State bishops ‘unequivocally’ endorse bills to repeal death penalty

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

The Louisiana Conference of Catholic Bishops is rallying around a pair of proposed bills that would eliminate capital punishment.

In a statement released April 18, the bishops ask “all men and women of good faith, especially those members of the Louisiana legislature, to search their heart in an effort to seek mercy and love to support the repeal of the death penalty and aid in building a culture of life.”

“This current legislative session allows us in a renewed way to move beyond this dark reality of our state’s history and toward a state that affirms life without exception,” the statement said.

Sen. Dan Claibor of Baton Rouge, Rep. Terry Landry of New Iberia and Rep. Steven Pylant of Winnnsboro have filed bills to be heard in the current session of the legislature to repeal capital punishment. According to the statement, the LCCB “unequivocally” supports SB142 and HB101.

“It is clear that the use of the death penalty does not serve as an instrument to address the deep-rooted issues that are the cause of widespread violent crime within our society,” the bishops said. “Instead it is a ‘solution’ that seduces us into believing that the taking of a life solved a problem, and in fact forces us further into a culture of death.”

Danièle Van Haute, pro-life director for the Diocese of Baton Rouge, said she was “very encouraged” to see the legislators file the bills.

“The church affirms the sacredness of all human life,” she said. “If we, as a society, have the means of protecting citizens from aggressors without recourse to the death penalty, then we have the obligation to use those alternate means and abolish the use of capital punishment. This is what recent popes like Pope Francis and St. John Paul II have taught.

“If Louisiana is successful in repealing the death penalty, it will be a victory for all citizens of the state and far beyond this dark reality of our state’s history. This is what recent popes like Pope Francis and St. John Paul II have taught.”

SEE BISHOPS PAGE 20

FEEDING THE SPIRIT

Holy Rosary food pantry benefits from campaign

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Deacon Steven Gonzales was speechless, an exuberance captured not by words but by a buoyant smile.

A native of the St. Amant area, Deacon Gonzales was unabashedly emotional when he saw the fruition of a project Leadership Ascension had been working on for several months. What started out as a relatively modest undertaking turned into something much more grandiose, a difference maker in assisting Holy Rosary Church in St. Amant feed needy families in Ascension Parish, many of whom remain in recovery mode long after August’s flood waters have receded.

“Amazing,” Deacon Gonzales, a deacon assistant at Holy Rosary, said shortly before blessing a large covered trailer aptly named The Traveling Samaritan, along with two pallets of food and toiletries, two upright freezers, two hand trucks, one dolly, multiple metal shelving units for storage and food warmers, all made possible by Leadership Ascension.

“This was completely unexpected,” Deacon Gonzales said. Leadership Ascension, comprised of business leaders throughout the civil parish, initially embarked on a campaign to raise $14,000 for the purchase of a trailer that would assist the Holy Rosary food pantry, which was lost during the flood. But as word spread through Ascension Parish, things changed quickly, according to Nanette Crystal, a member of the 2017 Leadership Ascension Class that adopted Holy Rosary as its class project.

“In the beginning it was going to be a very small request,” Crystal said, adding that the group, once adopting Holy Rosary as its beneficiary, realized the church had greater needs than initially believed.

“And it grew from there,” she said. “Once we initially started to ask our local businesses (for donations), and not even just the businesses, family members came out of the wood work to give us small checks. It just added and added and added.”

Not only was the initial goal of $14,000 met, at least another $5,000 was raised in kind services, such as shelving, cages to transport the food and the dolly.

Volunteers from St. Elizabeth Hospital in Gonzales chipped in by taking up a donation to buy food from a Gonzales grocery store which sold the goods at cost.

“Inside it was pretty strapped so we were not sure where we would be with it,” said Rene Brinkhaus, a member of the 2017 Leadership Ascension class who works in the human resources department at St. Elizabeth Hospital. “To come up with $14,000 was not all that hard. People knew what we were doing and it motivated them even more.

“We were just so thankful.”

Deacon Gonzales said the trailers and other supplies were “badly needed” after the flood waters spared only one building on the Holy Rosary campus. He said the food pantry, including all of the shelving and food, was ruined and because of contamination everything had to be thrown away.

SEE BENEFICIARY PAGE 19
Burning question

Throughout the liturgical year, the church’s most solemn Masses feature insightful Scripture readings and breathtaking music, along with the use of incense, a longtime Catholic tradition.

Save for a few sneezes and an occasional cough from the congregation, depending on the celebrant’s own usage, incense provides an aromatic sidebar to an already beautiful ceremony.

So what exactly is incense, loved by so many but others scrambling for tissue? Basically, is it a granulated or powdered aromatic resin obtained from various plants. Frankincense, perhaps best known for being one of the gifts the Magi brought to the infant Jesus, is the primary component of liturgical incense.

When the resin is sprinkled on glowing coals in the censer, the incense becomes a fragrant cloud of smoke symbolizing prayer rising to God. The use of incense is found through the Bible, perhaps most poignantly in Revelation where it is written that an angel appeared, standing at an altar holding a gold censer and was given a great quantity of incense to offer.

Revelation goes on to say “the smoke of the incense along with the prayers of the holy ones went up before God from the hand of the angel” (Rev 8:4). The first use of incense first appears around 1500 BC, found in Egyptian hieroglyphics. It was around that time when Queen Hatshepsu sent a fleet of ships to what is the northern part of Somalia to acquire frankincense and myrrh tree seedlings.

Even Moses made use of incense, bringing a recipe down from Mount Sinai for sacred incense made with frankincense. In those times, frankincense would be stretching the budget, a pound selling for what would equate to $500 in today’s economy. But it was cheaper than myrrh, which sold for what would amount to $5,000 in today’s market.

Economic reasons aside, early Christians did not use incense because it was associated with pagan worship. Also, in those early days Christians worshiped in secret so the strong scent of incense could potentially compromise their location and lead to persecution or even death.

Incense did not become a part of Christian celebrations until sometime around the fifth century, according to scholars.

As first indicated in Revelations, the rising smoke indicates the rising of prayers offered by the congregation, as well as sanctification and purification.

When used during Mass, incense is intended to remind Catholics of heaven and that worshipping God in liturgy is divine in origin. It is also a call to prayer.

The path to Pentecost

Lord Jesus, open the Scriptures to us; make our hearts burn while you speak to us. Alleluia. Alleluia!

The celebration of Easter continues on the fourth and fifth Sundays of the season. The path to Pentecost follows the proclamation of the paschal mystery understood as Jesus’ passion, death and resurrection. Sacred Scripture gives three powerful testimonies which offer guidance, confidence and strength for faithful prayer and meditation.

Know for Certain

St. Peter confidently stands in front of a crowd mocking him and the other Apostles. They had just been filled by the Holy Spirit and were loudly proclaiming the works of Jesus. Present-day terms would describe this moment as “shouting from the rooftops!” They were completely strengthened by the Holy Spirit, so much so they held nothing back. St. Peter stood to give a bold testimony of Jesus’ death and resurrection, recounting how many standing in front of him were amazed at the “deeds, wonders and signs” given by Jesus, only to turn on him in the crucifixion.

Many were taken aback and asked St. Peter, “What are we to do?” He invited them to repentance and baptism in the name of Trinity. As a result, 3,000 that day gave themselves to the Lord. Three thousand in one day! Think of how many since then!

Paragraph 6:8 of The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains, “The resurrection of Jesus is the crowning truth of our faith in Christ, a faith believed and lived as the central truth by the first Christian community; handed on... preached, ‘Christ is risen from the dead! Dying he conquered death; to the dead he has given life.’” Faith and hope are in God. Jesus restores life in us with the father. We know this for certain. But how certain are we about this truth? As we profess the Creed, do we fully embrace the resurrection of Jesus and look forward to our own?

Walking with Jesus

St. Luke’s Gospel describes the most incredible resurrection account. Imagine, being a close disciple of Jesus, walking seven miles from Jerusalem to a village known as Emmaus, and discussing with another the account of the women who saw the empty tomb and the resurrected Lord. They were excited and astounded at the same time. Along the journey a stranger joins them, who seemingly knows nothing of the past three days, asking, “What sort of things?” The two react as if he has been under a rock (or roof) intended.

They give an overview, questioning their faith in the long-awaited Messiah. The stranger then explains how “this Jesus” fulfills every prophecy and proclamation handed down according to the Jewish faith of the Christ. He broke open the word of God in a way like no other as they continued their journey. Talk about a great Bible adventure! Upon invitation, the two welcomed the stranger into their home for a meal. Their eyes were again open, but this time by the stranger blessing, breaking and sharing of the bread. The stranger revealed his true identity, as Jesus, through this common act. He was veiled in his glorified state, yet fully recognizable in the breaking of the bread, the glorified Messiah! He then vanished. And what did they do? Hide in a corner? No! They got up and ran all the way back to the Apostles in the upper room, some seven miles in the dark, without fear, but with burning fervor, ready to “shout from the rooftops” that they encountered the risen Lord!

The event on the road to Emmaus prefigures the Mass. The Liturgy of the Word invites us to encounter Jesus in the story of salvation, connecting the Old Testament with the New Testament and the Epistle as a bridge. The Liturgy of the Eucharist is the most perfect earthly encounter with Jesus, as we partake in his paschal mystery, that being his passion, death and resurrection. We know FOR CERTAIN God is with us, in the person of Jesus who gives his entire body, blood, soul and divinity by the power of the Holy Spirit through transubstantiation of the bread and wine, broken, blessed and shared. He is really and truly present. This truth we are called to shout from the rooftops!

SEE GOSPEL PAGE 4
Traveling Fatima statue spreads blessings throughout the diocese

By Rachele Smith
The Catholic Commentator

Weeks after saying goodbye to a special guest in her home, Vanessa Babin is already looking forward to another visit. But it may be a while. Her guest, a traveling statue of Our Lady of Fatima, has prompted many to offer prayers, say the rosary and experience a peace some say fills their home with its presence.

“The first time I (saw the statue) was at my aunt’s house. She called me to come over and say the rosary. I did, and it was such a profound peaceful experience,” Babin said. And there was something else. Shortly after that visit, Babin, a parishioner at St. Mark Church in Gonzales, noticed a pressure wound on her son was starting to heal.

“It had been stagnant for so long, and it was starting to get smaller,” she said, explaining the wound formed after they discovered her son, who was left paralyzed after an accident, had been placed in his wheelchair incorrectly.

The healing was significant, Babin said, adding that the wound continues to heal.

On March 20, Michelle and Kevin Rowell, accompanied by Elsie Schemsnyder and Marcelle Wooseley, brought the Our Lady of Fatima statue to Babin’s home for the first time. The group was previously at the Rowell’s house where the statue had stayed for the previous two weeks. Upon leaving the Rowell’s, the group recited prayers including the Chaplet of the Divine Mercy, a prayer to our Lady of Fatima and an Act of Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

During the ride to Babin’s home, the statue was buckled into the back seat and stationed next to a box containing handwritten petitions that move from house to house.

“The petitions are never read aloud. Rather they are kept in the box until Divine Mercy Sunday, then they are burned,” said Michelle Rowell.

Like the prayer service that signified the closing of the statue’s time at the Rowell’s house, an opening celebration, this one highlighted by the saying of the rosary, was offered at Babin’s home.

In addition to Babin, two other voices were added to the prayer group her grandchildren, Luke and Lily, who are in the fifth grade and second grade respectively at St. Amant Primary School in St. Amant.

Babin explained she was watching the children since classes were canceled that day, and she was just so “tickled” they joined everyone in the prayer service.

It was also a teaching moment for Babin as she guided Lily, who is preparing to receive her first Communion, in saying the rosary.

“During the time (the statue) was here, my sister-in-law and my daughter joined me for the rosary one day, and we asked the kids if they wanted to play outside or come pray with us,” said Babin. “They decided to pray with us.”

JoAnne Marchand, a parishioner of St. Mark, brought the Our Lady of Fatima traveling statue to the area from New Jersey some 24 years ago.

“I’m a nobody in all of us,” she said.

“But because of my (New Jersey) friend who was healed and invited us to her home, that’s how it all happened.”

Marchand explained she had returned from Medjugorje months before that trip and was “on fire” with her faith. Yet, she still wasn’t sure how she was going to handle the job of coordinating different homes for the statue.

“Mary knows where she needs to go,” she said, adding, “It always worked out.”

Several years ago, Michelle Rowell began helping with the traveling statue and now coordinates the list of homestays. Marchand said Rowell, along with her husband, Kevin, is a special couple and have helped introduce the statue to many others, including families with young children.

For their part, the Rowells feel blessed to honor Mary by helping with the traveling statue. They say the Blessed Mother has stood by them and continues to be there for them, even during their darkest of days.

“Our son, Allen, died on June 1, 2014,” explained Michelle Rowell, who added that she and her husband were talking to Allen on the phone shortly before he was struck by a vehicle while walking home.

Looking back on that night, Kevin said he now sees many graces.

“When we found him, there was no blood or bruises,” he explained, noting how difficult that would have been to see.

“I immediately turned my thoughts to Mary, and said, ‘Mary, intercede for us,’” noted Michelle, who added that when her son breathed his last, it was peaceful.

“There was no hysteria or anything like that,” she said. Over the many months that have followed since Allen’s death, Michelle and Kevin have become strong witnesses to Mary’s intercession and have even helped others endure the pain of losing a loved one.

“We still have pain from losing Allen. It’s not easy, but we have learned to offer that pain to Mary who leads us to her son,” said Michelle.

Her husband nodded, adding, “She gives us the grace to know we will be with our son again.”

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Portuguese businessman sends free Fatima statues throughout world

CAPE TOWN, South Africa – (CNS) Every time Jose Camara thinks his ministry is completed, somebody else needs a statue of Our Lady of Fatima to spread the devotion.

Camara, a retired Portuguese businessman, has donated more than 1,000 of the statues, handmade in Fatima, to parishes around the world since January 2013. He even covers the cost of transport, including to South Africa, Madagascar, Australia and the United States.

“I started out just over four years ago with the idea of offering 12 handmade statues of Our Lady of Fatima – one for each apostle – to parishes in South Africa, where I lived for many years,” Camara said.

In the first week after his offer was publicized in South Africa’s Catholic weekly, The Southern Cross, he received 63 applications.

“Now I have sent more than a thousand statues to parishes, schools, convents, Catholic movements, prisons and so on – and even to some individuals – all over the world,” said Camara, who now lives in Cascais, about 20 miles west of the Portuguese capital, Lisbon.

He has sent statues to more than 30 countries: throughout Africa and to the Holy Land, India, the Philippines, Australia, Great Britain, Germany, Guatemala, the United States – even to parishes in Portugal. Some of the destinations are remote, such as Reunion Island and Mauritius.

And every time he decides his task is finished, a new email reaches him from regions that need of Our Lady of Fatima.

“But I cannot continue forever,” Camara said. Apart from the expense of buying the statues and the even greater cost of having them shipped to their destination, the logistics, bureaucracy and stress about delivery are becoming a strain for a man who is “not getting any younger” and must contend with worsening health problems. And, he admits, “my life savings are almost depleted.”

For a long time, he asked to remain anonymous. He allowed the use of his name only when media that interviewed him insisted on it.

“I don’t seek any credit; I only want to serve Our Lady and the Lord,” he said.

He said he has been inspired by people he has met, such as the priest in Namibia who drove 560 miles each way to collect a statue for his parish.

The statues are handcrafted and hand-painted in a workshop in Fatima. They are various sizes and are intended for use inside the churches. In exchange for a statue, recipient parishes had to promise to recite the rosary once a month as a community, and to place the statue at an altar in the main church or in a side chapel or shrine dedicated to Our Lady of Fatima.

“Although I usually don’t donate to individuals, I sent her a statue as a personal gift. But there are always delays with customs and so on. A statue normally takes four months to arrive. It didn’t look like the statue would arrive in time, but I sent it anyway, placing my trust in Our Lady,” Camara recalled.

Four months later, he received an email that the woman was on her deathbed and the statue had not arrived. From Portugal, Camara ascertained that it was at customs in Cape Town, so on a Friday afternoon the dying woman’s sister rushed to have it released and took it to the hospital.

“They took photos of the woman holding the statue, looking happy to be with Our Lady. She died the next day, 24 hours later. That was faith. I did not believe that she would see the statue,” he said.

He paused and added: “Our Lady has been dropping blessings from above.”

“Good Shepherd Sunday

Finally, we hear one of the seven “I Am’s” given in the Gospel of St. John. Shepherds during the time of Jesus built gates made of stone to protect the sheep. Jesus is the gatekeeper of the fold. King David’s most recognized Psalm 23 proclaims, “The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want.” Jesus gave his life for his flock. St. Thomas Aquinas, in a homily given on the Second Sunday of Easter explains, “There are three reasons as to why Christ is called the Good Shepherd: (1) to defend the sheep from lions, wolves, the devil; (2) to lead and feed them in good pastures with scriptural grace and glory; and (3) to restore those who are wandering, leaving behind the 99 to rescue the lost one.”

Do we answer the call of our Good Shepherd? Are we trying to defend ourselves rather than call upon Jesus? Are we “eating” the nourishing word of God by reading, listening and meditating on the Bible, as well as gathering our families and friends for Sunday Mass in order to be fed by his body and blood in the Eucharist? Are we guiding those who are wandering to come back home? Are our hearts burning within as he speaks to us? Are we confidentially shouting from the rooftops, Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia. Alleluia!

Dow is the director of the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis for the Diocese of Baton Rouge.
Educating children with disabilities presents special challenges

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

When Doctors Madonna and James Healy were expecting their first child, Madonna’s pregnancy went as expected. “I was a good prenatal mother,” said Madonna, who recently came to the Diocese of Baton Rouge with her husband when he presented a marriage enrichment seminar. “I didn’t do the things I was not supposed to do and did the things I was supposed to do.”

As he grew, her son was active and sometimes would not answer the first time she called him.

When he entered kindergarten, the teacher told Healy that her son was not following directions in class. Healy started working with him, giving him points if he covered his ears away when she called him. After a certain number of points, she treated him with dignity, “because I want to,” he said. He was suspended from school.

That was the launching pad to get Healy thinking about what teaching can be, rather than punishing children for each infractions of the rules. Healy gives the presentation “Everyone’s Called to God’s Table, Even the Ones Who Can’t Sit Still in Their Seats.” She is the consultant for special needs for the Office of Religious Education of the Diocese of Joliet, Illinois.

Healy has a friend who was a clinical psychologist, who diagnosed her son with ADHD.

She met with the principal and his teacher and told them what the psychologist recommend they do. She said the principal basically said, “This is a Catholic school and she was going to hold him to a higher standard. Children with ADHD typically were not allowed to enter that school.”

The teacher told Healy, “Now that I know what’s going on, he won’t be singled out anymore. I can handle this.” After that her son had more success on his tests and classroom work.

People misunderstand what ADHD is, which often results in them being excluded and not receiving the services that can help them functionally improve, according to Healy.

“This is what happens with most parents who have a child with a disability. If you have a child who has a missing limb, blind or other physical disability, they know what to do. But if you have a child with an invisible disability – ADHD or autism – they look normal, but now we know that they have problems with executive functions. The thoughts are that they must be undisciplined, it must be their parents’ fault, they are willfully disobedient so they get enabled by parents. And that’s what I was finding at the school my kids were attending.”

Healy conceded that it took some time for her to jump in the role of advocating for children with learning disabilities. She served on the school board of the school her son attended, and when a fellow schoolboard member complained that another learning-disabled child spat on his child, her first thoughts were, “Oh, no! My child did this.” In order that her child would “fly under the radar” she said nothing.

She said her silence, however, did not “settle right” with her, and she began speaking out on specific ways children can be included in the school and church setting.

“It became easier, the more I talked about the idea, the more I realized that it’s not my fault, its not their (children’s) fault. “I realized that what these parents needed was compassion and support. Here they are in the the same situation as me. They’ve got kids that are difficult to raise, and what they get from their family and neighbors is ‘Do something. Your kids have issues and you can’t control them.’” Healy said.

“What I was able to do was share that they work way harder than the average parent and they had nothing to be ashamed of – to help them pick up their chin and face those people, and say, ‘My child has a disability and we are doing the best we can. We need your support. If you can’t give it to us we will go elsewhere.’”

Having been on “both sides of the issue, as a teacher in the classroom and parent of a child with learning disabilities, Healy knows that the number one rule for teachers is that children raise their hands before speaking. Learning disabled children, particularly those with Asperger’s disease, find it difficult to follow that rule. But they can be worked with, Healy said.

She noted she was telling her students the importance of staying hydrated when a student with Asperger’s blurted out, “Mrs. Healy, don’t you mean 74 percent (for children).”

“I thought, ‘Whatever.’ But I looked it up later and he was right,” Healy said.

Meanwhile, the other students in the class were saying, “Don’t correct Mrs. Healy. She’s the teacher. She knows everything.”

Healy helped the child follow the rules by covering her ears with her hand and saying, “I’m sorry, I can’t hear you, you don’t have your hand raised,” if he did not.

She developed a relationship with the child and was delighted when she overheard him tell someone, “Mrs. Healy loved me when I was in the second grade.”

“That’s what was important to me. I wanted the children to believe that the teachers loved them like they were their own and would give them what they needed,” Healy said.

They always say it takes a village to raise a child. When you are a parent of a child with disabilities you need that village. The teachers, administrators – everyone – needs to be part of that village,” she said.

Mercy opens the door to understanding the mystery of God, pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Mercy is a true form of knowledge that allows men and women to understand the mystery of God’s love for humanity, Pope Francis said.

Having experienced forgiveness, Christians have a duty to forgive others, giving a “visible sign” of God’s mercy, which “carries within it the peace of heart and the joy of a renewed encounter with the Lord,” the pope said April 23 before praying the “Regina Coeli” with visitors gathered in St. Peter’s Square.

“Mercy helps us understand that violence, resentment and revenge do not have any meaning and that the first victim is the one who lives with these feelings, because he is deprived of his own dignity,” he said.

Commemorating Divine Mercy Sunday, Pope Francis said St. John Paul II’s establishment of the feast in 2000 was a “beautiful intuition” inspired by the Holy Spirit.

God’s mercy, he said, not only “opens the door of the mind,” it also opens the door of the heart and paves the way for compassion toward those who are “alone or marginalized because it makes them feel they are brothers and sisters and children of one father.”

“Mercy, in short, commits us all to being instruments of justice, of reconciliation and peace. Let us never forget that mercy is the keystone in the life of faith, and the concrete form by which we give visibility to Jesus’ resurrection,” Pope Francis said.
Gender change and morality/Televising prerecorded Masses /Byzantine Catholics

Q There has been a lot in the news lately about people who identify with the gender opposite the one listed on their birth certificate. Some take hormones of the opposite sex; some even have surgery to “change” their sex. What is the Catholic Church’s position on such transgender people? Is it OK for them to take these hormones and have such surgery? (Alexandria, Virginia)

A The Catechism of the Catholic Church says: “Except when performed for strictly therapeutic medical reasons, directly intended amputations, mutilations and sterilizations performed on innocent persons are against the moral law” (No. 2297). That statement is generally considered by Catholic moral theologians to prohibit the sort of “sexual reassignment surgery” of which you speak.

Writing in 2005 for the National Catholic Bioethics Center, Dr. Richard Fitzgibbons noted, “It is impossible to change a person’s sex. Hormone treatments, cosmetic surgery and surgery to mutilate the sex organs do not change a person’s sex.”

In the 2016 apostolic exhortation “Amoris Laetitia” (“The Joy of Love”), Pope Francis said that “the young need to be helped to accept their own body as it was created” (No. 285). In a 2014 article in The Wall Street Journal, Dr. Paul McHugh, former chief psychiatrist at Johns Hopkins Hospital, referenced a 2011 long-term study that followed 324 people who underwent sexual reassignment surgery. The study showed that 10 years after the surgery, “the transgendered began to experience increasing mental difficulties” and “their suicide mortality rose almost 20-fold above the comparable nontransgender population.”

The Catholic Church’s view is that people struggling with gender dysphoria (apparent psychological identification with attributes of the opposite sex) should be shown compassion, protected from prejudice and treated with psychotherapy that is skilled and sympathetic.

Q For some time now, I have been disturbed by the fact that, several times a day, EWTN telecasts the Mass of that day without indicating that these Masses are prerecorded and not “live.” Surely 99 percent of those watching feel that they are participating in a real Mass. This has significant import on the spiritual lives of the network’s viewers, especially on Sundays.

A I have written repeatedly to the network urging them at least to precede such Masses with a statement indicating that the presentation is for inspirational purposes only and not a real Mass, but no adjustment has been made. Do you agree with me that the station needs to correct this? (While I am sure this is unintentional, the network is involved in a serious matter of deceptive spiritual broadcasting.) (Merion Station, Pennsylvania)

Q On Sundays and other holy days of obligation, a Catholic who is able to do so has a serious obligation to attend Mass, i.e., to participate personally in the eucharistic celebration. If prevented, however, by sickness, infirmity due to old age, severe weather or other emergency, the obligation ceases; nor is that person then morally bound to “make up” for the absence by watching the televised Mass for (in your words) “inspirational purposes.” In this case it matters not at all that the Mass is prerecorded.

A In my own diocese, where I was once responsible for arranging to have the Sunday Mass televised, we filmed those Masses on the previous Wednesday evening (because studio time was less expensive and priest-celebrants easier to find.) So, to answer your question – no, I don’t think that EWTN is involved in “deceptive broadcasting” or needs to correct anything.

Q My future son-in-law is a member of the Byzantine Catholic Church. Recently, when he came to visit us, we all went together to our family’s Roman Catholic parish, and he received holy Communion. First, what is the difference in the two churches? And secondly, can members of one of these churches receive Communion in the other one? (Albany, New York)

A The Byzantine Catholic Church is one of 23 Eastern Catholic churches worldwide. It is in full communion with the bishop of Rome and recognizes the pope as the visible head of the church. Members of the Byzantine Catholic and the Roman Catholic churches are welcome to receive Communion and fulfill the obligation of Mass attendance when attending the eucharistic liturgy in each other’s churches.

The origin of the Byzantine Catholic Church can be traced to the ancient city of Byzantium (modern-day Istanbul). Byzantine churches have some distinctive features: They are elaborately adorned with artwork (particularly figures of the saints), and the sanctuary is separated from the congregation by an “iconostasis,” a wall or screen covered with icons.

Leavened bread (rather than unleavened) is consecrated at a Byzantine Eucharistic celebration. Episcopal consecration is distributed under both species and administered by the priest with a spoon. (Communicants are directed that their mouth or tongue should not touch the spoon.)

Byzantine liturgies tend to be more musical than the Roman ones and involve a continual dialogue in song between the priest and congregation; throughout the Byzantine service, the priest faces the East along with the people (i.e., toward the altar).

All three sacraments of initiation – baptism, first Communion and confirmation – are administered in a single ceremony when either infants or adults are being received into the Byzantine Catholic Church. Priests in the Byzantine Catholic Church are permitted to be married. Further valuable information is available byzath.org, an unofficial website of the Byzantine Catholic Church in America, including the location of the Byzantine Catholic parish nearest you.

FATHER DOYLE is chancellor for public information and a pastor in the Diocese of Albany, New York. Questions may be sent to Father Kenneth Doyle at askfatherdoyle@gmail.com and 30 Columbia Circle Dr. Albany, New York 12203.

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- LeBlanc’s Food Stores, Baton Rouge, Gonzales, Donaldsonville, Hammond, Plaquemine, Prairieville and Zachary
- Louisiana Vet Home, Jackson
- Martin’s Supermarkets, Baton Rouge
- Magnuson Hotel, St. Francisville
- North Ridgely Healthcare, baker
- Oak Point Supermarket, Central
- Oak Wood Nursing Home, Zachary
- Old Jefferson Community Care, Baton Rouge
- Our Lady of the Lake College, Baton Rouge
- Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center, Baton Rouge and Walker
- Our Lady of the Lake Physician Group, offices with locations throughout the Diocese
- Reeves’ Supermarket, Baton Rouge
- St. Elizabeth Hospital, Gonzales
- St. Mary’s Books & Gifts, Baton Rouge
- St. Vincent dePaul Stores, throughout the diocese
- Scheiznayer Supermarket, Vacherie
- Southside Produce, Baton Rouge
- Tony’s Seafood, Baton Rouge
- UPS Store, Coursey Blvd., Baton Rouge
- Whole Foods Market, Baton Rouge
- Winn Dixie in Hammond, New Roads and Ponchatoula

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Partnership allows theology students to earn degrees in Baton Rouge

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Aspiring theology majors in the Diocese of Baton Rouge for the first time will be able to earn their degree and not leave home.

A partnership joining the diocesan Office of Evangelization and Catechesis with Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University, theology students as well as those interested in other avenues of religious formation will be able to complete all of their academic requirements in Baton Rouge.

Father Jamin David, pastor at St. Margaret, Queen of Scotland Church in Albany, explained the program is an outgrowth of the former Religious Studies Institute, which ended several years ago because of off-campus accreditation issues with St. Joseph Seminary College in St. Benedict. Not only did lay formation slip away, so did formation for deacons.

RSI, originally formed in the 1980s, trained lay people in a professional way as well as training diaconate candidates.

“It provided lay people involved in ministry, directors of religious education, catechists, advanced opportunities for learning on a college level,” Father David said, adding that when the partnership with St. Ben’s fell apart, so did the formation programs. He said a committee was formed to develop a program using components of the old RSI and deacon programs that would be able to work in harmony with each other instead of having the previous “prerequisite, building block approach.”

Initially, at the request of the Presbyteral Council, a formation curriculum was developed to reinstate deacon formation, a program now completing its second year. However, as Father David noted, “when we developed the deacon program, we developed it in the back of our mind as to how can lay formation fit in it.”

The result is a curriculum that will have deacon candidates, theology students and those pursuing lay formation taking classes together for the first three years, focused on the essential foundations of theology such as Scripture and the sacraments. Father David said those classes are what “you would expect anybody who is going to work on some type of certification in theology to have.”

“The blessing is you have people that are being formed as deacons sitting next to people that are growing in their faith as lay professions,” said Dina Dow, director of the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis and a former RSI instructor. “So that network begins in the classroom, which I think is one of the greatest treasures, is learning together and serving in different ways.”

After the first three years, lay formation students will branch off into one of three separate tracts that include catechesis and faith formation, liturgical studies and parish administration, which includes courses in finance and business management. Diaconate candidates will continue on their own track working toward ordination.

Father David said students completing 60 hours of academic work will earn certification from the diocese, but “if you still want academic hours (from FMOLU) you will be able to do it.”

“What’s interesting is all have some overlap in the first three years and they all have some overlap in the diaconate program,” he added. “But all three have classes specific to their tract.”

Previously, those desiring to earn theology degrees had the choice of attending Our Lady of Holy Cross or Loyola University, both in New Orleans.

He said the committee has asked FMOLU to develop two to three additional classes per tract, adding that anywhere from six to nine classes will be placed in the curriculum.

“Some, we don’t have to reinvent the wheel,” Father David. “We can plug (students) into classes already offered (at FMOLU).

“So any person who would like to enroll in any of the classes is able to but the only kicker is the financial part. So (FMOLU) is open to having anybody and everybody participate in the classes.”

Dow encourages young people coming out of high school, people that might have a calling to ministry, or working in ministry professionally and want to deepen their commitment or simply those Catholics interested in growing in their faith should investigate the program.

When one begins to grow in their faith through academic learning, God will open the path to you because you are called to be there,” said Dow, recalling some of her own life experiences. “If there is a spark of ‘I think I want to learn more’ then go for it.”

Father David said Franciscan University is giving a 50 percent discount on tuition to students sponsored by a church parish or diocese. Diaconate candidates get 50 percent of the 50 percent off.

“For the first time it offers people in Baton Rouge to receive professional training in theology without having to leave the city of Baton Rouge,” he said. “We do have a Catholic university here and the partnership enables the people to come into the city to receive their education.”

Father David said the classes are three hours a day, two days a week, one on a Saturday morning and another one night during the week.

“I am very excited,” Dow said. “I think this is a gift that has come to us at a very important time in our faith. As lay faithful, we are called to support our priests and our religious to help form our community of faith beyond the walls of our church.

“The laity is already taking on increase importance in parishes because of the shortage of priests. There are things to take the sole burden off our pastors.”

People interested in the program can contact the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis at 225-336-8760.

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EASTER JOY – Bishop Robert W. Muench welcomes diners to the annual St. Vincent de Paul’s Easter Meal on Easter Sunday. More than 140 volunteers served nearly 480 people. St. Vincent de Paul president Michael Acaldo said the volunteers also handed out clothes and shoes to the needy. Pictured is the Plauche family who are parishioners at St. Aloysius Church in Baton Rouge. Photo courtesy of Michael Acaldo / St. Vincent de Paul Society
Miracle League offers opportunity for special needs youth to excel

By Rachele Smith
The Catholic Commentator

How do you know when your dream becomes a success? Is there a time when you realize your hard work, dedication and perseverance were, well, worth it? For Brandi Polito Aertker, that defining moment came when she was watching local youths play baseball at Cypress Mounds, a baseball and softball complex in Baton Rouge.

Aertker, the executive director of the Miracle League, was on hand to see the adapted baseball league’s new video board operational. The board, located past center field on the Miracle League field, was put in place before the spring league started and reveals a huge photo and name of each player while at bat.

“It was just a pick up game, but our players a chance to feel like they are part of a team. There is a real sense of comradery,” she said.

Aertker recalled finishing a game one time and noticing two players from the Miracle League were playing on an open field with a couple of boys from another league.

“It was just a pick up game, but our players in their wheelchairs were playing alongside these other players. I had tears in my eyes, and a big smile on my face and I remember thinking, ‘This is why we do this,” she said.

A pediatric ICU nurse, Aertker was working in Dallas when she first stumbled across a Miracle League field in Frisco, Texas. The find was a win-win for Aertker who immediately saw the possibilities of helping children with a pasttime she loved.

“It grew up around baseball,” she said, explaining how she spent most of her childhood summers either playing softball or watching baseball.

Her family ties to the game run deep: her dad is a part owner of Cypress Mounds, a baseball and softball complex in Baton Rouge some 45 years ago.

“It (the St. Louis King of France softball field) was a great place to grow up, and I learned a lot of skills. I can keep a score book and make change (from the concession stand),” she said.

In 2008, Aertker returned to Baton Rouge to help build the Miracle League field, which is accessible for wheelchairs and features a rubberized field.

She said her family has been instrumental in the league’s success and continues to play a vital role in the day-to-day operations, especially since Aertker moved to Crowley with her husband and growing family.

“Our first season (in 2011), we had two teams and the kids played each other for every game,” Aertker explained.

This spring, 85 kids signed up to play, she said, noting that nothing could happen without volunteers.

“Since each player is assigned an individual buddy for each game, more kids playing means more volunteers. But Aertker said they have relied on people from all walks of life to help, and she continues to appreciate the team spirit of Baton Rouge.

“One thing that our players love is to have others come out and cheer for them during the game. They just love it, especially when they see other baseball players out there,” she said.

If you would like to add your voice to the Miracle League cheer section, games are held Tuesday and Thursday nights starting at 6 at Cypress Mounds. The league plays during the spring and fall seasons only. For more information or to volunteer, contact miracleleaguecm.org.
Congolese priest: Demand for cellphone metals thwarts efforts to end war

MANCHESTER, England – (CNS) Global demand for metallic ores used in cellphones is thwarting efforts to end war and violence in Congo, said an African priest.

Any person who possesses a cellphone or other electronic device with components derived from such “conflict minerals” is benefiting from bloodshed, said Father Richard Muembo, rector of a Congolese seminary fire-bombed earlier this year.

“Anyone who uses modern technology nowadays is in some way using the blood of the Congolese people,” he said in an interview with the United Kingdom branch of Aid to the Church in Need, a pontifical foundation helping persecuted Christians.

“Looters from all over the world come here to exploit the country,” the priest said in an April 19 statement by the charity.

Fighting in Congo is being perpetuated by a struggle over access to such ores as coltan, from which niobium and tantalum are extracted, he suggested. The ore is used in the production of batteries for smartphones, computers and GPS devices.

Catholic leaders have worked to end the violence between the government and the criminal gangs and armed groups, which sell the ores to buy arms, only to find themselves the target of attacks.

The Seminary of Christ the King, of which Father Muembo is rector, was partially destroyed in a firebomb attack Feb. 18 after church leaders refused to allow it to be turned into a military outpost.

The 77 seminarians were forced to flee the complex in Malole in the central Kasai region of the country to continue their studies 250 miles from their classrooms.

On March 31, Catholic schools were burned and the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in Luebo, near Malole, was desecrated by militia fighters.

Human rights monitors reported attacks on church properties in other parts of the country in early April.

“Schools have been closed, hunger reigns, parts of the population are hiding in the jungle,” Father Muembo said. “We dream of an end to this pointless war.”

The Congolese bishops’ conference launched a mediation bid after opposition leaders accused President Joseph Kabila of seeking to retain power when his second and final term expired Dec. 20. The bishops brokered a peace accord, signed Dec. 31. In late March, the bishops abandoned attempts to arrange a government-opposition power-sharing settlement and, within days, violence erupted in eastern Congo.

“The Catholic Church is highly respected in this country because it has never let itself be co-opted by any political group,” Father Muembo said. “Now attempts are being made to emboil the church in the conflict.”

Father Apollinaire Gikongo, a member of staff at the seminary, said: “It is necessary ... to say no to violence, to the industry of death, to the arms factories and the arms trade.

“Technology should make lives easier, not end lives,” he said in the Aid to the Church in Need statement.

Western firms have been accused of working with violent gangs in Congo to obtain minerals used for producing electronic gadgets and of allowing trade in resources to perpetuate human rights violations.

In February, the chairman of the U.S. bishops’ International Policy Committee wrote to the acting head of the National Security Council urging President Donald Trump not to suspend the rules making companies declare if they used “conflict minerals.”

A 2012 Securities and Exchange Commission ruling, required by Section 1502 of the Dodd-Frank Act, does not prohibit companies from buying such minerals, but was designed to force companies to disclose the chain of custody of such minerals in an effort to keep them from helping armed groups, particularly in Congo.

According to April 20 reports in the U.S. media, House Republicans have unveiled a draft of a Dodd-Frank Act replacement, called the Financial Choice Act, and on April 26 will hold a committee hearing on the bill.

GLOBAL DEMAND FOR METALLIC ORES USED IN SMARTPHONES ARE THwarting EFFORTS TO END WAR AND VIOLENCE IN CONGO, THE PRIESTS SAY. PHOTO PROVIDED BY CNS

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The Easter Triduum

Compassion to Joy

St. Joseph Cathedral was the site for the annual Chrism Mass, celebrated by Bishop Robert W. Muench and the clergy of the diocese. The bishop blesses the oils to be used at church parishes throughout the year and those oils are distributed at the end of the Mass. 

Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

Devin Joseph, a student at Assumption High School, was realistic in portraying the anguish Jesus must have felt on the march to Calvary. Youth ministers Tawana Williams and Jerry Carter produced the reenactment. Actors ranged in age from elementary school to late 20s. 

Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

Father Michael Alleli, pastor at St. Louis King of France Church in Baton Rouge, washes the feet of parishioners during the Holy Thursday evening Mass. Following the Mass, the altar was stripped and Eucharistic adoration was held until 10 p.m. 

Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

High-school dancers perform during a reenactment of the Passion at St. Augustine Chapel in Klotzville on Good Friday. The dancers included Tymour Washington, Keondra Bleye and Alysa Adams. 

Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

Clergy members at Holy Ghost Church in Hammond gathered around the fire before the start of the Easter Vigil Mass, which was celebrated by pastor Father Robert Mercier OF. The candle was then lit, above, and a procession to the altar followed. 

Photo by Debby Shellby | The Catholic Commentator

Following the reenactment, Father Gordian Iwuji MSP, pastor at St. Benedict the Moor Church in Bertrandville and St. Augustine, celebrated the Good Friday service, including reading of the Passion. Before the service and veneration of the cross, Father Iwuji lay prostrate before the covered crucifix. 

Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

Father Michael Aleli, pastor at St. Louis King of France Church in Baton Rouge, washes the feet of parishioners during the Holy Thursday evening Mass. Following the Mass, the altar was stripped and Eucharistic adoration was held until 10 p.m. 

Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

High-school dancers perform during a reenactment of the Passion at St. Augustine Chapel in Klotzville on Good Friday. The dancers included Tymour Washington, Keondra Bleye and Alysa Adams. 

Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

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Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

Father Michael Aleli, pastor at St. Louis King of France Church in Baton Rouge, washes the feet of parishioners during the Holy Thursday evening Mass. Following the Mass, the altar was stripped and Eucharistic adoration was held until 10 p.m. 

Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

High-school dancers perform during a reenactment of the Passion at St. Augustine Chapel in Klotzville on Good Friday. The dancers included Tymour Washington, Keondra Bleye and Alysa Adams. 

Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator
Cristo Rey freshman uses running to encourage struggling youth

By Rachele Smith
The Catholic Commentator

Erion Davison, a student at Cristo Rey Baton Rouge Franciscan High School, has a message for other young adults: “Keep running.”

As a track and field athlete, Davison’s catchphrase and interest in running is obvious, but the honor student doesn’t just want to support other runners. Rather, Davison wants to reach out to anyone confused or discouraged, hoping her own life struggles, coupled with her strong faith, can encourage young people in all aspects of their lives.

“I wanted to do something for teens,” Davison said, explaining why she decided to write her book, “Keep Running: How to Endure When Life Looks Impossible”.

Davison said that many might wonder how a high school freshman can write a book about life.

“They might think I haven’t experienced very much,” she said.

However, Davison remarked that she has endured “significant” events in her short life, and she believes those times can be used to help others.

“I want teens to understand that no matter what you go through, you have to keep pushing. You just have to keep running because God will see you through,” she added.

With chapters featuring titles, such as, “On Your Mark, Get Ready, Set, Go,” “The Run Without Daddy,” “Sprinting Through Relationships” and others, Davison continues the track allusions throughout her book, focusing on the reader’s need to win the race in life that “God has called each of us to do.”

A New Orleans native who moved to Baton Rouge with her mom and siblings after Hurricane Katrina, Davison credits one of her mentors, Tremaine Sterling, with giving her the confidence to write the book.

Davison remarked that as a student author, she had to stay organized and focused and had to make sure she didn’t fall behind with homework and preparing for tests.

She admitted there were some difficult days, yet she added Sterling, who is the founder of the 29:11 Mentorship Program, a Baton Rouge organization geared to helping young people achieve their potential, was always there to offer wisdom and point out the wonderful things God had planned for her “even before anyone ever had an opinion” about her.

Sterling said he met with Davison regularly for many months to help her meet her writing goals. As the author of his own book, “Life is a Trip: How to Navigate Between the Twists and Turns,” Sterling used his own experience in writing and publishing to guide Davison, who at 16-years-old will be transitioning out of the 29:11 program soon.

He explained that while there is no established project for a student’s final year in the non-profit organization, many of the students are grateful for what they have received during their time in the program and want to give back to others.

In addition to Davison’s book, another student in the program is preparing a CD to help others, she said.

“Our goal (in the mentorship program) is once you get out, you can now become (to others) what you once saw,” he added.

Since her book’s release, Davison has had many opportunities to tell others about her work, including a “book talk” at the Baton Rouge main library.

She said she has received positive feedback and many good things from the book.

Davison, who hopes to attend Pensacola Christian College in Pensacola, Florida and pursue a career in sports therapy, remains hopeful that her book will encourage others to turn to God and carry out his purpose in their lives.

Published early this year by Keen Vision Publishing, the 139-page softcover features motivational and faith-based prose as well as an opportunity to answer questions and journal with “Coach E” at the end of each chapter.

For more information on Davison’s book, visit her website at eriond.org.

Cristo Rey Baton Rouge Franciscan High School student Erion Davison holds a copy of her recently published book, “Keep Running: How to Endure When Life Looks Impossible.” Photo by Rachele Smith | The Catholic Commentator

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PASSION PLAY – Eighth-grade students at St. Jean Vianney School in Baton Rouge presented the Living Way of the Cross to the school community on April 6. Students participating in the reenactment were Ethan Hames as Jesus; Riley Waguespack as Mary; Braxton Impson, Mason Braud, Landon O’Connor, Jacob Mougeot and Steven Reed as soldiers; Sydney Bingham, Jenny Pham, Jonathan Moya, John Paul Guidry, Sena Johnston, Allie Domino, Charlee Musso and Ben Messina as followers; and Emma Miller, Melissa Munoz, Aeryn Miller and Kristina Ton as the women with Mary. Photo provided by Bridgette DiGerolamo | St. Jean Vianney School

PORTRAYING JESUS – Holy Ghost School in Hammond first graders performed their annual Easter play for parents and students on two consecutive days. Dr. Gina Anthon wrote much of the original music and the first-grade teachers wrote the script based on the book “The Tale of the Three Trees.” Performers and narrators led the audience through the sacrifices of each tree. Students dressed as trees, woodcutters, angels, the Holy Family, disciples, mourners and Jesus as they helped bring the story to life. Pictured as disciples of Jesus, from left, front row, are Aidan Corley, Braeden Pierre, Gavin Smith, Mason Mattingly, Andrew Clark and Corbin Muguira; back row, Luke Sills, Owen Orlando and Porter Foster as Jesus who calms the storm. Tyler Bowers and Alex Larson portray the story of the second tree that gets cut and becomes the ship that Jesus navigated. Photo provided by Cindy Wagner | Holy Ghost School

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The Catholic Commentator

ENTERTAINMENT

April 28, 2017

MOVIE REVIEWS

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

The Blackcoat’s Daughter
2/24
Stylish and very adult demon-possessed drama set at a Catholic boarding school in the dead of winter. There an old-fashioned fiend complete with two horns inhabits a glowing basement coal furnace and uses a hallway pay phone to command a gloomy freshman (Kiernan Shipka) to carry out murderous sacrifices.

The Case for Christ
PG
As his wife (Erika Christensen) undergoes a gradual conversion to evangelical Christianity, sparking discord in their marriage an aggressively atheistic Chicago journalist (Mike Vogel) uses his investigative skills to try to disprove the resurrection and with it the faith. Director Jonathan M. Gunn’s screen version of Lee Strobel’s memoir intertwines in the story his wife’s conversion with the problematic relationship between the protagonist and his father (Robert Forster). While not as heavy-handed as many message movies the film which is acceptable for a wide audience and makes a potentially valuable educational resource succeeds more as a vindication of the rationality of belief in Jesus than as entertainment. Graphic descriptions and images of scourging and crucifixion a single crass term. A-II; PG

The Fate of the Furious
Universal
Grown viewers willing to kick reality to the curb will have fun with this preposterous but lively auto-themed action adventure the seventh sequel to 2001’s “The Fast and the Furious.” Blackmailed by an elusive criminal mastermind (Charlize Theron) whose cyber skills keep her virtually untraceable the leader (Vin Diesel) of a team of car racers which includes his wife (Michelle Rodriguez) and a former federal agent (Dwayne Johnson) turns on his friends and aids the villain in her bid for world domination. Director F. Gary Gray and screenwriter Chris Morgan put loyalty (even under strain) first and safety last as their globetrotting ensemble which also includes Jason Statham as a now-imprisoned veteran of Britain’s special forces hunts down an opponent so powerful she has her own AWACS-style airplane. Doses of humor and clever resourcefulness help to divert attention from dicey us-against-the-world moral values though the sketchy ethics do come tricked out with distinctly Christian detailing. Frequent gunplay and hand-to-hand combat but with little gore, brief partial nudity a marital bedroom scene an adultery theme several uses of profanity a few milder oaths a single rough and many crude terms an obscene gesture. A-III; PG-13

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IN CASE YOU MISSED OUR HOLY WEEK PROGRAMMING

The reporter is working on as well as with a low-key story of the central character’s strong bond and the problematic relationship between the protagonist and his father (Robert Forster). While not as heavy-handed as many message movies the film which is acceptable for a wide audience and makes a potentially valuable educational resource succeeds more as a vindication of the rationality of belief in Jesus than as entertainment. Graphic descriptions and images of scourging and crucifixion a single crass term. A-II; PG

Smurfs: The Lost Village
Columbia
Colorful but unengaging children’s cartoon in which as the blue elves of the title Mandy Patinkin voices their leader continue to fight themselves against the schemes of the evil wizard (voice of Rainn Wilson) who has long sought to steal their youth-restoring power-bestowing “essence” the sole female among them (voiced by Demi Lovato) has an identity crisis which leads to a journey of discovery on which she’s joined by a trio of her male counterparts (voices of Joe Manganiello Jack McBrayer and Danny Pudi). In helming the third in a series of feature-length outings for the creatures first dreamt up by Belgian cartoonist Peyo director Kelly Asbury eschews the mix of animation and live action used in the two previous films. While the result is visually pleasing and screenwriters Stacey Harmon and Pamela Ribon’s script promotes teamwork and good moral choices the story their telling to satisfy not only the least demanding youngsters. Occasional peril so mild scatological humor A-IV; PG

Gifted
Fox Searchlight
A 7-year-old math prodigy (McKenna Grace) gets caught up in a custody battle between the easy-going uncle (Chris Evans) by whom she has been raised since her mother committed suicide during her infancy and her hard-driving grandmother (Lindsay Duncan). At issue is the degree to which she should forsake a normal life to concentrate on her studies. Director Marc Webb’s endearing and well-acted drama which also features Jenny Slate as the girl’s caring teacher, is briefly marred by the young heroine’s exposure to the aftermath of a bedroom encounter and her use of a vulgar expression. Though fleeting these elements of Tom Flynn’s script, together with some other adult fare, make what might have been a family-friendly movie into one exclusively suitable for grownups and perhaps older teens. Nongraphic pre-marital sexual activity, mature references, including a suicide theme, a single rough term, a couple of uses each of crude and crass language. A-III; PG

Unforgettable
Warner Bros.
Feverish domestic drama in which an obsessive ex-wife (Katherine Heigl) conspires against her former husband’s (Geoff Stults) fiancee (Rosario Dawson), eventually framing her rival for murder. Director Denise Di Novi keeps the pot boiling but, together with screenwriter Matthew Hedges the story the tell so well satisfy not only the least demanding youngsters. Occasional peril so mild scatological humor A-IV; PG

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

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Pope to canonize Fatima seers, other saints

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Pope Francis will declare the sainthood of Blessed Jacinta Marto and Blessed Francisco Marto, two of the shepherd children who saw Mary in Fatima, Portugal, during his visit to the site of the apparitions May 13.

The date was announced April 20 during an “ordinary public consistory,” a meeting of the pope, cardinals and promoters of sainthood causes that formally ends the sainthood process.

Cardinal Angelo Amato, prefect of the Congregation for Saints’ Causes, addressing the assembly noted that of the future saints considered at the consistory, five were children or young teenagers.

“In our time, where young people often become objects of exploitation and commerce, these young people excel as witnesses of truth and freedom, messengers of peace (and) of a new humanity reconciled in love,” the cardinal said.

At the same consistory, the pope set Oct. 15 as the date for the canonizations of two priests and two groups of martyrs, including Blessed Cristobal, Blessed Antonio and Blessed Juan – also known as the “Child Martyrs of Tlaxcala” – who were among the first native converts in Mexico. They were killed between 1527 and 1529 for refusing to renounce the faith and return to their people’s ancient traditions.

Pope Francis will preside over the canonization ceremony of the Fatima visionaries during his visit to Fatima May 12-13.

The pilgrimage will mark the 100th anniversary of the Marian apparitions, which began May 13, 1917, when 9-year-old Francisco and 7-year-old Jacinta, along with their cousin Lucia dos Santos, reported seeing the Virgin Mary. The apparitions continued once a month until Oct. 13, 1917, and later were declared worthy of belief by the Catholic Church.

A year after the apparitions, both of the Marto children became ill during an influenza epidemic that plagued Europe. Francisco died April 4, 1919, at the age of 10, while Jacinta succumbed to her illness Feb. 20, 1920, at the age of 9.

Francisco’s and Jacinta’s cause for canonization was stalled for decades due to a debate on whether non-martyred children have the capacity to understand heroic virtues at a young age. However, in 1979, St. John Paul II allowed their cause to proceed; he declared them venerable in 1989 and beatified them in 2000.
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ominational Catholic, Protestant,
Evangelical, Eastern Rite, Rus-
sian Orthodox, or Coptic believe in Jesus? He, of course, is regarded by most of the world, including Muslims, Jews, Hindus and Buddhists as one of history's greatest moral teachers. That, however, is far from the profession of faith that we as Christians make along with St. Thomas the Apostle, "My Lord and my God." When we heard in last Sunday's Gospel reading, Jesus was the baby boy born to Mary of Nazareth in the manger in Bethlehem. He was truly one of us. He was "son of man" as he called himself, a human being. He was also infinitely more, the son of God, and therefore our Lord and our God.

How we have come to believe in a savior who is true God and true man, a savior who predicted 500 years before his birth in the Old Testament book of Isaiah the prophet to be "Emmanuel" or "God with us." It all began with an empty tomb.

The apostles had been following a young, itinerant rabbi, nothing too unusual for young Jewish men in Jesus' day. A strong expectation of a messiah, a savior, had grown among the whole Jewish population. Palestine was a conquered country suffering under the dominating rule of Rome. It had a history of being subjected by one powerful nation after another for almost 1,000 years Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks and then Romans. The Jews' suffering and their belief that each time their God who delivered them fills many of the Old Testament books. First century A.D. was a time that cried out for a savior. Jesus seemed to fill that role in many ways. He healed the sick and the dying, he fed people, he preached a God who wanted the welfare of his people. Could he have been one sent by God to deliver them one more time from oppression? God's ways are not men's ways. Jesus preached a gospel of radical love, but it had nothing to do with the overthrow of Roman rule. He was only a threat to the religious leaders of his country whom he criticized for their rigidity and lack of concern for the poor. The Roman governor Pilate recognized Jesus' innocence but was not willing to risk his position by allowing even a mini-upris-

ing by the mob yelling for Jesus' condemnation. So Jesus was crucified, wrapped in a burial shroud and hastily placed in the tomb of a faithful and wealthy Jew, Joseph of Arimathea, before the Sabbath began. There had been no time to anoint the body with burial spices as was Jewish custom. So early Sunday morning after the Sabbath rest had been observed, Mary Magdalene and other women went to the tomb to anoint the body. They found the stone rolled back and were in-

structed by an angel to tell the apostles that Jesus has risen. On their way, Jesus meets them and tells them to report his rising and living to the apostles. In all of the Gospels it is noted that the burial clothes are left behind. If anyone had stolen the body, they would not have unwrapped it from its shroud. It would have been easier to carry the body wrapped. In St. John's Gospel, "the beloved apostle" takes note of this and "believes." At this point, none of the other apostles seem to understand fully what had happened. At first, they had not believed Mary Magda-

lène's report of having seen Jesus alive. But then Jesus appeared to St. Peter, then to all the apostles in the upper room, except for St. Thomas who was absent, then to two disciples on the road to Emmaus, again to the apostles including St. Thomas, and according to St. Paul, to 500 disciples (1 Cor 15:5-8), then to St. James, Jesus' relative, and "Last of all ... he appeared to me (Paul)."

At his second appearance to the Apostles, St. Thomas the doubter became St. Thomas who fully understood who Jesus was. "My Lord and my God," he cried, after Jesus had shown him his wounds.

This is what we believe too. We have not seen the risen Lord, but we have the testimony of those who did, those who saw and believed. And much more, we can read in the Acts of the Apostles how their belief, strengthened by the spirit of the risen Christ, never failed them again. All but one apostle died a martyr. That same spirit is promised to us by Jesus in the Gospels. It is "the advocate" Jesus promised his church at the Last Supper. Through his spirit given to us, Jesus keeps his promise to be with us always.

Why then are we Christian? Because, if by the grace of God which Christ won for us, we keep our faith in him, and we try to follow him to our death, then we will share his resurrection. Our life has integrity and purpose. Our death is not a final ending but a passage to an eternity with God and our loved ones. Because of Jesus' resurrection, we can say with St. Paul (1 Cor 15:54):

"Death is swallowed up in victory Where, O death is your victory? Where, O death is your sting?"

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.

PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PRAY FOR US

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>Sr. Dulce Maria Flores HMSS</td>
<td>Sr. lanette's report of having seen Jesus alive. But then Jesus appeared to St. Peter, then to all the apostles in the upper room, except for St. Thomas who was absent, then to two disciples on the road to Emmaus, again to the apostles including St. Thomas, and according to St. Paul, to 500 disciples (1 Cor 15:5-8), then to St. James, Jesus’ relative, and “Last of all ... he appeared to me (Paul).” At his second appearance to the Apostles, St. Thomas the doubter became St. Thomas who fully understood who Jesus was. “My Lord and my God,” he cried, after Jesus had shown him his wounds. This is what we believe too. We have not seen the risen Lord, but we have the testimony of those who did, those who saw and believed. And much more, we can read in the Acts of the Apostles how their belief, strengthened by the spirit of the risen Christ, never failed them again. All but one apostle died a martyr. That same spirit is promised to us by Jesus in the Gospels. It is “the advocate” Jesus promised his church at the Last Supper. Through his spirit given to us, Jesus keeps his promise to be with us always. Why then are we Christian? Because, if by the grace of God which Christ won for us, we keep our faith in him, and we try to follow him to our death, then we will share his resurrection. Our life has integrity and purpose. Our death is not a final ending but a passage to an eternity with God and our loved ones. Because of Jesus’ resurrection, we can say with St. Paul (1 Cor 15:54): “Death is swallowed up in victory Where, O death is your victory? Where, O death is your sting?” 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 <a href="mailto:johnnycarville@gmail.com">johnnycarville@gmail.com</a>.</td>
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Bishop Muench’s annual Chrism Mass homily

With great joy, I welcome everyone to this Chrism Mass. This is the only annual diocesan assembly that brings together priests, deacons, women and men religious, seminarians, lay faithful from our various church parishes and institutions, (Catholic) Life Center personnel, Catholic high school students and cathedral musicians. We represent in microcosm our entire local church.

Today we remember with deep fondness members of our clergy who, since last year’s Chrism Mass, have been received into eternal life: Msgrs. William Green and Gerald Lefebvre, Father Michael Collins, Deacons Peter Schlette and Milton Schanzbach. “May they rest in peace. Amen.” We also recognize the ordination anniversaries of priests in our diocese: 45 years: Fathers Peter Callery SJ, Leonard Kraus SJ, Sam Maranto CSsR; 40 years: Brother Ray Hebert SC; 35 years: Fathers Randy Cuevas and Philip Spano; 25 years: Fathers Denis Kraus SJ, Sam Maranto CSsR; 40 years: Brother Schlette and Milton Ohankwere MSP. “May God, who has begun the good work in you, continue to bring it to fulfillment. Amen.”

This church blessing of the oils can be dated back to the Easter Vigil in the early 2000s. By the 400s it had been transferred to Holy Thursday. In 1967 (Blessed) Pope Paul VI permitted the ceremony to be held before Holy Thursday to facilitate better attendance, as well as provided assembled priests to renew the promises they made at ordination. This Eucharist highlights the unity of bishop and priests, on the anticipated feast day of priests on Holy Thursday, when Jesus ordained the apostles. The ceremony involves the blessing of three oils, the oil of the sick (used for the anointing of the sick), the oil of the catechumens (used at baptism), and the chrism in which balsam, an aromatic resin, is added (used for baptism, confirmation, ordination of priests and bishops and dedication of churches). The oils blessed today for use until the following year’s Mass will be caringly brought to local church parishes and Catholic institutions by many of you. Through our participation today we become symbolically present wherever and whenever these oils are administered in the diocese through the coming 12 months. What an exalted privilege. May I also suggest we pray for those who will be anointed with any of these oils this coming year.

The oil of the olive tree has life-giving properties of healing, nutrition, warmth and light. “Anointing, in biblical and other ancient symbolism, is rich in meaning. Oil is a sign of abundance and joy. It cleanses and limbers. Oil is a sign of healing, since it is nothing to bruises and wounds, and it makes radiant with beauty, health and strength. Anointing has all these meanings in the sacramental life. The anointing of the sick expresses healing and comfort. The pre-baptismal anointing with the oil of catechumens signifies cleansing and strengthening. The baptismal anointing with sacred chrism in confirmation and ordination is the sign of consecration” (The Catechism of the Catholic Church #1293-1294). In her intriguing book, “From the Beginning to Baptism, Scientific and Sacred Stories of Water, Oil and Fire,” theologian-scientist Dominican Sister Linda Gibler traces the sacramental story this pervasiveness of oil shifts from the inorganic to the organic to the human. The oils received here will be used in future Chrism Masses. The oils will also be used to bless the sacramentals of our faith: the holy Eucharist in the tabernacle. The anointing of the sick has all these meanings in the sacramental life. The anointing of the sick expresses healing and comfort. The pre-baptismal anointing with the oil of catechumens signifies cleansing and strengthening. The baptismal anointing with sacred chrism in confirmation and ordination is the sign of consecration” (The Catechism of the Catholic Church #1293-1294).

From The Bishop

Bishop Robert W. Muench

Church or Death Valley?

I would like to express an observation regarding people’s conduct in church. My wife and I were honored to represent our parish and receive the blessed oils from the bishop at the Chrism Mass. We arrived about 30 minutes prior to Mass starting.

After we took our seats, to spend time in prayer preparing spiritually was impossible. One would have thought we were in Death Valley on the LSU campus.

People were talking out loud, visiting with others; the couple sitting next to us were making comments regarding other people in the church. The only thing missing was food and drink.

Sad to say, this is not the only time I have experienced similar conduct. Once, when I was driving a truck, I stopped at a Catholic Church when Mass had just let out. Naturally, there were people still in church talking so loud prayer was impossible. The priest had to come out of the sacristy to ask them to be quiet.

Some have forgotten that Christ is still present in the holy Eucharist in the tabernacle. Catholic Churches were once known for their quiet, which allowed for peaceful prayer and meditation.

There is already too much noise in the world. Our churches must be places of quiet. “Be silent before the Lord God! For the day of the Lord is at hand; the Lord has consecrated his guests.” Zep 1:7 RSV CE.

Duane Breaux

Pierre Part

Letter to the Editor
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While we at The Catholic Com-mentator do our best to bring re-liable advertisers to our readers, we are not responsible for any claims made by any advertiser.

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For Sale

Georgetown University, Jesuits apologize for roles in sale of slaves

WASHINGTON (CNS) – Georgetown University and the Society of Jesus’ Maryland province apologized April 18 for their roles in the 1838 sale of 272 enslaved individuals for the university’s benefit.

More than 100 descendants attended a morning “Liturgy of Remembrance, Contrition and Hope” that the university created in partnership with descendants, the Archdiocese of Washington and the Society of Jesus in the United States.

“Today the Society of Jesus, who helped to establish Georgetown University and whose leaders enslaved and mercilessly sold your ancestors, stands before you to say that we have greatly sinned,” said Jesuit Father Timothy Kesicki, president of the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States, during the liturgy. “We pray with you today because we have greatly sinned and because we are profoundly sorry.”

The event took place the day after the District of Columbia marked Emancipation Day, which celebrates the emancipation of slaves in Washington April 16, 1862. This year, the local holiday was moved to April 17 because the actual day fell on Easter Sunday.

In early April, Georgetown announced plans for the liturgy and a renaming ceremony for two buildings on campus previously named for priests who sold women, children and men into slavery for financial gain in 1838.

Father Thomas Mulledy SJ, as Georgetown president, authorized the transaction, and Father William McSherry SJ also was involved in the 1838 sale.

Mulledy Hall was renamed after Isaac Hawkins, the first enslaved person listed in the sale documents. McSherry Hall is now named after Anne Marie Becraft, a teacher and free woman of color who established one of the first schools for black girls in the District of Columbia. She later joined the Oblate Sisters of Providence.

Sandra Green Thomas, a descendant of the slaves and president of the GU272 Descendants Association, spoke at length during the liturgy about the 272 enslaved people, her ancestors and her Catholic faith.

“The ability to transcend the realities of this life in this country have been a necessary tool in the survival kit of my people,” she said. “For the 272, I believe that their Catholic faith enabled them to transcend. No matter how incongruous their existence was with the gospel of God’s love and protection, they clung to their faith.”

President John J. DeGioia of Georgetown also spoke during the liturgy, saying that “slavery remains the original evil of our republic.”

The university “was complicit in” that evil, “a sin that tore apart families,” he said. “Through great violence, (it) denied and rejected the dignity and humanity of our fellow sisters and brothers. We lay this truth bare -- in sorrowful apology and communal reckoning.”

Father Robert Hussey SJ provincial of his order’s Maryland province, and DeGioia met with descendants.

Karran Harper Royal, another descendant, thanked Georgetown for its steps toward acknowledging ties with slavery, particularly the students who took their.

“The actions of Georgetown students have placed all of us on a journey together toward honoring our enslaved ancestors by working toward healing and reconciliation,” she said. “Our history has shown us that the vestiges of slavery are a continuum that began with the kidnapping of our people from our motherland to keeping them in bondage with the brutality of American chattel slavery, Jim Crow, segregation … the school-to-prison pipeline and the over-incarceration of people of color.”

The floods came around the same time the pantry had entered into a partnership with the Baton Rouge Food Pantry so a trailer was needed to transport supplies from Baton Rouge to St. Amant.

Sources said the Holy Rosary food pantry serves about 20 to 25 families a month.

“This is going to be wonderful,” Deacon Gonzales said. “We can get food much easier and if we have something that is hot, we can transport it using warmers or if it is cold using the refrigerators. We would have been able (to purchase the equipment in the future) but now we have all of the tools.”

He said the church will now be able to deliver food faster and fits in with the church’s mission.

“By definition we are service, we serve God’s people,” Deacon Gonzales said. “The community response is one of gratitude.”

The new trailer was used to carry water and other supplies during the annual Good Friday pilgrimage from Union to Holy Rosary.
BISHOPS ▼
From page 1

ing the death penalty, it will strengthen our identity as a pro-
life state by continuing to build a culture of life through the laws
enacted.

Claitor, who once worked as a prosecutor in New Orleans, cred-
ited his Catholic faith as to why his views on capital punishment
have evolved over time to where he is now a staunch opponent.
Along with his faith, Claitor also cited costs and lack of effective-
ness in his opposition.

Landry, a former director of the Louisiana State Police and
a one-time capital punishment proponent, has publicly ques-
tioned if indeed the death pen-
alty makes Louisiana a safer
place, as some have insisted. He
also paralleled Claitor’s concerns
about cost, especially in a cash-
strapped state such as Louisiana.

If passed, neither of the mea-
sures would change the sen-
tences of the 74 inmates already
don death row at the Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola. If
passed, neither of the measures
would change the sentences of
the 74 inmates already on death
row at the Louisiana State Peni-
tentiary in Angola.

The Department of Correc-
tions noted that it spends about
$1.52 million housing death row
inmates, and the Louisiana Pub-
lie Defender Board reported it
spends about 28 percent of its
total budget defending capital
cases, contributing to chronic
underfunding of public services
for non-capital cases.

The bishops’ statement began
by stepping back in time, recall-
ing Louisiana recorded its first
legal execution in 1722. Since
then, the statement said, “we
have dealt with the stain of the
dead penalty carried out by our
state in the names of its citizens.”

Agreeing with Claitor and
Landry, the bishops said it is clear
the use of the death penalty does
not serve as an instrument to ad-
dress the deep-rooted issues that
are the cause of widespread vio-
lent crime within today’s society.
They added that capital punish-
ment is a so-called solution that
“seduces” citizens into believing
that executing a convicted killer
solves a problem.

“In fact, (it) forces us further
to culture of death,” the state-
ment said. “In truth, our culture
frequently mirrors a culture of
death rather than one of life.”

Since 1984, 40 individuals
sentenced to death in Louisiana
have been exonerated. In nine
of those cases the charges were
dismissed, while another was ac-
quitted in a retrial.

Nationally, there have been
158 exonerations since 1973.

Only one execution has been
performed in Louisiana since
2002.

Citing St. John Paul II, the
bishops stressed “we are to up-
hold human dignity which does
d not discriminate between the
innocent and the guilty. Given
is valued above and beyond all
else, we must advocate for an al-
ternative to the death penalty.

“We must ask ourselves
whether or not there is vengeance
in our hearts. In many ways that
which we fear—violence itself—
has forced us to become pro-
ponents of violence. Just as the
pursuit of justice should never
be perverted by vengeance, fear
should never darken the ever-
shining light of life.”

The bishops believe life in
sentence without parole is an ap-
propriate alternative for those
convicted of first-degree murder
because it reflects a culture of
life by valuing life itself.

Although aware of the pain
and grief the victims suffer, the
bishops said their opposition
to capital punishment is not in-
tended to diminish the suffering
of those individuals.

“On the contrary it is a state-
ment which affirms the lives of
those lost and the ultimate value
of life in general,” the statement
said. “The stark reality is that cap-
ital punishment fails to bring back
life that has been lost. It does not
provide healing, reconciliation or
even peace to those impacted. Our
mercyful heavenly Father does
provide such things to us when we
turn to him and ask for his love to
be poured out onto us.

“The time is upon us to affirm
life without exception here with-
in our great state of Louisiana.”

A Disciple’s Journey

During the Easter Season, we are
reminded of the sacrifice He made
and of those who followed in His
footsteps so long ago. For them, weakness and doubt
became unshakeable faith. They went forward—even
unto death—in their roles as disciples, continuing His
ministry on earth.

As modern day disciples, our challenge is to transform
God’s blessings into a visible sign of His presence in our
world today. We are His physical body on earth, and
everything we do can be a reflection of His love. Our
journey through life is not always easy. Sometimes the
road is steep, and there is no way of knowing what waits
for us around the next corner. Regardless of the path we
take, Jesus is always with us.

When He said, “For I was hungry and you gave me
food…” He was speaking across time and space to all of
us. At St. Vincent de Paul, we can see His face in every person
who waits in line for our daily meal, in the faces of the
homeless who come to us for shelter and those who hope
that our pharmacy can ease their suffering. When we help
someone in need, we are extending His hand to them.

This year, our goal is to serve over 250,000 meals,
provide 30,000 guest nights of shelter and fill over
20,000 prescriptions. Please consider making a gift to
Christ’s ministry to the poor. You can feed the hungry at
our Dining Room, provide shelter to the homeless at the
Bishop Ott Shelter and Myram’s House, or fill
prescriptions for the needy at our Community Pharmacy.

Yes, I want to make a difference.

My gift of $ is enclosed.

Name: ____________________________
City: ______________________ State: ______ Zip: ______
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Mail your gift to St. Vincent de Paul, P.O. Box 127, Baton
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You can also give online at www.svdpbr.org.

Keep on Trucking — The St. George
Fire Department and a local company
recently visited Our
Lady of the Lake
Children’s Hospital
to give patients an
up-close look at
their fire and ce-
ment trucks. They
also previewed the
annual “Touch-A-
Truck” event, which is a unique, interac-
tive, one-day event
that allows children to see, touch and explore their favorite big trucks, vehicles, heavy equipment
and more, as well as meet the individuals who protect, serve and build Baton Rouge. Touch-A-Truck
will take place at BREC’s Fairgrounds on April 29. For more information, visit www.juniorleaguebr.
org/touch-a-truck/. Photo provided by Caroline Isemann | Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center

Bishop Robert W. Muench is shown during one of his annual visits to Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola.
The Louisiana Conference of Catholic Bishops has endorsed two bills introduced in the state legislature that
would repeal the death penalty in Louisiana. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator
When planning a wedding, couple must adhere to diocesan policies

A couple choosing to marry in the Catholic Church should realize that their wedding is more than a public display; it is a sacrament.

A well-planned liturgy gives insight into the importance the couple has placed on their wedding. But there are some diocesan policies that pertain to weddings.

In the Diocese of Baton Rouge, weddings are not permitted on Sunday or on holy days of obligation. Nor are weddings, even without the nuptial Mass, permitted after 3 p.m. on Saturday or days preceding the holy days of obligation.

Weddings on other weekdays must be scheduled to begin no later than 8 p.m.

There is no diocesan norm prohibiting marriage during Advent or Lent. But, where weddings are scheduled during these times of the church year, the couple should be advised to take into consideration the special nature of these liturgical seasons. In practice, the décor and liturgical arrangements determined by the parish during these seasons take priority over the environment desired by the couple for the wedding.

In the Diocese of Baton Rouge, weddings are usually to be celebrated in the parish church where either the bride or groom has a domicile, quasi-domicile or month-long residence. With the permission of the pastor of either the bride or groom and the pastor of the place of the proposed wedding, a wedding may take place in some other parish church. With the additional permission of the proper religious superior, a wedding may take place in a chapel attached to a religious house.

Weddings may not be celebrated out-of-doors, in commercial halls, secular facilities or private homes.

In the Catholic Church, a marriage of two Catholics normally takes place within a Mass. For a serious reason, a marriage between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic may take place at a nuptial Mass. Permission may also be granted for a Catholic and a non-baptized person to be married at a nuptial Mass for a grave reason.

When either the bride or groom is not Catholic, the couple is encouraged to choose a wedding liturgy that does not include Communion.

The wedding liturgy is complete whether or not there is a Mass.

The bride and groom are the ones receiving the sacrament and they are also the primary ministers of the celebration. There are also many other ministers at the wedding, each having a special role in the service. Care should be given that those persons asked to be ministers during the celebration have a clear understanding about what they are being asked to do and that they are people of faith.

Because the marriage ceremony is a public act of worship as well, it should reflect the communal nature of the sacrament, with the guests serving not merely as spectators, but more as participants in the marriage celebration. They are called upon to pray, to sing and to witness the love of Christ in the church and in society, to be signs of Christian love and support for the couple as they begin their married life.

The couple is encouraged to choose the readings, prepare the general intercessions and select the music for the wedding liturgy.

The Diocese of Baton Rouge recommends that music be chosen that is technically correct and of good quality. That which is cheap or a trite musical cliché should not even be considered.

The music at weddings should serve to emphasize the sacred event, not distract from it. Music at a particular wedding must be judged on how well it will enable this particular group of people present at this wedding to express their faith. Some churches require adherence to parochial guidelines for wedding music in hope that the suggestions contained there will offer even more help in planning the celebration of the wedding.

There are several books available that contain readings from sacred Scripture that would be appropriate in planning for a wedding. These books also contain relevant commentaries on the readings to assist the couple in choosing the readings and the Gospel that would be appropriate for their wedding.
Wedding photographers can tell stories of the day

By Nancy Wiechec
Catholic News Service

PHOENIX – Many photojournalists who have lost their jobs because of shrinking news staffs are turning to wedding photography as an alternative career. That makes good sense for photographers and for wedding clients.

Editorial photography is about documenting moments and emotion and making sure you’re where the key action is. That’s exactly what couples want to have captured on their most celebrated day, said Doug Hesse, who left the world of news photography nearly 25 years ago.

“There are beautiful moments that don’t need to be set up and they are real and wonderful,” said Hesse, founder and owner of Kdog Photographers, a Kansas City, Missouri, business specializing in wedding and family photojournalism.

“We tell stories with images,” he said. “Weddings are wonderful because there’s a whole story going on, and if I stop the action to pose photos then I’m not capturing the whole story.”

He said his photographers will generally pose some traditional couple and group shots, but their focus is on candid, natural moments.

Hesse offers these tips for contracting a photojournalist for a wedding:

— Make certain that photojournalism is the style of photos that you want. In most cases photojournalists will rely on natural light, giving images greater depth and dimension. Another popular style would be portrait photography, in which many of the photos are posed or set up by the photographer. Portrait photographers usually use strobe or flash to give a well-illuminated scene.

Additionally, during the exchange of rings the wording has been slightly changed to “receive this ring” to emphasize that each one is freely giving themselves to the other.

Father Ranzino reiterated the importance of music during a wedding ceremony and said the hymns selected should reflect the Scriptures and the sacramental nature of marriage and “not music of the popular culture.”

New order of celebrating marriage has minor changes

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Long-standing wedding traditions have been retained in the new Order of Celebrating Matrimony, which was released by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, according to Father Tom Ranzino, vicar general for the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

Father Ranzino said the changes were “not dramatic” and that the wedding ceremony is the “church’s celebration of a couple’s marriage.”

“The church is just trying to uphold the dignity of both the husband and wife.”

The changes were mandatory beginning Dec. 30.

Father Ranzino said the new Order of Celebrating Matrimony sets guidelines, some optional, for the ceremony, including the opening procession, music, receiving of the rings and the readings to be used.

He said it’s important to note that the bishops are calling the wedding ceremony the Order of Matrimony, saying the word order means a “collection of rites.”

“There are three rites within the order plus the order of blessing an engaged couple, the order of blessing a married couple within Mass on the anniversary of a marriage,” Father Ranzino said. “The thing to notice about matrimony is using the word to reflect the sacrament that is between a man and a woman and the sacrament bond so permanent and God takes the initiative to invite the couple into the matrimonial union.

“So while that is significant in clarification, it also continues with the church’s belief that marriage is a sacrament and Christ is a priest invites a man and a woman into this kind of marital bond.”

He explained the new rite clarifies some of the language from the first edition, initially in both Latin and English in 1968 following the Second Vatican Council. He said there was also a desire to find a way to allow the assembly to engage in such a way to give a witness to what is happening and to do so at appropriate times to express their support for the bride and groom.

One of the changes occurs early in the ceremony with the rite calling for a hymn to be sung after the entrance procession and everyone is in place. The second occurs after the bride and groom have given their consent and the priest invites the congregation to pray or sing either a an acclamation suggested within the rite or a different acclamation.

Another change of note where the community can respond is the singing of a hymn or praise following the blessing and giving of rings.

The new rite presents the couple with myriad of options for the opening procession. Father Ranzino said the procession must take place in the “customary manner” which for liturgy is to enter with a cross. He recommends the procession to include the groomsmen if they are going to be up front with the priest, as well as the altar servers and readers.

However, Father Ranzino said the procession can be arranged as the couple wishes.

“What we are trying to do is show some equality between the husband and the wife and that they are co-partners,” Father Ranzino said. “Our long standing tradition has been to highlight the bride as if she is the only minister and that is not what we are doing.

“It’s not what we are. We are not celebrating the bride only.”

Father Ranzino encourages the bride and groom to walk in with their parents, saying “it’s a lovely way for both the bride and groom to express how much their mom and dad mean to them. He said a second processional option is for the priest and servers to process to the altar and wait for the bride and groom to enter.

Father Ranzino said the new rite mandates that at least one of the readings must explicitly speak of marriage, not just love. And the word consent is now being used and not vows.
**Wedding day details don’t compare to lifetime preparation**

**By Mike Nelson**  
Catholic News Service

In an address to engaged couples, Pope Francis said many couples are more concerned with the “exterior details” of their wedding planning such as the banquet, photographs, clothes and flowers. Those, he said, are “important for a celebration, but only if they point to the real reason for your joy: the Lord’s blessing on your love.”

Weddings are big deals, no doubt about it. But as the pope points out, it is easy for couples to lose sight of the bigger picture — the marriage — if their focus is on a single day’s celebration.

That’s where church-sponsored programs come in, to provide perspective.

“Our main challenge, as a church, is addressing a lack of understanding in what marriage is,” said Mimi Streett, director of family life ministry for the Diocese of Oakland, California.

That is why marriage ministry leaders at the diocesan and parish level emphasize the need for solid, faith-based preparation process that can include:

- Engaged Encounter weekends to focus on relationships.
- Single-day or multiple evening classes that address practical issues.
- Ongoing mentor connections with married couples that can share real-life experiences.

Each of these preparation tools emphasizes marriage as a sacrament in the Catholic Church, something quite different from what engaged couples might glean from watching reality TV shows or reading glamour magazines.

“There is so much awful promotion on some of these TV shows where they make the bride out to be the star of an event, rather than a partner in a marriage,” said Mary Fay, associate director of marriage and family life ministry in the Diocese of Albany, New York. “That’s why faith-based preparation is so important; it is a moment of evangelization for these couples.”

In the Albany Diocese, about 500 couples a year go through the diocesan program that includes daylong sessions which address sacraments, spirituality, family of origin, communication and conflict resolution skills, finance management, career and family balance, couple’s prayer, and the benefits of being part of a Christian community.

“A significant number are unchurched or inactive in the faith,” added Fay. “So they need more serious preparation.”

A married couple is present at each session to talk about and answer questions on marriage. “By seeing a positive example, it gives the engaged couples a sense of marriage as a shared life, and that’s something they don’t get from the media’s depictions of marriage,” said Fay. “And by the end of session, they are more attuned to marriage as sacrament. They see that they’re not just creating a one-time event.”

In the Diocese of Fort Worth, Texas, a mandatory three-stage preparation process includes a course in natural family planning, a retreat and an on-going connection with a sponsor couple.

The process is a means to “lay out what the church believes about the sacramental nature of marriage, and we help people discern what they believe and why, so they can be better prepared to further explore their relationship,” said Jared Zimmerer, director of adult catechesis and evangelization at St. Francis of Assisi Church in Grapevine, Texas.

“The preparation process allows couples the chance to find out where they may have different ideas — perhaps on how to raise children, or handle finances — so they can better understand and address those issues,” Zimmerer added.

As often as possible, priests or women religious are part of the presenting teams, “and it can make a huge difference,” said Streett. “At our weekend retreats, we offer engaged couples the sacrament of reconciliation, and many take advantage. And when they write to us afterward and tell us they’ve stopped cohabiting, that’s big.”

Weddings are big deals, no doubt about it. But as the pope points out, it is easy for couples to lose sight of the bigger picture — the marriage — if their focus is on a single day’s celebration.

The tone of the retreat is “serious yet joyful, with caring and respect,” she said. “Sure, some couples are there to get it checked off, like a homework assignment, but we also see some beautiful things happen. A lot of couples tell us their communication is better, they take this commitment more seriously, many take steps to convert or return to church.”

Still, even the best, most faith-centered preparation may not drastically impact a couple’s concerns over which flowers should decorate the church, or what colors the bridal party should wear, or what they should serve at their reception or, whether to incorporate “something cool they saw on TV or Pinterest” into their wedding liturgy.

“It depends on how seriously couples take their faith,” Zimmerer said, adding that in his experience couples who “go through the preparation start to attend Mass and confession more regularly, and start to accept that marriage is what the church wants” not what they want. “That is a grace of the Holy Spirit,” he added.
Reading list for engaged couples should include ‘Amoris Laetitia’

By Carol Zimmermann
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — “Amoris Laetitia,” Pope Francis’ 2016 apostolic exhortation on marriage and family life, is not only something that can benefit parish programs but it also offers very basic and practical advice for engaged couples.

“Learning to love someone does not happen automatically, nor can it be taught in a workshop just prior to the celebration of marriage,” the pope wrote in his reflections on the October 2015 Synod on the Family.

He also said the main objective of parish marriage preparation should be to help engaged couples “help each to learn how to love this very real person with whom he or she plans to share his or her whole life.”

He suggested that couples learn this first from their parents and then from parish programs. He also said they should make use of the sacrament of reconciliation to find mercy and “healing strength” and also should reflect on the Bible passages selected for their wedding liturgy and the meaning of their exchanged rings.

On a practical level, he cautioned against the “exhausted and married” feeling many couples experience on their wedding day and suggested they could avoid this through more modest or simple ceremonies.

“Have the courage to be different. Don’t let yourselves get swallowed up by a society of consumption and empty appearances. What is important is the love you share, strengthened and sanctified by grace,” he said, sounding almost like the father of the bride.

Pope Francis also pointed out in “Amoris Laetitia” that there are many reasons young people don’t get married — financial reasons, fears or the sense that marriage would limit their independence.

To counter these views, he said young people need help discovering the dignity and beauty of marriage.

“They should be helped to perceive the attraction of a complete union that elevates and perfects the social dimension of existence, gives sexuality its deepest meaning, and benefits children by offering them the best context for their growth and development,” he wrote.

The pope recommended that marriage preparation programs help couples recognize eventual problems and risks they could face.

“In this way,” he said, couples can come to realize the wisdom of breaking off a relationship whose failure and painful aftermath can be foreseen.

The pope also pointed out that “many couples marry without really knowing one another.” To counter that, he said couples should discuss what they expect and want from their marriage and what kind of life they hope to build together.

Marriage is not the “end of the road,” he said, but “a lifelong calling based on a firm and realistic decision to face all trials and difficult moments together.”

Couples should make dinners special, cooking priest says

By Carol Zimmermann
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — When Father Leo Patalinghug was leading parish marriage preparation programs, he noticed couples put a lot into wedding planning but didn’t necessarily think about celebrating small milestones after they were married such as their month anniversaries.

But as he sees it, newlyweds should not wait a year to celebrate their wedding anniversary but instead they should do something special once a month to celebrate their marriage.

He isn’t suggesting four-course meals necessarily but simply preparing and sharing good food and conversation. To that end, he wrote the cookbook “Spicing Up Married Life.”

Father Patalinghug’s apostolate is “Grace Before Meals” — encouraging families to eat dinners together and share their faith at the table. His “Spicing Up” cookbook offers prayer and conversation topics for couples along with pastoral advice about raising children, forgiving each other, caring for extended family members and aging, in between dinner and dessert recipes.

In the introduction, he notes that it “may seem strange for an unmarried priest to write a book about marriage (much less a cookbook about marriage),” but he also points out that he is, to use a cooking phrase, simply trying to stir the pot and encourage couples to actively work on their relationships.

He dedicated the cookbook, published in 2012, to his parents on their 50th anniversary. Today the book is used in a number of marriage preparation programs across the United States.

He told Catholic News Service that when he was growing up, his family life helped inspire the apostolate he now dedicates his life to. It involves travels across the country giving parish workshops and speaking at conferences, appearing on radio programs and communicating via social media about the need for families to celebrate everyday meals together. He also has written three books and is currently working on two more.

The Filipino-American priest is the youngest of four children and he jokingly says he grew up in “Hotel Patalinghug,” because of his family’s hospitality, which is so typical of the Filipino culture. He said he helped or watched his mother cook and they never ate dinner until his father, a doctor, came home from work, usually around 7:30 p.m.

His extended family still gets together for big meals and his mom still does a lot of the cooking, because she’s such a good cook, said Father Patalinghug.

In “Amoris Laetitia,” Pope Francis’ 2016 apostolic exhortation on marriage and family life, the pope said marriage is not the “end of the road,” but a “life-long calling based on a firm and realistic decision to face all trials and difficult moments together.”

Because that hope, he added, is the leaven that “in those first years of engagement and marriage, makes it possible to look beyond arguments, conflicts and problems and to see things in a broader perspective.”
Anything you want, honey

By Ann M. Bare
Special to
The Catholic Commentator

“Hey, it’s your day, Babe. Do whatever you want. Just tell me what time to be where.”

That may be the easy way out for the groom-to-be, but it sure isn’t the best way to plan your wedding. Your input is essential — but don’t dictate too much. Welcome to yet another confusion in the female psyche.

Of course, we can’t use words like “never” and “always” because every bride is different, but planning a wedding can improve or damage a perfectly happy engagement. The distinct personality of your relationship will be challenged during wedding plans, but it also can be enriched as you discover more details about what is important to each of you.

Suggested input:
**Both:** Wedding budget, date, guest list, attendants, venue.
**Bride:** Invitations, flowers, decorations, bridesmaids’ dresses/gifts, the cake.
**Groom:** Groomsmen’s attire/gifts, transportation, surprise gift for your wife. (See how easy this is?)

**Either/both:** Reception menu and music, officiant, photographer, charge card usage.

Most couples re-consider the whole wedding day hoopla as the day approaches. “Why didn’t we just elope then come back for a wild reception? This is getting ridiculous. Our marriage is getting lost in the maelstrom of wedding plans. Honey, by the way...I still love you.”

Each step in the process of making your wedding day memorable should be deliberate and thought out — at least a little bit. Your attention to your mate should take priority; of course. As you respect and accommodate each other’s feelings, your relationship at the wedding will be more positively memorable than a perfectly arranged event.

Your wedding day is a celebration; your marriage is a process. Groom-to-be: Keep the planning light, doable and enjoyable. Save your stress for the big stuff. Bride-to-be: You might need a buffer; thank God for a good friend.

You’re going to be husband and wife. Congratulations!

Brides can give back

By Treas Erickson
Special to
The Catholic Commentator

It takes most brides months to find just the right dress, so it is no wonder that many reserve it and tuck it away for safekeeping once the big day is over. Some cannot bear the thought of parting with the dress they worked so hard to find, while others hope their daughters will wear their dress one day at their wedding. For brides not as attached to their wedding gown and unsure what to do with it, donation might be a good idea.

Just because you had a small fortune to spend on the dress of your dreams doesn’t mean others will. Help out brides in need. Donate your dress to a charitable organization that will make it available for other brides to wear. There are several that accept gently used bridal gowns and offer them to brides in need. Many of these organizations will also accept gently used bridesmaid dresses for use in weddings and other special events, like homecoming and prom.

If you’d rather your dress be sold and the money put to good use, there are organizations that will do that, too. Many charitable organizations accept gently used wedding dresses, sell them and use the money for a good cause. Like raising awareness of domestic violence or searching for a cure for cancer.

Just think. Someone somewhere could get the help they need to get out of a bad situation because you took the time to donate your wedding dress.

Can’t stand the thought of someone else getting married in your dress? No problem. Donate it to a charity that will re-purpose it, for christening gowns or baby quilts, for example. Imagine an infant getting christened in a gown made from an old wedding.

Many charitable organizations accept gently used bridesmaid and wedding dresses for use in wedding and other special events, like homecoming dances and proms. CNS photo

Couples who take the time to share a meal together have stronger relationships, said Father Leo Patalinghug, whose apostolate “Grace Before Meals” encourages families to eat dinner together.

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while coincidentally getting ready for a family gathering at his home.

In his book, the priest says: “It doesn’t take an extensive study to show me that couples that take time to share a meal together have stronger relationships.”

He also said this information shouldn’t surprise anyone, because if couples think back to when they first started dating they’ll remember that they likely met for coffee, went on picnics or romantic dinners. “Why stop that momentum after marriage?” he asked.

Dinner dates work for married couples, he points out in another chapter, but he also knows that many couples give the excuse that they are too busy for this.

Again, he advises thinking back to the dating stage of a relationship, when couples may have been just as busy as they are now but they still made time to be together.

“Admit it, nothing was more important than keeping that relationship alive and well. So why should anything change now?”

And to that end, he would simply advise picking a recipe from his book, cooking it together and sitting down to eat it at the kitchen table.
Church parishes teach children and youths about marriage

By Liz O’Connor
Catholic News Service

LEVITTOWN, Pa. – In the effort to promote Catholic marriages, which have been on the decline in recent years, some U.S. parishes are making conscious efforts to reach out not only to engaged couples but also to a much younger audience – children and youths – about the church’s teaching on marriage.

The declining number of marriages is “not simply a Catholic issue but a cultural phenomenon,” said Father Richard Kramer, director of the Office of Family Life for the Archdiocese of Washington.

“We’re really talking about evangelization,” about building a different kind of culture, he said. “We have to teach (young people) what marriage is.”

He suggested finding ways to make marriage a celebration of the whole parish and showing couples: “Look, we want you to have what Jesus wants you to have.” For example, honoring couples that are celebrating jubilee anniversaries – 25 or 30 or more years of marriage – says to young people, “So can you.”

Parish young adult ministries also should remind people that each of them is made to give their love away to someone else, whether to a parent, a sibling, a spouse or children of one’s own.

The priest stressed that parishes need to be intentional about their efforts to build the culture this way and to focus on “being a marriage-building parish” where newly married couples are immediately integrated into the life of the parish.

“Encouraging marriages isn’t going to come through quick fixes,” he added.

While the number of Catholics in the U.S. continues to increase, the number of Catholic marriages has been steadily declining.

According to 2014 data from the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University, the number of Catholic marriages reported – 148,134 – was less than half the number in 1964 – 352,458 – despite the number of self-identified Catholics having grown from 48.5 million to 81.6 million between 1965 and 2015.

Many dioceses and parishes concerned about marriage have their hands full focusing on marriage enrichment and the immediate preparation of couples that present themselves requesting marriage in the church.


Steve Patton of the Diocese of Sacramento, California, said remote preparation begins in the family at birth, as a growing child sees those around him or her and how they relate to each other. Proximate preparation begins around puberty and continues through the dating years until a couple finds each other and decides to marry. “That’s the audience” that is not typically being addressed, Patton said.

But efforts to reach larger groups are spreading. The Sacramento Diocese, for example, attempts to reach young people with its message on marriage through a program created and launched in the Diocese of Memphis, Tennessee, that has gatherings for mothers and daughters and for fathers and sons.

Patton said the “evaporation of the sacramental understanding of marriage” has been influenced by no-fault divorce policies, the widespread acceptance of artificial contraception and the recent trend toward acceptance of same-sex marriage. Marriage is seen as a vehicle for individual satisfaction, he said, something that is easily abandoned if it ceases to bring happiness not only to the couple but also to the individual.

Steve Bozza of the Office for Life and Family at the Archdiocese of Philadelphia similarly said: “It’s no secret that the decline of marriage is a decline in faith practice.” He looks at marriage promotion as a matter of evangelization, and cited the possibilities of the Year of Mercy as a time to bring back people who have “self-selected” themselves out of the church.

“We’re not going to change this overnight,” he said, echoing Father Kramer’s point.

Bozza emphasized the need “to speak of marriage and its truth,” noting that it’s not serving anybody to loosen up on church teaching on marriage in an effort to attract more people.

The Fellowship of Catholic University Students, or FOCUS, which sends teams of trained recent college graduates to college campuses to evangelize, puts a lot of emphasis on the idea of vocation and helping students see both marriage or religious life as a calling, said Kevin Cotter of Denver, the organization’s senior director of curriculum.

He said the group calls on married couples to serve as models demonstrating what married life looks like, “how it’s possible and joyful.”
Selecting food for your reception can be a little tricky

By Tresa Erickson
Special to
The Catholic Commentator

Plan your wedding for mid-afternoon, and food may not be much of an issue for you. You can serve cake and punch, and be done with it. Plan your wedding near mealtimes, and you better be ready to feed your guests, else you could wind up with a lot of hungry people who leave sooner than expected. If you don’t want to end up with an empty dance floor, here are some tips for serving the right food.

Consider the tone of your wedding. Formal affairs might call for a sit-down dinner preceding the wedding. Informal affairs might allow for a buffet of foods prepared by the finest caterers in town, whereas informal affairs might call for a sit-down dinner preceding the wedding. Formal affairs might call for a sit-down dinner preceding the wedding. Consider the food allergies of your guests. Some people are so allergic to certain types of food that they can go into anaphylactic shock at the mere whiff of it. You don’t want an ambulance at your reception. Consider the taste of your guests. Different people like different foods. Serve a variety of foods to appeal to the masses. Give guests a choice of foods and set up some food stations for those who like to graze. Don’t forget to include options for vegetarians and those on restricted diets.

Consider your budget. Foods vary widely in price. Seafood, for example, can be quite pricey compared to chicken. Buy the best you can afford and be prepared to make some compromises. Instead of three meats, for example, you might have to offer two meats.

Consider the flavor of foods. If you are using a caterer, request some taste tests so you can make sure what will be served at your wedding will please the palate. You don’t want to shell out big bucks on food no one cares for and have guests leaving early so they can go out to eat.

People have long been feasting at weddings. It is important that you take your time when selecting what to serve at your wedding. Try to accommodate as many people as possible within your budget, whether preparing your own food or relying upon the services of a caterer.

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He called each cultural adaptation and said the unity candle was “really created by the florists as a way of making some money.”

He said praying before the Blessed Mother is a devotional practice that in some parts of the world a bishop may grant permission for a specific reason but in the Diocese of Baton Rouge the ceremony must be celebrated in the church.

Father Ranzino added, “But in the mind of the church it is not in the rite. In truth, I am not supposed to be adding things to the liturgy.”

The rite makes no mention of the long-standing tradition of the couple kissing after the commitment or the pronouncement of the couple by the priest.

Regarding celebrating the ceremony in a venue outside of a church, Father Ranzino said in some parts of the world a bishop may grant permission for a specific reason, but in the Diocese of Baton Rouge the ceremony must be celebrated in the church.

Father Ranzino said overall he likes the changes and is a positive step for the church.

“Are we going to be a photo op, I would say let’s not do this. We can do it at the rehearsal.”

“I want to be pastoral about it because in some parishes it’s a strong tradition and it may make sense in the person’s mind,” Father Ranzino added.

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“Is it not pastoral practice to do it. It is not one of the cultural adaptations the bishops chose to put in the rite. I don’t recommend it. It can be done at the rehearsal supper or after the rehearsal.”

He said praying before the Blessed Mother is a devotional practice that in some parts of the country is not done but added it is a common in some areas of the diocese.

Father Ranzino said he would discuss the option with a couple desiring to do to determine if they have a devotion to Mary.

“We’ll talk about it and see what makes sense,” he said. “If it’s only going to be a photo op, I would say let’s not do this. We can do it at the rehearsal.”

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Father Ranzino said overall he likes the changes and is a positive step for the church.

“It forces us to rethink what we are doing and why are we doing it,” he said. “That can be helpful for the church to think about.”

Selecting food for your reception can be a little tricky

By Tresa Erickson
Special to
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Plan your wedding for mid-afternoon, and food may not be much of an issue for you. You can serve cake and punch, and be done with it. Plan your wedding near mealtimes, and you better be ready to feed your guests, else you could wind up with a lot of hungry people who leave sooner than expected. If you don’t want to end up with an empty dance floor, here are some tips for serving the right food.

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