SIMPLE LOVE

Amish community aids flood victims

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

The Percheron draft horses at Louisiana State Penitentiary, favorites in Baton Rouge area parades, caught the eye of Shawn Sagrera when he was doing prison ministry there for St. John the Baptist Church in Zachary and Our Lady of the Assumption Church in Clinton. Four years ago he purchased his first Percheron from an Amish family-run farm in Lykens Valley, Pennsylvania, and from that flowed a relationship that was cultivated as Sagrera, who owns a Brahman cattle ranch, visited their community on business, but most importantly, to learn about their culture and faith.

The Amish live simply. They do not own cars and have no or little electricity. They work long, hard hours in such trades as horse and dairy farming, carpentry and construc-

Building clears big hurdle

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

A proposed archives building to house valuable religious and civil records from throughout the Diocese of Baton Rouge took a major step forward Sept. 12 when the East Baton Rouge Parish Planning Commission unanimously approved the plan.

With no public opposition present, commissioners signed off on the proposal, which calls for a 7,500-square foot building to be built on Parker Street, directly behind the Bishop Robert E. Tracy Center. The proposal must still go before the Metro Council.

“I’m very pleased we were able to get through the planning commission unanimously,” said diocesan chief financial officer Joe Ingraham.

CELEBRATING ST. TERESA – Hundreds of thousands of people gathered in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican on Sept. 4 for the canonization Mass of St. Teresa of Calcutta celebrated by Pope Francis. For complete coverage of the canonization, please turn to pages 4-5, and for prayerful reflections of the church’s latest saint, please turn to pages 18-19. Photo provided by CNS
DID YOU KNOW

**Justo Juez**

Jesus is often called on by many of us in times of trials and tribulations, which is what thousands of flood victims are likely doing daily.

For many, however, Jesus is often called on when facing courtroom battles, which might come in handy at some point during the recovery process.

In many Spanish-speaking countries, this image of Christ, based on the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. John and readings from the Acts of the Apostles, are referred to as Justo Juez (The Just Judge). Prayers to Justo Juez petition the Lord through the grace of his precious blood for justice and mercy to the petitioner.

There is also a photo associated with this symbol that dates to the early days of the church. The photo is flush with symbolism, the most prominent being the image of Christ being crucified and crowned with thorns. Through the painting nearly every element of the Passion of Our Lord is portrayed, including the post from the scourging, the whip and flagellum, the ropes, which bound Christ, the spear that pierced his side, the hammer and other items.

A rooster and sun are also included and represent St. Peter’s denial. Showing every attention to detail, the artist shows the dice that the soldiers cast to divide Christ’s clothes, and the veil Veronica used to wipe the face of Jesus.

Through prayerful reflection, this one photo can lead an individual to contemplate the entire Passion.

One prayer to the Just Judge reportedly dates to the 1500s and is allegedly approved by the Inquisition and spread by Pope Leo XI.

Pope Pius IX supposedly prayed this prayer to be invisible from his enemies and thereby spared from any assassination attempts. The prayer implores Jesus for protection from one’s enemies and to be hidden in Christ’s sacred wounds. Perhaps on a more morbid note, the prayer asks that the supplicant be granted a good death through the merits of the Precious Blood and the Passion.

Peru celebrates an annual feast in honor of Justo Juez.

PICTURES FROM THE PAST

Flooding in southeast Louisiana is obviously nothing new. In April 1973, Bishop Robert E. Tracy visited flooded communities in the Bayou Pigeon, Bayou Sorrel and Pierre Part communities. Bishop Tracy is shown speaking with residents who were waiting word to evacuate. By that time many families had moved their possessions to attics or second floors to escape the rising waters. Photo provided by the Archives Department | Diocese of Baton Rouge

Flood impact evaluated

**By Richard Meek**

The Catholic Commentator

Although several church parishes in the Diocese of Baton Rouge took on water during the recent flooding, chief financial officer Joe Ingraham said the financial impact might be a little better than originally feared.

Also on the bright side, because of the creativity by all parties involved, Cristo Rey Baton Rouge Franciscan High School will have a site to build a new school.

Ingraham said St. Alphonsus Church in Greenwell Springs, Holy Rosary Church in St. Amant, St. Jean Vianney Church in Baton Rouge and Immaculate Conception Church in Denham Springs all took on water. Ingraham said St. Jean, which was perhaps the most severely damaged parish, did not have flood insurance because it was not located in a flood zone and was not required to carry the insurance.

Fortunately, he added “it looks like we will be able to get $500,000 from Catholic Mutual Insurance each for the school, church and day care.”

He said the parish may face some financial exposure, but the difference will be included in a grant the diocese is seeking from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Ingraham also revealed that the diocese and Cristo Rey have reached an agreement whereby the diocese will utilize FEMA money to demolish the old Redemptorist High School, which had water as high as four feet throughout the buildings. Once the demolition is completed, the site, including the administration building, classroom building, gym and baseball field will be donated to Cristo Rey.

“We are donating the site to allow (Cristo Rey) to build a school,” Ingraham said. “It lets them have a fresh start.”

Cristo Rey opened its inaugural school year Aug. 5 at the former Redemptorist site only to be chased out during the floods.

School president Dr. James Llorens has previously said the school will finish the school year at the Bon Carré Business Center in Baton Rouge.

Ingraham said he is working with the demolition crew to salvage pieces of the gym floor, which was severely warped by the water. The hope, he said, is to cut what can be salvaged of the floor into small pieces and be distributed to Redemptorist alumni or anyone who would like a keepsake.

“It’s wonderful for everybody because we can continue Catholic education in the area,” Ingraham said. “We are turning a negative into a positive for (Cristo Rey).”

He added that recovery funds would be used to replace damaged cafeteria equipment at Cristo Rey. In the interim, the diocese’s child nutrition program will serve meals to students at the Bon Carré site.

Redemptorist Elementary School, which sits only hundreds of yards away from the old high school, did not take any water.
FEMA regulations play role in volatility of housing market

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

As the need for housing significantly increases following historic flooding in the Baton Rouge area, some fear the cost of housing may escalate or people will leave the area. Yet the housing market has too many multi-faceted factors at this point for homeowners to determine whether they are “sitting on a goldmine” because their homes didn’t flood or whether people will choose to call somewhere else “home,” say area economic advisors and realtors.

A lot of what happens depends on what FEMA requires people to do to make their homes comply with flood risk standards and what it will charge for flood insurance, according to Wayne Clark of Clark Realty in Central, which works with buyers and sellers in the Central, Zachary, Denham Springs and surrounding areas. Flood maps will be redrawn, and it’s unknown how much insurance for homeowners, in general, will be affected.

Clark said a major concern of homeowners in heavily impacted areas is the cost for them to raise and repair their homes will be more than they can afford.

“(Central Mayor) Jr. Sheldon has been fighting to see that this doesn’t happen,” said Clark.

It is expected the value of properties that were flooded will go down, said Clark, but many owners of homes that didn’t flood can’t expect to charge top dollar for them, because they have not had them appraised yet.

“The mortgage industry is where it all begins,” said Clark.

Some people are choosing to gut and dry their homes and sell them “as is.” Michael Claus, of Claus and Claus Real Estate Brokers, which serves the Baton Rouge and surrounding area, said a subcategory of homes on the market called “damaged and not repaired” has been created because of the flood. Claus said it is too early at this time to tell whether these homes will sell. He noted that there are still many homes that still stand vacant after Hurricane Sandy struck the East Coast in 2012.

Claus said some may chose to keep and repair their damaged homes and rent them out.

According to Claus, the large number of homes on the market would indicate a “strong market.” However, when factoring in the number of homes on the market that are damaged, it is not as robust as the numbers may indicate.

Claus compared the situation to the 2007 housing market crash, when there were a lot of houses on the market, but that was due to the large number of homes being foreclosed on because the owners could not live up to the terms of their mortgage. While the houses sat vacant, many received damage.

Also, as insurance premiums get higher, the effective value of the home is also lower, Clause stated.

“It’s too early for people to feel like they are rolling the dice,” said Claus.

Clark and Claus said the inquiries they have been receiving the most is from people looking for rental properties.

“People want to see where they will eventually live,” said Claus.

While there is concern there will be a mass exodus of people from the area, similar to what happened to New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, there were many things different about Hurricane Katrina, said Dr. Loren C. Scott, of Loren C. Scott and Associates, Inc., an economic consulting firm. He noted the floodwaters from Hurricane Katrina remained for weeks, while waters receded fairly quickly after the Baton Rouge floods. Hurricane Katrina also came as New Orleans dealt with eight years of flat employment. As people found better paying jobs and better schools in the cities where they relocated, they did not return.

Scott acknowledged the likely rise in the cost of housing, particularly for renters, “because that’s the nature of the market right now.”

“If you have a good friend to stay with, you better get on your knees and thank God Almighty for that.”

Dr. Loren C. Scott
Loren C. Scott and Associates, Inc.

FEMA will play a critical role in the housing market as it sets the requirements for what people must do to comply with flood standards and determines what it will charge for flood insurance, according to economic experts and real estate agents. Some owners of flooded homes have chosen to clean out their homes and not make repairs and sell them as damaged and not repaired. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator
VATICAN CITY (CNS) – With a large tapestry bearing the portrait of the woman known as the “Saint of the Gutters” suspended above him, Pope Francis proclaimed the sainthood of Mother Teresa of Kolkata, hailing her courage and love for the poor.

Despite the formality of the occasion though, “her sanctity is so close to us, so tender and fruitful, that spontaneously we will continue to call her ‘Mother Teresa,’” Pope Francis said to applause at the canonization Mass Sept. 4.

“Mother Teresa, in all aspects of her life, was a generous dispenser of divine mercy, making herself available for everyone through her welcome and defense of human life, those unborn and those abandoned and discarded,” the pope said in his homily during the Mass in St. Peter’s Square.

An estimated 120,000 people packed the square, many holding umbrellas or waving fans to keep cool under the sweltering heat of the Roman sun. However, upon hearing Pope Francis “declare and define Blessed Teresa of Kolkata to be a saint,” the crowds could not contain their joy, breaking out in cheers and thunderous applause before he finished speaking.

The moment was especially sweet for more than 300 Albanians who live in Switzerland, but came to Rome for the canonization. “We are very proud,” said Violet Barisha, a member of the Albanian Catholic Mission in St. Gallen.

Daughter of Divine Charity Sister Valdete, a Kosovar and one of the Albanian group’s chaplains, said, “We are so happy and honored. We are a small people, but have had so many martyrs.”

Born in 1910 to an ethnic Albanian family in Skopje, in what is now part of Macedonia, Mother Teresa went to India in 1929 as a Sister of Loreto and became an Indian citizen in 1947. She founded the Missionaries of Charity in 1950.

In his homily, Pope Francis said God’s will is explained in the words of the prophets: “I want mercy, not sacrifice.”

“God is pleased by every act of mercy because in the brother or sister that we assist, we recognize the face of God which no one can see,” he said. “Each time we bend down to the needs of our brothers and sisters, we give Jesus something to eat and drink; we clothe, we help and we visit the Son of God.”

Like Mother Teresa, he said, Christians are called not simply to perform acts of charity, but to live charity as a vocation and “to grow each day in love.”

“Wherever someone is reaching out, asking for a helping hand in order to get up, this is where our presence – and the presence of the church which sustains and offers hope – must be,” the pope said.

Mother Teresa, he said, lived out this vocation to charity through her commitment to defending the unborn and bowing down “before those who were spent, left to die on the side of the road.”
St. Teresa’s canonization has special meaning for photographer

By Rachele Smith
The Catholic Commentator

Looking out into the crowd gathered in St. Peter’s Square for the canonization of St. Teresa of Calcutta, Baton Rouge photographer Marie Constantin, realized she had been thrust into a living sea of humanity.

“They didn’t look like me. They came from different cultures representing every corner of the world. They spoke in languages I couldn’t recognize or understand,” she said.

Yet, Constantin, whose 1986 photo of St. Teresa was chosen as the official photograph for the nun’s beatification ceremony, knew there was an indistinguishable thread that connected them together: the abundant love they all felt not only for the Catholic nun who devoted her life to helping India’s poor, but also for Pope Francis.

“I began to reflect on why we loved these two so much. For me, it was because they both loved the people so much,” said Constantin, adding, “And when leaders love the people like this, anything can get done. Nothing seems too difficult.”

Like Constantin, Baton Rouge residents Mary Anne Olivier and her husband, David, were also part of the huge crowds of pilgrims gathered in Vatican City on Sept. 4. As they watched Pope Francis declare Blessed Teresa of Calcutta a saint, they, too, were struck by the beauty of the moment.

“My feeling during the canonization was that this very humble, loving pope was canonizing an equally humble and loving saint in front of many poor and humble people. It was a once in a lifetime moment,” said David Olivier.

It’s also a moment that almost didn’t happen.

Over the years, the Oliviers had many invitations to go to Rome, three to be exact, but they never could go.

However, when her cousin, Father John Carville, a retired priest in the Diocese of Baton Rouge, asked one more time, Mary Anne accepted. But then a major glitch was discovered.

“My husband already had plans to go to the Wisconsin (vs. LSU) game for that same weekend,” Mary Anne said.

“I told him whatever he wanted to do was fine with me, but he decided being there (for Mother Teresa’s canonization) was more important,” she said.

For Mary Anne, their entire trip, which included a visit to the Missionaries of Charity’s mother house in Rome as well as an opportunity to meet Sister Mary Prema MC, the superior general of the order founded by Mother Teresa, was inspiring.

“There is just something special about Pope Francis holding (Mother Teresa’s) canonization during the Year of Mercy,” explained Mary Anne as she related the many acts of mercy St. Teresa performed for the “poorest of the poor.”

“They try to make her (Mother Teresa) look like a rock star, but she is someone people can relate to today. She truly is a saint of our time,” she added.

For Mary Anne, there are many aspects of St. Teresa of Calcutta’s life that encourage her but one she is particularly drawn to is the way St. Teresa followed Jesus.

“It can be hard to figure out God’s will for us. But Mother Teresa teaches us. I’m sure she didn’t think she would end up in the slums, yet she listened,” Mary Anne said, adding that not all of us are called to work with the poor, but doing what we can, wherever we are is most important.

“If you are see someone being bullied, then it can be as simple as sticking up for that person,” she explained.

Father Andrew Merrick, parochial vicar at Christ the King Church in Baton Rouge, echoed that attraction many feel for St. Teresa during a special Mass honoring her canonization held at St. Agnes Church in Baton Rouge. Father Merrick, who also serves as the director of vocations for the diocese, delivered the homily at the Mass, which was celebrated by Bishop Robert W. Muench and attended by hundreds of people.

“(Mother Teresa) is an absolute witness to what we need,” said Father Merrick, explaining that during her lifetime, St. Teresa of Calcutta was consistent in putting the humanity of each person first. She ignored the cultural trappings, such as a person’s wealth or beauty, and looked at each person as if through the eyes of God.

Msgr. Robert Berggreen, pastor of St. Mary of False River Church in New Roads, said this unique ability to show the love of Jesus was something Mother Teresa learned from her own parents as a young girl and something she continued to cultivate after taking vows of poverty, chastity and obedience as a nun.

“Somewhat unusually, she made a fourth vow: to give God everything, not to refuse him anything under pain of mortal sin. This desire for a deeper commitment suggests an intensity of spirit within her and her fervor of her love for Jesus,” he said.

Msgr. Berggreen spoke about St. Teresa’s life and her spirituality and mission as part of a special reflective opportunity at St. Agnes in honor of the canonization of Blessed Teresa of Calcutta. The Three Days of Prayer, held Sept. 1-3, also featured recitation of the rosary and Mass daily as well as Father Jeff Bayhi, pastor of St. John the Baptist Church in Zachary, remembering his encounter with St. Teresa.
Ministers at Mass in shorts/Late for Mass

Q Too often I have seen various ministers at the Mass wearing shorts. I find this to be the utmost irreverence. Would these same people wear shorts to dine with the president of the United States? Yet they wear shorts not only to dine with Our Lord, but to serve him as well.

I know that God probably doesn’t care, but shouldn’t we care how we present ourselves before him and act as his representatives? Shouldn’t we dress our best for Mass – which, after all, is the most important event we attend each week? (Upstate New York)

A There is nothing in the church’s universal Code of Canon Law as to how ministers of the Eucharist should be dressed – which is logical, when one considers that the Catholic Church embraces the entire world and that what is considered appropriate apparel varies widely around the globe. (I have been present at papal Masses in the interior of Africa that included liturgical dance by women in grass skirts – all done reverently and enhancing the sense of worship.)

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, however, does speak to the issue when it observes that for all who are present at Mass, “bodily demeanor (gestures, clothing) ought to convey the respect, solemnity and joy of this moment when Christ becomes our guest” (No. 1387).

Because taste in dress does differ (even within our own nation), it might seem wise for dioceses or parishes to draft their own guidelines – and many, in fact, have done so. Some are rather general, noting that ministers should dress in a way that is respectful, modest and presentable – often adding that clothing that is too casual or flamboyant can distract worshippers from the Eucharist.

Others are quite specific; one parish in the U.S. Midwest directs that liturgical ministers should wear “no jeans, sweatpants or yoga pants; no shirts exposing the navel; no tight-fitting clothes; no shorts; no flip-flops.” For men, this means “no T-shirts (collared shirts only); no sleeveless shirts.” For women, “no dress or skirt with a hem below the knee; no spaghetti strap tops or tank tops or tube tops; no style of dress exposing bare shoulders or bare back; no style of dress exposing cleavage.”

Q We recently moved and now have attended four Catholic churches close to our new home in an effort to figure out which one we would like to join. It appears that the church has relaxed any sort of tradition on timely arrival for Mass. At least 20 percent of the parishioners at each of these churches seem to arrive for Sunday Mass any time they want, right up until just after the readings. There seems to be no official response to this habit from the pulpit. So my questions are these: How late is acceptable? Just so you’re there by the time the readings start? Before the Gospel? Before Communion? Or is the church just happy to have us there at all – even if we are 20 minutes late or more?

A First, to your question as to “How late is acceptable?” Half a century ago, it was common for moral theologians and liturgists to speak of the “three principal parts of the Mass” – that is, the oratory, consecration and Communion. If you missed any of these, you were not supposed to “count” the Mass.

That minimalist approach has been set aside, lest it encourage the weak of heart to arrive as late as possible. The Mass is now viewed as an integrated whole, a single act of worship from the entrance rite through to the final blessing and dismissal. The current Code of Canon Law says simply, “On Sundays and other holy days of obligation, the faithful are obliged to participate in the Mass” (Canon 1247).

Those who habitually arrive late need to rethink their priorities, and a gentle reminder from time to time in the parish bulletin might be in order. (I would not do it from the pulpit – for fear of embarrassing and perhaps “turning off permanently” someone sitting in front of me.)

It strikes me that if someone were invited to a state dinner at the White House, he wouldn’t call and say he’d be a little late. Forgive me if I sound unpatriotic, but the eucharistic meal trumps a state dinner. I even think that we should get to Mass a few minutes early – to relax, pray and prepare ourselves spiritually to meet Jesus in holy Communion.

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as well as your local church parish

The Catholic Commentator

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Families learn life lessons through helping flood victims

Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

“Everyone is family in Louisiana” was proven to be more than a fuzzy, feel-good catch phrase following the flood of national disaster proportions in south Louisiana beginning Aug. 12. Families donated goods, “sweated it out” helping others gut and clean out their homes and opened their own spared homes to loved ones and neighbors sending out distress signals as they lost everything.

“I saw the amount of people out there who needed help and it was driving me crazy doing nothing,” said Stafford Johnson, a member of St. Aloysius Church in Baton Rouge and a junior at Catholic High School in Baton Rouge. He and his parents, Amy and Ryan, and sisters, Claire, 13, and Margaret, 9, students at St. Aloysius School, were also involved in the recovery efforts.

The family gutted and cleaned out the home of one St. Aloysius teacher who had been impacted. Learning neighbors down the street were impacted, they continued helping in any aspect they could.

“We learned from home to home how to help them,” said Amy Johnson.

“I had a sense of accomplishment about what I’ve done to help someone and impact their life. I kept on going,” said Stafford Johnson. He further reached out in house gutting efforts.

For Eddie and Jennifer Parfait, members of St. George Church in Baton Rouge, volunteering was a “teaching moment” on how to help people for their children Jordan, 8, a third-grade student at St. George School, Cooper, 6, a first-grade student at St. George and Jaxon, 2.

The family started cleaning out their closets and bringing things to the shelter and searching Facebook for volunteer opportunities.

“My eight-year-old is very inquisitive. He didn’t understand what was really going on,” said Eddie Parfait. “He would see the flood waters on television and say, ‘That’s cool.’ We had to tell him that it’s not cool — people are losing their homes. He still wasn’t getting it.

“But if you give him an example of people losing their toys – ‘How would you like it if you lost your toys?’ then he gets the meaning,” he said.

The family volunteered at St. George, shuttling supplies where needed. Jaxon’s hands wrapped the other side of the handle as he helped his father carry a bucket of supplies.

In Maurepas, families played a vital part in making sure people in that area received help.

“There’s only so much one man can do – it’s wonderful to see so many people assisting in the monumental task of recovery,” said Father Jason Palermo, pastor of St. Joseph Church in French Settlement and St. Stephen in Maurepas. “When you have a body of water (the Amite River) between cluster churches, it’s great to know that they (St. Stephen) came through and were filling the gaps and cooking meals.”

As the Amite River flooded, Kellye Babin and Dana Vicknair, St. Stephen parishioners, sisters and next-door neighbors to each other and the church, received a call from Father Palermo asking that the church hall be opened to receive evacuees. A request for supplies was posted on Facebook.

“People were coming giving donations for food, water, shelter,” said Babin.

Plans were to turn the parish hall into a shelter, but because having a shelter would require security they were unable to do so.

Supplies kept coming to St. Stephen, including many from St. Aloysius Church in Baton Rouge, by helicopter, and even from out of state. So St. Stephen became a distribution center for supplies and meals, according to Penny LeBlanc. She and her husband, and children Morgan, 10, and Jordan, 10, were among the families who spent countless hours volunteering.

“The kids asked, ‘What are we going to do today?’ I want ed them to experience this,” said Penny LeBlanc.

Babin’s son, PFC Brody Babin, United States Marines, had come home two days prior on a 30-day leave from Camp Lejeune in North Carolina but deployed himself by driving the back roads and helping people evacuate their homes with his truck.

“Being a Marine, this is what we do,” said Babin. “We see a lot of desperate situations. I wasn’t worried about my truck or myself.”

Vicknair’s daughter, Leia, helped deliver sandwiches to the boat operations so they could be delivered.

Babin and Vicknair said they are already each other’s best friend, but volunteering has made their bond even tighter.

“We pretty much live and breathe the parish,” said Vicknair.

St. Stephen parishioners Donald and Evelyn Gaudet, who were involved many hours with the distribution of donations at St. Stephen, said the flooding was so overwhelming they always felt they could “do more.” But they discovered just planting the seeds to look after others over the years took root in their daughter, Emma, 12. They learned that Emma had been expressing interest to Father Palermo during the past few months in participating in a mission trip to Ecuador in a couple of years.

“I guess we’ll all have to go,” said Gaudet.
Families living with families creates unique set of stressors

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Families living with families

Not an uncommon occurrence after a disaster, especially in southeast Louisiana where ties among extended families and even friends are indigenous to the culture. So it's no surprise that as recent flood waters receded those families not affected heartily swung open their doors and hearts to displaced family members.

Consequently, a family of four living in a modest home might now be housing 8 to 10 people in those same quarters, which suddenly seemed to shrink overnight.

But the generosity of the host families is inherent with potential potholes as the novelty of the first few days settles into the everyday meshing of two family units under a single roof.

"First of all it is important to recognize that (the guest family) is grieving," said Daryl Ducote, director of the Office of Marriage and Family Life for the Diocese of Baton Rouge. "With grief comes depression and anger."

"And so they may not be aware that some of the feelings being expressed in rubbing elbows with extended family is really a spillover from what is happening internally as they are trying to manage feelings of grief over what they lost. That grief in terms of sadness and anger gets displaced onto the people around them."

Ducote, who spent many years in private practice as a family therapist, said it is important for the host family not to take personally anything said out of anger and to show patience with their new guests. However, he was quick to point out that the visiting family is not granted a free pass, saying those family members must recognize that some of their actions will be out of place or inappropriate.

The second stressor, Ducote said, is recognizing a family is a system and combining two systems into one is not always an easy transition. He said sensitivity is a necessity and adults must negotiate roles, responsibilities and needs within the two systems.

"Every (family) system has its own equilibrium," Ducote said. "It operates in a way that maintains stability and when you put two different systems together there's a period of chaos while the two systems are trying to figure out how they are going to create a new system. Something new for the time being even though it is temporary."

Ducote said that equilibrium will not happen by accident but has to be a conscious effort by all parties. An amiable transition requires the adults taking the leadership roles and not allowing the children to dictate what is going to happen. He said the transition can be difficult for children, who may find they have to live under a different set of house rules to which they are accustomed.

"It's important for the guest adults to recognize that the authority really belongs to the host adults," Ducote said. "It's their home and their rules. There may be some room for temporary compromise but ultimately it's the host adults that set the rules."

"You are on somebody else's turf and they have the authority."

Ducote advised the families living together to make sure each has their own separate time, including privacy for the adults, and use what he called "heroic patience" among everyone involved because it is a difficult situation. He said feelings are raw and the guest family is riddled with grief, depression and anxiety.

He added that it was important to quickly repair the damage that may arise from hurtful comments or even inappropriate behavior.

"Repair becomes extremely important," Ducote said.

He recommended that the guest family continue to maintain its faith and spirituality and recognize that God has not abandoned them. He said the family must call upon God both individually and as a family to pray and ask for the strength to deal with the changes and struggles they are having to face.

Doing so might require the guest family to be creative in their approach, such as taking time as a family and retreating into the living room to pray together.

Ducote noted that kids are adaptable to change easier than adults but parents should be aware of any significant behavioral changes. For example, if a normally active child is quiet or lethargic that might suggest a warning sign that needs to be addressed.

"And most of the time that can be addressed simply by a parent talking to a child," he said. "If a child has difficulty expressing what is going on, the parent can guess what is happening and voice what they think is happening and see how the child responds. The child can say 'Yes' or 'No' and say I'm feeling this instead.'"

"I think it's a difficult time but I don't think it's traumatizing because kids are very adaptable. Parents must remind them this is a temporary situation. This is not permanent."
Finding faith in the studs of a gutted home

By Rachele Smith
The Catholic Commentator

With the majority of their flood-damaged possessions on the street and the final gutting of their home now complete, Todd and Susan Frugé and their children are ready to start over.

The Baton Rouge family is just one of tens of thousands affected by floodwaters that inundated the Capital City region and surrounding parishes starting Aug. 12.

But as they wait for construction crews to arrive and help return their lives to normal, the Frugés are doing something unique to draw inspiration from their faith.

At a time when stress and uncertainty can be high, the family is reminding themselves and others of God’s continued mercy by encouraging family and friends to write Bible verses on the exposed studs in their home.

It’s a way to literally be surrounded by God’s loving words and the love of everyone they hold dear, explained Susan Frugé, who added she got the idea from a family friend.

Today many studs, which stand in constant attention throughout the home, outlining rooms that only weeks ago were thriving with the every day activities of family life, are brimming with special verses.

From the Gospel of John, the words “We love because he first loved us” are spotted clearly in red marker on a stud leading into the home’s entrance way.

Nearby, “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts” (Col 3:15) is written on another stud while the encouraging words from Philippians “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” is within reach.

But for the Frugé family, one of the most inspiring verses on display is one they have relied on every day for the past 17 months: “For we walk by faith, not by sight.”

(2 Cor 5:7)

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But for the Frugé family, one of the most inspiring verses on display is one they have relied on every day for the past 17 months: “For we walk by faith, not by sight.”

This verse from 2 Corinthians 5:7 has been the family’s cornerstone, uniting them in battle as they rally around Todd Frugé and his fight with cancer.

Diagnosed in March 2015, Todd has undergone numerous chemotherapy treatments. It has been a difficult journey, but this past July the family received wonderful news, discovering from recent scans that Todd’s cancer had regressed and most importantly, was showing no signs of spreading.

Staying the course and following his doctor’s advice, Todd is continuing with the remainder of his chemotherapy treatments, which means he is unable to be around his home during cleanup and demolition.

Susan said they are staying with friends and feel blessed to have so many friends and family members ready to help out, even though many are also dealing with the destruction of their own homes.

For the Frugés, it is this compassion of family and friends, as well as their favorite Scriptures now permanently inscribed in the support structure of their home, which serve as a reminder that despite setbacks in life, God is present and ever faithful.

Bible verses line the exposed studs in the once-flooded home of Todd and Susan Frugé.

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Flooding silences 40 Days for Life; Life Fest to go on as planned

By Rachele Smith
The Catholic Commentator

While floodwaters have suspended an annual event focused on ending abortion, another one highlighting the dignity of human life will go on as planned.

Danielle Van Haute, co-campaign director for 40 Days for Life Baton Rouge, explained that the pro-life event which features prayer, fasting, vigil and community outreach has been canceled in the wake of unprecedented flooding that devastated the Capital City region, leaving an estimated 55,000 homes affected.

Van Haute, who also serves as the Respect Life Coordinator for the Diocese of Baton Rouge, noted that the decision to scrap the 40-day event, which was set to begin Sept. 28, was difficult to make, but “it was prudent.”

“Many of our volunteers were flooded, and they need this time to take care of their homes and their families,” she said.

In a joint statement made Sept. 7, Van Haute, along with co-campaign director Charlotte Bergeron, who also serves as president of Baton Rouge Right to Life, strongly encouraged anyone interested in the 40 Days for Life campaign to continue to pray for an end to abortion.

Van Haute added she has heard from some individuals and groups who still plan to come together and pray in front of the Delta Clinic of Baton Rouge, Inc. to stop abortions.

“That’s just a beautiful thing,” she said.

Barbara Thomas, executive director of the Women’s Help Center in Baton Rouge, noted that disasters can spark a rise in abortions. “We have seen an increase in abortion-minded women” coming into the center since the flood, she said.

While a formal 40 Days for Life event is suspended locally this fall, Van Haute did not rule out the possibility of coordinating a similar event in the spring. She said the 40 Days for Life campaign is international in scope and typically holds two events per year, one in the fall and one in the spring.

For anyone wanting to participate in the upcoming effort, which runs from Sept. 28 until Nov. 6, Van Haute suggests contacting the New Orleans campaign at 40DaysforLifeNola.com.

Despite the need to cancel the Baton Rouge effort, another activity that also supports life and focuses on preserving human dignity is still being planned.

Called Life Fest, the event is sponsored by the diocese’s Office of Marriage and Family Life. Held on the first Saturday of October, which is Respect Life Month, the Oct. 1 event will follow the theme, “Called to Compassion – Living Mercy.”

Van Haute explained that the day is an opportunity to celebrate life and learn more about God’s mercy, including how we receive it and how we live it.

This year’s Life Fest will feature a keynote address by Father Andrew Merrick, parochial vicar at Christ the King Church and the director of vocations at the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

According to Van Haute, other highlights of the event, which debuted in 2015, will include talks by several speakers passionate about respect life issues, including Dr. John Meinert, who will discuss mercy at the end of life; Jason Romero, who will provide practical information on day-to-day mercy; Alana Newman, who will offer her experience with compassionate solutions to infertility and Jay Jackson, the Catholic chaplain at the Louisiana State Penitentiary, who will discuss seeing prisoners through the eyes of mercy.

Like last year’s event, Life Fest 2016 is free and will include adoration, music by Greg&Lizzy, special children’s activities for kids registered with their parents and the annual Respect for Life Mass at 4 p.m.

To register or for more information, go to MFLDioBR.org.

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**THE 2016-17 BATON ROUGE DIOCESE DIRECTORY IS PRINTED!**

The new directory has all of the current listings and information on churches, clergy, schools, diocesan departments and personnel of the diocese, religious, retreat centers, deaneries, institutions and organizations and more!

To place your order, fill out the form below and mail to The Catholic Commentator, P. O. Box 3316, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-3316 with a check or money order for $9.50 for each directory ordered. The directory will be mailed to you.

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Donations come into St. Mark from New England drag racers

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Below is a summary of what many church parishes have been doing in relief efforts. If a parish would like to submit additional information, please send to rmeek@diobr.org.

St. Mark Church, Gonzales
St. Mark Church in Gonzales has been a beacon of hope in one of the hardest hit areas during the recent flooding. Pastor Father Rubin Reynolds said he and the parish staff have been overwhelmed by the support of so many throughout the area and well beyond. Donations have arrived from Connecticut and New Hampshire with the support of local drag racers from New England Dragway and Lebanon Valley Dragway.

Donations also came in from St. Joseph Catholic School in Arlington, Texas.

“We are truly grateful to each and every one,” Father Reynolds said.

Not long after the flooding began, St. Mark set up the Restoring Hope distribution center on the church grounds. Ladies groups from St. Aloysius and Our Lady of Mercy churches in Baton Rouge, along with Lisa Westerfield and local attorney Ed Landry, have been instrumental in the development of the distribution center.

Those ladies groups along with Unique Cuisine Catering also provided meals for families that were delivered by the Ascension Parish Sheriff’s Office and coordinated by deputy Bobby Webre.

Cara House, a pet shelter in Sorrento, was able to pick up some much-needed pet medication from the center.

“To the many persons, too many to name, who are there daily and when needed to help with meals, unload supplies, restock the center and assist persons in need ... you have our sincere gratitude and appreciation for being the hands and feet of Jesus in building up our community as a part of building up the Kingdom of God in our world,” Father Reynolds said.

St. John the Baptist Church, Zachary
St. John the Baptist Church in Zachary volunteers and staff members began mobilizing relief efforts long before the flood waters had crested.

Pastor Father Jeff Bayhi said that on Friday, Aug. 13, police knocked on his door, saying they needed a shelter.

“We opened up the hall and started cooking,” Father Bayhi said. “It was amazing because my parishioners put it on (social media), and by 10 a.m. we had enough food to feed 200 people.”

He said later that day Red Cross arrived to assist, and then it was decided First Baptist Church in Zachary would be set up as an evacuation shelter.

“It was a real cooperative effort,” Father Bayhi said. “First Baptist Church pastor (Steven Byrd) is a wonderful man.”

For two weeks and counting, St. John parishioners have been feeding people in the Zachary area, serving 150-200 lunches daily and 200 hot meals in the evening.

“We have had a tremendous outpouring of support,” Father Bayhi said. “It’s been wonderful. We have had a very rough summer as all people. It’s not what religion you are, it’s not what color you are. We need to help one another.”

Father Bayhi said the parish grounds did not take on water but many of the parishioners have been displaced.
Outside the activity center at St. Thomas More Church in Baton Rouge, parishioners work alongside families from St. Catherine of Siena Church in Metairie on Aug. 20 as they unload supplies for the relief effort. From left are Joselyn Deville, systems specialist Darwyn Welsh and director Kevin Littrell. Littrell said the repurposed computers had previously been taken out of service in the Catholic Life Center. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

St. Paul the Apostle Church in Baton Rouge recently held a prayer service followed by a dinner in the wake of the flood. Lighting candles during the service are Yvette Oliver, left, and her son Jamer Oliver. Pastor Father RICK Andrus SVD began the service with a short homily, saying “God gives us everything we need when we need it the most. God has something far greater for us and what we receive will be better than anything we have.” Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

The Father Vander Heyden Knights of Columbus Council 4874 in Ponchatoula delivered hot lunches to areas east and west of Ponchatoula, which were hit hard. Nearly 50 volunteers, including Knights and members of the Ladies Auxiliary, gathered at the council’s meeting hall and cooked 400 jambalayas and white bean dinners. Cases of bottled water were also delivered. The Knights delivered 640 lunches the following Saturday. “The Knights of Columbus membership means a dedication of service to God, family and community,” said Tommy Brehm, the council’s Grand Knight. “Delivering hot lunches is the very least we can do for our neighbors.” Photo by Buddy Williams | Knights of Columbus

Pilots of Patients, a volunteer pilot organization based out of Monroe, flew in three Cessna planes filled with much needed supplies for the relief effort. The mission of Pilots for Patients is to assist those in need of air transportation for medical purposes. The pilot volunteers donate their time and aircraft which they own or rent. Photo by Tammy Abshire

The Father Vander Heyden Knights of Columbus Council 4614 in Ponchatoula delivered hot lunches to areas east and west of Ponchatoula, which were hit hard. Nearly 50 volunteers, including Knights and members of the Ladies Auxiliary, gathered at the council’s meeting hall and cooked 400 jambalayas and white bean dinners. Cases of bottled water were also delivered. The Knights delivered 640 lunches the following Saturday. “The Knights of Columbus membership means a dedication of service to God, family and community,” said Tommy Brehm, the council’s Grand Knight. “Delivering hot lunches is the very least we can do for our neighbors.” Photo by Buddy Williams | Knights of Columbus

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Holy Ghost teacher brings the stage to life for young students

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

“You kind of put on a show every day,” said Suzanne Gautier, seventh- and eighth-grade science teacher at Holy Ghost School in Hammond, about how a little “drama” in the classroom can sometimes be good to help students connect with a lesson. Gautier, who is also the director of the school’s “Spirit of the Stage” Drama Club, was one of eight educators from around the country selected to work one-one-one with Broadway greats during the seventh annual “Freddie G. Fellowship” in July at New York City.

Gautier was nominated by parents for the award and received recommendations from students, colleagues and members of the community. The event, underwritten by Myrna and Freddie Gershon, chairman and CEO of Music Theatre International, honors teachers who are working to make a difference for their students and communities through the process of staging musical theatre productions in their schools and educational theatre groups. Holy Ghost also received $5,000 from the Gershons to enhance their arts program.

Gautier participated in theatre when in high school and later performed in community theater. In 1994, she was asked to direct a drama club at Holy Ghost. Since 1995, “Spirit of the Stage” has been offering students in fifth- through eighth-grades the chance to experience the performing arts. The club has performed at the Columbia Theatre for the Performing Arts in Hammond for the past 12 years as well as in the Atlanta Junior Theatre Festival.

Gautier said her immersion in Broadway, meeting with industry leaders in directing, composing, choreography and lighting helped her learn some “tricks of the trade” that she will be able to use as the club prepares for this year’s performances, which will include “The Lion King Jr.”

The most special moments of the trip, which also included a behind the curtain look at the Broadway production “Waitress” and a Manhattan Island cruise, for Gautier was observing another teacher directing her students and making connections with

SEE TEACHER PAGE 15
other teachers.

“There’s not that many people from my area who do middle school drama,” said Gautier.

Being inspired by the bright lights will help Gautier inspire her young actors, actresses and stage personnel, something she always strives to do.

“I try to identify certain talents – teach them how to show certain emotions – and pull out the creativity within the student,” said Gautier.

She emphasizes to the students they should not be embarrassed to do something “outside of themselves.”

She also throws the students into the direction process.

“I have many older students who do original choreography,” said Gautier. “They feel like they own it. They are excited about it. Some are not in a lead part, but they feel like they have played an important part in the production – and they can take pride in that.”

Sometimes there will be students who will come up to her and say, “I can’t do choreography.”

“I tell them, ‘If you can walk and move your body a little, then you can do choreography,’” Gautier said. “It’s the subtle movements.”

A science classroom teacher for the past 30 years, one may wonder how science and drama connect.

“I see it (drama) as an outlet,” said Gautier, who has seen Broadway shows periodically during the years and saw the live production of “Phantom of the Opera” for the first time in London.

The classroom itself is also a stage.

“I often do play actions in class,” Gautier said. “When there’s a lesson on the water cycle, I make up a song, when there’s a lesson on photosynthesis, I make up a song, when there’s a lesson on the carbon cycle, I make up a song. When you sing or act something out, the lesson stays with you.”
Don’t Breathe
Screen Gems

Three petty criminals (Jane Levy, Dylan Minnette and Daniel Zovatto) get more than they bargained for when they break into the isolated home of a blind, reclusive veteran (Stephen Lang) hoping to steal the large settlement he was awarded after his daughter was killed by a reckless driver. Director and co-writer Fede Alvarez is fairly restrained in his presentation of the mayhem that follows as the loner turns out to be anything but an easy mark, and the result is a generally effective thriller. Yet, as the action progresses, plot developments begin to strain the laws of logic. More significantly, perverse behavior and the horror equivalent of gross-out humor creep in, and creep out the audience in a way those seeking casual entertainment are unlikely to appreciate. Intense violence with some gore, a disturbing sequence involving a bizarre sexual assault, brief scatological humor; a couple of uses of profanity, much rough and crude language, an obscene gesture. L: R

Hell or High Water
CBS

Morally intricate tale of two brothers, one (Ben Foster) a cynical ex-con, the other (Chris Pine) a divorced dad with no criminal past, who go on a bank-robbing spree to save their family farm. When a duo of Texas Rangers (Jeff Bridges and Gil Birmingham) takes up the investigation, the cat-and-mouse game that results has unexpected—and tragic—consequences. Working from a screenplay by Taylor Sheridan, director David Mackenzie gravely unfolds a hardscrabble story of exploitation and desperation. But, along with a gritty atmosphere and dialogue to match, the issues he weighs call for careful analysis on the part of mature viewers. Some strong violence with brief gore, fleeting but graphic casual sex, occasional irreverence, about a half-dozen uses of profanity, frequent rough and crude language, numerous ethnic insults. L: R

The Innncents
Music Box

Luminescent, unflinchingly honest and respectful of religion, director Anne Fontaine’s drama about a fictional Benedictine convent in post-World War II Poland gently explores the conflicts between duty to the living and the shattered faith that can result from acts of depravity. The screenplay by Sabrina B. Karine and Alice Vial is loosely based on the real-life exploits of Madeleine Pauliac, a French Red Cross doctor, played by Lou de Laage and renamed Mathilde. After delivering the baby of a young nun, the physician is told the horrible story of how this incongruous event has come about: Several months earlier, invading Soviet soldiers, believing it to be their right, raped the sisters, leaving at least seven of them pregnant, and the abbess (Agata Kulesza) infected with syphilis. The film’s ruminations on how believers respond to awful times are superb. But this is obviously a solidly adult picture, and not one for those in search of casual fare. Mature themes, including rape and venereal disease, a nonmarital bedroom scene, several nongraphic depictions of childbirth. A-III; PG-13

War Dogs
Warner Bros.

Two young men from Miami become arms merchants in a fact-based movie that hovers between raucous comedy and serious expose. Through an initiative designed to let small businesses get a slice of the military-spending pie, a college dropout (Miles Teller) with a wife and daughter to support and his long-lost pal from yeshiva school (Jonah Hill), an alternately obnoxious and charming schemer, get rich by engaging in fraud and circumventing regulations. Known for comedies featuring crude male bonding, director Todd Phillips helped adapt the screenplay from a 2011 Rolling Stone magazine article and tries to provide antic humor and relevant social commentary on topics ranging from the pitfalls of the Pentagon’s procurement system to the moral legitimacy of the American-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Bent on illustrating the idea that all armed conflicts are fueled by the profit motive, the filmmakers fail to strike the right tone, especially regarding the ethical consequences for one of the protagonists. Several scenes of violence and gunplay, cohabitation, frequent drug use, pervasive rough and crude language, some sexual banter. L: R

The Light Between Oceans
Disney

M.L. Stedman’s 2012 novel about love and loss in 1920s Australia is adapted for the big screen by writer-director Derek Cianfrance, who marshals lush cinematography and first-rate acting. A lighthouse keeper (Michael Fassbender) and his spirited wife (Alicia Vikander) are happily married but unable to start a family, enduring two miscarriages. When a dinghy washes ashore on their remote island carrying a dead man and an infant girl who’s barely alive, they decide to raise the child as their own. But conscience weighs heavily, and a chance encounter with the lass’ real mother (Rachel Weisz) complicates matters considerably. Mature themes, scenes of marital sensuality, a few profane oaths. A-III; PG-13

REVIEWS

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

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
Pardon this lame attempt at humor, but I didn’t know that the alternative rock band Goo Goo Dolls was still “so alive,” musically, that is. Well, they are out with their 11th studio album “Boxes,” and released as the lead single off that disc is “So Alive.” Since they have now been around for two decades, here’s to rock band longevity!

The song describes an individual who has decided to break “down the walls in my own mind” about who he can be. He appears ready to reinvent himself, and he wants to “get out and get done.”

He states that “for the first time I feel like someone.” He believes that he can “make it on a wish” and because of this desire, he can honestly proclaim, “I’m so alive.”

Given his exuberance, he seems to have found an approach that works for his life. Indeed, any of us can reinvent who we are through openness to change. However, I do have a warning for him: Change depends on far more than remaking oneself “on a wish.”

Perhaps his “wish” is actually part of a vision of what he wants his life to become. If so, that is helpful. It is difficult to implement any plan for change unless you can imagine how you want your life to be different. The next step depends on putting together a plan of action.

However, he’d be wise to realize that his past behaviors and attitudes still hold power over him. His brain is conditioned to respond as he has been acting.

Discount this power of habitual response and his becoming something new will be sabotaged. Still, he does not have to be a prisoner of habit. He just needs to implement a new vision.

He will also need a step-by-step plan. For example, let’s say that he has decided to raise his GPA by a whole point. This would be quite a challenge but is doable.

He might see that his current approach to study is inadequate to the new goal. This habitual way of studying, or perhaps lack thereof, will likely resurface even though his vision asks for something else. So, he needs to build in ways to keep the past from eroding the changes that he seeks.

For example, he might include an “accountability partner” who can help him monitor just how much he is studying each day. He also might decide that while social time with friends is enjoyable, the new plan demands that he put less attention on this aspect of life.

Thus, to keep him on track, he might turn off his cellphone when he is studying and get back to attention on this aspect of life.

Like most changes that can make a positive difference in our lives, he will need to assess his commitment to the change, not just in words but through action. He should write out a plan of action for each week, identifying what he will do daily to help him earn a higher GPA.

God wants us to have a human existence that feels “so alive.” At some point in our lives, most of us recognize that creative and positive change is necessary if such “aliveness” is to be reached.

Dream about what you want. Name what might sabotage your vision, including past habits, and then form a plan that you can commit to with action.

Ask God to be your guide and partner for creating this you that you want to be. But watch out – you are likely to feel so alive!

**Martin** is an Indiana pastoral counselor who reviews current music for Catholic News Service.

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**So Alive**

 Feeling like a hero, but I can’t fly  
 No, you never crash if you don’t try  
 Took it to the edge, now I know why  
 Never gonna live if you’re too scared to die

 Gonna disconnect from the hardwire  
 Time to raise a flag for the cease-fire  
 Staring down the hole inside me  
 Looking in the mirror, making peace with the enemy

 Refrain:  
 I’m so alive, I’m so alive, I’m so alive  
 You can make it on wish if you want to  
 But watch out – you are likely to feel so alive!

 Keeping my faith for the bad times  
 Get up, get up, stand like a champ  
 On the walls, gonna sing it like an anthem  
 Take it to the world, gonna sing it

 Repeat refrain.

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**On the Record**

**Charlie Martin**

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**A plan to feel ‘so alive’**

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 Repeat refrain.
Mother “T’s” miracles

... Quite a story, but so is the final miracle that cleared the way for Mother Teresa’s canonization. It is about a mechanical engineer who almost died in a Rio de Janeiro hospital from abscesses in his brain.

I am not trying to be irreverent in the title I chose for this column. That is how the photographer for Malcolm Muggeridge, BBC correspondent who filmed Mother Teresa and wrote about her in his book, “Something Beautiful for God,” addressed her. She didn’t object at all, as he drove her and Muggeridge’s crew around Calcutta in her car, an old ambulance someone had given her. This same photographer, Ken Macmillan, discovered the first unofficial miracle connected with her. I don’t think it was one of the two miracles usually required by the Vatican before a person is declared a saint by the Church. I know the final miracle that cleared the way for her canonization and will describe it later, but this first one is my favorite.

Muggeridge was world famous for his BBC reporting, so I am going to let him tell the story in his own words from his book. “Part of the work of the sisters is to pick up the dying from the streets of Calcutta, and bring them into a building given to Mother Teresa for the purpose (a sometime temple dedicated to the cult of the goddess Kali), there, as she puts it, to die within sight of a loving face. Some do die; others survive and are cared for. This Home for the Dying is dimly lit by small windows high up in the walls, and Ken was adamant that filming was quite impossible there. We had only one small light with us ... It was decided that, nonetheless, Ken should have a go, but by way of insurance, he took as well some film in an outside courtyard where some of the inmates were sitting in the sun. In the processed film, the part taken inside was bathed in a particularly beautiful soft light, whereas the part taken outside was rather dim and confused.

“How to account for this? Ken has all along insisted that technically speaking the result is impossible. To prove the point, in his next filming expedition – to the Middle East – he used some of the same stock in a similarly poor light, with completely negative results.”

“Mother Teresa’s Home for the Dying is overflowing with love, as one senses immediately on entering it ... I find it not at all surprising that the luminosity should register on a photographic film. The supernatural is only an infinite projection of the natural, as the furthest horizon is an image of eternity ... The light conveys perfectly what the place is really like: an outward and visible luminosity manifesting God’s inward and invisible omnipresent love. This is precisely what miracles are for – to reveal the inner reality of God’s outward creation.”

Quite a story, but so is the final miracle that cleared the way for Mother Teresa’s canonization. It is about a mechanical engineer who almost died in a Rio de Janeiro hospital from abscesses in his brain. Marcilio Haddad Andrino began having convulsions as the abscesses blocked natural drainage of brain fluids and created life-threatening pressure in his brain. He suffered severe headaches.

His wife, Fernanda Naicismiento Rocha, reported that his doctor recommended surgery, but the anesthesiologist did not want to provide anesthesia because he said Marcilio would not survive that. There was nothing that could be done. Before he went into a coma, he asked that his wife and family pray to God and Mother Teresa for his healing. Fernanda had a relic of Mother Teresa, a laminated card with a relic of Mother Teresa’s clothing and a prayer on it. She said, “First I prayed to God and then to Mother Teresa. I prayed that God would cure and heal Marcilio. And if he couldn’t be cured, that Mother Teresa would escort him to the eternal dwelling of the Almighty ... My family prayed with me ... we’ve always felt her (Mother Teresa’s) presence with us. It was a feeling of peace and comfort and love.”

Fernanda could not spend the night with Marcilio because he was in intensive care. Some time during the night he awoke from the coma. He remembered only that “before being admitted I had a very strong headache, and I blanked. And then I wake up and I’m in a different place (intensive care in the hospital), and I don’t have any more headache, so I’m like, ‘What am I doing here?’ And I had this feeling of peace.’

Fernanda returned to the hospital to find her husband awake, free of pain and sitting up. The doctors were very surprised. “They didn’t have any idea of what had happened. If the headaches were no longer there, their conclusion was that the swelling and the abscesses had diminished, but they didn’t really know. Now me, I knew. I knew that Mother Teresa had cured Marcilio.” The year was 2009.

In August of 2015 the Vatican sent personnel to question Marcilio and Fernanda about the possible miracle. Asked by reporters if they ever questioned why all of this was happening to them, Fernanda answered, “You know, not really. The whole context of knowing that we had received a grace from God and from Mother Teresa made us reflect and brought a certainty that God is with us and that Mother Teresa is following us.” Later, after one of the Sisters of Charity called to tell them that the miracle had been authenticated, Marcilio said, “I was extremely happy that the miracle had been recognized, and it was a unanimous decision by the doctors and the theologians and the cardinals of the Vatican. And I was also happy that Mother Teresa was still there with me.”

And Mother Teresa was there, as further events confirmed. Marcilio explained: “At the age of 19 I had a kidney transplant, and I’ve been taking cortisone since age six and immunosuppressors since age 18, and in 2008 I was put on a very strong antibiotic. And because of that the doctors said after I left the hospital, when I was fine, that ‘given the amount of medicine that Marcilio has taken, I suggest you guys consider adoption if you’re thinking of children (because) they will not be normal because of the medicine that Marcilio has taken.’ We really wanted to have children, and in 2009 I underwent a battery of tests to see that I could, and my probability of having kids was 1 percent. Fernanda became pregnant in 2009. In 2010 we had a daughter ... in 2012 we had another child (a son) ... The children are healthy.”

And the whole family will have a part in Mother Teresa’s canonization in Rome.

Quotes are taken from an interview with Marcilio and Fernanda by David Van Bienia, a journalist with Time and the Religion News Service that appeared in Crux.

FATHER CARVILLE is a retired priest in the Diocese of Baton Rouge and writes on current topics for The Catholic Commentator. He can be reached at johnnycarville@gmail.com.
The following is a transcription of the homily given by Father Andrew Merrick at the Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Agnes Church in Baton Rouge for the canonization of St. Teresa of Calcutta.

You know that I absolutely love Mother Teresa, and I can tell you a litany of reasons why that is the case, but ultimately it comes down to one thing: She loves me. How do I know that? She has a preferential option for the poor and I know the poverty of my own heart. I have felt her love in a particular way for me. I spent a little over a month working with the Missionaries of Charity here at St. Agnes one summer as a seminarian. It was a time when I needed that love and she gave it to me very, very deeply.

So I ask that you pray with me and ask that the Lord will come and speak to our hearts that today no matter what comes out of my mouth you will know that Mother loves you and loves you with the very heart of Christ.

So let’s pray.

Come Holy Spirit, fill our hearts, just pour your love, your mercy and your grace upon us. I ask that You use me as Your instrument to speak the very words of Christ. Nothing more, nothing less. Inflame our hearts with the love of Jesus as you did with Mother Teresa. Our Lady, we ask your intercession. May you cut away anything that is not of the Lord and intercede for what is lacking.

Hail Mary ...

If you’ve heard me preach in the last few years, you’ll know this is one of my soapboxes. People want two things when they come to Mass: the Eucharist and a good homily. Let’s be honest, as Catholics we don’t have the best reputation for being good homilists. Let’s just toss that out there. But if you desire a good homily, are you praying for the person that is preaching to you? If the answer is, “no,” then you have no right to expect a good homily. So I know you guys just prayed for me ... because I made you. But you need to be doing that every single weekend, all during the week. “Lord, set the person who is doing the preaching, whether it be a priest or a deacon, set their heart on fire with the Scriptures and for you; so that they may open up my own heart.” If you get a bad homily, you realize you forgot to pray. It’s your fault.

Today we celebrate the canonization of St. Teresa of Calcutta. A saint. What does it mean to be a saint? There are a number of definitions that we could give, but essentially it means to be the living presence of Christ. The body of Christ is what St. Paul calls us, the church, because through our baptism we have become living temples of the Holy Spirit. A saint is someone who has allowed God, by participating with the grace of the sacraments and faith, to transform them so much that they say with the words of St. John the Baptist that, “He must increase and I must decrease” (John 3:30), and echo the words of St. Paul, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20). That is a saint.

It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. The fact is that every single person in this room, every single person in this church, every person in the world, is created for sanctity. If you’ve never heard that before I’m sorry. I am telling you today, “You need to be a saint, because God made you for that purpose.”

Every single one of us are made in a unique way to manifest who Christ is for the hurting world.

Some of us in a small hidden way, some of in a really big way. Mother Teresa happens to be one of the biggest in the history of the world. Let’s be honest. Her impact was amazing. Why did God send her during this time? Because we live in a time in which the whole world for the most part misunderstands and denigrates the human person. Pope St. John Paul II called it a culture of death. Pope Francis calls it the throw away culture. But essentially we are a people who base the worth of a human person on what they can accomplish, or what they can give to me or what society says is valuable at that particular time. So when someone is not able to produce something, or is not beautiful according to what MTV says, then we can just throw them away. They are an inconvenience to us. So in a culture that is living that reality, God sent this simple, poor Albanian woman to Calcutta. He sent her there first as a Sister of Loreto and she was teaching in a school. One day as she was heading off to her yearly retreat she had this deep experience in her soul. She hears Christ tell her, through the poor, in the train station, “I thirst”. I thirst.

That was the beginning of a deeper transformation into St. Teresa. From there she sent her into the slums of Calcutta, a place many would call the armpit of the world. Hundreds, thousands of people, literally strewn on the street dying. People that our world would say “throw them away,” being ignored day by day as folks walked by. And what did she do? She chooses to love.

She goes literally, and she is picking up dying people off of the street, who truly have no chance of survival in many ways. She takes them home, tends their wounds, she cleans them. And people are ridiculing her, “Mother, you are crazy! Why are you wasting your time with these people? They’re dying. And you bring them in and they still die. You’re not making any difference.”

And she said, “You see this one? I made a difference for him. He is dying knowing that he is loved, knowing that he is a person.” So in this world that puts the human person at the bottom and lifts up the material. She lifts the human person above it. No matter who you are, no matter what you can or can’t accomplish in the eyes of the world you are beautiful and loved by God. That is who you are.

She’s an absolute witness to what we need. Because of that the whole world is attracted to her. Her religious order grew astronomically fast. It’s insane how fast the order grew. And guess what? They didn’t have a website. They don’t have a vocation poster. They don’t have any of that stuff.

They run away from the camera. So how, why did they grow? Because the heart of Jesus was in the heart of Mother Teresa.

Is that it and that is it alone? I can tell you all day long stories of her. I’m glad that I get a chance to speak about her. You might not be glad when we are done, because it will probably be like nine o’clock tonight. But there’s ultimately one thing. When she was receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, which is amazing in and of itself that a Catholic sister would receive the Nobel Peace Prize, people were asking, “Why her? There are many people serving the poor. There are many people doing similar things. Why her?”

Because of her sanctity. Because people were drawn to that. That is the power of sanctity. One of my favorite stories of Mother Teresa was when she was in Los Angeles. She was speaking on the radio and this guy was driving. He was a drug runner for the cartel in California and he was driving up and down the coast running drugs, money and guns for the cartel. And he’s rocking out to his favorite radio station. All of a sudden his songs get interrupted and he hears this nun on the radio. And he’s mad. “What is this woman doing interrupting my music?” So he changes the station and boom she’s on that station. He changes the station again and boom she’s on that station. She’s on all of them. And he’s angry.

He says, “Obviously there is nothing I can about it I’m just going to wait it out.” But he’s really mad. All of a sudden as he’s driving he feels this sensation welling up into his heart and he begins to weep. So much so he has to pull off onto the side of the road. And he’s weeping and weeping and weeping. He knows something is different in his heart.

He goes home and he calls the radio station and says, “Who was that?” “It was Mother Teresa of Cal-

Guest Columnist
Father Andrew J. Merrick

St. Teresa a witness to what is needed in modern times

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cutta.” He says, “Who is that? Who is she?” So they try to kind of explain who she is. He asks, “Where is she? Where is she right now?” “Well she’s staying at the convent with the other sisters.” “Where is that? Give me the address.” So he goes there. He knocks on the door and tells the sisters what happened. They say, “OK. Here’s Mother Teresa.” He tells her his story. And this drug runner from the cartel is converted by the sound of her voice on the radio.

You want to talk about the power of sanctity? Her voice on the radio. The simple fact is God wants to do what with you, and with me. Why do we fear to allow him to do that?

Why do we fear to allow him to transform us?

People would run to Mother and say, “Mother what can we do? I want to stay in Calcutta. I want to help you.” She said, “Go home. Find your own Calcutta.”

Be the light where the Lord has placed you. Be the light where the Lord has placed you.

On your prayer card that you got when you came in she says, “God has so loved the world that he sent his only Son. And God still so loves the world that he sends you and he sends me.” She also says that we are telling people all the time that God is so loving, so kind and so merciful. But you know why people don’t believe it sometimes? Because we don’t show it.

She says we talk a lot about the poor. But many of us don’t talk to the poor. You hear that? We talk a lot about the poor. But many us don’t talk to the poor. We are at home, we are watching TV, we are in front of our TV screens and we have all the solutions to the world’s problems. But the ultimate solution is to be so consumed by the heart of Jesus that we just go love the person right outside of our door. Maybe right inside our door?

What’s her secret? She was consumed with knowing that Jesus loved her. I want to read you a portion of a famous letter she wrote to her religious sisters. We need to put this in the context that she is writing this to women who because of their love of Jesus have left everything to follow him have taken vows of chastity, poverty and obedience and a special promise to love him in the poorest of the poor. That is who she is writing this letter to, and this is what she says.

“My dearest children Jesus wants me to tell you again how much is the love he has for each one of you beyond all that you can imagine.” Here’s the line. I’ve read this literally over 100 times and every time it pierces my heart. “I worry some of you still have not really met Jesus, one to one, you and Jesus alone. We may spend time in the chapel but have you seen with the eyes of your soul how he looks at you with love? Do you really know the living Jesus, not from books but from being with him in your hearts?”

That is the question for us? Do we know about Jesus? Or do we know him?

A recent study says that barely above 50 percent of Catholics believe that it’s possible to have a personal relationship with God. That’s crazy! We are not doing our job. It’s one of the fundamental tenets of our faith that God is a personal God. And he wants a personal relationship with us, so that’s not just some idea or some core value that we are following but that we are in love with a God who is in love with us and that is what transforms us. She’s writing this to her sisters. We need to ask ourselves this every day. She says, “Ask for the grace he is longing to give us. How can we last even one day living our life without hearing Jesus say I love you?” She says, “It’s impossible.” She says, “Our soul needs this more than our body needs the air to breathe.”

That’s an intense statement. Our soul needs to know this love more than our body needs the air to breathe. And she goes on and on. She says not only does he love you, but he longs for you and he misses you when you don’t come close. She says these words of Christ, “I thirst.” If you have ever been in one of the Missionary of Charity chapels anywhere in the entire world there is a big crucifix on the wall and two words: I thirst. She says fundamentally that is the thirst of God for us, for our love. She tells her sisters later in the letter, “Why does Jesus say I thirst? What does it mean? Something that is so hard to explain in words? If you remember anything from Mother’s letter, remember this. I thirst is something much deeper than Jesus just saying I love you. Until you know deep inside that Jesus thirsts for you, you cannot begin to know who he wants to be for you or who he wants you to be for him.”

If you have ever been really thirsty, I mean really thirsty, what are you thinking about? “I just want some water.” I don’t care who’s in front of me. I don’t care what you’re saying. Mom, I love you. Yeah, she’s right there. Whoever is in front of me when I’m really thirsty, I can’t really think about anything else other than water.

Think of that times infinity. That is the longing God has for your heart. I don’t care if you are a living saint or a putrid sinner. That is the longing that God has for your heart. There is nothing that can make that stop. Nothing. She says, straight out of the heart of Jesus, there is nothing you can do to make God stop loving you. I don’t care what it is and you don’t have to earn it.

The world needs to know that God loves them. The world needs us to be saints. The world needs us to be saints.

God sent us Mother Teresa to remind us that it is very, very simple. She says, “Are you convinced of Christ’s love for you? And your love for him? This is the rock on which sanctity is built.”

Conviction of his love. If you are convinced of that you will become a saint.

I’ll close with this. Mother Teresa says that, “God can do great things through you based on one condition.” When I read that I’m like, “Yes! Just one condition!” That’s good stuff because if it’s a lot of conditions I’m in trouble. “God can do great things through you based on one condition: that you believe more in his love and less in your weakness.”

That you believe more in his love and less in your weakness.

Today, ask the Lord two things. “Lord, convince me that you thirst for my heart.” And if you’re not convinced then just look at the Eucharist. He makes himself so humble that he can be so close to you and so close to me.

The second thing I want you to ask Him is, “Lord, where’s my Calcutta?” Where is it? It might be in your house, might be in your classroom, in your work, in your neighborhood. It’s probably not very far. And then just go be Jesus, all broken and busted, just go be Jesus. But you better make sure you’re praying every day and staying united to him in the sacraments, because we can’t do it without him. God can do great things through you and through me based on one condition that we trust more in his love for us and less in our weakness. Let us be the heart of Christ by letting him give his heart to us.

St. Teresa of Calcutta, we love you and we thank you for being our mother, and the mother of the poor. Pray for us that we may know and be convinced of Christ’s love for us, and in turn sell everything that we are, and who we are, to give ourselves to Jesus, most especially in the distressing disguise of the poorest of the poor. St. Teresa of Calcutta, pray for us.

For all of those interested in reading more about St. Teresa and the source of her sanctification and charity, I strongly recommend that you begin with reading Mother Teresa’s Secret Fire by (Father) Joseph Langford from OSV Publishing. He was the co-founder with her of the Missionary of Charity Fathers. It is a book that I continue to return to for my own personal renewal and ministry.

In the hearts of Jesus and Mary, Father Andrew.
Feeding off life’s sacred fire

See the wise and wicked ones who feed upon life’s sacred fire.

These are lines from Gordon Lightfoot’s song, “Don Quixote,” and they highlight an important truth, both the wise and the wicked feed off the same energy. And it’s good energy, sacred energy, divine energy, irrespective of its use. The greedy and the violent feed off the same energy as do the wise and the saints. There’s one source of energy and, even though it can be irresponsibly, selfishly and horrifically misused, it remains always God’s energy.

Unfortunately, we don’t often think of things that way. Recently I was listening to a very discouraged man who, looking at the selfishness, greed and violence in our world, blamed it all on the devil. “It must be the anti-Christ,” he said, “How else do you explain all this, so many people breaking basically every commandment.”

He’s right in his assessment that the selfishness, greed and violence we see in our world today are anti-Christ (though perhaps not the anti-Christ spoken of in Scripture). However he’s wrong about where selfishness, greed and violence are drawing their energy from. The energy they are drawing upon comes from God, not from the devil. What we see in all the negative things that make up so much of the evening news each day is not evil energy but rather the misuse of sacred energy. Evil deeds are not the result of evil energies but the result of the misuse of sacred energy. Whether you consider the devil a person or a metaphor, either way, he has no other origin than from God. God created the devil, and created him good. His wickedness results from the misuse of that goodness.

All energy comes from God and all energy is good, but it can be wickedly misused. Moreover, it’s ironic that the ones who seem to drink most deeply from the well-springs of divine energy are, invariably, the best and the worst, the wise and the wicked, saints and sinners. These mainline the fire. The rest of us, living in the gap between saints and sinners, tend to struggle more to actually catch fire, to truly drink deeply from the wellsprings of divine energy. Our struggle isn’t so much in misusing divine energy, but rather in not succumbing to chronic numbness, depression, fatigue, flatness, bitterness, envy and the kind of discouragement which has us going through life lacking fire and forever protesting that we have a right to be uncreative and unhappy. Great saints and great sinners don’t live lives of “quiet desperation;” they drink deeply sacred energy, become inflamed by that fire, and make that the source for either their extraordinary wisdom or their wild wickedness.

This insight, saints and sinners feed off the same source, isn’t just an interesting irony. It’s an important truth that can help us better understand our relationship to God, to the things of this world, and to ourselves. We must be clear on what’s good and what’s bad, otherwise we end up both misunderstanding ourselves and misunderstanding the energies of our world.

A healthy spirituality needs to be predicated on a proper understanding of God, ourselves, the world and the energies that drive our world and these are the non-negotiable Christian principles within which we need to understand ourselves, the world and the use of our energies: First, God is good, God is the source of all energy everywhere and that energy is good. Second, we are made by God, we are good and our nature is not evil. Finally, everything in our world has been made by God and it too is good.

So where do sin and evil enter? They enter in when we misuse the good energy that God has given us and they enter in when we relate in bad ways to the good things of creation. Simply put: We are good and creation around us is good, but we can relate to it in the wrong way, precisely through selfishness, greed or violence. Likewise, our energies are good, including all those energies that underlie our propensity towards pride, greed, lust, envy, anger and sloth; but we can misuse those energies and draw upon life’s sacred fire in very self-serv ing, lustful, greedy and wicked ways.

Sin and evil, therefore, arise out of the misuse of our energies, not out of the energies themselves. So, too, sin and evil arise out of how we relate to certain things in the world, not out of some inherent evil inside of our own persons or inside of the things themselves. The wicked aren’t evil persons drawing energy from the devil. They’re good people, irresponsibly and selfishly misusing sacred energy. The energy itself is still good, despite its misuse.

We don’t tap into evil energies when we give in to greed, lust, envy, sloth or anger. No, rather we misuse the good and sacred energy within which we live and move and have our being. The wise and wicked both feed off the same sacred fire.

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. Now on Facebook at facebook.com/ronrolheiser.
**Women in Spirit Meeting** – Cheri McDaniel will talk about her journey from a Depression-era childhood to a successful career as a home builder and businesswoman to mission work in her presentation, “He Lays the Stones for Our Steps,” at the Women in Spirit meeting, Thursday, Sept. 29, noon, at St. Joseph Cathedral Parish Hall, Fourth and Main streets, Baton Rouge. For more information, email sjwomeninspirit@aol.com or call the cathedral at 225-387-5928.

**Taize Prayer Services** – Rosaryville Spirit Life Center, 39003 Rosaryville Road, Ponchatoula, will offer contemplative prayer services on the first Monday of the month through March, 7 p.m., beginning Oct. 3. For information, call 225-294-5039.

**Life Fest** – The second annual Life Fest, “Called to Compassion: Living Mercy,” will be held Saturday, Oct. 1, 10 a.m., at the ballpark of the Bishop Robert E. Tracy Center, Catholic Life Center Campus, 1800 S. Acadian Thwy., Baton Rouge. For more information, call 225-242-0323 or visit mlldiobr.org.

**Metairie Retreat House Event** – Dana Terri-to, director of services at Alzheimer’s Services of the Capital Area in Baton Rouge, will speak on “Spirituality and Dementia: Acknowledging the Person Within,” Tuesday, Oct. 4, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m., at the Archdiocese of New Orleans Retreat Center, 5500 St. Mary St., Metairie. Minimum offering is $20. For more information, visit retreats.arch-no.org or call 504-267-9604.

**Catholic Women’s Infertility Support Group** – A Catholic women’s infertility support group, sponsored by the Office of Marriage and Family Life of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, will be held on the second Wednesday of each month, 7 – 8 p.m., in the St. Paul room at the Kleinpeter Activity Center of St. George Church, 7808 St. George Dr., Baton Rouge. For information, email stellajulioted@gmail.com.
Volunteers feel the call to assist at evacuation centers

By Rachele Smith
The Catholic Commentator

As floodwaters inundated the Capital City region last month, many residents used social media to keep in touch with friends and family. But for Crystal Eldringhoff, Facebook provided more than just a way to communicate with others. It also launched her into action.

Eldringhoff, who serves as a sales representative at the Bishop Robert E. Tracy Center, a retreat and meeting center on the campus of the Catholic Life Center, explained that she was growing weary of helping those in need. They do everything, she said, working alongside them. It was amazing, she said.

When he received a call the Sunday afternoon after the flood from one of the Amish men that a group of them, who hired someone to drive them in a 15-passenger van, followed by a truck pulling a trailer containing two ox, would be arriving the next day to help with recovery, Sagrera was touched.

“We got here, just started getting out homes. It’s amazing what they did,” said Sagrera. Over a four-day period, they helped clear more than 35 properties in the Clinton, Baker and Central area and helped clean out apartments in Zachary.

The men started at 7 a.m. and worked until dark, said Sagrera.

“It was a grueling four days,” said Sagrera.

While the Amish, for the most part, don’t speak much, they exude joy in their work and share their culture and faith. They work with, accept and serve all, and enjoyed the Southern hospitality of Our Lady of the Assumption, St. John and the community, Sagrera stated.

“They were great. If they were suffering they never let anyone know. They were tremendous. They worked hard 10-12 hour days,” said St. John and Our Lady of the Assumption Pastor Father Jeff Bayhi. “They ate well. We fed them well.

“We have a couple of parishioners who have big houses and we got some Red Cross cots from First Baptist Church (in Zachary). One had built an outdoor cabin. They are not used to air conditioning anyway. One of them slept in the cabin. Between the two homes, they were housed.”

“They smile and laugh and have a good time. There were some nuns working alongside them. It was amazing,” said Sagrera.

The “nuns” were from the Congregation of the Hospitaler Sisters of Mercy, whose mission in the Baton Rouge area is to assist victims of human trafficking and who stepped forth to help those suffering from the flood. They assisted the Amish in cleaning out 11 apartments.

Fueled with a desire to help others, Eldringhoff and her husband, Tom, headed to Celtic Studios, where the city’s largest movie studio had been transformed into a makeshift shelter early on Aug. 14.

At first, they were just dropping off donations, but once they arrived, they could see their help was needed in other ways.

Eldringhoff explained that the shelter was just opening, so they began pitching in and offering assistance. For her, that meant going to the donations area, where she immediately began implementing an organizational system to make it easier for evacuees to find what they needed.

Her husband, Tom, who serves as the assistant principal for discipline at Catholic High School in Baton Rouge, began lending a hand with donation drop offs and collections.

“The shelter was just starting to set up, and the people there were self-organizing,” he said.

According to the Eldringhoffs, the needs of the shelter changed, sometimes hour to hour, and they soon found themselves involved in more leadership roles, such as helping with the logistics of crowd control and safety.

Eldringhoff said throughout their time helping at the shelter, they stayed focused on what was needed the most, resulting in creative solutions to keeping the bathrooms clean as well as thinking outside the box when the cell phones charged outnumbered the number of available outlets.

“I posted that we needed those (multiple) strip outlets, and within the hour, we received so many,” she added. Like the Eldringhoffs, Mila Gernon also wanted to do more to help those in need. She was watching the 10 p.m. news on Aug. 14 when she heard volunteers were desperately needed at the Baton Rouge River Center to assist arriving evacuees.

Gernon, who is an administrative manager with the diocese’s Office of Evangelization and Catechesis, left her home and headed downtown. She stayed until 2 a.m. helping set up cots, and returned the next two days to sort donations. For a short time, she was also assisting in a medical triage section organizing medical donations.

“It was just an amazing three days,” she said, calling what she participated in an example of “organized chaos” since directions sometimes changed hour to hour to best accommodate the greatest need.

“All I can say is we should be proud of ourselves in Louisiana. When people here pull together, we pull together. Black, white, Asian, high school, college students and older people all working together,” she said.

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In public meetings Ann Boltin, director of archives for the diocese, reiterated on several occasions that the building would house three full-time employees, be open from 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and not be used at night or on the weekends.

She also pointed out that the archives office currently receives 1.5 visitors per week. Heeding the advice of neighbors, diocesan officials went back to architects and redesigned the footprint. In the new design, the building will be set back nearly 145 feet from the street and its closest point to a residential neighbor will be 75 feet.

Additionally, several of the majestic oak trees that provide a canopy of shade will be saved as well as green space that fronts Parker Street.

Frank Duke, planning director of the city of Baton Rouge, pointed out that the latest architects’ rendering “does exactly what the neighbors wanted this to be. That’s why I think the neighborhood has calmed down a great deal.”

Storage has become a particular concern for Boltin and her staff. The current vault is at capacity, forcing some records to be stored in various closets throughout the Catholic Life Center.

Because of the storage crunch, no records, including those for church parishes, can be accepted.

“We are thrilled the planning commission has approved our plans for the archives building,” Boltin said. “As custodians of over 300 years of Louisiana’s history, proper housing and storage of our collections is critical.

“We are one step closer to ensuring that these records and artifacts are adequately preserved for us by current and future generations.”

Ingraham said if the city council approves the plan, he expects the final drawings to be completed by the end of the year and the project to go out to bid shortly after the first of the year. He said construction could begin in the spring.

Sources have previously said construction is expected to take about a year.

“Hopefully, the neighbors are pleased with the final result and the fact nobody showed up in opposition is one strong indicator of that.”

Approval by the council would draw to a close a process that began in the spring when the diocese announced plans for the building. Neighbors were vocal in their opposition, claiming the building would increase traffic in the area as well as affect the aesthetics of the neighborhood. They worked “an effort of all the sisters coming together” to help.

“We pulled nails out of the wall,” said Sister Norma Nunez HSM, who called the work “an effort of all the sisters coming together” to help their community. This was her first time to do this type of work and chuckled “no” when asked if she thought that she would ever be doing that.

The sisters found the Amish to be inspiring.

“They are happy to do things out of their heart and we see this. You could see that all day long, they had a smile on their face. They worked side by side with us,” said Sister Norma.

“If there is someone who needs something, they are glad to do it,” she said.

Sagrera expressed his gratitude to the Amish for taking time away from their trades, traveling more than 20 hours and using their own resources to help. But this is not the first time for them to come to the aid of their Southern neighbors, Sagrera said. After Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast in 2005, they helped with recovery efforts.

“They’ve become family,” said Sagrera.