A standing-room-only crowd of more than 800 families and friends filled St. Joseph Cathedral on May 28 to witness the ordination of Father Edwin Martin to the priesthood and Deacon Ryan Hallford as a transitional deacon.

Deacon Hallford is scheduled to be ordained to the priesthood in May 2017.

The most recent dual ordinations were held in 2013 when Father Joseph Vu was ordained a priest and Father Josh Johnson was ordained a transitional deacon.

Bishop Robert W. Muench called it an honor to be in “God’s house for the purpose of (celebrating) the priesthood and diaconate.”

The bishop said it gave him “special joy” to ordain Father Martin from permanent deacon to “permanent priest.”

“We have celebrated something very sacred,” the bishop added. “We have interacted with our loving God.”

Father Martin’s ordination was perhaps one of the more emotional in recent memory. Originally ordained a permanent deacon in 2010, Father Martin entered the seminary a little more than a year after the death of his beloved wife, Jenny, in 2013 with whom he had spent 37 blissful years. Jenny had battled cancer for the last few years of her life.

Father Martin’s emotions were on full display during his ordination, but it was his tears that offered a glimpse into the depth of his heart, perhaps recalling with a sense of joy and anguish his beloved wife, who in her dying days told him to pursue the priesthood after she was gone.

Deacon Hallford’s ordination represented a major step in his procession to the priesthood. He originally entered the seminary in 2002 but left a little more than two years later.

He re-entered in seminary in 2013 and has said this time he has “no second thoughts.”

“Ryan, I am honored to (ordain) you as a deacon, and I look forward to your ordination (to the priesthood),” Bishop Muench said.

In what is perhaps the most moving part of the ceremony, the Cathedral Choir sung the Litany of the Saints while Father Martin and Deacon Hallford lay prostrate on the altar in front of the bishop.

A reception followed at the Cathedral Parish Hall.

CYO to cease operation July 31; new CSAA league to form

After 71 years of service to the community, the Baton Rouge Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) is closing.

Bonnie McCoy, long time executive director of the CYO, said the office will shut its doors July 31.

The move will also end the Catholic School Athletic League (CSAL), the competitive sports program for elementary Catholic schools. The CSAL is administered through the CYO office, McCoy added.

Despite the closing, Michael Miller, assistant superintendent of Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Baton Rouge, said elementary school sports will continue to operate in Catholic elementary schools. According to Miller, the elementary school sports program will operate as the newly created Catholic Schools Athletic Association (CSAA).

The CSAA will be administered through the Catholic Schools Office and will continue to offer the same sports, including both competitive and recreational teams, to Catholic school students, said Miller.

Currently, a search is underway for a full-time league manager.

The move comes following insurance concerns. Miller said the Catholic Schools Office was asked see CYO PAGE 19
Behind the Collar

… with FATHER DONATUS AJOKO, chaplain, Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center

Q: What are some of the interesting things you have learned about the world of medicine as a hospital chaplain?

A: Before I worked in the hospital, I used to think about health care professionals only in terms of the job and how much they earn. Since I became a chaplain, my views have changed. Now I see the health care profession as a vocation, a calling, a ministry that requires compassion, love, care and endurance. It takes all your heart, all your mind and all your soul to be a care giver. Often physicians and nurses set their own problems aside in order to take care of their patients. But at the same time it is also comforting and rewarding when one sees oneself as an instrument that God uses to care for the rest and bring smiles to their faces.

Working as a hospital chaplain has exposed me to various aspects of health care and the way things are run in this world of medicine. Health care is a world of its own, one that is very complex and operates differently from other businesses. It takes a great deal to run a hospital, and there is no part of the organization that is not crucial in its smooth running. It is an organization where the administration does not control every activity in the system. For instance, I used to think that doctors own hospitals, and as such make every decision about what happens in hospitals; or that some people or organizations such as churches own hospitals and hire doctors to work in the hospital, and in such a situation, tell doctors what to do. Physicians are in a world of their own, guided by their professional, moral code of conduct, even when their decisions are in conflict with those in the administration. I have come to see physicians as humans with human heart, emotions and feelings.

I have learned how illness could make someone vulnerable. Illness is a respecter of no person, whatever one's position might be does not matter. Even with all the scientific breakthroughs in the field of medicine, it is still amazing how many diseases that go undiagnosed, untreated and are incurable, and they end up taking people's lives.

Another important aspect of the world of medicine that I have learned is the role of health insurance programs. The insurance industry is such a powerful industry that determines a lot of things that take place in the field of medicine. Sometimes insurers determine which doctor a patient can see, which hospital a patient can visit, how long a patient is allowed to spend in a hospital visit, and what type of procedure a patient can undergo.

Q: Who is the person, living or dead, whom you would like to drink tea with?

A: There are many people I admire in my life, but the two I will like mention here are my late father (Emmanuel Ajoko), may his soul rest in peace, and Saint John Paul II.

My father was a man of sound faith and dedication. Although he was born to a pagan family, he decided at a very young age to convert to Christianity against the opposition from his father. His father disowned him and he had to fend for himself as a teenager. When I brought the idea of going into the priesthood, he was so happy and told me that he would have become a priest had his parents supported him. He gave me all the support he could, but unfortunately the cold hand of death took him away. Sometimes, I think my vocation to the priesthood is my father’s vocation. He understood the value of education even at a young age that saw himself through school, became one of the first three people to graduate from elementary school in my community. He stopped at nothing to get you to see things from a different perspective. This I have done among my peers. Nigerians are very direct when it comes to speaking their minds. They say it as it is, sometimes people like it, and sometime they don’t. I am known among my peers as someone who does not go around the issues, and I do not appreciate people who do so. I call a spade a spade.

When there were difficult cases involving patients from Nigeria or other African countries, I have been called upon to help explain and resolve the situation. I also have helped to expose my peers to Nigerian foods, and they seem to love them.

Q: What is your favorite non-religious book?

A: Even though I am a very practical person, I enjoy reading classical works such as Shakespearean plays. William Shakespeare was such a great author. I admire the way he plays with words and ideas; his figures of speech dazzle me. I love all his plays, but the two that I pick up to read from time to time are “Julius Caesar” and the “Merchant of Venice.”

I brought cultural diversity to my department and maybe to the hospital. Sometimes it takes someone different to get you to see things from a different perspective. This I have done among my peers. Nigerians are very direct when it comes to speaking their minds. They say it as it is, sometimes people like it, and sometime they don’t. I am known among my peers as someone who does not go around the issues, and I do not appreciate people who do so. I call a spade a spade.

The Book of Kells

The Book of Kells, which was once described as “the chief treasure of the western world,” is an illuminated manuscript of the four Gospels written in Latin. The origin of the book remains controversial among scholarly types, but the majority of academia believes it was created in a Columba monastery in Ireland around 800. However, dissenters claim it was created in Northumbria or Picteland in eastern Scotland.

The book contains 340 folios, with their edges gilded in the course of rebinding in the 19th century. The book is written on vellum (prepared calf skin) in a script known as insular majuscule.

Scholars believe portions of the book were left unfinished, because some of the ornaments remain only in outline. Closely coiled spirals connected with each other by a number of curves are generally considered the book’s most characteristic ornament. Amazingly, despite the thousands of exquisite initials, there is not a single pattern or combination of a pattern that could be considered a copy of another.

The Book of Kells contains pictorial representations of the evangelists, the Blessed Virgin, the temptations of Jesus and Jesus being seized by the Jews.

Although three artists appeared to have produced the Book of Kells, because of the expert craftsmanship that has never been able to be replicated, some believe angels produced the Book of Kells.

Q: How do you express your Nigerian culture at the hospital?

A: To me, Saint John Paul II was another man of great faith and vision. To me, he is one of the greatest popes in the history of the church. He was a man of great charisma. He opened the doors of the church, while at the same time was careful enough not to expose the church to the secularism and liberalism of the modern world. He was the pope of the people; young people loved him, old people loved and I loved him.

Q: What is your favorite non-religious book?

A: Even though I am a very practical person, I enjoy reading classical works such as Shakespearean plays. William Shakespeare was such a great author. I admire the way he plays with words and ideas; his figures of speech dazzle me. I love all his plays, but the two that I pick up to read from time to time are “Julius Caesar” and the “Merchant of Venice.”

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When there were difficult cases involving patients from Nigeria or other African countries, I have been called upon to help explain and resolve the situation. I also have helped to expose my peers to Nigerian foods, and they seem to love them.
Supper and Substance provides kindling to fuel the fire of marriage

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Regular date nights are known to be “fuel for the fire” in keeping intimacy alive in a marriage. To turn up the notch of romance, by inviting God into their relationship, many Catholic couples participate in Supper and Substance (S&S), which combines an evening out with opportunities to share and grow in faith with other couples.

Married couples throughout the diocese will have an opportunity to experience this program and be invited to bring it into their own church parishes during a diocesan-wide S&S on Saturday, July 30, 7–10 p.m., at Premier Lanes, 1414 N. Airline Hwy., Gonzales.

S&S includes a meal and opportunity for couples to socialize and talk about the joys and struggles in their marriage and how God has blessed them, according to Emily Froeba, who, with her husband, Jason, brought the program to St. Mary of False River in New Roads and now helps others start it in other church parishes.

Froeba said many couples advise, support and evangelize each other.

“It opens the door like a breath of fresh air and gives them hope for their marriage,” said Froeba.

A witnessing couple will also talk about their faith journey in their marriage. S&S particularly helps couples in large churches connect, Froeba noted.

“It’s kind of easy to blend into the crowd,” said Froeba.

The event, in fact, acts like a springboard for couples to become more involved in their church. Wives may help organize branches or ministries geared towards women and children. Husbands may become involved in their church men’s or dad’s clubs. They may both volunteer to help with the children and youth ministries.

“It increases their energy and enthusiasm,” said Froeba. Jason Angette, who along with his wife, Elise, are co-directors of the faith and marriage ministry in the Archdiocese of New Orleans, which provided the inspiration for the S&S program for the Diocese of Baton Rouge, said the theme of each event is left up to the creativity of the organizers.

It can be an elegant meal with servers, a potluck, a tailgate-type affair, costume contest or as in the case of the diocesan event, held at a bowling alley. The activities, however, should not distract from the intent of the event for husbands and wives to talk with each other and other couples, to reflect and grow.

“Couples need to be intentional on how we live our marriages,” said Jason Angelette.

He and Froeba said they have seen instances where a troubled couple has “happened onto” S&S and received what they needed to “keep on keeping on.”

The result is often that husbands and wives evolve from being a solitary couple to active participants in their faith community.

“They are not only talking to each other, but to the church,” Angelette said.

David Dawson Jr., director of the family life apostolate of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, and his wife, Kate, will be the witnessing couple at the diocesan S&S.

David Dawson said it’s easy for a couple to have an intellectual idea of what faith looks like within a marriage and family, but never truly have experienced it.

“We desire to have spirituality and intimacy, but that can be nebulous,” Dawson said.

“There’s a sense of closeness and vulnerability that are part of marriage, he noted. Achieving that is not complicated, but it requires commitment and working with each other and with God.

“It’s the three of us working together like a team,” Dawson said.

With teamwork, the couples are not only strengthened, but so are their churches and dioceses, according to Kate Dawson.

“When members of a parish spend time together with no other goal than enjoying each other’s presence, with the added bonus of being together as couple in the date atmosphere of S&S, members of a parish/diocese can meet others who are like-minded (and in this case, married and wanting to keep faith on the forefront) and see that they’re not alone,” she said. “They can be encouraged on the journey … and a glass of wine certainly helps to encourage them!”

In addition to food, bowling and a live band at S&S, a cash bar, arcade and bumper car package are also available. To register, visit mfldiobr.org. For information, call Jason or Emily Froeba at 225-620-5391, or email emilyfroeba@yahoo.com.

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Edwards signs pro-life bills into law

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Pro-life supporters are hailing Gov. John Bel Edwards signing two bills aimed at protecting the life of the unborn child.

Edwards on June 2 signed HB 606, which prohibits health care facilities and clinics that perform abortions from receiving state funding. The signing comes as Planned Parenthood continues construction of a large abortion clinic in New Orleans.

Several days earlier Edwards signed into law the Unborn Child Protection from Dismemberment Act, which ends the practice of dismemberment abortion. Dismemberment abortion, more commonly known as Dilation & Evacuation (D&E), is a second trimester procedure where the abortionist uses forceps to remove the unborn child from the mother.

Danielle Van Haute, director of Respect Life, Diocese of Baton Rouge, said she was thrilled to see Edwards sign the legislation.

Edwards has signed several pro-life bills during the regular legislative session that ended June 6. “It is encouraging to know that when Planned Parenthood in New Orleans begins providing abortions it will not be receiving funding for any of its services,” Van Haute said. “Other than abortion, all those services are readily available from other providers in the community.”

Rep. Frank Hoffman of West Monroe, who authored HB 606 at Edwards’ request, said taxpayers “should not be asked to give their hard-earned dollars to businesses in our state that sell abortion.”

“Other than abortion, all those services are readily available from other providers in the community.”

Deanna Wallace, legislative director for Louisiana Right to Life, also expressed gratitude to the governor and his “strong leadership this session on behalf of life. “We believe it is a reason-able policy that taxpayer dollars should never benefit those businesses that sell abortions, a pro-cedure objectionable to so many of our citizens,” she said.

Van Haute noted the signing of the Unborn Child Protection from Dismemberment act was critical because the D&E procedure is “horrible.”

“There is no way to describe the procedure without being graphic,” she said. “This bill is also important because it’s helping to bring the truth of what abortion is into the light. We’re talking about the deliberate death of innocent human life sanctioned by law. This bill and the discussion surrounding it are helping people rethink their stance on abortion.”

Louisiana is now the sixth state in the country to have a law banning the D&E procedure. Wallace said approximately 1,000 of these abortions are performed annually in Louisiana.

“This legislation is a statement about who we are as a people,” said Rep. Mike Johnson of Bossier, who authored the bill. “In Louisiana, we believe every human life is valuable and worthy of protection, and no civil society should allow its unborn children to be ripped apart. Incredibly as it seems, we needed a law to say that. We have it now.”

Van Haute said she was encouraged by the overwhelming support of the legislature, especially on these two bills.

“We certainly appreciate it when measures are taken to safeguard the dignity and lives of all people,” she said.
Baptismal gown provides glimpse into family history

By Rachele Smith
The Catholic Commentator

It was made, family members believe, out of necessity. But through the years it has become a prized family heirloom, one that is now reaching a fourth generation.

On April 23, Brooklyn Marie White was baptized at St. John the Evangelist Church in Prairieville. As the infant daughter of Megan and Nathan White was welcomed into the Catholic faith, of Megan and Nathan White was baptized at St. John the Evangelist Church in Prairieville. As the infant daughter of Megan and Nathan White was welcomed into the Catholic faith, a white baptismal gown was gently placed on her.

The gown itself was simple. It was made of a sheer cotton material accented with lace and a touch of blue ribbon.

Yet, for all of its simplicity, this was no ordinary baptismal gown.

Crafted from the wedding dress of Brooklyn’s great-great grandmother, the gown had been used in family christenings since the 1920s.

Christa White, the grandmother of Brooklyn, said family history is not very clear, but “I believe my grandmother used her wedding dress (to make the baptismal gown) because they couldn’t afford to buy one.”

Christa White, who was also baptized in the same dress and used it to christen her two children, Nathan (the father of Brooklyn) and Lexie, said the name of every family member who used the dress is hand stitched into the fabric of the gown.

“I embroidered Nathan’s and Lexie’s name, and I will hand stitch Brooklyn’s name, too,” she said.

While the dress is a beautiful testament to one family’s faith, for Christa White, the dress is also a reminder of her family’s history.

In 1927, her grandparents, Anton Koper and Cecilia Brouwer, were married in Holland. When the first of their seven children was born, the young couple used fabric from Brouwer’s wedding dress to create a baptismal gown. Ultimately, this same dress was used to christen all of their seven children, including Christa White’s mother, Cily Winkeler, who was the only girl in the family.

Through the years, the gown was used at many family christenings. All total 25 descendants of Anton and Cecilia were baptized in the dress with each name carefully stitched in the fabric.

Until Brooklyn’s baptism, the most recent time the gown was used was when Christa’s nephew, her brother’s son, was christened in 2001. In the years between, Christa White made sure to take care of the dress and had it protected in a special airtight shadow box that normally hangs in her family’s living room.

“It was tacked on a cardboard background. To take it out (of the shadow box), I just snipped where it was tacked,” she explained.

Other than a little yellowing around the collar, the dress has been lovingly cared for. Christa White plans to have it preserved again, in hopes that as her family grows, this cherished tradition that is “near and dear” to her heart will also continue.

Four generations of family members christened in the same baptismal gown are, from left, Lexie White, Nathan White (Lexie’s brother), Christa White (Lexie and Nathan’s mother), Cily Winkeler (Christa’s mother), infant Brooklyn White (Nathan’s daughter) and Laura Nicossia (Christa’s sister and Cily’s daughter). Photos provided by Christa White.

Hand stitching around the front and bottom of the baptismal gown records the names of every family member who wore it. The names of 25 family members have been embroidered.

This wedding photo of Anton Koper and Cecilia Brouwer shows the wedding dress that was used to create a family baptismal gown.

The family baptismal gown shows a delicate lace edging and simple trim elements.

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Actions on global warming/ Confusion over Ascension

Pope Francis published his encyclical on global warming in June 2015. What actions has the church initiated to put his recommendations into effect? Are we waiting for more guidance from the Holy Father, or should we be looking for something from our bishops and priests? (Centertown, Missouri)

A Pope Francis did, as you say, address the issue of global warming in his encyclical “Laudato Si’” and the document (perhaps better appreciated under its English title, “On Care for Our Common Home”) speaks of a variety of environmental challenges, urges a broad dialogue on how we are to shape our future, and says that “climate change is happening and is not an illusion.”

Far from waiting for further guidance, there are steps that can be taken immediately, and the pope mentions some of them in the encyclical: “There is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions ... avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing water consumption, separating refuse, cooking only what can reasonably be consumed ... using public transport or carpooling, planting trees, turning off unnecessary lights ...”

A good resource is the Global Catholic Climate Movement, which includes on its website a list of “nine things a parish can do to help stop climate change (with no budget and no special expertise).”

Likewise, the Archdiocese of Ottawa in Canada publishes a document called “Care for God’s Creation: A Guide for Parishes,” which suggests that a parish form a “green team” responsible for environmental stewardship in the parish, that Catholic teaching on the environment be incorporated into homilies and bulletin inserts, and that the parish consider such measures as an energy retrofit program and an investment in solar panels.

Q If we are a universal church, why are holy day Mass requirements so different? Even in the U.S., most dioceses have transferred Ascension Thursday to a Sunday. Why not all? (Northampton, Pennsylvania)

A My answer is that your question is a good one. Part of the current state of the law makes sense to me and part does not. Canon law lists 10 holy days of obligation, but (with the permission of the Vatican) bishops’ conferences within a country may suppress some of them or move them to the nearest Sunday.

The result is that there is wide variety from nation to nation; many countries, like our own, have six non-Sunday holy days of obligation. Australia and the Netherlands have two. I can appreciate why certain days might be especially celebrated in certain places. In Italy on Jan. 6, the feast of the Epiphany, Mass is obligatory. Italians traditionally celebrate Epiphany with gift-giving, much as we do on Christmas. In Ireland, March 17 marks the feast of St. Patrick, that nation’s patron, and it is a holy day of obligation.

Ascension Thursday is a story in itself. Back in the late 1990s, bishops in the United States took notice that Mass attendance on Ascension Thursday had been dropping for a number of years. (Since the feast occurs on the 40th day after Easter, it can fall anywhere from early May to early June, so people don’t have it fixed in their mental calendars.)

As a result, wishing to highlight the importance of the Ascension, most of the ecclesiastical provinces in the U.S. transferred the celebration of the feast (and the obligation of attending Mass) to the nearest Sunday. However, the bishops of New England, some mid-Atlantic states and Nebraska kept the Thursday date.

The result is a fair amount of confusion. (And I won’t even go into the universal belief that the Ascension should be a holy day as is Christmas and Easter.)

Like you, I would look — some day in the future — for a bit more standardization and a bit less befuddlement.
Cathedral’s sexton helps preserve history of Baton Rouge area

By Rachelle Smith
The Catholic Commentator

Dressed in the grey uniform of a Confederate soldier, Chip Landry enjoys helping others understand history, even if that means going where no Civil War soldier had probably ever gone before: inside a third-grade classroom.

The long-time living history re-enactor and St. Joseph Cathedral parishioner recently related stories about life on the Civil War battlefield to a young audience at Baton Rouge Lutheran School.

As the 70-year-old Landry told stories about soldiers battling disease more than each other and passed around samples of unearthed bullets and hardtack, a type of long-lasting biscuit soldiers relied on for food, the students had many questions.

And Landry had the answers.

But then again, Landry is used to having the answers or “knowing where to find the answers” about history. It’s something he has acquired through the years while volunteering at the cathedral.

For some 23 years, Landry has served as the cathedral’s sexton or cemetery administrator, approving funerals and doing repairs. He even takes his job a step further and readily assists families in trying to find information about genealogy or family gravesites.

Landry, who has completed years of research about his own family, tracing his father’s roots back to Acadia and his mother’s back to the Huguenots or the French Protestants, knows the information found in a graveyard can be invaluable.

“There’s a lot of information on headstones,” he said.

But Landry notes some of that information can be lost when headstones are not cared for, cemetery records are not kept up-to-date or in some cases, simply destroyed.

“The last paid sexton (at the cathedral) left in 1928 and there was nobody watching the cemetery until the early 1950’s so there was a lot of unauthorized burials there,” he said.

As a result, some family history has been lost, but Landry does his best to help fill in the gaps.

“I get calls all the time. Someone will say, ‘I know my great-great-grand-daddy was buried in St. Joseph’s Cemetery, and I want to put a headstone on his grave,’” said Landry, who noted that he has been able to help families piece together information using state and church archives, newspaper obituaries and oral history the family itself might have.

As a retired sheriff’s office employee, Landry also recognizes that the information he finds, especially when it can be made into a photographic record, helps families keep more than their personal history intact.

Landry knows things like crosses, statues, even headstones can be taken from a cemetery, but a photograph can preserve those items for the family and if needed, help recover any missing or stolen items.

For some families, however, it’s already too late.

“They are reclaiming cemeteries in France right now,” he said.

“They are removing the remains and placing them in a catacomb, and all of that cemetery memorabilia on those graves, they are selling that stuff,” Landry noted.

This memorabilia, which includes large iron crosses, filigree crosses and other religious items are typically found in antique shops, even in America, according to Landry.

“The idea is that these cemeteries are from the 1700s, so there’s no family left, the remains are there, they can use that land for something else,” he said.

Landry, who also served in the Marine Corps and as a state park ranger, admits his work in helping families requires a lot of his personal time, yet his volunteer efforts and his desire to help others has not gone unnoticed. Recently he was recognized with the St. Joseph’s Apprentice Award. Landry was one of just five people honored this year with the award based on service to St. Joseph’s Cathedral.

“I was very surprised when Father (Paul) Counce told me (about the award). There are so many others who deserve it. But I think he tried to tell me as soon as possible, so I could get cleaned up,” laughed Landry.

In addition to Landry, others receiving the St. Joseph’s Apprentice award during an “Evening at the Cathedral” were Archbishop Alfred C. Hughes, Angelo Davis Kelley and Marino and Betty Casem. During the same event, another major recognition was given to Davis Rhorer, who received the Cathedral Community Award for his service.

Maintaining a cheerful disposition even in adversity

In this post-Pentecost season, it is important to remember some lessons from Jesus: love, pray, go, teach.

After his ascension, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to us. He wanted to spread his message to the world. He chose the Jewish cornerstone for the building of the church and sent the Holy Spirit to us. He chose the Jewish people as his people.

For today’s Catholic, the Holy Spirit is the shield against adversity.

To live joyfully, because Jesus asked it of you, do not wait for good things to happen. Good cheer is in the work for justice in the world, we should remain people of good cheer no matter what, not only because Jesus asked it of you, but because a cheerful heart is a shield against adversity.

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

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We make it personal.
Ryan Hallford answers God’s call

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Deacon Ryan Hallford readily admits, like so many other clergy members, he heard God’s calling at any early age, specifically after his freshman year at LSU.

Only in Deacon Hallford’s case, God had to call back. Deacon Hallford, who was ordained to the diaconate by Bishop Robert W. Muench on May 28 at St. Joseph Cathedral, originally entered St. Joseph Seminary in 2003.

“At the time I wanted to serve the church, and I love my faith, so why not the seminary?” he said. “I went in very enthusiastic but I knew very little about the church.”

A little more than two years later, the semester after Hurricane Katrina forever changed the landscape and psyche of southeast Louisiana, Deacon Hallford, who is scheduled to be ordained to the priesthood in May 2017, left, saying “I did not desire to be a priest anymore and left with the intention of never returning.”

He returned to LSU and after graduating with a degree in philosophy spent a year teaching in San Jose, California with the Jesuit Volunteer Corps. Deacon Hallford, a Sidell native who graduated from Northshore High School in 2002, returned to Baton Rouge in 2008 and spent the next several years teaching theology at St. Joseph’s Academy and St. Michael High School, with the intention of eventually becoming a college professor.

But as is so often the case, the seeds God planted may have been temporarily dormant but never died.

“When I left (the seminary) I devised all of these reasons in my mind to leave,” Deacon Hallford said. “Tangible things where I justified it to myself.

“The further I got away the less sense those reasons made.”

A series of life-changing events, including Deacon Hallford’s suddenly becoming legal guardian of his younger sister while she was a sophomore in high school, along with completing the final 200 miles of the grueling Camino de Santiago pilgrimage in Spain, provided the impetus to reconsider the priesthood. He admitted assuming responsibility for his sister, including him being forced to take on two extra jobs to help pay for her tuition at St. Michael, was “quite a transition” for both he and his sibling.

“It was difficult but very fulfilling,” said Deacon Hallford. He said his life plans had become simplified and admitted to himself he was never going to pursue a lucrative financial career. But he yearned to spend his life serving others, serving the church and growing in his ability to love God.

During that process, Deacon Hallford spent 11 days in Spain, praying for his sister, praying that she would be well and would be able to find a female role model. His prayers were answered when a local family allowed Deacon Hallford’s sister to move in with them for her senior year.

But it was also during that walk he experienced a defining, albeit painful moment, one that cemented his trust in God and would ultimately have him answering God’s call a second time.

“After his traveling companion was forced to leave because of a family emergency, Deacon Hallford marched in solitude, cooped up in thought and prayers. At one point he began to experience a kind of pain in the back of his foot, to the point where he could feel ‘vibrating and cracking,’ and he said he had torn his Achilles’ heel.

“After one particularly painful day that saw him only able to walk for one hour at a time, he asked God later that night at Mass,” said Deacon Hallford, “Do you want me to continue?”

“I remember experiencing at Mass that trust and God telling me, ‘You are going to do this. I am going to give you the grace to do this,” Deacon Hallford said. “When I woke up the next morning (the foot) was gone.”

“It was one of the most joyful experiences of my life.”

Deacon Hallford believed a healing took place that night, and upon reflection as to why, he considered it not only a message from God but also a second calling to the priesthood. He reached out to Father Matt Lorrain, then vocations director, about entering the seminary for the Diocese of Baton Rouge (he had initially entered for the Archdiocese of New Orleans). By the fall of 2013, he was back in formation at Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans.

“No second thoughts this time,” said Deacon Hallford, who comes from a broken home. “One of the things that really attracts me to the life of a priest is the way a priest is called to live out in the family of God.”

“If you think about the sacramental life of a priest he gets to experience the family of the church,” he added. “He gets to experience some of the most intimate moments of their lives. When there is new life, he is there. Blessings during pregnancy after birth, baptism, a priest gets to be there when people are getting reconciled to the church, express God’s mercy, gets to be there for new families sacraments of marriage, families grieving the loss of their loved ones and praying for...”
Father Martin honors wish of his deceased wife through ordination

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

When then Deacon Eddie Martin lost his wife of almost 35 years, Jenny, in 2013, in his grief he took a long, hard look at his life and asked, “Where do I go from here?”

“I looked into the mirror and said, ‘You’re not boyfriend anymore – she used to call me boyfriend. Who are you?” Father Martin said.

“Priest” was the answer he had arrived at through a journey, which included the encouragement and support of his wife before she died. Father Martin was ordained by Bishop Robert W. Muench as a priest for the Diocese of Baton Rouge on May 28 at St. Joseph Cathedral.

Father Martin said his first thoughts about becoming a priest came after one of his earliest childhood confessions.

“I felt like I could fly, ‘How cool is this,’ thought Father Martin. ‘This guy (the priest) makes people feel like they can fly all day talking about love and forgiveness. What better way would there be to spend life than to make people feel like this?’”

He started telling people he was going to be a priest. But when he had his first slow dance with a girl in junior high school, he pushed such thoughts aside.

Admittedly girl crazy after that, Martin was ready to settle down when he went to the University of South Carolina. Walking into class one day, he prayed God would send him the woman who would be his wife. Self-confident around women, he was stunned when the first girl he approached brushed him off. But in that same class he met a girl, Jenny, who became his wife.

The couple lived a short time in Alabama before they moved back to Baton Rouge. Father Martin worked as a chemical engineer and Jenny worked as a pharmaceutical representative. They eventually quit their jobs and started their own business.

In the midst of the busyness, Father Martin continued to feel the call of the church.

“I could care less how successful the business was. I just wanted to be in people’s lives and make a difference. I kept doing things that had to do with the church,” Father Martin said.

The early memories about priesthood kept drawing him closer to the priesthood.

His wife encouraged him to pursue that vocation.

When Jenny learned she had four months to live, she made plans to renovate the house. Father Martin asked her why she wanted to spend the last months of her life doing that.

“She said, ‘When I’m gone you’re going to be a priest. If you’re going to be a priest, you’re going to have to sell this house. To do it, you have to fix it up. You’re too cheap to do it on your own, so I’m going to do it for you,’” Father Martin heartily laughed.

But Father Martin struggled keeping himself together after she died. Then he remembered his wife’s encouragement by saying, “You can do this.”

At the following diaconate ordination, Father Martin told Bishop Muench he desired to become a priest and asked if he could continue praying and discerning about it.

“He dropped everything he was doing, put his hands on my shoulders and said ‘Let’s pray’ I felt chills coming all over me,” Father Martin said.

SEE MARTIN PAGE 11
Deacon Ryan Hallford

Deacon Hallford will be spending the next five months serving at St. Margaret Queen of Scotland Church in Albany in preparation for his priestly ordination. He is eager to learn the various ministries of the parish, the dynamics of how a church parish operates getting to know parishioners and performing the sacraments.

Above all, Deacon Hallford is looking forward to preparing for what he will be doing the rest of his life. The uncertainty is gone, and no further calls will be necessary. “I know what I exist for,” he said.

He said the bishop prayed he would be open to what God was calling him to do.

Father Martin wondered if the timing was right to enter the seminary, but God worked things out to show him it was right. He remembered his excitement as graduation drew closer and he was taped during a practice celebration of Mass.

“I thought, ‘Wow, I’m going to be doing this,’” Father Martin said.

Father Martin, who has been assigned as parochial vicar at St. Thomas More Church in Baton Rouge, said he is looking forward to bringing peace and restoration to people’s lives through the sacrament of reconciliation and celebrating Mass.

“I want to be the best priest I can be for whatever flock God sends me to,” said Father Martin. “I’m like a ball of clay and God will shape me the way he wants to shape me.”

Father Edwin J. Martin

He said the bishop prayed he would be open to what God was calling him to do.

Father Martin prays the Eucharistic prayer shortly after he was ordained a priest. Bishop Muench is to Father Martin’s right and Father Cleo Milano to his left.

The Catholic Commentator | June 10, 2016
But too much pleasure can cause you to break from being cooped up in school. Sightings swirling around you need a firm feeling dry and brittle or washed away after “leaving God behind” for fleeting distractions and pleasures. “Since school is out everyone craves for summer fun,” said Lupita Arena, a member of the Diocesan Youth Board. “Most teens are either chilling in their room watching Netflix or hanging out with friends. Now there is nothing wrong with taking it easy. Everyone deserves a break from being cooped up in school. But too much pleasure can cause you to lose sight of God. With all these distractions swirling around you need a firm foundation to keep you from flying away in your free time.”

Sand and surf, music, parties, latest video games, friends texting “U on ur way?” cool places to visit and take a selfie at … sleep! Prayers? Later. Mass? Maybe next weekend. Serving at the food bank? There’s plenty of other opportunities. This is MY time.

As teens hit the “open road” of summer away from regiments and obligations, youth from the Diocese of Baton Rouge remind their peers that staying connected with God assures their souls will be nourished and “taking it all in” rather than feeling dry and brittle or washed away after “leaving God behind” for fleeting distractions and pleasures.

“We have a flexible schedule to serve at places such as St. Vincent de Paul, the nursing homes, their church parishes or neighbors in need.” They can serve while spending quality time with their families. “In recent years I have assisted along with many of my cousins to aid my grandfather and the Knights of Columbus. One day in the summer we head out to a pond and hold a small fishing tournament for kids with cancer and some of their siblings,” said Dugas. “These kids are not much older than 8 years old and the sheer joy on their faces when they are fishing is heartwarming. All of the kids have managed to master appreciating the simplest things in life. On their faces is where I see Jesus love and joy clearly.”

Since many youth enjoy working with children, Vacation Bible School allows them to mentor young souls and grow spiritually, said Catherine Ledoux, a senior homeschool student. “Last summer, a few of my friends and I helped out at a day camp run by the Missionaries of Charity. Putting on a day camp with the sisters was an irreplaceable opportunity, and working with those kids was worth every minute of the summer that was spent there,” said Ledoux. She said doing activities with other youth who have similar values is another way to keep the faith. “Another fun activity for the youth is the summer softball league. For the past few years, I played on the St. Agnes summer softball team,” said Ledoux. “Playing games against other youth groups was a great time for fellowship, fun and friendly competition.”

Opportunities for youth to learn about their faith and worship together are another high priority for youth. “I think one of the biggest things that keep youth from God and their faith is that they do all these trips in the summer worrying about how to impress others with their boyfriends/girlfriends or their new tans,” said Brodie Vance, a junior at Catholic High School. “I feel one cool thing that can bring the youth back to their faith over the summer is more cool religious conferences and religious concerts over the summer and not just over the school year, which is when most of them are.”

He and other youth said Stuebenville youth conferences are life changing. Spending time in nature helps youth to get to know the maker of the universe, said Catherine Richard, a senior at St. Joseph’s Academy.

“The outdoors is where I see God and his beautiful works,” said Richard. “This summer, I will be spending three weeks in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina where I will be surrounded by nature and awesome people. Ever since I realized the outdoors is where I see God, I always try to find opportunities to spend time with our Lord in his beautiful masterpiece.”

Reading spiritual books is also a good way to grow in faith, according to diocesan youth board member Jonathan Farernet. He is currently reading the book “Father Elijah” by Michael O’Brien.

The most important thing a youth can do to stay on track with God is schedule it. Daily Mass, youth Bible studies, spending time adoring the Lord and visiting churches and attending Mass while out of town are simple ways to “pencil in” time with God.

“A couple of my favorite ways to spend time with God are going to the adoration chapel and relaxing in nature. Now that it’s summer, I can spend more time in the adoration chapel,” said Kaitlyn Doyle, a St. Michael High School senior. “Since I’m always on the go during the school year, I enjoy spending time winding down in the adoration chapel. It’s always good to stop for a little while and just ‘be’… We often get caught up in saying that we are ‘too busy’ for God. Summer is the perfect opportunity to open our schedules up for God.”

The youth pointed out there are more reasons to spend time with the Lord than without him this summer.

“These activities are a fun approach to grow in your faith over the summer,” said Arena. “Trust me, I have done them all! So get out there and have a good time!”

The Back to School special section will be July 8. Find out what will be happening in the Diocese of Baton Rouge Catholic Schools for the 2016-2017 school year.

Deadline is June 24!

To inquire about advertising your products and services to this specialized market or space reservation contact Wanda Koch at 225-387-0983 or email wkoch@diobr.org.
MUSICAL THEATRE – The Our Lady of Mercy School Musical Theatre Department recently presented “Once Upon a Mattress,” a retelling of the classic story, “The Princess and the Pea.” The musical was directed by school music teacher and chorale director Eleanor Bach and featured the talents of seventh- and eighth-graders Trevor Turner, Meghan Crump, Anna Leyer, Abbey Mitchell, Eleana Miller, Gabby Montagnino, Rhett Greer, August Embaugh, Annabelle Chenevert, Gordie Simon, Jane Laville, Clair Toups, Theresa Kadar, Abbi Land, Max Duet, Allie Canova, Giuliana Cedotal, Haylie Griggs, Molly Hannie, Lucy Laville, Abbey Mitchell, Sophia Paz, Mary Scott Thom, Zoe Vicari, Sarah Weinstein, Roland Michael Toups and Vivian Toups. The OLOM musical theatre program is a daytime enrichment class open to seventh- and eighth-grade students chosen through an audition process. Photo provided by Christy Haldane | Our Lady of Mercy School

Q-BALLERS SCORE – Brian Quantrille, left, a sixth-grade teacher at St. Thomas More School, presents a check to Laurie Adams, a representative with the Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center. The $1,806 donation was made possible after 903 raffle tickets were purchased by sixth-grade students at the school, all hoping to be selected as a so-called “Q-Baller.” Started by Quantrille in 2005, the Q-Ballers are 20 lucky sixth-graders, randomly drawn, who get the opportunity to play a wide variety of fun games with Quantrille and other school teachers on a selected Saturday morning. This year’s donation was the largest the group has made to the Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center. Photo provided by Tootie Dee | St. Thomas More School

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The Darkness

BH Tilt

Cut-rate demon-possession story in which an autistic child (David Mazouz) takes some sacred rocks from a subterranean temple during a family vacation to the Grand Canyon, thereby creating subsequent mayhem for his parents (Kevin Bacon and Radha Mitchell) and teen sister (Lucy Fry). Director and co-writer Greg McLean avoids anything churchy, relying instead on two Native American exorcists who come equipped with copper dowser rods, a feather and a stubborn determination to complete their task. Their intensity is not contagious. An occult theme, a couple of profanities, at least one rough and crude language. A-III; PG-13

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

A Hologram for the King

Lionsgate

The simple joys of a stable career and a second chance at love are celebrated in this adaptation of Dave Eggers' 2012 novel, which stars Tom Hanks as a U.S. businessman trying to persuade the King of Saudi Arabia to invest in a holographic teleconferencing system. Following the pattern set in the book, writer-director Tom Tykwer has his protagonist wandering in the Arabian Desert for most of the film, brooding over his past misdeeds and suffering quite a bit as a result. Amid the self-recrimination, he finds off romantic advances from a Danish adversary (Sidse Babett Knudsen) but also explores the beginnings of an honest relationship with a local doctor (Sarita Choudhury).

Since this personal component of the plot follows a divorce, it will strike Catholic viewers as less straightforward than the executive's regrets over his professional transgressions, such as his role in the outsourcing of manufacturing jobs to China. Adult themes, brief upper female nudity, a scene of drug use, fleeting rough and profane language. A-III; R

Neighbors 2: Sorority Rising

Universal

The only thing worse than this witless comedy's vain ruminating for laughs, during which it churns up the lowest depths of bad taste, is its pious attempt to preach a dumbed-down version of feminism. According to this philosophy, women have the same right to pass their college years in a narcotic haze as do the guys. Trying this out in practice is a trio of disaffected freshmen (Chloe Grace Moretz, Kiera Klesmen and Beanie Feldstein) who rebel against the male-dominated social scene on their new campus by founding a supposedly liberal fraternity. Unfortunately for the married couple (Seth Rogen and Rose Byrne) whose rivalry with the fraternity next door was chronicled in the franchise's 2014 original, under the guidance of the now-graduated frat boy (Zac Efron) who was once the spouses' chief adversary, the party-loving ladies set up house in the same dwelling the brothers used to occupy. This endangers the group this 3-D adventure agreement to sell their home, a deal they can't afford to have fail. Returning director Nicholas Stoller, who collaborated on the script with Rogen and three others, pulls out all the stops, deploying, among other things, adult toys, vomit and used tampons. Distorted values, including a benign view of drug use and of the gay lifestyle, explicit sexual acts, a glimpse of graphic nudity, pervasive sexual and gross-out humor, several uses of profanity, ruthless rough and crude language. O; R

Alice Through the Looking Glass

Disney

The heroine of this forced, mechanical follow-up to Tim Burton's "Alice in Wonderland" (2010) is not Lewis Carroll's curious 7-year-old girl but rather an intrepid sea captain with an entrepreneurial streak who refuses to bend to the will of a patriarchal society. Fueled by empathy and an appetite for risk, Alice (Mia Wasikowska) travels back in time in the fantasy realm of Underland to learn what happened to the family of her pal the Mad Hatter (Johnny Depp). Returning to the real world of 1875 London, she defends her family's legacy against a rapacious shipping company led by a former suitor (Leo Bill) who has designs on the vessel she inherited from her father. Despite exciting visuals, a talented ensemble, and glitzy costume and makeup designs, this 3-D adventure, directed by James Bobin, feels inert and tediously familiar at the same time. Frequent, moderately intense fantasy action, several instances of cruel behavior, a couple of mild sex scenes of drug use, fleeting rough and profane language. A-II; PG

The Angry Birds Movie

Columbia

Take an addictive phone app, contrive a plot to "explain" motivations, chuck in puns, a bit of potty humor and lengthy slapstick sequences, and you have the recipe for this inane 3-D animated adaptation. Co-directors Clay Kaytis and Fergal Reynolds track the efforts of a trio of flightless friends (voices of Jason Sudeikis, Josh Gad and Danny McBride) to defend the eggs of Bird Island from a band of invading pigs out to enhance their diet with yolky goodness. The straightforward plot is unlikely to confuse and the scenes of combat unlikely to frighten any but the very youngest children. Accompanying adults, on the other hand may well find themselves anxious for a speedy conclusion. Mildly scary action sequences, fleeting scatological humor. A-II; PG

For more Movie Reviews, visit thecatholiccommentator.org and look under ENTERTAINMENT.
Rising and helping others to rise with humility and kindness

Think about qualities that would help your life become a success. What would you choose? How about humility and kindness?

There are many spiritual qualities out there that bring added meaning and satisfaction to our lives. However, practicing humility and kindness clearly allows the light of God’s presence to shine through you.

In that regard, I was attracted to Tim McGraw’s new single, “Humble and Kind.” The song is off his recent album and invites you to consider what these qualities mean.

The song’s protagonist suggests a litany of possibilities about how to live “humble and kind.” For example, he affirms that one should set high goals as “you got mountains to climb.” Yet, he also suggests that “when the work you put in is realized, let yourself feel the pride but always stay humble and kind.”

More than sharing the love and kindness McGraw evokes, the song also captures the essence of his faith. As the artist describes his faith, he says, “My faith is in you and his love for you are endless. So, whenever you accomplish anything, be humble and acknowledge that it is God who directs your life.

Try to do small acts of kindness each day and do this as a service for which you may never be recognized. Your kindness can flow from the firm belief that God made all of us, and each of us bears an inherent imprint of worth and dignity. No matter who is before you, be kind to that person.

Also, smile. In fact, smile a lot! It has an immediate positive effect on others. Share your smile with everyone you meet.

When acting with kindness, don’t forget to extend this kindness to yourself. Sure, we all have a lot to learn, and sometimes our mistakes are our best teachers.

Tell the truth about whatever mistakes you make, but follow that up quickly with an attitude of kindness to yourself. Such kindness is often laced with a dose of compassion, accepting that we learn as we go, and we need to kindly accept our mistakes.

Also, remember that everyone’s needs count, including your own. Still, practice humility by refusing to take your needs too seriously. Focus on helping others feel cared for and supported.

Acknowledgment that you can grow more with these qualities. Ask God to help you become more humble and kinder as a way to reflect his care for all of his people. I suppose this list could continue to expand. I challenge you to construct a list.

Put your ego aside and give credit or recognition to others. Yes, the light and love of God shines through you when you are humble and kind.

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.”

On The Record
Charlie Martin

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Bishop Muench’s ordination homily

With consummate joy we assemble this morning in our revered cathedral celebrating this historic, graced occasion for our two highly-prized ordinands, beloved diocese and the church universal. We heartily welcome you, Deacon Ed, candidate Ryan, your family members and all. We express congratulations and support to you, and immense thanks to God. We also offer special prayers for Jenny Nates Martin, the late wife of Deacon Ed. May she rest in the peace of the risen Christ.

The biblical readings chosen by our ordinands are fitting and interesting. In Numbers, Chapter 11, Moses expressed to God exasperation with his grumbling, “riffraff” (Nm 11:14). People, pleading for God to “take his life to spare him the misery of seeking to lead them” (Nm 11:15). God bestowed some of the spirit on 70 elders to “share the burden of the people” (Nm 11:17) with Moses exercising the principles of collegiality and subsidiarity. Ministers overwhelmed with pastoral administration can find special comfort in this Scripture. I recommend all 35 verses of this chapter, not just the liturgically condensed 8, be the subject of special time in prayer and meditation. God is always ready to help for the mere asking.

In the second reading St. Peter expressed a favorite maxim of the apostles, based on Proverbs 10:12: “Let your love for one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins … As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins … As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins … As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins … As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins … As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins … As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins … As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins … As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins … As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins.”

By example and teaching, Pope Francis models great witness about the priesthood, priestly ministry and priestly formation. He has emphasized that every priest must be preeminently focused on his ongoing personal relationship with Jesus. The ordained can be measured by the extent they emulate Christ in their life and ministry. This cannot be achieved by mere “osmosis,” or just by “going through the motions,” but only through intentionally pursuing “a living relationship from the disciple to the Master, from brother to brother, from the poor man to God” (Homily, November 1, 2014, Domus Sanctae Marthae).

The pope has also stressed the priority for the priest, in imitation of the ultimate Good Shepherd, to be close to his flock. Who could ever forget his graphic, visceral image that priests must be shepherds living “with the smell of the sheep?” (Christ Simplicitly Homily, March 28, 2013).

In his inaugural Mass homily (March 19, 2013), the pope pointed out that priestly authority must be inseparably linked to service, especially for the neediest: “Let your love for one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins … As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins … As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins … As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins … As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins … As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins … As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins … As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins … As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins.”

The pope has challenged the ordained to exercise integrity and simplicity of life. There is no place for narcissism, vanity, entitlement, notoriety, clericalism or careerism. We ordained must be “shepherds, not wolves” (homily, May 15, 2013, Domus Sanctae Marthae). The pope’s abandonment of the papal quarters at the Vatican for the modest residence of Domus Sanctae Marthae, and use of a sub-compact Fiat for transportation during his visit to the United States monumentally attest to these ideals.

I acknowledge the challenge to fulfill all values given us ordained by Pope Francis, and ultimately Jesus himself. I also convey my unambiguous confidence in and gratitude for the service of our priests and deacons – in loyalty to Christ and the church, in committed community with one another, in loving service to others, and in generous and fervent administration of the sacraments, especially Eucharist and reconciliation. But why should we be surprised? Our priests and deacons characteristically come from loving, faith-filled families, who, with fellow Catholics and others, helped form them. While recognizing the difficulty our continuing acute shortage of clergy poses in just maintaining current levels of ministry, our number of seminarians and deacon candidates is increasing. For this cause we all must pray and work. And today with you, Ed and Ryan, we especially rejoice. As we will soon pray: “May God who has begun the good work in you bring it to fulfillment.” Amen. Amen.

PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PRAY FOR US

Please pray for the priests, deacons and religious women and men in the Baton Rouge Diocese.

June 15
Rev. Desmond Ohankwere MSP
Dcn. William B. Blair
Br. Marcel Riviere SC

June 16
Rev. Mansueto P. Palang
Dcn. Daniel S. Borné
Sr. Marie deMontfort Breaux SSF

June 17
Rev. Jason P. Palermo
Br. Marcus Turcotte SC

June 18
Rev. Bernard J. Papania
Dcn. Eugene F. Brady
Sr. Judith Brun CSJ
Rev. Suchit (Paul) Parakathil IMS
Dcn. Jerry W. Braud
Br. Edward Violett SM
Rev. Amrit Raj IMS
Dcn. Patrick J. Broussard Jr.
Sr. Helen Cahill FMOL
Dcn. Amerit Raj IMS
Dcn. Barry G. Campeaux
Br. Xavier Werneth SC
Dcn. Rubin Reynolds
Dcn. Michael T. Chiappetta
Sr. Nicetas Cambiado DM
Rev. Anthony J. Russo
Dcn. Randall A. Clement
Br. James Burns SC
Rev. Aimal Raj Savarimuthu IMS
Dcn. Samuel C. Collura
Sr. M. Celian MC
Rev. Michael J. Schatzle
Dcn. David L. Dawson III
Br. William Cawley SC

June 26
Rev. Sean O. Sheehy
Dcn. Guy E. Decker
Sr. M. Christa MC

June 27
Rev. Alexander J. Sheldon
Dcn. Benjamin J. Dunbar Jr.
Br. Eldon Crefsil SC

June 28
Rev. Philip P. Spano
Dcn. W. Brent Dupliciss
Sr. Judith Couturie CSJ
June 10, 2016

VIEWPOINT
The Catholic Commentator

17

Love in marriage

(Chapter Four of “The Joy of Love”)

What is special about love in marriage? We live in a world in which the appreciation of marriage has suffered greatly. Young people approaching marital age are influenced more by the lifestyles of movie stars than by any religious or even secular tradition of marriage. Hollywood and marriage do not go together like a horse and carriage; there, marriage is multiple and short term or, “Why bother, it kills love?” Modern secular America places all the emphasis on the splendor of the ceremony in some exotic location rather than on a life-long commitment to God, spouse, family and community.

In sharp contrast, Pope Francis in “Amoris Laetitia” (“The Joy of Love”) goes first to God’s revelation about the sacrament of marriage. St. Paul wrote an ode to love in his first letter to the Corinthians (13:2-7). He says that love is patient and kind, always at the service and support of another. Isn’t marriage a mutual pledge by the spouses to do justice more than just a feeling. It is shown more by deeds than by words. Love is meant to grow because “love makes the giver happy.” He and she enjoy the “pleasure of giving and serving.” Love is not jealous; it shows no “discomfiture” at the other’s good fortune. Rather, it values the other’s achievements. “Whereas love make us rise above ourselves, envy closes us in ourselves.” Marriage is a great school of selflessness. For love is not boastful; rather than focusing on ourselves, marriage should focus our concern on one’s partner. Love is not rude. Pope Francis comments that we all have to learn how to “listen, speak, and, at times, to keep quiet.” (Husbands eventually catch on to this.) Finally, love is kind. This is most important, says Pope Francis, because life in common becomes impossible when we just seek our own convenience.

Marriage is communal. It demands the ability to forgive because love forgives. It doesn’t hold grudges and isn’t resentful. It forgives because it has a positive attitude that seeks to understand the other’s weaknesses and excuses them. The humble person who seeks to love practices examination of conscience (good Jesus spiritually) and knows that he or she is often guilty of the same faults as their spouse. If we look for faults in our spouse, we can always find them. “Something is wrong,” says Pope Francis, “when we see every problem as equally serious.” If we always presume bad intentions, resentment rises against the other. We have to start with ourselves and learn to live with our own limitations and mistakes. When we can forgive ourselves, we are liberated from seeking false assurance by blaming others. Otherwise, family life becomes full of tension and mutual criticism.

“Love bears all things. Pope Francis comments: “Married couples try to show their spouses' good side, not their weaknesses and faults.” We all have failings and each is more than the sum of the little things that make us annoying to others. The other does not have to be perfect to be valued. “Love believes all things.” When applied to families, Pope Francis says that “believes” here really means “trust.” Love trusts the basic goodness of the other. It doesn’t try to control the spouse or the children. It trusts and helps family members to be their best selves.

“Love hopes all things.” Even though family members fail and disappoint, love entrusts them to God who can make crooked lines straight. We cannot force family members to act as we would like. Sometimes we have to let go and let God take care of them.

“Love endures all things.” Married love doesn’t give up. Love is ready to meet any challenge. It is committed to goodness. Sacramental marriage is rooted in the natural inclinations of the human person. The couple wanes the marriage to last. Their children want this, and we as a church must want this. For us, marriage is a covenant, a sacred promise before God that calls for fidelity. As the prophet Malachi wrote: “Let none be faithless to the wife of his youth. For I hate divorce, says the Lord” (Mal 2: 14-16).

Pope Francis describes marriage as a “friendship marked by passion.” The love of friendship inspires the couple to care for one another, serve one another, and above all, to perceive and esteem the “great worth” of the other. Marital love appreciates the beauty of the spouse without the need to selfishly possess him or her.

The charismatic pope whose love impresses millions speaks to the complaints he hears from modern couples: “In my own home nobody cares about me; they do not even see me; it is as if I did not exist.” Marital love, he says opens our eyes and enables us to see beyond all else, “the great worth of the human being. This contemplative love needs to be cultivated ... The most intense joys in life arise when we are able to elicit joy in others, as a foretaste of heaven.”

For love in the family to increase, three words, Pope Francis says, are essential: “Please;” “Thank you;” and “Sorry.” And he adds, “Don’t be stingy in using them ... The right words, spoken at the right times, daily protect and nurture love.”

Young couples preparing for marriage would enjoy reading this chapter. It is like listening to a wise grandfather. Older couples will enjoy Pope Francis’ words about the imperfection of human love, and living with someone who is worth valuing despite those imperfections.

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

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Special thanks to task force volunteers, participants

On Behalf of the Pastoral Planning Task Force:
It was over two years ago when Father Than Vu approached me on behalf of Bishop Muench and asked me to lead what has come to be known as our Pastoral Planning Task Force. It has been a challenging effort, to be sure, but more than anything, it has been a privilege. I am grateful, first, to our bishop for having the vision necessary to initiate this process. I am also very thankful to the members of our Task Force: Lyle Hitzman, Reginald Brown, Jay Jackson, Pamela Fosse, Sister Renai Daigle MSC, Brother Ray Hebert SC, Robert Sibille, Father Jamin David, Father Tom Ranzino, Father John Carville and Deacon Dan Borné. Also, our efforts throughout this entire process have been aided greatly by SSA Consultants of Baton Rouge. As I mentioned to Bishop Muench in one of our meetings, their assistance has been true stewardship for our church. Last summer when we made visits to all 67 parishes of our diocese, we enlisted the help of more than 20 volunteer facilitators. I am grateful to them for their time and support, as well as the other eight volunteers who helped to summarize the many responses received during our open discussions.

On behalf of our Task Force I recently met with Bishop Muench and presented to him our recommendations in the form of a written report. He has in turn asked us to move ahead with publication of the document and implementation of the recommendations contained therein. There will be an initial presentation of the report to all priests and deacons of our diocese in mid-June, followed by presentations in each deanery of our diocese (six in all) in early fall to all who might wish to attend. While some of the recommendations speak to immediate needs, many speak to ongoing ones as well. Therefore, the efforts of pastoral planning in our diocese will be continually evolving.

The results of the surveys and the conversations facilitated in our parishes during the summer of 2015, as well as smaller focus group conversations throughout the diocese, yielded more helpful and creative ideas than we could have ever hoped for. To the more than 1,200 of you who participated, thank you! We are very proud of the work that has been done and confident that the efforts of our Task Force and all of us now will help us to move into a future filled with bright hope and possibility.

Father Trey Nelson Chair, Pastoral Planning Task Force

Letters to the Editor should be typed and limited to 350 words and should contain the name and address of the writer, though the address will not be printed. We reserve the right to edit all letters. Send to: Letters to the Editor, The Catholic Commentator, P. O. Box 14746, Baton Rouge, LA 70898-4746, or to tcc@diobr.org.
COMING EVENTS

June 10, 2016

Pro-Life Mass – A monthly pro-life Mass will be held Tuesday, June 14, 5:30 p.m., at St. Agnes Church, 749 East Blvd., Baton Rouge. For information, call 225-385-4127.

Living Rosary – A living rosary will be prayed Saturday, June 18, noon, at the Cristo Rey football field, 4000 St. Gerard Ave., Baton Rouge. The public is invited to participate. For more information, call 225-536-7141, 225-485-2722 or 225-357-2833.

Prison Ministry Meeting – Catholic Charities Office of Prison Ministry is hosting “Messengers of Hope: Prison Ministry Volunteers,” Saturday, June 25, 9:30 a.m. – 1 p.m., at the Bishop Robert E. Tracy Center, 1800 S. Acadian Thwy., Baton Rouge. Bishop Robert W. Muench will celebrate a Mass at 8:30 a.m. in the St. Joseph Chapel. Current volunteers and those interested in prison ministry are encouraged to attend. To RSVP and for more information, email hjfeldeo@ccdiobr.org, or call 225-336-4406.

Holy Year of Mercy – Father Donald Blanchard will present a prayerful silent retreat, “The Holy Year of Mercy,” Friday, June 24 – Sunday, June 26, at the Archdiocese of New Orleans Retreat Center, 5500 St. Mary St., Metairie. The retreat will focus on the parable of the prodigal son and the call to be women of forgiveness and mercy. For information, email shalligan@arch-no.org, or call 1-888-937-9170.

Summer Stretch – The Diocese of Baton Rouge will provide four nights of food, fun and fellowship for students in sixth through eighth grade in its summer stretch program, 5:30 – 8:30 p.m.: Tuesday, June 21, St. Elizabeth Church, 119 Hwy. 403, Paincourtville; Wednesday, June 29, Holy Rosary Church, 44450 Hwy. 429, St. Amant; Tuesday, July 12, Holy Ghost Church, 600 N. Oak St., Hammond; and Wednesday, July 20, the Catholic Life Center, 1800 S. Acadian Thwy., Baton Rouge. Cost is $5 per event or $15 if going to all four events. For information, contact your youth minister, or call the Diocese of Baton Rouge Youth Office at 225-336-8751.

Marriage Encounter Weekend – Married couples seeking the tools to keep their marriage strong are invited to a Worldwide Marriage Encounter Weekend, Friday, July 22 – Sunday July 24 at the Bishop Robert E. Tracy Center, 1800 S. Acadian Thwy., Baton Rouge. For more information, visit jamiw-wme.org, call 470-297-8560 or email jackandangel@bellsouth.net.

Diocesan Supper and Substance – The Diocese of Baton Rouge will host its first diocesan-wide Supper and Substance for married couples on Saturday, July 30, 7 – 10 p.m., at Premier Lanes, 1414 N. Airline Hwy., Gonzales. The event includes food, fun, fellowship and opportunities for couples to be enriched in their marriage and faith. David and Kate Dawson will give a personal testimony. To register, visit mfdlilor.org. For information, call 225-620-5391.

Classifieds

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to assist the diocese when cov-
erage issues surfaced with the 
CSAL over a year ago.

“Basically we discovered that 
our (school) principals’ liabil-
ity was exposed and there was a 
risk,” said Miller.

George Cunningham, executive 
director of the CSAL, a CYO 
board member and junior high 
teacher at Our Lady of Mercy 
School, said league officials were 
alerted to the insurance con-
cerns last August.

“It became imperative for the 
well being of everyone that the 
(insurance) concerns were investi-
gated,” he added.

According to Miller, an easy 
fix was “to offer for the CYO to 
come under the diocese. That 
way there would be no problem 
with insurance.”

However, during a late spring 
moving, the CYO board elected 
to close the office, according to 
McCoy.

The CYO is a non-profit entity 
and is not affiliated with the Di-
cese of Baton Rouge.

McCoy and André Fourrier, 
president of the CYO board sent 
a letter dated June 1 to friends of 
the organization stating that the 
CYO office will be closing.

The letter explained the rea-
soning for the closing saying, 
“Last August the Diocese noti-
ﬁed the CYO that it would be 
taking over all future sports pro-
gramming.”

The letter thanked the Prin-
cipals’ Association, the school 
principals, the athletic direc-
tors and all school volunteers for 
their support through the years.

“The original plan was to sub-
contract the (new CSAA) league 
work with the CYO,” said Miller, 
who added a letter received April 
24 informed the Catholic Schools 
Office that the CYO would be un-
able to work with the CSAA.

Over the past few weeks, the 
CYO has provided samples of 
schedules, budgets and other op-
erating documents to the Catho-
ic Schools Office. Miller said 
that information has been used 
in preparing for the new league.

Miller emphasized the new 
CSAA will continue to offer the 
same sports as before, and “will 
continue to evaluate our stu-
dents and schools’ interest in 
other programs.”

As part of the Catholic educa-
tional philosophy of nurturing 
the whole child, Miller said that 
the Catholic Schools Office be-
lieves it is important for students 
to have opportunities to play 
sports against other Catholic 
schools. He also noted commu-
nity is an essential component 
of Catholic schools and said there 
will always be a need for volun-
teers and coaches in the schools.

“Extra-curricular activities are 
regarded as an important part of 
the total learning experience. 
Catholic schools seek to generate 
a healthy sense of competition, 
to create a spirit of cooperation and 
to foster both leadership and cre-
ativity,” he said.

As the CSAA prepares for its 
inaugural year, Miller said the 
Catholic Schools Office has invit-
ed Kristin Sheehan, program di-
rector of “Play Like a Champion 
Today,” to its annual gathering of 
teachers, support staff and ad-
ministrators on Aug. 2. Housed 
at the University of Notre Dame, 
“Play Like a Champion Today” is 
a national initiative working 
with coaches and sports leaders 
in creating personal integrity, 
responsibility and character de-
velopment through sports.

Over its years of service to 
the Baton Rouge community, the 
CYO has organized many sports 
teams for Catholic and non-
Catholic students, ranging from 
preschool age to high school.

Last year, 3,678 students 
played CSAL and/or CYO foot-
ball, volleyball and basketball, 
according to numbers released 
by the CYO office.

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Those players fielded 330 
teams from third to eighth grade.

In addition to sports, the 
CYO, which began in 1945 when 
the city of Baton Rouge was still 
part of the Archdiocese of New 
Orleans, has sponsored other ac-
tivities such as student dances, 
arts and crafts for all ages as well 
as various fun classes for seniors.

File photos provided by the CYO office show the different sports en-
joyed by Baton Rouge youth through the years.
STUDENT EXCELLENCE AWARD – Brooke Miller Melancon, center, received the Our Lady of the Lake College Student Excellence and Commitment to Service Award, an honor that recognizes years of commitment to scholarship, leadership and service. Melancon earned her bachelor’s of science degree in nursing. During her years at OLOL, Melancon worked tirelessly to support key initiatives while maintaining a variety of academic and co-curricular pursuits. She served as a Franciscan scholarship recipient, a pre-ambassador liaison, a student ambassador and a peer tutor, where she made a positive impact by serving as a role model and mentor for students. Melancon, center, is pictured with Dr. Redfield Bryan, left, vice-chair of Our Lady of the Lake College’s Board of Trustees and OLOL College President Tina Holland. Photo submitted by Elaine Crowe | OLOL College

FILMING HISTORY – Professional Genealogist and Researcher Judy Riffel, middle, examines one of Ascension Church in Donaldsonville’s baptismal registers for an upcoming segment on CBS morning news. The segment, focused on the identification and research of the Georgetown slaves and their ancestors, is scheduled to air on June 20. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

DEACON CELEBRATION – St. Patrick Church in Baton Rouge recently held a reception for Deacon Pete Walsh, who celebrated his 20th anniversary of ordination. St. Patrick pastor Father Matt Dupré, right, is shown presenting Deacon Walsh with a statue of St. Stephen, a deacon of the early church and patron saint of deacons. Also pictured is Deacon Walsh’s wife, Joan. Photo submitted by Sandra Colomb | St. Patrick Church

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“Who do you call? St. Vincent de Paul!”

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Early DEADLINE NOTICE

The July 8 issue will have an early deadline of June 24th due to the July 4th holiday.

If you are planning to send an item to be published in the July 8th issue – article, picture, announcement or including an advertisement – it must be in The Catholic Commentator office by Friday, June 24 at 4:30 p.m.

If you have any questions, please call us at 225-387-0983.