SPREADING HOPE

ICC church rising from the flood

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

“Hopeful” is the keyword at Immaculate Conception Church in Denham Springs, according to pastor Father Frank Uter after devastating floodwaters hit the area in August. A beehive of activity has been going on around the campus—new flooring has been installed, repaired walls have been painted and parish school of religion classes have begun, with the junior and senior high classes returning to the large hall of the parish activity center, giving a spring-like atmosphere of new life in the midst of fall.

The walls and shelving in the storage building have been restored in order to receive items that were salvaged during the cleanup, said Father Uter.

“This way the meeting room will be free for work to begin in it,” Father Uter said.

Work is also nearly completed in the T-
SEE RISING PAGE 10

Included in the flood recovery work at Immaculate Conception Church in Denham Springs was putting fresh mulch in the children’s playground. Photo by Debbie Shelley | The Catholic Commentator

Novenas offer opportunity to experience Christ

By Rachele Smith
The Catholic Commentator

The students were quiet when they entered the church.

Walking behind each other, they quickly slipped into their reserved pews at Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Baton Rouge and prepared for the first Friday of the Novena to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ.

The novena, held on Oct. 7 and set for every first Friday of the month during the next nine months, attracted more than 100 people, each beginning what Father Miles Walsh, pastor of Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, called a pilgrimage or a “journey of faith with Jesus Christ.”

“Praying novenas is a scriptural tradition that goes back to Jesus himself,” said Father Walsh, noting that, according to St. Luke’s Gospel, on the day Jesus ascended into heaven, the apostles, doing what Jesus commanded them to do, came together with Mary to pray and wait for the fulfillment of the father’s promise.

“On the 10th day, they received the gift of the Holy Spirit,” said Father Walsh.

He explained that in those nine intervening days, as the apostles and Mary followed Jesus’ commandment waiting and praying, that the first novena in the history of the Catholic Church was made.

“The word ‘novena’ simply means ‘nine’ in Latin, so every novena is nine consecrated days of prayer offered to God in response to Jesus’ command,” he explained, adding that the nine days of prayer can fit a number of patterns, such as one day after the other, one day every week, or as in the case of Sacred Heart’s fourth annual Novena to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ, one day each month for nine months.

“In cases of extreme need (such as an emergency illness), you can say a novena in nine hours,” said Father Walsh, noting that the purpose of ev-SEE NOVENA PAGE 19

ICON OF STRENGTH – A missionary copy of Our Mother of Perpetual Help icon entrusted by Pope Pius IX to the Redemptorists visited St. Gerard Church in Baton Rouge. See article on page 8.
St. Sebastian was an overcomer

Seconds seem to be moving at a snail’s pace, an eternity between each tick of the clock.

Your local heroes, perhaps clad in purple and gold, are attempting to hang on and finally conquer the evil one, who could be draped in crimson and white.

You know prayers are needed to pull your team through on this crisp autumn night, but where to direct such a petition?

Why not turn to St. Sebastian, the patron saint of athletes, who also knows something about overcoming adversity, as legend says he died twice.

Little is known about St. Sebastian’s youth, although it is believed he is originally from Gaul, a region of western Europe that now encompasses France. He was educated in Milan and in 283 joined the Roman Army.

St. Sebastian, who was passionate about his commitment to serve Christ, excelled in the army and was promoted to serve in the praetorian guard to protect Emperor Diocletian. St. Sebastian was able to use his position to convert several prominent individuals and assist martyrs in their suffering.

Reportedly, in 286 the emperor, notorious for ordering the slaughtering of Christians, learned of St. Sebastian’s actions. Diocletian ordered St. Sebastian to be killed by tying him to a tree and have archers use his body as target practice.

The soldiers carried out their orders and left St. Sebastian’s body for dead. But somehow he had survived and was eventually nursed back to health by Irene of Rome, the widow of St. Castulus.

Upon his recovery, St. Sebastian sought out Diocletian and when confronting him near a staircase proceeded to belittle the emperor in what was likely an ancient form of trash talk. Not surprisingly, Diocletian did not take too kindly to the verbal beatdown and ordered St. Sebastian to be clubbed to death, then thrown into the sewers. This time there would be no survival.

He was secretly buried in the catacombs beneath Rome and around 367 his remains were moved to a basilica in Rome. Later, his cranium was sent to a monastery in Germany and in 934 placed in a silver case. Today, the relic is in a case in a reliquary in Ebersberg.

Because of his using his role in the army as a platform to conversion, he is also the patron saint of soldiers.

Experience God’s transforming love

By Diana DePaola

As we near the end of the liturgical year in Ordinary Time, the 31st and 32nd Sunday Mass readings steer the faithful toward a deep appreciation of God’s infinite love of mankind and how far God will go to manifest his love.

Love of Souls

God’s very being is encountered in all of creation, particularly within mankind. His love is encased in mercy which exceeds all boundaries to the point where he will overlook the sins of those who truly repent. Like a good parent, God warns and reminds mankind to abandon their wicked ways and believe in him. Am I heeding God’s warnings? Do I trust in his infinite mercy?

Encountering Jesus

Zacchaeus, the most prominent tax collector and wealthiest man in town, had to climb a tree in order to satisfy a deep longing to want to know Jesus by seeing him. His physical stature limited his view, while his passionate heart raised him to new heights. Jesus immediately affirmed Zacchaeus’ desire, stood next to him despite the negative reaction of the crowd, and invited himself over for a visit. Here is an amazing transformation as the richest man in town who was burdened by sin, repented then embraced generosity because of the truth which emerged from encountering Jesus. Do I allow for a close encounter with Jesus? What is impeding my vision to see Christ? How high do I or will I climb to “see” him?

Suffering has meaning

Transformation into a new life in Christ is joyful. But what happens when life gets painful? People have suffered, are presently suffering or will suffer. When suffering is experienced, God not only raises the faithful to new life, he accompanies them through the trials and tribulations. Believe it or not suffering does have meaning. The greatest example of this is Jesus’ passion, death and resurrection. Tremendous anguish (passion) leads to a point of complete surrender (death) which in turn merits new life (resurrection.)

And through all of this comes a deeper appreciation of who we are and who we belong to.

But try to explain this to someone who is in the midst of the struggle. Here is the explanation: you are not alone. As members of the body of Christ, we accompany those who are suffering. We walk together. We are called to be sources of strength and encouragement for others who are painfully walking their journey of faith. Who can I accompany today? Who can I offer life-giving faith, hope and love?

DePaola is director of Evangelization and Catechesis for the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

The 12 promises of the Sacred Heart

Many Catholics are familiar with Jesus’ private revelations to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque in 1673-1675 to propagate devotion to his Sacred Heart, but did you know our Lord also revealed 12 promises to those who honor him in this way?

Jesus said: I will give them all the graces necessary in their state of life; I will establish peace in their homes; I will comfort them in all their afflictions; I will be their secure refuge during life, and above all, in death; I will bestow abundant blessings upon all their undertakings; sinners will find in my heart the sources and infinite ocean of mercy; lukewarm souls shall become fervent; fervent souls shall quickly mount to high perfection; I will bless every place in which an image of my heart is exposed and honored; I will give to priests the gift of touching the most hardened hearts and those who shall promote this devotion shall have their names written in my heart.

The 12th promise is sometimes called the “great promise” and reveals the excessive mercy of Jesus’ loving heart.
CCDBR finds itself in role reversal following flood

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Disaster recovery specialist Carol Spruell keeps her bags packed, ready to fly off to another catastrophic event on a moment’s notice.

Spruell, who has also served as communications director for Catholic Charities Diocese of Baton Rouge, has dodged tornadoes in Oklahoma and Alabama and assisted in American Samoa following a devastating tsunami.

Roles were recently reversed, however, when Catholic Charities sent out a clarion call for assistance of its own in the wake of the August flooding. Catholic Charities USA responded immediately, deploying eight team members to assist in such areas as transportation, manning evacuation shelters and distributing supplies.

For Spruell and CCDBR executive director David Aguillard, being on the receiving end of assistance from many of the same people they have either served with in other disasters or at least trained with at various meetings was an adjustment.

“It was great because (the volunteers) just jumped right in and did whatever you asked,” Spruell said. “They speak the same language. It was just a relief to know there were people we could trust and tell them what to do.

“It helped me to stay focused and I did get some case management out of it.”

Aguillard called the experience “humbling.”

“There is a certain amount of feel good you get about yourself when you are the one providing help,” he said. “To ask and to know we really needed it was humbling but it was very uplifting with the quality and caliber and speed with which CCUSA sent people.”

As the waters rose and the scope of the damage began to come into focus, Rohan Allen felt from his New Jersey home, a yearning to flooding in Houston and being active in the recovery effort of Hurricane Sandy in New Jersey.

“The only thing I knew about Louisiana was what I saw on the news before the flooding and during the flooding,” Allen said. “I just wanted a chance to come and experience the people in this agency.

When I heard that basically the diocese needed help, I thought about it for a short while and said, ‘Why not?’

“This is specifically what I do.”

Allen spent nearly three weeks in Baton Rouge, extending his stay by a week.

“October is a traumatic experience and uneventful like anything I have ever experienced.”

Hispanic community because he speaks Spanish. What he witnessed was staggering.

“I have never personally seen so many people in one place displaced,” Allen said. “The shelters here are huge. But I did like how organized (the shelters) were. I was impressed by that.”

Allen was surprised and ultimately inspired by the spirit of southeast Louisiana residents. Despite the challenges facing them, Allen said he was awestruck with the sense of resiliency.

“It astonished me how awesome the people are,” he said. “They inspired me a little bit to see their frame of mind that even though they get knocked down they still have hope and in their own way try to recover themselves.”

Allen also felt a welcoming spirit he had not experienced elsewhere. Normally, his experience has been that when he walks into the room in other places people are quiet.

“Here, everyone cares,” he said. “It doesn’t matter if you are rich or poor, they appreciate what you do for them. They are hospitable, and have a love for family and life.”

Aguillard said through the assistance of Allen and the other CCUSA volunteers, his agency was able to meet with 1,600 heads of households in the first month after the flood, conducting extensive needs assessment with each and referring them to appropriate resources. He said he also plans to integrate mental health services into the long-term recovery.

The agency was also able to dole out nearly $40,000 in rent and other direct assistance such as bus tickets.

“It has been the most difficult five weeks of my career,” Aguillard said. “The expectations from the federal government, state government, church parishes, thousands of individuals coming to seek assistance, the constantly changing priorities week to week, minute to minute complicated by staff shortages, the devastation to the response infrastructure has created personal and professional and organizational challenges that have been unlike anything I have ever experienced.”

“This is a traumatic experience and
Msgr. Greene remembered as a witness for Christ

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Msgr. William L. Greene lived his life with an openness that let others see that Christ was the center of it. Family, friends, priests and men and women religious gathered at St. Joseph Cathedral in Baton Rouge on Oct. 20 to celebrate his life, both his and theirs, and their call to witness their faith as demonstrated by Msgr. Greene.

Msgr. Greene died Monday, Oct. 17 in Baton Rouge, three days after his 91st birthday.

A 1939 graduate of Catholic High School in Baton Rouge, Msgr. Greene graduated from St. Joseph Seminary in St. Benedict in 1942 and Notre Dame Seminary in 1950 with a master of arts degree. He was ordained in 1950 in the Archdiocese of New Orleans by Bishop L. Abel Callout, the same priest who gave him first Communion.

Msgr. Greene served as parochial vicar of Our Lady of Good Counsel, Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Jackson. He served as parochial vicar at St. Joseph Cathedral in Baton Rouge.

The monsignor also served in several administrative and leadership positions in the diocese, including director of the Marriage and Family Life Department and Evangelization and Catechesis Office; judge, pro-synodal judge and promoter of the justice for the tribunal; and dean of the North Baton Rouge, South Suburban and Southern Deaneries; and domestic prelate.

In the funeral homily, Father Jon C. Koehler said Msgr. Greene’s life expressed his devotion to his church, family and other people.

“The Lord Jesus was the center of his life,” said Father Koehler. “He said this was not only evidenced at St. Pius X and St. Thomas More, but it was also evidence in his whole-hearted attitude of serving God.”

“It is not only a remembrance of someone who is loved, but also the realization that we all, through the Holy Spirit at our baptism, are called to witness by our lives,” said Father Koehler.

“Even after he retired he gave back with everything he could,” said Father Koehler, who pointed out that Msgr. Greene served many Masses and stayed active in the church. Writing about Catholicism in Louisiana was a passion of Msgr. Greene, who loved to travel to do research for his books.

Msgr. Greene understood well Pope Francis’ admonition to accept all people as a gift of life and to listen to them and to help them feel love and accepted, Father Koehler said.

“People look to one another to see that the face of Christ is alive, and we the church are the people of God are witness to that,” said Father Koehler. He noted everyone has people who have influenced them. Msgr. Greene influenced people to give their lives to God.

“The example of recognizing that in following Christ, he, like all of us, sinned, but that he could, indeed, at least impact the world in a small way,” said Father Koehler.

In his reflections at the Mass, Bishop Robert W. Muench said the year that Msgr. Greene was ordained, he received his first Communion.

“I never saw him in any mood but happy, joyous, spirit-filled and supportive. That was one of his gifts,” said Bishop Muench, who anointed Msgr. Greene the day before his death.

“I felt a deep sense of peace that he had. During the anointing, I believe he had a sense his life was complete,” said the bishop.

“We will remember him with fondness. I believe he instantly went to the kingdom of our Lord. We thank God for the gift of his life,” Bishop Muench said.

Among those whom Msgr. Greene had a close relationship with were the sisters of St. Joseph, said Sister Kathleen C. CSJ.

“He was a boy when his mother would drive the sisters to grocery shopping and other errands. He’s been a friend to the sisters throughout the years,” she said.

Msgr. Greene celebrated Mass daily for the sisters in the chapel of St. Joseph’s Academy when they lived at the convent on Kleinert Street. He continued celebrating Mass for them when they moved to their present location on Hundred Oaks Ave.

“He believed in a liturgy that is well structured,” said Sister Kathleen. She said Msgr. Greene was “very progressive,” and consulted with lay people in his leadership positions.

“He loved his ministry. He loved his vocation,” said Sister Kathleen.

Brother Marcel Riviere dies

Brother Marcel Riviere SC, who had spent the past four years in the Diocese of Baton Rouge, died Oct. 14 at the age of 89.

Brother Marcel, son of the late Anita Braud and Marcel Guy Riviere, was a native of Thibodaux. He joined the Brothers of the Sacred Heart from Thibodaux College in 1942, making first vows in Metuchen, New Jersey in 1945.

Brother Marcel spent much of his active ministry as a religious brother working in the formation of brothers and lay partners. He served on the congregation’s general administration, headquartered in Rome for 18 years.

He later ministered in Lyons, France, at the Coindre International Center for 10 years. He served nine years as director of the brothers in study at Spring Hill College in Mobile, Alabama. He also directed the brothers at St. Stanislaus College Prep in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi for six years and ministered on the Navajo Indian Reservation in St. Michael, Arizona, for five years before retiring to Baton Rouge.

Donations in memory of Brother Marcel may be sent to the Brothers of the Sacred Heart Foundation, 4600 Elysian Fields Avenue, New Orleans, LA 70122.
Bridal bouquet connects special memories for one family

By Rachele Smith
The Catholic Commentator

Like many couples, Simone deBrueys and Jon Bajon wanted their September wedding to be special, a reflection not only of their love for each other, but also the cherished relationships they enjoy with family and friends. But what they didn’t expect was the arrival of a bridal bouquet, a gift that symbolized everything they wanted and so much more.

The bouquet, created by many hands using centuries-old craftsmanship, was made by residents living in the Marshall Islands, an island country that will forever hold a special connection for the deBrueys family.

Located between Hawaii and the Philippines, the country is known for its tropical beauty and translucent water. It’s also the place where deBrueys’ brother, James, died six years ago.

deBrueys and her parents, Mary T and Jim deBrueys, explained that James was volunteering on the Marshall Islands with WorldTeach, a non-governmental organization that places volunteer teachers in developing countries.

After graduating from LSU with a degree in anthropology, James deBrueys decided to teach English on the Arno Atoll, his father said. The Arno Atoll is a remote part of the sprawling chain of more than 1,200 volcanic and coral atolls that make up the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

“The area was so remote. There was no electricity, no running water, but it was where James wanted to be,” said Mary T, noting that her son believed in getting the most out of every experience.

During his time in the Marshall Islands, James taught children and adults, and he was making many connections with the islanders.

He was definitely enjoying his time there, said his parents.

But everything changed on Thanksgiving Day in 2010. That’s when James boarded a boat with four other adults heading to the capital atoll of Majuro. James was going to a Thanksgiving feast provided by WorldTeach for the organization’s volunteers.

However, he and the others, including a pregnant woman, never made it to Majuro. Their capsized boat was later found, and only two bodies were recovered. The other three people, including James, were lost at sea.

Mary T said they are still not exactly sure what happened on the water that day.

“That’s when we met Miran Powell,” added Mary T. “That’s where her parents live,” she added.

Powell offered to accompany the Baton Rouge family on their unexpected trip to the island country. Her presence and concern helped the family in their immediate grief and through the years, Powell’s friendship and ties to the island country that James once loved, continues to bring the family comfort.

But Powell is not the only one from the island country to offer support. Mary T explained many islanders and volunteers from the WorldTeach organization have embraced them and the good work James was doing on the island.

For example, shortly after the accident, several WorldTeach volunteers and many islanders worked together to fulfill a dream James had by building a basketball court for the children.

In addition, the local family recently met a young boy on the island who was named after James. The boy was the first one born after the accident, demonstrating how much the islanders on the Arno Atoll appreciated the work James was doing there.

Acknowledging these acts of love, it’s easy to see how this type of affection also brought a beautiful addition to Simone and Jon’s wedding.

Mary T explained Powell’s mom crafted a special medallion featuring a small photo of James.

Simone placed the emblem on her bridal bouquet, allowing the connection between these hand-made gifts and her lost brother to be complete.

“We wanted to acknowledge everyone in some way during our wedding, and I thought the flowers were the greatest acknowledgement of James we could ever have,” said Simone.

Above, this close-up photo of Simone deBrueys’ bridal bouquet illustrates the intricate artwork of the handcrafted flowers as well as the medallion featuring her brother’s photo and a rosary deBrueys’ carried on her wedding day. Photo by Rachele Smith | The Catholic Commentator

Left, holding her bridal bouquet, Simone deBrueys and her husband, Jon Bajon pose for a photo on their wedding day. Photo provided by Mary T. deBrueys

Bishop Robert W. Muench, assisted by Deacon John Veron, parish life coordinator, Holy Rosary Church in St. Amant, blessed Holy Rosary Oct. 23 in celebration of the church’s reopening after the devastating August flood. The church was filled with people, and Bishop Muench commended the Holy Rosary community for their deep spirituality and for working together to recover from the flood. Photo by Debbie Shelley | The Catholic Commentator

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Lately, I find myself asking quite a bit from God perhaps too much. I ask for things for myself, since my own life has fallen a bit off course as well as for friends and family members, some of whom have serious health problems.

I make sure to thank God for the blessings that I do have, but I am starting to think that I am demanding too much of the Lord and that I should curb my prayer a bit. Do you think it is possible to pray too much? (Albany, New York)

I do not think it is possible to pray too much. I take as my guide the story Jesus told in the 11th chapter of Luke’s Gospel – about someone who went to a friend at midnight to borrow food to feed an unexpected guest. The friend at first didn’t want to be bothered, noting that the door was locked and that his family was already in bed; but because of the caller’s persistence he finally relented. And the moral of the story, says Jesus, is that we should pray with the same persistence. “Ask and you will receive,” is the translation we read at Catholic Masses, “seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.”

But some scriptural commentators have pointed out that the original Greek text is in the “present imperative” form and that a more precise rendering might be, “Keep on asking... keep on seeking... keep on knocking.”

At the same time, though, I would mention the need for patience when we pray. God is on his own timetable, not ours, and (knowing, as he does, considerably more than we know) he may even decline our requestor grant it in a way we didn’t expect (and don’t even like).

Our wisest and safest prayer comes from the words of the Our Father, “Thy will be done.”

Prayer, we learned as children, is “lifting our minds and hearts to the Lord,” and when Paul says in First Thessalonians that we should “pray with the same persistence,” he is inviting us to an abiding awareness that the Lord is listening to us and that he cares.

Question Corner
Father Kenneth Doyle

Our family consists of a mixture of Catholic and Protestant Christians. One family member, who is gay, is contemplating marriage to a same-sex partner. My husband and I do not plan to attend the ceremony, in deference to our Catholic faith. Over the years, we have worked hard to promote cohesion in a family where everyone is loved and accepted. We do expect to continue to welcome both this family member and the partner into our home, as it is not our place to pass judgment, but we are concerned that after this “hurtful snub” they will not want to come and that other family members may disown us as well. We continue to pray for spiritual guidance and hope that you might address this issue in your column, both for our own benefit and for those in similar situations. Please advise us as to how to be true to our beliefs while also keeping our family intact. (Ohio)

A

In 2013, when the state of Rhode Island was debating whether to approve same-sex marriage, Bishop Thomas J. Tobin of Providence advised Catholics that they should “examine their consciences very carefully” before deciding to attend a same-sex ceremony, lest their presence be taken as a sign of approval. Two years later, Bishop C. Michael Jarrell of Lafayette said that “all Catholics are urged not to attend same-sex marriage ceremonies.”

So although there is no absolute canonical prohibition against attending, church leaders would likely advise you not to go. The consistent teaching of the Catholic Church over the centuries, based on biblical texts (and recently reaffirmed by Pope Francis), is that marriage is a lifelong commitment between one man and one woman and Catholics are asked to give witness to that teaching.

At the same time, I admire your deep desire to maintain harmony in the family and to keep the bonds of love unbroken. Perhaps it would be good for you to sit down with the family member in question; in that setting you could describe your inner conflict as well as pledge your continuing love and support.

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The Catholic Commentator
October 28, 2016
Pro-Vita speaker has unique perspective on the horrors of abortion

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

For a few moments, an abortionist held Sarah Zagorski’s life in his hands. He induced her mother, who was conflict-
about her crisis pregnancy, when she was 26 weeks preg-
ant. Zagorski was born breech and not breathing, and the doc-
tor told her she would be incapable of living a normal life and
that it be better to let her die.

But the Holy Spirit moved Zagorski’s mother as she saw
her humanity and said no. She demanded Zagorski receive
medical treatment and she was taken to a children’s trauma
ward in New Orleans.

A fighter from the womb, Zag-
orski is a strong advocate for the
unborn. She is the development
orski is a strong advocate for the
birth ward in New Orleans.

The evening began on a light-
er note, as attendees enjoyed dinner
and jazz music provided by the St. Michael High School Jazz
Band. They also had a chance to
bid on auction items provided by
customers parishes and individuals
throughout the diocese.

The dinner was followed by a
“Beauty of March Presentation,”
given by pilgrimage director
Emily Froeba featuring a video of the 2016 pilgrimage.

In his testimony, Alex Ruch,
seminarian for the Diocese of Baton Rouge, said March for
Life was a “wake up call” in his sophomore year at St. Michael
that changed his life from being a rebellious teenager to disciple
of Christ.

“What happened to me was
an encounter that changed my
life and continues to change my
life,” said Ruch.

Brooke Evans, a member of
St. George Church in Baton
Rouge, said even through the
difficulties of the trips, includ-
ing the bus breaking down, there
was so much more that made the
trip life-changing.

She enjoyed the MP3 evening
rallies and particularly eucharis-
tic adoration.

“It was as if everything in the
room stopped,” said Evans.

Pushed outside of her comfort
zone, Evans said, “I used to be a
quiet person. I’m not so quiet
anymore.”

Ruch and Evans said they
were compelled to speak up for
the lives of people like Zagorski,
whom the culture of death wish-
es to kill.

“I was unwanted,” Zagorski
said. She said her mother had
a “beautiful heart but terribly
confused mind” who suffered
from schizophrenia and bipolar
disorder.

Zagorski’s mother was al-
ready the mother of seven when
pregnant with Sarah, and her
father, a medical doctor with a
separate family, told her to have
an abortion.

Zagorski’s mother had deep
regrets from abortions she had
in the past. In emotional turmoil
over the situation, she decided
to go to an abortionist in town
because she was told he was a
“cheap doctor” who could help
her.

“To this day, I don’t know if
she intended to have the abor-
tion, or if she was simply seek-
ning medical help, but I know it
wasn’t the abortionist’s intention
to let me live,” said Zagorski.

It wasn’t long after Zagorski
was brought home that her
family was investigated by the
Department of Children and
Family Services. When she was
16 months old, she was received
by her foster parents, who did
not have children and wanted to
adopt Zagorski.

Then the call came that Za-
gorki had to be returned to her
biological family.

Zagorski said, "No matter what
anyone may tell you, children
will always love their biological
families." But she said what fol-
lowed were the darkest days of
her life.

Zagorski suffered from abuse
and neglect in her family.

“We (she and our siblings)
were fighting for food and fight-
ning for our mother’s attention,”
said Zagorski.

She was reunited with her
foster family at nine, and she
went on to become active in pro-
life work.

Zagorski talked about how
the abortion industries target
families like hers, who are poor,
and that people, like St. Teresa
of Calcutta, are called to walk
alongside them.

“No matter what, God is al-
ways calling us to look into the
eyes of the poor," said Zagorski.
Our Mother of Perpetual Help icon brings comfort to many

The Catholic Commentator

There have been many different interpretations of Our Mother of Perpetual Help over the years, according to this display which accompanied the icon during its visit to St. Gerard Majella Church in Baton Rouge. Photo by Debbie Shelley | The Catholic Commentator

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

“Make her known to the whole world,” Pope Pius IX told the Redemptorists when he entrusted them with the original miraculous icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help on April 26, 1866 at St. Alphonsus Church in Rome. As the Redemptorists celebrate the 150th anniversary of receiving the icon, Pope Francis blessed 12 missionary copies to be sent around the world. One came to St. Gerard Majella Church in Baton Rouge.

The icon was welcomed at St. Gerard with a Mass on Oct. 9. The Our Lady of Perpetual Help Novena was prayed daily until Oct. 22.

The Mother of Perpetual Help icon is believed to have been created in Crete by an unknown artist, said Father Cao Chuong CSsR, pastor of St. Gerard.

According to tradition that dates back to the 16th century, it was taken from there to the 17th century, when the Redemptorists built St. Alphonsus, they received word of the icon and learned about its location from a Redemptorist priest.

“This image of our Blessed Mother is probably the best known and most recognizable icon within the Catholic Church because of the efforts by the Redemptorists,” Father Paul Yi, chancellor of the Diocese of Baton Rouge and pastor of Ascension of Our Lord and St. Francis of Assisi Churches in Donaldsonville, said in his homily at St. Gerard.

“Throughout 2,000 years, Blessed Mother has been called by many names. For sailors she was the Star of the Sea; for contemplatives, a Mystical Rose; and for students, Good Counsel,” Father Yi said. “But no matter what title you give Blessed Mother, she will always be known for her perpetual help and presence to us.”

Father Yi pointed out that in the icon, the child Jesus clings to his mother’s hand in fear while gazing up at the angels over his shoulder. One of his sandals has come loose, indicating the haste with which he had run to his mother.

“Why is the Child Jesus so frightened? The angels in the picture are holding instruments of his passion and death,” Father Yi said.

“The face of Our Lady is grave and sorrowful, with her eyes directed not at Jesus, but at us. Her eyes are filled with compassion and love, which sees our troubles and needs. One feels that she is pleading with us to avoid sin, which has caused her son to suffer so much for us. Her gaze makes us a part of the picture and the pain it portrays. ‘Will you not love my son, who has loved you so much?’ she seems to say. Her hands hold her son securely and her right hand directs our gaze to him. Yet her gaze is fixed on us to have courage and trust in the promise of eternal life purchased by her son’s suffering and death. We are invited to cling to her hands throughout our life journey,” he said.

Father Chuong said, “I see the icon – an image of Mary holding the child Jesus with smaller images of the Archangel Gabriel and the Archangel Michael over her shoulders – as a window into the Gospel. You simply gaze upon it and simply observe and let it soak in, and it speaks to you.

“My greatest hope is that the icon can bring people to their own personal conversions that will be necessary to bring peace in the city and in the world. Unless we begin with a personal conversion, and then a communal conversion in our faith, I don’t believe much can be accomplished. Our effort to end violence and promote peace is very much about basic Gospel values,” Father Chuong said.

Those who prayed the novena said they received comfort.

Priscilla Maqueen, a member of St. Gerard, said the icon conveys to her, “Everything will be all right. You just have to trust no matter what the outcome.”

She has been praying for her grandson, who severely injured his arm in an accident on his job. She said he has been having “conversations with God” and is hopeful he will come back to the faith.

Mary Ann Burton began praying the Tuesday Mother of Perpetual Help novena with her parents at St. Gerard Church when she was a child.

“The Mother of Perpetual Help has always been a part of my life. It’s comforting to know she’s protecting us at times like this,” Burton said.
Gov. gives keynote at awards luncheon

By Rachele Smith
The Catholic Commentator

What makes someone want to “do good” and help the community? Is it instilled at birth or is it something learned?

For Governor John Bel Edwards, serving the public is a desire you learn, something that comes from those you love and respect the most: your parents.

As the keynote speaker for “Fete des Fideles,” the newly named awards luncheon for Our Lady of the Lake College, now Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University, Edwards credited his parents for their strong example in public service and offered what could be considered transformative childhood memories of his mother’s years as a nurse.

“Mamma had eight kids in 10 years and as soon as her youngest child went to kindergarten, Mamma went back to work as a nurse in a local hospital,” Edwards told the more than 350 attendees at the luncheon.

The crowd, which consisted of students and health care professionals, also included Edwards’ mother, Dora Jean Edwards, who, along with three other women in attendance, was celebrating her 60th year as a graduate of OLOL’s School of Nursing.

“It wasn’t long before Mamma realized that many of her patients, the ones who were the poorest and the uninsured, no matter how sick they were, were transferred somewhere else, and she decided she wanted to work where they were being transferred to,” said Edwards, adding that like her patients, his mother moved to Lallie Kemp Hospital in Independence.

From watching his mother work as an ER nurse for the next 30 years and his father’s responsibilities as a sheriff, Edwards said he (and his siblings) learned the importance of public service.

“Many days Mamma was at work (at Lallie Kemp), and she would administer health care to the prisoners in my daddy’s jail. She felt that was as important as giving health care to anybody who came to that hospital,” he said, commending his mother’s deep Catholic faith and the education she received in living out that faith as the conduit for his own desire to help expand health care to the working poor in Louisiana. Earlier in his keynote, the governor provided updated figures on the state’s expanded Medicaid program, noting that since it started in July, 317,000 poor people in the state now have health coverage.

“Thank you, Mamma,” he said, after explaining how easy it was for him to prioritize health care from her example.

Dora Jean Edwards, however, didn’t set out to make an example of her life’s work. Growing up poor, she said her family didn’t always have the money for the things they needed.

“We were very poor. My daddy died when I was two-years-old. I lived it first hand. I felt it,” she said, noting that when she was growing up in rural Louisiana, her mother went to Lallie Kemp Hospital, and she was “very happy to have it.”

Having the opportunity to attend nursing school and to give back and help others was important for Dora Jean, who added she enjoyed celebrating with other graduates at the school’s luncheon on Oct. 8.

In addition to Governor Edwards’ address, “Fete des Fideles” featured the presentation of several alumni awards.

Allison Walker, retired senior vice president for planning and business development at Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center, received the Franciscan Impact Award, and Sister Helen Cahill, FMOL, was awarded the Distinguished Alumni Franciscan Impact Award for her work as a nurse and chaplain.

In addition, Sandra Mathes, a 2010 nursing school graduate, received the Shining Star Alumni Award, with Amanda Bolton, a 2013 graduate, selected as the Rising Star Alumni Award.

Other special activities at the luncheon included the presentation of 15 new San Dominick crosses to Cristo Rey Baton Rouge Franciscan High School president Jim Llorens. The special crosses will replace the ones lost during the August flooding. The crosses were originally given to the school in honor of the Franciscan Sisters.

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The adoration chapel, which was hit particularly hard by the flooding, is ready for painting and painting is about complete in the sacristy. Workers are putting up sheet in the youth house and soon will begin using drywall and repairing it.

The biggest priority is to complete the offices so the administrative staff can move back to their office homes. Father Amal Raj IMS both “have places to lay our heads at the end of the day,” stated Father Uter.

He said he is pleased with the progress.

“I told them (the staff) I just welcomed the property and I will have to go to the deaners,” said Father Uter.

The rectory will be one of the last buildings to be repaired, but Father Uter and parochial vicar Father Amal Raj IMS both “have places to lay our heads at the end of the day,” stated Father Uter. Father Raj IMS.

“We have received very generous gifts from church parishes as far as Oklahoma who took up collections and sent us the donations outside of the area, Father Uter said.

“But there is a sense of patience and understanding. People are smiling and groaning each other. The feeling is hopeful,” said Father Uter.

Without reconstruction complex, a kindergarten classroom that took on water from a slow draining sidewalk is now ready for students.

Reconstruction crews are finishing up repairs on damage caused by the Aug. 15 rainstorms, students at Redemptorist St. Gerard School in Baton Rouge are getting in the swing of things, both figuratively and literally, this school year.

New playground equipment, purchased after the school community raised $11,000 in four weeks, was unveiled earlier this month.

Built to withstand levels of play, the equipment, complete with an eco-friendly ground cover made from recycled rubber materials, is used for running the new meeting place for RSG students at recess, providing a safe place for them to climb, slide and, of course, swing.

The new play system was dedicated on Oct. 6, a big day for students at Redemptorist St. Gerard School in Baton Rouge.

Archbishop, who lives in Lake Charles and tours the country with his band “Sean Ar- don and Zydeko,” used the opportunity to not only teach about Louisiana history and music, but to also educate and motivate the students about school.

“W hen I play my music, I can keep their attention,” said Ardon.

“I talk to them about the importance of staying in school and doing their best,” he added.

Since that time, construction crews have completed repairs to a kindergarten room, which received some water from a slow draining sidewalk, and they are steadily mending damage to classrooms housed above the school’s cafeteria.

While maximin entered those classrooms, they ca
tinued to work on the building’s roof, water did not affect the cafeteria, which is located on the basement level. A water-lined ceiling shows damage sustained from the heavy rains of the August flood event.

Finding momentum at Redemptorist St. Gerard

By Rachelle Smith

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School counselors can help stressed students cope after flood

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Trauma can cause neurological changes that inhibit learning and adapting, according to researchers on post-traumatic stress. School guidance counselors throughout the Diocese of Baton Rouge gathered at the Catholic Life Center on Wednesday, Sept. 28 to learn more about helping children and families cope in the aftermath of disasters, such as the August flooding in the Baton Rouge area.

Dr. Stephanie Eberts, assistant professor of professional practice at Louisiana State University and coordinator of the school counseling concentration, discussed the difference between crisis and trauma.

Eberts, who had worked as a school counselor in elementary and middle schools in New Orleans, shared what she had learned after Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast in 2005.

The first is that schools often provide the only mental health services students will ever receive.

“A lot of students and parents are not getting their mental health needs met,” said Eberts.

While their basic needs are being met they may not be getting what they need for their mental wellbeing, such as a place to decompress.

She also learned that after a disaster, counselors might spend more time with adults than with students, which is time well spent.

Schools also provide the sense of security and stability that is hard to find when families lose their home, said Eberts. She said this can be challenging because “a lot of teachers are struggling because they lost their homes.” This indicates teachers need attention to, said Eberts.

Children do not have the variety of coping skills as adults do, Eberts stated. Once people cross the threshold of what they can cope with, they resort to maladaptive skills. They have a “fight or flee” type of behavior, becoming either aggressive or shutting down.

Eberts said children in crisis cannot focus in class. They also may have nightmares.

Children who experienced trauma could have symptoms that mimic other psychological disorders such as attention deficit and hyperactivity disorders or oppositional defiant disorder. Misdiagnosis can result in inappropriate treatment and punishment.

Some children may have traumas that occurred before the flood, such as sexual abuse, whom counselors will want to spend more time with and refer to other mental health professionals and resources.

“We know that kids who are victims of multiple traumas that are unaddressed become the adults with deep-seeded problems,” Eberts said.

Drugs are also not the cure for trauma, stressed Eberts. Of the popular medications prescribed for trauma, she said serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) make life more manageable for some; benzodiazepines have tranquilizing effects and addictive properties; and antipsychotic medications can interfere with all sensations: positive and negative.

Eberts emphasized a gentle approach is more effective than a strict one.

“You may never known how much a seemingly small gesture can mean to a student in crisis,” Eberts said.

She encouraged teachers to draw children into the present moment through helping them focus on their breathing, expressive arts, dance and movement classes, improvisation exercises, prayer or spiritual exercises or any mindfulness practices done in group settings.

“Because of a fear of feeling fear being ‘hijacked’ by uncomfortable sensations,” said Eberts. “Mindfulness practices open people up to their inner experiences.”

When stress is at an all time high, everyone needs a break, stated Eberts.

She encouraged the counselors by telling them they already have the skills they need to help students.

Relationships play a vital role in the healing process, Eberts noted. She said parents play a primary part in students’ recovery. Research also shows that a good support network promotes healing, Eberts said.

The meeting was very timely considering the need of families in their schools, said the counselors.

“It’s been a stressful time for the families,” said Amanda Martin, guidance counselor at St. Jean Vianney School in Baton Rouge, of which 77 percent of the faculty and 25 percent of the students were impacted. She said parents have been stressed trying to keep their jobs going and homes repaired. At school, the students are doing fine, but some are having a hard time outside of school. But Martin noted the school, church and community, as in any time of crisis, have worked together supporting the students.

Linda Dutreix, guidance counselor at St. George School in Baton Rouge, said, “I had a mom tell me that she’s embarrassed to ask for help. I told her that God developed us to need each other, especially in the hard times.”

“I have heard (people say), they didn’t know what they needed until someone asked what they needed … Parents, for the most part are carrying the bigger burden. But the schools help with the structure,” said Ann Perron, counselor at Our Lady of Mercy School in Baton Rouge.

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Youth speak out about issues important to them in election

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

With only a few days to go until the elections in a contentious campaign season, teens say they are taking a serious look at the issues knowing that they, too, will soon vote on matters that will determine the future of this country.

“Yes, I have (watched) quite closely,” said Rudolph Richards, a freshman at Lee High School in Baton Rouge and a member of St. Margaret Queen of Scotland Church in Albany and St. Thomas Catholic of Pointe Coupee. “People either want to listen with open ears and not listening with open ears and about unnecessary topics, are stated that the candidates argue that the issues of this election aren’t being addressed at all in this year’s campaign. She stated that the candidates argue about unnecessary topics, are not listening with open ears and do not understand what the important issues are. "It is hard to balance my faith with my political views. I try to keep them separate," said Williams. "I use my spiritual and political views completely. I believe that God has in store for us is what is best for us," said Daggs.

"People either want to totally take them away or add restraints," said Swanner. "I simply just ask how Jesus would feel and what he would do," said Cooper. "All I can do is pray that what God has in store for us is what is best for us," said Daggs.

COLORING THE PASTOR – Deacon Ryan Hallford, who served at St. Margaret Queen of Scotland Church in Albany and St. Thomas Church in Springfield, recently developed a “therapeutic exercise” for two communities dealing with the recent flood. Deacon Hallford’s only instruction: “Your pastor (Father Jamin David) is colorful. Show the world how colorful he is.” In the 16-year-old and over category, the winner was Laura Hugget (cantor at St. Margaret) who is a student at Southeastern Louisiana University. In the 15-year-old and under was Katie DeLaune, a first-grader at Holy Ghost School in Hammond. Photo provided by Father Jamin David | St. Margaret and St. Thomas churches
Occasionally funny but mostly awkward animated comedy in which the plans of an ambitious stork (voice of Andy Samberg) who’s been tapped by his boss (voice of Kelsey Grammer) to take over the big-box store shipping system his breed now operates in lieu of delivering babies are derailed when a human orphan (voice of Katie Crown) who was long ago stranded among the birds accidentally sets their disused infant manufacturing machinery to work. Together the duo scramble to get the child thus facturing machinery to work. Together orphans are derailed when a human boss (voice of Kelsey Grammer) to take over the big-box store shipping system his breed now operates in lieu of delivering babies which cast members simply break into a dance, fleeting crude and crass language. A-III; PG-13

Keeping Up With the Joneses
Fox
Flat action comedy in which a suburban couple (Zach Galifianakis and Isla Fisher) discover that their suspiciously perfect new neighbors (Jon Hamm and Gal Gadot) are, in fact, undercover spies. In a bid for fish-out-of-water laughs, Michael LeSieur's script then drags the ordinary duo through high-speed chases, shootouts and other dangerous situations. Amid the chaos, a couple of uses of profanity, pervasive rough and occasional crude language. O; R

Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children
Fox
Following the mysterious death of his beloved grandfather (Terence Stamp), a Florida teen (Asa Butterfield) convinces his dad (Chris O'Dowd) to take him to the remote island off the coast of Wales where the old man had been sent during World War II to see if the otherworldly institution for an inadequate biological one are trotted out yet again. While too scary for tots, the film is generally well suited for their older siblings, the occasional touch of slightly vulgar language aside. Much stylized violence with minimal gore, of slightly vulgar language aside. Much stylized violence with minimal gore, semigraphic marital lovemaking, partial nudity, some sexual humor, including a reference to aberrant behavior, a same-sex kiss, several uses of profanity, at least one rough term, occasional crude and crass language. A-III; PG-13

Kevin Hart: What Now?
Universal
Lincoln Financial Field in Philadelphia is the outsized setting for this concert film featuring the diminutive comic. His language gets raunchy, but his routine is never base, mean-spirited or smutty. Vocabulary aside, there are two main problems here: A framing device of Hart in a James Bond-style movie, directed by Tim Story, isn't particularly funny or original. And Leslie Small, the director of the stand-up sequences, is stuck with long close-ups of Hart contorting himself and squawking to sell his jokes before the 50,000 people in the stadium. Hart’s frantic gestures are clearly less appealing when magnified on the big screen. Occasional profanities, pervasive rough and crude language. A-III; R

The Girl on the Train
Universal
Seamy suburban melodrama about the intersecting lives of an unemployed alcoholic (Emily Blunt), her ex-husband (Justin Theroux), his new wife (Rebecca Ferguson) and a couple (Haley Bennett and Luke Evans) who live in the same neighborhood. In adapting Paula Hawkins' best-selling novel, director Tate Taylor elicits an intense performance from Blunt, but his time-hopping tale of addiction, adultery and murder fails to live up to its artsy pretensions. Instead it has the feel of a sometimes voyeuristic anec-dote told by a persistent barfly. Merely unpleasant at first, the film reaches a profoundly immoral conclusion as an act of justifiable self-defense gets mixed up with revenge at its rawest. Skewed values, some brutal violence with gore, strong sexual content, including graphic adultery and marital lovemaking as well as full nudity, a couple of uses of profanity, pervasive rough and occasional crude language. O; R

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Jack Reacher: Never Go Back
Paramount
Tom Cruise, in his second venture as the former Army officer-turned-freelance-detective invented by British novelist Lee Child, is as durable as a cast-iron stove. A somewhat mysterious knight-errant, Reacher is a strong moralist according to his own lights, and descends into others' predicaments like a deus ex machina. This go-round, he comes to the rescue of a military-intelligence operative (Cobie Smulders) who's been framed for an espionage charge involving murders in Afghanistan. He also learns that he may have a teenage daughter (Danika Yarosh) from a previous fling. The difference between this film and the 2012 original, in which Cruise stalked through Pittsburgh, is that director Edward Zwick, who co-wrote the screenplay with Richard Wenk and Marshall Herskovitz, provides occasional moments of pleasantly ac- domestickickering. That helps break up the narrow escapes, shootings and slugfests – as well as the long sequences during which cast members simply break into a sprint. Stylized violence, including gun-play, fleeting crude and crass language. A-III; PG-13

The Catholic Commentator
ENTERTAINMENT
October 28, 2016

Motion Picture Association of America ratings:
G – General audiences; all ages admitted
PG – Parental guidance suggested; some material may not be suitable for children under 13; some material may be inappropriate for young 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 accom- companying parent or adult guardian
NC-17 – No one under 17 admitted

USCCB Office for Film & Broadcasting classifications:
A-IV – Adults and adolescents
A-III – Adults
A-I – General patronage
A-II – Adults with reservations
L – Limited adult audience
O – Morally offensive
"Scars to your beautiful"

Canadian pop artist Alessia Cara originally performed "Scars To Your Beautiful" for the repertoire of speakers in TEDxTeen 2015 in New York. (Check out the program’s website and learn what some teens are doing to help heal our world.) Cara spoke about how all of us face personal struggles and, at times, painful disappointments, and yet the value and dignity of our shared humanity always shines through.

The song describes someone who “tries to cover up her pain and cut her woes away.” She “just wants to be beautiful” and yet, she “goes unnoticed.” Consequently, she doesn’t “see the light that’s shining deeper than the eyes can find it.” She believes that she must do something, even change her body, to be worthy and beautiful.

So the song tells her that “there’s a hope waiting for you in the dark” and asks her to see that “you don’t have to change a thing, the world could change its heart. No scars to your beautiful, we’re stars and we’re beautiful.” (Repeat refrain.)

Refrain:
But there’s a hope that’s waiting for you in the dark
You should know you’re beautiful just the way you are
And you don’t have to change a thing, the world could change its heart.
No scars to your beautiful, we’re stars and we’re beautiful.

Oh, oh
And you don’t have to change a thing, the world could change its heart
No scars to your beautiful, we’re stars and we’re beautiful.

(Repeat refrain.)

Oh, oh
And you don’t have to change a thing, the world could change its heart
No better you than the you that you are (no better you than the you that you are)
No better life than the life we’re living (no better life than the life we’re living)
No better time for your shine, you’re a star (no better time for your shine, you’re a star)
Oh you’re beautiful, oh you’re beautiful.

Thus, we don’t waste time or energy being concerned about comparisons. We have work to do! The light within us needs to be shared. Perhaps this light needs to shine on the difficult challenges for our family.

So the song tells her that “there’s a hope waiting for you in the dark” and asks her to see that “you don’t have to change a thing.” Instead, “the world could change its heart” and even the way it sees what constitutes genuine beauty. She has “no scars to your beautiful,” and indeed, we are all shining “stars.”

Living with such insight takes perspective and maturity. The world wants us to measure ourselves by some outer standard, for example, physical beauty, GPA or SAT scores.

However, we who are followers of Jesus have a different view. We have cast aside all yardsticks of cal beauty, GPA or SAT scores.

To be a disciple of Jesus means that while there is nothing to prove about one’s goodness and beauty, there is plenty to give. There are people around you who feel that they carry “scars” that compromise their innate beauty. By shining your light on them, they will see more clearly that such painful beliefs about who they are can evolve.

Be the shining light of God’s presence to others today!

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 47975, or on Facebook at “Charlie Martin’s Today’s Music Columns.”
EDITORIAL

Remember to vote

Perhaps at no other time has a presidential election been so divisive, with the two major candidates drawing criticism even from within their own parties.

Fortunately, the curtain will soon drop on this political circus and the feeding frenzy that has reached unprecedented levels will be mercifully silenced.

Unfortunately, the candidates have been so embroiled in verbally lacerating each other with their vitriol and unconscionable personal attacks that not only have solutions to the country’s most pressing issues been absent, the issues themselves have not been fully delineated. What a sobering thought for a critical election just days away.

However, no matter your party affiliation or perhaps your level of disappointment, which seems to be permeating the country, voting remains a privilege paid for many times over with the blood of our young people. It is a privilege not to be taken lightly, especially in an election where the direction of our country for future generations is on the table.

Voters must vote their conscience but only after a thoughtful and prayerful discernment. That discernment should include consideration of a candidate’s broader platform that matches one’s own faith, values and morals.

An election with such broad implications should not rest on one issue but must be examined by a more critical eye focused on the present as well as the future. Naturally, one should look to the Catholic Church through the words of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops for guidance. But history has proven that even among the Catholic community there is often a deep political divide.

Adding intrigue to this year’s election is that the ultimate winner will potentially be able to shape public policy for many years. The current roster of Supreme Court justices is aging, opening the door for the next president to appoint justices whose belief systems parallel that of a specific party’s agenda. This reality should not be taken lightly by either party.

No candidate is perfect, and never will be, especially in today’s dysfunctional political climate. And polls have shown that the public might be holding their collective breath, if not their nose, when they pull the lever.

But vote we must, and the Catholic voice must be heard.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Not following the faith

In the Sept. 30 of the The Catholic Commentator the “Question Corner” was disturbing, to say the least. A reader told the priest that their children however preferred a parish that “...has people go to confession by writing things on pieces of paper to be burnt.”

One would certainly think that the priest columnist would be horrified at this practice and emphatically explain how this was NOT a valid method of confession.

Instead, his first comments were telling the questioner why they didn’t have to “face east” and that his biggest concern was that they didn’t have to “face east” and that his biggest concern was that they divide. Catholic Bishops for guidance. But history has proven that even among the Catholic community there is often a deep political divide.

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But vote we must, and the Catholic voice must be heard.

Of angels good and bad

Halloween and All Saints Day are big days in south Louisiana. I love driving through the neighborhoods and seeing the Halloween decorations on so many homes. The stores are full of them, and each year they become more elaborate. It is a time of great imagination for children and of dances and parties for adults. Mothers and fathers are hastily sewing to present the cutest little ghost or goblin. Treats are being cooked and baked or simply bought for the visits of these little spooks on Oct. 31. It is a fun time and, barring sick pranks, vandalism and crime, an innocent time of good childhood memories.

One of my favorite historical novels is entitled “The Feast of All Saints.” It is actually authored by none other than Anne Rice, the vampire lady, who became rich for her novels about the fantasies we associate with the eve of All Saints or Halloween. The saints in her historical novel are the descendants of slaves and white slave owners in New Orleans and the river plantations around it. Their story is one of courage and often great goodness, learning and skill. For instance, they were the owners of the first funeral homes in New Orleans and ministered to both the white population and to the “free people of color.”

All Saints has always been an important religious feast in this part of Louisiana. It is a time to spruce up our graveyards and pray for our dead. Families return home to work in the cemeteries, attend Mass together and bless the graves. We remember our most important heritage, that because of the gift of faith handed down to us by our forebears we would not be without them today.

“Corruptio optimi pessima” - “The corruption of the best things is always the worst.” That seems to be a theme of many vampire stories and of Halloween, and because of the never ending human battle against evil, it is connected with the Feast of All Saints too. Due to a fundamentalistic trend in the religion of many of these days, we hear warnings about devil worship being involved with Halloween. When we use images of the devil or symbols we often think of as harmless, like peace signs, we are told that we run the risk of coming under the influence of Satan. In my 52 years of priesthood I have actually met two persons, one who claimed to have belonged to a satanic cult and the other to have fought such evil.

So, should we forget Halloween and just stick with All Saints? Actually, the two are connected. In the final book of the Bible, “Revelations” or “Apocalypse,” a countless multitude of saints stand before the throne of God. Through suffering and holiness on earth they have participated in the victory of Christ, the lamb of God. He, the ultimate good, has conquered the ultimate evil, symbolized by the dragon and the two beasts, and will continue to conquer in every age.

The dragon is Satan, also known as Lucifer, the rebellious angel. He loses his battle with St. Michael, the guardian angel of Israel, and is cast down to earth where with his minions he continues to pursue Christians (12:7-9). But we Christians will always win because the Lamb has conquered. That is the lesson of the book of Revelations, that in every age Christians who are faithful to Christ, the Lamb, will overcome the dragon and his beasts.

Historically, the beasts already have been overcome. The first beast with seven heads is pagan Rome built on seven hills whose seven emperors persecuted the Christian church even as St. John the Evangelist was writing Revelations. The second beast promotes the worship of the first. It symbolizes the false prophets who urged Christians to worship the emperors. Faithful to the Lamb, the Christians refused and were martyred. Thus they participated in Christ’s victory and were marked by his sign. They stand in contrast to those who followed the beast and were marked with his sign, 666, the Hebrew numerical equivalent of the name Nero Caesar, an emperor who declared himself divine.

However, Scripture is the living word of God it has a way of being repeated in every age. The

PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PRAY FOR US

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

Contemplative prayer

Contemplative prayer, as it is classically defined and popularly practiced, is subject today to considerable skepticism in a number of circles. For example, the method of prayer, commonly called centering prayer, popularized by persons like Thomas Keating, Basil Bennington, John Main, and Laurence Freeman, is viewed with suspicion by many people who identify it with anything from “New Age,” to Buddhism, to “Self-Seeking,” to atheism.

Admittedly not all of its adherents and practitioners are free from those charges, but certainly its true practitioners are understood and practiced correctly this method of prayer, which allows for some variations in its practice, is in fact the form of prayer which the Desert Fathers, John of the Cross, and the author of the Cloud of Unknowing call Contemplation.

What is contemplation, as defined within this classical Christian tradition? With apologies to the tradition of Ignatius of Loyola, who forms things differently, but is very much in agreement with this definition, contemplation is prayer without images and imagination, that is, prayer without the attempt to concentrate one’s thoughts and feelings on God and holy things. It is a prayer so singular in its intention to be present to God alone that it refuses everything, even pious thoughts and holy feelings so as to simply sit in darkness, in a deliberate unknowing, within which all thoughts, imaginations, and feelings about God are not fostered or entertained, as is true for all other thoughts and feelings. In the words of The Cloud of Unknowing, it is a simple reaching out directly towards God.

In contemplative prayer, classically understood, after a brief, initial act of centering oneself in prayer, one simply sits, but sits inside the intention of reaching out directly towards God in a place beyond feeling and imagination where one waits to let the unimaginable reality of God breakthrough in a way that subjective feelings, thoughts and imaginations cannot manipulate.

And it is precisely on this point where contemplative prayer is most often misunderstood and criticized. The questions are: Why shouldn’t we try to foster and entertain holy thoughts and pious feelings during prayer, isn’t that what we’re trying to do in prayer?

How can we be praying when we aren’t doing anything, just sitting? Isn’t this some form of agnosticism? How do we meet a loving, personal God in this? Isn’t this simply some form of transcendental meditation which can be used as a form of self-seeking, a mental yoga?

Where’s Jesus in this?

I will let the author of The Cloud of Unknowing reply to this: “It would be very inappropriate and a great hindrance to a man who ought to be working in this darkness and in this cloud of unknowing, with an affective impulse of love to God himself alone, to permit any thought or any meditation of God’s wonderful gifts, kindness or his work in any of his creatures, bodily or spiritual, to rise up in his mind so as to press between him and his God, even if they be very holy thoughts, and give him great happiness and consolation. ... For as long as the soul dwells in this mortal body, the clarity of our understanding in the contemplation of all spiritual things, and especially of God, is always mixed up with some sort of imagination.” We cannot imagine God, we can only know God.

In essence, the idea is that we may never mistake the icon for the reality. God is ineffable and consequently everything we think or imagine about God is, in effect, an icon, even the words of Scripture itself are words about God and not the reality of God. Admittedly icons can be good, so long as they are understood precisely as icons, as pointing to a reality beyond themselves; but as soon as we take them for the reality, our perennial temptation, the icon becomes an idol.

The difference between meditation and contemplation is predicated on this: In meditation we focus on icons, on God as God appears in our thoughts, imagination and feelings. In contemplation, icons are treated as idols, and the discipline then is to sit in a seeming darkness, beneath a cloud of unknowing, to try to be face to face with a reality which is too big to grasp within our imagination. Meditation, like an icon, is something that is useful for a time, but ultimately we are all called to contemplation. As the Cloud of Unknowing puts it: “For certainly, he who seeks to have God perfectly will not take his rest in the consciousness of any angel or any saint that is in heaven.”

Karl Rahner agrees: “Have we tried to love God in those places where one is not carried on a wave of emotional rapture, where one is unable to mistake oneself and one’s life-force for God, where one accepts to die from a love that seems like death and absolute negation, where one cries out in an apparent emptiness and an utter unknown?”

That, in short, is contemplative prayer, authentic centering prayer, as a discipline.

OBLATE FATHER ROLHEISER, theologian, teacher and award-winning author, is president of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas. He can be contacted through ronrolheiser.com or on Facebook at face book.com/ronrolheiser.
COMING EVENTS
October 28, 2016

Holy Ghost Fair – Holy Ghost Church’s Family Fall Fest will take place Friday, Oct. 28 – Sunday, Nov. 30 at Holy Ghost, 601 N. Oak St., Hammond. There will be food, games, booths, entertainment and raffles. For more information, call 985-345-3360 or visit hgchurch.org.

Feast on the Levee – St. John the Baptist Church, 402 S. Kirkland (River Road), Brusly, will celebrate its Feast on the Levee Sunday, Oct 30. The day includes food, a fun run at 8 a.m. and 5K run at 8:30 a.m., children’s entertainment. For information, call 225-749-2189.

Troop 7 Jambalaya Fundraiser – Boy Scout Troop 7 of St. Aloysius Church, 2025 Stuart Ave., Baton Rouge, will hold a jambalaya fundraiser Wednesday, Nov. 2, 11 a.m. – 7 p.m. at the KC Hall. Plates are $7 each and include jambalaya, bread, green beans and cookie. For information, email bhencyh@aol.com.

Gospel of Luke Bible Study – Beginning Wednesday, Nov. 2 a 12-week study of the Gospel of Luke will be held at the Kleinpetzer Center of St. George Church, 7808 St. George Dr., Baton Rouge. Cost of the class is $15. For more information, visit st-george.org or email karen@st-george.org.

Hunger Walk – The 2016 Annual Hunger Walk will be held Sunday, Nov. 6, 2:30 p.m. at the Catholic Life Center, 1800 S. Acadian Thwy., Baton Rouge. There will be a pre-walk prayer and program starting at 2 p.m. The event will benefit the Baton Rouge Food Bank and Holy Grill. Following the 2-mile walk there will be music, fellowship and hunger awareness. More information can be found on Facebook at brfoodbank.org/2016communityhungerwalkdonationform or by calling 225-359-9940.

St. Jean Vianney Mission – Father Whitney Miller, director of the St. Charles Center in the Diocese of Lake Charles, will present an Advent mission, “The Face of Mercy” (Misericordiae Vultus) at St. Jean Vianney Church, 16166 S. Harrells Ferry Road, Baton Rouge, Monday, Nov. 7 – Wednesday, Nov. 9, 7 p.m. Father Miller will discuss how to keep the spirit of mercy alive after the Year of Mercy ends. 225-753-7950.

Metairie Events – The Archdiocese of New Orleans Retreat Center, 5500 St. Mary St., Metairie, is hosting the following events: Friday, Nov. 4 – Sunday, Nov. 6, “Living as a Beloved Child of God,” with Father Joseph Palermo; Friday, Nov. 11 – Sunday, Nov. 13, “You Are Kidning? On Becoming Like a Little Child Again,” with Father Philip Chirocp SJ; Wednesday, Nov. 16, 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m., “Becoming a Woman of Faith, Wholeness is Holiness: A Look at the Psychological and Spiritual Journey of Women,” with Jane Hebert and Yvonne Hymel. For more information, visit retreats.arch-no.org or call 504-267-9604.

Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites – The next meeting will be Sunday, Nov. 13, 1:30 p.m., at Our Lady of Mercy Parish Activity Center, St. Gabriel’s Room, 444 Marquette Ave., Baton Rouge. For more information, call 225-343-3181 or 225-803-3391, or email rober twhite456@att.net.

Tickfaw Retreat – Our Lady of the Way Spiritual Life Center, 50352 Antioch Road Tickfaw, will host the following events: Friday, Oct. 28 – Sunday, Oct. 30, “Living in such different times: God’s way to lead us to Major League Faith,” with Father Phillip Scott, founder of the Family of Jesus the Healer community; and “Inner Healing of the Hurts of the Heart, Mind & Soul,” with Father David Seid. Details and registrations can be found at ourladyoftheway.org.

Rosaryville Spirit Life Center – Rosaryville Spirit Life Center, 39003 Rosaryville Road, Ponchatoula, will present the following events: Friday, Nov. 4 – Sunday, Nov. 6, “Becoming a Wounded Healer,” with Father Matt Linn S.J., Tuesday, Nov. 22, 7 p.m., “The Face of Mercy,” with Becky Eldredge. For more information, call 225-294-5039 or email sdavis@oppeace.org.

Born to Run – The Born to Run 5K and 1-mile fun run to benefit the Woman’s New Life Center will be held Saturday, Nov. 12 at North Blvd., Town Square in Baton Rouge. Same-day registration and packet-pickup opens at 8 a.m. The 1-mile run begins at 9 a.m. and the 5K run race begins at 9 a.m. There will be a post-race party with food and music. For more information, visit borntorunbr.com, email events@womansnewlife.com or call 225-218-4862.

Christmas Card Donations – The Office of Prison Ministry is collecting Christmas cards for correctional facilities in the Diocese of Baton Rouge. Cards may be brought to Catholic Charities, 1900 S. Acadian Thwy., Baton Rouge or call 225-336-4406.
every novena is fundamentally the same: “to prepare our souls for the coming of the Holy Spirit and to open our minds and hearts to the gift of God’s grace.”

But is it possible to receive anything different when the same novena is prayed repeatedly and the same words are recited over and over again?

Father Walsh explained that no matter how many times a novena is prayed, it is never the same.

During his homily for daily Mass on Oct. 7, Father Walsh used an analogy of a yearly family vacation to explain how every novena is different.

“Every family vacation is a new opportunity to enjoy the presence of my loved ones and to bond more deeply with them in love,” he said, adding that each novena also offers a unique encounter with God.

For this novena to the Sacred Heart, which will continue over the next first Fridays of the month until June 2017, Father Walsh said “the Holy Spirit has time to accomplish his work in us and to make us anew in Christ’s image.”

In addition, by comparing this nine-month novena to a baby’s gestational period, Father Walsh said he is reminded that “God is inviting us to spend the next nine months in the womb of holy mother church so that we can be spiritually reborn in the image of his son.”

The novena to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which began after Jesus confided the mysteries of his Sacred Heart to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque in 1675, is just one of many novenas used in the Catholic Church. Others include special novenas to saints, the Blessed Mother and facets of traditions in the church.

Josie Duke, a religion teacher at St. George School in Baton Rouge, is devoted to the Novena to the Divine Mercy.

Duke explained her devotion started after reading the Diary of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska and learning about the promises to those who pray the Divine Mercy.

“I read all of these promises, and I realized that’s all I need. When Jesus says he ‘will stand between my father and you, not as a just judge but as a merciful savior,’ then what else do you need?” she asked, rhetorically.

“I thought, ‘Sign me up,’” she smiled, adding that in addition to saying the Divine Mercy Novena, which begins on Good Friday and ends on Easter Saturday, she also tries to recite the Divine Mercy Chaplet every day.

For Kitty Blanchard, a bookkeeper at St. Agnes Church in Baton Rouge, there is comfort and a deeper sense of spirituality when she recites the Novena to St. Teresa of Calcutta.

A lay member of St. Teresa’s Missionaries of Charity sisters, Blanchard said the novena is beautiful and each day offers quotes from Mother Teresa that she can focus on and apply to her own life.

Blanchard also approaches a novena as a great way to study and learn more about the life of a saint.

“Like Blanchard, Dina DePaula, director of the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis for the Diocese of Baton Rouge also views the consistent prayer of a novena as an opportunity to focus on the attributes of a particular saint.

“A novena attaches you to that saint. You really get to know them, and there’s this transformation of getting closer to God through that saint,” she said.

DePaula, who said she always felt a great affinity for St. Theresa of Liseaux or the Little Flower, has found that when she starts her day with a novena prayer, she “feels focused on the heavenly realm and that I have that saint by my side” through the day.

“It keeps me in check,” she said.

Novenas also help DePaula in another way. They allow her to connect to family, including those who are no longer here. Like many cradle Catholics, DePaula grew up with many older relatives praying novenas, and she especially remembers her grandmother’s devotion to Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

“For DePaula, it’s a rich heritage that has helped her own faith-life flourish and one that can still make her smile today. “My grandmother was always ready to pray for you,” she said, adding, “She lived to be 100-years-old; we used to say she was preserved in Community Coffee and novenas.”
Franciscans open new building

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Several hundred supporters and employees gathered for the blessing of the Pauline O’Sullivan Campus for Shared Services on Tuesday, Oct. 18.

The new building, which at one time housed a popular grocery store, will help bring in many of the administrative services of the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System under one roof, according to chief financial officer and senior vice president Robert Ramsey.

“This building will reduce the number of leases into one location and will save us significant dollars,” said Ramsey, adding that approximately 600 employees will work out of the offices, which features an open and modern concept with a multitude of small cubicles.

“We are not totally done,” he added.

In her opening remarks, Sister Barbara Arceneaux FMOL, regional minister for the Franciscan health system, said the structure “could not have come with a better name than calling it the Pauline O’Sullivan building.”

She noted that it was named after Sister Pauline O’Sullivan FMOL, the first president of the health system who from 1988-94, Sister Barbara said Sister Pauline was instrumental in the transition of the system from three independent hospitals into one combined health system.

“She would be proud of what we accomplished,” Sister Barbara added, noting that there are 13,000 employees scattered across the state.

She said the building’s numerous rooms will be named after religious sisters and FMOL sisters.

Bishop Robert W. Muench blessed the offices located on the Pauline O’Sullivan Campus for Shared Services on Oct. 18. The building will bring together many of the administrative services of the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System under one roof. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

Preparing for Thanksgiving

As most of us are planning our Thanksgiving menus, there are people who are wondering where their next meal is coming from.

In our community, there are thousands of households where people are skipping meals just to make ends meet. St. Vincent de Paul is the only community kitchen that is open every day of the year, providing a hot lunch and a brown bag supper daily. Last year, we served a record 242,695 meals, and we expect to exceed that number this year. The lines at our Dining Room are long, and we can only meet the need with the help of generous people like you.

Yes, I want to feed the hungry and homeless this Thanksgiving. My check for $_________ is enclosed.

Name: __________________________
City: __________________ State: _____ Zip: ______

Mail your gift to:
St. Vincent de Paul, P.O. Box 127, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-0127.
You can also give online at www.svdpbr.org!

#1 Give Catholic to benefit ministries

Just in time for the holiday shopping season, Catholics in the Diocese of Baton Rouge are being offered the opportunity to support their school, church parish or favorite charitable organization.

The diocese, along with the Archdiocese of New Orleans, the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux, the Diocese of Biloxi, Mississippi and the Diocese of Jackson, Mississippi, is participating in a Catholic giving day on Nov. 29 titled #GiveCatholic, according to Tammy Abshire, director of Stewardship for the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

For 48 hours beginning at midnight on Nov. 29, Catholics will be able to visit the giveCatholic.org home page and click on a specific ministry listed to make a donation.

“The #GiveCatholic campaign is an excellent opportunity for individuals to support their favorite Catholic organization and make an impact on the lives of those in our local community,” Abshire said. “Compelled to action by our faith, we’re asking everyone to come together and share their gifts lovingly in justice with others, and return them with increase to the Lord.”

Last year, The Catholic Foundation of the Archdiocese of New Orleans launched #GiveCatholic, the inaugural online giving day by Catholics for the works of the Catholic Church in the history of the United States and raised $1.3 million to benefit 112 archdiocesan parishes, schools and ministries. This year, #GiveCatholic has set a goal of 200 participating organizations and $1.5 million.

#GiveCatholic is held each year in conjunction with #GivingTuesday, which is celebrated on the Tuesday following Thanksgiving and the widely recognized shopping events Black Friday and Cyber Monday. #GivingTuesday kicks off the charitable season, when many focus on their holiday and end-of-year giving.

All Catholic schools, parishes, and select diocesan ministries affiliated with the Diocese of Baton Rouge are invited to participate as recipients of donations if they meet the three requirements: 1) complete and submit a commitment form; 2) attend an #GiveCatholic training session; and 3) register their organization online at giveCatholic.org.

Donate Your Car Before It Turns Into Pumpkin

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul needs car, boat, camper and motor-home donations. Proceeds benefit the poor and homeless served by the Bishop Ott Shelter Program, St. Vincent de Paul Dining Room, St. Vincent de Paul Community Pharmacy and Myriam’s House.

Call (225) 383-7837, ext. O to make your donation or online at www.svdpbr.org. Free Towing!!

Hot Rod Vinnie says:

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

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