Mass unites diverse cultures

By Rachele Smith
The Catholic Commentator

It was a welcome from around the world.

Using greetings, such as “Bienvenue” (French); “Bienvenido” (Spanish); “Willkommen” (German); “Benvenuti” (Italian); “Welkom” (Dutch); “Chao mung” (Vietnamese); “Hwan-yeong” (Korean); “Ben-vindo” (Portuguese); and of course, “Welcome,” several speakers showcased the rich heritage of the Baton Rouge area as they opened an international Mass at St. Joseph Cathedral on Jan. 10.

The Mass, officiated by Bishop Robert W. Muench and concelebrated by pastor Father Paul Counce, drew hundreds of parishioners and guests, including Gov.-Elect John Bel Edwards and his family as they made final preparations for his inauguration the following day.

The International Mass was celebrated on the feast day of the Baptism of Our Lord, a fitting opportunity to recognize the universality of the Catholic Church. “Catholic means universal,” noted Bishop Muench in his homily. “Today we celebrate as a worldwide church what Jesus means to us through generations who have passed on the word through faith and sacraments. We are a people who are different, yet we have one faith and one baptism,” he added.

The celebration included a special presentation of historical pieces demonstrating the different ethnic groups who have called the Baton Rouge area home since the city’s founding almost 300 years ago.

Silence offers opportunity to connect with God

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Giving up something is a big “to do” on the Lent checklist of many Catholics … candy, alcohol, cigarettes, social media. One thing many may not consider is words, at least with other human beings, to better hear the voice of God.

Pope Francis underscored the connection between silence and mercy when announcing the Jubilee Year of Mercy last year.

“In order to be capable of mercy, we must first of all dispose ourselves to listen to the word of God. This means rediscovering the value of silence in order to meditate on the word that comes to us. In this way, it will be possible to contemplate God’s mercy and adopt it as our lifestyle,” wrote the pope in a papal bull of indiction of The Year of Mercy, “Missericordiae Vultus.”

His initiative, “24 Hours for the Lord,” calls people to receive the mercy of God through Eucharistic Adoration and confession on the Friday and Saturday preceding the fourth week of Lent.

People in the Diocese of Baton Rouge will be entering into this sacred silence with the Lord this Lent whether at home, in nature or on re-

SEE SCHULTE PAGE 20

SEE SILENCE PAGE 7

Archbishop Schulte dies at the age of 89

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Archbishop Francis B. Schulte, who served as the archbishop for the Archdiocese of New Orleans from 1989-2002 and whom Bishop Robert W. Muench called his “mentor,” died Sunday, Jan. 17 in Philadelphia at the age of 89.

SEE SCHULTE PAGE 20
Lent is approaching, so naturally palates in southeast Louisiana are yearning for... pretzels?

The pretzel, the salty little delicacy that goes well with a popular Lenten beverage containing malts and hops, is a traditional Lenten food dating to the fifth century. In fact, there is even a prayer to the pretzel.

During the church’s early days Lenten restrictions were much more demanding and included abstaining from milk, butter, cheese, eggs, cream and meat for all 40 days. Additionally, the general rule was for a person to have one meal a day, usually in the evening or around 3 p.m., and smaller snacks to maintain strength. So a need arose for a simple food that would be in accordance with the laws of abstinence and fasting.

Those early Christians, who obviously had no idea of the spiritual virtues of a shrimp po’boy on Fridays, made small breads of water, flour and salt to serve as a reminder that Lent was indeed a time of prayer. The breads were shaped in the form of two arms crossed in prayer and called “bracellae,” the Latin term for “little arms.”

The Germans changed the Latin term to “brezel” which in English eventually became pretzel. The earliest picture of the pretzel can be found in a fifth century manuscript.

Very quickly and not surprising to those who delight in a salty pretzel, this quirky new snack became quite popular, perhaps because they satisfied one’s hunger and was a spiritual reminder of God responding to the faithful’s prayers. They even became a symbol of good luck, long life and prosperity.

Pretzels were also distributed to the poor and hungry. What remains unclear is when and how the pretzel evolved into the modern hard treat, but one legend claims it was born out of a baker’s sleep depravation. Legend has it that the baker dozed off while baking pretzels and the fire in the oven began to die out. Upon awakening, he rekindled the oven but ultimately over-baked the pretzels.

Understandably, the master baker was initially upset but soon discovered the hard-crusted pretzels were less perishable and quite tasty. Even ceremonies have been developed to honor the pretzel. One such tradition has a parent explaining the origin of the pretzel to the family so children will understand its spiritual significance. It is also recommended pretzels be served daily at the evening meal for the duration of Lent, but what is unclear is if this would replace the French bread.

So the next time you are watching LSU at your favorite watering hole and a basket of those salty delights is placed before you, remember you are engaging in one of Lent’s oldest and perhaps quirky traditions.

Q You also love to write. Can you tell us what you wrote on that trip to Italy when others went sightseeing and you sat out on the patio to write?

A I had toured a bit of Rome and seen the Coliseum (from the outside). Then we went to a villa in Tuscany. This villa perched on the top of a valley was filled with grape vines and olive trees. On the other side of the valley, mountains rose up. On the morning in question, we were going to go see David’s statue and other art work in Firenze; but I awoke with a stiff back. So I sat out on the back patio overlooking the valley, and the story came to me. I envisioned a large mesa in the center of a valley surrounded by mountains. The mesa was divided in two by a high wall which stretched from one edge of the mesa to a large coliseum and from the other side of the coliseum to the opposite edge of the mesa. The people on one side of the wall did not interact with the people on the other side.
Pre-inauguration Mass celebrated at St. Joseph Cathedral

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Archbishop Gregory M. Aymond of New Orleans looked at Gov.-elect John Bel Edwards, thanked him for his commitment to Louisiana and his willingness to address the challenges "ahead of you."

"Thank God some of them you don’t know," said the archbishop, drawing a chuckle from a large crowd that had gathered at St. Joseph Cathedral to celebrate Mass only hours before the inauguration of perhaps one of the improbable governors in Louisiana’s history.

Edwards, a staunch Catholic and parishioner at St. Helena Church in Amite, stunned many observers this past fall with a decisive knockout of political heavyweight Sen. David Vitter in the general election. The morning of the inauguration, hours before he was to take office, Edwards, his wife, Donna, the state bishops and approximately 500 friends and elected state officials gathered in the cathedral for Mass that was co-celebrated by Archbishop Gregory M. Aymond of New Orleans and Bishop Robert W. Muench. The Mass was celebrated at the request of Edwards.

During his homily, Archbishop Aymond said that Edwards, through his selections of the readings, "gives us an important definition of what it means to be a leader and a public servant."

He said by choosing the first reading from Kings, "John Bel tells us as he takes on this enormous responsibility, he asks only one thing from God. And that is for an understanding heart, to know what is right, to know what is wrong, to know what is good for this great state of Louisiana."

In a reading from James, Archbishop Aymond said Edwards is "telling us and promising that his faith in God, his strong commitment to the state of Louisiana is more than words.

He promises through this reading to act with integrity and that his promises will be fulfilled as he governs us and uses the wisdom given to him by God."

Reflecting on the Gospel, which was read by St. Helena pastor Fr. Mark Beard, Archbishop Aymond said Edwards wants to see clearly the genuine needs of the people.

"(Edwards) says through this reading he wants to respond to those needs in a spirit of justice, faith and charity for the common good," Archbishop Aymond said. "In so doing, our governor, and we as citizens, can show charity to the least among us, those easily forgotten. And in doing so we have the opportunity to see the face of Christ."

The archbishop thanked Edwards for his faith, and asked that God "gives you the patience that you need to carefully listen as to discern what is right, (and the) wisdom to know what is pleasing in God's sight and to build up our state."

Bishop Muench opened the Mass by invoking God's blessing on our own beloved state of Louisiana, and especially those chosen to lead and serve in their various areas of responsibility."

Edwards was inaugurated on the steps of the Capitol later that morning, with Father Beard delivering the benediction.

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St. Anthony of Padua
St. John the Evangelist
St. Joseph
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St. Michael the Archangel
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SOUTHWEST DEANERY
Ascension of Our Lord
Our Lady of Peace
St. James
St. Joseph the Worker
St. Philomena
St. Anne
Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

NEW ROADS
St. Mary of False River
Immaculate Conception
St. Ann
St. Joseph
St. Frances Xavier Cabrini
Immaculate Heart of Mary
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USCCB files amicus brief on behalf of Little Sisters of the Poor

WASHINGTON (CNS) – The general counsel for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops filed an amicus brief with the U.S. Supreme Court in support of the Little Sisters of the Poor, who have asked the court for relief from being forced to comply with the federal contraceptive mandate.

The brief was filed Jan. 8 in the Zubik v. Burwell case, which the court will hear this year. The case will determine whether the Little Sisters of the Poor and other ministries can be forced to comply with the contraceptive mandate of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Under the Affordable Care Act, all health insurance plans are required to provide coverage for birth control drugs and procedures. Churches themselves and other institutions that primarily employ and serve members of the churches are exempt.

Nonprofit religious entities such as church-run colleges and social service agencies are not exempt, but the federal Department of Health and Human Services created what it calls an “accommodation” under which such organizations morally opposed to the coverage may file a particular form or notify HHS that they will not provide it.

The contraceptive coverage is then provided to those organizations’ employees, but through third parties, and with no cost or further involvement to the employer. Entities that refuse to comply with the mandate are subject to significant fines.

The USCCB brief argues that the contraceptive mandate not only damages religious freedom, but society as a whole.
Schools enrollment on the upswing

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Enrollment numbers for schools in the Diocese of Baton Rouge bucked a nearly two decades long trend by showing an increase for the current school year.

Although the bump is minimal, an .8 percent rise, Superintendent of Catholic Schools Dr. Melanie Verges welcomed the news. She noted the enrollment had been trending downward for the past 17 to 20 years but added even that decline was lower than the national average.

The uptick also continued in the number of low-income families who are participating in state assistance programs to send their children to Catholic schools. Overall, those students rose from 1,000 a year ago to 1,117 for 2015-16.

The number of students in the Louisiana Scholarship Program, also known as the voucher program, showed a slight decrease from 863 students to 843. However, the number of students in the recently minted School Tuition Organization program pushed the number over the 1,000 mark.

The STO offers low-income families the opportunity to select the school they believe offers their children the best education. The program provides tax breaks to state taxpayers who donate to the STO, which then uses the donations to fund the scholarships to those students.

“We are fulfilling our mission of educating children,” Verges said, adding that she sees a level of happiness among those students and their families. “They bring a spirit of gratitude, a spirit of appreciation of being able to receive a Catholic education.”

Perhaps equally as important, test scores continued to rise throughout the diocese. Verges was most proud of the fact that in the ACT testing, 43 percent of students in the Class of 2015 were deemed college ready.

In 2011, that number was 32 percent, representing an increase of 11 percentage points. In order to be determined college ready, a student must score at least 23 in each of the categories of reading, math, science and English.

Verges said nearly 90 percent of students were deemed college ready in English and math, which has been a priority in recent years, going from 55 percent to 59 percent.

Collectively, diocesan students averaged 24 on the ACT, well above the state average of 19.4 and the national average of 21.

“(The test scores) tell me that the curriculum is doing what it needs to do,” Verges said. “Our principals and our teachers are embracing a rigorous and relevant program, which we have been working on since 2009. (Teachers) get it, they are doing it.

“We are making sure our students are ready for college.”

Verges also was quick to point out the improved test scores included the state scholarship students. In the past, some opponents of the voucher program had expressed a concern that those students could potentially bring down a school’s, and ultimately the diocese’s, overall test scores.

“Even at the same time of increased scholarship students, the concept that they’re going to bring us down is totally not true,” Verges said. “We’ve continued to go up as a diocese. Our ACT scores continue to rise, so that tells me by the time our kids get to be seniors, the education they are getting is at a higher level than national statistics.

“We’re turning out fantastic students, but we always have.”

Verges said the test scores for the voucher students also show a dramatic rise, meaning they are learning at a high rate. And she said the Catholic education being provided to those young people is an investment in the future.

“It changes our society because there’s a hopefulness, there’s a competency that they are able to take into their future,” she said. “Whether they choose a four-year college or they choose to go into a career, hopefully we helped change their hearts and developed their minds so they are capable of making a positive difference in the world. That’s the whole goal.”

Even though the voucher system appears to be a great success, especially to those students who otherwise would have been unable to receive a private education, Catholic officials will be keeping a close eye on new Gov. John Bel Edwards for any potential changes. Edwards has the support of the state teachers’ unions, which oppose the scholarship program.

Edwards has hinted at some potential changes, including eliminating kindergarten students from participation as well as only allowing students who are attending schools rated D or F to be eligible. Currently, students attending schools rated C and below are eligible for the voucher program.

“Anytime an administration makes changes, things happen,” said Verges, quickly adding that the program actually saves the state millions of dollars in educational costs, a critical factor as legislators face a budget shortfall that has been estimated as high as $2 billion.

She expressed optimism the trend of increasing enrollment will continue and said schools continued to look at alternative ways to provide financial assistance to families who want their children to experience a Catholic education. The Bishop’s Annual Appeal has donated $75,000 annually for the past several years to provide assistance to lower income families.

Verges said families can apply online for the BAA money, and the final decision on who is accepted is made by the school systems’ finance committee. Financial assistance is also available through the Black and Indian Mission.

“We have wonderful teachers who go above and beyond,” Verges said. “And planning and theory is always trumped by experience. I think the experience our families have in Catholic schools speaks well for the spirit and the ministry of the schools.”
At Mass recently, I was stunned by a statement made by the deacon who was giving the homily. That has made me wonder whether deacons have sole independence when preparing remarks or if the priest exercises oversight. (City of origin withheld)

On the parish level, the pastor has the ultimate responsibility for the orthodoxy and propriety of what is said from the pulpit. To answer your question directly: A deacon cannot fit into the church for one Mass. Isn’t this a tacit acknowledgement that this feast day is not very important? (Clifton, New Jersey)

Jan. 1, 2016, is a holy day of obligation. But our parish calendar shows that next year, Jan. 1 will not be a holy day of obligation i.e., Jan. 1, 2017.

If holy days are so important, why do some oblige Mass attendance while others do not? Doesn’t this send a message that some of them are not really that critical? Also, for the past two years, even while it has been a holy day of obligation, our church has scheduled only one Mass on Jan. 1.

Obviously, the entire parish cannot fit into the church for one Mass. That seems a logical conclusion, but it remains true that the other holy days were still important enough in the mind of the bishops to require attendance at Mass.

As to your concern about your parish offering only one Mass on Jan. 1 even when it has been a holy day of obligation, I agree with you. I don’t think it’s an acknowledgement that this particular feast is not important, but it may be a concession that Mass on this date is not nearby as well attended as it ought to be — and pedagogically, I don’t think it’s good to cater to people’s delinquency.

I would think it better, if priests are available, to have at least two feast day Masses — perhaps a vigil early in the evening on Dec. 31 and then a morning Mass on Jan. 1, to make it more convenient for people to fulfill their obligation and start the new year off right by seeking the blessing of the Lord.
treat, especially at Rosaryville Spirit Life Center and Manresa House of Retreats. On March 4-5, a silent retreat, open to single men and women and married couples that is sponsored by the St. Joseph Spirituality Center, will be led by Sr. Cynthia Sabathier CSJ and Sr. Lucy Silvio CSJ at Rosaryville. The retreat will consist of short gatherings to receive reflection prompts, reflection time and communal prayer.

Diane Hanley, executive director of the St. Joseph Spirituality Center, discovered the meaning of spending quiet time with God during a “Christ in the Wilderness” retreat at the Hermitage in Stockton, Illinois. While there, she reflected on the time when she asked her mother, who was dying from Leukemia, what advice she had for her before she died. She told Hanley, “You play so many roles in life ... you’re somebody’s daughter, wife, mother, sister, co-worker ... make sure to think about who is Dianne, who are you?”

“It had been 20 years since I had been given that advice, and I realize I had not taken time to do that until that three-day hermitage,” Hanley said.

Spending time in silence helps people to be honest with themselves because it is only “them and God.” Going on retreats particularly helps one to get rid of all the distractions and “tugs of responsibilities.” Challenges include working through temptations to check the phone, dryness of spirit or even fear that God wants to punish you for mistakes. They can be overcome through the first step of Ignatian Spirituality which imagines God as benevolent, said Hanley.

People might be surprised that God makes them feel capable and loved through inspirational insights such as, “You’re on the right track,” or “You’re capable of this,” Hanley said.

“It makes me more eager to get back into the world and respond,” said Hanley.

Terry Bellon, who has attended silent retreats at Manresa for the past seven years, found this to be true.

During past retreats, Bellon focused on his children as they went through the “tumultuous teenage years,” but this past year he focused on his own spirituality.

“It’s one of the best retreats I’ve ever had,” said Bellon.

“You can sit under a tree, take a walk down the oak alleys, or the lovee and have time for yourself and God,” Bellon said.

“It’s a great time to charge your spiritual batteries.”

Rick Huber, who has attended the Manresa retreats for the past 11 years, said he finds clarity, particularly in his relationship with others in his silent time.

“You reflect, pray and think of the long term – what you want to do along the path of life,” Huber said.

Like Bellon, Huber enjoyed participating in the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises, visiting with priests and going to confession.

Susie Borruano, an instructor at the La National Guard-Gillis Long Center in Carville, has spent a busy life caring for children and teaching. She is looking forward to the Rosaryville retreat and said the time with God is a time of renewal.

“I remember the first time I went I didn’t think I would like it, but I fell in love with it,” said Borruano. “It helps you get a better appreciation of all the blessings in your life. It’s like starting over.”

Karen Jakubak, principal of St. Jude School, says she’s had the double blessing of spending time in silence with God and her daughter, Kathryn, at Rosaryville for the past five years.

“When I was pleased that my teenage daughter would do that at such a young age,” said Jakubak about her daughter Kathryn, who is now a law school student at LSU.

“I found it a beautiful time together even though we weren’t talking – we sat together outside, we reflected, went to the chapel and prayed the rosary,” said Karen Jakubak. Such activities brought them back to the center of their faith, she said.

“When you are pulled in so many directions, you have to get back to the center of what God is calling you to do,” she added.

Kathryn Jakubak agreed. As technology grows, so does the need to find the space to be with God.

“God is speaking to you more powerfully in silence than in all the noise of the world,” she said.

Approaching the Year of Mercy as an opportunity to grow

January can be a drag, a real letdown.

The remaining Christmas cookies are stale crumbs and the tree, once so respected, has been ingloriously dragged out of the house to be recycled into mulch. One by one, the Christmas lights in the neighborhood have gone out, as if some festive power grid is broken. The days look darker.

After the Epiphany, even the liturgical excitement has waned and we slip rather disconsolately into that oh-so-well-named “ordinary time.” For me, the first lines of Christina Rossetti’s beautiful Christmas poem are more appropriate for the grim days of January than December’s dazzle: “In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan, Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone.”

But the new year heralds good things as well and provides opportunity for growth. It brings with it a sense of order re-established. My house never looks cleaner and less cluttered than the day I vacuum up the departed tree’s last needles.

January invites us to dig deeper into the mystery we have just commemorated. Leaving the eggnog and the parties behind, we ask ourselves just what the Incarnation really means in our lives. That’s a hard question. Its best answer must be found in prayer.

One of my favorite lines from the Advent readings is from Micah 5:4, “He shall be peace.” The early prophet was not saying, Israel’s future king would bring peace or foster peace. No, much deeper, much more encompassing than that. He will be peace.

It reminds you of what Jesus said. “I am the way, and the truth and the life.” I’m not merely showing you the way, spelling out for you the truth. I am the way.

This can only mean, for us, that we must engage in relationship with Jesus. We aren’t just called to do good in this world, but to grow with him who is good, he who is the image of the invisible God. This is a call we cannot neglect.

Put yourself in the mind of a Jewish person at the time of Christ. Your faith has taught you that a Messiah will appear someday, to save the people of God from their grievous suffering. All of the prophets point to a future king in David’s line. If the Gallup Poll existed back in Jesus’ day, the average Jewish person would probably have described for the pollster this Messiah in terms of military might and power.

At the time of Christ’s birth, Judah and Galilee, the towns of Bethlehem and Nazareth, and even Jerusalem, were all under the crushing heel of the boot of the Roman Empire. If you dreamed of liberation from this mighty force, you probably saw it in terms of revolution, the kind of revolution you imagined your savior would bring.

Could you have visualized your salvation coming in the form of a baby born to the poor? Worse, a man who would eventually be killed in the most ignominious execution the times would allow? How can this be our Messiah?

In some ways, those questions still haunt us. Why does our world still suffer so? Where is our salvation? Why didn’t Jesus change everything?

And moreover, if Jesus surprised his people, how often does he come to us and we fail to see him because we have preconceived ideas of who he is? Let January be your classroom, Jesus your teacher. Ask him these questions. Take up the challenge of the Year of Mercy and ask Jesus how you can merge yourself into his mind, how he can change everything.
Wednesday, Feb. 2
7 p.m.
“St. Joseph the Worker, St. Jules & St. Elizabeth” Pierre Part

Thursday, Feb. 3
7 p.m.
“Immaculate Heart of Mary, St. Joseph & St. Frances Cabrini” Maringouin

Friday, Feb. 4
7 p.m.
St. John the Evangelist Plaquemine

Saturday, Feb. 6
4 p.m.
Our Lady of Peace Vacherie

Sunday, Feb. 7
11 a.m.
St. Ann Morganza

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Monday & Tuesday, Jan. 25-26
CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL – Bishop Robert W. Muench, School Chaplains – Rev. Matthew Dupré, Rev. Josh Johnson, Rev. Miles Walsh and other priests

Wednesday & Thursday, Jan. 27 & 29

Monday & Tuesday, Feb. 1-2

For schools outside of Baton Rouge have their chaplains oversee Reconciliation Services.

BISHOP’S 2015-2016 ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SCHEDULED VISITS

Monday, Feb. 22
Holy Ghost Hammond

Thursday, Feb. 25
St. John Plaquemine

Tuesday, Mar. 1
Catholic Pointe Coupee New Roads

What is your favorite sport and what makes it your favorite?

I learned to play basketball in my high school’s yard, and it quickly became my favorite. Why? Because it was non-stop. Because we had to play offense and defense. Because it required us to play as a team. I was a “streak shooter.” When I got “hot,” I could shoot extremely well from the outside. Looking back, I wish that there had been a three-point line back when I played. Watching today, I realize that I took pride that the basketball I played was a non-contact, finesse “team” sport. Today’s pro-basketball does not interest me so much because of all the pushing, hands-on action and a tendency toward individualism rather than toward “team” effort.

If you have news or events coming up in your church parish, school or organization, please let us know about it so we can spread the word! Email Richard Meek at rmeek@diobr.org; or fax to 225-336-8710
OLOL selects social worker for inaugural Sister Linda award

Kristine Little, LCSW, was presented the inaugural Sister Linda Constantin Courage and Compassion Award during a recently ceremony at Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center, left to right, are Little, Sr. Barbara Arco- neaux FMOL and Linda Lee, administrator, Mary Bird Perkins – Our Lady of the Lake Cancer Center. Photo provided by Scott Miller | Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center

Our Lady of the Lake Cancer Center has chosen Kristina Little, LCSW and patient navigator, as the inaugural Sister Linda Constantin Courage and Compassion Award winner. The purpose of the award, named in honor of Sister Linda, a longtime nurse and member of the senior administrative team at Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center, is to recognize a cancer center team member who exemplifies her deeply held values and beliefs. Sister Linda passed away in 2005 after battling colon cancer.

Little, a member of the cancer center team for more than four years, specializes in navigating head and neck cancer patients through their journey, beginning with diagnosis and continuing through treatment. Dr. Daniel Nuss, chair of the OLOL Cancer Center's Head and Neck Cancer Multidisciplinary Care Team, praised Little for her work with a complex patient population because of often disfiguring and life-changing surgeries and other treatments.

"Not only is (Little) an expert in the type of support head and neck cancer patients need, ensuring they understand what is required for the next step of their treatment and ensuring they have every resource available," said Nuss at the award presentation.

Provincial Sister Barbara Arceneaux FMOL presented the award to Little in front of an audience of Mary Bird Perkins and Our Lady of the Lake team members. "Sister Linda believed in justice for all and service as a privilege. In the last days of her life, her constant request was for a good deed to be done for another. Her life was truly remarkable and her legacy vast. We are so proud Little is carrying on Sister Linda's ministry of caring for those most in need," said Arceneaux.

Also speaking at the award presentation were cancer center administrator Linda Lee and Coletta Barrett, vice president of mission at Our Lady of the Lake. The Sister Linda Constantin Courage and Compassion Award will be presented annually.

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Call today to schedule an appointment to help ensure your finances are keeping pace with you.
All of the historical artifacts presented at the International Mass were on display at the reception.

Lynn Kaylor Rob-
Nita takes a photo of a family name she found while browsing a book on Germans who settled along the Mississippi River. Germans pioneers settled along the river in the 1720s by John Law and his Company of the Indies.

A French prayer book “Livre des Missions” was published by the Redemptorist Order in 1846.

A German Bible from 1871 was given to St. Joseph Cathedral from an anonymous donor; the book is today Nova Scotia to Maryland. In addition to the cover of the original register presented since, with the advanced age of the item, the pages are fragile and “sensitive.” She added that while the book is open to families for genealogical research, it along with many other items documenting the history and culture of the diocese, are stored in a protected environment.

In addition to the cover of the original acadian registry and a prayer book, the area’s French culture was also highlighted through song during the Mass showing the rich heritage and found items were selected based on the culture of each country.

Photographs by Vic Messina when he served the mission church supported by the Diocese of Baton Rouge for 10 years, and one of the oldest and most unique documents of the diocese included a framed picture of the Mass showing the rich heritage of the diocese, are stored in a protected environment.

In addition to the cover of the original register of St. Charles aux Mines Church, the church of the Acadians before they were forced to leave their homeland by the British. The register is one of those owned by the Acadians. They were saved in 1755 by Acadian ancestors who traveled from what is today Nova Scotia to Maryland and finally to Louisiana where they founded St. Gabriel Church.

Ann Bolin, archivist of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, noted only the cover of the original register was presented since, with the advanced age of the item, the pages are fragile and “sensitive.” She added that while the book is open to families for genealogical research, it along with many other items documenting the history and culture of the diocese, are stored in a protected environment.

In addition to the cover of the original acadian registry and a prayer book, the area’s French culture was also highlighted through song during the Mass, which also featured Scripture readings and intentions recited in different languages and a final blessing given by the bishop in Latin.

Following the Mass, approximately 200 parishioners and guests attended a reception in the Cathedral’s parish hall, where they were treated to music and international food sampling.

Bobbie Carry, chair of the development group of the cathedral, noted the idea to have some type of food was just a natural extension of Louisiana’s culture.

“We saw that we had the different (ethnic) groups reflected in prayer, music, history and language. Of course, this is Louisiana, so we must have food,” she said, noting that the idea for an international Mass originated when she and her committee members recognized the diocese is such a “wonderful gambol of peoples,” and they wanted to focus on that.

Carry also explained that while the International Mass was well received, another one next year at the cathedral is not being planned at this time. Instead, the committee is working on other ideas, including one that is approaching soon, a vigil Mass and dinner honoring volunteers on April 16.

Father Counce, who pointed out the renovation and expansion of the parish hall certainly opens up the possibility of more church events, expressed spending time talking with those in attendance and found the international Mass was a great way to be reminded that even though we belong to one or another ethnic group, we all belong to something so much bigger: the Catholic Church.

A baptism register for Holy Ghost Church in Hammond dates from 1896-1918. The names of Vietnamese martyrs canonized by the Holy See and Le Van Phung Parish.

A German Bible from 1871 was given to St. Joseph Cathedral from an anonymous donor; the book is today Nova Scotia to Maryland.
Swimmers set high-water marks in state competition

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

The alarm clock goes off at 4 a.m. and Catholic High School senior Colin Bone gets up and is out of the house by 4:25 a.m. He trains until 6:30 a.m. and gets ready for school, after which he practices with the Catholic High School swim team until about 5:45 p.m., goes home and eats and, shortly after, goes to bed.

“I put in 16-17 hour days,” said Bone.

Bone and St. Joseph’s Academy senior Amy Miller, who keeps a similar grueling schedule as another member of the Black Team and St. Joseph’s Academy swim team, are gratified, however, because they helped their schools’ swim teams win the Division I State Championship and set records. This was SJA’s fifth consecutive state title and CHS’s fourth.

Miller became the first female to break the 50-second barrier in the 100-yard freestyle, in a time of 49.97 seconds at the state meet. Miller also won the 100-yard breaststroke in 1:03.35, the fastest time in state meet. Miller has since signed a letter of intent to swim at Texas A&M.

Miller swam “off and on” as a child but didn’t swim competitively until her sophomore year. She played volleyball through her ninth-grade year and attempted to join the gymnastics team but was told she was too tall.

“It was my dream, but it didn’t happen,” Miller said.

Knowing she needed to focus on one sport, Miller decided to try swimming, and she is quite successful.

An old injury, a broken elbow near the growth plate she sustained in the sixth grade as she did some swimming dry-lands exercise, threatened to cut her swimming career short in her junior year. It was suspected her ligament tore while it bothered her.

Dr. Felix “Buddy” Savoie of Tulane’s Institute of Sports Medicine surgically repaired the ligament and Miller’s dedication cut her recovery time significantly. Miller has since signed a letter of intent to the swim at Texas A&M.

“Colin is the best and most accomplished swimmer in the history of Catholic High School. He finished his high school career undefeated and holds or was part of 6 LHSAA state records,” said CHS swim coach Doug Logsdon. “Outside of the pool Colin was a great teammate. He served as a role model for his teammates and regularly spoke to them about practice, effort, faith and life in general. He’s a tremendous young man who comes from a great family – his mom teaches at St. Jude. I am proud to have coached Colin and we wish him nothing but the best of luck at Olympic Tri-

Catholic High School senior Colin Bone (left) was named the Male Swimmer of the Meet and St. Joseph’s Academy senior Amy Miller were named the Female Swimmer of the Meet at the Division I State Championship.

“I’m really excited to go to college and to get to know everyone,” said Miller, who wants to go to nursing school.

Bone started swimming lessons at the same time as his sister, a student at Tulane University. While she dropped out of the sport until she joined the SJA swim team, he continued to swim.

“I think she quit because I kept beating her. She didn’t want her little brother beating her,” Bone said wryly.

Bone has gone on to not only beat his sister, but to top swimming athletes in high school. He signed a letter of intent with Auburn University.

“Colin is the best and most accomplished swimmer in the history of Catholic High School. He finished his high school career undefeated and holds or was part of 6 LHSAA state records,” said CHS swim coach Doug Logsdon. “Outside of the pool Colin was a great teammate. He served as a role model for his teammates and regularly spoke to them about practice, effort, faith and life in general. He’s a tremendous young man who comes from a great family – his mom teaches at St. Jude. I am proud to have coached Colin and we wish him nothing but the best of luck at Olympic Tri-

SEE SWIMMERS PAGE 13

Save the Date

Diocese of Baton Rouge Diocesan Youth Conference.

DYC 2016
Faith Based Investigators

Saturday, February 20, 2016
Catholic Life Center
Baton Rouge, LA

Check with your youth minister for more information and a formal flyer once it becomes available. You may also check the Diocese of Baton Rouge Youth Ministry website at www.diobryouth.org!
Once her old ones have been is constantly setting new goals ethic has been contagious. She “Her dedication and strong work swim coach Rebecca Barber. “Amy’s outstanding swim -
ing career is not the only thing that has made Amy such a huge asset to this team,” said SJA swim coach Rebecca Barber. “Her dedication and strong work ethic has been contagious. She is constantly setting new goals once her old ones have been met. She has been such a great example for our whole team on never giving up. I am so proud of Amy and cannot wait to see what she will accomplish in the years to come.” Bone and Miller said they enjoy swimming because it is a full-body sport which allows them to focus on their own performances yet work together with the rest of their teams. “You’re trying to better your own times, but having a team that supports you is one of the most important aspects of this sport,” Bone said. “It would be very hard to do this by yourself.” “You have to put in the work and practice all the time to bet -
ter yourself and others in the group. If they see you doing this they will want to do the same. It’s about bettering each other,” Miller said.

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St. Louis King of France Church
2121 North Sherwood Forest
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Call 225-275-7280 for more information.

ART WINNER – Jayla Patrick, center, a seventh-grade student at Belfair Montessori School, received an award from depu -ty grand knight Billy Rimes, left, and grand knight David Dartez, right, of the Knights of Columbus Order 13632 at St. Joseph Cathedral. Patrick won the KC chapter’s “Keep Christ in Christmas Poster Contest,” an event held annually by KC chapters across the nation to inspire and encourage community. With a student population of approximately 200, of which 85% are enrolled through the Louisiana State Scholarship Program, the school community focuses on creating an educational atmosphere which encourages and challenges students to develop their fullest potential.

Applicants must meet the following criteria:
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The Catholic Commentator
Joy
Loosely based on the life of Joy Mangano, inventor of the self-wringing “Miracle Mop” and a cable television sensation, this madcap tale about a dysfunctional family hoping to hit the big time is written and directed by David O. Russell. Jennifer Lawrence plays the divorced mother of two who struggles mightily to keep a roof over the heads of four generations of her extended clan. Her father (Robert De Niro), a mechanic and tinkerer, has robbed extreme athletes in place of the leader of the gang he’s been assigned to infiltrate – stalls, crashes and burns. The rampant mayhem of the first version has been curbed, and the visual thrills to be derived from this iteration are obvious. But viewers will search in vain for any consistent morality below the slick surface – or for much that lingers in the memory. Gun and physical violence, a brief scene of implied sexual activity, drug use, fleeting crude and crass language. A-III; PG-13

The Revenant
A wilderness survival drama, directed and co-written by Alejandro Inarritu, based on the life of Hugh Glass (Leonardo DiCaprio), an explorer and fur trader in the American West of the 1820s. On an expedition up the Missouri River led by a military captain (Domhnall Gleeson), Glass is attacked by a grizzly bear. Lying near death, Glass is powerless to prevent the murder of his son by a fellow hunter (Tom Hardy), who abandons him in the wilderness. Glass refuses to succumb, crawls out of the grave, and embarks on a 200-mile odyssey through vast uncharted lands to avenge his son’s murder and bring the killer to justice. As such, he becomes a “revenant,” or one returned from the dead. For adults with stomach strong enough to endure many squeamish moments, rewards await: a powerful film with first-rate performances, stunning cinematography, and timely messages about good versus evil, and of redemption versus revenge. Bloody violence and gore, several disturbing images, a sexual assault, frequent rough, crude and profane language. L; R

Church’s credibility found in showing mercy, pope says in new book

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Being ministers of God’s mercy, church members overcome “prejudice and rigidity,” taking risks like Jesus did in order to heal and to save, Pope Francis said.

In Jesus’ day, lepers were cast out of the community “to avoid contamination: the healthy needed to be protected,” but Jesus, at his own risk, “goes up to the leper and he restores him, he heals him,” Pope Francis said in a new book-length interview on mercy.

“By welcoming a marginalized person whose body is wounded and by welcoming the sinner whose soul is wounded, we put our credibility as Christians on the line,” the pope told the Italian journalist Andrea Tornielli in “The Name of God Is Mercy.”

The book was released Jan. 12.

In the interview, the pope spoke about experiencing an overwhelming sense of mercy during confession when he was 17 years old, provided more details about stories he has recounted in homilies, explained his comment, “Who am I to judge” about a homosexual person seeking God and discussed the need he saw to invoke a jubilee Year of Mercy.

He also talked about the relationship of mercy and justice and addressed criticism that his focus on mercy amounts to watering down church doctrine and tolerating sin.

Tornielli asked Pope Francis why he so frequently and negatively mentions the “scholars of the law” in his morning homilies. The pope responded that in the Gospels “they represent the principal opposition to Jesus: they challenge him in the name of doctrine” and such an attitude “is repeated throughout the long history of the church.”

Using the example of Jesus’ close contact with lepers despite the Old Testament law that lepers be excluded from the community, Pope Francis said it is obvious that the exclusion of lepers was meant to contain disease, but it led to social and emotional suffering and, what is worse, to a sense that lepers had committed some sin which caused their disease. They were excluded from the community, but also from a relationship with God.

In literally reaching out to lepers, the pope said, Jesus “shows us a new horizon, the logic of a God who is love, a God who desires the salvation of all men.”

Jesus touched and healed the lepers, he continued. “He didn’t sit down at a desk and study the situation, he didn’t consult the experts for pros and cons. What really mattered to him was reaching stranded people and saving them.”
Healing begins with patience and support

Shawn Mendes’ song “Stitches” addresses a problem many face: putting one’s life back together after a painful romantic breakup. In his words, “I thought that I’d been hurt before, but no one’s ever left me quite this sore; your words cut deeper than a knife.”

The protagonist of the song is in so much emotional pain that he’s “got a feeling that I’m going under” even though he knows that “I’ll make it out alive if I quit calling you my lover.”

However, he seems to be sabotaging this effort to “move on” by “tripping over myself, aching, begging you to come help.” He also feels that “now that I’m without your kisses, I’ll be needing stitches.”

While “stitches” is used metaphorically, referring to mending his broken heart, the real help he needs is a stronger will. It is impossible to heal from a romantic separation if your initial reaction is to beg someone to continue a relationship.

Of course he is hurting because of the demise of the relationship, but healing can begin only when he accepts that it’s over. His life can begin anew when he starts looking ahead rather than behind.

How can he do this, particularly when he still longs for another person? For the protagonist, or for anyone else, the first step is to understand that the process of moving on requires patience. Rarely is healing from an emotional loss a steady climb past the hurt a person may feel. Some days the sense of loss will be intense, and other days it seems easier to accept. This is why patience helps.

One must allow for the normal emotional ups and downs that are always part of loss. When patience is combined with the will to heal, eventually one’s life can feel whole again. A person can once again feel a renewed hope for the future.

Martin is an Indiana pastoral counselor who reviews current music for Catholic News Service. Your comments are always welcome. Please write to me at: cmartin@hughes.net, or at: 7125 West CR 200 South, Rockport, IN 47365, or like this column on Facebook at “Charlie Martin’s Today’s Music Columns” and post a comment or suggestion.

Visit The Catholic Commentator Online for more ‘Charlie Martin’ columns at thecatholiccommentator.org.
Editorial

Unfulfilled dream

Equality begins with a dream. A dream of a society where all are treated equally and with the respect all human beings deserve.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. had that dream and the courage to publicly pursue that goal in an era when racism was rampant and the plantation mentality was still very much a part of the fabric of many southern communities. King paid the ultimate price for the cause of human rights but his memory is very much alive.

Rightfully, the country honors this great American hero annually in January. But nearly five decades after his life was shortened by a sniper’s bullet, one has to wonder how far the country has advanced in treating people of all races equally. Admittedly, gone are the days of separate water fountains, back of the bus rides, Jim Crow; and denial of voting rights based on skin color. But is it accurate or delusional to say that racism has been exonerated? The answer is obvious as the daily headlines that scream of alleged police brutality, hate crimes committed against people because of their sexual orientation and demands that we close the borders denying refugees suffering religious and political persecution in other countries the opportunity to seek a better life in the United States.

Is King’s dream of a colorblind society still just a dream, an insuperable goal?

The question is as poignant as it was a half a century ago when Rosa Parks courageously refused to give her seat up on a public bus to a white passenger, especially in this election year when presidential candidates are resorting to racial-hating, cultural stereotyping, cockamammy symbolism and fear tactics to advance their agendas and woo voters. They have seemingly become fear mongers, incorporating apocalyptic dialogue as a part of their campaign oratory.

Sadly, candidates from both parties bear the burden of guilt.

Meanwhile, hatred that had festered for two generations is surfacing to greater degrees on a daily basis, defiling the conscious of modern society. Politicians seemingly intent on polarizing rather than unifying an already divided country are perpetuating the carnage. Their noxious drivel is insulting to every American voter.

As Catholics, our mandate from Christ is to preserve Dr. King’s dream of a society where all human beings are created equal with inalienable rights and not allow it to be extinguished by the flames of racism and bigotry. Not only is it our civil duty but our spiritual responsibility as well.

“Bear wrongs patiently” is the fourth of the seven spiritual works of mercy, at least in the list I am reading in Michael Gaitley’s book, “You Did It to Me.” A caution: the corporal and spiritual works of mercy are based on scriptural sayings, usually those of Jesus and St. Paul. You will find slight variance in order and the wording of these works of mercy.

For instance, Dr. Robert Stockpole, director of the John Paul II Institute of Divine Mercy, gives a different order in “The Spiritual Works of Mercy: parish renewal program,” listing “Be patient with those in error” as number five. Both bearing wrongs patiently and being patient with those who are in error are virtues, but I prefer Gaitley’s wording because St. Paul in his epistles five times commends “patient endurance” to his new Christians. In most of these instances he is talking about hardships they are enduring with patience. It could be the Corinthians quarreling among themselves, as they were want to do. Applied to our present life this work of mercy could be as simple as patience when someone cuts us off in traffic. There is a famous bumper sticker that those of us who drive as if we are afflicted with road rage should use: “Please be patient, God is not finished with me yet.” On the other hand, St. Paul sometimes is referring to the patient endurance of the early Christians in the face of religious persecution, a truly heroic virtue, sadly also necessary in many areas of our world today.

Spiritual works of mercy are directed to the needs of the soul, while corporal works of mercy are intended to help the bodily needs of others. As with other spiritual works of mercy, bearing wrongs patiently often has the advantage of helping both parties, the one doing the wrong and the one bearing it patiently. When we have been insulted directly, or unkind remarks about us have been made and reported to us, we have two choices: to turn in kind and intensify the hurt now going both ways, or bear the wrong patiently, double our effort to be kind to the other and break the chain of hurt. If we can make this second response, we maintain our peace of soul, and the other has the chance to get over whatever anger, jealous or ill-feeling caused the attack. Mercy in a spiritual way has been given.

Beyond our personal spirituality, bearing wrongs patiently can be needed as a public virtue. Present day instant communication of everything that happens locally, nationally and internationally, which give partial facts as they happen and seldom the whole story, has made us a much angrier world. Everything seems wrong, everyone feels he or she is a victim or is in imminent danger of becoming one. There was a story Jan. 4 on public radio about a refugee camp in Kenya so filled with Sudanese refugees it has become the size of Atlanta, Georgia. It was reported that everyone turned to have a cell phone, not a full smartphone, but at least a phone that had Facebook capability. People were selling their daily inadequate ration of food to replace lost or broken phones. In many instances it was the only way they could keep in touch with family members separated in their flight from the killing in Sudan. That contact, I am sure, was some consolation, but one can imagine the fear, desperation and anger communicated and multiplying in that dreadful situation for those seeking solution in sight. It sounded like a microcosm of our world trying to adjust to the good and the bad of this new era of mass communication of information. We live in difficult, dangerous and angry times. We need to be patient as a nation and a community of nations with whatever burdens we bear and not blame others too easily for them.

I do not believe that the present tone of politics in our nation reflects the true goodness of America. Fear and anger are winning votes. They are being used demagogically by candidates. The good we can do for our own people and for the suffering peoples of the world is being forgotten. We need to protect our own selves, certainly. But we as a nation also have a moral and Christian obligation to share the burdens and the risks of others. The irony of our day is that the Germans, who only about 80 years ago succumbed to the message of fear, anger and scapegoating voiced by Hitler and his Nazi program of genocide, are now the bravest of nations in accepting refugees fleeing similar cruelties in the Mideast and Africa. They have turned bad history into virtuous mercy. Being called upon to accept refugees may seem to us Americans a wrong done by ISIS with intentional diabolical malevolence, and this is quite likely true. But considering the innocent lives at stake, it is a wrong that we should willingly and patiently bear. The result of not doing so was adroitly captured in a recent newspaper cartoon of the Statue of Liberty becoming a refugee.

Father John 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.

Viewpoint

Bear wrongs patiently

Another Perspective

Father John Carville

Mission Statement

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.


Forever being ahead of our souls

S

ome times nothing is a helpful as a good metaphor. In his book, “The God Instinct,” Tom Stella shares this story: A number of men who made their living as porters were hired one day to carry a huge load of supplies for a group on safari. Their loads were unusually heavy and the trek through the jungle was on a rough path. Several days into the journey they stopped, unshouldered their loads, and refused to go on. No pleas, bribes or threats, worked in terms of persuading them to go on. Asked why they couldn’t continue, they answered: “We can’t go on; we have to wait for our souls to catch up with us.”

That happens to us too in life, except mostly we never wait for our souls to catch up. We continue on without them, sometimes for years. What’s meant by this? Mostly it means that we struggle to be in the present moment, to be inside our own skins, to be aware of the richness of our own experience. Mostly our experiences aren’t very soulful because we aren’t very present to them. For example:

For the past 20 years, I’ve kept a journal, a diary of sorts. My intent in keeping this journal is to record the deeper things that I’m aware of throughout each day; but mostly what I end up actually writing down is a simple chronology of my day, a daybook, a bare, no-frills, recounting of what I did from hour to hour. My diaries don’t much resemble Anne Frank’s diary, Dag Hammarskjold’s, Markings, Etty Hillesum’s, An Interrupted Life, or Henri Nouwen’s, Genesee Diary. My journals resemble more what you might get from a schoolboy describing his day at school, a simple chronology of what happened. Yet when I go back and read an account of what I did each day, I’m always amazed at how rich and full life was on those days, except that I wasn’t much aware of it at the time. While actually living through those days, mostly I was struggling to get my work done, to stay healthy, to meet expectations, to carve out some moments of friendship and recreation among the pressures of the day, and to get to bed at a reasonable hour.

In Exile

Father Ron Rolheiser

There wasn’t as much of soul there, just a lot of routine, work and hurry. I suspect that this is not atypical. Most of us, I suspect, live most of our days not very aware of how rich our lives are, forever leaving our souls behind: For example, many is the woman who gives 10 - 15 to fifteen years of her life to bearing and raising children, with all that entails, tending constantly to someone else’s needs, getting up at night to nurse a child, spending 24 hours a day on constant alert, sacrificing all leisure time, and putting a career and personal creativity on hold. And yet too often that same woman, later on, looks back on those years and wishes she could relive them—but, now, in a more soulful way, more deliberately aware of how wonderful and privileged it is to do precisely those things she did with so much drama and tiredness. Years later, looking back, she sees how rich and precious her experience was and how, because of the burden and sacrifice, how little her soul was present then to what she was actually undergoing.

This can be multiplied with a thousand examples:

Lessons learned through the blessing of silence

S

everal years ago a friend approached me about attending a silent retreat at St. Joseph Abbey. Naturally for someone who has a tendency to be verbose and has on occasion been asked, well, demanded, to throttle back on the dialogue, the idea seemed preposterous. Upon further questioning, I learned silence was required from after dinner on Friday night until Sunday at noon, following 11 a.m. Mass.

But surely conversation was allowed during meals. After all, who would want to eat scrambled eggs in silence? And what happened to “please pass the salt?” Not a chance. Silence meant silence.

But the idea was presented to this cynical soul in a way that the retreat would be an opportunity to deepen my spiritual life. Heck, I thought, my spiritual life, like so many others, seems shallow far too often, so it became a risk-reward conversation, and risk won out.

Staff members at the time chuckled a bit too loudly and enthusiastically when informed of my plans, and I was not even offended when wages were made and betting lines established about how long I could remain silent. I even thought about plucking down a scarfing or two.

Packed with reading material, including a copy of “The Return of the Prodigal Son,” a magnificent book which the Diocese of Baton Rouge will utilize immediately. Admittedly, it was a bit unerving to watch 30 adult men file out of the dining room without saying a word, not even the expected male grunts of satisfaction that accompany an excellent meal.

The retreat followed a familiar format with daily Mass and rosaries, morning and evening prayers, spiritual presentations and free time. Still transitioning from work, the first night of silence was welcome but the impact hit me the following morning when the only sounds were that of knives and forks carving their way through breakfast.

As the weekend unfolded, silence surprisingly became a welcome friend and not an unwelcome obstacle. Silence allows all retreatants the opportunity to purge their minds and hearts of outside distractions and focus on God’s word. Silence invites those in attendance to bare their hearts and communicate with God, to offer prayers and use the silence to listen for an answer.

We all hear stories of how God speaks to individuals through words or even signs. Recently, I mentioned to someone that God has never spoken to me in the way he has to so many others. The response was, “Were you ever quiet long enough to listen?” Guilty as charged, but the one lesson I learned is that silence offers the opportunity to hear what God is telling us, where he wants us to lead us, and to trust in him the journey will be spiritually rewarding. All one has to do is listen.

Listening is the one struggle I have yet to overcome, but retreats offer a wonderful opportunity to spend quiet time with God, to reveal in his works, ask for his mercy and to continuously pray without interruption. That alone is worth two days of silence.
Women in Spirit Meeting – Jean Gatz, motivational speaker, author and member of St. Jude Church in Baton Rouge, will speak at the Women in Spirit meeting on Thursday, Jan. 28, noon, at the St. Joseph Cathedral Parish Hall, Fourth and Main streets, Baton Rouge. Women in Spirit is a non-denominational meeting for women seeking spiritual growth. A complimentary luncheon will be provided. RSVP by emailing sjomenspirit@aol.com or calling the cathedral office at 225-387-5928.

Fried Chicken Dinner – St. Joseph Church, 76450 Gum St., Grosse Tete, will host its annual fried chicken dinner, sponsored by the church’s Ladies Altar Society, on Sunday, Jan. 31, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. The menu includes chicken, rice dressing, greenbeans and a roll. Dinners are $7 each. Sweets will also be available for purchase. For more information, call 225-625-2438.

Defending Life Class – Clelie Carpenter, a Baton Rouge 40-Days for Life leader, will present a Defending Life Class on Saturday, Jan. 30, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m., at Bethany Church South Campus, 10877 Reiger Road, Baton Rouge. The event is co-sponsored by Baton Rouge Right to Life. For more information and to reserve a spot, email cleliecarpenter@gmail.com.

St. Mark Mission – Father Wade Menezes CPM of the Fathers of Mercy Apostolate will present a parish mission, “Celebrating the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy,” Saturday, Jan. 31 – Thursday, Feb. 4. Sessions begin at 7 p.m. with exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, a talk and benediction. Confession is available before and after the sessions. For information, call 225-647-8461.

St. Joseph and St. Michael School Reunion – A reunion of former students and employees of St. Joseph and St. Michael schools will be held Saturday, Feb. 6, with a Mass at 4:30 p.m., at St. Michael Church, 6484 Hwy. 44, Convent. There will be a tour of the St. Michael school building followed by a reception in the church hall. For information, call 225-869-5784.

Diocesan Wedding Anniversary Celebration – Bishop Robert W. Muench will celebrate a Mass honoring couples celebrating their 25th, 50th and 65th or greater wedding anniversaries on Sunday, Feb. 21, 3 p.m., at Our Lady of Mercy Church, 445 Marquette Ave., Baton Rouge. A reception will follow at the church parish’s Activity Center. To register, contact your church parish office.

Festival of Two Rivers Auction-Taste Fair – St. Alphonsus Church, 14040 Greenwell Springs Road, Greenwell Springs, will hold its annual Festival of Two Rivers Auction and Taste Fair on Saturday, Feb. 27. Doors open at 5 p.m. and food will be served beginning at 6 p.m. Tickets are on sale at the church and school office. Each $100 ticket admits two adults. For information, call 225-261-4650 or 225-261-5299.

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Court rules Fla.’s death penalty system unconstitutional

WASHINGTON (CNS) – The U.S. Supreme Court Jan. 12 said the state of Florida’s death penalty system is unconstitutional because it allows judges, rather than juries, to determine whether a convicted criminal should get a death sentence.

Michael B. Sheedy, executive director of the Florida Conference of Catholic Bishops in Tallahassee, said the conference was “pleased this decision was issued so promptly” on what was the first day of Florida’s 2016 legislative session.

“This should compel the Legislature to address the issue immediately,” he said in a statement emailed to Catholic News Service.

Ruling in Hurst v. Florida, the high court said that the state’s “capital sentencing scheme” violates the Sixth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

Writing for the majority, Justice Sonia Sotomayor said the amendment, which guarantees the rights of criminal defendants, “requires a jury, not a judge, to find each fact necessary to impose a sentence of death.”

The case is named for Timothy Lee Hurst, convicted of the 1998 murder of his manager at a Pensacola, Florida, fast-food restaurant. In Florida, the jury plays an advisory role, deciding if the defendant is eligible for the death penalty; then a judge determines whether that sentence should be imposed.

In Hurst’s case, a jury in 2000 decided 7-5 in favor of putting him to death. He was granted a new sentencing hearing on appeal, and the jury again recommended a death sentence. A judge then found the facts necessary to sentence Hurst to death, and the Florida Supreme Court affirmed that decision.

Hurst’s lawyers in an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court argued his sentence violated the Sixth Amendment.

According to an AP story, the Supreme Court returned the case to the Florida Supreme Court, which now must review Hurst’s sentence and determine if he should get a new sentencing hearing.

Justice Samuel Alito was the lone dissenter in the ruling. He said that Florida judges are simply reviewing what juries in such cases have already decided.

“According to Sheedy, Florida’s Catholic conference, which is the public policy arm of the state’s bishops, “has long identified the need to address Florida’s flawed death sentencing scheme despite our position that life imprisonment without parole is an alternative that keeps society safe and renders the death penalty unnecessary.”

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“Archbishop Francis Bible Schulte was quintessentially a man of God and a man of the Church,” Bishop Muench, who served as vicar general under Archbishop Schulte, said in a statement. “He was a genuinely spiritual, prayerful and Christ-like person, who deeply embraced his call as a baptized/confirmed disciple of Jesus, and ordained deacon, priest, bishop and archbishop of the Catholic faith.

“Gifted with an incredibly brilliant intellect, he was a clear and forceful teacher of that faith, an eloquent preacher of the Word (who could speak spontaneously like an accomplished poet), a talented and dedicated administrator, and a skilled executive who utilized process as his style of leading. He was also an engaging conversationalist, with an acute sense of humor.”

Archbishop Schulte, born Dec. 23, 1926 in Philadelphia, was ordained to the priesthood May 10, 1952. He spent much of his pastoral career in education, serving as a faculty member in Philadelphia-area Catholic schools, then as assistant superintendent and eventually superintendent of schools for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

Archbishop Schulte was appointed auxiliary bishop in Philadelphia on June 27, 1981 and appointed the Bishop of Wheeling-Charleston, West Virginia on June 4, 1985. He was appointed archbishop of New Orleans Dec. 6, 1988 and installed Feb. 14, 1989 at St. Louis Cathedral.

Archbishop Schulte submitted his letter of resignation to the Vatican in 2001 as mandated at the age of 75 and on Feb. 16, 2001, St. John Paul II appointed Archbishop Alfred C. Hughes, who had been shepherding the Diocese of Baton Rouge since 1993, as Coadjutor Archbishop of New Orleans. Archbishop Hughes was installed in New Orleans on Jan. 3, 2002.

Bishop Muench, who had been serving as bishop of the Diocese of Covington, Kentucky since 1996, was appointed bishop for the Diocese of Baton Rouge on Dec. 15, 2001 and installed at St. Joseph Cathedral on March 14, 2002.

“To me personally (Archbishop Schulte) was a very specially treasured friend, mentor, inspiration and companion whom I will always remember with deep fondness and gratitude,” Bishop Muench said. “May he rest in peace of the risen Christ.”

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Catholic Schools Week 2016

Supplement to The Catholic Commentator
Happy Catholic Schools Week, everyone!

What a blessing you all are to me and to us all!

I commend and affirm parents who have sent their children to one or more of our Catholic schools. You have committed yourselves, your financial support and your cooperative efforts to be a positive influence in your children's development. Most of you have sacrificed material goods (a larger home, a better car, a more expensive vacation and the like) to make an investment in the development of each young person when we know how to give them space. This means that we have to create the material and spiritual conditions for the full development of our children. They seek to be instruments of grace of the God who has created and redeemed. They exist to enlighten, educate, inspire and encourage their students, helping them to learn about what it means to be human, and helping them inculcate what it means to be called to share in God's divinity, in the dimensions of both time and eternity.

And so I take this special opportunity to acknowledge and thank Dr. Melanie Verges, our diocesan superintendent of schools, and her dedicated staff, diocesan and local school board members, as well as local home and school association members, pastors, priest chaplains, administrators, teachers, staff, volunteers, benefactors, alumni and alumnae, but most of all, you the parents, family members and students of our beloved Catholic schools. What a blessing you all are to me and to us all! Happy Catholic Schools Week, everyone!

From the Bishop

Bishop Robert W. Muench

Making a difference

The holy father's reminder of the ministry of Catholic education helps us to realize the importance of the work that is celebrated during Catholic Schools Week. After recently completing the self-study process for national accreditation and preparing to welcome the quality assurance visiting team, Diocese of Baton Rouge Catholic schools involved in district accreditation are keenly aware of the importance of creating material and spiritual conditions for the full development of students in their care. Our vision to Evangelize Hearts, Educate Minds, Encourage Talent, and Embrace the Future is focused on providing a solid foundation that helps students fully develop their God-given gifts so that they can be everything they can be.

During Catholic Schools Week, we will gather to celebrate Mass with Bishop Robert W. Muench and priests from across the diocese. In addition to prayer during Mass, two important signs of our Catholic identity are included in the day's activities. First, schools bring donations for Catholic Charities as a sign of gratitude for their commitment to service. Each year an entire truck is filled with items for people in need within our diocese. Second, faculty members with anniversary years of service are recognized as a sign of gratitude for their work in Catholic education. We all know teachers and staff members who have made a positive difference.

From the Superintendent

Dr. Melanie B. Verges

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Tuesday, January 26
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- Catholic environment
- Hands-on learning
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Challenges understood by Msgr. Berggreen

Msr. Robert Berggreen understands the challenges teachers encounter on a daily basis. As a former educator who taught at the now closed St. Joseph Preparatory school, where he also served as rector for seven years, Msgr. Berggreen can relate to teachers and administrators who must address education complexities likely unheard of 50 years ago.

Msgr. Berggreen, an avid reader who has more than 5,000 books and the pastor at St. Mary of False River Church in New Roads, generously shows his support to teachers at Catholic High School of Pointe Coupee and Catholic Elementary School of Pointe Coupee by being involved in many of the school’s activities. Because of his unwavering support to both schools, Msgr. Berggreen was chosen as the Distinguished Pastor of the Year for Catholic schools in the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

“Msgr. Robert H. Berggreen is the epitome of humility,” Catholic High School of Pointe Coupee principal Colleen Caillet said. He serves as the spiritual leader for our whole school community and shepherds us toward Christ-like values.

“Monsignor gives generously of his time to our school, leading Mass, serving on our advisory board, participating in senior retreat, days of recollection and many other special liturgical events. (Msrgr. Berggreen) is wise, gentle, supportive and a blessing for the Catholic of Pointe Coupee school family and the St. Mary of False River community.”

Msgr. Berggreen, who celebrated his golden jubilee as a priest in 2014, was ordained Dec. 19, 1964. He has served in numerous capacities for the diocese, including chancellor for 25 years. He was also director of vocations, a member of the College of Consultants and the clergy personnel board, secretary of education, the diocesan theology commission and the Bishop’s Senate of Priests.

Msgr. Berggreen spent 13 years at the prep school. He admitted that teaching was never a career he would have enjoyed but did enjoy his time in the classroom.

Sacred Heart offers Biddy Ball program for youngest students

The advantages of children participating in sports are well documented. Studies show that students participating in sports have higher grades, greater personal confidence and show more restraint in avoiding risky behavior.

But for the youngest athletes at Sacred Heart, the greatest benefit is fun. Sacred Heart’s coed Biddy Ball program is open to all students in pre-kindergarten through second grade. The program began eight years ago with basketball and tee ball. With the success of these two sports, the program was expanded two years ago to include soccer and flag football.

Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students are combined to form teams, and the teams play each other throughout the season. First and second grade students follow the same format. A typical season includes four to six games. All games are played on the Sacred Heart campus, including the historical ball field. The program is parent driven, with parents acting as coaches on the field and on the court with the students.

“Our Biddy Ball program provides our youngest ‘Tigers’ with a great opportunity to get involved in school activities at an early age,” said athletic director Cornell Christophe. The program creates bonds outside the classroom and teaches the students respect and team work, all while they learn basic, fundamental rules about the respective sports, according to the school’s website.

Baldridge ‘a gift to St. Michael’

According to St. Michael the Archangel Diocesan Regional High School principal Ellen Lee, educator Lisa Baldridge is always willing to go the “extra mile” for a student or even a coworker.

“Baldridge, who has been teaching Spanish at St. Michael for 27 years and was chosen the Distinguished Secondary School Educator for the Diocese of Baton Rouge, has led foreign travel experiences for students for 25 years. She was instrumental in beginning a mission trip program to Nicaragua that Lee said has been “life changing for many of our students.”

“(Baldridge) truly embodies the spirit of education and her Catholic faith by sharing her time and talents with everyone in the school community,” Lee said. “She has been a gift to St. Michael.”

Lisa Baldridge

According to Lee, Baldridge is always willing to try innovative ways to help her students and colleagues learn. Recently, St. Michael adopted the 1:1 Technology Program, and Baldridge has played a vital role in its implementation and success.

“She jumped right in, without fear or hesitation, determined to use technology for learning and has been a source of support and professional development for her fellow teachers,” Lee said. “When the need arose for a mentor for new teachers (Baldridge) agreed to accept the challenge with enthusiasm and a can-do attitude.”

Baldridge has served on a number of committees, including the faculty advisory committee, strategic planning committee, safety committee, capital campaign committee and multiple accreditation committees.

Baldridge has been “life changing for many of our students,” according to St. Michael principal Ellen Lee.

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Open House—February 3rd, 2016

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Please refer to our website for a more detailed description of our school’s programs.
Biddy Ball program for pre-kindergarten through second grade students. Parent coaches are, from left, James Papillion, Rick Akin and Gene Baker. Photo provided by Sacred Heart of Jesus School

Sacred Heart of Jesus first- and second-graders enjoy a game of soccer as part of the school’s Biddy Ball program for pre-kindergarten through second grade students. Parent coaches are, from left, James Papillion, Rick Akin and Gene Baker. Photo provided by Sacred Heart of Jesus School

Among the parents who are new to Sacred Heart, Trisha Rawlinson, agreed with Mascari. Practices and games give parents an opportunity to get to know one another and begin developing close friendships with other families here, which is a real hallmark of the Sacred Heart community,” Mascari said.

Rawlinson’s mother, Trisha, agrees with Mascari. According to his mother, Rawlinson previously played soccer through a league not affiliated with Sacred Heart. “Basically the kids played the game and everyone went home afterwards and didn’t get together again until the next game,” she said. When Rawlinson started playing at Sacred Heart, Trisha Rawlinson said she visited with the parents more, which created camaraderie both on and off the field. “While each parent is cheering for their own child, we’re also cheering collectively for children on both teams because we’re all part of the bigger Sacred Heart family,” she said.

Murphy plants educational seeds for the future

During the height of the so-called “space race,” when the United States and Russia were competing as to who would be the first country to send someone to the moon, Carolyn Murphy became infatuated with aeronautics. That experience led to a fascination for what she calls “all things science.”

Murphy is now living her dream, having taken over the science lab at the beginning of this school year at St. Aloysius, where she has taught for the past 31 years. Most students likely recognize Murphy, who also teaches fourth grade, as “teacher in the garden,” which has become her own haven.

Murphy, selected as a winner of the Distinguished Educator Award, was instrumental in creating the school garden, which has become an integral part of the St. Aloysius campus. The center has become a vibrant center of activity and almost daily students, teachers and even parents can be found working and learning in the garden.

Murphy, who also credits her love of science to a childhood spent playing outside in the country, exploring the woods, chasing creatures, building forts and playing in the dirt, said her plan is to assist teachers plan and conduct experiments in the lab that will provide students hands-on experience. Her goal is to have all classes visit the lab as well as work in the garden.

She wants students to gain skills such as “questioning things, coming up with a plan, learning from trial and error, working with others and recognizing success.”

Already during the current school year, a fifth-grade religion class made density rainbows a part of their study on Noah’s Ark and an eight-grade class produced a potion similar to the one in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s “Dr. Heidegger’s Experiment.” Sixth-grade class is planning to perform an experiment that shows how desert plants retain moisture.

Even music classes are learning songs about growing, seeds and are planting vegetables.

Murphy is a past recipient of the James DeBruyees Teacher Award, which is awarded annually to a St. Aloysius teacher or staff member who shows “dynamic thinking outside the box.”

Ms. Lisette Allen ● Texas Catholic Conference

Dr. Donald Edwards ● Archdiocese of Miami

Ms. Sandra Leatherwood ● Diocese of Charleston

Mr. Michael Pizzingrillo ● Diocese of Albany

Dr. Janice Ritter ● Diocese of Charlotte

Dr. Stephan Sargent ● Northwestern University

Thank you for your service.
St. Joseph’s Academy to establish new design lab

St. Joseph’s Academy recently identified STEM as an area of focus. Because women have traditionally been underrepresented in the fields of science, technology, engineering and math, SJA opened the Andrea Clesi McMakin ’74 STEM Lab to provide cross-curricular, hands-on learning opportunities in a laboratory setting.

Building on the success of the STEM Lab, SJA will establish an innovation and design lab to open in August. The new lab will offer cutting-edge, project-based learning to equip young women for success in college and the 21st century workplace. The innovation and design model helps students develop critical-thinking, collaboration, creating and problem-solving skills. In the lab, they will design projects to solve real-world problems and impact their communities, taking learning beyond classroom walls.

The lab will be the link between SJA’s STEM Lab and the global community. Students will learn to both think and do, said Amy Perrin, SJA’s director of innovation and design.

“The innovation and design lab will serve as both a design space/think tank and a classroom,” Perrin said. “The lab is a highly collaborative space where students will utilize the design thinking methodology to solve challenges that are relevant to the real-world and to the curriculum. The six-step design methodology — identify, interpret, ideate, invent, implement and improve — will bridge the gap between art and engineering, teaching students how to creatively design solutions to real-world problems.”

Students will have additional resources at their disposal to gather and focus information, imagine the possibilities, design a prototype, then build and deliver it, Perrin said. All students will be required to participate in at least one project-based assignment.

Students will identify a problem; develop empathy surrounding the problem; brainstorm ideas for solutions; and design an activity or object to help solve the problem. Failure, according to principal Dr. Michele Lambert, is encouraged.

“As is critical to success in the workplace, the innovation and design model teaches students the skill of knowing how to fail and move on from failure,” Lambert said. “This process is non-linear and will require students to often go back to a previous step or to start again from scratch. Not every project will be successful, and that is okay. Failure and, therefore, re-thinking are crucial components of the innovation and design model.”

In advance of the August opening of the innovation and design lab, Lambert challenged faculty members to redesign an existing space to create a 21st-century classroom. Each academic department was charged with creating student-centered spaces that would allow for collaboration and project-based learning as well as independent work.

The departments were asked to imagine a comfortable space where students could easily rearrange furniture, access ample writing space and use task-appropriate technology. Faculty members presented their concepts at the school’s professional development meeting this past October. The social studies and foreign language departments submitted the winning designs and were each awarded $10,000 to bring their ideas to fruition.

Lambert praised each department’s design proposals and said they used skill and creativity to embrace the concepts of innovation and design. “I feel the benefits to the girls are innumerable,” she said. “These designs incorporate the most significant tenets of 21st century learning, including collaboration, communication, critical thinking and community-mindedness. What an incredible benefit to all of our students, no matter the classroom setting.”

The innovation and design model is gaining traction across the country, specifically in California and the Northeast. The concept resulted from discussions with industry leaders, who explained the need for the educational system to provide students with the ability to imagine a problem and come up with all the steps to solve it, Lambert said. She added that colleges are paying close attention to students who participate in these types of programs, as they are more marketable in the workforce.

“I am so excited to think how well our high school students will be prepared for a future in which innovation and creatively designing solutions for the problems in our community are so important,” Lambert said. “Utilizing the design-thinking process and the ‘Six Is of Innovation’ will guide our students to develop the core characteristics of an innovator. Along with a strong background in technology, the girls will be extremely prepared to become successful entrepreneurs and help the community in unbelievable ways.”
This past fall, St. Aloysius School received the prestigious National Blue Ribbon award from the U.S. Department of Education. According to school officials, the award is meaningful in many ways, including that the school has achieved an atmosphere where children can feel comfortable to learn and discover their talents. Officials said they appreciated the honor but area always striving to get better.

One targeted of improvement for the current school year is community service.

While service has always been a component of St. Aloysius, officials have expanded the idea by creating a junior spirit of service club for fifth and sixth graders as well as a faculty service committee. Students of every grade level have already participated in a number of projects this year.

The pre-kindergartners made bags of Halloween treats and brought books for the students at nearby Southdowns School. The joy of the students who gave and those who received brought smiles to the faces of all of the grown-ups who were in attendance.

The kindergarteners made placemats for the Kairos ministry visit to the Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola. The children shared their thoughts on the project as they created brightly colored pictures with messages of God’s love. Some of the students’ comments: “It will make Jesus happy that we are helping people who really need us.” “We hope they learn that Jesus loves them and that they can be good too.” “Maybe they will feel happy and love in their hearts when they see these placemats.”

First grade students collected Halloween costumes, which were shared with the children in the Big Buddy Program. The children in the program wore their costumes for a Halloween dance.

Second grade students collected bags and wallets and back-packs for needy families. Thanks to the generosity of the students, many items were collected to help those less fortunate.

The students also took part in setting out boxes and collecting the bags each day. Madison Word said, “When I dropped off all of the stuff, I felt happy for the people who don’t have anything.” Katie Loone said, “I like helping the poor because it gives you a really good feeling.” Madeleine Bushice said, “Helping the poor is a good service. I felt good when I did it.”

Third grade is continuing the school’s team effort in helping St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital fight cancer by collecting pull-tails. The students are also supporting fellow student Alli Matthies, who goes to St. Jude regularly for treatments to combat leukemia.

Fourth grader Julia Bauer said of her class project: “Our school is doing a wonderful thing by donating to Trevor’s Wish. Trevor’s Wish is a process by which we collect food (canned goods) for the hungry at the All School Mass. I think it is very important for everybody to have food. Our whole school helped bring food for Trevor’s Wish, but the fourth grade created posters to help convince people. It made me feel so good to donate food to people in need so they might be able to have a wonderful Thanksgiving meal. It makes me happy to know that I am helping other people.”

Fifth graders assisted the Kairos prison ministry at Angola at their recent retreat. Students wrote letters to those inmates participating in the retreat. These letters encouraged the men to pray and follow Jesus.

Co-chair Matt Zylicz shared that during the closing ceremony, several of the inmates mentioned the impact the cookies and letters had on their hearts. One of the letters received by an inmate prompted him to choose to love God and follow Jesus for the rest of his life. Emma Claire Hendry said, “It made me happy for him. I’m glad his changing his life.”

Anna Plauche, a sixth grader, said her class collected books. “The sixth graders collected over eight thousand books for the LSU Museum, Catholic Charities (of the Diocese of Baton Rouge) and the Battered Women’s Shelter. We all brought gently-used books from home. Collecting all these books for people in need made me feel so thankful for everything I have, even the smallest things, like books.”

The St. Aloysius seventh and eighth grade Spirit of Service club volunteered at the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank on an October Saturday morning for several hours. The club members were responsible for sorting and boxing a variety of foods to be distributed in the community.

Students sorted and boxed more than 9,000 pounds of food.

Eighth-grader Jessica Michelet said, “going to the food bank to volunteer was a really cool experience. The thought that I was helping others in need filled me with happiness. I was happy that we could help even just a little bit. It was a little disheartening to see how much food they needed to feed all the people coming through, but I was just glad that I got to help as much as I did. As a very wise person once said, ‘There is more happiness in giving than in receiving.’”

The faculty service committee used its holiday this past fall to landscape the front of St. Patrick’s House. This facility provides shelter for young mothers who are getting back on their feet after the birth of their child.

A volunteer drew landscape plans and the plants and mulch were donated. The teachers put the plan into action to provide a beautiful welcoming area near the main entrance. The day started out rainy, but it made the soil the perfect consistency to till and plant.

Assistant principal Gay Herbert said the project “was a joy to be able to help these ladies to live in a comfortable and attractive environment.”
Holy Family School adds robotics program and Spanish to its curriculum

The beginning of the 2015-16 school year was an exciting time for Holy Family’s returning students as well as its new students.

Over the years, two of the most common questions administrators receive during their recruitment periods are, “Do you teach a foreign language” and “How are your students prepared for a future in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM)?”

Going into its’ 66th year of continuous academic excellence, Holy Family was prepared for both. Michael Comeau, principal of Holy Family School, saw the immediate need to implement two new programs into the school’s already stellar enrichment schedule. Since that time, Holy Family has added a robotics program as well as a Spanish curriculum.

Annie Cagle was hired as both the technology coordinator and an instructor for Holy Family. She understands the world our students are growing up in; technology touches every part of their lives.

“It is important for our students to receive a solid foundation in technology to be competitive in their future schooling and employment at a much earlier age than in the past,” Cagle said.

In our technology classes students do not just learn the basics of word processing. They gain a deeper knowledge of computer hardware and software, learn the basics of coding and work on logic and critical thinking skills. Our goal is to teach the students the concepts that they can apply to all areas of their life, concepts that they can apply to real life learning and have our students become the problem solvers, innovators and inventors of the future.

Through robotics students learn STEM concepts that they can apply to all areas of their life, but it is done in such a way they have no idea they are learning and not just playing. In robotics club, students who may not normally flourish in an extra-curricular club are given an opportunity to have satisfying achievements. Robotics provides a meaningful problem-based learning where students can learn critical and logical thinking, problem solving, integration and application of knowledge, receive hands-on learning in cooperative groups, become self-motivated and demonstrate mastery of new skills.

Cagle said there is an interest in robotics across the board from third grade through eighth.

“They’re seeing programs and they want to learn how to make their own programs. They see a future that I don’t think kids 10 years ago would have seen,” she said. “If we don’t challenge them, then we’re not seeing where they are going to go in the future.”

Anna Maria Cuadra was hired as the new Spanish curriculum coordinator and instructor and teaches children in grades preK-fourth through eighth.

Much research has been done that proves adding a second language to a child in early development is vitally important because of the already prevalent and growing nature of the language.

As Holy Family approaches its’ 66th year, they invite you to explore these new enrichments along with touring the campus and meeting their teachers and students so you can personally experience why they are a “Holy Family.”
School choice for all is human right, Atlanta archbishop tells U.N. body

GENEVA (CNS) — Amendments to the constitutions of some U.S. states are preventing children from low- and middle-income minority families from better educational opportunities than what may be available in public schools, amounting to discrimination, the archbishop of Atlanta told a U.N. committee meeting in Geneva.

In remarks to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory argued recently that the so-called Blaine amendments violate the basic human right to school choice and that nations are required to end all barriers to parental choice in education.

Blaine amendments prohibit the use of state funds at sectarian schools. They are named for Rep. James G. Blaine, R-Maine, who as speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives in 1875 proposed such an amendment to the U.S. Constitution. While the amendment overwhelmingly passed in the House, it failed by four votes in the Senate.

The meeting was part of the U.N. committee's review of reports filed by the Vatican relating to its performance under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

Among its provisions, the convention requires signatories to describe steps they have taken to advance the rights of people under the law, including education, and to contest practices that lead to racial discrimination.

Citing his own experience of being educated in Catholic schools, Archbishop Gregory told the committee he enjoyed "life-changing academic and formative opportunities" that "without equal access to public education funding are not available to most low-income families today."

Prior to the archbishop's arrival in Geneva, the Atlanta Archdiocese joined the Solidarity Center for Law and Justice, an Atlanta-based human rights law firm in submitting a report examining how Catholic schools generate social capital that helps students overcome obstacles to learning.

The report illustrated how demographic shifts, staffing challenges attributable to the lack of available women religious or men religious to teach in Catholic schools and discriminatory education funding practices interfere with the ability of Catholic schools to build social capital in some of the most impoverished U.S. communities.

Archbishop Gregory acknowledged that the committee cannot dictate state education funding policies. At the same, however, he noted that the committee was "the most accessible and immediate venue within the U.N. treaty system to consider how discriminatory education funding policies interfere with the ability of Catholic schools to build social capital in some of the most impoverished U.S. communities."

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Our Lady of Mercy School: a model of smart growth

Our Lady of Mercy School has experienced significant growth in enrollment over the past three years, and now the plan is “grow to stay small.” Mercy pastor Father Cleo Milano has established the priority for the school as smart growth. “We don’t just want to get bigger. We want to keep the warm, intimate, family atmosphere that Mercy is known for.” By keeping classes small, and in some grades by making them smaller, Mercy plans to maintain a close-knit feel even within a large school community.

For the past year, Father Milano has invited members of the parish to prayerfully consider the needs of the church and school community and how to accommodate growth for the future. In an effort to discern how God is calling the parish to grow, Our Lady of Mercy worked with the Center for Planning Excellence (CPEX) to conduct a nine-month master planning process that concluded in August. The resulting product is the blueprint for the church’s and school’s growth for the next 10-20 years.

“We invited all of our parishioners, school families, teachers, church and school staff, and members of the mid-city community to participate in planning for Mercy’s future,” says Father Milano. “We wanted everyone’s voice to be heard.”

The feedback from the master planning process indicated that there was a strong desire to focus on small class sizes. Principal Brian Moscona confirms that prospective families who tour the school want to know about class size.

“Parents want to know that their child will be loved and cared for as an individual, that their child will be safe and prioritized. I want the same thing for my son Anthony who will be at Mercy soon.”

Moscona says the beneficiaries of small class sizes are both the students and the teachers.

“When I taught in Los Angeles I had 35 students in my class, and when I taught in Atlanta I had 20 students in my class. With the smaller class, I was able to focus more time and attention on each student. This helped my students grow academically, spiritually and socially, and it allowed me to make a significant impact on their learning and development,” Moscona said.

Our Lady of Mercy will soon launch a capital campaign to fund the first phase of its master plan, which will include construction of a new early childhood building. The new facility will create additional homerooms to allow for small class sizes.

Moscona states, “We don’t want our student body to get much bigger. Rather, the additional homerooms will allow us to spread out the students into more classrooms so we have fewer students in each class.”

The school plans to utilize modular classrooms adjacent to its current early childhood building during the 2016-17 school year while construction of a new classroom building occurs on the south end of campus.

Disney’s The Lion King KIDS performed at St. Peter Chanel School

Disney’s The Lion King KIDS played at St. Peter Chanel School in Paulina last fall. The musical is based on the Broadway production directed by Julie Taymor and the 1994 Disney film. The student cast contained approximately 36 students led by Denise Moran and Karlie Poirrier.

Starring as the Rafiki’s were Isabelle Babin, Elizabeth Scorsone, Wren Delaneuville, Colby Schexnayder and Talajia Allen. In the role of Simba was Alec Duhe as Young Simba and Sloane Zeller as Adult Simba. Nala was played by Carsyn Hymel as Young Nala and Emma Mohon as Adult Nala. Caitlyn Rojas played Mushani, Yumi Domangue played Sarabi and Brynn Furgeson served as Scar. Ava Duhe captured the role of Zazu and the popular characters Timon and Pumba were played by Alex Poret and Brylee SanAndres. The hyenas Shernzi, Banzai and Ed were played by Josie Robertson, Will Zeller and Jake Poirrier. Playing the Lioness were Alexia Deselles, Maria Detillier, Emma Guzman, Calista Ordeneaux, Isabella Babin, Jaehah Long, Kate LeBlanc and Sydney McClung. Chosen for Scar’s army of Hyenas were Chloe Barnett, Zach Jenkins, Michael Krumholt, Devin Dicket, Noah Detillier, Blaze Melancon, Julian Long, Dominic Annaloro, Amon Broden and Brilee Poche.

The Lion King KIDS tells the story of the epic adventures of a curious cub named Simba as he struggles to accept the responsibilities of adulthood and his destiny as king. Along the way, the young lion encounters a colorful cast of characters including spunky lioness Nala, charismatic meerkat Timon and lovable warthog Pumba. To claim his rightful place on the throne and save his beloved pride lands, Simba must find his inner strength and confront his wicked Uncle Scar. The Lion King KIDS features classic songs from the 1994 film such as “Hakuna Matata” and the Academy Award – winning “Can You Feel the Love Tonight” as well as additional songs penned for the Broadway production.

Saint Stanislaus is a Catholic day and boarding school for boys in grades 7-12 located in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi.

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Our Lady of Mercy School principal Brian Moscona greets students in route to morning assembly. The school’s plan to “grow to stay small” includes maintaining the warm, intimate, family atmosphere for which Mercy is known. Photo provided by Our Lady of Mercy School

OLOM ▼
From page 9B

“Serving students individually is a foundational component of Mercy’s educational philosophy,” states assistant principal for academics Claire Willis.

“Having fewer students in each classroom means the environment will be conducive to each student reaching his or her potential,” she said.

During the next few years, there will be significant construction taking place on the Mercy campus. The new and improved facilities will help Mercy grow to stay small, helping the parish fulfill its mission as a community of faith, united in prayer, love and Catholic tradition.

KICKING OFF CSW – St. Thomas More School will kick off Catholic Schools Week with the main hall of the school being adorned with blue and gold paper chains made by the students who wrote or illustrated their favorite things about St. Thomas More on the individual chains. Each day at morning assembly, students will learn one fun fact about St. Thomas More. Throughout the week, students will engage in hands-on activities that teach them about the history of the school and about their patron saint, Thomas More. In the spirit of charity and generosity, students will be donating kitchen supplies to Catholic Charities. The week will conclude with delicious cupcakes in celebration of St. Thomas More’s birthday. Photo provided by St. Thomas More School

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Holy Family School has a non-discriminatory admissions policy.

A Diocesan School of Excellence
2016 Catholic school distinguished graduates named

Every year each Catholic school in the Diocese of Baton Rouge selects one of its alumni as its distinguished graduate. This year these people will be honored at a dinner Monday, Feb. 1 at the Renaissance Hotel in Baton Rouge.

The 2016 Distinguished graduates are:

**Ascension Catholic Diocesan Regional School**

Daniel Mattingly’s family lineage runs through the heart of Ascension Catholic School. A 1980 graduate and a 2011 inductee into the ACS Hall of Distinction, Mattingly comes from a long line of Ascension Catholic graduates that include his wife, siblings and oldest son. His youngest son is scheduled to graduate in the spring.

Perhaps his most rewarding moment came recently when he learned he was the school’s Distinguished Graduate. “It is a very humbling honor to be chosen because I don’t feel that I have given as much as many of the past honorees,” Mattingly, an agricultural land manager for Lula-Westerfield, his family’s sugar mills, said. “I always want to be part of the solution and mine is only one name on a long list of dedicated people who want to make our school a good place to be.

“This honor is set apart by the fact that I was chosen by people of the community where I was born, raised and still live.”

Mattingly has been an active volunteer at Ascension Catholic for more than 15 years, serving one term on the school board and chairing the annual school fair for more than seven years. He has also chaired numerous fund-raising groups, raffles and projects.

“(Mattingly) has given countless hours as a volunteer,” ACS principal Sandy Pizzolato said. “He leads by example to take on a project and follow through.”

Mattingly has earned his bachelor’s degree in agricultural economics from LSU and has spent his entire career in the agricultural field. He also spent six months in Australia learning the sugar cane industry from host farmers. He has been with Lula-Westerfield for the past 23 years.

Mattingly is also active in civil activities, including serving on the board of directors at Savoie Industries, the Assumption Farm Bureau and First South Farm Credit.

He credits his success as well as his own moral values to his Catholic education. “It is my belief that Catholic education expanded the values that I have learned at home,” he said. “The dedicated religious and lay faculty led by example, not only at school but also in our communities. They taught me to look beyond my needs to the greater needs of my community and to give back.

“It is important for me to give back because I feel blessed and want every child who passes through Ascension Catholic to make the most out of the opportunities they are provided.”

**Catholic High School**

If you are a fan of Catholic High football, then you will recognize Matthew Moscona’s voice. Since 2008, he has handled the play-by-play for CHS football radio broadcasts.

As a sports talk radio personality and someone who has been honored three times as one of the “Top 30 Local Sports Talkers in America” and a “Best of 225” nominee for his work, Moscona is humbled to be this year’s distinguished graduate for Catholic High School.

“Catholic High has more than 7,000 alumni worldwide. To be selected among that number, to be recognized by a place I love so dearly is overwhelming,” he explained.

A graduate of 2000, Moscona has special memories of playing football for CHS. He remembers the Bears’ back-to-back state semifinal appearances during his last two years of high school and how his senior class helped bring bay pep rallies to the school. He also recalls a special time before a playoff basketball game against West Monroe.

“A group of my friends and I performed a skit which included a choreographed dance to Britney Spears’ song ‘Crazy.’ It brought the house down, and I’m fairly certain the video still exists — somewhere,” he admitted.

But memories aside, Moscona believes it is his Catholic education that prepared him for life. “As much as I appreciated my 13 years of Catholic education during my school years, I have come to appreciate it even more as I have moved into my professional life and started a family of my own. Not only did it prepare me academically for a smooth transition to college but also helped shape my faith and morals to be able to handle tough decisions life inevitably throws at all of us,” he explained.

Moscona especially credits the mission of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart at CHS in helping to shape his life, just as it molded the lives of generations of young men before and after his graduation.

For Moscona, living out the brothers’ mission means giving back, something he enjoys doing at CHS, such as when he is invited to speak to student activity groups or participate in career day.

While he is modest about his selection as a distinguished graduate, Moscona, who said the only way he believes he distinguishes himself in the community is by being “the best husband, father and child of God I can be,” recognized the connection this honor has to his years at CHS.

“When CHS principal Lisa Harvey called to inform me that I had been chosen as Catholic High’s Distinguished Graduate, it means that I have carried the legacy of the brothers into my
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adult life. If I can influence others the way the faculty and staff at CHS influenced me, I am making the world a better place because I know that was and is their calling,” he said.

Catholic School of Pointe Coupée

Catholic High School of Pointe Coupée has played a major role in the person that Vernon Scott Devillier, who is the school’s Distinguished Graduate, has become.

“I will always be devoted to my school which I love so dearly,” said Devillier, who graduated in 1984. “I am dedicated to helping give every child an opportunity to succeed and live with Christ.”

Devillier is the superintendent of Zachary schools, which has been the top performing school district in the state for the past 11 years, and father of two children, Tyler and Ashley. He has a long history of volunteering. He was a teacher and coach from 1989-98; volunteer junior high baseball and softball coach, from 2007-2011; softball field maintenance volunteer since 2009; and member of the steering committee for a capital campaign since 2015.

Being chosen the distinguished graduate for his alma mater is very touching for Devillier.

“For my school which I love so dearly to honor me for what God has called me to do – love, teach and serve children – is the ultimate honor,” said Devillier.

He has many fond memories of Catholic of Pointe Coupée. His favorite teacher was coach Jim Hightower.

“He taught me math all four years of high school. He also was my favorite football coach who taught me many life lessons on and off the football field. He along with my dad inspired me to become a teacher, coach and administrator,” said Devillier.

The night Devillier graduated from Catholic of Pointe Coupée at St. Mary of False River Church in New Roads, he said he sat in the pew thinking of all the great memories of high school and realized how much he would miss the school.

“That’s probably why I returned after graduating from LSU to coach and teach at Pointe Coupée,” he said.

Devillier said he gives “glory to God for all my successes” and is thankful for the role that many people have played in that.

“A Catholic education provides a Christian environment where children can learn how to work, play, serve and live a spiritual life in Christ,” said Devillier. “Catholic High School of Pointe Coupée and Father Frank Uter (pastor at St. Mary of False River in New Roads from 1976-84) brought me closer to God.”

“I attribute my success to those who supported and guided me in my life, from my parents, family, friends and all the educators in my life. Therefore, I share this honor with them,” said Devillier. “That’s what makes the award special.”

The support he received has motivated him to give back by ministering to the next generation of students.

“I have dedicated my life to serving children, whether it be at Catholic of Pointe Coupée, Zachary or wherever God sends me,” said Devillier. “This is who I am. This is what I am called to do.”

Holy Family School

Horace Crochet graduated from Holy Family School 27 years ago but his heart has never left Port Allen. Crochet serves on a number of Holy Family committees, including the athletic committee and finance committee. He also serves as the financial chairman for the annual Holy Family Bear Fair.

For his commitment to the school that he never really left, Crochet has been selected as Holy Family’s Distinguished Graduate.

“(Crochet) always finds a way to give back to Holy Family School and its students,” said principal Michael Comeau. “(Crochet’s) service to Holy Family School sets him apart from others. He is always willing to help on numerous maintenance projects and assists in preparing special occasion meals for the teachers.

“He exemplifies everything that Holy Family School works hard to instill in its students. He is more than deserving.”

Crochet’s three children are extending the family lineage as they are also students at Holy Family, indicative of the importance he and his wife place on Catholic education.

“My wife and I were both students of a Catholic education, and we would not want anything else for our own children,” said Crochet. “A Catholic education provides students with the spiritual and academic skills they will need for a meaningful life.

“With a Christ-filled environment, our children are able to grow morally, spiritually, academically, emotionally and physically.”

Crochet, who was selected Catholic High School’s Man of the Year in 1992, is also a parishioner at St. John the Baptist Church in Brusly, where he serves as an usher and volunteers as a cook for the annual Feast on the Levee. He was also selected to the Louisiana All-State Basketball team in 1992 while playing at Catholic High.

Despite the accolades, Crochet stays grounded, never forgetting his role as a parent.

“Our role as parents is to provide the best opportunities for our children, and a Catholic education is the foundation for a well-rounded individual,” he said.

Holy Ghost School

Holy Ghost School and Church in Hammond have been the home of Pamela Cali Bankston, the school’s Distinguished Graduate, and her family since the 1920s.

“Both my grandfather and mother attended Holy Ghost, which makes my child a fourth generation student,” said Bankston. “Holy Ghost is where we as a family have celebrated all of our baptisms, first Communions, confirmations, weddings and received comfort during the funerals of our loved ones. So I am pleased to be able to give back and assist in the continued growth of the school community that has given so much to me.”

Serving the community as a registered nurse at North Oaks Medical Center since 1993, Bankston graduated cum laude with a bachelor’s degree in nursing degree from Southeastern University in 1993. SLU’s Thirteen Club recognized her as an honor graduate that year.

Bankston is also an accomplished writer. She authored the children’s middle grade fiction novel, “Frimmy Frieda’s Gymtastophe,” in 2014, which was inspired by her own uncoordinated efforts at Holy Ghost to make the cheer team. She was the first-place winner in the “So You Think You Can Write” Hammond Regional Art Center’s Short Story Celebration of the Written Word Contest in 2015.

In 2015, she was the first-place winner of the Berry, Bridges and Books Writer’s Page Turner Young Adult Category. She published the La Famiglia Sicilian American cookbook in 2010. In 2005, she placed in regions in the General Food International Coffee’s “Celebrate the Moments of Your Life” essay contest.

Bankston is a steady presence at Holy Ghost. "I attribute my success to those who supported and guided me in my life, from my parents, family, friends and all the educators in my life. Therefore, I share this honor with them,” said Devillier. “That’s what makes the award special.”

The support he received has motivated him to give back by ministering to the next generation of students.

“I have dedicated my life to serving children, whether it be at Catholic of Pointe Coupée, Zachary or wherever God sends me,” said Devillier. “This is who I am. This is what I am called to do.”

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Despite the accolades, Crochet stays grounded, never forgetting his role as a parent.

“Our role as parents is to provide the best opportunities for our children, and a Catholic education is the foundation for a well-rounded individual,” he said.
Bankston has also assisted in fund raisers for the Hammond Regional Arts Center, Richard Murphy Hospice Foundation in Hammond, the Louisiana Children’s Discovery Center, SLU, The Ancient Order of the Hibernians and Holy Ghost Church.

While Bankston credits the academic education Holy Ghost School for providing her with the foundation for her professional career, she said it was the emersion she received in the Catholic faith there that truly helped her succeed.

“What I learned from both the words and actions of Christian teachers was invaluable and continues to assist me in the trials and tribulations of daily life today,” Bankston said.

According to Bankston, the fact that the distinguished graduate award is based on the Catholic faith makes it an honor for her.

“It is especially humbling to have been chosen by my child’s educators as I strive daily to be a Christian role model for him. After all, it is through the power of many of their prayers that I have become a mother and role model for him. After all, it is through the power of many of their prayers that I have become a mother,” said Bankston.

The school’s prayerful environment continues to bolster Bankston’s faith life.

“When I think of all my teachers at Holy Ghost, it’s Sister M. Juliana that always comes to mind first,” said Bankston. “She taught in both a strict and gentle fashion. I still have the rosary that we made in our fifth-grade class and find that there is nothing calmer than the peace I feel when saying those prayers nightly.”

**Mater Dolorosa School**

Joyce Paille’s life has always centered around Mater Dolorosa School in Independence.

After graduating from high school, Paille was hired at the school as an aide. She has never left.

Paille eventually worked her way up to the position of executive secretary, a position she still serves in today. Modest by nature, and one who shuns awards, Paille has been chosen as Mater Dolorosa’s Distinguished Graduate.

“What she does she does from the bottom of her heart,” principal Linda Wisinger said. “She could be working for a public sector for more money. She could be retired but she is still making sure that Mater Dolorosa School and Church has what it needs to continue.

“We so appreciate all she does for both church and school,” Wisinger said when Paille first went to work at Mater Dolorosa staff members were paid once a month. Paille was hoping to use that first check to purchase a winter coat but she came up a bit short.

But her commitment to Catholic education was never left out in the cold, as she and her husband, also a Mater Dolorosa graduate, overcame financial challenges to send their three sons to the Independence school.

“All children should have the advantage of a Catholic education,” said Paille, who graduated from Mater Dolorosa in 1961, said. “The morals, values and religious education are far beyond what a child would receive in any other school.

“All three of my boys went to Catholic schools and I do not regret what it cost because the value far surpasses any amount of money I paid.”

Wisinger said Paille is being honored because of her devotion to the school and the church.

“She is a devout Catholic and will do whatever she can to help the school and the church,” Wisinger said. “Whenever the school calls and asks a favor of her, she is right there to be a help to do whatever she can.

“She just wants what is best for all.”

**Most Blessed Sacrament School**

A native of Switzerland who moved to Baton Rouge at an early age, Patricia Manetsch quickly found a home at Most Blessed Sacrament School in Baton Rouge.

Manetsch, currently a domestic violence assistant district attorney for Calcasieu Parish, said MBS was a place where she “always felt very welcome and well-nurtured.”

Selected as the MBS Distinguished Graduate for 2016, Manetsch said the school helped her develop the educational and moral background that is carrying over into her adult years.

“I feel very blessed to have this honor,” said Manetsch, a 2003 graduate of Most Blessed Sacrament. “My Catholic education has allowed me to seek Christian community service opportunities

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Manetsch’s life has been rooted in Catholic values, especially education. After graduating from MBS she attended St. Joseph’s Academy.

Manetsch graduated from LSU Law School in 2013 but even during her college years she reached out to others through her many volunteer activities. A native Spanish speaker who is also fluent in French, Manetsch participated as a student-attorney for the LSU Law Immigration Clinic and volunteered for Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

She served on the board of directors for Capitol Area CASA and co-founded the Baton Rouge Chapter of the Habitat for Humanity.

While in law school, Manetsch received awards in constitutional law, legal ethics and professionalism, and immigration law.

She credits her success to the values she developed while at MBS and SJA.

“Stretching far beyond academic, Catholic education sets the foundation for shaping lifelong values that emphasize our relationship with God, our loved ones and our community at large,” Manetsch said.

She joyously remembers her days as a multi-sport athlete, especially basketball. So perhaps it’s no surprise that one of fondest memories from her days at Most Blessed Sacrament was when former LSU and NBA standout Shaquille O’Neal delighted the students with a surprise visit during a pep rally.

“We were all so excited and I got to give him a hug,” she said.

Our Lady of the Lake College

In 2012, Anita Gautreaux reached a goal that was 35 years in the making.

Having spent more than three decades as a nurse, Gautreaux’s ultimate dream was to return to school with designs on becoming a registered nurse. She ultimately reached that goal in 2012 when she graduated from Our Lady of the Lake College at the age of 60.

“This year she is being honored as the school’s Distinguished Graduate, an award she thought was beyond her reach.

“When I received word of this great honor, I was very surprised,” a humbled Gautreaux said. “Personally, I’m sure there is another person who is more deserving of this honor I.”

“This honor is for me accomplishing a very personal goal in my life,” added Gautreaux, who received the Order of St. Louis IX Award along with her husband in 2009. “That too was a great honor.”

That award is presented to laity members who contribute their time and talents to the church.

While working as an LPN, Gautreaux added that she believed her chances of returning to school were slim. But in 2009, and she and her husband made the decision she should chase her dream. Returning to the classroom, however, brought its own cache of unexpected challenges.

“As a non-traditional student going back to school was difficult,” she said. “Not only was I a full-time student but also a full-time worker (her nursing career). Looking back, the sacrifice has been well worth it.

“So yes, this honor means a lot to me.”

While attending OLOL, Gautreaux was active with the Haiti project and the school’s chapter of the Student Nurses Association, serving as vice president in 2011 and president one year later. She also volunteered in the Breast Cancer Awareness program, the food bank at Thanksgiving and the giving tree for Christmas.

“I think it is important to give back (to OLOL) because they gave me so much as well,” she said. “Like all Catholic schools, Our Lady of the Lake College enables (its) students to deepen their relationship with Jesus, which broadens their faith and connects their faith to their daily lives.

“Catholic schools encourage all of us to be good stewards of God’s gift and to share these gifts within their communities,” she added, citing the OLOL staff for helping instill self-confidence, self-respect and the courage to ‘share these values.’

“As a Catholic nurse I can encourage those in need to turn to their God for inner strength and consolation during their illness,” Gautreaux said.

As a late in life student, Gautreaux served as a silent role model for many of her younger classmates. But given her humble nature, she admitted she had no idea until the pinning ceremony, when to her “utter surprise” the entire student body gave her a standing ovation.

“Wow! I had no idea,” she said. “Most of the parents of my classmates told me all the time (before) I was ‘Miss Anita this, Miss Anita that.’

Now it’s Miss Anita RN, as well as distinguished graduate.

Our Lady of Mercy School

At the tender age of 5, Lacey Sanchez told her mother of plans to participate in the Our Lady of Mercy School talent show. Sanchez’s mother replied to her daughter that she did not have a talent, which only drove the determined first grader to prove her doubting parents wrong.

Locked away in her bedroom, Sanchez learned how to sing “Tomorrow” from the popular Broadway show “Annie.” Wearing a homemade dress made by her mother, Sanchez not only went on to perform but won the contest in her debut.

Twenty years later, the sun has seemingly come out on all of Sanchez’s “tomorrows” and another honor is just a day away. Sanchez, the 2014 Miss Louisiana, received her most recent honor by being selected OLOM’s Distinguished Graduate for 2016.

“This is truly an honor I hold apart from any other,” said Sanchez, who is an LSU law student while at the same time pursing a master’s of communications degree from the LSU Manship School of Mass Communication.

“Receiving an award over 20 years later (after starting at OLOM) from those who molded me into the Catholic woman I am today is the greatest honor I can imagine,” she added. “Not only is it validating in my adult life but it is motivating me as well to do more and give more going forward.

“Honored is an understatement. To be chosen as a fellow distinguished graduate amongst others such as Congressman Garret Graves and my very own teachers, George Cunningham and Sonia Hurst, ‘honored’ does not do it justice.”

Sanchez said one of the most important lessons she learned at Our Lady of Mercy was leadership, one that she relied on during her reign as Miss Louisiana. She spent the year traveling Louisiana promoting the state’s culture and commerce.

However, she added to her already busy itinerary the visitation of schools, discussing with students the importance of living healthy, active, drug and alcohol free lifestyles.

“Some of my visits made me realize that every educational experience is not centered around Christ as mine was,” said Sanchez, a former track and field star at LSU and Southeastern Louisiana University. “This truly made me appreciate the blessing and gift of a Catholic school education. I am forever thankful to my parents for investing not only in my education but also my spiritual growth by sending me to a Catholic school.”

She is firm in her belief that Catholic education is not only a gift for life but an investment in children’s academic and spiritual lives. She said receiving an outstanding education while developing one’s walk with Christ is a parley few stu...
Students experience in modern society.

“I believe this combination provided me with a strong moral compass,” Sanchez said. “It has given me the desire to strive for excellence in my life not only for myself but for those around me.”

She added that her education helped shape her into the person she is today and that her teachers motivated her to excel in all areas, the point where as Miss Louisiana she had the opportunity to compete in the Miss America Contest.

It all started in a homemade dress, a red curly wig in the gymnasium at Our Lady of Mercy.

Her sun has indeed come out.

Redemptorist/St. Gerard School

A speech pathologist and university professor, Dr. Patricia Minnis is “extremely honored” to be selected as the Distinguished Graduate from Redemptorist/St. Gerard Elementary.

Minnis is a 1981 elementary school graduate and is passionate about Catholic schools, noting her own Catholic education provided her with a solid foundation.

“This solid foundation has given me the skills and tools to achieve many things in my life and enabled me to be grounded in my faith,” she added.

But recognizing what her own Catholic schooling did for her is only the start. Minnis believes in giving back because she said a Catholic education provides “the spiritual and developmental skills necessary to build a bright academic and spiritual future.”

She also believes it is important for current students to see graduates of their school so they can see “the success that the graduates have achieved.”

Minnis continues to return to campus as a consultant for speech evaluations and interventions for the early childhood students at Redemptorist/St. Gerard and has served in many other capacities, including volunteering as a basketball coach, volleyball coach and room mother.

Her service extends to the community as well where she serves on the task force for the state department of education, the Cristo Rey feasibility task force and as a consultant for Head Start.

Minnis noted that her volunteer efforts and her commitment to Catholic education have allowed her to distinguish herself in Catholic schools and the community. No matter her success, she can still recall memories of her years in elementary school, such as the school fair, getting sippie cups at recess and field day.

She also holds fond memories of her favorite teacher, Ms. Sue, who taught music.

“We had so much fun learning songs and singing. I still remember some of the songs that we sang and have taught them to my kids,” she said.

Sacred Heart of Jesus School

As a Distinguished Graduate of Sacred Heart of Jesus School, Paul Burns, a real estate broker and community volunteer, embodies the teachings of a Catholic education through excellence in mind, heart and service.

The 1966 graduate of Sacred Heart is the founder of Burns & Co. Inc./Realtors and was named Realtor of the Year by the Greater Baton Rouge Association of Realtors. He was also awarded Alumnus of the Year through LSU’s chapter of Order of the Omega, a nationwide leadership honor society recognizing outstanding members of the Greek community.

Burns has served his parish, Our Lady of Mercy Church in Baton Rouge, through several ministries, including as a lector and member of the liturgy committee. He has also donated time and talent to Our Lady of Mercy School, St. Joseph’s Academy and Catholic High School and has volunteered with many agencies and organizations in the community.

He has served on the board for the Baton Rouge Women’s Program, Theater Baton Rouge, City Club, Louisiana Arts & Science Museum, LSU Fraternity Advisory, Regions Bank Advisory and Hospice of Greater Baton Rouge. In addition, he was selected as president of the board of directors for the LSU Museum of Art and the Greater Baton Rouge Association of Realtors, and chairman of Community Fund for the Arts. He is currently serving as a board member for the Louisiana Real Estate Commission and an active member of the Rotary Club of Baton Rouge.

Calling his Catholic education “a foundation in life for strong spiritual growth and life long learning,” Burns and his wife of 40 years, Diana, provided the same type of education for children, Meredith and Reed, with both attending school at Our Lady of Mercy.

“I’m grateful for the opportunity and for the educators who provided me with my Catholic school experience,” Burns said.

St. Aloysius School

At 29 years old, Dixon Wallace McMakin cannot imagine receiving any other honor in his lifetime that will be as humbling as being chosen St. Aloysius School’s Distinguished Graduate.

“Of all the teachers, coaches, class room assistants, staff, administration, room mothers, lunch ladies, classmates, friends and family that were a part of my 10 years at St. Aloysius, I deserve this more than me,” he said.

A 2001 graduate of St. Aloysius, McMakin is an investment advisor, an independent insurance broker and an attorney. He is also a 2015 Louisiana Bar Foundation Fellow, a member of Baton Rouge Business Report’s “Top 40 Under 40” class for 2015, and a 2014 graduate of the John W. Barton Leadership Development Program.

McMakin, who admits he is “very blessed” to have been given a strong Catholic education, named John Bennett, former longtime principal at St. Aloysius as his favorite teacher, calling him “a mentor and guiding light.”

McMakin noted his Catholic education taught him to give back, something he does through volunteering at St. Aloysius Church where he is a lector and member of the Knights of Columbus.

He also teaches Junior Achievement to fifth-grade students at the school.

“All success I have gained is by living out my Catholic faith and education in my daily principles,” he said.

Based on these principles, McMakin explained he tries to do seven things every day: think, laugh, cry, sweat, learn something new, make someone smile and pray.

McMakin said he is “a brutally honest person,” especially about his own life journey. However, he tries to use those experiences to help him be more open with others and share his faith with anyone he meets.

“I take any chance I can to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to let people know that we all go through swells on our journey in the sea of life, but God is with us and loves us more than we can ever love him,” he said.

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Dr. Patricia Minnis

Paul Burns

Dixon Wallace McMakin
St. Alphonsus School

Kevin Rogers

Being selected the Distinguished Graduate for St. Alphonsus was a “complete surprise” for local optometrist Kevin Rogers.

The 1995 St. Alphonsus graduate admitted he didn’t even know the honor existed before but looks at it as an award that reflects back on his elementary school.

“It is a great honor to be recognized by the school that helped mold my moral compass. They apparently did a decent job,” he said.

As an optometrist, Rogers established an eye care practice that has allowed him to be “philanthropic financially” and serve the community as a commissioner for Central Fire Department’s Board of Commissioners and as a member of the board for the Central Chamber of Commerce.

He noted that along with great memories playing basketball in third through eighth grades, his Catholic school education helped build his foundation for “everything in life” including faith, family and work.

“Being a graduate of St. Alphonsus and then of Catholic High, my Catholic education gave me not only the educational process, but also faith and discipline, to be able to succeed as a husband and father and also in building my practice,” he noted.

Married and the father of two small children, Rogers noted that it is only fitting to give back to his parish community.

At St. Alphonsus, he is a member of the pastoral council and also volunteers to serve at the ministry appreciation day and at the church/school fair.

St. Elizabeth School

The Catholic values instilled by St. Elizabeth School have been the guiding principle throughout the life of Dianna Lynn Cavalier Landry, who has been chosen the school’s Distinguished Graduate.

Landry, a 1960 graduate of St. Elizabeth School and mother of two children who were third generation SES Cubs, continues to remain true to SES values, according to school administrators. She was a member of the SES Mothers Club and held various offices. She also co-chaired the school’s auction for many years.

The distinguished graduate also serves her church parish in many capacities as a sacristan, reader, eucharistic minister for daily Mass and host of Bible study groups. She also volunteers for many charities.

As a nurse for 38 years, Landry cared for and counseled patients and family members in their time of need.

Landry has worked at several area hospitals and home health agencies as well as the Spine Diagnostic and Treatment Center. She is an auxiliary member at Thibodaux Regional Medical Center.

“My education at St. Elizabeth School formed the development of my Catholic faith,” said Landry. “The unpretentious school led by the Sisters of Mt. Carmel established my moral and spiritual values that inspired me for a lifetime.”

“Dianna is a woman of dignity; her moral compass is one that we would hope for our students to follow,” said Mollie Landry, principal of St. Elizabeth School.

St. Francis Xavier School

Paulette Ann Pourciau, the Distinguished Graduate for St. Francis Xavier School, uses her strong organizational and people skills to share her faith and benefit her community.

“My belief was fostered by my parents who valued faith, a strong work ethic and respect. These were strengthened for me at St. Francis Xavier, St. Joseph’s Academy and Our Lady of the Lake College,” said Pourciau, a nursing instructor at Baton Rouge Community College.

The distinguished graduate was the recipient of the 2005 Katrina Effort Award for managing a hurricane shelter with other nursing students. She was also awarded a Brotherhood/Sisterhood Award from the East Baton Rouge School System.

Pourciau, who graduated from SFX in 1967, has been described as a model of care, concern and outreach in her faith community and the city. She has volunteered with religious education projects, such as church and school events, and as a eucharistic minister. She has contributed numerous sewing and baking products as part of her ministry.

What has distinguished Ms. Pourciau is her excellent people skills,” said St. Francis Xavier principal Paula Fabre. “She is able to relate to everyone in a special way that makes them feel valued and appreciated. She reflects Christ in her willingness to assist others with a joyous spirit.”

“The special gift of respect and caring for others distinguishes Ms. Pourciau. She has a true spirit of collaboration in working with others to achieve that goal. She has great organizational skills and the ability to appreciate the contributions of others. She offers encouragement, when needed, along with praise,” Fabre said.

St. George School

Teachers returning to a school where they were educated either as a child or teenager is not uncommon.

But for Father Brad Doyle, his return to St. George School has taken on a spiritual significance. St. George, his home church parish and where he attended elementary school, is Father Doyle’s first pastoral assignment since being ordained this past May.

He was also selected St. George’s Distinguished Graduate.

“We chose to honor Father Doyle because he exemplifies the best qualities of a St. George School graduate,” principal Jack Nelson said. “He has used his God given talents to live his faith everyday. He models to our school and parish community what it means to be a man of faith and serve others.”

Father Doyle said receiving a Catholic education is not “primarily about success.”

“It’s about holiness,” he said. “The holy person becomes who they were made to be. Success will follow.”

Nelson said Father Doyle is actively involved in not only the church as parochial vicar but the school as well. He said when Father Brad celebrates Mass for the school, “students are mesmerized by his meaningful and captivating homilies.”

“Father Doyle excites the students into actively participating in our weekly Masses.”

Nelson said Father Doyle also spends time in the classrooms and the school playground with the students. This past fall he was even found stalking the sidelines as an assistant football coach for the school’s sixth-grade team.

“(Father Doyle) has set himself apart from others by his outstanding relational skills, integrating himself into the life of our school and parish by his presence in our community,” Nelson said. “Through his natural charisma he connects with people.”

PAULETTE ANN POURCIAU

Father Brad Doyle

Dianna Lynn Cavalier Landry
GRADUATES

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He has been a visible part of our school community.”

St. Jean Vianney School

St. Jean Vianney benefits from the technical and creative solutions provided by its Distinguished Graduate Susan Marie Verdin. Verdin, a 2012 graduate of SJV, is a senior at St. Michael High School where she has been a member of the choir and the science club, holding the office of president her junior year. She provides technical support as the Help-desk technician at St. Michael. Her responsibilities include troubleshooting, taking computers apart, replacing parts, customer service, helping in classrooms, matching parts with their computers, identifying RMA IDs, imaging, reimagining, networking and virtual pc.

Verdin has used her technical skills to give back to SJV. She designed the 2015 Gala t-shirt and created an ad for the 2015 Gator Swamp Fest. She has also assisted the SJV technology coordinator to integrate technology-based learning into the school’s lesson plans.

“Susan’s appreciation of a Catholic education shows forth as she volunteers to assist SJV through her gifts and talents,” said SJV principal Wendy Gilmore Ross. “Her love of technology and graphic design are shared enthusiastically at her elementary school. We appreciate Susan and all alumni who give back to SJV.”

Verdin also participated in Warriors for Life and has attended March for Life in Washington, D.C.

The distinguished graduate attributes her successes and call to service to her Catholic education.

“I believe that a Catholic education is important because it teaches students the significant of faith and morals and how to live the way Christ did,” Verdin said.

St. John Interparochial School

Charles “Squeaky” Miranda, the St. John Interparochial School Distinguished Graduate, said the academic lessons and values taught at the school inspired him to not only succeed in business, but as a person.

Miranda, a 1963 graduate, was a student athlete at St. John and was inducted into the St. John School Athletic Hall of Fame in 1977. He went on to become a teacher and coach at the school.

“My years at St. John School both as a student and teacher were the best in my life,” said Miranda. “They have given me so much by being taught by the nuns and priests. They made me a better person. They mold you into becoming a good Catholic.”

“My favorite memories at St. John were playing football and basketball and running track. All of those games are memorable and I will cherish them for life,” said Miranda.

He used the values he learned at St. John to continue his families’ rich tradition in the restaurant business and to give back to the community.

“Squeaky is a hardworking businessman who owns and operates City Café, the restaurant started by his family in Plaquemine in 1919. Despite the many hours he dedicates to the restaurant, he has also served as a volunteer coach at St. Thomas More School in Baton Rouge,” said Cherie Schlatre, principal of St. John.

St. John/St. Theresa School

Some of Keely Ladner’s earliest memories at St. Theresa of Avila School center on the confetti eggs used at the annual fair. She remembers with excitement the weeks of preparation and anticipation leading up to the start of the fair.

For her, it was just the simple joy of being a kid but yet it produced memories that will last a lifetime.

As an adult, she has not strayed far from her roots, and for the past six years the mother of two has been a member of the St. Theresa fair committee, the same event that brought her so much joy as a child.

“My life has been enriched by my Catholic education and I feel it is my responsibility to give back for my children and future generations,” said Ladner, St. John Primary/St. Theresa Middle schools’ Distinguished Graduate. “I am truly blessed my parents provided me with a faith-rich environment that included my Catholic education and active involvement in our church parish. Due to this foundation of faith first and foremost, I am privileged to provide the same for my children.”

Ladner, a 1989 graduate of St. Theresa, earned a master’s of occupational therapy degree and has been practicing in the Gonzales area for the past 16 years. She said Catholic education provided her with the foundation for growth, development and success. That development has also carried over into her personal life, including being the mother of two children whom she calls her “greatest achievement in life.”

“My faith has guided me to be a devoted, spiritual mother they both deserve,” Ladner said. “They have taught me the true meaning of unconditional love.”

She added she was deeply humbled to be chosen for the distinguished graduate award and said she could “think of many others that are so deserving.”

“I am honored to represent my school family and very appreciative to be acknowledged for my dedication and ongoing relationship with my school community,” Ladner said. “This award reinforces my dedication to being the best role model I can be for (her children).”

Ladner, who served on the home and school association for one year, continues to volunteer at many school events, including dances, the annual field day and concession day. She said her enjoyment comes from spending time with her children and getting to know their friends, teachers and other parents.

St. Joseph School

Being selected the Distinguished Graduate of St. Joseph School in Ponchatoula is different from any other award Dale E. Roberts said he has received because it is about “the whole person.”

“It’s about being an example to others by the way you live your life,” Roberts said.

Roberts, who graduated in 1972, has been a distribution operator with Atmos Energy for 37 years. He was state safety committee president for one year and local safety team leader for three years.

Volunteering is also very important for Roberts. He actively volunteered for 16 years while his children attended school. He coached girls’ volleyball and basketball for seven years. He was booster club president and athletic director for four years. Roberts also volunteered at activities that benefited the school, such as the spring fair, craft show and bingo.

Shocked and extremely honored to be named the distinguished graduate for St. Joseph, Roberts said a Catholic education is not only a quality education, but people receive daily reinforcement of Catholic Christian values and principles by which to live their lives.

“Leading by example and casting a good shadow are things taught in Catholic schools,” said Roberts. “When students see adults participating at their school it reinforces those lessons.”

Seeing people authentically living out their faith helps others to encounter God,
GRADUATES ▼

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“IT’S ABOUT BEING AN EXAMPLE TO OTHERS BY THE WAY YOU LIVE YOUR LIFE,” ROBERTS SAID.

When asked what distinguished him in the school community, Roberts said it is not “by the job I have but the man I am.”

Described by school administrators as someone who “embodies the charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph in all that she does,” Karen Baudin Allen has been selected as the Distinguished Graduate from St. Joseph’s Academy.

Allen, a 1984 graduate, works in the ministry of the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System, serving as executive director of PACE Baton Rouge and PACE Lafayette. She has helped SJA with many innovative initiatives and provided leadership in many capacities, including serving as chair of the board of directors, chair of the search and selection committee for a new principal, past chair of the phone-a-thon committee, and as a member of the strategic planning executive committee.

In addition to her guidance and fund-raising roles at SJA, Allen also supports the Baton Rouge community through her efforts with the American Heart Association, United Way, Baton Rouge Crisis Intervention and Alzheimer’s Services of the Capital Area.

She was honored for her community service with the Franciscan Service Award from OLOL in 2002 and was also selected as a Louisiana delegate for Rotary’s Student Exchange Program to Finland in 1998.

Allen noted the importance of Catholic education, emphasizing that it “develops the whole person through focusing on Christ in our life to establish values, enhance our faith and serve others.”

St. Joseph’s Academy

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St. Jude School

Crediting her Catholic education with her “gift of divine vocation,” Elise Abshire is the Distinguished Graduate from St. Jude School.

The 22 year old, who has taken the name Sister Eternal Life, is in formation and teaching fourth-grade catechism at the novitiate house in Maryland for the Sister Servants of the Lord and the Virgin of Matara.

She holds a degree in Spanish from LSU and started her own bakery business, “Fleur D’Elise Sweets,” before fully answering God’s call to become a Catholic sister, a desire she said started during her years in Catholic schools.

“Catholic education was an instrument that God used to foster my love for the Catholic faith (the fullness of truth),” she said.

Throughout her years in school, Abshire’s connection to her faith was evident. As a high school student at St. Joseph’s Academy, Abshire was active in student ministry and continued that involvement at LSU, where she served as the vice president of the Louisiana Catholic College Students (LCCS).

When she was 20 years old, she joined other young people throughout the United States in a grassroots movement to protect the sanctity of life. Called “Crossroads – Taking Steps to Save Lives,” the Catholic-based event involved trekking across the country in the hopes of converting others by witnessing to the dignity of all human life, from the moment of conception to natural death.

Even though she is now living in another state, Abshire (Sister Eternal Life) continues to stay close to St. Jude Parish, participating in youth group and serving as a confirmation sponsor.

In selecting her as St. Jude’s distinguished graduate, school officials noted that she is a great example of a young person answering the call of God and that she exemplifies their motto of faith, academics and excellence.

St. Louis King of France School

St. Louis King of France’s Distinguished Graduate is a volunteer, a strong advocate for Catholic education and community, Roberts said it is not “by the job I have but the man I am.”

A man with a good sense of humor, Robert’s favorite teacher at the school was Sister Joan of Arc because of her combination of humor and discipline.

“Her combination of humor and discipline. One of the most funny and memorable moments of his days at St. Joseph was playing tackle football with Sister Mary Paul as quarterback.

“She was quite a tough lady and I do not remember her taking any shots at us off the field,” said Roberts.

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and a faithful servant of God.

Caroline Trelles, a 2009 graduate of St. Louis, is a student at the University of Louisiana in Lafayette where she is a member of the Leadership Society. After college, she plans to work with children in hospitals as a child life specialist.

Her interest in helping children shows through her volunteer work. At St. Louis she reads to students, coaches volleyball, works as a scorekeeper and assists with the fair. She has also served the church parish as a liturgical dancer and altar server and is known for helping in any capacity needed, often driving back to Baton Rouge from Lafayette with little advance notice.

Trelles demonstrates the values she learned in Catholic schools by giving back and working with children from many backgrounds and abilities. She teaches differently-abled students to swim and has received several honors from the YMCA for her work as a lifeguard instructor.

Recognized as loyal in her faith and as someone who exemplifies Catholic values in her daily life, Trelles was also chosen by school administrators as this year's distinguished graduate because she is considered a role model for students and adults alike.

St. Michael the Archangel Diocesan Regional High School

Ally Smith expressed with the exuberance of her cheerleading background the joy and opportunities she can receive from her alma mater, St. Michael High School, which named her its Distinguished Graduate.

“When I received the call that I had been selected I was very excited,” said Smith. “There is a special place in my heart for this school and what it has done for me and my family. I love being part of the St. Michael family and being chosen as a distinguished graduate is a very special honor.”

Smith, a 2001 graduate, said the most memorable time at St. Michael was her senior year and being part of the cheerleading team.

“Many of the traditions that I was part of were passed down and I was happy to continue them when I was coaching (at St. Michael),” said Smith. “I have also been able to watch many of my former cheerleaders come back to St. Michael as cheerleading coaches. It means so much to me that I had the opportunity to be a part of that school and the athletic programs.”

She was cheerleading coach at St. Michael from 2006-10. During that time she helped build a competitive cheer program that competed at the national level. In 2010 she married Robert Smith, St. Michael’s head volleyball coach, and since then has attended many St. Michael functions, where she sees many people who are still teaching at St. Michael who taught her. Each year she donates a piece of her artwork to the school auction as a way to give back.

The distinguished graduate is now the computer teacher, technology coordinator, athletic and cheerleading coordinator at St. Alphonsus School.

Smith said her Catholic education has played a defining role in her success in life.

“Having attended Catholic school for elementary and high school and now teaching at a Catholic school, I realize the blessings that a Catholic education provides. Catholic education strives to develop the whole child and provides students with a faith-filled education. It promotes learning to meet social, emotional and academic needs.

“I am so appreciative of my Catholic education that I am now sending my children to a Catholic school so they can receive the same opportunities that I was blessed with,” Smith said.

St. Peter Chanel Interparochial School

Anne Detillier has faced adversity few can imagine, losing twins and a four-month old child to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

Through those tragedies Detillier turned to her faith for solace, a faith rooted in childhood while attending St. Peter Chanel Interparochial School. She even channeled her grief as inspiration to develop the Garden of Angels, a stunningly beautiful and tranquil sanctuary located behind St. Peter Chanel.

Detillier founded the memorial prayer garden in memory of her son, Alex, and twin boys, Michael and Matthew. From a humble beginning, the expansive garden now holds personal stories, tributes and memories through 50 angels and statues, nine benches and one fountain.

For those who know Detillier, the garden is reflective of a person who lives her faith through her life. Detillier, who remains an integral part of the St. Peter Chanel community, was selected as the school’s Distinguished Graduate.

“(Detillier) is a standout community member,” St. Peter principal Paula Poche said. “She has done so much in her life already that includes both the community and the church and school. She never says no when asked and always lends a supporting hand to anyone who needs it.

“She is an example of the (St. Peter) mission, who integrates the teaching of her Catholic-Christian faith into every aspect of her life.”

Detillier, a 1993 graduate of St. Peter and currently an administrator for St. James Parish Schools, said she understands the importance of children being able to grow
GRADUATES ▼

From page 196 and immersed in an environment where God can be a part of “everyday questions and answers.”

“As children grow, they do question their identity, supernatural power and their relationship with God,” she said, adding that all children have the right to a high quality education.

She is also a proponent of education choice regardless of economic status and said her choice for Catholic education is rooted in her desire to have a Christ-centered environment for her three children.

Poche said Detillier has repeatedly shown a willingness to go above and beyond to volunteer at school functions. She has served on the school board, helped coach various sports within the community, served as a homeroom parent, a Eucharistic minister and in several other programs.

Detillier, who earned her masters degree at Nicholls State University, was chosen Teacher of the Year in St. James in 1992. In her current role as director of curriculum and instruction, she has served on numerous state and local committees.

She has also used the Garden of Angels as a way to provide opportunities for students to take part in service workdays by helping maintain the garden. St. Peter students as well as public school students work together in the garden.

“(Detillier) has left a legacy at the school with the creation of the Garden of Angels,” Poche said. “Students for generations to come will always remember this garden as a place of prayer and reflection.”

St. Thomas Aquinas
Diocesan Regional High School

Serving as a family court judge in the 21st Judicial District, Judge Jeffrey Cashe often reflects back on the education he received at St. Thomas Aquinas Diocesan Regional High School.

Cashe, who was a member of STA’s second graduating class in 1991, said the Catholic foundation and principles he learned at St. Thomas have been an “integral part of my value system and guided me in every aspect of my life.”

Catholic education has been a common thread for much of Cashe’s life. After graduating from St. Thomas he earned his bachelor’s degree from Southeastern Louisiana University and went on to earn his Juris Doctorate from St. Mary’s School of Law, a Catholic university in San Antonio. He was a practicing attorney before elected a judge with 52 percent of the vote in the general election in 2014.

He has served as president of the 21st JDC Bar Association and on the boards of the Richard Murphy Hospice Foundation, Hammond Downtown Development District and the Hammond Chamber of Commerce.

Cashe is also a St. Thomas Aquinas school board member.

“(Cashe) is one of those graduates who truly remembers where he started,” principal Jose Becerra said. “He learned much about life skills at STA and has incorporated them into his daily life as an adult.”

“He is a perfect example of our mission statement: his experiences were spiritual, academic and extracurricular. He embodies the idea of the development of the whole person, which is the integral part of our mission.”

“(Cashe) has shown himself to be a leader in our community,” Becerra added. “His experiences have molded the spiritual and professional aspects of his life today.”

Cashe admitted he is grateful for the values he learned at St. Thomas, including the “lifelong friendships with my classmates.”

St. Thomas More School
Ashley McDaniel is home.

Not that she ever left. McDaniel has spent a lifetime at St. Thomas More School, first as a student, then as an administrator before moving up to her current position as assistant principal.

Her involvement, however, extends well beyond her educational commitment. She is also deeply involved with the church parish, serving as Eucharistic minister, chairman of the Dad and Daughter Dance, a member of the Lenten fish fry committee as well as a participant in Dancing to the Eagle Beat, which is an annual fund raiser for the school.

Her dedication has not gone unnoticed. McDaniel was recently chosen as St. Thomas More’s Distinguished Graduate.

“I was very honored to be selected (for the award) because people I know selected me for it,” said McDaniel, a 1984 graduate of St. Thomas More. “They felt the work I do every day was worthy of this honor and that means a great deal to me. The administration and faculty think I embody the qualities they expect in someone they bestow this honor upon. This will always be an honor that I hold close to my heart.”

McDaniel said the school has served as a source of inspiration for her as a child and later as an adult. She enjoys giving back not only as an assistant principal but also through other volunteer opportunities.

“I am blessed to be able to live my ministry through my chosen profession, and I choose to do it (at St. Thomas More) because of my rich history and association with it,” she said. “I want to give back to help make sure other students can receive the quality education I did. It is an amazing school that I know will be around for a long time. I just want to do my part.”

“A Catholic education sets the foundation for life, not just your educational career,” added McDaniel, who credited being a cheerleader and student council president at STM as helping her develop leadership skills at a young age that would prove beneficial for opportunities that arose in high school, college and her professional career.

“Attending Catholic schools helped form me into the person I am today,” she said.

“(McDaniel) has demonstrated a lifelong commitment to serving our school and church community through her continuous service,” principal Dr. Judy Hickman Armstrong said. “(Her) dedication goes well beyond her job responsibilities. She is devoted to serving (St. Thomas More) students, parents, faculty and parishioners to continue (the school’s) legacy of excellence.”

“She gives her heart and soul to our community.”