MIXED EMOTIONS

2015 one of joy, sorrow in diocese

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

During 2015, the Diocese of Baton Rouge was filled with farewells to beloved leaders, the closing and opening of new doors in education, anniversaries celebrating 150 plus years of ministry, as well as explosions of fear, frustration and joy.

The year started on a somber note as the diocese said goodbye to Vicar General Father Than Ngoc Vu, who was also pastor of St. Aloysius Church in Baton Rouge. Father Vu died Jan. 28 and was laid to rest on Jan. 31 as hundreds of clergy, including Bishop Robert W. Muench, Archbishop Alfred Hughes, who was former bishop of this diocese, Bishop Shelton Fabre of the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux and family and friends gathered to pay their respects at a wake at Christ the King Church and Catholic Center and funeral Mass at St. Aloysius Church. A tremendous outpouring of love came from the Vietnamese community, with people wearing white bandanas around their heads, a traditional symbol of a family in mourning.

Following a period of mourning, Father Tom Ranzino was appointed vicar general, and Father Paul Yi, pastor of Ascension of Our Lord and St. Francis of Assisi churches in Donaldsonville, chancellor, the position previously held by Father Ranzino.

OLOL volunteers live out corporal works of mercy by volunteering

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

An unusually warm late fall sun seared volunteers from Our Lady of the Lake Hospital as they moved furniture, planted grass and completed a full landscaping project. Hot as they may be, however, their spirits never wilted.

Nearly 25 OLOL volunteers recently assisted at Sanctuary for Life and Families First, two agencies of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge that serve needy families, especially single or expectant mothers. Overall, approximately 100 OLOL employees were spread across the city, volunteering in such places as nursing homes, schools and overall helping the needy.

“It’s nice to be able to get out of the office to be reminded why you do what you do, and why you are really here,” said Laure Rabalais, division director for academic affairs at OLOL. “It is God’s purpose, it is about serving others.”

Several volunteers spent their day transferring furniture from the existing Sanctuary for Life building to an adjacent building that had been recently renovated. The older building is also undergoing an extensive renovation.

Men and women moved sofas, televisions, clothes, desks, beds and other items, mindless of the sweat that was forming as they toiled. A water break provided a brief respite.

“We are serving those in need and fulfilling the mission of our employer,” said Eva Vallet, manager of Our Lady of the Lake’s midcity facility. “We come
TREASURES FROM THE DIOCESE

This shrine that depicts Our Lady of Fatima and the shepherd children adorns the meditation garden at Our Lady of Mercy Church in Baton Rouge. The shrine, which was a gift to the only church at that time that was dedicated to Our Lady in Baton Rouge, was formally blessed in 1955 by Father Louis E. Marionneaux, who was chaplain at Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola before he was assigned to OLOM. The shrine sits a few feet away from the church’s adoration chapel. The meditation garden, which began in 1975, was developed through gifts made in honor of deceased loved ones and also includes a fountain and Stations of the Cross placed along a winding path. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

PICTURES FROM THE PAST

Bishop Robert E. Tracy is shown in an undated photo preaching from the ambo in St. Joseph Chapel at the Catholic Life Center. The chapel was completed in the late 1960s but not dedicated until Sept. 30, 1970 by Cardinal John Cody, former archbishop of New Orleans and at the time archbishop of Chicago. On that same day, Cardinal Cody also dedicated the Martin Luther King Jr. Catholic Student Center at Southern University, the Catholic Life Center and St. Joseph Cathedral Prep School in Christ Court of the Catholic Life Center, as well as consecrated St. Joseph Cathedral, which had undergone renovations. The medallions on the ambo shown above have been saved and will be used in the new ambo recently installed at the chapel. Photo provided by the Archives Department | Diocese of Baton Rouge

DID YOU KNOW

Sunday has long been regarded as the day we gather as family and as community to celebrate the Eucharist.

The origin of celebrating the Eucharist on Sunday dates to apostolic times even though the early Christians, who were converted Jews, continued to observe the Sabbath on Saturday and even celebrated Mass on that day. During those early times, the Mass was celebrated within the frame of a meal (an agape), held on Saturday night after sunset.

Early in the second century, in some Christian communities, the Mass itself was separated from the meal and celebrated in the early morning hours of Sunday, which became the new Christian day of worship. The Mass was celebrated before dawn and traditionally consisted of a sermon, prayers, singing of Psalms and teachings from holy Scriptures.

During the fourth century all Christian communities had replaced the Saturday night meal with the Sunday morning celebration. In 314, after the church had obtained freedom under Constantine, the time of the Sunday morning celebration was pushed back from early morning to 9 a.m., an hour the Romans traditionally designated for important business.

The first mention in Scripture regarding celebrating Mass on Sunday, or the “Lord’s Day,” comes in St. Paul’s Epistle to the Corinthians, written in the year 57. St. Paul refers to “first day of the week” as most appropriate for the celebration, and two years later in the acts of the Apostles repeats the “first day of the week” reference.

Although most Catholics today have an abundance of churches and times from which to select to attend Mass, the early Christians were forced to make great sacrifices to receive the Eucharist, even to the point of risking their lives.

Sunday was referred to as the “Day of the Lord” by early Christians. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Sunday symbolizes the new creation ushered in by God’s resurrection. The Catechism goes on to say Sunday is “the Lord’s Day” and is considered the first of all feasts.

Because the Sunday Eucharist is the foundation and confirmation of all Christian practice, the faithful are obliged to “participate in the Mass.”

Sundays are also designated by the Catechism as a day of grace and rest from work. Many might remember the days of the old Louisiana “blue laws” when alcohol and other items, including some hardware items, could not be sold on Sundays.

One thing that has not changed, however, is our obligation and what should be our desire to attend Mass on Sunday to hear God’s word and receive the body and blood of Christ.

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

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Runners have opportunity to attend unique Mass before marathon

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Runners as devout in their faith as in their quest for speed will have the opportunity to experience both on the day of the Louisiana Marathon, scheduled on Sunday, Jan. 17 in Baton Rouge.

Father Michael Alello, pastor at St. Philomena Church in Labadieville and himself a veteran marathoner, is planning to celebrate a 26.2-minute Mass at 6 a.m. at St. Joseph Cathedral, one hour before the 7 a.m. start of the race. The time of the Mass coincides with the 26.2-mile trek that begins one block from the cathedral, winds its way through several neighborhoods before finishing near the cathedral.

“There’s a joke that there may be a running clock in the sanctuary,” Father Alello said with a laugh. “We are not worried about the time. We are worried about getting together.”

Father Alello said the initial idea of the pre-marathon Mass came a year ago when he participated in the half-marathon of the Louisiana Marathon, and after finishing the race was left searching for a place to attend Mass. He was later discussing the idea with a friend and tossing around ideas to entice runners to attend Mass before the race.

“We want to have a fun, catchy way (for runners) to take time before the race, where they are nervous and anxious and trying to figure out what you are going to do,” Father Alello said. “Come take a few minutes to pray and get our Sunday Mass obligation in, too. What better way to start your race.”

He admitted the Mass will be simple, with no music and “not a whole lot of preaching.”

“We will have a chance to come together, to pray together as a Catholic community and receive the Eucharist,” he said. “It will be great exposure for the cathedral and great exposure for our church. There are a lot of people that like to get together and pray before a race and what better place.”

He said the feedback has been positive and, he is optimistic about a good turnout. Runners who are participating in the half marathon have even jokingly asked him if the Mass can be 13.1 minutes (the distance of a half marathon) for them.

“I told them I don’t think it works like that,” Father Alello said with a chuckle. “Come in your running gear. It will give people a chance to land before the race.”

On a more serious note, he said the Mass is an opportunity to invite Catholics who might not normally attend Mass to come and pray before the race.

“It’s an opportunity to reflect on the gifts that you have in your life and the goodness of God to actually be able to run a race and celebrate the commitment of months of training and celebrate that with God,” Father Alello said. “It’s a great chance for our Catholic community to come together at our mother church, a chance to settle your heart and your mind and thank the Lord for the ability to do what we are going to do that day and celebrate who we are as Catholic people. That is what it is about. God is good to us.”

After months of hard work, including running the fastest mile of his life, a 7:42 split during a recent four-mile run, Father Alello is hoping to set a personal record in what will be his sixth marathon. A relatively newcomer to marathon training, he said he is hoping to finish the race in “sub 4,” marathoner’s lingo for less than four hours.

“I’m feeling it this year,” he said with confidence. “The training is going great, I’m feeling really good and praying really hard I don’t get injured (before the race).

“It’s my first full marathon in Louisiana and I have the home field advantage.”

St. Philomena parishioners will be manning one of the water stations and offering encouragement to their pastor as he goes by, not long after he celebrates Mass before the race.

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“It’s my first full marathon in Louisiana and I have the home field advantage.”

St. Philomena parishioners will be manning one of the water stations and offering encouragement to their pastor as he goes by, not long after he celebrates what will be one of the most unique Masses of his pastoral career.

“It will be a great start to an awesome day, celebrating two of the things I love the most,” Father Alello said. “My church and my running.”

RECEIVING THE SCRIPTURES - Several diaconate candidates recently gathered with Bishop Robert W. Muench for the Institution into the Ministry of Lector ceremony at St. Joseph Cathedral. Pictured, left to right, are Father Jamin David, Bishop Muench, Tim Messenger, George Hooper, Kirk Duplantis, William Corbett, Minos Ponville Jr., Stephen Brunet, Gary Mooney, Deacon Thomas Benoit and Deacon John Veron. After Bishop Muench’s homily, each of the seven candidates received a copy of the Scriptures from the bishop. Photo provided by Chris Vasser

LENT 2016
A special section coming February 5

WE ARE LOOKING FOR ‘MEATLESS’ LENTEN RECIPES and LENTEN EVENTS in the Baton Rouge Diocese for LENT 2016. Please submit recipes, events and advertising requests no later than Tuesday, JAN. 26 to Wanda Koch at wkoch@diobr.org; 225-387-0983; or mail to The Catholic Commentator, P. O. Box 14746, Baton Rouge, LA 70898-4746

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Refugee crisis, mandates, same-sex marriage dominate 2015

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (CNS) – The explosive global refugee crisis and Pope Francis visit to the United States that included an historic address to Congress were perhaps the top news stories of 2015 affecting the Catholic community but same-sex marriage and the continued debate over healthcare mandates also were debate-sparking issues.

Several of those issues appear destined to dominate domestic and foreign politics for years to come even at a time when Pope Francis has been calling for a compassionate world response.

Early in 2015, Pope Francis again called attention to the plight of mostly Libyan refugees who perish on route to Europe during the Mediterranean Sea crossing to the southern Italian coastal region of Lampedusa. The pope concluded the year by confirming his intention to visit the Mexico-U.S. border during an anticipated papal visit to Mexico set for February, an action that will likely be seen as provocative by some U.S. lawmakers.

Waves of refugees have been fleeing war-torn Syria for new opportunities in the West. By year’s end a new surge of Central Americans mainly unaccompanied minors crossing the U.S.-Mexico border and entering the United States had added to tensions over accepting newcomers into this country.

It is possible some Syrian refugees may be resettled in Baton Rouge during 2016. And deadly terrorist-related shootings this fall in Paris and in San Bernardino, California, further strained refugee response initiatives as top politicians such as U.S. President Barack Obama and German Chancellor Angela Merkel faced heavy criticism and even open resistance to the resettlement of North African and Middle Eastern refugees.

Pope Francis’ U.S. visit in September and his newly inaugurated Year of Mercy for the church worldwide are seen as further teaching moments from the pontiff on the need for mercy and compassion for migrants and refugees.

The number of refugees and internally displaced persons currently in need of protection is the largest since World War II, according to the Washington-based Jesuit Refugee Service/USA, which serves and advocates for the rights of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons.

One silver lining in the crisis is that a greater awareness of the Syrian meltdown and other forcibly displaced persons.

The perception this is primarily a Catholic issue because of the church’s long-standing natural-law teaching against artificial contraception and abortion is misplaced, he told Catholic News Service.

Although contraception is “the presenting issue,” he said he fears the regulations put in place by the Department of Health and Human Services in administering the health care law represent “a slippery slope” that would undermine religious freedom for many Americans.

Under the Affordable Care Act of 2010, most religious and other employers are required to cover contraceptives, sterilization, and abortifacients drugs and devices that work by causing early abortion through employer-provided health insurance.

On Nov. 6, the U.S. Supreme Court said it will hear seven pending appeals in lawsuits brought by several Catholic and other faith-based entities against the contraceptive mandate.

In 2015 several circuit courts ruled that religious entities, such as the Denver-based Little Sisters of the Poor, are not substantially burdened by opt-out procedures the federal government put in place for them to avoid the requirement to provide contraceptive coverage in employee health insurance.

The Obama administration’s “opt-out” requires these employers to fill out a form for HHS that states their objections to providing coverage and triggers an arrangement for a third party to provide the coverage for their employees. It is a provision they still find objectionable.

Only one circuit court, the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, in a September ruling, accepted the nonprofits’ argument that complying with the opt-out provision violates their religious beliefs.

The Dioceses of Pittsburgh and Erie, Pennsylvania, and the Archdiocese of Washington are among numerous plaintiffs from around the country consolidated into seven cases that the court has agreed to hear – probably in the spring – together under the general heading of Zubik v. Burwell. Sylvia Mathews Burwell is the current HHS secretary.

Legal services are being provided by private or public-interest law firms at no cost to the plaintiffs. Many other religious bodies will be affected by the outcome of the Supreme Court case, as their cases are at various stages working their way through appeals courts.

Pope Francis’ U.S. visit Sept. 22-27 was so full, “each day was like a week,” said the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Any one of his public events would have made the trip worthwhile, said Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville, Kentucky, but he noted that what will stand out the most from the visit were the pope’s “personal opportunities to be with people that are not the influential, but the forgotten.”

The archbishop said the pope brought Catholics together with a “sense of fervor and enthusiasm” that will continue to benefit both the U.S. church and the pope, who was “encouraged by his interaction with us.”

Pope Francis talked about how much he enjoyed the U.S. visit right away: during his Sept. 27 return flight to Rome after six jam-packed days in Washington, New York and Philadelphia on the heels of his four-day visit to Cuba. He told reporters he “was surprised by the warmth of the people” in the U.S. and how they were “so loving.”

It was his first visit to the United States and he reminded the country’s leaders of the nation’s founding principles and urged them to protect families and the earth from an uncertain future.

Pope Francis was welcomed to the White House and became the first pope to address a joint meeting of Congress. He joined leaders of other religions in honoring the dead and comforting their surviving family members at ground zero in New York.

He addressed the United Nations. And, in Philadelphia, using a lectern once used by Abraham Lincoln, he called for respect for religious freedom and ethnic and cultural differences.

At the Vatican and on five continents in 2015, Pope Francis continued to encourage and demonstrate a style of evangelization that emphasizes walking with people, listening to them and showing them God’s mercy.

On the 1,000th day of his pontificate, which began March 13, 2013, Pope Francis opened the Holy Door in St. Peter’s Basilica and inaugurated the Year of Mercy to help Catholics “rediscover the infinite mercy of the Father, who welcomes every one and goes out personally to encounter each of them,” he said at Mass Dec. 8.

Mercy, the family and the environment topped the list of topics repeatedly and insistently discussed by Pope Francis and Catholic leaders across the globe in 2015.

The pope and synod affirmed repeatedly that God’s ideal for the family is based on the marriage of one man and one woman, united for life and open to having children.
St. John parishioners honor vets with special Christmas

By Rachele Smith
The Catholic Commentator

In the early morning hours of June 6, 1944, Daniel Farley was an American army ranger on board a landing craft headed for Omaha Beach in Normandy, France.

Despite the constant enemy gunfire bombarding the beach that morning, Farley would become the sixth American ranger to scale the cliff wall at Normandy.

His heroic deeds, combined with the similar efforts of approximately 160,000 other Allied soldiers who stormed the shores of Normandy that day, would eventually liberate France from German control, ultimately setting the stage for the end of World War II in Europe.

For his valiant works, which also included being among the first group of Americans to free Buchenwald, a German concentration camp, Farley received a silver star, two bronze stars, two purple hearts and the French Legion of Honor medal.

Today, at 89-years-old, Farley is a resident at the Louisiana Veterans Home in Jackson. He is just one of dozens of men and women living there who served their country with pride through the years. While not every resident has experienced the horrors of fighting like Farley, their service has helped keep America free.

To honor the military service of these men and women, and to ensure that their Christmas was extra merry this year, parishioners at St. John the Baptist Church in Zachary collected wish list items and held a special holiday celebration at the veterans home on Dec. 17.

“There were the typical wish items like pajama pants and sweat suits, but we had some unusual ones, like a brown cowboy hat and a basketball,” explained Nita Poole, administrator and assistant to pastor Father Jeff Bayhi.

Poole and several fellow parishioners, including Babs Bello, Clayton Landry and Joyce Quinealty, joined about 35 residents at the home in a Catholic prayer service before handing out presents. Quinealty’s husband, Tom Quinealty, led the service.

As the veterans received their beautifully wrapped presents, smiles and appreciation filled the meeting room. Some residents were assisted in opening their presents as manipulating the ribbons or opening the boxes proved a little too tough, but the joy of being remembered was easy to spot on every face.

Farley received a sweater and “some other things,” pausing to note the incredible generosity of those who purchased and wrapped the presents, Meyers added, “You can’t take anything for granted.”

After visiting with each other for a short time, the residents returned to their rooms. This gave Poole and the rest of “Santa’s helpers” (as they were called that day) an opportunity to walk around the veterans’ home, spreading cheer and delivering gifts to those unable to attend the morning prayer service.

Poole noted how important it is to remember veterans and their service and added how she hopes to continue being a part of this Christmas ministry next year.

Vietnam Veteran Don Meyers, a resident at the Louisiana Veterans Home in Jackson, receives several presents from Babs Bello. Bello and several other parishioners from St. John the Baptist Church in Zachary deliver gifts as well as Christmas spirit to veterans living at the home. Photos by Rachele Smith | The Catholic Commentator

Marilyn Denton, a resident who retired from the US Army after serving 25 years, was also thankful. “This is so nice,” she said, smiling. Denton, who was part of the now-dis-continued Women’s Army Corps and later served in Desert Storm with her reserve unit, explained that not only was it special to be thought of by others, but the gifts themselves really mean a lot.

“A lot of the people here don’t have any extra money, so this really helps,” she added.

Once the gifts were handed out, Don Meyers, a Vietnam Veteran, was the first resident in the room to speak above everyone else and offer appreciation.

“I want to thank everyone from Zachary who went out of their way to bring these presents to us,” he said.

Acknowledging how the parishioners had to spend time shopping for them and wrapping the presents, Meyers added, “You can’t take anything for granted.”

Of special interest to parents, The Catholic Schools Week section will feature information about the Catholic schools in the Diocese of Baton Rouge, current registration for the next school year, distinguished graduates and more.

Deadline for advertising is January 12, 2016.
Call Wanda Koch at 225-387-0983.

Nita Poole stretches across the table to present a special gift as veterans at the Louisiana Veterans Home in Jackson enjoy the Christmas gift giveaway.
Pope Francis on corporations/Lamp for Blessed Sacrament

Q I know that Pope Francis has spoken against big retail corporations as contributing to economic injustice in the world. I am currently employed by a national pet supply corporation, which, as far as I know, tries to do good things to pay it forward and help both people and animals.

In my job, I do feel that I have lots of opportunities to be the face and hands of Jesus for my customers. But the pope’s remarks now have me concerned. It may be that I don’t fully understand the wrongs that this (or any) corporation might be committing on a larger level.

Do you think that employees of big box stores have a duty to quit their jobs and try to find different, smaller-scale employers? What would Pope Francis recommend to someone in my position? (Waynesboro, Virginia)

A It is true that Pope Francis has regularly spoken out in defense of the poor and against unbridled capitalism. In particular, in a talk in Bolivia in July of 2015, he challenged a world economic system that “has imposed the mentality of profit at any price, with no concern for social exclusion” and said that poor countries should not be reduced to being providers of raw material and cheap labor for developed nations.

In 2013, in “Evangelii Gaudium” (in No. 56), the pope had lamented the enormous gap between the haves and the have-nots, saying that “this imbalance is the result of ideologies that defend the absolute autonomy of the marketplace.” That does not equate, though, to the condemnation of every large-scale corporation, and each one must be evaluated separately. Since most of us have neither the time nor the talent to do this, it helps to rely on such organizations as Christian Brothers Investment Services or the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, which regularly screen large companies for the ethics of their business and employment practices.

Q Some years ago, I was driving my car in an unfamiliar area and felt a desire to stop in a church and pray. I came across a huge barn of a building with no sign on the outside, and I wondered whether it might be “one of ours” (i.e., a Catholic church).

I entered and saw a red candle lighted, to the right of the altar, and I knew that I was “home.” In more recent years, though, some of the Catholic churches I visit have no red light, and the Blessed Sacrament is locked away in a chapel. Perhaps this is just a quirk of my home diocese, but I can’t help wondering: Why are we hiding God? (Orange, California)

A The “sanctuary lamp,” to which you refer, is actually required in a Catholic church whenever the Blessed Sacrament is reserved. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (the GIRM, the church’s liturgical “rule book”) says in No. 316 that “near the tabernacle a special lamp, fueled by oil or wax, should shine permanently.”

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Volunteers from Our Lady of the Lake Hospital recently spent a day spread throughout the community helping in such places as nursing homes, schools and in particular, two agencies of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge. Included in their volunteering was moving furniture into a recently remodeled building at Sanctuary for Life.

Photos by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

Volunteers ▼

From page 1

together at work as a team. It’s wonderful to come together as a team in service.”

Vallet also understood the opportunity she was helping to provide to women in desperate need of a safe haven, a place to transition while working through the perils of life.

“It’s wonderful (to give those women) an opportunity to live in a safe, clean place to bring a child in,” she said.

Ellen Landry, senior director of laboratory services at OLOL, agreed with the others that the work they were doing was indeed performing a corporal work of mercy, especially mindful during this Jubilee Year of Mercy. She said the reason she chose to volunteer at Sanctuary for Life is that its mission is the protection of the new born, “life as we know it.”

“And babies are wonderful. Every life is important. Young women (choosing) to give birth to their babies is an extraordinary decision.”

“It is very rewarding for us to be in the community and to help others,” she added. “It’s not common in the world we live in today. We are a small part but an important part.”

Across town, Hill Pearson, who owns a landscaping business, was directing a crew of OLOL volunteers plant shrubbery and beautify the outside of Families First. Pearson said he was there to help out a neighbor but quickly added, “It’s the least I can do.”

“I do it to get away from the everyday life,” he said. “Just to donate time, expertise and labor. It’s very rewarding. It’s not all about the money. It’s about making the buck every day.

“It’s about helping those that are a little bit less fortunate, helping them making their place where they have to stay a little bit more presentable to them. It makes you sleep a little easier knowing what you did is your part,” said Pearson.

“To be able to work at an institution that supports others, to be able to give to others, and to pray for the others, to serve, that’s one of the best things in the world,” Rabalais said.

Looking for Mary in a priceless rosary

My husband and I once lived in an apartment for several months before moving on to a permanent home in another state.

We stored the bulk of our possessions in a warehouse, and movers would eventually transport them to a house when we were settled. Traveling with us were just the essentials and a few small things of value, such as good jewelry.

When the day arrived to head out of state to our new home, it wasn’t difficult to pack. Clothes, toiletries, a few pots and pans, and a small television we had purchased for our apartment life were loaded into our two cars. Since I was reluctant to drive alone across country, my brother had flown in to help with the driving and had spent the night on our couch.

We were excited and eager for a new life. The three of us grabbed our coffee, did a quick inventory of the apartment’s closets and cupboards and prepared to take off.

For The Journey

Effie Caldarola

But something drew my husband back for one last look. I’ll never guess how he managed to find them, but tucked away, hanging on a nail, out of sight, around the corner of my closet, were five beautiful sterling rosaries I had hidden there. I had forgotten about them.

“Do you want these?” he asked with a smile.

One of them was my mother’s, a gift from my father decades ago. She had valued it deeply and prayed with it all of her life. She loved it so much that she gave one to each of my three children, inscribed with their initials, and when she realized I loved them, she gave me one, too. They were all in my possession, and I’d almost left them behind.

I will never forget how I felt when I saw my husband holding them out. It wasn’t the monetary value, although my parents were not wealthy people and purchasing sterling was an indication of the importance of the gift. It was the immeasurable value of my parents’ love, and the significance of the rosary itself that would have made the loss devastating.

Like many women of my generation, I’ve evolved through various stages of Marian devotion in my life. When I was young, the nuns used to frighten us, in that Cold War era, with apocalyptic visions associated with Fatima.

Our family prayed the rosary together, and I yearned for Mary as a source of solace and not fear. Later, as I explored Scripture and theology, I learned to know the real woman in Mary. Scripture gives us so little insight, although the words ascribed to her in the Magnificat are among the most powerful spoken by any saint.

Nevertheless, even today I struggle to know her. The saint I greatly admire, Ignatius of Loyola, was dedicated to her, as is Pope Francis and a host of other notables whose insight I value.

So I still search for this mysterious woman. When my youngest child was born looking gray and still, I spontaneously began to say the Hail Mary aloud over and over. Today, that baby, whom we named Maria, is beautiful and healthy at 25.

Like countless others, I go to Mary in times of trouble. My rosary lies beneath my pillow, and in moments of night-time anxiety, I cling to it as to a rope thrown from a ship to a drowning woman. That’s exactly how it seems to me in the dark hours of the night.

Mary, Mother of God, pray for us and help us to know you.

Caldarola is a columnist for Catholic News Service.
Symbolism, beauty plentiful in renovated St. Joseph Chapel

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Visitors to St. Joseph Chapel at the Catholic Life Center will likely notice a more welcoming and inviting sanctuary.

Gone are the stone altar, ambo, tabernacle stand and presider’s chair, replaced by wood furnishings hand-crafted by Baton Rouge artist Patrick Sicard. From his rustic downtown shop, Sicard, well known for his works throughout the diocese, crafted new furnishings primarily out of cherry wood, and to a lesser degree padauk, a West African hardwood.

“I think (the chapel) feels a bit more intimate,” vicar general Father Tom Ranzino said. “The distance between the sanctuary and the assembly has been softened a bit. While it’s still very clear this is still an altar, it evokes the design of the beauty of God. It’s handcrafted and reflects the creator.”

Father Ranzino said he first met with liturgical consultant and retired LSU art history professor Marchita Mauck more than two years ago concerning potential renovations of the bishop’s chapel and St. Joseph Chapel. Mauck brought Sicard in on the project, and it was decided the bishop’s chapel would be completed first.

Sicard, whose work can be found in St. Aloysius, Holy Ghost, Immaculate Conception in Lakeland, Immaculate Conception in Scotlandville as well as schools in Covington, New Orleans, Colorado and North Carolina, crafted a new altar, tabernacle and chairs for the bishop’s chapel, which is part of the bishop’s apartment first built by Bishop Joseph V. Sullivan.

“That turned out really lovely and then we turned our attention to (St. Joseph Chapel),” Father Ranzino said.

“Over the years (the chapel was originally completed in the late 1960s) some renovations had been done that were not necessarily based on any liturgical needs,” Father Ranzino said. “Everything was built into the actual space. Sometimes that can be beautiful, sometimes it can be a little difficult, particularly if you are trying to maneuver around that space. The altar was in a way much too big for that space.”

He stressed early in the process certain guidelines be met, including use of a local artist, following liturgical principles of what each piece is for, appropriate to the size and space, well-crafted and not a major financial outlay.

Sicard was asked to make the furnishings functional and at the same time be reverend of the Eucharist and maintain a sense of the past.

He returned to the shop and went to work, using drawings at the bishop’s apartment first built by Bishop Joseph V. Sullivan. “That gave you the impression of what the altar represents,” he said. “It’s definitely a talent from God. I’m in a better place for me, especially in the area churches.”

He did meet one unexpected snag when 2,270 pounds of lumber was delivered but the driver refused to help unload it because Sicard did not have a forklift. So he was forced to unload all of the lumber first onto St. Charles Street and then move it again into his workshop, all while the delivery driver watched.

With the designs approved and the wood delivered, Sicard went to work, spending up to six days a week for nearly a year in the shop crafting stunning new furnishings. The altar features legs he calls “kind of chunky” but with a bow that bows outward.

“It gives you the impression of what the altar represents,” he said. “The mensa (altar table) represents Jesus and it has weight pushing down on it so the legs are giving but are not going to break. I wanted a little symbol in the legs. They look like they are carrying some weight.”

As per his trademark, Sicard create a space between the legs and mensa to give a floating effect.

“All of the legs I try to do I try not have the mensa touching the legs,” he said. “I like the space you don’t see, that’s just there.”

The legs of the ambo and presider’s chair parallel that of the altar, and the ambo will also hold the four medallions that were on the old ambo. Father Ranzino said the medallions were cast by the four evangelists.

Also in the plans are a new sanctuary lamp and the laying of hardwood floors over the brick floor in the sanctuary. Already, the processional cross used in the diocese’s 50th anniversary celebration has replaced the old cross.

“We’ve gone back to the simple, original chapel skin...And it has new liturgical furnishings, emphasizing the chair and ambo and table.”

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Meek | The Catholic Commentator

The new altar at St. Joseph Chapel at the Catholic Life Center features bowed legs and a floating effect between the legs and the mensa (altar table). The chairs of the presider’s chair, ambo and tabernacle stand mirror those of the altar. All of the pieces were handcrafted by Patrick Sicard of Baton Rouge. Photos by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

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The Diocese of Baton Rouge has thirty schools in eight civil parishes, with strong Catholic identity the focus in all schools. The district is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and standardized test scores are above state and national averages.

Catholic schools in the Diocese of Baton Rouge
Evangelize Hearts, Educate Minds, Encourage Talent and Embrace the Future

Ascension Catholic was founded in 1842 and currently serves 516 students in Grades PK – 12. With 40 professional staff members, the school has a mission of teaching the Catholic faith and being responsive to the needs of the day. The school recently served 516 students in Grades PK – 12. With 40 professional staff members, the school has a mission of teaching the Catholic faith and being responsive to the needs of the day. The school recently

processional cross used in the diocese’s 50th anniversary celebration has replaced the old cross. The mismatched holy water fonts and hymn boards were also removed.

“We’ve gone back to the simple, original chapel skin,” Father Ranzino said. “And it has new liturgical furnishings, emphasizing the chair and ambo and table.”

Sicard, who said he never repeats his designs, said the satisfaction comes in seeing his work in the area churches.

“I tell (people) they could not be in a better place for me, especially what they represent,” he said. “It’s definitely a talent from God. I’m blessed to be able to do this.”
Peace common wish for New Year

By Rachele Smith
The Catholic Commentator

The start of any calendar year is often filled with resolutions. For some, it’s becoming healthier or getting more organized (finally). Others may resolve to volunteer more or take on a new hobby. Whatever the decision, the New Year is about new beginnings, a chance to dream and a reason to wish.

Yet, when thinking about the future, we are also demonstrating something so much more than just resolving to be better or do more.

According to Darryl Ducote, director of the Office of Marriage and Family Life for the Diocese of Baton Rouge, we are also showing our faithfulness.

“The fact that we make these wishes at the New Year says something about hope,” said Ducote, adding that as people of faith, we are constantly hopeful, and the New Year is an opportunity to express that hope.

During the liturgical season of Advent, which ended just before Christmas Day, hope was the anchor. Mary was seen as a model encounter with the face of Jesus.”

Michael has been a beacon of community will join us in order to construct a capital campaign to construct a new multi-purpose building.

“It is my hope that our community will join us in order to make this vision a reality in 2016,” she said, noting that St. Michael the Archangel High School, echoed that thought, but also added a special wish as St. Michael enters the final stages of a capital campaign to construct a new multi-purpose building.

“IT is my hope that our community will join us in order to make this vision a reality in 2016,” she said, noting that St. Michael has been a beacon of Catholic education for so many families for over 30 years, and hopes to “build upon that past as we plan for the future.”

For Father Davidson, inner peace is what leads to world peace which is what he ultimately wishes for everyone to experience.

God’s children will use the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy to filter their relationships, especially those with estranged family members, through understanding, forgiving and compassionate hearts,” he said.

Dr. Melanie Verges, superintendent of Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Baton Rouge, has a special wish for those involved in Catholic schools as 2016 begins.

“I wish students, families, and all staff grow in wisdom and understanding of God’s grace in their lives,” she said.

Ellen Lee, principal of St. Michael the Archangel High School, echoed that thought, but also added a special wish as St. Michael enters the final stages of a capital campaign to construct a new multi-purpose building.

“My first thought certainly has to do with the church, and that the church really becomes an instrument of God’s mercy on a whole new level for everyone,” said Father Gros.

Explaining that the church has always been that instrument of God’s mercy, Father Gros added that he would like it to impact people in a new and profound way so that they could “have a personal encounter with the face of Jesus.”

Deacon Dan Borné, a deacon assistant at St. Jean Vianney Church in Baton Rouge, also expressed a wish not only for others but also for the Catholic Church.

“My hope for 2016 is that all followers: “What you have received as a gift, give as a gift” (Mt 10:8), while adding his own personal wish for 2016.

“That purposefully seek and more deeply experience God’s inexhaustible love for us, and that we endeavor to be intentional and conscientious ministers of that love to others,” he said, encouraging everyone to live the life of heaven here and now and be that source of support, gladness and joy to each other.

Father Al Davidson, pastor of St. Joseph the Worker Church in Pierre Part, has a similar wish of God’s great love. He wants to see “the grace of the season bring inner peace” to everyone.

For Father Davidson, inner peace is what leads to world peace which is what he ultimately wishes for everyone to experience.

For Father Gros, who shepherds the cluster churches of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Plattenville and St. Ann in Napoleonville, he also expressed a wish not only for others but also for the Catholic Church.

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MERRY MUSIC MAKERS – Members of the St. Thomas More School Liturgy Choir perform at the Salvation Army Very Merry Music Kettle Fund Raiser at Perkins Rowe on Dec. 5. Under the direction of STM music teacher Ruth Linder, the choir, composed of fourth – eighth-grade students, also brought their musical talents to several area nursing homes during December, helping the residents at each home enjoy the sounds of Christmas.

Photo provided by Ruth Linder | St. Thomas More School

THAT’S A WRAP – The St. Jean Vianney School Beta Club members held a toy drive and stayed after school to wrap the gifts. The toys were delivered to the St. Vincent de Paul Society for the annual Bishop’s Christmas toy giveaway.

Photo provided by Bridgette DiGeolamo | St. Jean Vianney School

A CHILDREN’S NATIVITY – St. George School students in Caroline Armour’s class presented the Christmas Story to parents and other students before the holiday break. Instead of reciting lines, the 5- and 6-year-olds sang their individual parts, infusing the story of God’s birth with the melody of children’s voices. The cast included, from left, back row, JW Alford, Paxton Rivet, Ellen Casadaban, Vivian Nguyen, Matthew DuBos, Alexander Pagoulato, Edward Centanni, Clayton Alombro, Noah Hawk and Cole Boudreaux; front row, from left, Ava Crona, Aiden Simmons, Gardner Wade, Cameron Thompson, Margaret Alford, Sacha Mindrut, Kelley Comeaux, Jules Lawrence and Ben Connison. Not pictured: Connor Coulon.

Photo by Rachele Smith | The Catholic Commentator

RIDE HAPPY – St. Jude the Apostle School eighth-grader Kayla McConnell, left, surprised her buddy Launa Robertson, a pre-k student at Wildwood Elementary School, with a new bike for Christmas. McConnell and other members of the Jr. Beta Club at St. Jude collected more than $1000 in donations and purchased 18 bicycles for their buddies at the public school. Several fathers of the Jr. Beta Club students volunteered their time in assembling and transporting the bikes. St. Jude’s Jr. Beta Club regularly participates in various projects and field trips throughout the year with students at Wildwood.

Photo provided by Starr Driesse | St. Jude School

GIFTING JESUS – St. Louis King of France students had a baby shower for Baby Jesus. Students brought new, unwrapped baby items for donations to Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge. They also collected money. Students, left to right, are Zack Frederic (Joseph), Kathy Vu (Angel) and Camille Trelles (Mary). Photo provided by Jennifer Tullier | St. Louis King of France

EYES ON HEAVEN – The kindergarten classes at Holy Ghost School in Hammond entertained audiences with their annual play “The First Christmas.” Several students were invited to the play on Tuesday, Dec. 15, and a packed audience of relatives filled the gymnasium Dec. 16. All students participated in a variety of roles including narrators, angels, shepherds, stable ani-

Photo provided by Cindy Wagner | Holy Ghost School

THE MEANING Of THE SEASON

STUDENTS celebrate the MEANING of the SEASON
Youth eager to march for life

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

To be pro-woman, one must be pro-choice, according to today's secular culture. More than 500 youth and adult leaders from the Diocese of Baton Rouge will join hundreds of thousands of people from across the nation countering this misconception by speaking out for the dignity of women and the sacredness of unborn life at the March for Life Rally, "Pro-Life and Pro-Woman Go Hand and Hand," Friday, Jan. 22 in Washington, D.C.

Bushloads of youth will leave the Catholic Life Center and other parts of the diocese on Jan. 16, for the 24-hour journey to the nation's capital, according to seminarian Ryan Hallford, who is coordinating the trek for the diocese along with Kathleen Lee, campus minister at St. Michael High School and Emily Froeba, religion education teacher at St. Michael.

The bus ride plays an important part focusing the youth on meeting these goals by getting them out of their comfort zone so they can become a family, think about their vocation in life and prepare to vocalize their beliefs that life is sacred and must be protected, said Hallford. The emphasis is that the youth are going to the march as pilgrims, not tourists.

During big portions of the ride, the bus is a "technology-free" zone, which can frustrate the youth. There are also "Irish drills" in which the youth must sit by someone they do not know. This can be difficult for many, who would rather hang out with their friends.

"Each bus is a mini church," said Hallford, as through prayer, journaling, singing and sharing their faith the youth become a church family.

It's the mystique of the "unknown" and the excitement of being part of a large movement to protect life that attracts many first time pilgrims to the march.

"I will probably be overwhelmed when I get there," said Daniel Wesley, a member of the St. Alphonsus Youth Group, who will be seeing the nation's capitol for the first time. He said he will rest up the week before the trip since he anticipates not getting much of it during the trip.

Wesley said he was struck by the reality of abortion when he discovered that the mother of a friend had an abortion. He said his friend lost a sibling and he himself lost a potential friend. He wants to convey to others that life-affirming alternatives, such as adoption, are much better than abortion.

Amie Martinez, 18, a member of the youth group at St. Thomas More Church in Baton Rouge, who will be taking her first trip to the march this year, said as she watched the controversy over abortion and the favorable light that much of the media place on abortion made her realize it was time to stand up and help protect life.

Martinez has been to the capitol with other students from SJA, where she is a senior, and Catholic High School as part of a tourism trip, but this journey will be much different.

"Seeing it (the capitol) will be a much different experience. I will not be focusing on the city as much as why I'm there – I will be focusing on connecting with the Lord and defending life," said Martinez.

Natalie Milazzo, 17, also of the St. Alphonsus Youth Group, said her first trip to March for Life will help her stay involved in the church. Taking in a new city and meeting new people will also help her stay close to an issue which is "really big to Catholics."

"There are many people who can adopt," said Milazzo. "The baby should be given a happy life and it should not be wasted."

Attending March for Life can also be a family experience. Molly Cline, a member of the St. Mary of False River Youth Group, and her younger sister, Sarah, and mother, Missy, principal at Catholic of Pointe Coupee Elementary School, went last year and are going again this year. Molly Cline said, "Going to March for Life slapped me in the face with the depth of the abortion problem. I feel that I am much more passionate about my pro-life beliefs."

Cline is the president of Students for Life at Catholic High School of Pointe Coupee.

Sheri Klemm said she was proud of the way her daughter, Peyton, now a student at LSU, used on the trip the skills she learned as a member of the St. Joseph's Academy pro-life club and participant in Camp Joshua, which teaches youth how to be pro-life leaders. Peyton kept her composure as she dialogued with an atheistic young man who said he was pro-choice.

"It was very eye-opening to see my daughter not be confrontational, but to be assertive in what she believes," said Klemm, who was a chapereone and religious education coordinator at St. Thomas More School at the time she attended the trip and is now a theology instructor at St. Joseph's Academy.

"Peyton Klemm said, "If you don't have the opportunity and know how to discuss it, the reason and mission, a person can get cold."

Alli Crochet, 17, of the youth group of St. Joseph the Worker Church in Pierre Part, is going back for her second trip because of the powerful experiences she had, such as praying at an abortion clinic.

"They saw us praying and hopefully they will pass it on to others to stop abortion," Crochet said.

"I want to change hearts, not only of the people who are there, but the people who were not there, but watching it (through the media)," Crochet said.
The Diocese of Baton Rouge has thirty schools in eight civil parishes, with strong Catholic identity the focus in all schools. The district is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and standardized test scores are above state and national averages.

Most Blessed Sacrament School was founded in 1979 and currently serves 509 students in Grades K – 8. With 25 professional staff members, the school’s mission is to minister to the educational needs of parish families by providing a teaching atmosphere which promotes Gospel values and academic excellence for all students. The Diocese of Baton Rouge Program for Exceptional Students operates a dyslexia lab on campus. The school received national recognition as a Blue Ribbon School in 2013 and has recently completed the self-study process for re-accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (AdvancED).

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Sisters
Universal
Upset that their parents (James Brolin and Dianne Wiest) are selling their childhood home, two grown but immature siblings (Amy Poehler and Tina Fey) try to relieve their glory years by holding a wild party for their friends from high school in the now-empty house. While one reveals her feelings with an old enemy (Maya Rudolph), the other, a divorcee, yearns for romance with a neighbor (Ike Barinholtz). Director Jason Moore’s patchy comedy aims to make a point about the need to grow up. But, as Fey’s character fondly recalls her teenage promiscuity, a married couple has concealed public sex and the strain proceedings fail to evoke either laughs or enlightenment. Misguided values, including a benign view of casual sex, drug use and artificial contraception, a nongraphic scene of aberrant sexual activity, much sexual and some scatological humor, several uses of profanity, pervasive rough and crude language, obscene gestures. O; R

Star Wars: The Force Awakens
Disney
After a 10-year hiatus, the iconic science-fiction franchise is rejuvenated courtesy of a lucid plot, abundant humor and the introduction of two dynamic new heroes: a young scavenger (Daisy Ridley) and a disaffected foot soldier (John Boyega) of the Dark Side. Together, they help Jedi warrior Han Solo (Harrison Ford) and his sister and ally General Leia (Carrie Fisher) battle a fascist army (commanded by Andy Serkis). Director and co-writer J.J. Abrams brings a steady hand, if not much technical innovation or visual flair, to this seventh installment of the intergalactic saga. Just enabling the duo of newcomers to deliver such compelling performances, however, turns out to be the key to revitalizing the blockbuster series. Much stylized fantasy violence. A-II; PG-13

Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Road Chip
For
When the talent manager who has become their unofficial adoptive dad (Jason Lee) takes a trip to Florida with his surgeon girlfriend (Kimberly Williams-Paisley), the singing brothers of the title (voices of Justin Long, Matthew Gray Gubler and Jesse McCartney) fear he intends to propose to her. It’s not the prospect of the doctor becoming their stepmother that troubles the warbling rodents, but the idea of her bullying teen son (Josh Green) joining the family. Since this acerbic lad turns out to be just as anxious as they are to thwart the match, the four join forces and set out on a cross-country journey to put the kibosh on any question popping. Despite a simplistic and recycled plot, director Walt Becker’s lightweight blend of animation and live action will likely satisfy its diminutive target audience. As for their accompanying elders, they’ll be pleased by a generally positive though rough terms, occasional crude language. O; R

The Big Short
Paramount
The run-up to the financial crisis that began in 2007 provides the backdrop for director and co-writer Adam McKay’s ensemble dramatization based on the real events recounted in Michael Lewis’ 2010 book about a handful of individuals who foresaw the collapse of America’s housing market. Despite virtually universal opposition from clients and colleagues, two eccentric fund managers (Christian Bale and Steve Carell), a fast-talking banker (Ryan Gosling) and a pair of small-scale investors (Finn Wittrock and John Magaro) backed by a retired Wall Street powerhouse (Brad Pitt) stake everything on a downturn. Along with interesting characters acting under severe pressure as they wait for the system to collapse, McKay’s screenplay, written with Charles Randolph, offers audiences an amusing primer on the economic factors underlying the crash. Even as it merrily berates the greed and folly its heroes alone seemed able to fathom, the script carefully reminds moviegoers of the human cost resulting from such widespread corruption.

For more Movie Reviews, visit thecatholiccommentator.org – ENTERTAINMENT.
Like I’m Gonna Lose You

I found myself dreaming in silver and gold
Like a scene from a movie that every broken heart knows
We were walking in moonlight, and you pulled me close
Split second and you disappeared and then I was all alone
I woke up in tears, with you by my side
A breath of relief, but also real
No, we’re not promised tomorrow

Refrain:
So I’m gonna love you like I’m gonna lose you
I’m gonna hold you, like I’m saying goodbye
So I’ll kiss you longer, baby, any chance that I get
I’ll make the most of the moment and love with no regret
Let’s take our time to say what we want
Use what we got before it’s all gone
No, we’re not promised tomorrow

(Repeat refrain.)

I’m gonna love you like I’m gonna lose you
In the blink of an eye, just a whisper of smoke
You could lose everything, the truth is you never know
So I’ll kiss you longer, baby, any chance that I get

(Repeat refrain.)

So I’m gonna love you like I’m gonna lose you
I’m gonna hold you, like I’m saying goodbye

(Repeat refrain.)

This is loving, giving love freely, with the full knowledge that eventually you will lose your grandparents. To love them as fully as you desire, you will need to accept this vulnerability. As with any relationship, the future is uncertain.

Still, we should not allow love to be dominated by a fear of loss. Instead, we should just love. Primarily, that means treating others with kindness, respect, generosity, and forgiveness — no small task! Acting with love means extending love to anyone God brings into our lives.

Romantic relationships are more complex and you should be careful to not give another an unintended message about what your love means. Romantic relationships take lots of time to grow before one can understand what type of commitment can be honestly given. Go slow in romance.

But love should never be limited by romance. Family members, friends, your school peers and many others need the unqualified benefits that love brings. Show others how the love of God shines within you and freely bring this love to them.

FREELY loving another person or a group of people means bringing an attitude of service to the world. Think about how you could serve others and then set out to prepare yourself for a life of service.

Should you love “like I’m gonna lose you”? Well, if that means taking nothing in life for granted, sure. But love freely. Let no fear of loss restrict the power of your love.

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

Sung by Meghan Trainor and John Legend | Copyright © 2015, Epic Records

Loving without limits

Rising in the charts is Meghan Trainor and John Legend’s single “Like I’m Gonna Lose You.” In the song’s official video, we see couples obviously taken up with romance, but we also see love, as in the bond between a mother and a small child, between individuals who are friends, and what appears to be a grandmother with her granddaughter. The message is clear: You can’t be too careful with love regardless of the relationship. Love as fully as you can.

However, the song’s character seems to focus more on her romantic partner. She has a dream in which “we were walking in moonlight, and you pulled me close, split second and you disappeared and then I was all alone.” After she wakes up, she realizes that the other person remains by her side. She gathers “a breath of relief,” but also realizes “we’re not promised tomorrow.”

She resolves to “love you like I’m gonna lose you … hold you, like I’m saying goodbye.”

It is true that everyone is fragile, and “in the blink of an eye … you could lose everything.” The song suggests that we need to “make the most of the moment and love with no regret.” However, doing so is not easy.

For example, let’s say that you recognize that your grandparents are elderly, and even if they are in good health, it is clear that they are moving closer toward the end of their lives. You decide to make an effort to spend more time with them, help them with tasks that perhaps they find difficult. You decide to do what you can to add more joy to their lives.

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How is admonishing sinners a spiritual work of mercy?

S

in sells newspapers and raises the ratings of TV shows and move-
ies. Investigative reporting wins prizes for modern media. Letters to the
editor in newspapers and magazines often call for the correction of others. But
when it comes to us personally correcting others, especially those to whom we
are closest, we experience discomfort and often shy away from doing it. Even
when we hold an authoritative position, making moral judgements about others
may make us feel like Pope Francis,

“Who am I to judge?” And when we cor-
rect others or call for their correction,
there is always the danger that Jesus
pointed out, “You hypocrite, first take
the log out of your own eye, and then
you will see clearly to take the speck out
of your brother’s eye” (Mt 7:5). It is easy
to project our own guilt on others.

Nevertheless, Catholicism’s tradi-
tion of including the admonishment of
sinners in the spiritual works of mercy
is accurate and often necessary. One of
the most obvious examples is the case
of addictions. Alcohol, drugs and sex
each can be used responsibly under the
right circumstances, but each also can
be abused and become so addictive that
the individual user is helpless to over-
come their destructive effects. Any of us
who has participated in an intervention
to get an addict to seek the medical and
therapeutic help necessary to control
the addiction knows how difficult, risky
and very uncomfortable that action
can be. Yet it is a mercy and blessing
for the addict and for many others
being hurt by his or her addiction.
How many lives have been saves, not
to mention marriages, and children protected
because a few people loved the add-
dict enough to risk the difficult task of
intervening.

Sin always hurts

someone, at least the sinner himself. So
we should want to help others to lead
good, productive and virtuous lives.
Virtue is its own reward, and we want
our friends to be happy, so we encourage others
to live virtuous lives. But we
have to be careful about point-
ing out the faults of others.
Too much negativity never
produces in us a communal
love, and often shy away from doing it. Even
when the other’s fault really needs to be
corrected, we can’t do it with charity if
we are angry. Pray for the person; wait
for the right moment when you won’t
sound harsh, and let the other know
that you love him or her, and tell them
about God’s mercy. Jesus was rather
blunt with the scribes and Pharisees when
they were acting hypocritically, but with common sinners he practiced
a gentle and patient love. He was always
around them, and they were obviously
attracted to him. He ate with them,

which in their culture was the ultimate
sign of acceptance.

More than any other religious
figure in our times, Pope Francis has
already been able to make Jesus’ Gospel
and God’s commandments attractive to
the world’s people, Christian and
non-Christian alike. He preaches the
positive purpose of the command-
ments, to produce in us a communal
love, to heal wounds and to warm the
hearts of the faithful. The ministers of
God should approach the world: “The thing
the church needs most today is the
ability to heal wounds and to warm the
hearts of the faithful . . . The ministers of
the church must be ministers of mercy
most of all.”

May the mercy of Christ guide you
and be shared with others by you
through the New Year.

FATHER CARVILLE is a retired priest in the
Diocese of Baton Rouge and writes on
current topics for The Catholic Com-
mentator. He can be reached at johnny
carville@gmail.com.

How is admonishing sinners a spiritual work of mercy?

S

in sells newspapers and raises the ratings of TV shows and move-
ies. Investigative reporting wins prizes for modern media. Letters to the
editor in newspapers and magazines often call for the correction of others. But
when it comes to us personally correcting others, especially those to whom we
are closest, we experience discomfort and often shy away from doing it. Even
when we hold an authoritative position, making moral judgements about others
may make us feel like Pope Francis,

“Who am I to judge?” And when we cor-
rect others or call for their correction,
there is always the danger that Jesus
pointed out, “You hypocrite, first take
the log out of your own eye, and then
you will see clearly to take the speck out
of your brother’s eye” (Mt 7:5). It is easy
to project our own guilt on others.

Nevertheless, Catholicism’s tradi-
tion of including the admonishment of
sinners in the spiritual works of mercy
is accurate and often necessary. One of
the most obvious examples is the case
of addictions. Alcohol, drugs and sex
each can be used responsibly under the
right circumstances, but each also can
be abused and become so addictive that
the individual user is helpless to over-
come their destructive effects. Any of us
who has participated in an intervention
to get an addict to seek the medical and
therapeutic help necessary to control
the addiction knows how difficult, risky
and very uncomfortable that action
can be. Yet it is a mercy and blessing
for the addict and for many others
being hurt by his or her addiction.
How many lives have been saves, not
to mention marriages, and children protected
because a few people loved the add-
dict enough to risk the difficult task of
intervening.

Sin always hurts

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Priests’ Formation Days offer spiritual growth for clergy

The Continuing Formation of the Clergy Committee holds Annual Priests’ Formation Days on the second full week in January. These formation days are one of the important ways in which the priests of our diocese are formed for ministry. They offer the priests opportunities for growth in intellectual and spiritual formation, emotional maturity and physical well-being. Since these days are offered once a year, and is a commitment by the diocese for their on-going formation, participation by the priests is mandatory. However, on occasion, ministry needs arise at the same time preventing the priests from participating in these Annual Formation days.

With the guidance of the Diocesan Presbyteral Council, the Continuing Formation for Clergy Committee has secured a site for this year’s Annual Formation, Jan. 11-14, in Biloxi, Mississippi. The committee and I are aware that the distance from Biloxi to many of our diocesan parishes would be significant and that pastoral ministry can and will occur during these days. Nonetheless at the express request of the Continuing Formation Committee and the Presbyteral Council, I am expecting priests to attend the entire formation days’ schedule. I know this may affect certain regular ministries, such as daily Mass and funerals. The daily Mass schedule in your parish can be adjusted as determined by your parish priest to meet the needs of your parish during Annual Formation. While this is a sacrifice, I consider this sacrifice worth making. Regarding funerals, I would ask that funerals be scheduled either before Annual Formation begins or after, but not during, the scheduled Annual Formation days. If this is completely impossible, one of the deacons from the diocese can provide the needed funeral rites, namely the vigil wake, funeral without Mass and rite of committal. If the local parish staff is unable to secure a deacon for this special funeral need, the parish staff may call the Office of the Vicar General at 225-387-0561 for further assistance.

Over the years attendance at our Annual Formation and Priests Retreat has been remarkably consistent. Pressing ministry could compromise and jeopardize our commitment to these special opportunities. I hope this letter helps you understand and support our priests with their commitment to their formation for ministry. I ask that you pray for our priests and our diocese during these days.

In summary, every priest of the diocese is expected to be present and take part in Annual Formation days in Biloxi. I appreciate your affirmation and encouragement of our clergy who give so much of their lives for our diocese. May God be generous in leading us into the future with hope.

Lacking the self-confidence for greatness

We all have our own images of greatness as those pertain to virtue and saintliness. We picture, for instance, St. Francis of Assisi, kissing a leper; or Blessed Mother Teresa, publicly hugging a dying beggar; or St. John Paul II, standing before a crowd of millions and telling them how much he loves them; or St. Therese of Lisieux, telling a fellow community member who has been deliberately cruel to her that God has been deliberately cruel to her how much she loves her; or even of the iconic, Veronica, in the crucifixion scene, who amidst all the fear and brutality of the crucifixion rushes forward and wipes the face of Jesus.

There are a number of common features within these pictures that speak of exceptional character; but there’s another common denominator here that speaks of exceptionality in a different way, that is, each of these people had an exceptionally strong self-image and an exceptionally strong self-confidence.

It takes more than just a big heart to reach across what separates you from a leper; it also takes a strong self-confidence. It takes more than an empathic heart to publicly hug a dying beggar; it also takes a very robust self-image. It takes more than mere compassion to stand before millions of people and announce that you love them and that it’s important for them to hear this from you; it also takes the rare inner-confidence.

It takes more than a saintly soul to meet deliberate cruelty with warm affection; it also requires that first you yourself have experienced deep love in your life. And it takes more than simple courage to ignore the threat and hysteria of a lynching mob so as to rush into an intoxicated crowd and lovingly dry the face of the one they hate; it takes someone who has herself first experienced a strong love from someone else. We must first be loved in order to love. We can’t give what we haven’t got.

Great men and women like St. Francis, Blessed Mother Teresa, St. John Paul II, and St. Therese of Lisieux are also people with a stunning self-confidence. They have no doubt that God has specially gifted them and they have the confidence to publicly display those gifts. The sad fact is that many of us, perhaps most of us, simply lack sufficient self-image and self-confidence to do what they did. Perhaps our hearts are just as loving as theirs and our empathy just as deep, but, for all kinds of reasons, not least because of how we have been wounded and the shame and reticence that are born from that, it is existentially impossible for us to, like these spiritual giants, stand up in front of the world and say: “I love you – and it’s important that you hear this from me!” Our tongues would surely break off as an inner voice would be saying: “Who do you think you are? Who are you to think the world needs to hear your special love?”

True, but often it isn’t virtue that’s our problem; it’s self-confidence. Mostly we aren’t taking the rare inner-confidence. They rate you from a leper; it also takes a strong self-confidence. Mostly we aren’t able to say something to the effect that we often judge a person to be cold when he or she is only wounded. How true.

Thankfully God doesn’t judge by appearances. God reads the heart and discerns between malice and wound, between coldness and lack of self-confidence. God knows that no one can love unless he or she has first been loved, and that very few, perhaps no one, can publicly display the heart of a giant, the courage of a hero, and the love of saint when that big heart, courage and love haven’t, first, been felt in an affective and effective way inside of that person’s own life.

So what’s helpful in knowing this? A deeper self-understand-

William Wordsworth once said something to the effect that we often judge a person to be cold when he or she is only wounded.

How true.

In Exile

Father Ron Rolheiser, theologian, teacher and award-winning author, is president of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas. He can be contacted at ronrolheiser.com.

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.
**Pro-Life Mass** – A monthly pro-life Mass will be celebrated Tuesday, Jan. 12, 5:30 p.m., at St. Agnes Church, 749 East Blvd., Baton Rouge. For more information, call 225-387-4127.

**Emmaus Retreat** – A men’s Emmaus retreat will be held Friday, Jan. 29 – Sunday, Jan. 31 at Rosaryville Spirit Life Center, 39009 Rosaryville Road, Ponchatoula. The retreat is based on the Scripture passage “The Road to Emmaus” (Luke 22:14-35). For more information, call 504-481-0411 or 504-267-4944.

**International Mass** – Bishop Robert W. Muench will celebrate a Mass highlighting the multi-cultural history of Baton Rouge during an International Mass on Sunday, Jan. 10, 10 a.m., at St. Joseph Cathedral, Fourth and Main streets, Baton Rouge. During the Mass, people will receive a blessing in Latin and hear welcomes and readings in various languages. A reception at the Cathedral

Parish Hall will follow the Mass. Visitors can view several items on display provided by the Archives Department of the Diocese of Baton Rouge. For more information, call 225-387-5928, or email office@cathedralbr.org.

**Martin Luther King Celebration** – Agnes Andrews, a graduate of Southern University, real estate agent and an active person in the financial services industry, will speak at the Martin Luther King Celebration, hosted by Mary Immaculate Council #119 and St. Aubry Ladies Auxiliary Court #119, on Saturday, Jan. 16. The event will start with a march at 10 a.m. beginning on Landry Street at Bayou Maringouin and ending with a program at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, 11140 LA-77, Maringouin. For more information, call 225-635-2436.

**St. George Mission** – Father Philip Chirchop SJ will present a retreat, “Practicing Mercy: Kissed by Mercy, Embraced by Love,” Monday, Jan. 18 – Wednesday, Jan. 20, 7 p.m., at St. George Church, 7808 St. George Dr., Baton Rouge. Babysitters will be available for those registering by Wednesday, Jan. 13. For more information, call 225-209-2212.

**Louisiana Life March South** – Louisiana Life March South will be held Saturday, Jan. 23, beginning at 9:30 a.m. with pre-event remarks and activities at Galvez Plaza behind the Old State Capitol. The March will begin at 10 a.m. and conclude near the State Capitol at 10:45 a.m., with a formal program. For more information, visit LALifeMarch.com.

**Bible Study** – Immaculate Conception Church, 865 Hatchett Lane, Denham Springs, will host an eight-week Bible study, “Mary: A Biblical Way with the Blessed Mother” for eight weeks, beginning Thursday, Jan. 28, 9:30 – 11 a.m. For more information, call 225-665-5339.

## Classifieds

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### Help Wanted

**Youth Minister Position Available**

St. George Catholic Church is accepting applications for a full time Youth Minister. The purpose of this position is to provide
careful leadership and to continue development of a youth
program for grades 6-12. The program will include faith
formation, retreats, service and social programs, and working
in close collaboration with the Confirmation Director, Director of
Faith Formation, Religion Coordinator of St. George School,
and the campus ministers of the Catholic High Schools in Baton
Rouge. Applicant must be a practicing Catholic, organized and
willing to work with a pastoral team. Preferred 3 years expe-
rience working with youth. Basic Diocesan religious certification
or equivalent with a commitment to continuing professional
religious education and Youth Ministry certification will be re-
quired. Salary and benefits are based on the Diocesan salary
plan. Please send resume by February 29th to:

Youth Minister Search
St. George Catholic Church
7808 St. George Drive
Baton Rouge, LA 70809

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In February members of the Catholic faith decreed the announced closing of the emergency room at Baton Rouge General Hospital on Florida Boulevard. Among the noted speakers at a press conference on the capitol steps, Father Rick Andrus SVD, pastor of St. Paul Church in Baton Rouge, spoke about how not only the north and midcity areas of Baton Rouge, but the entire city and surrounding civil parishes would be affected without emergency medical care in that area. The ER closed March 31.

Fans of the well-known Catholic author, theologian and defender of the Catholic faith and common sense, G.K. Chesterton, converged on Chesterton Square in Ponchatoula at the premier National Chesterton Conference in March. A new era for Our Lady of the Lake College was ushered in on Feb. 26 when Dr. Tina Holland was inaugurated as the college’s fourth president in a celebration at St. Joseph Cathedral.

A familiar name in health care expanded its hospice services into the Diocese of Baton Rouge. Notre Dame Hospice, which is a ministry of the Archdiocese of New Orleans and already has hospice facilities in New Orleans and Biloxi, Mississippi, bought what was St. Michael’s Hospice in Prairieville. Notre Dame gained control of St. Michael’s on Feb. 1.

The year was active for the Catholic Schools office, which rolled out an innovative expansion of its special education Program for Exceptional Students, which in the first year included seven sites scattered throughout the diocese.

St. George Church in Baton Rouge broke ground March 22 for a new facility that will seat 2,500 people and will include a daily chapel with seating for 125 people.

The diocese was “on fire” with passion for the faith as it hosted a four-part series on Pope Francis’ “Evangelii Gaudium,” or “Joy of The Gospel.” Those attending the sessions shared powerful testimonies in small and large groups about their own life experiences relating to the document.

The Louisiana Conference of Catholic Bishops made its presence known during a state legislative session that was as perplexing as it was cantankerous, culminating with a budget that left few happy and a looming financial crisis that legislators one day will be forced to resolve. LCCB Executive Director Rob Tasman said the session had its oddities but it was also one that he said left him satisfied regarding social justice and educational issues.

The year also saw the retirement of two longtime Catholic school principals. Linda Fryoux Harvison retired after spending 32 years as a faculty member, administrator and principal for 11 years at St. Joseph’s Academy. John Bennett retired after 30 years as principal at St. Aloysius School.

The end of the school year also signaled the ending of the 69-year history of Redemptorist High School. The school was closed because of its declining enrollment, which was projected to be 150 for the 2015-16 school year, and an estimated $2.4 million deficit.

But endings can also be followed by new beginnings. A Cristo Rey School will be opening at the former Redemptorist High School. The concept, environment and mission of Cristo Rey is to provide the corporate work study component, and it is created for low income families and students only, according to Dr. Jim Llorens.

The future church parishes of the diocese was also examined through visitations by a pastoral planning task force. The task force developed a process for input with the assistance that included visits to every church parish. Each session included a brief history of the efforts of the task force, a presentation of possible future alternative models for parish leadership and an opportunity for every one in attendance to complete a survey as well as vocally present their input.

The task force completed its visitations in October and will make recommendations to the bishop.

The Knights of Peter Claver, the largest and oldest African-American Catholic fraternal organization, looked at the needs of the African-American community and how it can educate the community about domestic violence. Chief Justice Bernett Joshua Johnson of the Louisiana Supreme Court, rallied attendees at a state conference in April to help “break the chains” of domestic violence.

Father Brad Doyle, Father Reuben Dykes and Father Matthew Graham were ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Robert M. Muench on May 30.

Also in the summer, the diocese increased its capacity to give hope to men who have been released from prison and looking for a way to begin a new life with the expansion of its Joseph Homes. Bishop Muench dedicated the opening of a new eight-bedroom complex that sits adjacent to the current seven-bedroom building.

On Aug. 29, the diocese marked the 10th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. The damage and destruction unleashed by the storm changed the lives of everyone in the diocese, as Catholic Charities, church parishes and schools and individuals reached out to people fleeing the storm.

Even as St. Aloysius School had sad moments, with the passing of Father Vu and the retirement of Bennett, it also celebrated the fact that it has been named a Blue Ribbon School. To be nominated, students had to place in the top 15 percent in the nation in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics as measured by state or nationally normed tests.

Another award winner in 2015 was the Society of St. Vincent De Paul in Baton Rouge, which was selected as winner of the Nonprofit of the Year by the state of Louisiana.

St. Vincent de Paul also recently celebrated 150 years of delivering care and assistance to homeless, at-risk and disadvantaged individuals and families throughout the Baton Rouge area. The nonprofit organization celebrated its anniversary with a Mass at St. Joseph Cathedral on Dec. 19.

Other celebrations in the diocese included the first Life Fest at the Catholic Life Center on Oct. 10, replacing the pro-life rally traditionally held in January.

Also in October, the diocese launched its new partnership with Our Lady of the Lake College for the diaconate formation program. The partnership with the diocese and Our Lady of the Lake was necessitated when St. Joseph Seminary College, which had previously played an integral role in the diaconate formation program through the diocesan Religious Studies Institute (RSI) program, endured accreditation issues.

A “saint was the house” in the diocese as the body/major relics of St. Maria Goretti came here for All Saints Day weekend. Thousands of visitors stopped by Our Lady of Mercy Church in Baton Rouge to venerate the youngest person to be declared a saint by the Catholic Church.

November was also an important anniversary for St. Elizabeth of Paincourtville, which celebrated “175 Years of Faithful Discipleship” on Nov. 14. Bishop Muench celebrated a Mass to honor the history of “The Queen of the Bayou.”

Catholic Charities was also busy in 2015 responding to the needs of refugees fleeing from turbulence in their native homeland. Through Louisiana Project Esperanza, Catholic Charities provided legal services to children coming to Louisiana who crossed the U.S. border from Mexico and Central America to protect their lives and assure their sanctuary in the U.S. remains documented.

If the midst of the world’s negative explosive situations in 2015 there was an explosion of joy when Catholic High School defeated Archbishop Rummel 31-28 in the Allstate Sugar Bowl/LHSAA Select Prep Classic Division 1 State Championship Dec. 4 in the Mercedes-Benz Superdome in New Orleans. The unforgettable game was the Bears’ first football state title in school history.

Days later, Bishop Robert W. Muench blessed the Holy Door at St. Joseph Cathedral to launch the Jubilee Year of Mercy on Dec. 8. Father Paul Counce, pastor of the cathedral, opened the door and the bishop was the first to walk through.

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