Source of God’s life is the Holy Spirit

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

As Catholics prepare to celebrate Pentecost Sunday, “the birthday of the church,” on May 15, many pray for a “fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit.” With that honorable request comes a word of warning: when the Spirit moves, lives are turned upside down.

This was apparent when Jesus’ disciples gathered in the upper room in Jerusalem to wait for a filling of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:2-4, states, “there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.”

Who is the Holy Spirit?

In his May 8, 2013 general audience, Pope Francis said the Holy Spirit as proclaimed in the Nicene Creed, is Kýrios, Lord (the giver of life).

“This signifies that he is truly God just as the Father and the Son; the object, on our part, of the same act of adoration and glorification that we address to the Father and to the Son.”

He adds, “However, I would like to focus especially on the fact that the Holy Spirit is the inexhaustible source of God’s life in us.”

Father Brent Maher, pastor of St. Ann Church in Morganza said, “He (the Holy Spirit) comes to...”

Pentecost Sunday May 15

Wisdom
Understanding
Counsel
Knowledge
Fortitude
Piety
Wonder

Schools, parishes putting the fun in fundraising

By Rachele Smith
The Catholic Commentator

If you are a parent, or even remotely know the school-age kid next door, chances are you have some experience with fundraising. From cookie dough to wrapping paper to coupon books, many groups and organizations rely on selling as a way to generate needed funds.

But focusing solely on product sales for revenue can be tricky and many people, especially parents, balk at the idea of having to buy yet another raffle ticket or magazine subscription.

Yet, while some people may not like fundraising, money generated from these sales support many activities for organizations and even service-oriented groups that help the needy or sick.

In the Diocese of Baton Rouge alone, more than a half-dozen building or renovation projects are either being planned or are currently under construction. Most of these projects, such as the newly opened gym at St. Jean Vianney School or the new church being built for St. George Church in Baton Rouge rely on contributions.

So, what’s a school, church or other organization supposed to do to raise money?

Some are revisiting the idea of fundraising. By being creative, they are putting the “fun” back in fundraising and scoring some impressive profits.

Back to the Future
Finding the “fun” for her school’s fundraiser was easy for Eliska Du...
The light side of faith

The original novena

The Novena to the Holy Spirit is considered the oldest in the Catholic Church and the only novena prescribed by the church. Also, it is generally believed that this novena established the nine-day precedent for all novenas.

The Holy Spirit Novena traces to Jesus who, after dining with his Apostles, sent them back to Jerusalem to await the Holy Spirit, which, according to Scripture, was nine days. This first novena was a time of preparation and petition awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit, which we celebrate on Pentecost Sunday.

With his instructions Christ instituted the practice of what would become a novena – nine days of prayer, especially in preparation for some special grace.

For Catholics, the novena is an opportunity to recognize our own sinfulness and petition the Lord for repentance as well as an outpouring of the Holy Spirit into our hearts.

Praying the novena is relatively simple and certainly not time consuming with two prayers said daily as well as prayers specific to that day. Praying the novena in the days leading up to Pentecost has its own spiritual rewards, with an indulgence of 10 years for the faithful who assist in a public Holy Spirit Novena. A plenary indulgence may be earned for individuals who participate in at least five of the exercises, go to confession, receive holy Communion and pray for the holy Father’s intentions.

Those praying the novena privately in the days leading up to Pentecost or at any other time during the year may gain an indulgence of seven years on any day of the novena. A plenary indulgence is available, but if a public novena is being held, this indulgence is only an option to those who are unable to attend the public service.

Each day of the novena consists of praying the Act of Consecration to the Holy Spirit as well as a Prayer for the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Each day of the novena also consists of a prayer to each of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, including fear of the Lord, piety, fortitude, knowledge, understanding, wisdom and counsel.

Correction

The correct website address to help fund a planned safe house for human trafficking victims in the Baton Rouge area is metanoia-inc.org.
Father Alex Harb ordained at St. George

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

From an early age, Father Alex Harb felt a calling, though one so young can never be certain. But as often happens when a seed of faith is planted, it grew and was nurtured at St. George Church in Baton Rouge, where he was baptized, confirmed and received his first Communion.

He also attended first grade at St. George School.

Even as he navigated the East Baton Rouge Civil Parish public school system the seed flourished, fed by the support of his family and friends.

On April 23, the dream came true when Father Harb was ordained as a Maronite Catholic priest at St. George by Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles.

“I don’t entirely remember why but (becoming a priest has) always been on my mind, come and gone, come and gone,” Father Harb said. “I could not get away from the call.

“Part of it was my own experience of Christ in the Eucharist, wanting to be able to bring Christ to people in that same way. It became clear to me I could serve God in many different ways, I could pursue becoming a saint in many different ways, but what God intended was for me to go this way.”

By the time Father Harb walked the stage to receive his diploma from Baton Rouge High School, he had made the decision to answer God’s calling. After some discernment, including dinner with Bishop Robert W. Muench and attending vocation weekends at St. Joseph’s Abbey, he decided to become a Maronite priest since his father was also a Maronite.

“You enter the church of your father at baptism, so I just applied for the most obvious thing,” he said. “When I was 17 a (Maronite) priest said ‘you are a Maronite and you should go be a Maronite priest.’ It made sense to me.”

Upon graduating from high school, Father Harb began the application process while also enrolling at LSU. He said the “understanding is you get a degree and then come to seminary.”

While attending LSU, Father Harb was active in ministry at Christ the King Church and Catholic Center, serving under such mentors as former vicar generals Father John Carville and Father Than Vu and current vicar general Father Tom Kanzino at St. George. He also served on the retreat team at St. George and worked with the diocesan youth team.

Additionally, he served as a sacristan and a server at St. Sharbel Maronite Mission in Baton Rouge. Father Harb’s father, Charbel Harb, is a leader at St. Sharbel.

After earning a philosophy degree from LSU in 2009, Father Harb attended Maronite seminaries in St. Louis, Lebanon and Washington, D.C. He also served at parishes in Cleveland and Akron, Ohio, working as a sub deacon, then as a deacon, visiting hospitals, attending and conducting church parish meetings, preaching at Mass and becoming involved with Sunday schools and ministries ranging from the church youth group to retiree club.

“What was interesting was understanding my vocation each year,” Father Harb said. “What was God calling me to do as a seminarian, as a sub deacon, as a deacon?”

In a moving ceremony immediately following the Rite of Ordination, Father Harb processed throughout the church holding the holy Eucharist above his head. At one point during the ordination, Bishop Zaidan imposed his left hand on the mysteries and his right on Father Harb’s head.

Father Harb embarked on his new ministry almost immediately, baptizing his nephew and celebrating his first Mass at St. Agnes Church in Baton Rouge the day after ordination. As a priest, Father Harb said he hopes to be a man of prayer, study and virtue and to be someone who gives of himself.

“To love but also to love if possible in a way that other people will know they are loved” he said. “I’m ready to say yes to God.”

Father Alex Harb
Artist turns damaged tree into St. Michael sculpture

By Rachele Smith
The Catholic Commentator

All it took was a stroke of lightening, and just like that, the live oak tree was gone.

Where once its beautiful canopy provided shade and comfort to those seeking solace at the graveside of their loved ones, the only thing left of the century-old tree was a black-charred and barren, dangerous shell.

Not anymore.

Today a visit to Greenoaks Memorial Park reveals another side of this once-dead oak.

Thanks to the talent and creativity of chainsaw artist Chad Townson, the damaged tree has undergone a reincarnation of sorts. Yes, it continues to provide comfort but now in the form of St. Michael the Archangel.

“I’ve always done angels, a sort of gothic angel,” said Townson, who added that since the tree was located inside a memorial park, creating an angel out of the tree seemed natural.

As someone who has enjoyed creating art almost his entire life and with over eight years experience in chainsaw art, Townson was selected to create the tree carving after being contacted by Greenoaks to submit an idea.

“Every day who left a particular impression on Townson. The man’s wife had just died, and as they talked, Townson learned a great deal about him, the strong love he had for his wife, and the incredible sorrow he felt. Before he finished the tree carving, Townson made a special cross for his new friend and left it by his wife’s grave.

While he was raised Baptist, Townson said he doesn’t practice a particular faith, but he does consider himself to be spiritual. In creating his 23-foot sculpture, Townson said he wanted to make sure St. Michael appeared as if the archangel was “ready to take off.”

“It’s a stance he sees as symbolic,” he said.

“As in his other angel creations, Townson also chose not to put a face on the statue. “People can see what they want to see,” he said.

On the back of the statue, Townson used sinker cypress to carve out St. Michael’s shield and then crafted a cross on it with copper. He purposely made it large so it “could be seen half a mile away.”

Once finished, Townson used a water seal to protect the longevity of the tree, and even here, his artistic talent is evident.

“I mixed glitter with the water seal. So now, every time you look at it, you see something different,” he said.

During a special dedication of the St. Michael the Archangel Tree Carving on April 23, Father Matthew Dupré, pastor of St. Patrick Church in Baton Rouge and director of the diocese’s Office of Vocations and Seminarians, uses holy water to bless the St. Michael the Archangel tree carving at its dedication.

Photos by Rachele Smith | The Catholic Commentator

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Cordon appointed to USCCB national steering committee

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

The Diocese of Baton Rouge will play a leading role nationally in raising awareness of child protection.

Amy Cordon, diocesan director of the Office of Child and Youth Protection, was recently appointed to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Steering Committee to help launch a national pilot program: Building a Culture of Safety in the United States.

The USCCB Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection has developed a curriculum designed to teach diocesan and child protection officials the basics of High Reliability Organizations. The committee’s mission is to work with the various dioceses, which elect to participate and educate directors on the curriculum as well as implement HRO principles that will raise the awareness of all individuals working with children to recognize any warning signs of potential abuse.

“I’m honored,” Cordon said of her appointment. “I was shocked.”

“I have been involved in this process for a couple of years now,” added Cordon, who first began USCCB-level training in HRO principles in February 2014. “It has been a blessing to see how the Missions of HRO are being implemented and how the focus is to create a culture of safety for children in institutions such as church parishes, agencies and schools. She stressed child protection in various institutions is not defined as training or background checks, although those are critical and necessary.

“The most important function in a child protection system is the response to boundary violations because that’s where your prevention of child abuse happens,” Cordon said. “It’s all tied to a code of conduct standards where anyone working with children has to learn and agree to and the response is basically enforcement of those standards when they are violated.”

She said child protection comes down to individuals saying, “Hey, that is not what we are supposed to be doing when we are mentoring children. I recognize it and I respond to it before a child is harmed.”

“And that is child protection, raising the awareness and the notion that everyone is in charge of child protection. It is everyone’s responsibility.”

Cordon expressed concern that today’s culture often dictates that children are the responsibility of parents so others are programmed that the child who could potentially be in harm’s way is someone else’s responsibility. She said people might not want to get involved or question their own perceptions of what they think they saw.

“That is what is dangerous,” she said.

Cordon said the committee will be educating directors who are taking (child protection) in a different way to get more people involved in their own individual dioceses, such as policy makers and front-line workers. She said the training includes teaching of the core principles of HRO that include preoccupation with failure, reluctance to simplify, sensitivity to operations, commitment to resiliency and deference to expertise.

Once the core principles are learned, participants will be presented with real life scenarios. Cordon said the scenarios allow each diocese to ask if this incident had happened in their diocese would they have measures in place that would prevent this catastrophe, or would something fall through the cracks.

“Most people want to protect children,” she said. “This is more about teaching people when to act, how to trust their instincts and to realize they may be the only person that sees something or the only person who (a child) makes a comment to that could be a cry for help.”

Cordon is encouraged by the fact that more children have a tendency to speak out when someone is not following accepted rules or an adult is encouraging a young person to break the rules.

“Collectively we are not willing to tolerate child abuse,” she said. “I think a lot of it is empowering people to use their voice on behalf of children and help them understand not only is it the right thing to do but the godly thing to do.

“Prevention is the most important thing we do. Just ask a person who has been sexually abused by an adult. They do not get to go on vacation from that. That is their life. So what’s the value of a life?”

Deacon Stahl praises NADD director

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Deacon Ray Stahl has the utmost respect for the man who has been elected to lead the 18,000 permanent deacons in the United States.

Deacon Ray Duplechain, director of the Office of the Permanent Diaconate for the Archdiocese of New Orleans since 2010, was recently elected as director of the National Association of Diocesan Directors. NADD represents the United States deacons.

As NADD director Deacon Duplechain will also be the deacons’ liaison to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations.

“I knew (Deacon Duplechain) to be a straightforward, dedicated deacon,” said Deacon Stahl, who serves at Immaculate Conception Church in Denham Springs and went through formation with Deacon Duplechain.

The election comes at a critical juncture for all deacons serving in southeast Louisiana. In 2018, the 50th anniversary of the revival of the permanent diaconate, which was called by the Second Vatican Council, and New Orleans will host the 50th anniversary conference of deacons.

“It’s important for us to be able to understand the mission, vision and vocation of the permanent deacon, because this is only 50 years old,” Deacon Duplechain said. “Each diocese has a bishop who has particular challenges and needs, so the diaconate serves to fill those challenges. What happens here doesn’t necessarily happen in different dioceses.”

(The Clarion Herald Newspaper in New Orleans contributed to this report.)
Is St. George a Saint?/Frequency of Anointing

Q I attended Catholic schools for 12 years, and I view that experience as a prime factor in my success in life. In 1966 when I was confirmed, I took George as my confirmation name. Shortly after that, my class was told that many saints never existed and that George was one of them.

Our teacher explained that George was a folklore hero—a cultural myth much like Paul Bunyan, who existed only in storybooks. (Strangely, though, we were told that we could still pray to him.) I’m wondering whether there is any new thought on this and what the current state of sainthood is for good old St. George. (Owings Mills, Maryland)

A Whoever told you that St. George never existed was wrong. He was born to a Christian family in Lydda in Palestine in the late third century and became an officer in the Roman army. When the emperor Diocletian decreed that every soldier should renounce Christianity and offer sacrifice to the Roman gods, George refused—the result being that he was decapitated. His body was later built in his honor in Lydda. That much is factual, but the legend of George as a dragon slayer, a story carried back to the 12th century, seems to have little basis in fact.

The confusion over the status of George arises, in part, from a 1960 revision in the church’s liturgical calendar when it was decided that some names should be removed from the calendar of the saints and several others, including St. George, should have their feast day celebrations made optional. That change was the logical consequence of the Second Vatican Council’s determination in its decree on the liturgy that “lest the feasts of the saints take precedence over the feasts that commemorate the very mysteries of salvation, many of them should be left to be celebrated by a particular church or nation or religious community; only those should be extended to the universal church that commemorate saints who are truly of universal importance” (“Sacrosanctum Concilium,” No. 111).

On April 23, 2013, just a month after his election as pontiff, Pope Francis joined several cardinals in celebrating Mass in a Vatican chapel in honor of his patron saint on St. George’s feast day. (The pope’s baptismal name is Jorge.)

Q Is there a limit as to how often one can receive the sacrament of the anointing of the sick?

A In the 1960s when the Second Vatican Council changed the preferred name from extreme unction to anointing of the sick, that change was meant to indicate a change in purpose— or rather, a return to this sacrament’s original purpose. No longer was it to be administered only at the point of death but to those whose illnesses, though serious, were not immediately life-threatening.

The frequency for receiving this sacrament is a matter of judgment, but some guidelines exist. In No. 998 of the church’s Code of Canon Law, we read that the sacrament is intended for “the faithful who are dangerously ill.”

However, the Catechism of the Catholic Church clarifies that and expands on it in No. 1515: “It is fitting to receive the anointing of the sick just prior to a serious operation. The same holds for the elderly whose frailty becomes more pronounced.”

The rite of anointing itself says that “old people may be anointed if they are in weak condition even though no dangerous illness is present.”

It’s important, I think, not to limit “illness” to the physical. Every priest I know would welcome to the sacrament those in the throes of psychological depression or struggling with an addiction.

Now, as to your specific question: In offering the sacrament monthly, your parish is not suggesting that the same people receive it every month but that there are probably new candidates each time. That could mean people newly diagnosed or whose situations have worsened or who are facing serious surgery.

I do not know what procedures your husband will undergo, but certainly if they involve serious risk, he could receive the sacrament each time. The Code of Canon Law encourages erring on the side of caution. In No. 1005, it says that the sacrament is to be administered in a dangerous illness.

Our church now administers this sacrament monthly. My husband will be facing several procedures over the next few months. Is he allowed to receive this blessing each month if there is a procedure or only once a year? (Jeffersonville, Indiana)

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Retreat helps students understand the importance of the Eucharist

By Rachele Smith
The Catholic Commentator

For Addison St. Pierre, choosing a color for her first Communion chalice was easy. “Purple is my favorite color,” the second-grader at Paulina Chanel School, St. Pierre said simply, “Yellow is my mom’s favorite color.”

For Addison and her mom, April St. Pierre, coming together to decorate what will be a remembrance of her first Communion is a special time.

As the two paint and talk together, they are able to discuss an important day in Addison’s sacramental life, and that’s one of the benefits of the chalice project, organizers said.

“It’s a perfect opportunity for the kids to do something special with their parents, one on one, that is faith-based,” Donna Waguespack explained.

As the director of religious education at St. Joseph Church in Paulina, Waguespack works with her counterparts in the parishes of St. Michael the Archangel Church in Convent and Most Sacred Heart of Jesus in Gramercy to create a program that is meaningful and faith-filled for those preparing to receive the Eucharist for the first time.

Their chalice project pottery, completed with the help of Judy Starrett, owner of a pottery store in Sorrento, is just the start. Starrett, who works with others schools in creating a similar project, takes the pottery back to her shop to fire. They are returned to the children during their first Communion retreat.

“The (chalices) really have a special meaning for the children,” said Carol Ann Rome, the director of religious education at St. Michael.

Rome explained that during their retreat, which has the added benefit of uniting the parish’s children, the children are taught about the vessels and vestments that the priest uses during the Mass. The day is designed to teach the children about key aspects of the Catholic faith and the church’s traditions, such as the story of Blessed Imelda Lambertini, the patroness of first holy communicants.

Her story, Waguespack explained, allows the children to see that even young people can have a strong feeling of receiving the Eucharist.

But in addition to instruction, organizers note the retreat provides something else.

“It’s a great opportunity for us to evangelize the parents, too,” Waguespack said, noting that just like the children, many of the adults are especially interested in the do’s and don’ts of receiving Communion.

Reminders and lessons Rome gives include no gum chewing and no eating or drinking anything, except water, an hour before receiving Jesus.

“Of course, we talk about if you are sick, then that’s an exception,” Rome added.

Another point she noted is consuming the host immediately if it is taken in the hand and not taking it back to the pew. She also always adds one more thing just for the children.

“This is not a party when you come to Mass. You don’t bring cookies to eat or play with your iPads,” she said.

Rome, along with Waguespack and the director of religious education from Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Harriet Melancon, meet regularly and work at preparing a top-notch first Communion preparation program.

Their retreat features various centers focused on scripture, the order of the Mass, and the meaning of the Eucharist. Emphasis is placed on age-appropriate stories and crafts that help the children understand the importance of the sacrament. For example, one project, glued on construction paper, shows a chalice with a simple white host placed above it. The host, when lifted, reveals an image of Jesus underneath, illustrating clearly that the Eucharist is Jesus.

“We want them to understand that even if it is a crumb, it is still Jesus,” said Waguespack, who added that she, along with Rome and Melancon, are grateful for the direction and help provided by Father Vincent Dufresne, pastor of the shared churches and deacons Alfred Adams and Mario (Sam) Sammartino.

“We take this part of our job very seriously,” said Waguespack. “The Eucharist (and its meaning) is an important part of our faith.”

On conscience and the reception of Communion

Conscience is the faculty of human reason that makes practical judgments regarding what is morally right or wrong. In the search for truth, a person should always turn to a respected authority to enlighten. Catholics are encouraged to turn to the teaching authority of the church, namely to what’s referred to as the magisterium. But those who act in a way that differs from the letter of the law cannot be presumed to be doing so in bad faith.

The decision to do what is right or wrong always remains a personal one. Catholics are bound to follow their conscience. In the case of Catholics who have remarried without the benefit of an annulment, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith teaches that Catholics whose “nullity of marriage cannot be demonstrated” are not permitted to receive the Eucharist, unless special permission has been given them to live as “brother and sister.”

Most Catholics in this predicament report that they are either unable or unwilling to live as “brother and sister” especially if they have doubts about the validity of the first marriage. They ask: “Can we not trust our own inner sense of right and wrong?”

Those who say no are saying that the partners of a marriage are too close to their situation to be objective, but this is a debatable point.

Pope Francis has placed importance on Catholics being free to make choices using a “well-formed conscience,” but he also warned that it doesn’t mean “whatever I think.” He repeated the point that the church has always taught the supremacy of conscience. While he upheld the teaching that marriage is indissoluble, he put it in context by stating that conscience is the proximate norm of morality.

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For a better farewell.
How well do you know your spouse?

By Debbie Shelley

The Catholic Commentator

Time to play a game, husbands and wives, to see how well you really know each other.

Ladies: What animal best describes how your husband sleeps? A) Cuddly bear B) Quiet mouse C) Snorbing lion D) All-over-the-place monkey?

Gentlemen: If your wife could be compared to a cereal, what would it be? A) Fruit Loops B) Special K C) Cheerios D) Cocoa Puffs?

Breaker: Wives, when it comes to the upper body, would you say your husband is more A) Buffed B) Puffed C) Stuffed D) Doesn’t have enough?

At the recent Newlywed/Seniorwed game at Immaculate Conception Church in Baton Rouge, there was a lot of laughter, pondering how a spouse might answer the question and fun-filled fellowship.

One of the favorite participating couples was Leroy and Elsie Poydras, the longest married couple with 54 years. Leroy is a spry 95.

Unfortunately, Leroy missed a question that should arguably have been under judge’s review. The question was, “What is the color of your wife’s favorite slippers?” He knew they are gold, but Charlene grew up Baptist.

The Jenkins credited the fact that they lived away from their national church for a while, thus increasing how much they had in common how much they had in common.

For the right reason, said Sheila, who helps each other’s love language.

For a marriage to be successful, said Calvin, “don’t sweat” the rest. When they have strong disagreements, they compromise by deciding what’s important to get the details exact and “don’t sweat” the rest.

You have to be willing to say you’re sorry,” said Calvin.

If the Poydras’ were admired for their love after so many years together, Bradley and Sheila DeRouen, who have been married nine months, were favorites because of that sense of romance that comes from being newly married.

Bradley DeRouen said it seemed to him that when he and his wife had their turn in the game, the other couples looked at them with expressions on their faces that conveyed, “Yeah, I remember when we were like that,” and “I remember when we did that.”

“It reminded them to get back to the basics,” said Bradley.

The DeRouens, who have known each other for 16 years, but only started dating and realized how much they had in common in the past few years, said they have already figured out for a marriage to be successful husbands and wives must speak each other’s love language.

And never let the fun and dating stop, said Sheila, who helps organize movie nights for the church.
Students, educators honored at Mother Seton Awards luncheon

By Rachele Smith
The Catholic Commentator

An event held to honor those who excel in the classroom as well as those who reflect the giving nature of America’s first saint was also used to incorporate lessons on mercy, something especially fitting during this Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy.

Held on April 28 at Drusilla Place Catering, the annual Diocesan Home & School Luncheon recognized distinguished educators and the diocese’s Students of the Year. In addition 26 Mother Seton Award recipients were honored for their exemplary volunteer efforts and unselfish devotion to Catholic schools.

The event also featured guest speaker Judy Zelden, a master catechist from the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

Zelden offered insight into the personal story behind the award’s name, Mother Seton was an extraordinary woman who, once she converted to Catholicism, would go on to open the first American church parish school, establish the first American Catholic orphanage and found the first American religious community for women, the Sisters of Charity.

Yet, despite these successes, Mother Seton would also endure many trials and tragedies, including the death of her husband at a young age and the deaths of two of her five children.

But Mother Seton, according to Zelden, continued to trust and follow God’s will and her devotion to the Blessed Sacrament never wavered.

Zelden said that as the first saint born in America, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton illuminated selflessness and “embodied the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.”

Zelden noted that during this Year of Mercy, all Christians could obtain God’s mercy in the forgiveness of their sins. She encouraged everyone to take advantage of this special time and offered instructions on the accepted way to go through the Holy Door of Mercy.

Zelden said that through the church, gives his unending grace freely. This grace, known as a type of indulgence, can be received by walking through a Holy Door.

“You can go through as many times as you want,” said Zelden, who added that after walking through the Holy Door, the Apostle’s Creed should be recited following by the special jubilee prayer.

She also explained it is important to pray for the pope’s intentions and receive the sacraments of reconciliation and the Eucharist either that day or shortly after going through the Holy Door.

According to Zelden, the graces of indulgence can be applied personally, to someone you know, such as a wayward child or someone who has walked away from the faith or for those who have died.

She noted she especially appreciates the opportunity to help deceased relatives and friends.

Following Zelden’s talk, Bishop Robert W. Muench and Dr. Melanie Verges, superintendent of the Catholic Schools Office along with Michael Miller, assistant superintendent of Catholic Schools and Renee Tullier, president of the Diocesan Home and School Association, presented awards to three outstanding students in Catholic schools. Every year, Catholic schools in the diocese nominate a student in fifth, eighth and twelfth grades who they feel embodies the best characteristics of a Catholic school student. One student is then chosen from each grade as the Student of the Year.

For a complete list of all those honored at the luncheon, visit thecatholiccommentator.org.

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Let’s go back to 1985, a time when Daniel Dumas, a 1985 graduate of the school and a member of the first class of SJV and a member of the first batch of graduates, knew that his old school had a capital campaign that was being launched in the school’s auditorium, black box theatre and fine art classrooms as well as fill the school’s kindergarten classrooms as well as fill the school’s kindergarten classrooms.

In the 1980s, SJV was born. At St. Thomas Aquinas High School, the school is now experiencing a second generation of students. The school is also the computer lab instructor, said the school will be able to work with students in the school’s kindergarten classrooms as well as fill the school’s kindergarten classrooms as well as fill the school’s kindergarten classrooms. The school’s kindergarten classrooms as well as fill the school’s kindergarten classrooms.

The next step was getting dancers. Since the event started in 2013, Lock has been able to convince several parents, alumni and parishioners to work with a choreographer and show off their dance skills (no matter how new) to help raise money for renovations to the school’s gym.

“The dancers are people who can bring in their current, our young alums, our parishioners. It’s a community,” said Lock. “I knew when I took this position that we wanted to have a community, and if I did that, the rest will follow. I didn’t want to send out letters and ask for money,” she added.

Held in the school’s gym, Lock has made sure the Dancing to the Eagle Beat event is the best it can be. Using her creative eye and attention to detail, Lock, along with school faculty, staff and other volunteers have been able to transform the gym into a first-class stage and dance venue.

Funds are generated through fun voting and ticket sales. In the first year, the event raised $15,000. This year, the Feb. 27 fundraiser raised more than $60,000.

No Shave Club
At St. Thomas Aquinas High School, a slight change in the school’s dress code helped raise some $10,000 for prostate cancer research.

With this (Gator Gala), you’re getting something for your money immediately. You have dinner, the band, just and if I did that, the rest will follow. I didn’t want to send out letters and ask for money,” she added.

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NET retreat draws St. John students into the arms of God

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

At a school retreat, there's a variety of responses from the students. Some may approach it eagerly and others are reluctant, with arms crossed, looking around or with a shy "deer in the headlights look" on their faces.

At retreats hosted by NET Ministries, however, as the retreat unfolds, even the reluctant can be drawn in by the warmth of God. Their arms unfold, often to hug others, their looks turn to the speakers during their message and the shine in their eyes is from the joy they have found or the tears they cried after discovering how much they are loved by God.

This was the case when NET presented a middle school retreat at St. John Middle School in Plaquemine.

Each year approximately 150 young adults ages 18-28 volunteer nine months to serve on the NET teams. These team members become like family for each other as they travel the country and seek a stronger relationship with Christ. One of the main highlights for most of the students was the intimate small group sessions, where many opened their heart and shared their stories.

“I never experienced something like this before,” said sixth-grader Karalyn Thomas. “During the private prayer meetings the leaders prayed for me and I got to pray for them and other people in my life.”

Parker Devillier, eighth-grader, said he liked the way the NET team could deliver some serious faith lessons in a fun way. “The (NET team) was very passionate about teaching, but they were also funny and could relate to people our age. They allowed us to play games and have fun, but were serious when they needed to be. The NET retreat was way better than what I had been expecting.”

Eighth-grader Cole Lambert was touched by the way the NET leaders directly acknowledged stories about how they almost lost their faith but they stayed with the church and grew in their faith.

Lambert said the NET members taught him in his last year of middle school the importance of community and working together.

Madison Young, also in eighth-grade, agreed. “Their stories really leave a mark on you and these stories like his disciples did,” said eighth-grader Elise Jackson.

Small group discussions with members of the NET Ministries evangelization team was the highlight for many middle school students attending the St. John School NET retreat. Photo provided by Donna Carville

Class of 2016
A Special Section of
The Catholic Commentator

A keepsake special section is designed to honor graduates from the Diocese of Baton Rouge naming each graduate from the 7 Catholic high schools in the diocese with pictures of the valedictorians and salutatorians. Graduates from Our Lady of the Lake College and Diocese of Baton Rouge graduates from Catholic schools outside the diocese will also be included.

This is a great opportunity to say congratulations to the graduates and/or promote your school’s accomplishments, or promote your business to these young future leaders and their parents.

Issue date: May 27 • Advertising deadline: May 18

STA yearbook earns design recognition

For the third consecutive year, St. Thomas Aquinas Regional High School’s yearbook, Veritas, has been recognized for excellence and featured in the Look Book, a resource book published by Jostens and used by yearbook advisers and students seeking creative design and inspiration in creating their school’s yearbook.

The 2015 yearbook was created by students in STA’s publications I and II classes under the direction of yearbook adviser and communications director Michelle Chauvin. Chauvin noted the 2015 Veritas was one of 494 yearbooks recognized for outstanding page design and coverage. A panel, which included nationally recognized scholastic journalism professionals, judged some 3,000 yearbooks submitted for the chance to be included in Josten’s Look Book.

“It is such an exciting honor to have industry professionals recognize the hard work and effort the students put in to create a yearbook that is as relevant to its audience at their 25-year reunion as it is on the day it’s published,” said Chauvin.
SLIMY FUN – Sacred Heart of Jesus School sixth-grader K.K. Guttzeit manipulates the “magnetic slime” created in a recent science experiment by the sixth-grade physical science class. Looking on, from left, are, first-grader Madelyn Campbell, sixth-graders Edward Shanks and Blake Hester, and first-graders Lions Ray and Caden Trumble. Photo provided by Lisa Black Cosse’ | Sacred Heart of Jesus School

TOPS IN SCIENCE – Eldred Jackson, an eighth-grade student at St. Francis Xavier School, was the overall winner in the school’s science fair. His project, “Does Natural or Chemical Fertilizer Help Plants Grow Best?” received top honors. Photo submitted by Paula Fabre | St. Francis Xavier School

RAISING AUTISM AWARENESS – Holy Ghost Catholic School celebrated Autism Awareness month on April 15. Donned in blue shirts, socks, accessories, etc., students donated a minimum of $2 to benefit the Class for Autism based at Holy Ghost. As secretary of the National Junior Honor Society, Juliette LeRay, sister of Luc LeRay, presented the idea to the NJHS members and sponsors at a recent meeting. Pictured are, front row, from left, Tyler Phelps, Juliette LeRay and Luc LeRay; back row, Laura Ulloa, teacher; NJHS officers Amelia Pham, Travis Settoon, Myles Naquin, Cameron Dionne, Laken Neal, Jacie Bellina and Carley Walker, teacher. Holy Ghost students raised approximately $1,300. Photo by Cindy Wagner | Holy Ghost School

MOTHER TERESA SERVICE AWARD WINNERS – St. Michael the Archangel High School seniors Jennifer Vu, left, and Andrew Button received the Mother Teresa of Calcutta Christian Service Award for their outstanding service to others. The award is given annually to a senior boy and girl who have been a shining example in their service to others throughout their four years at the high school. It is the highest service award at St. Michael. Photo provided by Kristi Watts | St. Michael High School

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The Huntsman: Winter’s War
Universal

Positioned to bookend the action of 2012’s “Snow White and the Huntsman,” this lavishly-staged adventure at once a prequel and a sequel to the original is well intended but dull and derivative. Director Cedric Nicolas-Troyan and screenwriters Evan Spiliotopoulos and Craig Mazin have doubled up on everything from the first outing, matching their two time frames with a duo of wicked queens (Charlize Theron, Emily Blunt), a pair of rival kingdoms and a brace of brave huntsmen (Chris Hemsworth, Jessica Chastain). A quartet of dwarves (Nick Frost, Rob Brydon, Sheridan Smith and Alexandra Roach) is thrown in for good measure. With barely a nod to the Brothers Grimm, the filmmakers cobbled together a silly plot involving a quest to locate a missing magic mirror and prevent it from falling into the wrong hands. Cartoons action violence, implied premarital sexual activity, an out-of-wedlock pregnancy, a few crass terms. A-III; PG-13

Mother’s Day
Open Road

Set in Atlanta, this sprawling ensemble comedy takes on, among other themes, divorce (Jennifer Aniston and Timothy Olyphant), marital secrets (Kate Hudson and Aasif Mandvi), parental prejudice (Margo Martindale and Robert Pine) and life after loss (Jason Sudeikis). Considerable focus and aplomb would be required to keep an audience engaged with such complex proceedings. Instead Garry Marshall’s uneven direction, added to a discursive script, results in a leaky slop bucket of bromides. The film’s aesthetic flaws are matched by a faulty moral outlook that, while presenting an ultimately positive view of marriage, gives both cohabitation (Jack Whitehall and Britt Robertson) and a lesbian relationship (Sarah Chalke and Cameron Esposito) an unthinking pass. Tacit acceptance of immoral lifestyles, some distasteful humor, at least one rough term, occasional crude language. L;PG-13

Ratchet & Clank
Granercy

Busy 3-D visuals fail to mask the flat tone and by-the-numbers storytelling of this animated sci-fi adventure from co-directors Kevin Munroe and Jericca Cleland. After failing in his effort to join a team of glamorous intergalactic peacekeepers (their leader voiced by Jim Ward), a catlike mechanic (voice of James Arnold Taylor) teams with a robot (voice of David Kaye) to take on a planet-destroying villain (voice of Paul Giamatti) that the more seasoned warriors have so far been unable to defeat. As scripted by Munroe, in collaboration with T.J. Fixman and Gerry Swallow, this video-game adaptation sends respectable messages about plucky underdogs doing the right thing. But the vehicle used to convey this theme bears more resemblance to a tired jalopy than a gleaming spaceships. Some cartoon violence, including explosions, occasional peril. A-I; PG

Keanu
Warner Bros.

Satirical action-comedy starring Keegan-Michael Key and Jordan Peele as nerdy African-Americans who must pose as murderous thugs and mingle with drug-slinging Los Angeles gangsters to recover the purloined kitten of the title. As honed on their Comedy Central television series, Key and Peele’s brand of socially aware humor frequently considers the influence of pop culture on racial identity and translates well to the big screen. The catch is that they are bound to mimic what they spoof. And so their movie traffics in precisely the material it sends up—particularly with respect to stereotypical cursing. Director Peter Atencio keeps the focus on his two stars whose approach is generally light-hearted and good-natured. Yet a disrespectful tone toward God and religion, together with the gritty milieu of their underworld parody, mars their potentially valuable commentary. Scenes of sometimes gory violence, much drug use, some irreverence, upper female and rear nudity, occasional profanity, pervasive rough language. O;R

MOVIE REVIEWS

USCCB Office for Film & Broadcasting classifications:
A-I – General patronage
A-II – Adults and adolescents
A-III – Adults
A-IV – Adults, with reservations
L – Limited adult audience
O – Morally offensive
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 accompanied parent or adult guardian
NC-17 – No one under 17 admitted
NC-13 – Not recommended for under 13
NC-12 – Not recommended for under 12
NC-11 – Not recommended for under 11
NC-10 – Not recommended for under 10
NC-9 – Not recommended for under 9
NC-8 – Not recommended for under 8
NC-7 – Not recommended for under 7
NC-6 – Not recommended for under 6
NC-5 – Not recommended for under 5
NC-4 – Not recommended for under 4
NC-3 – Not recommended for under 3
NC-2 – Not recommended for under 2
NC-1 – Not recommended for under 1
NC – Not recommended for anyone
O – Morally offensive

The Catholic Commentator
May 13, 2016

The Catholic Commentator

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Grieving a lost relationship and learning for the future

As we all know, life sometimes presents us with hurtful situations. Surely, a difficult hurt is the breakup of what you saw as an enduring romance. This topic is addressed in Gwen Stefani’s latest release, “Used to Love You.” Several music commentators have speculated that the song documents how Stefani is working through the grief of the dissolution of her marriage.

The song showcases the conflicting emotions caused by the end of a romance. The song’s protagonist admits that she “never thought this would happen,” and she wonders if “I must be dreaming, you’re gone.” She previously thought that “I was the best thing that ever happened to you” and “you loved me the most.” She now sees more clearly that there were problems in their relationship. She recognizes how “you thought there were no boundaries, but you just pushed me too far.” She also wonders if anyone “taught you how to love.”

However, she will find more truth and, consequently, more healing in knowing that she loved to the best of her ability, even though she still faces the end of a relationship. This is one reason why I often tell couples that love is not enough. Most of us also need to grow and add skills if we are to handle effectively the problems and the intense emotions that a romance brings. Love and commitment provide the foundation for any enduring relationship. But after that, we need to learn how to work through the problems and hurts that are part of any relationship.

My ministry as a pastoral counselor and marriage/family therapist for over 30 years has taught me this: Now is the time to address any problem that surfaces. Having a problem in a loving relationship is normal. Putting off addressing it makes the healing more difficult.

Our God wants us to grow and learn how to love another. Safeguard your relationship by seeking his work needed for your growth.

MARTIN is an Indiana pastoral counselor who reviews current music for Catholic News Service. Your comments are always welcome. Please write to: cmartin@hughes.net, or at: 7125 West CR 200 South, Rockport, IN 47975, or like this column on Facebook at “Charlie Martin’s Today’s Music Columns.”

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**Used to Love You**

Sung by Gwen Stefani | Copyright © 2015, Mad Love, Interscope Records
### EDITORIAL

**Save vouchers**

A budget proposal to take a surgeon's knife to the Louisiana Scholarship Program will not only deny a quality education to many of the neediest children in the Diocese of Baton Rouge as well as the state of Louisiana but ultimately create a bigger burden for taxpayers.

The proposal calls for slashing funding to the voucher program by 14 percent, or approximately $6 million. Proponents insist the cuts are needed to help balance the beleaguered state budget.

Paradoxically, proponents say that what would amount to a 10-percent incision on each voucher would not reduce the number of existing voucher students, leaving one to question what mathematical matrix was employed. If enacted, the cuts could potentially place a greater burden on private schools, subsidizing the state even further.

Approximately 7,000 low-income students, mainly minorities, currently take advantage of the scholarship program. By doing so, those students are not forced to attend what has proven to be a troubled public school in their respective districts.

More than 1,000 voucher students are currently enrolled in Baton Rouge diocesan schools, and their progress has been nothing short of remarkable. They are learning at an accelerated rate as test results have borne out and rapidly catching up to their peers who have spent a lifetime in private education.

Not surprisingly, the proposal is meeting with boisterous opposition, especially from those parents whose students are currently participating in the scholarship program.

Admittedly, Louisiana is navigating through an unchartered fiscal typhoon and difficult decisions loom but to put an undue burden on the backpacks of needy children who are showing top-shelf academic progress in their new educational surroundings is unacceptable. Perhaps lawmakers might be better served by focusing their attention to the pork-barrel projects that have been an anchor on the state budget for far too long and leave our children alone to study and focus on their education, free from the mystery of where their next classroom will be located.

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### Love in the family

In so many encyclicals and papal exhortations, the biblical sections, often near the beginning, are the best, and to me, the most helpful. If you want to know about the value and inviolability of human life, read the beginning and especially Chapter 2 of St. John Paul II’s “Evangelium Vitae” (The Gospel of Life). Or, if you want to understand the Catholic Church’s social teaching, focusing on human development driven by charity and truth, read Pope Benedict XVI’s introduction and first chapter in “Caritas in Veritate” (Charity in Truth).

Pope Francis wants to get a bit more practical than the style of encyclicals, so he writes “exhortations.” But again, the Catholic and papal vision of love in the family can best be found in Chapter 1 of “Amoris Laetitia” (The Joy of Love), just recently published.

The Bible begins with God creating man and woman in his own image. The human couple are a sign of the Trinity father and son, bound by the spirit of love, the Holy Spirit. Pope Francis says that the Book of Genesis talks about Adam and Eve’s family in realistic terms “with all its burden of violence but also its enduring strength.” The Bible is full of families, births and loves, even whole genealogies, from its first pages down to its last where St. John in Revelations relates his vision of the heavenly wedding feast of the bride (the church) and the lamb (the risen Lord) (21:2, 9).

Musing on St. John’s vision of heaven, Pope Francis quotes his own country and city’s greatest poet, the Argentine Jose Luis Borges, who wrote, “every home is a lampstand.” To Pope Francis this means that “The couple that loves and begets life is a true living icon... capable of revealing God the Creator and Savior.... The triune God is a communion of love, and the family is its living reflection.”

The love of husband and wife is so often portrayed in Scripture as a reflection of God’s own love. Adam is overjoyed because God found him the perfect companion, “flesh of my flesh, and bone of my bone.” And the biblical sage, Sirach, says that woman is man’s “best possession, a helper fit for him and a pillar of support” (Sir 36:24). The woman too thinks that love and marriage are wonderful: “My beloved is mine and I am his” (Song of Solomon 2:16). In the Bible the same Hebrew word used in Genesis to describe the marital and sexual union of man and wife is used in Psalm 63:8 to describe every person’s union with God: “My soul clings to you.”

Pope Francis connects the couple’s family life and the passing of our faith. This is explicit in the Jewish family’s haggadah, the dialogue that accompanies the celebration of the passover meal. “All that we have known, that our fathers have told us, we will not hide from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord...” (Ps 73:3-6).

However, Jesus is not unaware, Pope Francis says, “of the pain and suffering that break up families and their communion of life and love.” In the Gospels, Jesus teaches about marriage in the midst of an argument the Jews are having about divorce. Jesus often shows sympathy for families in pain. His miracles overcome the power of death in the homes of Jairus, and of the widow of Naim and of his friends, Martha and Mary. His parables are about the love of a father for his prodigal son, about the embarrassing lack of wine at a wedding and about a poor widow who loses her money.

There is much said in the Bible also about the blessing of work and the family. “You shall eat the fruit of the labour of your hands; you shall be happy, and it shall be well with you” (Ps 128:2). God wants the family to prosper: “May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life! May you see your children’s children” (Ps 128:5-6). The work of mothers is pictured as winning the praise of their husbands and children (Prov 31:10-31). And there is St. Paul’s pride in his own work as a tent maker. Jesus tells a parable about workers forced to stand idly in the town square hoping to earn a day’s wage so their families can eat.

Finally, and above all, love is expressed in the Gospel as mercy. As husband and wife daily embody Jesus’ command to love one another, by giving their lives to one another and to their children, they imitate Jesus’ example of mercy and forgiveness. Pope Francis concludes his exhortation by recalling a closely connected virtue, that of tenderness. The infancy accounts about Jesus’ birth remind us of the “delicate and tender intimacy between mother and child: the image is that of a babe sleeping in his mother’s arms after being nursed... There is a closeness that is conscious and not simply biological. Drawing on that image, the Psalmist sings: I have called and quieted my soul, like a child quieted at its mother’s breast” (Ps 131:2).

As we gaze upon the icon of the Holy Family, Pope Francis asks us to remember the violence of Herod that forced them to flee with their child into Egypt, and to give merciful support to so many families today who are refugees from violence.

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**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 johnny.carville@gmail.com.**
Marking an anniversary

What we cease to celebrate we will soon cease to cherish. This year, 2016, marks the 200th anniversary of the founding of the religious congregation to which I belong, The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. We have a proud history, 200 years now, of ministering to the poor around the world. This merits celebrating.

As a writer, I don’t normally highlight the fact that I am a professed religious, just as I don’t usually highlight the fact that I’m a Roman Catholic priest, because I fear that labels such as “Catholic priest,” “Father,” or “Oblate of Mary Immaculate” attached to an author’s name serve more to limit his readership than to increase it. Jesus, too, was pretty negative on religious labels. Mostly, though, I avoid writing under a specific religious label because I want to speak more through the wider prism of my humanity and my baptism than through the more specific prism of my priesthood and vowed religious commitment. It’s a choice I’ve made, respecting the choice of others. With that being said, I want to break my own rules here and speak more specifically through the prism of my identity as vowed religious. So I write this particular column as Father Ronald Rolheiser OMI, proud member of The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

Let me begin with a little history: Our congregation was founded in Southern France in 1816 by Eugene de Mazenod, declared a saint by the church in 1905. Eugene was a diocesan priest who immediately upon entering the ministry saw that the Gospel wasn’t reaching many of the poor and so he began to focus his own efforts on ministering to the poor. It takes a village to raise a child and, so he reasoned, the poor and so he began to focus his own efforts on ministering to the poor.

And we’re missionaries, meaning that we understand our task to be that of establishing communities that help them to become self-sufficient, and then moving on to do this over and over again. That may be a noble task, but it’s also a formula for heartache. It isn’t easy on the heart to be forever building something only to give it over to someone else and move on. You don’t ever get to have a permanent home; but there’s a compensation, as a missionary, after a while every place is home.

We aren’t a large congregation, we’re only about 4000 members scattered in some 68 countries, humble in comparison to the likes of the Jesuits, Franciscans and Dominicans. Indeed in an early version of the famous French Larousse Dictionary, we were described as “a kind of mini-Jesuits, it found mostly in rural areas.” We are flattened by this description. Our call is not to be in the limelight, but to be at the edges. No accident that it’s there, at the edges, in a rural area, where I met the Oblates.

We also pride ourselves on being robust, practical, earthy and close to those we serve, and our dress often betrays this. Our families and close friends are forever buying us clothing to try to upgrade our less-than-stellar wardrobes. It’s not that we deliberately cultivate an image of being somewhat unkempt; it’s more that we tend to draw men to our ranks who have other priorities.

And our founder? He wasn’t an easy man, obsessed as he was, as sometimes saints are, by a single-mindedness that doesn’t easily tolerate weaknesses among those around him. He could exhibit blessed rage sometimes. I’m secretly glad that I never met him in person, fearing his judgment on my own weaknesses; but I’m wonderfully glad for his charism and for that motley group of men, often over-casually dressed, who continue his mission.

In Exile

Father Ron Rolheiser

Native reservations, in immigrant areas of our cities, in tough inner-city places where the police are reluctant to go, and in developing countries where access to food, health and education are still scarce commodities. Our mission is not to the privileged, though we try to bring them with our mission, and our members themselves are often drawn from among the poor and our message to the young men entering our ranks is: If you join us, consider what’s not in it for you!

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OBELATE FATHER 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 or at facebook.com/ronrolheiser.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Christ’s courage an example for all

I was relieved to read in Father (John) Carville’s article “Why was Jesus Crucified?” his words, “To say that God the father had to be satisfied, appeased, by Jesus’ crucifixion for the insult and rejection caused by all our sins makes God some kind of blood thirsty, thin-skinned human potentate.”

I agree completely. Jesus was silenced by the Jews simply because he was denouncing their church laws – those Mosaic laws that they held as sacred, even though they were burdensome, uncharitable and unjust. Jesus finally had the courage to speak out against them, saying that all that was necessary was to love God and their neighbors.

Emma Ragusa
Baton Rouge

Stories help evangelize

Thank you for the wonderful faith witness story of the Port Allen family and the glorious photos of Father David Allen performing immersion baptisms of Rhett and Wyatt. The baptism of these children is the realized crescendo of a challenging faith journey of a family walking with God in faith, hope and love. The children’s baptism welcomes and celebrates them within their Catholic community. It is a wonderful story of shared faith experience and teaching.

Also, the story about Carville is another story about God working in and through God’s people and the incredible faith and devotion of service of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. The sisters ministry to the marginalized patients was a living witness of love and care.

Both stories by Debbie Shelley illustrate the evangelizing spirit of our diocesan newspaper as well as moments of catechesis for the reader. Both stories are timely as Pope Francis releases His Apostolic Exhortation of Synod of the Family, and we are in the middle of the Jubilee Year of Mercy.

I look forward to more stories such as these in future issues.

Adele M. Berthelot
Gramercy

The mercy of accompaniment

Thanks to Father Carville for reviewing “Amoris Laetitia” and subjective matter that doesn’t determine practice, but makes interesting reading. Father considers “Amoris Laetitia” in itself. I’ll place it within the church.

“Amoris Laetitia” is properly interpreted from the church’s heart by faithfulness to pre-existing teaching: Scripture, catechesis, canons of law and infallible magisterial pronouncements within previous documents (e.g., Familiaris Consortio 84, Veritatis Splendor 52). These treat irregular situations like second marriages without annulment in such depth that no question of objective morality remains unanswered. No result regularizing these situations is left undefined. Thus, the only possible end results are annulled first marriage, terminated second marriage, second marriage lived as brother and sister or no change. Valid paths to eucharistic Communion combine reconciliation (confession) with any of the first three, also experience “joy of love” despite self-abandonment.

“Amoris Laetitia’s” mercy is pastoral, rather than change in paths to the Eucharist. The church accompanies adulterous couples on their journey, not abandoning them even should they choose to live as brother and sister. Thus, relationship with the church doesn’t end in condemnation. In fact, it doesn’t end. It continues in merciful accompaniment, such that these couples also experience “joy of love” despite self-induced separation from the Eucharist by ongoing adultery.

Claude Culross
Baton Rouge
St. Isidore Mission – Father Tom Sullivan CPIM will present a mission focusing on the Blessed Sacrament, the Blessed Mother and God’s mercy Sunday, May 15 – Thursday, May 19, 7 p.m., at St. Isidore Church, 5657 Thomas Road, Baker. Confession will be available from 6–6:45 p.m. before the missions. There will also be an educational movie at the St. Isidore Center May 16 – 19 following the 8 a.m. Mass. For information, call 225-775-8850.

Women in Spirit Meeting – Aimee Wiles, principal of Cristo Rey High School, will give a talk “We Walk by Faith and Not by Sight,” at The Women in Spirit meeting, Thursday, May 26, noon, at St. Joseph Cathedral, Fourth and Main streets, Baton Rouge. Women in Spirit is an interfaith program for women. A complimentary lunch will be served. To RSVP and for more information, email sjwomeninspirit@aol.com or call 225-387-5928.

Help Restore The Convent Fundraiser – Ascension Catholic School will hold a fundraiser to restore its historic convent Sunday, May 22, 11 a.m. – 2 p.m., at the Lemann Memorial Donaldsonville Community Center, 1100 Clay St. Donaldsonville. There will be food, a silent and live auction and buy a brick campaign. To purchase tickets, donate auction items, buy a brick or for information, call 225-473-9227.

Redemptorist High School Reunion – The Redemptorist High School Class of 1966 will host its 50th reunion on Saturday, Aug. 6. If you have not been contacted regarding this reunion, email your contact information to Maria “Kitty” Thomas at kitty66@yahoo.com.

Day of Prayer – Msgr. William Bilinsky will present a day of prayer concerning the Beatitudes Tuesday, May 17 at the the Archdiocese of New Orleans Retreat Center, 5500 St. Mary St., Metairie. For information, visit retreats.arch-no.org or call 504-267-9604.

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Gospel of John, Jesus said he discourse to the disciples in the Rouge. in the world, according to Father Stine noted. God created in his image, to help a boy. The Blue Fairy, representing God, creates Pinocchio and wishes for him to be a real puppet and he becomes a real realizing the Holy Spirit, breathes life him to Pinocchio, but he ignores it representing God, creates Pinocchio and wishes for him to be a real boy. The Blue Fairy, representing the Holy Spirit, breathes life into the wooden puppet. Like the Holy Spirit, she gives wise counsel to Pinocchio, but he ignores it and eventually winds up in the cage of puppet master Stromboli and needs a savior. The Blue Fairy, representing Christ at this point, saves him. But he is deceived by others and is led to Pleasure Island and eventually finds himself in the belly of a whale. Because Pinocchio heroically saves his father, who came after him, the Blue Fairy breathes new life into the puppet and he becomes a real boy. In a similar way, the Holy Spirit works in people, whom God created in his image, to help them become more like Christ, who is the word made flesh, Father Stine noted.

When a person receives the Holy Spirit, the Spirit serves as a counselor, advocate and comforter in their lives, enabling them to witness to Christ and carry out his mission for them in the world, according to Father Miles Walsh, pastor of Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Baton Rouge. He said in Christ’s farewell discourse to the disciples in the Gospel of John, Jesus said he would ask the Father, who would send them another advocate (Christ being the first), the Holy Spirit, who will be with them always. Once people receive the gift of new life in the Holy Spirit in baptism, the Spirit remains with them unless they grieve him through mortal sin. And even then, if they come back to Christ and confess their sin, they will be restored, according to Father Walsh.

At baptism, the Holy Spirit infuses people with three theological virtues of faith, hope and love and seven cardinal virtues. People’s relationship with the Holy Spirit reaches a new level of maturity when, like the apostles at Pentecost, they receive an outpouring of the Holy Spirit at consecration, said Father Walsh.

“God always takes the initiative in giving us the gifts of the Holy Spirit,” said Father Walsh.

People can further their relationship with the Holy Spirit through charismatic renewal, according to Father Henry Gautreau, liaison for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Office of the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

The stirring of the Holy Spirit in the church was particularly seen in the Second Vatican Council, noted Father Gautreau. He referred to the passages concerning the pastoring of charismatic gifts in the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church Lumen Gentium: “The Spirit dwells in the church and in the hearts of the faithful, as in a temple … Guiding the church in a way of all truth (Jn 16:13) and unifying her in communion and in the works of ministry, he bestows riches of the church opened up that I was, and am. I learned to pray and praise God unafraid, with joy, with my whole body, with hands raised. I learned and experienced that God loves me, miserable sinner that I was, and am. I learned to accept the prayers of others. I learned to pray with others. The riches of the church opened up to me in a deeper and heart-felt way.”

Stephanie Armand, another member of the OLOM charismatic renewal group, said she was introduced to the movement at a healing service about 10 years ago.

“I was made to feel welcomed. I was crying during the healing service. Father David Vavasseur offered me his handkerchief. I was prayed over and I have never forgotten that peace,” Armand said.

For Fritz Newburger, a member of the Outpouring of the Holy Spirit Group at Christ the King Church, said his first experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit was being on the floor and laughing joyfully.

“I never stopped smiling,” said Newburger. The Holy Spirit also moved him from wanting to become a medical scientist to discerning a vocation with the Franciscan order.

For Gloria Ethridge, who is part of one of the first charismatic renewal groups in the diocese that met at St. Aloysius Church in Baton Rouge and now meets in her home, the Holy Spirit fills her with awe.

“When the Holy Spirit is involved, it brings new life and new hope. It enlivens the church and brings new enthusiasm,” said Ethridge. “It’s God Almighty at work.”

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Pro-life legislation closer to Legislature passage

A pair of key pro-life bills inched closer to landing on the desk of Gov. John Bel Edwards after garnering overwhelming support in the Senate.

HB 386, authored by Rep. Frank Hoffmann of West Monroe, would increase the current time for reflection between pre-abortion counseling and the actual abortion procedure from 24 hours to 72 hours. The bill passed the Senate floor by a 34-4 margin and now heads back to the House of Representatives for technical concurrence before going to Gov. Edwards, who has expressed his support for the legislation. Louisiana Right to Life assisted Rep. Hoffman in preparation and support of HB 386, and the Bioethics Defense Fund provided legal consultation.

“Reflection periods longer than 24 hours are common across major decisions people must make in America, including getting married, signing a mortgage and more,” said LARTL legislative director Deanna Wallace. “It is appropriate to allow women to have extra reflection time before abortion because of the magnitude of the decision in a woman’s life. As testimony has shown, many women regret their abortion decision and now wish they had been given a longer reflection period.”

We must also remember that abortion facilities in Louisiana are only selling one service: abortion,” she added. “(HB 386) empowers women with more time to appropriately consider all their options, including parenting and adoption, from sources other than the profit-focused abortion facility.”

A portion of the bill exempting women who live 150 miles or more from the abortion facility from the 72-hour requirement was added back to the legislation on the Senate floor. It had previously been removed in the Senate committee.

“The 150-mile provision keeps the legislation consistent with recent federal court opinions, including the recent 5th Circuit decision on the Louisiana admitting privilege law,” Wallace said. “According to the 5th Circuit’s findings in that case, the exception would apply to less than 10 percent of Louisiana women of child-bearing age.

HB 618, which would require hospitals to inform parents who suffer a miscarriage that they have a right to bury or cremate their child, was passed 38-0 by the Senate. The bill was authored by Tom Willmott of Kenner.

“Parents who have suffered this tragedy have shared with us that they wish they had this opportunity to promote their own emotional healing process,” Wallace said. Several additional pro-life bills are expected to be considered as the session winds down.