. Pius in Baton Rouge and St. Isidore in Baker. Father Allen will continue as pastor at Holy Family Church in Port Allen.

Bishop Muench also appointed Lisette Borné associate director of vocations and seminarians.

Father Gros, a Catholic High School graduate who was ordained by Bishop Muench in 2009, has been pastor at St. Anne and Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary since July 1, 2012. He is also dean of the Southwest Deanery and chaplain at Ascension Catholic Regional High School.

He has served as parochial vicar at Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Gramercy, St. Michael Church in Convent, St. Joseph in Paulina, Christ the King and Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Denham Springs.

Father Merrick, a graduate of Catholic High of Pointe Coupee and ordained in 2008 by Bishop Muench, has been pastor at St. Elizabeth and St. Jules since July 1, 2012. He was also administrator at both parishes from 2011-12.

He served as parochial vicar at St. Thomas More Church in Baton Rouge, Christ the King and Immaculate Conception.

Father Dupré, a Catholic High graduate who was ordained in 1998 by Archbishop Alfred C. Hughes, has been serving as pastor at St. Patrick and chaplain at Catholic High since 2014. He was appointed director of the Office of Vocations on July 1, 2012.

Father Dupré has served on the College of Consultants from 2009-14, pastor at St. John the Baptist Church in Brusly, administrator at St. Joseph the Worker Church in Pierre Part and St. Theresa of Avila Church in Gonzales and parochial vicar at Holy Rosary in St. Amant, Christ the King and St. Jean Vianney in Baton Rouge.

Father Kandulna was ordained in Jharkhand, India in 1997 and is currently parochial vicar at St. Louis King of France in Baton Rouge. He also served as parochial vicar at Holy Rosary.

Father Graham was ordained May 30 and has been serving the past year as parochial vicar at Christ the King.

Norwegian bishop: To avoid same-sex marriage, no more civil weddings

WARSAW, Poland (CNS) – A Norwegian bishop said the country’s clergy will no longer officiate at civil weddings, after the predominant Lutheran Church’s governing synod voted to conduct gay marriages in Norway.

Bishop Bernt Eidsvig of Oslo told Catholic News Service that he would have to seek permission from the Vatican, but added, “It’s clear we must distinguish our own church marriages from others.”

“This is a matter of liturgy, so it doesn’t necessarily reflect broader change in our society’s moral values. But politicians may now get aggressive toward churches who resist these weddings, so the best option is for us to stop conducting marriages on the state’s behalf.”

He said Norwegian Catholics “hope to maintain good relations with the Lutheran Church,” but said they would “make it clear we don’t understand their decision and hope they’ll still reconsider it.”

Bishop Eidsvig told CNS April 21 that many Norwegians remained strongly opposed to same-sex marriage, which has been legal since 2009. He said Lutheran churches in Africa, Asia and Latin America had also “strongly condemned” the synod decision.

“My own reaction is one of sorrow and disappointment, and we can foresee the longer-term consequences for interchurch contacts here,” Bishop Eidsvig said.

The Lutheran synod voted overwhelmingly to approve same-sex marriages at its annual conference, after rejecting a similar proposal in 2014. Lutheran clergy who oppose same-sex marriage will be allowed to opt out.

Bishop Eidsvig and three Protestant Norwegian leaders sent a statement to Norway’s Yrt Land daily, saying same-sex marriage violated “not only the Christian understanding of marriage, but also the historic and universal view of marriage.” The statement said the introduction of separate civil and religious ceremonies would protect other churches from “increased pressure to consecrate same-sex couples.”

Catholics make up a small minority of the 5.2 million inhabitants of Norway.

Pope Francis will visit Lund, Sweden, Oct. 31 for an ecumenical service with Lutheran World Federation members to mark the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation.
Funeral Mass years after death/Destination weddings?

Q You noted in a recent column that the Mass is “the most powerful prayer that can be offered on a deceased person’s behalf.” That comment brought back a wave of sorrow for my wife and me. Ten years ago, her father died after a lengthy and progressive illness. Due to the fact that we were living out of state at the time, and worsened by some unresolved hard feelings toward their father by other surviving family members, Dad was shuttled into a grave at a veterans’ cemetery before my wife and I could intervene.

Despite the fact that he was a lifelong practicing Catholic, he was buried without even a public wake, and worse still, without the Catholic funeral Mass he richly deserved. So my question is this: Can he still have a full funeral Mass, not just a memorial Mass, celebrated in his name even though he is already buried, even without the presence of his remains? (If so, I would contact our family’s original pastor.)

It would be an opportunity for Dad’s soul to enjoy a proper requiem, and longtime friends a chance to prayerfully ask God’s graces on Dad’s behalf, an opportunity they were deprived of (and shocked by) at the time of his passing. (City of origin withheld)

A Yes, you could have a Mass celebrated for your father-in-law even now, 10 years after his death. Technically, I suppose, it would be called a memorial Mass, but in most respects it would be similar to a funeral Mass, except that the body would not be present. (And these days, with cremations becoming more frequent, that is already the case at many funeral Masses.)

I would suggest that you contact your family’s pastor and see if he would be willing to celebrate a separate, special Mass for your father-in-law. (In other words, you would not simply add the deceased’s name to the other intentions at one of the regularly scheduled parish Masses.)

You may want to announce the Mass in a newspaper notice or by contacting friends and family directly. Perhaps you would want to call it an anniversary memorial Mass for your loved one. At the Mass, you might consider having a small table with your father-in-law’s picture and a bouquet of flowers. (That table could be placed either where people first enter the church or, if the priest is willing, in front near the altar where the casket would ordinarily go.)

Your question, and your sadness and lingering regret, remind me how important it is, at the time of a death, for a family to set aside differences and join in planning funeral rites that best honor the deceased and respect his wishes. Clearly, your father-in-law would have wanted a funeral Mass.

Q What is the church’s position about “destination weddings,” which may or may not be performed by a priest? If two previously unmarried Catholics in good standing are married in such a non-church ceremony, will the church accept that marriage? (Schenectady, New York)

A My take on “destination weddings” (Cabo San Lucas seems the current rage) is that they are fraught with complication both from the religious point of view as well as the civil.

To answer your question simply, two Catholics must be married by a Catholic priest or deacon. Sometimes an “exotic” wedding venue will assure a couple that the venue will find a member of the clergy to officiate, but whether that will turn out to be a Catholic priest or deacon in good standing is always uncertain. (More often than not, it will not be a Catholic at all.)

Further, there is the matter of securing the proper license from a foreign municipal authority and assuring that the marriage will be recognized in the United States. On more than one occasion in the recent past, I have persuaded Catholic couples bent on a destination wedding to be married beforehand in a quiet ceremony in our church parish with me as the celebrant and with a marriage license from our own city hall.

Following that, they can leave and party in the tropics with their friends and family, confident that their marriage is recognized as official by the church and by the state.

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Infant’s health journey a confirmation of faith for Port Allen family

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Sisters often experience a double joy when doing something together, such as shopping, basking on the beach, watching a movie or eating their favorite pizza. For Brooke LeBlanc Verzwyvelt and Lauren LeBlanc Bahlinger, being pregnant for the first time with a due date one week apart was bliss beyond the first time with a due date February.”

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Verzwyvelt had a fairly smooth pregnancy. However, she didn’t expect the medical complications her son would face.

On Jan. 21, Verzwyvelt endured 24 hours of labor before Rhett was born by cesarean section on Jan. 22. Rhett seemed to be doing fine the first couple of days, although he had not had a bowel movement.

He was discharged the Monday after his delivery. That night, Rhett threw up bile and was in pain.

“He was not doing everything a baby normally does,” said Verzwyvelt. She brought him to the pediatrician, and it was discovered that Rhett had a malrotation of the bowels and other intestinal issues.

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Rhett’s story has been a faith lesson to Holy Family parishioners. The Scripture passage came up in a recent Lenten retreat, and LeBlanc shared her personal testimony of how God works with people during difficult times.

“It touched people from the congregation to hear Rhett’s story,” LeBlanc said. “It’s been a real faith journey.”

Rhett was discharged from the hospital after two weeks.

“It was so exciting. It was also a little scary,” said Verzwyvelt, remembering that Rhett had come home with them before only to be in the hospital the next day. “But we couldn’t wait to get home and learn how to be his parents.”

Rhett was back at the hospital on Feb. 11, this time to meet his cousin, Wyatt. Just as the sisters had planned, Rhett and Wyatt were baptized at Holy Family on April 3, Divine Mercy Sunday. It was a big family event, as some relatives even came in from California. Verzwyvelt was Wyatt’s godmother and Bahlinger was Rhett’s godmother.

The cousins have been spending a lot of time together, and Verzwyvelt said they are at that stage of beginning to notice each other. Their mothers have lots of plans for them, such as joint birthday parties and celebrating other milestones together: “They are going to be inseparable,” said Verzwyvelt. “They will do everything together.”

The news from the doctors was grim for (Brook) Verzwyvelt and her husband, Richard. The surgery would be long and complicated, and Rhett would have “a really long road” to take in his life.

She sent a picture of the passage by text message to her daughter, who was with Rhett in the ICU after surgery. Verzwyvelt’s faith was bolstered.

There was also the constant support of their church parish home, Holy Family Church in Port Allen.

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Planned Parenthood defunding highlights pro-life legislation

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

The potential defunding of Planned Parenthood was one of four pro-life bills the Louisiana House Committee on Health & Welfare advanced to the full House on April 20.

Also unanimously passed by the committee on what was declared “Pro-Life Day” by Louisiana Right to Life were bills making it criminal to sell infant body parts or organs of a baby who was aborted, to protect unborn disabled babies and stopping dismemberment abortions.

Rep. Frank Hoffmann of West Monroe, a staunch pro-life advocate, opened the committee meeting by introducing HB 606, which would stop state funding of any organizations that perform abortions, except in the case of rape or incest or if the life of the mother is at risk. The bill is being pushed by Gov. John Bel Edwards, who as a state representative had a strong pro-life voting record.

Deanna Wallace, legislative director of Louisiana Right to Life, said Hoffmann’s bill is not technically aimed at Planned Parenthood and the organization is not mentioned in the legislation. However, she did say that if the bill is approved, then “the ball is in Planned Parenthood’s court.”

Wallace said Planned Parenthood would not be affected and would continue to receive Medicare funding unless the organization moves forward with its plans to build a large clinic in New Orleans that is projected to perform more than 2,800 abortions annually. Abortions currently are not being performed at Planned Parenthood’s Baton Rouge facility.

The New Orleans clinic has come under fire and the Claiborne Avenue location has been the site of numerous protests from pro-life supporters.

Wallace said if the clinic opens and abortions are offered and performed, “(Planned Parenthood) will be choosing to defund themselves from being able to offer actual healthcare.”

There was also much discussion surrounding HB 1019, introduced by Rep. Mike Johnson of Benton, which would ban partial birth abortions, also known as dilation and evacuation.

“D&E,” as the practice is more commonly referred to, is a practice where the physician performing the abortion extracts one body part at a time, beginning with the child’s feet.

Johnson detailed the gruesome procedure to the committee and noted “all of this takes place while the child is alive.” He went on to say the baby feels extreme pain during the procedure.

Johnson said many abortion clinics use this “barbaric procedure” because it is “cheaper than other procedures.”

Dr. Damon Cudihy of Lafayette said the bill is necessary to protect the women and children of Louisiana. He compared the procedure to the medieval torture practice of being hanged, drawn and quartered.

“Surely we can do better than that,” he said.

Cudihy said he often hears arguments that abortions are necessary to save women’s lives. But he added terminating pregnancy does not “mean we must end the child’s life.”

He said he has managed hundreds of cases to save the mother’s life, and “the number (of babies) I had to kill was zero.”

“It have never or never will intentionally kill either (mother or child),” he added.

Wallace testified that approximately 1,000 partial birth abortions are performed annually in Louisiana.


Several people also discussed the aftermath of abortion, noting that abortion does not end on the examination table.

Opponents of the bill testifying included New Orleans attorney Ellie Schilling and representatives of various organizations, including Catholics for Choice.

Johnson said the bill would not ban abortions in Louisiana but is more about setting policy.

“What do we want to stand for in Louisiana?” he asked. “Barbaric is not what we are about in the state of Louisiana.”

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“What do we want to stand for in Louisiana?” he asked. “Barbaric is not what we are about in the state of Louisiana.”

Regarding HB 1019, which would protect disabled unborn babies, Rep. Rick Edmonds of Baton Rouge said children with disabilities “are the greatest blessing you will be a part of.”

He admitted that all parents would like for their children to be born perfect and to be perfect, but “sometimes what happens is what we consider bad, not saying (children with disabilities) are bad.”

He said those children have a way of being a blessing to a family and a marriage.

“I don’t think we should take away,” he said. “Life is hard but life is also precious.”
By Richard Meek  
The Catholic Commentator

The past intersected with the present when Archbishop Alfred C. Hughes and Bishop Robert W. Muench concelebrated Mass on April 16 as part of the annual Evening at the Cathedral fundraiser at St. Joseph Cathedral. During a ceremony at the parish hall following Mass, Archbishop Hughes, who served as the bishop in the Diocese of Baton Rouge from 1993-2001, was one of five people to receive the St. Joseph's Apprentice Award. The others included Chip Landry, Angele Davis Kelley and Marino and Betty Casem. Davis Rhorer was presented the Cathedral Community Award. During his homily, Archbishop Hughes reflected with fondness on his years in the diocese and the memories of "so many Eucharists in this holy place." He thanked Bishop Muench for the bishop's invitation to participate in the liturgy, as well as Father John Carville, who served as vicar general under Archbishop Hughes and Father Michael Moroney. Father Carville, who is now retired and a columnist for The Catholic Commentator, and Father Moroney, currently the pastor at St. Alphonsus Liguori Church in Greenwell Springs, also concelebrated the Mass. Archbishop Hughes said he continues to use St. Joseph as an example of being a "good bridegroom to my spouse, the church" as well as a spiritual leader to the people "who God still invites me to serve." "Why? For our salvation," Archbishop Hughes said that he believes Pope Francis, through his words and deeds, mirrors the Good Shepherd "for us in our own time." He said that the pope's apostolic exhortation, "The Joy of Love," although lengthy, it is well worth the read. Archbishop Hughes said the pope reaffirmed the church's teaching that marriage is a union of one man and one woman while also calling for compassion for gay individuals. Additionally, the archbishop said the church is at best when instead of ostracizing divorced couples, "we accompany them" on their spiritual journey. He concluded his homily by saying the Easter season is intended to be life-changing, and that all Catholics can do things differently. "We can remember what is good," he said. "We can spread the Gospel message by living it and speaking it in a truly joyful and pervasive way." New Roads native Bishop Shelton Fabre of the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux joined Bishop Muench and Archbishop Hughes following Mass. Bishop Fabre was presented with the St. Joseph Apprentice Award in 2012. Landry, who grew up attending St. Joseph Cathedral, has been the sexton at the cathedral cemetery for more than 27 years. Kelley is a longtime public servant and respected business executive who also served as chief financial advisor to former Gov. Bobby Jindal. She also is chair of the advisory board of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge. Marion and Betty are longtime St. Joseph parishioners and active in the church parish. Rhorer, a 1974 graduate of Catholic High School, is the first and only director of the Down Development District.
The terms used to refer to the patients were the same as those used for prisoners. Families were offered for sale by the owners of those who were “brought” into the hospital. These were usually suffering from leprosy, and patient was often considered a condition that allowed for the sick to be quarantined in a selected location. A board of control was established to run the leprosy hospital. They selected Indian Camp Plantation in Carville. Patients began arriving by rail during Nov. of 1894. Soon thereafter, patients were quarantined for the rest of their lives. Located near the end of the New Orleans-Dallas Pike, Carville was considered a remote location.}

Bringing a light of hope to the leprosy, or the knowledge of how the disease was acute as the disease itself, were the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul.

The president of the control board, Dr. Isadore Dyer, had suggested that the Daughters of Charity, untrained and unready for the work of caring for the patients, were designated for the work of caring for the patients. After some consultation, the sisters accepted the mission. With spurts of enthusiasm, the sisters who had just arrived in Carville were considere within the first 24 hours of their arrival. The first chapel was built made one of the sisters quarters and measured 25 x 15.

In 1943, Hansen’s patients at Carville celebrated the coming of Christmas with the pro-£ision “The Manger Prince.”

Complications from the disease come when people delay going to the doctor, or doctors misdiagnose it because they still think of it as an ancient biblical disease. Dr. David R. Scollard, director National Hansen’s Disease Programs

Dr. David R. Scollard, Director
National Hansen’s Disease Programs

Sister Beatrice Hart, Sis-
ter Superior, who was one of the first four Daughters of Charity to arrive in Ca-
ville, wrote in a letter dated April, 1890:

To the sisters:

To remove the captive to bury the dead.

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By Rachele Smith  
The Catholic Commentator

Huddled in a group around their tour guide, about 25 Catholic school students listened intently to a description of what life was like at the nation’s first home for leprosy patients along the Mississippi River.

Yet, even as the students, who were part of a larger group of sixth-graders from St. Theresa School, Gonzales, learned the story of this once quarantined community in Carville, they were also shocked by some of the things they heard.

No, it wasn’t learning that the first patients arrived in the cloak of darkness in 1894, or even that before a cure was found, patients had to live in the facility forever. What brought surprise and even gasps from these students was discovering why first-time patients were told to change their names.

As the tour guide explained, before Hansen’s Disease was understood, myths and stigmas were so widespread that some people would lash out and possibly harm a patient’s family or property back home. By forcing patients to change their names, and hiding their true identity, it was believed family members and their homes would be protected.

“That’s just so sad,” said Emma Lauret, a sixth-grader at St. Theresa.

“I almost started crying,” said Torrie Schexnaydre, a religion teacher at St. Theresa.

“What does this say about their human dignity?” she asked.

Creating moments where students can be actively involved in their understanding is important for teachers like Schexnaydre, who noted their April 12 field trip to the National Hansen’s Disease Museum is an ideal place for seeing the corporal and spiritual works of mercy in action.

“It’s really interesting how the residents here had to leave their families, yet the nuns and the staff comforted them and made them a part of their own families,” she said.

Kim Lacinak, coordinator of religious education at St. John Primary and St. Theresa Middle schools, explained the idea to visit the museum as part of a sixth-grade retreat grew out of a partnership between the two schools and the nine church parishes that are associated with it.

Lacinak said while planning the sixth-grade retreat at St. Gabriel Church last year, Father Charlie Landry, pastor of St. Gabriel Church, believed the museum, something “right in our own backyard” presented a great opportunity to do more: to teach social justice.

“This is a great place to teach mercy,” Father Landry said.

“The place was built on mercy. It was mercy and love for the people who needed a place to stay,” he added, recalling how when it was believed the disease was contagious, those who were diagnosed with it, had no place to go except Carville.

In addition to touring the museum during the day-long retreat, students started the day with a Mass, toured the cemetery, had an opportunity for reconciliation and participated in a social justice talk with Father Landry. “We see compassion, love and forgiveness here,” Father Landry told the students during his talk.

“When the Daughters of Charity (of St. Vincent de Paul) came here (to provide care for the residents), they knew they would never go back home. Those sisters came here and gave up their lives. Imagine that,” Father Landry said.

SEE STUDENTS PAGE 13
STUDENTS
From page 12

Lacinak noted sixth-graders represent the perfect age for lessons on social teaching because they “really understand why” acts, such as mercy, charity and love are needed.

Evan Tassin is proof. For the 12-year-old, the field trip taught him that showing mercy is important.

“We're always taught to treat others the way we want to be treated, yet the patients here weren't treated that way. I was surprised to see how the people were treated like they were unholy and told they couldn't go to heaven. They just had a disease, and that was really horrible,” he said.

Tassin noted showing mercy and kindness is not just something that helps others. Both the giver and receiver benefit. It is something he learned after visiting a nursing home last year with his fifth-grade classmates.

“We were nervous at first, but once we saw the smiles on their faces, it made us feel like we did something good,” he said.

Father Landry invites anyone wanting to experience the feeling of mercy at the museum complex to attend regularly scheduled Sunday Mass at the Sacred Heart Chapel, located on the site grounds. Mass begins at 8:30 a.m.

BIRTHDAY FUN – St. Jean Vianney School first-graders, from left, Irellyn Watkins and Brady Thompson, together with their teacher, Rebecca Courtney, talk with a resident at the Regency Place Nursing and Rehabilitation Center. The students visited the center on April 12 to celebrate residents' birthdays in April. They sang songs, handed out sweet treats and talked with the residents. Photo provided by Bridgette DiGerolamo | St. Jean Vianney School

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MINISTRY AND THEOLOGY

Summer 2016

MAT I: Basic Courses
June 6 – 9  Conversion & Spirituality 9 - 11:30 a.m.
June 13 – 16  Journey through Scripture 12:30 - 3 p.m.
June 13 – 16  Church History 9 - 11:30 a.m.
June 13 – 16  Creed 12:30 - 3 p.m.
July 11 – 14  Christology 9 - 11:30 a.m.
July 11 – 14  Sacraments 12:30 - 3 p.m.
July 18 – 21  Morality 9 - 11:30 a.m.
July 18 – 21  Evangelization, Catechesis, Mission 12:30 - 3 p.m.

MAT II: Intermediate Courses
July 11 – 14  Liturgical Year 9 - 11:30 a.m.
July 18 – 21  Christian Prayer 9 - 11:30 a.m.

All courses will be held at The Bishop Tracy Center, Catholic Life Center, 1800 South Acadian Thruway, Baton Rouge

Registration and payment ($45 per class) must be done online! SPACE IS LIMITED!

Online Courses

MAT II
June 20 – 23  Catholic Identity in the Catholic School  Webinar 9 – 10:45 a.m.
July 11 – 14  Catechism of the Catholic Church: Using it in Catechesis  Webinar 9 – 10:45 a.m.

Enrichment Credit Opportunities
June 14  The Psalms of Mercy  Webinar 6:30 – 8 p.m.
June 21  The Parables of Mercy  Webinar 6:30 – 8 p.m.
June 28  Mercy in the Fathers of the Church  Webinar 6:30 – 8 p.m.
July 7  The Saints in Mercy  Webinar 6:30 – 8 p.m.

Enrichment Webinars are 3 credits each – $10 Registration fee

Participation in a webinar, coupled with a reflection paper is required. Registration required for credit, but the webinars are open to all who want to participate. To participate in webinars without receiving certification credit, registration isn’t necessary, simply use the webinar link which will be made available prior to the start of the webinar and join in.

Registration instructions available:
www.diobrchristianformation.org/certification/course-registration
www.diobrchristianformation.org/calendar/course-calendar/month.calendar

For questions about Summer Classes contact the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis at 225-336-8760 or mhall@diobr.org
Barbershop: The Next Cut
Warner Bros.
Earnest but heavy-handed debates about how to deal with gang violence are interspersed with frequently vulgar jokes in this seriocomic portrayal of life on Chicago’s South Side. With the shop of the title now augmented by a beauty parlor (led by Regina Hall), much of the barbed humor is distributed with frequently vulgar jokes in how to deal with gang violence are inter-

Motion Picture Association of America ratings:
G – General audiences; all ages admitted
PG – Parental guidance suggested; some material may not be suitable for children
PG-13 – Parents are strongly cautioned to give special guidance for attendance of children under 13; some material may be inappropriate for young children
R – Restricted; under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian
NC-17 – No one under 17 admitted

Hardcore Henry
STX
Obscenely violent sci-fi action flick set in Moscow is presented exclusively from the point of view of the (uncredited) title character, a man whose scientist wife (Haley Bennett) brings him back to life as a cyborg and who, aided by a cagey stranger (Sharlto Copely), must then battle assailants led by a malevolent industrialist (Danila Kozlovsky) with telekinetic powers. The novelty of writer-director Ilya Naishuller’s decision to shoot the unrelenting onslaught entirely through the eyes of the mute Henry quickly wears off. And the movie’s frenetic pacing and glibly humorous tone cannot hide the fact that it amounts to little more than a tedious and dispiringly dispensable exercise in excess. A near-constant stream of extremely graphic violence, frequent drug use, strong sexual content, including several perverse situations and much upper female nudity, pervasive profane, rough and crude language. O; R

The Jungle Book
Disney
This adaptation of British author Rudyard Kipling’s 1894 collection of stories about the adventures of a “man-cub” (Neel Sethi) raised by animals offers delightful, good-natured, heartfelt entertainment for the entire family, the most easily frightened of tos possibly excepted. Orphaned as a baby, the boy is led by a kindly panther (voice of Ben Kingsley) to a pack of wolves, which raises him as one of their own. A menacing tiger (voice of Idris Elba) regards him as a threat and orders him killed, but the boy escapes. On the journey that fol-

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Filling that empty spot with God’s love

Tori Kelly’s single “Hollow” describes a “hollow” life being healed and filled with love. The song’s protagonist says “I’m paper thin,” and “I’m fragile, and you know this.” She wants a person to “wrap me in love, fill my cup.” She is “empty,” she says, “and only your love can fill up my cup.” She says that “I confess my weakness, you pick up the parts that are broken.”

These words carry the most meaning if we hear them directed toward God. Loving parents and loving friends can fill some of the emptiness we feel inside, but we long for more love than that. Only God can fill the heart and heal the parts of ourselves that are “broken.”

In our Catholic history, we have seen this reaffirmed by a cloud of witnesses who have spoken about how only the love of God fills our deepest desires. We can look to material possessions to fill an inner void, but in time that glimmer fades.

We can use our skills and abilities to build a life of success and achievement, and doing so helps our lives, but no success can completely fulfill us. Even if we are fortunate to establish enduring, loving relationships, there will still be a part of us that longs for something or someone else.

There is a reason for this longing. We come from a God who calls us. We need this journey to grow, heal and live out the divine purpose that God has placed in us. But our ultimate destiny is to be reunited with our source and to know completely God’s endless, unconditional love.

Commit yourself to read one chapter of the Gospel every other day. Think about what the story describes and how it might speak to you.

Another way to know Jesus better is to do what he did, and this means caring about other people. Everyone person carries the image and likeness of God in their souls, and we honor the God within them when we do acts of service for others.

Be sure to start this at home. Perhaps this service will not be recognized, but small, consistent acts of service will support the lives of your parents and siblings. Of course, continue your service and extend it to your friends, and to the local community. There are so many needs in the world, but all of us can do something to help. Even the smallest of acts can make a difference.

If you perform these acts of love daily, a miracle will begin to form in your life. Any hollowness you feel will be healed, and deep, quiet joy will fill your life.

MARTIN is an Indiana pastoral counselor who reviews current music for Catholic News Service. Write to: cmartin@hughes.net, or at: 7125 West CR 200 South, Rockport, IN 47635, or like on Facebook at “Charlie Martin’s Today’s Music Columns.”

Sung by Tori Kelly Copyright © 2015, Capitol | School Boy Records

Across
1 Rite in the Church in the West
6 Rich soil
10 “…the ____ , raise the dead…” (Mt 10:8)
14 Sun-dried brick
15 Differ ending
16 An orchestra tunes to one
17 The house of a parson
18 Memo letters
19 Jaworski of Watergate fame
20 a ‘chosen race, a royal ____’ (1 Pt 2:9)
22 Public showing
23 “As it was in the beginning, is ____”
24 500 sheets
25 Soft food for infants
26 Person in authority
29 Pange ____
32 Narrow opening
33 Microwaves
34 Works the soil
35 Qualified
36 Deadly sin
37 9th letter of the Hebrew alphabet
38 Strap
42 Alley
44 “As it was in the beginning, is ____”
45 Sing America
46 Musical study piece
49 Musical study piece
50 “Let’s go”
51 Webber musical
52 “Let’s go”
53 Well-known
73 Heal
74 Engrave
75 Apparel

Down
1 “Thy word is a ____ to my feet” (Ps 119:105)
2 Purim month
3 Novelist Morrison
4 Norwegian dramatist
5 Catholic actor Liam
6 She and her sister Rachel were both married to Jacob
7 Hef
8 Role player
9 Monk who is father of modern genetics
10 Mary, the Mother of God, for example
11 Mountain goat
12 Poultry enclosure
13 Game of chance
21 Like Rebekah’s sons
25 Isle
26 King David composition
27 Playwright Edward ____
28 Pivotal
30 Papal order
31 “Cheers”
33 Beam of light
34 Extreme
35 One of 12 brothers in the Old Testament
37 The New or Old Testament
39 Sicilian volcano
43 Finnish honorific
46 Coal scuttle
50 First step in religious orders
52 Rise
55 Attack
57 Teacher
58 Type of angel that Michael is
59 Cupola
60 Drilling gp.
63 Snack
64 Cherub’s strings?
65 Summer drinks
66 Claret

Solution on page 18

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Resurrection of good conscience cases

In this Easter season it seems fitting that Pope Francis should provide the Diocese of Baton Rouge with a reversal of an inglorious aspect of its history. In 1972 theologians were promoting the idea of priests in the “internal forum,” then called “confession,” helping penitents caught in second marriages without an annulment to make the decision that they were in good conscience and could return to the sacraments, including eucharistic Communion. This, of course, depended on the circumstances of the first marriage that ended in divorce. Annulments were more difficult and took more time to obtain in those days. So, like today, it was an attempt to extend some mercy to the faithful whose first marriage had a sad end.

The Archdiocese of Chicago was actually the first diocese to implement the practice. Its leader at the time was Cardinal John P. Cody who had recently arrived after serving as the archbishop of New Orleans. In New Orleans, his neighbor and good friend was Bishop Robert Emmet Tracy, founding bishop of the Diocese of Baton Rouge. Bishop Tracy quickly followed suit and promoted the practice among his clergy. But, there never was an idea that it was a right or wrong practice but also had certificates made in his chancery to be given to the returning communicants.

The Vatican was upset. This was a shocking externalization of the internal forum and its sacred secrecy. They notified the Apostolic Delegate in Washington, who got Cardinal John Krol in Philadelphia, the president that year of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, to call Bishop Tracy with the order to cease and desist. That was the end of good conscience cases in Baton Rouge and the rest of the about half dozen dioceses who were doing it.

Now, thanks to Pope Francis and the two Synods of Bishops he called in preparation for this Jubilee Year of Mercy, good conscience has been resurrected after having been buried for 45 years. “Amoris Laetitia” (“The Joy of Love”), Pope Francis’ post-synodal apostolic exhortation, was written, he states, to value the gifts of marriage and family and to encourage everyone to be a sign of mercy and closeness wherever family life remains imperfect or lacks peace and joy. It is a long document, 256 pages, with numbered paragraphs, divided into nine chapters. There are beautiful chapters on marriage in Scripture, two central chapters on love, one on pastoral approaches to building the home on God’s plan, another on raising children and a final chapter on family spirituality. The thorniest issue facing Pope Francis and the synods was the situation of divorced Catholics who remarried without obtaining an annulment. Pope Francis calls these marriages “irregular situations” in Chapter 8 which contains the pope’s solution to the contentious issues of the two synods.

Present church law prohibits Catholics in such situations from receiving Holy Communion and performing certain other liturgical functions. Canon 916 states that all who are “conscious of grave sin” ought not approach Holy Communion. They are not, however, excommunicated. They still are members of the church and of their church parish.

I. We must not lose heart because of these circumstances. Pope Francis clearly wants to bring them back into a fuller participation in the faith-life of their communities. He writes in paragraph 296: “The way of the church is not to condemn anyone forever; it is to pour out the balm of mercy on all those who ask for it with a sincere heart...for true charity is always unmerited, unconditional and gratuitous.” The pope is rightly returning the emphasis to the conscience of the individual believer regarding their responsibility for whatever caused the divorce in the first marriage. The Lord knows that individuals do very regrettable things that can’t be undone. Sometimes all they can do is repent for their failings.

The pope explains the process he envisages priests using in paragraph 300: “What we are speaking of is a process of accompaniment and discernment which ‘guides the faithful to an awareness of their situation before God.’ Conversation with the priest, in the internal forum (sacrament of reconciliation) contributes to the formation of a correct judgment on what hinders the possibility of a fuller participation in the life of the church and on what steps can foster it and make it grow.”

Pope Francis supports his position by arguing that the church already has a “solid body of reflection on mitgating factors and situations. Hence it can no longer simply be said that all those in any ‘irregular’ situation are living in a state of mortal sin and are deprived of sanctifying grace” (Paragraph 300). Sometimes people cannot change their present marital situation without doing more harm.

Many synod fathers said something similar when they wanted to affirm that “Under certain circumstances couples find it very difficult to act differently. Therefore, while upholding a general rule (marriage is for a lifetime) it is necessary to recognize that responsibility with respect to certain actions or decisions is not the same in all cases.”

Pope Francis wants everyone to act out of an informed conscience, correctly knowing the demands of the Gospel. “Yet,” he says, “conscience can do more than recognize that a given situation (e.g. being divorced and remarried) does not correspond objectively to the overall demands of the Gospel. It can also recognize with sincerity and honesty what for now is the most generous response which can be given to God, and come to see with a certain moral security that it is what God himself is asking amid the concrete complexity of one’s limits, while yet not fully the objective ideal.”

When Pope Paul VI published his encyclical “Humanae Vitae” banning artificial birth control, many who disagreed with his position, abstained from reading it. That was a shame, because, in addition to that condemnation, it had many very beautiful things to say about marriage. I hope that the same thing will not happen with “Amoris Laetitia” because of its length. In the coming weeks I will try to lead you through it by highlighting the most beautiful passages.

Father Carville is a retired priest in the Diocese of Baton Rouge and writes on current topics for The Catholic Commentator. He can be reached at johnnycarville@gmail.com.
Loyalty and patriotism revisited

In a recent article in “America” magazine, Grant Kaplan, commenting on the challenge of the resurrection, makes this comment: “Unlike previous communities in which the bond among members forges itself through those it excludes and scapegoats, the gratuity of the resurrection allows for a community shaped by forgiven-forgivers.”

What he is saying, among other things, is that mostly we form community through demonizing and exclusion, that is, we bond with each other more on the basis of what we are against and what we hate than on the basis of what we are for and hold precious. The cross and the resurrection, and the message of Jesus in general, invite us to a deeper maturity within which we are invited to form community with each other on the basis of love and inclusion rather than upon hatred and demonization.

How do we scapegoat, demonize and exclude so as to form community with each other? A number of anthropologists, particularly Rene Girard and Gil Baillie, have given us some good insights on how scapegoating and demonization worked in ancient times and how they work today.

In brief, here’s how they work: Until the pain of life, as many of us know, is real, and seemingly unending while we’re going through rough moments. However, in any tragic circumstance there is one word you need to focus on and that is survival. You can go on grieving for a year or a decade or more, but sooner or later you will have to decide whether you’re going to be a survivor or whether you’re going to let problems destroy you. There is still a job for you to do in this world, perhaps a job that nobody else can do, and if you don’t do it, it will remain undone. Millions have come to

A woman once wrote me a letter that helped me understand a great deal about the pain of grief. She said that on a beautiful sunny July morning, her 26-year-old son was killed in a car accident. He was on his way to work when a driver pulled out of a side street and killed her “wonderful boy.”

She said she never knew such a feeling of desperation, such isolation and unending agony before. The depth of the pain, the flow of tears and the silence were overwhelming. And yet, she said, “I never knew one could still exist when everything inside had died.”

This brokenhearted woman managed to survive with the help of God. She later said that with time, and with the help of God, she found her bearings. She said she learned to find joy in the midst of the most excruciating pain.

She said she learned that even when you have suffered a terrible loss, the worst loss one can imagine, one day a person will discover that he or she will laugh again and live again. Knowing that God is by your side, helping you every step of the way, you will come to learn the important lesson that joy really does prevail over sorrow.

This story also reminds me of a grief-stricken man who was tempted to commit suicide. One day while riding on a bus, he spotted a pamphlet on the floor and picked it up out of curiosity. It contained this message: “Today you may feel hopeless, but tomorrow or the next day you will remember that you have a purpose, a true mission in life. It will transform you, and give you the courage to carry on.”

He decided not to commit suicide, and never thought of it again. He wrote to me several months later to explain how this sense of mission changed his life forever.

It reassured me of the words found in John 16:33: “In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world.”

FATHER CATOIR writes on issues of spirituality for today’s Catholic News Service.

The mission of The Catholic Commentator is to provide news, information and commentary to the people of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, Catholics and their neighbors alike. In doing so, The Catholic Commentator strives to further the wider mission of the Church: to evangelize, to communicate, to educate and to give the Catholic viewpoint on important issues of the present day.

MISSION STATEMENT

God is with us even when our greatest joy seems to vanish

As a priest, I’ve spent the past 30 years of my life writing about supernatural joy in the lives of others. The message is simple: faith, together with the discipline of controlling your thoughts, can help overcome even the most horrible emotional pain we can experience.

The pain of life, as many of us know, is real, and seemingly unending while we’re going through rough moments. However, in any tragic circumstance there is one word you need to focus on and that is survival. You can go on grieving for a year or a decade or more, but sooner or later you will have to decide whether you’re going to be a survivor or whether you’re going to let problems destroy you. There is still a job for you to do in this world, perhaps a job that nobody else can do, and if you don’t do it, it will remain undone. Millions have come to
St. Francis of Assisi Food Festival – St. Francis of Assisi Church, 818 W. 10th Street, Donaldsonville, will host its food festival on Sunday, May 1, 11:30 a.m. – 3 p.m. There will be Cajun food, children’s games, fellowship and live auction. For information, call 225-473-3176.

Charismatic Mass – A charismatic Pentecost Mass will be celebrated by Rev. Juel Kadulna IMS on Sunday, May 15, 2 p.m., at St. Louis King of France Church, 2121 N. Sherwood Forest Dr., Baton Rouge. Refreshments and prayer ministry will be available after the Mass. For more information, call 225-346-8873.

Rachel's Vineyard Retreat – A Rachel’s Vineyard retreat will be held for those who have been touched by abortion Friday, May 13 – Sunday, May 15. The weekend combines Scripture, meditation, spiritual exercises and discussions to help lead retreatants to the heart of God’s love and compassion. For more information, email rachelsvineyardbrocom@yahoo.com or visit rachelsvineyard.org. Inquiries, registration and participation are confidential.

St. Isidore Mission – Father Tom Sullivan of the Fathers of Mercy will present a mission focusing on the Blessed Sacrament, the Blessed Mother and the mercy of God Monday, May 16 – Thursday, May 19, 7 p.m., at St. Isidore Church, 5657 Thomas Road, Baker. Confession will be available from 6 – 6:45 p.m. There will also be a session May 16 following the 8 a.m. Mass. For information, call 225-775-8850.
mand for the services of these young girls and what “johns” are willing to pay to have sex with a young teenager or even a pre-pubescent girl. According to at least one report, human trafficking has become a $32 billion a year industry, ranking it higher than the illegal drug industry or gun trafficking.

Lt. Chad Gremillion with the Louisiana State Police Special Victims Unit on Human Trafficking/Child Exploitation, which was formed two years ago by Colonel Mike Edmonson, said a pimp can make up to $632,000 annually “selling” four women or children. According to Gremillion, the pimp puts “his girls” on a date, takes her money when she returns and sends her back to the street for another date.

“We have seen johns of all race, age, socioeconomic background,” Gremillion said. “They are thrill seekers who are willing to go to any risk to achieve their desire.

“This is a money-making business.”

Since the formation of the Special Victims Unit, which has allowed state, federal and local law enforcement agencies to focus their combined resources on rescuing victims and ensuring the pimps are prosecuted, Louisiana State Police has reported an 86 percent increase in human trafficking cases investigated in 2015 from 2014.

“This crime has been going on for years, but now through education and victim advocate groups, we are identifying it more and helping these victims,” Gremillion said.

Father Jeff Bayhi, pastor at St. John the Baptist Church in Zachary and Our Lady of Assumption in Clinton, was first made aware of human trafficking several years ago while filming a television show in Rome. It was during that visit he was introduced to Sister Eugenia Bonetti MC who has made it her ministry to rescue girls who are being trafficked in Italy and help women escape the prostitution industry.

“Trafficking is much more common than people realize,” he said. “It’s sick but it’s real.”

Since that initial introduction, Father Bayhi has become an advocate to help girls escape the lifestyle. Parishioners at St. John the Baptists and Our Lady of Assumption have helped create and support two international shelters for young girls, one in Italy and the other in Nigeria. He has called both houses “powerful examples of this (Jubilee) Year of Mercy.”

He now has his sights closer to home. In his latest and certainly most ambitious project, Father Bayhi has enlisted the assistance of four nuns of the Hospitaller Sisters of Mercy, with a motherhouse in New Jersey, to establish a safe house in the Baton Rouge area. The home will house 16 girls who will be home-schooled as well as taught life skills and job skills. They will also be allowed to stay as long as necessary.

Father Bayhi said no cell phones or access will be allowed, and there will be a security detail at the house.

“Coming from New Orleans, 40 percent of the juveniles who are trafficked are trafficked by their primary caregiver: mother, uncle, mother’s boyfriend,” Father Bayhi said. “And so the absence of a person who loves you for you and wants to keep you safe and give you hope is what has been missing in a lot of these children’s homes.”

Father Bayhi expects much of the funding to come from Medicaid, a charity organization he founded for the purpose of helping youth in Louisiana, specifically opening a retreat center for kids. However, he said that idea “never got traction,” and once he realized the prevalence of human trafficking in the United States, he told Sister Eugenia “if she gets me some nuns I will (establish) a safe house.”

“In my mind religious sisters are a game changer,” he said. “The difference between a home and an institution is having a mother there to love you and be there 24/7. To guide you and keep you safe. That’s the role the sisters will play.”

Sister Norma said the sisters will mentor the girls and tend to their spiritual and moral care. She expects the girls will be below the age of 18 with many from the surrounding area, where trafficking has become an increasing problem, but also from neighboring states and perhaps as far away as Mexico.

Sister Norma said she has already been in contact with law enforcement officials as well as the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services to guide girls who are looking for a way out.

Sister Ann Maria Mataew HSM said the victims are typically taken by predators who promise them a better life, whether it is a job or education.

“Then, (the pimps) misuse them or sexually abuse them or take their passport and send them to Louisiana or other places throughout the United States. “They’re being misused, with no way to come out to the police (because the girls are often in the United States illegally). We are healing them, making them whole.”

Even more than education, more than life skills, more than job training, Sister Alexandrine Rasonoarina HSM said perhaps the most important lessons the girls can learn is the capacity to trust and to love, two components missing from much of their young lives.

“That’s the reason we are here, to nurture them,” she said. “They lost all of their lives, lost their love. So we are here to give it back.

“Hopefully we will learn to trust again, learn again to trust in other people, learn again to know there is someone out there to truly love them, not for profit, not for money or for pleasure.”

Gremillion said pimps typically prey on young girls who exhibit signs of vulnerability or weakness, such as those suffering from low self-esteem.

**Lt. Chad Gremillion**

Louisiana State Police

“Hopefully they will learn to trust again, learn again to trust in other people, learn again to know there is someone out there to truly love them, not for profit, not for money or for pleasure.”

Gremillion said pimps typically prey on young girls who exhibit any signs of vulnerability or weakness, such as those suffering from low self-esteem or who endured abuse in their home life. Typically they may be runaways, perhaps as far away as Mexico.

He said the girls are lured by broken promises and ultimately brainwashed, making it difficult to break away.

“Usually, the pimp will provide for them the basics,” he said. He will have promised them everything, all to which are broken promises. These girls don’t have days and nights. They work when their pimp makes them work.

“Many feel they have nowhere to go,” Gremillion said, adding that is one reason why the safe house is important to rescuing the victims and allowing them to recapture their youth.

“These nuns will be mothers to these girls,” he said. “It will allow them to learn life skills and hopefully see that there is a side to humanity that loves them.”

Gremillion said the public can help police in a number of ways.

“If a girl is with a significantly older boyfriend, and there are signs of physical abuse, poor hygiene, signs of fear, or girls in hotels that are with several other girls and one or two males, (individuals) should call their local law enforcement agency,” he said.

“Tell them you have someone you are willing to assist in this fight against human trafficking to visit Medonia-inc.org and offer a financial contribution that will help establish and support the safe house. He noted that because of some regulations he is not willing to participate in, there will be no government funding for the house. He is asking individuals to donate as little as $10 a month or perhaps a parish $100 a month. He also is asking for prayers from the community.

“I don’t take that lightly when I say we need prayer,” Father Bayhi said. “You can only imagine a 15-year-old who has performed over 1000 sexual favors what kind of shape in which she arrives. We’re going to use the wisdom of Solomon and the grace of God.”

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Hospice is About Living

- We rely upon the intercession of our Blessed Mother to assist us in imitating the healing ministry of Jesus Christ as we care for terminally ill patients and their families.
- We call forth the compassion and kindness of our staff, who serve in this health care ministry, to respond to the physical, spiritual and emotional needs of our patients and their families.
- We believe in the sacredness of life from conception to natural death, and we devote ourselves to supporting patients and families through the dying process at the end of life’s journey on this earth and new life in eternity.

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Bishop John D. Deshotel was installed as the seventh bishop for the Diocese of Lafayette on April 15 at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist.

Bishop Deshotel, a native of Basile, and Bishop Michael Jarrell were among those who participated in the installation. Bishop Robert W. Munch and chancellor Father Paul Yi were also in attendance.

The third of eight children born to Welfoot Deshotel and Luna Marie Manual, Bishop Deshotel attended Immaculata Minor Seminary High School in Lafayette and later attended Holy Trinity Seminary in Texas, where he earned his bachelor's degree in philosophy, and a Masters of Divinity degree from the University of Dallas.

He was ordained to the priesthood for the Diocese of Dallas on May 13, 1978 in his hometown church of St. Augustine. On April 27, 2010, he was ordained as auxiliary bishop of Dallas by Bishop Kevin J. Farrell in the Cathedral Shrine of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Guadalupe.

On Feb. 17, Pope Francis appointed Bishop Deshotel as the bishop of Lafayette.

As Bishop Deshotel processed into the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist for the start of the Rite of Installation, he was greeted by Father Chester Areneaux, pastor of the cathedral. Bishop Deshotel offered a blessing to those gathered, which included more than 100 diocesan priests, deacons and seminarians from the Diocese of Lafayette, as well as more than 150 of Bishop Deshotel’s extended family and friends.

Others in attendance included several clergy members from the Diocese of Dallas; bishops from throughout Louisiana, Texas, Alabama, Arkansas and Florida; interfaith guests; civil officials; and representatives of the Diocese of Lafayette’s office staff.

Archbishop Gregory Michael Aymond of New Orleans offered his greeting which was then followed by a welcome address from Bishop Jarrell. Archbishop Aymond and Bishop Jarrell escorted Bishop Deshotel to the bishop’s chair, also known as the cathedra. A symbol of episcopal ministry since ancient times, the chair symbolizes the unity of the people in the diocese with their bishop.

Following the Gospel reading, Bishop Deshotel gave his first homily as ordinary of the Diocese of Lafayette. This was followed by the intercessional prayers, which were offered in different languages representative of the various cultures of the diocese. In addition to English, these languages included Latin, Italian, Creole French, Spanish, Vietnamese, Arabic and German.