CARRYING THE CROSS

Youth view Real World

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Spending a mostly sleepless night as a homeless person would and doing without may have been what it took to wake youth up to the facts of what it means to be the homeless and marginalized people they encountered and served during Real World 2017, June 27-July 1.

The youth’s feet may have lightly walked past the poor, marginalized and suffering without a glance backwards before participating in Real World. But after experiencing what it must be like to shoulder the weight of the cross that those suffering from pain and loss may be carrying on their backs, they said their steps are more inline with Christ’s, walking toward, rather than away from those who need them.

“The Way of the Cross, Real Ideal” was the theme of Real World Camp 2017. The youth discovered that Jesus’ long, painful journey to Calvary and his death on a cross are the model to follow in dealing with the suffering still present today.

Real World focused on the concept of “Two Feet of Love in Action.” The first “foot” is called social justice, or removing root causes and improved structures, the second “foot” is called charitable works, or meeting the basic needs of individuals.

The week of service and sacrifice was launched with a Mass, during which Father Ryan Hallford, parochial vicar at Holy Family Church in Port Allen, urged the youth to let the week make a difference in themselves and the community.

“You are meant to spice up the world,” said Father Hallford. He encouraged the youth to be “missionaries of mercy” and “salt of mercy.”

At each stop, the youth took time after getting off the signature white bus of St. Isidore Church in Baker to pray and meditate on a particular station before proceeding with their social justice or service project.

The first stop for the pilgrims of mercy was Holy Grill located at a BREC park at the end of Cadillac Street in North Baton Rouge. Holy Grill is a ministry of the Interfaith Federation of Baton Rouge, whose members include several Catholic churches in the Diocese of Baton Rouge. The campers read with and played with children and then served lunch to them and others coming in need of a meal.

“It’s such a beautiful thing,” said a smiling Robin McCullough-Bade, executive director of the Interfaith Federation.

SEE MERCY PAGE 20

Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank

Works of Mercy awards grants

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Historic flooding this past summer left the Greater Baton Food Bank in unfamiliar waters. Rather than taking the lead in the recovery process, as is their custom, food bank officials found themselves on the other end, seeking assistance, digging out of the carnage deposited by four feet of murky flood water, and facing an uncertainty about the organization’s ability to reach out to those suffering.

“It’s been an interesting experience,” said Mike Manning, executive director of the food bank. “We are usually reaching out and not worrying about ourselves. We had to spend time (on ourselves before we could reach out to others.)”

Within four days, however, the food bank was operating at 70 percent capacity out of a small warehouse not far from its Choctaw Street location. Within four weeks, the warehouse portion was back at full capacity, with administrative offices operating out of temporary trailers.

“It was difficult for us to have to wear two hats at once,” Manning said, adding that he coordinated the cleaning out process of the warehouse while he directed his staff to see Mercy page 20
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The beginning
By Ann Bolton

Although we are celebrating the bicentennial of the incorporation of the great city of Baton Rouge, the Catholic Church has been a presence in the area for much longer. Our earliest explorers travelled with priests on their journeys to the New World.

It was in 1699 that the first Mass was celebrated on the banks of the Mississippi River in the territory that would become Baton Rouge. It was not until almost 100 years later that the first Catholic Church was established in 1792. La Iglesia de la Virgen des los Dolores (Our Lady of Sorrows) became a parish to serve the people of Baton Rouge during Spanish rule. The Spanish were particularly eager to solidify their stronghold in an area that had been under British control and settled by English Protestants for 16 years.

In an effort to reach out to a mostly English population, the Spanish king appealed to the bishops of Ireland for native priests who had completed their studies in a Spanish seminary. It was believed that these priests who were Irish and spoke English could relate to the people of Baton Rouge but would remain loyal to the Spanish Crown because of their seminary education.

The bishops obliged and sent Irish Carmelite priests to serve the Louisiana territory. Father Carlos Burke was assigned to Baton Rouge in the fall of 1792 and became the first pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows.

The original church site, as Father Burke would have found it, was located near the present day Capitol Lake. A second church was later built on land donated by Don Antonio de Gras and remains the site of the current St. Joseph Cathedral.

Pictured is an early baptism register for St. Joseph Cathedral in Baton Rouge. Photo provided by the Archives Department | The Diocese of Baton Rouge

Reaping the harvest
By Dina Dow

The seed is the word of God, Christ is the souzer. All who come to him will have life forever.

The 14th and 15th Sundays in Ordinary Time kindle the desire to live as faithful disciples of Jesus. We are called to deeper awareness of the characteristics of God as our king, our life guided by Jesus and our receptivity of the word.

Meekness

The prophet, Zechariah, invites us to “rejoice heartily ... your king shall come to you, just as he is, meek ...” One of the most comforting images of God as our king is that of meekness. The creator reigns with patience and humility. This is a positive trait. We live in a time of reactionary responses. Knee-jerk reactions to situations lead to negative outcomes, which, at times are dire. A non-violent response leads to peaceful resolution.

Psalm 145 further unveils traits of God as gracious, merciful, slow to anger, great in kindness, good to all, compassionate, faithful in his words, holy in his works, lifts up the lowly and raises those who bow down. Wait, this is a king? Yes, this is our king! We are called to live our life according to his kingly ways. Sit in prayer with these words: kind, good, meek, compassionate, lifts-up. All lead to peace. Lord, help me emulate your Love as we journey to your kingdom.

Guided by the yoke

The Gospel of St. Matthew (chapter 11) reveals Jesus praising the father. He is grateful for the “little ones” who have been given the wisdom hidden from the self-righteous. They, with childlike faith, trust in the message of Jesus, whereas others cannot seem to grasp it. Further, he states, that if we know him we will know the father. And just like that, he invites the “weary,” which constitutes most of us, to rest as we share his yoke, which is easy and his burden, which is light.

My grandfather was a farmer. I have vague memories of him placing yoke on his mule as he tended the field. I was amazed how the yoke enabled him to easily guide the creature without harm. In fact, my grandfather was working harder to guide it. The results were straight lines and turned up soil ripe for sowing the seeds and planting strawberries.

Jesus asks us to take up his yoke, which will not only be easy, but will be guided by him. When we attempt to steer ourselves without the guiding hands of Jesus we become lost, unrested and exhausted. Let us be guided by the strong hands of Jesus as he gently leads us on his path.

Behind the Collar

... with FATHER MIKE MORONEY, pastor of St Alphonsus Church in Greenwell Springs

Q You used to drive a bus. Can you tell us about that?
A I had a lot of fun driving buses and later on a motor coach. A friend of mine, Bo Stepp, and I drove the youth on trips all over the country; we had a lot of great times. What was most enjoyable was that we were able to take the youth, altar servers and retired groups on trips at a very reasonable cost. Today’s cost of renting a bus makes it very difficult to go on trips like we did in the past.

Q What were some of the challenges, “learning moments” and positive outcomes that came from being displaced

CORRECTIONS

St. John School in Plaquemine left Everett Fuselier off of its graduation submitted to The Catholic Commentator.

Recently ordained Deacon George Hooper is 70.
Praying the rosary outgrowth of Jewish tradition

In a somewhat surprising finding, Catholic Life Television has discovered its most frequently watched program is the recitation of the rosary, which airs three times daily. According to station manager Stephen Lee, parishioners throughout the Diocese of Baton Rouge have indicated they pray along with the rosary program as part of their daily devotions. The program allows them to pray even as they are involved in routine daily tasks.

Even though it remains popular, the program has become somewhat dated, Lee said. He noted that this same program has been on the air without change since 2003.

The program features images of churches, cemeteries and nature that reflect various scenes from the local communities and so it is entitled, “The Louisiana Rosary.”

Lee said he saw a need to develop a new version of this program that would further enhance its prayerful dimension as well as make it more visually appealing by using high definition video.

In preparation for the new series, Lee asked Darryl Ducote, director of the Office of Marriage and Family Life, to do some research on the history and meaning of the rosary that might provide a guide for the direction of the new series.

Ducote discovered that the rosary actually has its roots in Jewish practice. According to Scripture, God instructed Moses to offer sacrifice three times each day to honor God as their life-giver and protector. That practice of sacrifice was ritualized after the building of the temple in Jerusalem with sacrifices occurring at mid-morning, noon and mid-afternoon.

Many devout Jews went to the temple to pray during the sacrifices, while others interrupted their daily tasks to pray from wherever they were at the same time that the sacrifices were being offered. The prayers that they most commonly used at those times were the recitation of the psalms.

The early Christians, who were originally converts from Judaism, continued the practice of praying the psalms three times each day. They also added the practice of reciting the prayer that was specifically Christian, namely, the Lord’s Prayer or “Our Father.”

This practice of marking the various times of the day course of a day.

During the Middle Ages, since most of the people were illiterate, reciting the psalms became more difficult. As a result, the Cathedral Office gradually died out.

Even though the practice of the Divine Office continued in the monasteries, the difficulty in praying the psalms remained a problem since many of the monks, who were not priests, were not able to read and write. An alternative to the recitation of the psalms gradually crept into the devotional practice of both the laity and the uneducated monks. In place of the 150 Psalms, they substituted the recitation of one Hail Mary prayer for each of the psalms. Praying three times each day, they recited 50 “Hail Marys” in the morning, 50 at noon and 50 in the evening to complete the number 150, matching the number of psalms. Then, to maintain the tradition of reciting the Lord’s Prayer, they inserted one Our Father before each set of 10 Hail Mary’s.

In order to keep track of how many Hail Mary’s were being said, they used a bowl of 50 pebbles, removing one pebble each time they recited the prayer, until the bowl was empty. Because the pebbles were somewhat cumbersome, the monks eventually replaced the pebbles by tying knots on a string. Later on, beads replaced the knots.

During the 15th century, another devotion became popular, which involved the practice of meditating on significant moments in the life of Jesus. The goal of these meditations was to lead the person toward the imitation of Christ. Over time, these two practices, the recitation of the Hail Marys and the meditations on the life of Christ, called “the mysteries,” were combined into a single devotion that we now recognize as the rosary. In fact, these two practices compliment one another since the repetition of the Hail Marys serves as a kind of mantra that clears the mind to focus on the life of Jesus and Mary.

With this history in mind, Catholic Life Television sought to revise its current program of the rosary by combining these two elements of recitation and meditation. A group of diocesan employees volunteered to record the recitation of the rosary prayers. Then, to facilitate the meditations on the life of Jesus and Mary, the staff of Catholic Life Television toured most of the church parishes of the diocese and captured images of artwork that correspond to the mysteries of the rosary. The artwork included stained glass, statuary, paintings and sculpture. To add to the reflective mood, the producers used original sacred music composed and recorded by local artist James Rosenblum from his album, “Small Things With Great Love.”

Since all of the participants, artwork and music are from the diocese, the revised program is named for the river along which many of the local churches are situated. This new program is called, “River Road Rosary.” It will debut later this summer and air daily at 5 a.m., 9 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.

An audio version of this program is also available on CD from Catholic Life Television.

A group of employees from the Diocese of Baton Rouge volunteered to record the recitation of the rosary for Catholic Life Television, which will be debuting “River Road Rosary” later this fall. Pictured, from left, Anita Krail, Father Paul Yi, Tammy Abshire, Stephanie Moore, Dr. Melanie Verges, Darryl Ducote, Michael Miller, Rachele Smith, Mary Barnhizer, Karen Benoit and Shannon Baldridge. Photo provided by Catholic Life Television.
Partial travel ban worries bishops, Catholic groups

WASHINGTON (CNS) – The chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Migration said the country’s Catholic bishops are “deeply concerned” about the consequences of the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision to allow a partial ban on foreign nationals as it reviews the constitutionality of a wider ban.

“The court announced June 26 that until its hears the case in the fall and weighs a decision, it would allow part of the ban to be implemented and some ‘foreign nationals’ will be barred from entering the country, but that determination will be made depending on the applicant’s previous relationships with a person or institution in the U.S. The administration says it needs to implement the ban while it reviews the refugee resettlement program and its vetting procedures.

Bishop Vasquez said the bishops are “deeply concerned about the welfare of the many other vulnerable populations who will now not be allowed to arrive and seek protection during the proscribed pause, most notably certain individuals fleeing religious persecution and unaccompanied refugee children.”

He urged the Trump administration to include refugee service providers as well as national security and immigration experts in a timely, transparent and efficient review of the existing refugee resettlement program.

“We believe it is vital to utilize the full expertise of the existing resettlement program when conducting such an important evaluation,” he said in a statement issued late June 26.

The court said the partial ban that has already gone into effect allows “foreign nationals who have a credible claim of a bona fide relationship with a person or entity in the United States” to apply for entry, but “all other foreign nationals are subject to the provisions of (the executive order).”

That means a person with a family or a nexus with an organization, such as a university or employer, is not affected by the ban.

The court seemed to be taking into consideration the hardships the ban would create for an “American party,” such as a family member, whose relatives are denied entry, or for a university or employer, while also trying to consider the administration’s arguments that it’s necessary to do so in the interest of national security.

Denying entry to immigrants with no connection to the country “does not burden any American party,” the court said. And though the order is seeking to cap the number of refugees allowed into the country at 50,000, the court said that if a person with one of the previously mentioned connections to the U.S. is seeking refuge, “such as a person may not be excluded even if the 50,000 has been reached or exceeded.”

Groups such as Catholic Relief Services, the official international humanitarian agency of the Catholic community in the United States, expressed disappointment with the ruling.

“This ruling will devastate some of the most vulnerable people in the world, innocent people who are fleeing the exact kind of violence that this executive order seeks to protect against,” said Bill O’Keefe, CRS’ vice president for government relations and advocacy. “The facts tell us that these refugees already undergo significant vetting – more than anyone who enters the United States – and none has gone on to commit acts of violence.”

It also reinforces the false idea that refugees are dangerous, O’Keefe said.

“We outright reject the idea that refugees are implicitly dangerous,” he said. “At a time of such unprecedented need around the world, we should be doing more to help and resettlement those who are in danger and need, not less.”

Christopher G. Kerr, executive director of Ignatian Solidarity Network, a national social justice education and advocacy organization based in Ohio, said the high court’s decision “does not reflect our country’s spirit of compassion and welcome.”

“When we create uncertainty for those seeking safety from conflict and persecution, we compromise their dignity as fellow people of God,” said Kerr.

“We continue to stand with those seeking refuge and safety here in the United States.”

The troubled executive order went into litigation almost as soon as it was issued Jan. 27, just a week into the new president’s term. It was revised in March, but those revisions, too, have faced legal challenges.

In a statement after the court’s announcement, Trump said the high court’s decision was a “clear victory” for national security.

“It allows the travel suspension for the six terror-prone countries and the refugee suspension to become largely effective,” he said.

In a partial dissent, Justice Clarence Thomas said he worried that “the court’s remedy will prove unworkable” and that the “compromise will burden executive officials with the task of deciding – on peril of contempt – whether individuals from the six affected nations who wish to enter the United States have a sufficient connection to a person or entity in this country.”

It also may “invite a flood of litigation until this case is finally resolved,” he said.

The U.S. Supreme Court’s decision came a day before it ended its current term. The new court term begins in October.

The U.S. Supreme Court's decision to allow a partial ban on foreign nationals as it reviews the constitutionality of a wider ban has "human consequences," according to Bishop Joe S. Vasquez of Austin, Texas. The court announced that in October it will hear a case involving President Donald Trump's travel ban.
World Refugee Day delivers message of hope

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

“Migrants and refugees can experience, along with difficulties, new, welcoming relationships which enable them to enrich their new countries with their professional skills, their social and cultural heritage, and not infrequently, their witness of faith, which can bring a new energy and life to communities of ancient and Christian tradition, and invite others to encounter Christ and to come to know the Church” – Pope Francis

The second annual World Refugee Day Celebration, “#We Stand With Refugees,” June 24 at LSU underscored the pope’s message of the mutual benefits derived when communities welcome refugees and immigrants fleeing violence, persecution, poverty or famine. The community is rewarded with the outpouring of graces that come from expanding its view of the face of Christ in its midst, say participants.

The event, sponsored by the Louisiana African Solidarity Response (LASR), was a day of learning, story telling and cultural performances and fun.

Organizers pointed out that in 2016 the UN Refugees Agency launched a #WithRefugees petition to send a message to governments that they must work together and do their fair share for refugees.

LASR pointed to the sobering fact that more than about 66 million people on earth are displaced.

Jean Dreseley, director of refugee resettlement and employment for Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, outlined the vetting process and how difficult it is for refugees to enter the United States.

Dresey pointed out how the process includes the collection of biodata, such as name, birthplace, address, birthday, etc. Further identifying documents must be submitted and the Department of Homeland Security interviews the applicants.

She noted a refugee can be turned down or delayed due to a variety of reasons, and it can take years for a refugee to be admitted.

Audience members heard testimonies from people impacted by war and violence in their home countries who successfully went through the vetting process.

One was Henry Wari from South Sudan. While Syria remains the world’s largest source of refugees, South Sudan is the biggest and fastest new displacement emergency. According to LASR, 1.4 million refugees come from South Sudan and 1.9 million are internally displaced, the vast majority of them under the age of 18.

Wari described the conflicts and tensions in 1983 when President Gaafar Niemeiri declared his intention to transform Sudan into a Muslim Arab state by instituting Sharia’s law and dividing the south into three administration regions, reviving southern opposition and militant insurgency.

“The war was intense,” said Wari.

After a 1985 coup, the new government rescinded this decree and made other significant overtures aimed at reconciling north and south but did not rescind the “September Laws” of the Niemeiri regime instituting Sharia’s law.

This added fuel to the conflict and those making it to refugee camps faced rough conditions.

The country experiences ongoing turmoil. With help from friends, Wari and his family were admitted to the United States and have lived in Baton Rouge for the past 17 years. He is one of the founding members of LASR and an advocate for the rights of refugees.

Wari remembers loved ones affected by the trauma in Sudan and called for the acceptance of refugees from there, many whom have been through harrowing experiences, and the promotion of lasting peace there.

Clara Hart, board chair for the Refugee Congress who fled Mozambique in the 1960s in fear of political persecution and resettled in the United States in 1988, talked about the gifts refugees offer their new home countries.

“It’s a special day for us to spend time thinking of other refugees who are seeking safety,” said Hart. “World Refugee Day is a time to celebrate the human spirit.”

She noted how the Syrian refugee crisis highlights a worldwide humanitarian crisis. She said over 66 million, or one out of 113 people, is forcefully displaced from their home.

“The crisis is personal to me,” said Hart.

She noted that when she and her family were displaced, they lived in fear that someone would take her father away.

Hart talked about the difficulty of learning American norms and eating in soup kitchens when first coming to this country. But she said her story, like many refugees and immigrants, is one of resilience.

She said such resilience spills over to the United States, as the resettled people contribute their skills as doctors, lawyers, teachers and workers.

Keynote speaker Dr. Susan Weisher, migration specialist/fellow with the Jesuit Social Research Institute, affirmed Hart’s message and gave words of encouragement to the refugees and immigrants present.

She talked about how resettlement is often accomplished with so little time and resources and is filled with learning about those “crazy machines,” shopping in stores with numerous choices, learning a new language, enrolling children in school, etc.

Weisher talked about how immigrants and refugees from France, Nova Scotia, Haiti, Cuba, Germany and the Canary Islands among others created the interesting cultural melting pot that Louisiana is today.

Noting that Pope Francis calls for globalization of charity, Weisher assured the refugees and immigrants that many Americans want to better understand the suffering they went through before they came to the United States and want to hear their stories, as well as celebrate their triumphs with them.

“To all the refugees here present tonight, I think you represent the promise and potential of America,” said Weisher.

Poetry presentations added to the festive atmosphere at the World Refugee Day Celebration #We Stand With Refugees June 24 at LSU. Photo by Debbie Shelley | The Catholic Commentator

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No heaven? A vengeful God?

Q I am 86 years old. I was baptized as a child, educated for 12 years in Catholic schools and am still a regularly practicing Catholic. Some weeks ago, I read a column of yours that absolutely floored me and my family as well.

Since I was very young, I have always been taught to believe that St. Peter is at the “Golden Gate” to meet us, but you say there is no “specific” heaven. Then at least there is no place called heaven?

Has my faith all been in vain? And if one can’t go to heaven, then why not sin? Shame on you, Father Doyle, for what you wrote. Can you even imagine all the damage that your column did? (Richmond, Virginia)

A The temptation is to dismiss such a letter quickly, to assure myself it was just this one particular reader who had misread the column. But I wish it were that easy; instead, a letter has a certain abstraction nor a physical place in the picture of heaven, which includes St. Peter greeting arrivals at a golden gate, and that is fine. But the futility comes with trying to express transcendent ideas in human pictures and words.

I did say in the column that heaven is “not some remote geographic corner of the physical universe.” I quoted the Catechism of the Catholic Church, that heaven “does not mean a place (‘space’) but a way of being,” and St. John Paul II, who said that heaven is “neither an abstraction nor a physical place in the clouds, but a living, personal relationship with the Holy Trinity.”

I want to assure the letter writer that I believe with all my heart that heaven does exist and that my highest hope is one day to reach that goal, to be united with God in everlasting and perfect joy. What exactly that will look like, I do not know; I only know that it will be a whole lot better than I could ever dream it to be.

I went back and reread the column, asking myself if I might have expressed anything differently. Faith is a precious and a fragile thing; I want, of course, always to treat it with reverence and not threaten it.

The writer of the letter has a certain picture of heaven, which includes St. Peter greeting arrivals at a golden gate, and that is fine. But the futility comes with trying to express transcendent ideas in human pictures and words.

Q I am a Catholic priest who has long been puzzled by Leviticus 20:9-21. In that passage, God gives Moses a long list of people who should be put to death: those who curse their parents, adulterers, homosexuals and many others.

In my own mind, God could not have given this order for two reasons: First, he would have been violating his own Fifth Commandment, which says “You shall not kill”; and secondly, these offenses do not deserve the death penalty.

I once asked a noted Catholic biblical scholar about this, and he said that this passage like so many in the Old Testament is a mystery, echoing the words of St. Augustine regarding the deception Jacob used to gain the inheritance of Esau. (“It’s not a lie, but a mystery.”)

This matter is very relevant since the church has been trying for decades to have the death penalty abolished. Your comments, please. (Little Rock, Arkansas)

A I would not look to the Old Testament to situate the church’s current position on the death penalty. In fact, that position has developed over the centuries, to the point where now it is virtually one of total opposition.

Some of the church’s greatest theologians (notably Augustine and Aquinas) supported the right of society to use the death penalty, and even the current Catechism of the Catholic Church says that the death penalty may be used if that is the only possible way of defending society against an unjust aggressor.

However, that same section of the Catechism (No. 2267) is quick to point out—quoting St. John Paul II’s encyclical “Evangelium Vitae” (“The Gospel of Life”)—that in today’s society, cases in which the execution of the offender is an absolute necessity “are very rare, if not practically nonexistent.”

In June 2016, Pope Francis told the World Congress Against the Death Penalty that “nowadays the death penalty is unacceptable, however grave the crime of the convicted person.”

I would look instead to the New Testament—to Matthew’s Gospel, for example, where Jesus teaches (5:38-39): “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, offer no resistance to one who is evil. When someone strikes you on (your) right cheek, turn the other one to him as well.”

Passages like this one seem to argue for leaving vengeance and violence to God, the author of life. As to why the Old Testament differs so sharply, I would agree that it is something of a mystery.

Perhaps it had to do with the culture of the time and what people could then accept and understand. (I am reminded of the explanation Jesus gave in Mt 19 for why Moses had allowed divorce—because of the “hardness” of people’s hearts.)

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Charismatic ministry chance to deepen spirituality

By Rachele Smith
The Catholic Commentator

Larry Hebert is ready.
As one of the leaders of the newly reinstated Catholic charismatic prayer ministry at St. Mark Church in Gonzales, Hebert wants to encourage others in cultivating a personal relationship with Jesus through expressing the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

For Hebert, knowing, appreciating and glorifying the Holy Spirit is key in creating a strong relationship with Jesus, noting how the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, which is celebrating 50 years in the church, has helped him and his family grow spiritually.

He pointed to the words of St. Paul, where in 2 Timothy, the apostle said to "stir up those flames."

"I think of it like a BBQ pit. You have a bunch of coals down there and some has-bennies, but what you need to do is stoke them and stir them up into flames, so they can warm you up and do you some good," he said.

Hebert, along with Susan and Ron Duhon, form the leadership team for St. Mark’s Catholic charismatic prayer ministry, which met for the first time after Mass on June 29.

According to ministry leaders, the early meeting time will help those unable to attend the regular gatherings of nearby Catholic Charismatic groups, known as “The Family of Faith,” which continue to meet after work hours and in the evenings at St. Theresa of Avila Church in Gonzales, St. Joseph Church in French Settlement and Holy Rosary Church in St. Amant.

“We found that some people don’t like to drive at night, so this helps them,” said Hebert, adding that everyone is welcome to attend the morning meetings which are scheduled on the last Thursday of each month following 8:30 a.m. Mass.

Harold Sheets, a leader in The Family of Faith group, said Catholic charismatic prayer meetings begin with praise and worship and are followed by a speaker or brief message “to build that faith up” before concluding with personal prayer. He said the time allows those attending to strengthen their relationship with Jesus and enjoy Christ-centered friendships, activities he also credits with bringing others to the ministry.


Following Mass and musical worship, many of the faithful approached the altar with special prayer and healing requests.

Sheets said that being a part of the Catholic charismatic group has helped him to see the Word of God come alive. He explained how he relies on the Holy Spirit, especially in leading a spirit-filled life.

“The Holy Spirit helps me, and I want all of the help I can get,” he explained, adding how participating in the sacraments and being part of the church’s charismatic renewal supports him in being close to his Catholic faith.

Dotty Loar, who serves as the lay director of Catholic Charismatic Renewal for the Diocese of Baton Rouge, estimated that worldwide more than 149 million people have been touched by the Catholic charismatic ministry in the church.

Since Pope St. John XXIII first prayed for God “to renew your church as by a new pentecost” at the opening of Vatican II, the ministry has received papal support, including from Pope Francis, who in speaking to those attending the 2014 convocation of Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Rome, Italy, said, “The Charismatic Renewal is a great force meant to serve the preaching of the Gospel in the joy of the Holy Spirit.”

Loar said many people find comfort in the ministry, especially those who are hurting.

“Lots of times, we think of physical hurting, but yes, there are illnesses and other physical problems that are very real and we see them, but there are also those who hurt emotionally and spiritually, too,” she said.

She said the Catholic Church has so much to offer to those who are hurting, searching or in need, and the Catholic charismatic prayer ministry is just “something else our church has to offer.”

In Baton Rouge, there are 13 active prayer groups, according to Loar. Some meet weekly while others gather twice a month or monthly.

In addition, she stated that special events, such as the Pentecost Mass and healing Masses, are held regularly, including the ministry’s Annual Day of Renewal scheduled for Aug. 12 at Our Lady of Mercy Church in Baton Rouge. The day long event is expected to feature speakers, prayer and praise and worship opportunities. If you are interested in attending or would like more information on Catholic Charismatic Renewal, contact Loar at 225-636-2454.
Faculty and students at Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University are using research, teaching and service programs to address the many issues and opportunities facing the area’s local aging population, including using a recently acquired grant from the Council of Independent Colleges to teach computer classes to area seniors.

FMOLU was chosen from an applicant pool of more than 90 institutions to receive a $12,000 grant from the CIC’s Intergenerational Connections: Students Serving Older Adults program, supported by the AARP Foundation. The award will be used to fund service-learning fellowships for students to serve 55 senior adult residents of the Our Lady of the Lake Senior HUD apartments. The fellows will be instructing the senior adults on basic computer skills, the use of internet sites to access medical and other information of interest, social media to communicate with family and friends, and Microsoft word to create narratives for the Elderly Housing newsletter and other written pieces.

“With almost 20 percent of Louisiana’s population over the age of 60, it is imperative that our institution makes caring for our senior population now and in the coming years a priority,” said Franciscan University president Dr. Tina Holland. “Through programs that promote health at all ages and serve Louisiana seniors through service-learning projects, we can make a long-term positive impact on the lives of many local seniors.”

In line with this focus, Dr. Lindsay B. Mullins, has been promoted to the Sister Agnes Marie Fitzsimons endowed Chair of Gerontology, where she will organize and promote multidisciplinary participation in gerontological studies. She will draw upon her experience as a nurse scholar and as the Family Nurse Practitioner program director to promote health and quality of life for elders in the region through continued research on building community capacity to promote healthy aging, and by positively impacting Louisiana’s nursing workforce and the education surrounding elderly care.

Mullins has been with the university in various capacities since 2009, and she also serves as a family nurse practitioner for the Louisiana Sleep Foundation. She previously served as a charge nurse at Georgetown University Hospital in Washington, D.C., from 2001-2005 and as a family nurse practitioner at Methodist Hospital in Dallas from 2005-2006.

She received her bachelor of science in nursing from LSU Health Sciences Center in 2001 and her master’s degree as a family nurse practitioner in 2004 from Georgetown University School of Nursing. She completed her studies with a doctorate from LSU’s Peabody College of Education in 2010.

St. Jude celebrates vocations

In celebrating what would have been the 50th anniversary of Father Mike Collins’ ordination to the priesthood, his close friend, St. Jude the Apostle Church pastor Father Trey Nelson, recalled the rich history the parish has of sending young men to the seminary.

Father Nelson celebrated the Mass on June 25 at St. Jude in Baton Rouge, paying special tribute to Father Collins, who died earlier this year.

“Known for his bright personality, his ability to give good counsel, especially to other priests, and remembered fondly for his simple but valued philosophy, ‘beyond every Good Friday there stands Easter Sunday,’ Father Mike made us all better people,” Father Nelson said. “He taught us all, that when we welcome others into our lives, we welcome Christ himself. May we not forget this lesson.”

During the homily, Father Nelson recalled his own inspiration to the priesthood, calling Msgr. Andrew Frey, former pastor at Our Lady of Mercy Church in Baton Rouge where Father Nelson was raised, “the holiest man I ever knew.”

“As a child, he showed me that, to live one’s vocation and be happy, you must pray every day,” he said.

Beaming with pride, Father Nelson delved into the rich history of St. Jude, beginning with Father Pat Mascarella, whose home parish was St. Jude. Father Nelson called Father Mascarella an inspiration to all. “Visually impaired, yet still serving,” he said.

He also cited vicar general Father Tom Ranzino, Father Michael Allelo and Father Matthew Graham for their St. Jude roots. The parents of Father Allelo and Father Graham were in attendance at the Mass.

“Along with vocations to the priesthood, St. Jude Parish has always been supportive of and connected to brothers and sisters who serve in religious life, or what is also known as consecrated life,” Father Nelson said.

He concluded by recalling a phrase from the Rite of Ordination: “May God who has begun the good work in you bring it to fulfillment.”

“While these words speak directly to candidates for priesthood and deacon, they are fitting for all of us: those who live the vocations of marriage and the single life, those who live as religious sisters and brothers; every single one of us,” Father Nelson said. “This is why we set aside this moment today to celebrate the gift of a vocation.”

“For all of us, but especially for our children, teenagers and young adults, to know that God has created you for a very special purpose in this life, a purpose that is meant to be lived for more than yourself,” he added. “As you consider your future, your career, the possibilities of marriage and children, and other aspects of life, please, please consider the question ‘could God be calling me’ to priesthood or religious life? “And, would you be willing to go where the Lord calls? Because, it is a wonderful life, one that I or any of my brothers and sisters in ministry would not trade for anything.”

SECULAR ORDER INSTALLATION – Father Nutan Minj presides over the installation of officers in the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites on June 11 at Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church in Baton Rouge. Pictured from left are Ethlyn White, president; Dana Barton, director of formation; Mary Rolfs, council member; Earl Pitre, council member; Joan Pitre, secretary; and Clara Gillespie, treasurer. Not pictured is council member Clarence Landry. Photo provided by Dana Burton.
Roundtable says church must ‘recruit, empower’ diverse lay leaders

ORLANDO, Fla. (CNS) Over 100 Catholic leaders attending the Leadership Roundtable’s annual convening in Orlando said the church needs to go beyond “engaging laity” to “appointing, recruiting, promoting and empowering diverse lay leaders.”

“This requires laity and ordained being in right relationship as co-responsible for the mission” of the Catholic Church, said the group in a statement released after the close of its June 29-30 meeting.


Under the theme “Engaging, Equipping and Energizing Catholic Leaders for the Joy of the Gospel,” the roundtable gathered Catholic leaders from across the United States to explore best practices in developing Catholic leaders as missionary disciples.

“Building upon a framework of empowered humility and creativity in ministry, participants articulated a vision of leaders as missionary disciples grounded in authenticity, joy, relationship and attention to those at the margins,” it said.

In its statement, the group said that “formation of leaders as missionary disciples is more than an intellectual experience. It is one that happens through encounter with God’s people in vibrant local communities, through mutually beneficial service and immersion experiences.”

The Leadership Roundtable listed several key elements it said are needed in such formation of leaders, including:

– Commitment to action and contemplation centered on Jesus and the Gospel.

– Building bridges between laity, clergy and religious through shared formation, mentoring and leadership.

– Partnering “with the full reality of our multicultural, multilingual church and society.”

– Preferential option for people on the margins, and a commitment to engage women, youth and young adults in meaningful leadership.

– Engaging people where they are rather than condemning them’ and accepting risk and inviting the imperfect disciple to serve.”

The Leadership Roundtable also said it is necessary for church leaders to practice accompaniment by “partnering with” rather than “doing for” and making space and providing resources for people “to create the church to which they want to belong.”

The roundtable also cited the need to go outside of one’s comfort zone, “especially through short- and long-term mission experiences.”

It said the statement “builds upon a framework of empowered humility and creativity in ministry provided by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano of Bridgeport, Connecticut. In addition to drafting the statement, participants at the convening came up with one tangible action to which they each could commit to advance leadership formation in their own work. Besides Bishop Caggiano, speakers at the convening included Bishop Mark L. Bartchak of Altoona-Johnstown, Pennsylvania; Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville, Kentucky; Archbishop Jerome E. Listecki of Milwaukee; and Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore.

St. Peter Claver awards

The Knights of Peter Claver, Wilfred B. Ricard Council #116, recently honored Henry Stewart III for his service to Immaculate Conception Church in Baton Rouge. During the 10:30 a.m. Mass on June 11, Stewart received the Faithful Service Award for having been faithful to the ideals of Claverism for 50 years. He was presented with the 50-year pin and Gold Seal Certificate. Photos submitted by Lawrence Williams Sr.

The Knights also presented Certificates of Scholarship awards to Hannah Williams, Dijaz Trudell, Callia Cox and Alyssa Johnson. Pictured, from left, are Kelli Eaglin, Barbara Dunbar, Josephine Dubriel, standing in for Cox, Williams, Johnson, Trudell and Commander Rogers Jackson.

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Some of the children come from ‘the projects’. “It’s such an important service to the people of this area. Youth discovered that human trafficking begins with children from 8 to 10 years-old. One of the busiest hu...
Youth learn how to become pro-life leaders

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

When a person you are talking to does not have a pro-life viewpoint concerning abortion, euthanasia and end-of-life issues, to keep the person from becoming entrenched in their views in a heated conversation it takes skill and compassion, which are developed through experience, said leaders of PULSE Leadership Institute.

Approximately 60 youth from around Louisiana attended the PUSLE Leadership Institute on June 4-9 at the Catholic Life Center to learn how to become pro-life leaders and have a dialogue concerning respecting life at all stages.

“These leaders not only discussed abortion, but also adoption, euthanasia, physician assisted suicide, disability discrimination in abortion, pro-life feminism and heroism, Planned Parenthood, third party reproduction and pro-life legislation,” said PULSE adult leader Krista Corbello. They heard from several experts, including Bobby Schindler, Terri Schiavo’s brother, and Brandon Buell, founder of Jaxon Strong.

They also were inspired throughout the week by leading modern pro-life organizations such as Rehumanize International and New Wave Feminists.

Corbello said the concept of pro-life feminism captivated the students after they heard a talk from Aimee Murphy, executive director of Rehumanize International.

Murphy supported “the woman’s right to choose” until she thought she was pregnant as a sophomore in high school. In January she had sex with an “on-again-off-again” boyfriend. In February he raped her, and in April she missed her monthly cycle. The boyfriend pulled her out of class one day and told her, “I can’t possibly tell my mom what happened. We can’t ... I’ve been thinking. If you don’t get an abortion, I might kill you and then myself.”

Murphy’s first thoughts were she could have an abortion and “take care of the problem.” But after researching fetal development and adoption, she knew violence to an unborn child was not the solution.

She told her parents about her pregnancy, then went to the doctor and found out she wasn’t pregnant.

Through her situation Murphy was drawn to feminism. She discovered many leading feminist leaders strongly opposed abortion and created the first pro-life feminist organization. Contemporary feminist organizations today include: Feminists for Life, Feminists for Nonviolent Choices, Alice Paul Group and Rehumanize International and New Wave Feminists.

“In the popular feminist circles, ‘pro-life’ is treated like a swear word of its own, associated with the idea of stripping women of rights and chaining them barefoot and pregnant in the kitchen. But I’m here to tell you today that not only can you be a feminist – but that being pro-life and pro-woman really do go hand in hand,” said Murphy.

Receiving information and inspiration from the “educational hub” at the Catholic Life Center, the youth put the lessons into practice by going out into the community.

“The week began with a call to compassion while reflecting on the testimonies of speakers who were directly impacted by abortion,” said Corbello. “The students had a thorough pro-life persuasion course and immediately practiced persuasion skills by surveying and engaging random students on LSU’s campus. They witnessed and prayed at the Delta Women’s Clinic, the abortion facility in Baton Rouge, and toured the adjacent Women’s New Life Center and witnessed a live ultrasound, learning about all of the pro-life, pro-woman resources the agency can offer to a woman in crisis. The last day included a visit to a nursing home and breakout sessions on concrete activism for their high school or college campuses and home communities.”

The highlight for many of the PULSE participants was conducting pro-life surveys on LSU’s campus.

Students scattered across campus with clipboards and surveys which asked about whether or not certain groups of people deserve equal rights: men and women, people of different color, people of different sexual orientation, and lastly, born and unborn, said Corbello.

The final question concluded the form survey, and participants could elect to further the conversation about born and unborn.

“Many PULSE students engaged in deep discussion with passers-by, some for longer than an hour,” said Corbello.

Jayci Terrel, a member of Our Lady
Sarah Massey, 16, of St. Anthony of Padua Church in Houma, said she had a conversation with a man who said in the same way “population control” is conducted for animals in shelters, abortion is a form of population control for humans. He believed it was the mother’s right to abort a child. He further pointed to the number of children in foster care.

Massey kept to her training of being non-confrontational with the man. But she noted she had her own positive experience with the foster care system, in that a two-year-old boy in foster care came to live with her family.

“He fits right in. He has chubby checks and he tries to keep up with his older brothers,” said Massey with a broad smile.

She said it’s up to youth to make sure such positive messages get out.

“Just because you’re young doesn’t mean you can’t make a difference,” Massey said. “As it says in Timothy 4:12, ‘Let no one have contempt for your youth, but set an example for those who believe, in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity.’

LEADING THE CHEERS – For the second straight year, Sacred Heart of Jesus School cheerleaders received the coveted Leadership Award at the conclusion of a three-day Universal Cheerleaders Association (UCA) Varsity Camp. The Leadership Award is presented to the squad that receives the most votes from the squads attending camp. Each squad votes for the squad on which they’d like to be a member. The cheerleaders also received superior first overall, superior first in extreme routine, superior first in cheer, second place in sideline routine, three superior ribbons on evaluations and spirit sticks. The squad was also invited to perform at the Buffalo Wild Wings Bowl on New Year’s Day in Orlando. Co-captains Blake Hester, Kourtini Hughes and Lindsey Landry, all rising eighth-graders, were selected to the All-American team, along with classmates Kelby Cheever and Jemma Wood. They were invited to perform in the Thanksgiving Day parade in Disney World. Team members are, from left, front row, Claire Tramonte, Wood, Hughes, Landry, Hester, Lila Aucoin, Samantha Hale, UCA cheer staff; middle row, Frances Rhodes, Morgan Massey, Ann Claire Harris, Anna Chapman, Blanche Coleman, Claire Graves; and back row, Cheever, Brandon Joseph, UCA cheer staff, Caroline Campbell, Cécile Werth, Hillary Leonard, Sophia Guillory, Brooklyn Hoffman and Claire Perrault. Photo provided by Lisa Black Cossé | Sacred Heart of Jesus School
The inspiring true story of U.S. Marine Pvt. Megan Leavey (born in 1983) and Rex, her bomb-sniffing German sheep-dog, who together completed more than 100 combat missions in Iraq before an explosion sidelined both. Before impulsively deciding to jump-start her life by joining the Corps, Megan (Kate Mara) is a listless and depressed 20-year-old living with her harridan of a mother (Edie Falco). After enlisting, she finds her niche in the K9 Division headed by a brusque sergeant (Common), and goes on to help save countless lives while also opening her heart to a fellow Marine (Ramon Rodriguez). With its gritty portrayal of the horrors of combat, the film, directed by Gabriela Cowperthwaite, is a valuable reminder of the personal sacrifices made by those who serve our country, as well as a salute to the enduring rewards of friendship. A few scenes of intense wartime violence, off-screen nonmarital sexual activity, several profanities, occasional rough and crude language. A-III; PG-13

Mary, My Mother

There is no other woman in history with a greater impact than the Virgin Mary. Discover the Blessed Mother in a whole new way in MARY, MY MOTHER, through personal testimonies, songs, Marian apparitions, and so much more.

Sun. 2:30p, Mon. 9:30p, Tue. 6:30a, Wed. 11:30a, Fri. 9p

Woman

When the Holy Bible teaches that men and women have different roles in relationship to one another, it does not base this relationship on cultural norms, but on God’s original creation. This show brings this vocation, spirituality and dignity of woman to the forefront with relevant topics and stories of accomplished Catholic women from around the world.

Mon. 5:30a, Tue. 11:30a, Wed. 12:30a, Thur. 1p, Fri. 6:30p

Captain Underpants: The First Epic Movie

Cheerfully silly, bodily functions-obessed kid's cartoon adapted from a series of books by Dav Pilkey. Two fourth-grade pranksters (voices of Kevin Hart and Thomas Middleditch) fear that their friendship will be broken up if their strict grade pranksters (voices of Kevin Hart and Thomas Middleditch) fear that their friendship will be broken up if their strict

Improvising a solution, they hypnotize him and use mind control to convince him that he is Captain Underpants, the superhero featured in some of the many comic books they have written and drawn together. In this guise, he battles a wild haired mad scientist (voice of Nick Kroll) who schemes to employ technology to stamp out laughter, especially among kids. Parents averse to potty humor will find little to like in director David Soren's otherwise unobjectionable comedy, which showcases a giant mechanized toilet running amok and an orchestra of whoopee cushions. A brief spell of seriousness finds the central duo figuring out that some grownups may be mean because they’re lonely, and doing their best to remedy an instance of this problem. Pervasive child-scare scatological humor. A-III; PG-13

Rough Night

Raunchy comedy in which a bride-to-be (Scarlett Johansson) and four of her best friends (most prominently Jillian Bell and Kate McKinnon) find their wild bachelorette weekend in Miami marred by the accidental death of the stripper (Ryan Cooper) they hired to add to the fun of getting drunk and high. From the sandy swingers next door (Demi Moore and Ty Burrell) to the lesbian relationship in the past of the fiancée's two other pals (Isla Glazer and Zoe Kravitz), director and co-writer Lucia Acrio's film runs the gamut of smut as the quintet scrambles to hide the evidence, fearing for barely tenable reasons that the police will not believe their story. Pure dreck. Strong sexual content, including abortive sex, nudity and a benign view of homosexual acts, co-habitation, drug use, some gory images, constant vulgar humor, several uses of profanity, pervasive rough and crude language. O; R

47 Meters Down

While vacationing in Mexico, two sisters (Mandy Moore and Claire Holt) go shark diving in an iron cage. But the cable holding the enclosure snaps, and they plummet to the seabed at the depth of the title. Director and co-writer Johannes Roberts’ claustrophobic, nerve-racking thriller, which is plausible enough to be more frightening than many horror movies, confronts the resourceful siblings not only with the predators they were meant to be observing in safety but with a rapidly dwindling supply of oxygen as well. As they struggle to survive, and the skipper (Matthew Modine) of the boat they were lowered from tries to organize a rescue, themes of forgiveness and self-sacrificing love are briefly showcased. Probably acceptable for older teens. Some gory and gruesome images, a single rough and a couple of crude terms. A-III; PG-13

Motion Picture Association of America classifications:

NC-17 – Restricted; under 17 requires accompanied by a parent or adult guardian

R – Restrict; under 17 requires accompanied by a parent or adult guardian

PG-13 – Parents strongly cautioned to give special guidance for attendance by children under 13; some material may not be suitable for children

PG – General audience; all ages admitted

G – General audiences; all ages admitted

A-IV – Adults

A-III – Adults, with reservations

A-II – Adults

A-I – Adults

L – Limited adult audience

O – Morally offensive

gives shelter to a young couple (Christopher Abbott and Riley Keough) and their toddler (Griffin Robert Faulkner). But fear and suspicion eventually undermine the good intentions behind this arrangement, with horrifying results. Writer-director Trey Edward Shults takes a deeply pessimistic view of human nature in a film that is well executed yet painful to watch. Maturity is required to grapple with its lifeboat ethics and tacit acceptance of euthanasia in extreme circumstances. Some harsh gory violence, including mercy killing, an adultery theme, scenes of marital intimacy, sexual sound effects, a couple of uses of profanity, frequent rough language, several crude terms. A-III; R

The Lovers

To the extent that a thoughtful drama about marital infidelity can be considered a lyrical, writer-director Aazael Jacobs has achieved that. He carefully structures his plot to minimize any gaping holes in logic. But he also downplays the extensive collateral damage adultery inflicts. Lacking a steady moral compass, his characters are undone by life’s unpredictability. Tracy Letts and Debra Winger play a middle-aged couple for whom the marital spark is gone. But after both take on lovers (Aidan Gillen and Melora Walters), their attraction flames back into life. An adultery theme, fleeting scenes of marital sexual activity, some of it potentially aberrant, much profane and rough language. L; R

Cars 3

In this installment of the family-friendly animated franchise, some of the anthropomorphic automobiles featured in the earlier films are joined by a fleet of new characters sure to please young viewers. A veteran race car (voice of Owen Wilson) is eclipsed by a new generation of faster vehicles, led by a brash young rival (voice of Armie Hammer). Temporarily sidelined by an accident, the aging champ seeks a second chance by joining forces with a youthful trainer (voice of Cristela Alonzo) and harkening to the wisdom of a grizzled adviser (voice of Chris Cooper). Amid the dizzying blur of NASCAR-like action, director Brian Fee and screenwriters Kiel Murray, Bob Peterson and Mike Rich work a nice amount of heart and humor into the comedic plot, along with winning messages about persistence and the value of mentoring. A brief, highly stylized crash scene. A-1; G
WASHINGTON (CNS) — The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, in its analysis of the Senate health care bill, said late June 26 the measure would leave 22 million more people without insurance.

“This moment cannot pass without comment,” said Bishop Frank J. Dewane of Venice, Florida, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development.

“Today, the Congressional Budget Office released a report on the ‘discussion draft’ of the Senate health care proposal, indicating that millions of people could lose their health insurance over time,” he said in a statement issued in response to the just-released analysis.

“As the USCCB has consistently said, the loss of affordable access for millions of people is simply unacceptable,” the bishop said, noting he would continue to study the full CBO report. “These are real families who need and deserve health care.”

He added, “We pray that the Senate will work in an open and unified way to keep the good aspects of current health care proposals, to add missing elements where needed, and to not place our sisters and brothers who struggle every day into so great a peril on so basic a right.”

The Senate released its Better Care Reconciliation Act in “discussion draft” form June 22, with plans to take it up on the Senate floor for a vote before Congress’ 4-week recess.

But the afternoon of June 27, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Kentucky, announced senators will not act on the bill until much later in July. News reports said McConnell and others determined they did not even have enough votes to begin debate on the measure.

The same day at least 300 Sisters of Mercy voiced their strong opposition to the Senate proposal in a statement issued from Buffalo, New York, where they gathered for the religious congregation’s chapter meeting.

“Health care for all, especially the most vulnerable is one of our enduring concerns,” said Sister Patricia McDermott, president of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas. “The Sisters of Mercy have a legacy of advocacy for health care as a right, as well as providing care to generations of people. If the proposed legislation passes, health care ministries, social service agencies, and services for the elderly and family members will be impacted and suffer. The Senate measure also drew opposition from the president and CEO of Catholic Charities USA. In a letter to senators June 26, Dominican Sister Donna Markham urged senators to reject the bill and “craft a health care bill which truly expands coverage, reduces costs and respect human life and dignity.”

The bill in its current form “will have a devastating impact on the poor, marginalized and vulnerable in our country,” Sister Markham wrote.

While welcoming provisions in the bill to protect human life and increase flexibility to states in paying for health care, “a bill that rolls back gains in health care for the poor and vulnerable is deeply regretful,” the letter said.

“It is deeply shameful that instead of improving our health care system, the bill provides tax cuts for people making over $200,000 per year while at the same time demanding dramatic cuts or eliminating programs which help those most in need and most unlikely to afford health care,” the letter said.

In a statement the day Senate leaders released the Better Care Reconciliation Act, Bishop Dewane said the Senate version contains “many of the fundamental defects” that appeared in the House-passed American Health Care Act “and even further compounds them.”

“As is, the discussion draft stands to cause disturbing damage to the human beings served by the social safety net,” Bishop Dewane said June 22. It is precisely the detrimental impact on the poor and vulnerable that makes the Senate draft unacceptable as written.”

One part of the bill cuts the federal government’s share of funding for Medicaid to 57 percent of its cost over the next seven years. States have picked up the balance of the funding to date.

Under the Affordable Care Act, the government had guaranteed that its funding for adults newly eligible for Medicaid would fall to no lower than 90 percent of their costs. Many states expanded Medicaid coverage for all adults ages 18-65 with incomes up to 133 percent of the federal poverty level.

Bishop Dewane criticized the “per-capita cap” on Medicaid funding, which would no longer be an entitlement but have its own budget line item under the Better Care Reconciliation Act. The effect, he said, “would provide even less to those in need than the House bill. These changes will wreak havoc on low-income families and struggling communities, and must not be supported.”

He indicated the Better Care Reconciliation Act at least partially succeeds on conscience rights by “fully applying the long-standing and widely supported Hyde Amendment protections. Full Hyde protections are essential and must be included in the final bill.”

However, the bishops “also stressed the need to improve real access for immigrants in health care policy, and this bill does not move the nation toward this goal,” Bishop Dewane said in his June 22 statement.

**Bishops: Loss of affordable health care with GOP plan ‘simply unacceptable’**
Eucharist, the center of our faith

There is a very old saying, centuries old, that in Latin goes “Lex orandi, lex credendi.” It translates literally, “The law of praying is the law of believing.” Its full meaning is that our church’s official prayer in the liturgy of the Mass and the sacraments is a true guide to our faith, our belief. Last month on June 18 we celebrated the feast of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ which commemorates the institution of the Mass, the eucharistic celebration of the Last Supper, by Jesus with his disciples.

Letters to the Editor

Letters to the Editor should be typed and limited to 350 words and should contain the name and address of the writer, though the address will not be printed. We reserve the right to edit all letters. Send to: Letters to the Editor, The Catholic Commentator, P. O. Box 3316, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-3316, or to tcc@diobr.org.

Another Perspective

Father John Carville

What we pray in the Mass is what we believe, that Christ is truly present to us in the consecration of the bread and wine. We join ourselves to him as he offers his life and his death, his body and blood, to our father in heaven. And we are united to him as we receive his real presence in the bread and wine of Communion.

No where is Jesus’ intention clearer than in the Gospel of the Last Supper, “Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink” (Jn 6: 53-55).

Clear, yes and yet for many, difficult to accept. As Christian denominations split off from the Catholic Church during the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century, none except the Lutherans and the Anglicans (in America, Episcopalians) kept belief in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist as a required tenant of their faith. Of course, the Jews who had been following Jesus and had witnessed his miracle of multiplying the loaves and fishes also had difficulty in believing what he said. “The Jews quarreled among themselves, saying, ‘How can this man give us his flesh to eat?’” Even among those who had committed themselves to him as disciples, there were many who “returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him” (Jn 6: 66).

Jesus often taught in parables and allegories. That was an accepted way of teaching for rabbis in his time. These could allow different interpretations. However, on the question of his real presence in the bread and wine of the Eucharist Jesus would not walk it back, change or soften it. He asked his 12 apostles, “Do you also want to leave?” (Jn 6: 67). St. Peter answered for them, “Master, to whom shall we go? You have the world of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God” (Jn 6: 68-69). The how it happens wasn’t as important as the one who was declaring this truth. He, Jesus, had been sent by God. That was more than enough for St. Peter, who after the resurrection would clearly recognize that Jesus was God’s only begotten son. So would the other apostles, like St. Thomas, who declared clearly that Jesus was his “Lord” and his “God.”

When I was studying theology, it seemed that there were at least a half-dozen theories offered through the ages by theologians trying to explain how Jesus is present in the Eucharist. These were largely futile attempts to explain what is ultimately a mystery because it concerns the presence of the risen Christ. St. John wrote in the prologue to his Gospel, “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw his glory, the glory of God’s only Son, full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:14). Then he added, “No one has ever seen God. The only son, God, who is at the father’s side (in heaven) has revealed him” (Jn 1:18). Later, in his first epistle, St. John takes this theme again, saying “Beloved, we are God’s children now (on this earth); what we shall be (in heaven) has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it (or he, Jesus) is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (1 Jn 3: 2-3).

St. Thomas Aquinas gave us the most widely accepted explanation of how Christ becomes really present in the Eucharist with his philosophy of transubstantiation. However, to understand Aquinas’ theory, one has to study an awful lot of scholastic philosophy and theology. And this doesn’t make for good sermons, much less for good homilies which are supposed to make Scripture applicable to our lives today. Even the Catechism of the Catholic Church doesn’t go deeply into the “how” of Jesus’ real presence in the Eucharist. In paragraph 1166 it simply quotes St. John Damascene: “You ask how the bread becomes the Body of Christ and the wine… the Blood of Christ. I shall tell you: the Holy Spirit comes upon them and accomplishes what surpasses every word and thought…Let it be enough for you to understand that it is by the Holy Spirit, just as it was of the Holy Virgin and by the Holy Spirit that the Lord, through and in himself, took flesh.”

A mystery is not something we cannot understand, but rather a truth that we cannot totally understand because it involves the infinite God who is too great for our finite minds to completely comprehend. But as Jesus told St. Philip, “He who sees me, sees the Father.” The Eucharist is communion with Christ, becoming united with him, and through him with God the Father and the Holy Spirit. It is the foundation and center of all the other six sacraments which celebrate specific moments of God’s mercy to us. Baptism welcomes us into Christ’s church where we come to know God and love him and commit ourselves through the sacraments of confirmation, marriage and holy orders to sharing that love with others. Life is a challenging journey on which we often stumble through our own weakness, for which we beg forgiveness in the sacrament of reconciliation, and through various evils not our fault that wound us and ultimately need God’s healing unction in the sacrament of the sick. In these other six sacraments God is present to us in his strengthening Spirit. Every sacrament is a manifestation of God’s love. The eucharistic is that love made flesh, the fulfillment of his promise to send us a sign of his abiding love, “Emmanuel” the son who will make flesh, the fulfillment of his promise to send us a sign of his abiding love, “Emmanuel” the son who will make

Mission Statement

The mission of The Catholic Commentator is to provide news, information and commentary to the people of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, Catholics and their neighbors alike. In doing so, The Catholic Commentator strives to further the wider mission of the Church: to evangelize, to communicate, to educate and to give the Catholic viewpoint on important issues of the present day.

PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PRAY FOR US

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

July 10
Rev. Matthew J. Graham
Dcn. Alfred J. Ricard Jr.
Br. Xavier Werneth SC

July 11
Rev. Paul A. Gros
Dcn. Thomas M. Robinson
Sr. My-Dung Pham ICM

July 12
Rev. Leo Guillot
Dcn. Eliazar Salinas Jr.
Br. James Burns SC

July 13
Rev. Eric V. Gyan
Dcn. Mario (Sam) Sammartino
Sr. Tuyet Anh Pham ICM

July 14
Rev. Ryan P. Hafildor
Dcn. Joseph M. Scimeca
Br. William Cawley SC

July 15
Rev. Patrick Healy SSJ
Dcn. Rudolph W. Stahl
Sr. Christine Pologa CSJ

July 16
Rev. Ray Hebert SC
Dcn. Michael F. Thompson
Br. Eldon Crifasi SC

July 17
Rev. J. Clifton Hill CSSp
Dcn. J. Thomas Traylor
Sr. Penny Prophit FMOL

July 18
Rev. Gordan I. Iwuji MSP
Dcn. John W. Veron
Br. Ramon Daunis SC

July 19
Rev. Charbel Jamhoury
Dcn. Doanh Van Vu ICM
Sr. Maria Rabalais CSJ

July 20
Rev. Joshua D. Johnson
Dcn. J. Peter Walsh
Br. Carl Evans SC

July 21
Rev. Joel Kandula
Dcn. James E. Wax
Sr. Anne Michelle Ramagos CSJ

July 22
Rev. Jon C. Koehler
Dcn. P. Chauvin Wilkinson Jr.
Br. Clement Furno CSSR

July 23
Rev. Leonard Kraus SJ
Dcn. Alfred Adams Sr.
Sr. Alexandrine Rasoanirina SOM
To whom can we go?

Father Ron Rolheiser

I magine that you are languishing in a foreign jail alone. You don’t know a soul in this strange country. If you return to the homeland from which you have escaped, your life is in immediate danger. Your wife and children have fled to yet another foreign country, and you wonder when or if you will ever see them again.

Hoping to be granted asylum, you exist in limbo in a cell, waiting, frightened and solitary, for the labyrinthine legal system to chew you up and eventually spit you out.

This is the reality for many undocumented individuals in the U.S. And this is where my friend Ruth comes in. Not wearing a hero’s cape, but merely a witness, Ruth is powerfully part of a ministry of presence that a Sister of Mercy has developed in Omaha, Nebraska.

For whatever reason a Somali or a Guatemalan or an Afghan might seek refuge, if they are undocumented they can end up in jail. Our system has no other solution. Ruth and her associates are there simply to be a friend while the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the courts battle over what to do with this stranger in a strange land.

A foreign language skill can be helpful in Ruth’s work, but not necessary. Friendship is maintained through smiles and constancy.

Ruth and her Middle Eastern friend are fortunate in that he speaks perfect English and is well-educated. “I told him he can share with me his most precious possession his story,” she said.

He told her that in all the months he has waited in jail, he has been his only friend. She has sustained him by her visits and cards, and her willingness not to “fix” the situation although she did help find a donor who would pay for some legal expenses but simply to be a listening presence.

The United Nations says the 21st century has produced the greatest state of displacement of peoples in recorded history 65.3 million people on this earth have been forcibly displaced from their homes at the end of 2015. Sometimes they have fled to another part of their country. Often they have had to flee its borders.

For The Journey

Effie Calderola

Ruth’s friend, who has been in jail for months, was initially granted asylum, but a higher court has remanded his case back to the lower court. The prospects aren’t good and he has no idea where he will land if he is put on a plane and expelled from the U.S.

What can we do? Pope Francis says we have a moral responsibility to be part of a solution to this huge problem.

We have a duty “toward our brothers and sisters who, for various reasons, have been forced to leave their homeland: a duty of justice, of civility and of solidarity,” he said earlier this year.

What does this mean? It means we foster a conversation of civility about immigrants and refugees, even when it’s not comfortable to do so in our present political climate. We can urge our bishops and our parishes to speak out more forcefully.

We can support what our local parishes are doing to help refugees. Often our local Catholic Charities are involved in refugee resettlement, and they need household goods, furniture, food, sometimes transportation to English classes.

Jesus Refugee Service or Catholic Relief Services need our donations for their work with the displaced worldwide.

If every Catholic in the U.S. responded in some way to Pope Francis’ pleas, we would go a long way toward standing in solidarity with the stranger in our midst.
COMING EVENTS

July 7, 2017

Pro-Life Mass – A monthly pro-Life Mass will be celebrated Tuesday, July 11 at 5:30 p.m. at St. Agnes Church, 749 East Blvd., Baton Rouge. For information, call 383-4127.

St. Dominics Emmaus Retreat – A Men’s Emmaus Retreat will be held Friday, July 14 – Sunday, July 16 at Rosaryville Spirit Life Center, 39003 Rosaryville Road, Ponchatoula. The retreat is based on the Road to Emmaus scripture passage (Lu 24:13-35), and its importance in men’s lives. For information to register, call Norm Madere at 504-481-0411. Rick Valadie at 504-267-4944 or David Drude at 985-974-0677.

Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites – The Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites welcomes all who are interested in developing their prayer life according to the Carmelite saints. The next meeting will be Sunday, July 9, 1:30 p.m., at Our Lady of Mercy Parish Activity Center in St. Gabriel’s Room, 444 Marquette Ave., Baton Rouge. For more information, call 225-343-3181 or 225-803-3391, or email robertwhite456@att.net.

Charismatic Day of Renewal – Bishop Sam Jacobs and Andi Oney will be the guest speakers at the Day of Renewal, “Jubilee Celebration,” of Catholic Charismatic Renewal of the Diocese of Baton Rouge Saturday, August 12, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m., at Our Lady of Mercy Parish Activity Center, 445 Marquette Ave., Baton Rouge. No registration is required and lunch will be provided. For information, call 226-636-2464.

Soulcare – Soulcare, a program which combines praying the rosary with core strengthening exercises, stretching and full-body movement, will take place at Immaculate Conception Church in Denham Springs, 865 Hatchell Lane, on Saturday, July 15, 9 a.m. (joyful), and Tuesday, July 18, 9:15 a.m. (sorrowful). Bring an exercise mat. For more information, call Amanda Milton at 225-938-9236, email amandamilton88@gmail.com, or visit soulcore.com.

New Orleans Retreat Center Events – The Archdiocese of New Orleans Retreat House, 5500 St. Mary St., Metairie, will present the following retreats: Friday, July 14 – Sunday, July 16, “Jesus Christ is Interested in Us,” with Father Richard Buhler SJ; and Thursday, July 20 – Wednesday, July 26, “Come to the Quiet” directed retreat with the center spiritual directors. Also, on Friday, July 28, “Wine and Dine Gala 2017” with Chef John Folse at the Chateau Golf and Country Club, 3600 Chateau Blvd., Kenner. For information and to purchase tickets for this fundraiser, call 504-887-1420. For more information on retreats, visit arch-no.org or call 504-267-9604.

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from your rectory during the flood of 2016?

When I hear the words “The Great Flood” I don’t understand what was great about it. For us here at St. Alphonsus it was a devastating experience. I do not have any words that can describe the wonderful people of St. Alphonsus and the Central community. They were tenacious, courageous and tireless in their efforts of support of each other, for the church and the entire community. We all shared this disaster together whether some-
MERCY ▼  
From page 1

man the temporary quarters and get back in the business of distributing food.

Today, Manning sits comfortably in his refurbished office, the temporary trailers have been removed and the stench replaced by the sweet aroma of hope and purpose. National support has been overwhelming, and companies such as Best Buy, UPS and Walmart supplied such valuable equipment such as new computers and a phone system, all of which were claimed by flood waters.

Even popular singer and songwriter Taylor Swift chipped in a $50,000 donation.

“We are still not finished,” Manning said, but added he has temporarily demobilized the contractor. “Namely, we are focused today on response.”

The Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank was one of five agencies to be awarded grants through the annual Bishop Stanley J. Ott Works of Mercy Trust Fund program, as administrated by the stewardship office of the Diocese of Baton Rouge. Each agency was awarded checks of $5,000.

Along with the food bank, the agencies receiving grants included Youth Oasis, the Baton Rouge Speech and Hearing Foundation/The Emerge Center, Capital Area CASA Association and the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

Eleven organizations were invited to apply for funding, stewardship director Tammy Abshire said.

Since its inception in 1992, more than $252,000 has been awarded to non-profit organizations housed within the diocese in an effort to continue the charitable works started by Bishop Ott.

“The Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank has a tremendous history of reaching out to those in need, which aligns with the mission of the works of mercy and our Catholic faith,” Abshire said. “This past year, however, the food bank has severely tested and has responded with admirable dedication and commitment.

“Faced with its own daunting task of rebuilding, food bank officials were miraculously able to responded to the needs of the community only days after the flood waters had receded. We are truly honored to be able to assist the organization as it continues in its own recovery yet at the same providing valuable services for a region that remains in recovery mode.”

Manning said the food bank, unique in that it does not charge any of its participating 115 agencies to participate and relies solely on fundraisers, grants and donations to operate, will use the money to assist with everything from acquisition to distribution.

“We are grateful to the diocese for their support of the food bank,” he added, noting that a difficult task remains even as demand begins to level off following the flooding frenzy.

Traditionally in September, he said, about one million pounds of food are distributed to the agencies that are housed in 11 civil parishes. However, in the aftermath of the flood, nearly 2.6 million pounds of food were distributed just in September.

Currently, the food bank is averaging 250,000 pounds of food per week from its 170,000-square food warehouse, either through delivery or agencies picking up what is needed.

“The demand has come down since August, but it was intimidating because so many people needed food,” Manning said. “The challenge is so many people have moved.”

Because of that fluidity, he said some agencies showed dramatic increases in demand, some decreased and other simply were temporarily out of service, creating a logistical nightmare for his staff.

Bishop Robert W. Muench presented checks of $5,000 each to five organizations that were recipients of grants from the Bishop Stanley J. Ott Trust Fund Program. Pictured from left, Tammy Abshire, director of stewardship for the Diocese of Baton Rouge; Michael Acaldo, executive director of the St. Vincent de Paul Society; Liz Betz of the Capital Area CASA Association; Tekoah Boaster from Youth Oasis; Bishop Muench; Julie Chappell from BR Speech and Hearing Foundation/The Emerge Center; and Charlene Guarisco Montelaro from the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank. Photos by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

Mike Manning, executive director of the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank looks over a large refrigerator that house perishable items at the warehouse. The food bank was one of five organizations that were awarded $5,000 grants through the annual Bishop Stanley J. Ott Works of Mercy Trust Fund program.

Even as the effects of the flood continue to ebb, Manning said the need for his agency remains critical. He said two years ago the food bank served 87,000 non-duplicated people, an astonishing 15 percent of the population of the area served. He said a number of factors have played into that total, including the fact that some of the more rural civil parishes often suffer higher than average poverty rates.

“Baton Rouge has dramatically grown (in the past few years) but we don't see those numbers in other areas,” he said. “There are still a lot of agricultural parishes in other areas.”

“When you think about the way people live today, you are one, two paychecks away from getting assistance from us,” he added. “When you think about the 10 millions meals distributed every year and, and not having (the food bank) to supply the food, what would these people do? What about their health and other problems?

“We are a health care first, and supply nutritious food.”

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- St. James

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The value/values of Catholic schooling

As we prepare to open a new school year, those of us who attended Catholic school years (indeed another century!) ago have many memories of a different time and a different society. One of the words that come to my mind is dedication – the dedication of religious sisters and lay faculty who labored so sacrificially and for little financial compensation, as well as our parents who gave up some basic human amenities for the sake of their children. And for what ultimate purpose? To help us learn about our God father, son and Holy Spirit, our Catholic Church of 2000 years, God’s Holy Word (the Bible), the sacraments (celebrating Eucharist and reconciliation), the origin, meaning, purpose and destiny of our existence.

Jesus said: “What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? For the Son of Man will come with his angels in his father’s glory and then he will repay everyone according to his conduct” (Mt 16:26-27). “God created mankind in his image, in the image of God he created them” (Gen 1:27). God created our predecessors and us, endowing us with the gift of self-direction (free will). Choices have consequences. The first question for us to answer is: “Who am I?” The second question to answer is: “Who is God?” The third question is: “Who is my neighbor?” The fourth question is: “How do I gain eternal life with God?”

Catholic schools represent, teach and promote the answers of these questions not only through instruction, but through personal and communal witness and support. The role of commitment to universal respect of others and the place of discipline (appropriate self-control and external order) take their rightful place.

All this said, our Catholic schools seek to be second to none in helping their students grasp the “secular” studies of language arts, mathematics, history, sciences and the role of co-curriculars including music, art and athletics. Our Catholic schools seek to educate the whole person: humanly, religiously, spiritually, morally, intellectually, physically and socially.

To all as part of the Catholic schools extended community who have contributed to our personal development and well-being, and to all who minister through Catholic schools in any capacity, as well as those who enroll their children in them, I express profound gratitude and assurance of prayer. Only God can ultimately and fully reward you, both in time and in eternity. God’s peace, grace, providence and love to all.

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Happy New Year! is proclaimed each January as people reflect on the past and look forward to the future. Likewise, our schools celebrate a new year each August when students return from summer break. While resolutions made in January are noble, many of us are less than successful in accomplishing our intentions. Unlike the individual resolutions, however, the resolutions for improvement made in Catholic schools have structure for success because of the national accreditation process for continuous improvement. This commitment to improvement is what makes Catholic schools in the Diocese of Baton Rouge consistently excellent, as they fulfill the vision of evangelizing hearts, educating minds, encouraging talent and embracing the future.

The Assessment of Catechesis and Religious Education (ACRE) continues to indicate that students in the diocese score above national norm in all domains and in all grades tested. High schools have adopted the Curriculum Framework for Religious Education from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Now it is time for an elementary/middle school curriculum to be developed, and we look forward to the work of the task force collaboration with the Department of Evangelization and Catechesis in that initiative.

Academic excellence is also apparent from standardized testing, and the work of the schools to meet the challenges of the ACT Aspire standardized testing program has been tremendous. The Diocese of Baton Rouge Learning Standards for math and
St. Jude principal returning home

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Michelle Gardiner, the incoming principal at St. Jude the Apostle School in Baton Rouge, said she looks forward to contributing her skills and talents to build upon the school’s strong efforts in providing the best experiences for its students, parents, teachers and the community.

Gardiner has dreamed of being involved in education since she was a young child, when she played the role of teacher.

She taught kindergarten as well as sixth grade in public schools in Mississippi, Arkansas and Denham Springs. She has also worked as a part-time national consultant for the program “On the Way to Success in Reading and Writing” program.

But it wasn’t until after she joined the faculty and staff as a pre-kindergarten teacher at Our Lady of Lourdes School Catholic School (OLOL) in Greenville, Mississippi in 2005 that she became involved in administration. OLOL’s principal Sister Marie Elizabeth Alsapough encouraged Gardiner to go into administration work. She received a master’s degree in Catholic leadership and became vice-principal, then principal, of the school. She accomplished many things during her time there, including collaborating and authoring the diocesan-wide restructuring of math and science curriculum for kindergarten and for pre-k, overseeing the design and construction of a new elementary school and overseeing the fundraising and construction of a new OLOL school building as it was merged with St. Joseph Middle School/High School campus.

As principal, Gardiner professionally mentored three principals in the Diocese of Jackson.

To be an effective principal, Gardiner said one must have vision for the school and be a “hands on” leader. “I believe they should be highly effective, results-oriented, open-minded and collaborative in nature,” said Gardiner. “They should be very adaptable and practice contemplative practices in all aspects of daily interactions with all stakeholders.”

“Through the integration of Scripture, church traditions, cardinal virtues and theological virtues, the principal should be able to take an ordinary decision making situation or moral dilemma and transform it into a reflection of the Gospel values.”

She added, “I believe the principal should be a mentor to the faculty and understand their spiritual needs and provide opportunities through staff development and retreats that focus them on reflecting on their individual strengths and weaknesses, as well as confirm their commitment to the mission of the Catholic school. I recognize the importance of providing the faculty with a working environment that fosters a collaborative and enthusiastic team, which is actively involved in exploring innovative ways of improving the school.”

Gardiner believes that principals are also “blessed with the opportunity to be a spiritual leader and community.”

“I believe the vision of a Catholic school should be to help children recognize the importance of self-awareness and the role it plays in strengthening the individual, an awareness of God’s love for them, and foster within them a commitment to serve God and their community,” said Gardiner who is also looking forward to working with St. Jude pastor Father Trey Nelson.

Gardiner, a graduate of Woodlawn High School and Southeastern Louisiana University, said she is glad to be returning to Baton Rouge, where her parents and other family members live.

SEE GARDINER PAGE 4B

Incoming principals

Seven Catholic schools in the Diocese of Baton Rouge will open the school year with new principals.

The list includes Pat Sanguinetti at St. Thomas Aquinas Diocesan Regional High School in Hammond, C.J. Laird at Sacred Heart of Jesus School in Baton Rouge, Aimée Wiles at Redemptorist St. Gerard School in Baton Rouge, Dr. Kathleen Herpich at St. Elizabeth Interparochial School in Picayune, Michelle Gardiner at St. Jude the Apostle School in Baton Rouge, Cheryl Santangelo at Mater Dolorosa School in Independence and Claire Willis at Cristo Rey Baton Rouge Franciscan High School.

The new principals are introduced in the next several pages.

VERGES ▼

From page 2B

English/language arts are being embraced by teachers throughout the diocese as they map a rigorous curriculum within their schools. We welcome professional collaboration again this year as we focus on student growth and continuous improvement.

Advisory board members throughout the diocese support growth in the schools, and their leadership in school development is critical for success. The Diocesan School Board is engaged in strategic planning, which followed the Diocesan Pastoral Plan. The work of the committee will provide direction for the future, which is dependent on having strong advisory boards that result from the commitment of individuals as well as the functionality of the group. To foster both, the annual board retreat for all local and diocesan board members will be held on Aug. 21 – 22. We look forward to gathering to pray for the ministry of education and to learn more about effective board practices.

We are grateful for the leadership of Bishop Robert W. Muench, who supports and celebrates the work of the schools, and to pastors and priests in our diocese, who nurture the ministry of education within their church parishes. As all stakeholders work together for the good of education, our community will experience tremendous blessings from the Holy Spirit. There is much to celebrate, and we wish everyone a Happy New Year in Catholic schools!
St. Elizabeth perfect fit for Herpich

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

When Dr. Kathleen Herpich first stepped into the halls of St. Elizabeth School in Paincourtville, she was greeted by a feeling of familiarity, of being comfortable.

She knew immediately that was where she needed to be. So a journey that began in New Jersey, with stops in Pennsylvania, Ohio and Georgia will come to rest on the banks of Bayou Lafourche. Herpich recently accepted the position as principal of St. Elizabeth, succeeding Molly Landry.

“When you walk into a school, it’s almost like walking into a house you’re going to buy, and you got that feeling this is a good place, this is a place I could be,” said Herpich, who has a doctorate of education from Seton Hall University. “It’s hard to pinpoint that feeling but that’s what I felt when I walked into the school and into the classrooms.

“I felt like it was welcoming, it was friendly. Students were happy, you could see they were smiling, and I could see it wasn’t just because I was walking into the room with (St. Elizabeth Church administrator) Father Matthew Graham.

Small by design, St. Elizabeth is sporting an enrollment of about 230 students. But the school’s quaintness is what this 17-year veteran administrator has found so appealing.

“In doing my dissertation for my doctorate I found that is not necessarily the size of the class but it’s the size of the school,” said Herpich, who earned her master’s degree at Montclair State University. “It’s important that everyone knows each other. The kindergarten student should be known by the eighth-grade teacher as well, not as well known as by the kindergarten teacher but at least know their name, be able to say hello to them, recognize their face.

“It goes a long way with the environment of the school and the security and the learning of the students.”

Admittedly, St. Elizabeth was not Herpich’s first choice, having originally applied to become principal at one of the Catholic high schools. However, after finishing second in that process, she said Dr. Melanie Verges, superintendent of Catholic Schools for the Diocese of Baton Rouge, called her back to gauge Herpich’s interest in St. Elizabeth.

“I had already been to the Catholic Life Center and liked what I saw,” she said. “When I visited the school I really liked what I saw. I felt it was exactly like what I was looking for.”

Herpich said she is excited to maintain the enrollment and have the school adhere to a strict curriculum, as outlined by the Catholic Schools Office but admitted that it’s far too early to speculate on what changes might be coming.

“She has served as principal at Catholic schools in Lima Ohio; Fairless Hills, Pennsylvania; Philadelphia; and New Brunswick, New Jersey. She was also an adjunct professor at Holy Family University and Montclair State.

For the past year Heprich was working as an education consultant doing teacher coaching at Northstar Educational Consultant Group in Grayson, Georgia.

“I have very fond memories of my high school and college years,” said Gardiner.

Her husband, Emile, an LSU alumnus whom she has been married to for 28 years, also has family members living in Baton Rouge.

“We have roots in the LSU Tigers,” said Gardiner.

The Gardiners have two sons, both whom have had been educated in a Catholic elementary and high school. Eric, 22, will be a senior at Mississippi State University and Craig, 18, will be a freshman at MSU this fall.

“It’s a house divided,” Gardiner said wryly about the Tigers-Bulldogs rivalry.

As she returns to Baton Rouge, Gardiner said she knows St. Jude has a reputation as an outstanding school in the Capital City, and she wants to help the school to excel even more.

“There’s a lot of energetic and enthusiastic people (at St. Jude),” Gardiner said.
Willis plans for increased expansion at Cristo Rey

By Rachele Smith
The Catholic Commentator

Claire Willis, an experienced Catholic school administrator and teacher, has been chosen principal of Cristo Rey Baton Rouge Franciscan High School. She will replace Aimee Wiles, who has accepted the principal post at Redemptorist St. Gerard School, also located in Baton Rouge.

Willis, who most recently served as the assistant principal for academics at Our Lady of Mercy School in Baton Rouge, will help guide Cristo Rey as it begins its second year of operation in Baton Rouge.

“I was very drawn to the school’s mission to provide a Catholic preparatory college experience to students who might not otherwise have that strong educational opportunity,” said Willis. A graduate of LSU with a bachelor’s degree in history and English, Willis later moved to Nashville, Tennessee where she earned a master’s degree in education from Vanderbilt University. She returned to Baton Rouge to begin her teaching career and served as an English teacher at St. Joseph’s Academy and Catholic High School, both in Baton Rouge.

Additionally, she received an educational specialist certificate in gifted education from LSU and taught gifted classes in ELA (English language arts) instruction at Glasgow Middle School in East Baton Rouge Civil Parish.

Since arriving at Cristo Rey this summer, Willis has been preparing for a sizable increase in the student body. The school is adding a new freshmen class as it continues to expand during the next three years.

In August, Cristo Rey opened with 170 freshmen, and as those students now enter their sophomore year of high school, the school will operate at roughly half its projected capacity of 500-600 students expected in 2019.

“Naturally, the school is expanding and growing. We’ve seen Willis page 10B

God is her guide

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Cheryl Santangelo, new principal of Mater Dolorosa School in Independence, believes in her students, saying every student, no matter their disability, has the ability to learn.

Santangelo has spent most of her working years educating students and teachers. A 1975 graduate of Independence Girls High School, Santangelo graduated from Southeastern Louisiana University with a bachelor’s degree in business education with a minor in social studies. She later received a master’s degree in supervision and later principalship. She graduated from Southeastern with a Master’s Plus 30 degree.

Santangelo began teaching at Valley Forge Academy in Amite. After three years she taught at Mater Dolorosa. In 1985 she began teaching in the Tangipahoa School System.


Married to her high school sweetheart, Johnnie Charles Santangelo Jr. for the past 40 years, family has always been important to Cheryl Santangelo. Her other children include Julie and Jennifer. A doting grandparent of Julie’s son, Colton, and Jennifer’s triplet sons, John, Brooks and Ryder, Santangelo loves teaching them about family traditions. She said Mater Dolorosa Church’s School’s strong support of families prompted her to apply and accept the principal’s position.

Becoming a principal is a natural fit for Santangelo. For many years she chaired the school’s St. Joseph’s Altar, teaching the tradition to many children. She is known as the “altar lady” to many.

She served on the Mater Dolorosa School Board for six years.

She served as an extraordinary minister of the Eucharist for Mater Dolorosa Church.

She received the Mother Seton Award for Mater Dolorosa School.

Soon after she was hired as principal, Santangelo started making improvements at the school. She is starting a pre-k class. She’s been recruiting potential students from catechism classes at St. Helena Church in Amite, raising money for new flooring and getting the walls painted in the cafeteria and making sure the grounds on the school are well kept.

She’s also had a luncheon meeting with the teachers to help reduce the stress of the teachers about having a new principal.

She said she plans to strongly support the school’s efforts to make sure their students have the best educational experience possible.

“I think it’s better to teach beyond the curriculum and textbook,” Santangelo said.

With all her plans, however, Santangelo plans to let God be her guide.

“When you spend time in God’s word it makes a difference,” Santangelo said. “It’s all about him.”
Laird set to lead Sacred Heart of Jesus School

By Rachele Smith
The Catholic Commentator

C.J. Laird is more than just ready for his new job as principal at Sacred Heart of Jesus School in Baton Rouge.

He’s also humbled.

Laird, who most recently served as principal at Redemptorist St. Gerard in Baton Rouge, said he understands the legacy and deep tradition at Sacred Heart, and he is excited to be a part of it.

“As a long time history teacher, I was obviously attracted to the history at this school and church parish,” he said.

Certainly, Sacred Heart’s past is extensive.

The church parish was the first in Baton Rouge to build a school, with its charter parishioners and priests opting to build and support a school before considering the construction of a larger church. When the school was completed in September 1929, the Sisters of St. Joseph were asked to guide its direction, offering their service for many years and ultimately setting the stage for lay administrators and teachers who would continue their work in what is today the oldest diocesan parochial school in the city of Baton Rouge.

For Laird, knowing that his history is important as it helps him understand his role in fostering and continuing Sacred Heart’s legacy.

Laird, a native of Texas, graduated from Florida State University before returning to the Lone Star State and attending Lamar University for a master’s degree in educational administration.

He and his wife, Danielle, who is from Baton Rouge, lived in Houston for several years, where they both worked as teachers.

In 2014, with their young family growing, the couple decided to move back to Danielle’s hometown and plant roots in Baton Rouge.

Soon, Laird began teaching at Catholic High School in Baton Rouge, and last fall, he was tapped for the top post at Redemptorist St. Gerard.

An adult convert to Catholicism, Laird said he has a deep appreciation for Sacred Heart’s commitment to Catholic education and its faith-based teaching.

Laird said while living in Houston, he taught in a large high school that served some 4,600 students. The classes were large, and while the best and worst kids were always recognizable, some students simply got lost, he stated.

“In a big school, if a kid wants to be invisible, they can be. But it’s hard for that to happen at a small school. Instead teachers and staff go out of their way to get to know each child, and that’s huge for me. I believe it’s important that every child knows they are loved and cared for by God,” he said.

C.J. Laird
Sacred Heart of Jesus principal

My door is always open, ... adding that he strives to learn where his students are and what they need.

C.J. Laird
Sacred Heart of Jesus principal

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SCIENCE • TECHNOLOGY • RELIGION • ENGINEERING • THE ARTS • MATHEMATICS
New name, more help

By Richard Meek

Revisions to a long-standing federal program that has undergone a series of name changes will provide more equitable funding to private and Catholic schools as well as a state ombudsman to ensure those dollars are being channeled to the appropriate coffers, according to an official with the U.S. Department of Education.

During a meeting of Catholic educators earlier this year at the Catholic Life Center, Jenah Morrisey, management and program analyst for the Department of Education's Office of Non-private Schools, said the most recent updates to the No Child Left Behind Act signed in nearly 15 years ago has reauthorized the protection act for secondary and elementary schools.

Renamed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Morrisey said the changes, which go into effect for the 2017-18 school year, provide equitable services to private school students and teachers.

“Equitable services is the key phrase,” Morrisey said, adding that the changes will affect all or some parts of Title I, Title 2 and Title 4 programs.

“I would not say there are drastic changes, but there are some important additions to the law,” Morrisey told The Catholic Commentator. “One of the bigger ones is states are now required to designate an ombudsman (at the state level) to monitor funding allocated to private schools. They will be monitoring the districts and not the schools but will be a resource to the private schools if they have questions to help resolve issues.”

Morrisey noted there will also be some changes to the way public school districts will be required to allocate Title I funding. Previously, public school districts were able to lop off some of the money for certain types of programs and proportion to the public schools what was left.

“That resulted in lower per pupil allocation.”

Morrisey said. “Now they will not be able to take off the reservations. It’s a big change and it will alter funding amounts for both the public and private schools. The funding is a little more straightforward.

“I think in some regards the change in funding is big,” she added. “With Title I those reservations could take a big chunk. That is no longer the case.”

Because of the changes, both the teachers and students could potentially see an increase in services because of the sharing of funds.

One Catholic school educator in Ascension civil parish said the changes will allow students struggling in areas such as math and reading additional one-on-one tutoring attention they need during the school day, calling it a “big benefit.”

“They will also be able to get counseling services through the school,” said Dianne Talbot, instructional specialist for the Catholic Schools Office. “(The counseling) will be whatever a particular counselor is allowed to do with his or her qualifications.”

According to officials, the ESSA Act should help clear up confusion in the classroom regarding eligibility of Title I services. In any particular classroom, two students who are Title I eligible might be sitting next to each other but because of the way a particular public school district is structured, one of the students might be eligible for services besides.

LaRIND

From page 68

As he prepares for the new school year, Laird said a key element of his management style is listening. Taking cues from his own experience and from administrators who he believes have mentored him, including Lisa Harvey, principal at Catholic High School, Laird believes listening and “trying to be aware of what people need” is one of his strengths.

“My door is always open,” he said, adding that he strives to learn where his students are and what they need.

According to Laird, students come to Sacred Heart from 21 different zip codes in and around Baton Rouge, and as they drive from “near and far,” he said, it’s a testament to the school’s strong dynamic tradition.

But while Sacred Heart no longer draws students from around the neighborhood, the school’s new principal sees a bright future for the area.

“Look at the development on Government Street. I’m also seeing investment on Florida Boulevard which is key since the parish backs up to it. It’s all ripe to blossom,” he said.

Laird believes the parish and school can play a pivotal part in the neighborhood’s revitalization.

“We have a strong mission here. We can be the cornerstone to move the area in a positive way,” he said, adding, “We can be a beacon for the rejuvenation of this neighborhood.”
Diocese of Baton Rouge
2017 – 2018 Catholic School Instructional Leaders

The Gift of Leadership

The Catholic Commentator 2017 BACK TO SCHOOL July 7, 2017

8B

The Catholic Commentator 2017 BACK TO SCHOOL July 7, 2017

8B
Ready, set, save

By Ann M. Bare
Special to The Catholic Commentator

The smell of a box of crayons and the scent of ink in a recently opened box of spiral notebooks stir up childhood memories. Add sharpened #2 pencils and a pink eraser, a zippered pencil case, a bottle of glue, a pair of scissors and a wooden ruler and we were ready for school. That was then; this is now.

Back-to-school lists these days include a box of tissues, a bottle of hand sanitizer, antiseptic wipes, folders, notebooks, binders, a ream of copy paper, colored pencils, washable markers, erasers, gym shoes, locker organizers and possibly a laptop. Are you kidding? Guess what the kids are getting for Christmas – nine months before they're actually going to use them. Oh, and don’t forget the backpack.

Getting kids ready for school can push one to apply for a second mortgage – or, wait, you just did that last year. Planning ahead and watching for sales can decrease the financial outflow in August – especially if there are several children heading off to classrooms.

When our young’uns (or even high schoolers) are gathering everything for the first day of the school year, there’s an innate need to start them out with new everything. Maybe that’s because we enjoyed our book bag of fresh-smelling items years ago. We think that some memories need to be stored in the reservoir of our kids’ minds.

But do they really need ALL new items? If the money isn’t there this year, perhaps a few healthy leftovers can sneak into last year’s spruced-up backpack. After a week, everything is “used” anyway, so maybe last year’s ruler, a decorated box with last year’s crayons and markers, stacks of loose leaf paper, and some gently used folders with new stickers can meet the immediate need. The class won’t use 25 boxes of tissues, 25 bottles of sanitizer and 25 cartons of wipes the first week; putting off those purchases for a while can put a little cushion on the budget. (Just tell the teacher your provisions will come later.)

College freshmen’s expenses are even more shocking – towels, sheets, small fridge, iron, laundry soap and dryer sheets, medications, personal items, cell phone, overpriced textbooks, spending money and new clothes. (Gotta have new
been hiring new faculty members and looking at ways to enhance the delivery of instruction for our students,” said Willis, who as someone who focused on curriculum development and high academic standards as an assistant principal, also added that she will continue to concentrate on that passion in her new post.

In addition, Willis said since accepting her position, she has been connecting with other school leaders in the Cristo Rey Network, which comprises 32 schools nationwide.

But while preparing for the new school year is important, there are other goals Willis wants to achieve at Cristo Rey, and one involves making sure more people in the community know about the mission and purpose of the school.

“I want to raise awareness of the great work going on at Cristo Rey,” said Willis, explaining that the school’s focus of empowering students and families from low-economic areas through education and a work study experience also fits well within the social justice concerns of the Catholic church.

“It’s very much in line with what Pope Francis wants us to do,” she said.

Willis remarked students and their families appreciate the opportunity they have for a brighter future through Cristo Rey, and the entire school community is grateful for the support others give through donations, volunteer work and prayers.

“Our families deserve to be a part of this,” she said, emphasizing, “There’s great work happening here.”
Our Lady of Mercy breaks ground for building

The confetti flew, dirt turned, and holy water was sprinkled by Bishop Robert W. Muench as Our Lady of Mercy School in Baton Rouge celebrated the ground breaking of the new expansion on its lower school campus. As students, teachers and families sang songs in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, OLOM pastor Father Cleo Milano recalled the humble beginnings of the school in 1953. The school opened in September of that year with 174 students in grades one through four. Fast forward 64 years from those first school years when a temporary building and a Scout Hut were being utilized for classroom space, Our Lady of Mercy is preparing for an expansion that will accommodate its now 950-plus students with a state-of-the-art Early Childhood Center on the lower school campus.

The expanded and renovated facility will be the new home for Mercy’s 5-year-old “Little Saints” pre-kindergarten program through second grade. The expansion of the lower school will increase grade level sections allowing for an average student-teacher ratio of 25 or less students in each classroom. Students and faculty thrive in these smaller classes and achieve their greatest potential. Having the lower school separate from the upper school also helps Mercy maintain the intimate, personal and family feeling that is one of its hallmarks.

In the fall of 2015, Mercy completed a nine-month master planning process with the Center of Planning Excellence (CPEX) that generated a 20-year master plan for the church and school. A feasibility planning study was then conducted which resulted in the decision to launch a capital campaign to accommodate the growth of the church and school.

With much anticipation, the first phase of the Mercy building campaign, Traditions for Tomorrow, is now in action. Mercy broke ground in May with a community-wide celebration complete with a solemn blessing of the site from Bishop Muench and hard hats for kids. The new building designed by Coleman Partners Architects will provide a self-contained facility for the school’s youngest Blue Jays. The new Early Childhood Center will include its own library and media center (separate from the main campus); cafeteria; nurse’s station; counselor’s office; and an expanded common space that will be utilized for morning assembly, prayer and group gatherings.

Arkel Constructors was recently selected as the general contractors for this first building project. Construction is scheduled over the next 10 months with an anticipated completion date in May. On the
I'm off to college. Awesome. Now I can do whatever I want. Nope! Now I don't have to keep my room clean. Nope! Now I can buy whatever I want with my newly acquired credit card. Nope! Now I don't have to listen to authority. Nope! Nope! Nope! After living 17-18 years in a house with a parent or two, life can seem a bit constricted. Who wants to keep hearing about responsibilities, asking permission to leave the house, listening to complaints about my choice of friends and gripes about how much time I spend on screens? Finally … FREEDOM.

Freedom from what? Freedom to be what? Does freedom mean no boundaries, no worries, no have-tos? Never! Freedom now means you get to make choices independently of a parent nagging you, but every decision has consequences. You now have no one to blame but yourself when you buck sensibility and authority with your newfound independence.

Many kids don't have gracious, respectful relationships with authority – at home, at school or on the streets. Makes sense. They're adolescents, and that's a time of life when dictated rules are being transferred to self-imposed responsibilities. That process can take years; in fact, it does take years. (Unfortunately for some, years and years and years.) So what does "out of the nest" mean?

Now I have to make sure I get to class on time. Yep! Now I have to say no to the invitation to a raucous, sure-to-bring-cops party. Yep! Now I have to make sure I study and meet deadlines for projects. Yep! Now I have to really think …

By Ann M. Bare
Special to The Catholic Commentator

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SMHS shares with other schools

St. Michael High School in Baton Rouge implemented a 1:1 technology initiative four years ago, with each student receiving a Fujitsu tablet PC to use for all of their classes. The computers are on a four-year rotation, and with new ones coming in for the 2017-18 school year, administration decided to donate more than 150 computers to other schools for their students to use. SMHS technology integration specialist Abby Tate commented, “These computers were so beneficial to our students that it is great to see that they can continue to be used in classroom settings. For those students in lower grades, it will provide them with the experience and tools they need in order to be prepared for high school.”

Students working on the SMHS help desk have preparing the computers for donation. St. Jean Vi

Students at the Centro de Capacitacion integral Marie Poussepin with their computers.

SMHS Breanna Berteau working in our student-run help desk preparing the computers for donation. Photos provided by Kristi Watts | St. Michael the Archangel High School

Students at the Centro de Capacitacion integral Marie Poussepin with their computers.

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See NOPE PAGE 13B
St. George students learn life lessons through D.A.R.E. program

D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) is a program to help fifth-grade students resist the pressure which may influence them to experiment with alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. In this program, the students are introduced to the D.A.R.E. Decision Making Model that assists them in problem solving, being a good citizen and making wise decisions. To graduate and earn a certificate the students are expected to maintain good attendance, demonstrate good behavior during the class by following the D.A.R.E. rules, keep their body free of drugs, complete the student workbook and write a D.A.R.E. report. The science-based D.A.R.E. Keepin’ It REAL curriculum and materials are used during the D.A.R.E. class.

St. George School’s D.A.R.E. Officer is Captain Randy Aguillard, Commander of D.A.R.E., Junior Deputies and Neighborhood Watch. He has been teaching D.A.R.E. for 22 years and 21 of those years have been at St. George School in Baton Rouge. Aguillard is a kind-hearted, compassionate man who loves interacting with the students and helping them develop the ability to make good choices, which makes him a good role model for students inside and outside of the classroom and a strong advocate for the D.A.R.E. program. Aguillard is also an active member in his parish, St. Jude Church in Baton Rouge, a crisis negotiator, member of Honor Guard and part of the Louisiana D.A.R.E. training staff. He shares and uses personal life experiences to clarify how the D.A.R.E. program is useful both in school and family settings.

Where am I and how did I get here? Oh no! My folks are going to kill me when they see my grades! Oh no! College years have enough routine stress without adding irresponsible drama/trauma. Making decisions because it’s the right thing to do (rather than because Mom or Dad said so) starts leveling out your life of dependability, integrity and trustworthiness, virtually guaranteeing long-lasting friendships and worthwhile employment and, doggone it, people will like you. More importantly, you’ll like yourself. College days are training days. Set the goal, fix your sight, do the work, achieve. Who said it was going to be easy?

NOPE ▼ from page 12B about who I’m going to hang out with. Yep! Now I have to buy only what I can afford (“budget” is not a four-letter word). Yep! Yep! Yep!
Shoot, I overslept. Oh no! My credit card bill can’t be this high! Oh no!

WARRIOR ALUMNI HONORED – Past graduates and long-time volunteers at St. Michael the Archangel High School in Baton Rouge were recently honored. From left, Jason and Katelyn McCann received the 2017 Alumni of the Year Awards, while parent volunteer Kristy Larson and Father Brad Doyle, parochial vicar for St. James Church in St. James and St. Philip Church and Our Lady of Peace Church, both in Vacherie, were presented with the school’s 2017 Warrior Sword Awards. Others honored at the annual Warrior Awards Dinner were 2017 Wall of Honor Athletes Josh Fontenot, a 1998 graduate of St. Michael and a wrestling and football standout, and James Meyers, a 2007 school graduate and five-time state swim champion. Photo provided by Kristi Watts | St. Michael the Archangel High School
SJA continues emphasis on STEM, innovation and design

St. Joseph’s Academy, in Baton Rouge, will begin the 2017-2018 academic year with a continued emphasis on providing young women with the tools they need to succeed on the college level and beyond.

To address the traditional under representation of women in the fields of science, technology, engineering and math, SJA will offer even more cross-curricular, hands-on learning opportunities in the Andrea Clesi McMa-kin ’74 STEM Lab. Since opening in June of 2015, the lab has provided students with access to 20 3D printers, laser cutters, arduinos and a variety of electronic devices. The lab is filled every hour with engineering students as well as those from other disciplines wanting to utilize the state-of-the-art tools.

SJA was among the first schools in the country to have 3D printers; having 20 is unprecedented on the high school level. The printers and other tools enable students to design and build projects they can use in class. As a result, students are learning concepts, then putting those concepts into practice in the lab.

To further integrate the success of the STEM Lab across the curriculum, SJA opened the 2016-2017 school year with a state-of-the-art Innovation and Design Lab. A year later, the lab will continue to offer cutting-edge, project-based learning to equip young women with 21st-century skills, including critical-thinking, collaboration, creating and problem-solving.

The Innovation and Design Lab serves as the link between the STEM Lab and the global community; teaching students the six-step engineering and design methodology – identify, interpret, ideate, invent, implement and improve – to help them creatively design solutions to real-world problems.

Students gather and focus information, imagine the possibilities, design a prototype, then build and deliver it. They identify a problem, develop empathy, brainstorm ideas for solutions and design an activity or object to help solve the problem. The Innovation and Design model emphasizes the process and problem solving. Failure and the resulting re-thinking are crucial components of the model, resulting in curiosity, empathy, creativity and collaboration.

Evidence of the impact of the STEM and Innovation and Design labs can be found in the success enjoyed by SJA students in a variety of science fair competitions. SJA was the top school in the 2017 Region VII Louisiana Science and Engineering Fair and finished first in the 2017 Louisiana State Science and Engineering Fair. As the result of their strong original research projects, many students were invited to participate in national and international science competitions. Indeed, more SJA students secured invitations in 2016-2017 than in any previous years.

Participants finished first, second and fifth at this year’s Louisiana Junior Science and Humanities Symposium. Three students advanced to participate in the National Junior Science and Humanities Symposium, and an unprecedented seven students were invited to participate in the 2017 Intel International Science and Engineering Fair.

At the International Sustainable World Energy, Engineering and Environment Project Olympiad in Houston, all four participants brought home awards, including a silver medal, two bronze medals and an honorable mention. Both participants in the recent GENIUS Olympiad won silver medals.

“The STEM Lab, Innovation and Design Lab and Science Fair provide our girls with invaluable learning experiences at the high school level,” said Linda Messina, SJA’s Science Fair coordinator. “They are able to create and design in the innovation and design lab, and then develop statistical skills, analysis and critical-thinking skills through STEM. This invariably leads to success in college and in their careers.”

Messina said that as the result of their exposure to STEM-centric learning opportunities, a vastly increased number of SJA students are pursuing engineering degrees and careers. “The students design their own experimental procedures, sometimes with the help of college professors who serve as mentors, and they are very innovative and on the cutting edge of current technology with real-world applications,” she said.
Reflective garden offers students to spend time with Mary

Sacred Heart of Jesus School students will journey toward a more intimate relationship with the mother of Jesus during the 2017-18 school year through a “Meditations with Mary” in a beautiful new prayer garden and courtyard. The prayer garden, dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary on June 24, is located on the east side of Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Baton Rouge.

Students will visit the prayer garden at least once a month for private reflections and other activities.

“Meditations with Mary” is a wonderful opportunity for our students and will help them connect with our heavenly Mother in a new way, said junior high religion teacher Amy Faucheux. Faucheux is planning a number of activities for “Meditations,” including praying the rosary, reading passages about Mary and having the students write prayers or poems to Mary that will be read at the prayer garden.

Second- through fifth-grade religion teacher Lisa Lively is also excited about the opportunities that ‘Meditations with Mary’ will offer the students. “The role of a mother is so important in the life of a child and Mary is such an important part of our Catholic faith,” said Lively.

“I’m hoping to make a connection for the younger students between Mary and her role as a spiritual mother in their faith life. ‘Meditations with Mary’ will be a perfect opportunity to form and foster this relationship with Mary as their spiritual mother.”

Lisa Lively
Sacred Heart religion teacher

The centerpiece of the brick plaza is the five foot statue of Mary carved from Carrara marble in Italy. It rises on a pedestal of two feet and is surrounded by a flower bed of roses enclosed within a brick seating wall. New landscaping, including trees and shrubbery, compliments the plaza.

According to Sacred Heart pastor Father Miles Walsh, the decision to dedicate the new courtyard to Our Lady is appropriate for two reasons. The courtyard is physically bounded by the rectory, parish hall and the east side of the church, which is, of course, dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This location demonstrates in a very tangible way the intimate union of the sacred heart of Jesus and the immaculate heart of Mary, noted Father Walsh.

“Mary leads us to her son and it is so fitting that one enters the eastern portal of the church by passing through a prayer garden dedicated to Our Lady,” said Father Walsh.

The second reason the courtyard is named after Our Lady is that 2017 marks the centennial year of Our Lady’s appearance at Fatima. When Mary appeared to the shepherd children over the course of six months, she prophesied the eventual triumph of her immaculate heart, a time when the hearts of many would be converted to the sacred heart of her son.

First-grade religion teacher Linda Rizzo loves using outdoor space for her students. “It’s so important to get the students outside to be surrounded by God’s work,” she said. Rizzo uses the outdoor Stations of the Cross on the school grounds weekly during Lent and they also visit the statue of Mary located on the school yard. “The new courtyard will be the perfect intimate space for the children to spend quiet time with Mary.”

Religion coordinator Lori Tomecek plans to incorporate use of the courtyard into the eighth grade “Come, Lord Jesus!” program. Eighth-graders have a fall “Come Lord Jesus” in small groups. “We’ll definitely find time for our eighth-graders to spend time with Mary during some of these events,” said Tomecek.

ESSA

while the other student might not be, depending on their residence. Because Catholic schools attract from a number of areas, students often cross public school district boundaries, which is at the root of the confusion.

Talbot said the amount of funding the school receives is based on what school the student would attend if they were going to a public school.

“Each student has a different funding rate,” she said. “We pool our funding and that’s how we get a total dollar value.

“If we have more funds and make good decision for use of those funds, make it student centric decision making, we will have more money to spend and the hopeful outcome will have even better results. If it follows that through training and awareness, we have better practice, then that would be the case.”

ESSA is an outgrowth of the Elementary Secondary Act originally passed in 1965, which was then updated to the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002.

From page 7B

The new statue of Mary is beautiful and the courtyard is so peaceful,” said Sacred Heart parishioner and rising eighth-grader Claire Perrault. “With our busy school days it’ll be really nice to spend a few minutes in silent prayer with Mary.”

The courtyard and prayer garden was funded by a single anonymous donor as part of the parish’s ‘Growing Into the Future’ Campaign. “We give thanks to Our Lord, his Blessed Mother and the benefactors who made this third phase of the ‘Growing Into the Future’ campaign possible,” said Father Walsh.

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Court says church school can’t be barred from state

By Carol Zimmermann
Catholic News Service

In a 7-2 decision, the Supreme Court June 26 said a Lutheran preschool should not be excluded from a state grant program to refurbish its playground surface just because it is a religious entity.

“The exclusion of Trinity Lutheran from a public benefit for which it is otherwise qualified, solely because it is a church, is odious to our Constitution all the same, and cannot stand,” wrote Chief Justice John Roberts in the court’s opinion.

The court’s decision reverses a ruling by the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals that had sided with the state’s 2015 decision to exclude the school from obtaining grant funds.

Roberts said the appeals court decision made it clear that the Trinity Lutheran preschool was “put to the choice between being a church and receiving a government benefit,” and the answer they were given was: “No churches need apply.”

At issue in Trinity Lutheran Church v. Comer was the school’s denial of grant reimbursement to nonprofit groups for the cost of purchasing and installing playground surfaces using recycled tires through a state program.

Missouri’s Department of Natural Resources, which administers the playground resurfacing program, ranked Trinity Lutheran’s grant application fifth out of the 44 it received. The department, which funds 14 grants, said it denied the school’s application because the state constitution prohibits state funds from going “directly or indirectly, in aid of any church, sect or denomination of religion.”

For Trinity Lutheran, the bigger issue was the school’s constitutional right to the free exercise of religion, which was a key point in oral arguments presented to the court in April.

The court’s opinion noted that the school was not claiming “any entitlement to a subsidy” but was asserting its “right to participate in a government benefit program without having to disavow its religious character.”

It also said the case indicated discrimination against religious exercise not just in “the denial of a grant, but rather the refusal to allow the church – solely because it is a church – to compete with secular organizations for a grant.”

The court stressed that this case was unlike Locke v. Davey, a 2004 court ruling which said federally funded scholarships were not required to go to college students who were receiving divinity degrees. In the preschool case, the playground grant was not related to religion.

Roberts, writing the court’s 19-page opinion, said the student in question in the Davey case was not denied a scholarship because of who he was but “because of what he proposed to do – using taxpayer funds in a clergy training program.” In the playground resurfacing case, Roberts wrote: “There is no question that Trinity

Activists rally outside U.S. Supreme Court in Washington June 26 after the court sided with Trinity Lutheran Church in Columbia, Mo., which sued after being denied a state grant for creating a safer playground. CNS photo by Yuri Gripas | Reuters

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St. Thomas More School expands and upgrades technology program

St. Thomas More School, in Baton Rouge, expanded and upgraded its technology program across all grade levels this summer for students to use these learning tools in all subject areas. Included in this program are new computers and software for a technology project lab, grade level sets of Chromebooks and iPads with educational applications. Technology is immersed across the curriculum to support interactive, engaged, hands-on learning, problem solving activities and lab experiences. STM students working with fifth-grade teacher Katelin Curry, center, are, from left, Camille Curry, Avery Deaton, Selena Pham, Ann Geyer and Araceli Sturiale. Photo provided by St. Thomas More School

CHS donates used laptops to St. Theresa Middle School

With gratitude and appreciation, St. Theresa Middle School in Gonzales accepted 68 gently-used laptops for use by the eighth-grade class, making the entire grade level equipped one-to-one with a computing device. Catholic High School in Baton Rouge refurbished the laptops to like-new condition and provided training to St. Theresa teachers on how to utilize the laptops as a valuable teaching tool. Access to and assistance from the Catholic High School technology helpdesk, which is run by Catholic High School students who actually repair computing devices such as these laptops, was also provided.

St. Theresa Middle eighth-grader Joe Richardson makes use of one of the used laptops donated by Catholic High School to St. Theresa Middle. Photo provided by St. Theresa Middle School

Cristo Rey Baton Rouge Franciscan High School

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We would like to sincerely thank the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady for serving as the school’s religious sponsor as well as the support from our local Board of Directors.

To learn more about Cristo Rey Baton Rouge Franciscan High School, visit cristoreybr.org or call 615-7479.
Avoid, deny, defend

By Ann M. Bare
Special to The Catholic Commentator

Stop, look and listen.
Stop, drop and roll.
Now we add: Avoid, deny, defend.

Unfortunately, campuses have become a target for active shooters. No longer can we assume that once kids are at school, they’re safe. According to 2016 FBI information, in the last decade, 20 percent of active shooter events occurred in schools. With more than 42,000 high schools, colleges and universities in America, only a very small percentage has experienced such a tragedy; however, awareness, training and education are essential as students enter and exit buildings and classrooms.

Hoping and praying that nothing ever happens is an option, but reality does not support such a singular approach. Being prepared may be the successful method of survival.

In 2002, Texas State University initiated the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT)™ Program to train law enforcement officers how to quickly address active threat situations. They also created a course to train civilians how to respond in such an event: Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events (CRASE). CRASE promotes an effectual procedure for civilians: Avoid. Deny. Defend. (ADD).

Always be vigilant for suspicious behavior. If your “gut” is uneasy about someone or a situation, don’t ignore that feeling. Tell someone, or if you’re alone, call 911. If immediate danger is verified …

Avoid: When you see an active shooter, if possible, RUN through the nearest safe exit and tell others to do the same. Call 911 ASAP, of course.

Deny: If you can’t safely exit, deny the shooter access to where you are. Get in a safe room, turn off all lights, lock the doors and barricade it with whatever is accessible, then get out of sight. Make a loop around the door handle with a computer or electrical cord, belts, ties, etc. and use all your weight to tug on it as an added measure to prevent the shooter from entering. Of course, absolute quiet is essential to present an “empty” room.

Defend: If you can’t avoid or deny access, be ready to defend yourself. Hope

Diocese of Baton Rouge Catholic Schools
STATEMENT OF POLICY
The schools of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, admit students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at its schools. They do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school administered programs.

Additionally, in compliance with Title IX of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, no person in the schools of the Diocese shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, or be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity except as permitted under said Title IX.

Finally, the schools of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, have adopted and will implement the imperatives of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act as amended, and will inform parents and students of their rights under this amendment to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The above stated policy applies to the following schools and institutions of the Diocese:

– Ascension Catholic Diocesan Regional School
– Catholic High School (Baton Rouge)
– Catholic Elementary of Pointe Coupée School
– Catholic High of Pointe Coupée School
– Cristo Rey Baton Rouge
– Franciscan High School
– Holy Family School
– Holy Ghost School
– Mater Dolorosa School
– Most Blessed Sacrament School
– Our Lady of Mercy School
– Redemptorist St. Gerard School
– Sacred Heart of Jesus School
– Special Education REACH Program
– St. Aloysius School
– St. Alphonsus School
– St. John Primary & St. Theresa Middle School – EAEI Partnership
– St. Elizabeth Interparochial School
– St. Francis Xavier School
– St. George School
– St. Jean Vianney School
– St. John Interparochial School
– St. Joseph School
– St. Joseph’s Academy
– St. Jude the Apostle School
– St. Louis King of France School
– St. Michael the Archangel Diocesan Regional High School
– St. Peter Chanel Interparochial School
– St. Thomas Aquinas Diocesan Regional High School
– St. Thomas More School

Signed: Dr. Melanie B. Verge
Superintendent

An educated guess

By Ann M. Bare
Special to The Catholic Commentator

Over the years, there have been innumerable comments about education. Many well-known men and women have shared their thoughts. Can you make an educated guess about who said what?

1) “A thorough knowledge of the Bible is worth more than a college education.”
2) “A well-educated mind will always have more questions than answers.”
3) “Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself.”
4) “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”
5) “Education must not simply teach work – it must teach life.”
6) “He who opens a school door, closes a prison.”
7) “I have never let my schooling interfere with my education.”
8) “If a man empties his purse into his head, no man can take it away from him. An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest.”
9) “Intelligence plus character — that is the goal of true education.”
10) “My mother said I must always be intolerant of ignorance but understanding of illiteracy. That some people, unable to go to school, were more educated and more intelligent than college professors.”
11) “The beautiful thing about learning is that no one can take it away from you.”
12) “The giving of love is an education in itself.”

Answers: A-10, B-3, C-5, D-8, E-6, F-2, G-11, H-9, I-4, J-12, K-1, L-7

ENJOYING ENTOMOLOGY – Preschool students at Holy Ghost School in Hammond, from left, Braden Pellichino, Amelie Stagg, Caroline Kincaid, Kinsley Harvey and Jacob Horn enjoy “maggot painting” after learning about insects from Erin Horzelski, a forensic entomologist at Southeastern Louisiana University. Photo provided by Cindy Wagner | Holy Ghost School
What can evangelize the world? A good Catholic school

PHOENIX, ARIZ. (CNA/EWTN News) The Catholic school can be a missionary force to bring Christ to the world, the Bishop of Phoenix has said in a new apostolic letter.

“A mark of a truly Catholic school is the fruit that is borne in the lives of its graduates,” Bishop Thomas J. Olmsted of Phoenix said. “That fruit is to be shown in the missionary activity of its graduates, called and sent by Jesus to be salt and light in the culture around them, knowing that people and cultures die without Christ.”

His letter said Catholic schools should be “a place of encounter with Jesus Christ” that can impart a Catholic worldview through the curriculum, help students achieve true freedom, and send them out as “missionary disciples to transform the culture.”

Many Catholic school students first must have a relationship of trust with someone who is a disciple of Christ, but once that is established “through hospitality and kindness,” he said, “the most loving thing a Catholic school can do is to share with each person the living Jesus Christ.”

Catholic schools help ensure that all students hear the basic Gospel message and are given “the freedom and help to make a response in faith.” Catholic schools “cannot exist for themselves.” Rather, the Gospel demands that when students are well-formed they be sent out “as ambassadors of the truth and love of Christ.”

Bishop Olmsted reflected that true freedom of Catholic education is rooted in the truth and draws from Christ’s words from the Gospel of John: “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

“A joyful and evangelized person is truly free to be and to live as a child of God,” he said, criticizing views of freedom that separate it from truth. He contrasted freedom with slavery to sin.

“When Catholic education imparts to students the intellectual and moral virtues to know the truth and to love the good (which are both ultimately found in God) it is giving students the gift of true freedom,” he said.

According to Bishop Olmsted, Catholic schools should be a place of encounter with Jesus Christ, and a critical component of evangelization, according to some Catholic officials. Catholic schools help ensure that all students hear the basic Gospel message.

“Rather, the ethos of a Christian education vivifies and unites the totality of the school’s curriculum,” he said, praising Catholic educators “noble vocation” to help young people discover who they are.

“As ambassadors of the truth and love of Jesus the Word made Flesh – be inspired missionary disciples of his kingdom,” Bishop Olmsted said.

AVOID ▼

From page 18B

fully there are others with you to attack if danger is imminent. And attack with everything and anything you have: weapon, chair, fire extinguisher, scissors, printer, sharp stick, etc. Eyes, neck and groin are vulnerable areas which quickly bring a perp down. Your life (and others’) undoubtedly depends on the effectiveness of your all-out attack.

It usually takes about three minutes for police to arrive after a call is made. When they’re on the scene, DO all they command: Lie down on the floor, put your hands up, run out of the building, throw down your weapon, etc. They’re looking for an attacker; they don’t know if it is you or someone else. Let them do their job. You can defend yourself after the threat has been removed.

You don’t have to live in fear; rather, be aware of the people around you. You can learn more about Avoid Deny Defend™ at avoiddenydefend.org.

READY ▼

From page 9B

clothes.) The list goes way beyond these few items.

Part of a valuable and practical education is learning to live within your means. It’s time to pare down dollar stores and thrift stores. Paring down a wardrobe to include the basics with a few accessories can be freeing both emotionally and financially. Rent, don’t buy books if possible; look for food sales in grocery stores – not restaurants. And choose friends who don’t have a no-cap allowance. It’s pretty tough to keep up with the rich and/or credit card abusers.

Feeding the need (or desire) to have the newest, latest, biggest, prettiest, most popular anything will lead to unnecessary challenges. School is tough enough without creating more stress with irresponsible spending. Ready. Set. Save.

OLOM ▼

From page 118

horizon for the future of Mercy’s campus – a new gymnasium, renovation of the current gym, additional parking, public restrooms, an outdoor plaza and gathering space and a new parish ministry building. For more information about Our Lady of Mercy and progress of the church and school, visit traditionsfortomorrow.com.

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concorded in full with the opinion. Justice Sonia Sotomayor issued a 27-page dissenting opinion joined by Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

Roberts' opinion states from the outset that he did not concur with footnote No. 3. Justices Clarence Thomas and Neil Gorsuch made similar distinctions. Justices Anthony Kennedy, Samuel Alito and Elena Kagan concurred in full with the opinion.

Sotomayor said the court described the Lutheran school decision as "a simple case about recycling tires to resurface a playground," but she warned that the "stakes are higher."

She said the court's ruling "profoundly changes" the relationship between church and state "by holding, for the first time, that the Constitution requires the government to provide public funds directly to a church."

"Today's decision is a landmark victory for religious freedom," said Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore, chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee for Religious Liberty. "The Supreme Court rightly recognized that people of faith should not be discriminated against when it comes to government programs that should be made available to all."

He also said the high court's ruling "marks a step in the right direction toward limiting the effects of the pernicious Blaine amendments that are in place in many states around the country."

The amendments to state constitutions, dating back to the 19th century for the most part, "stem from a time of intense anti-Catholic bigotry in many parts of the country," he said in a statement. These "harmful provisions," he added, have "restricted the freedom of faith-based organizations and people of faith to serve their communities."

Hannah Smith, senior counsel at Becket, a nonprofit religious liberty law firm, called the court's decision "good for kids and good for religious liberty."

Becket filed a friend-of-the-court brief on the school's behalf as did the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Missouri Catholic Conference, the National Catholic Educational Association, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America and the Salvation Army.

"This decision is significant because seven of the justices agreed that churches can't be treated as second-class citizens when it comes to widely available public safety benefits," said Smith.

By Ann M. Bare

Special to
The Catholic Commentator

Intelligence — most dictionaries include in their definition "the ability or capacity to acquire and apply knowledge and skills." Seems pretty simple. Everyone has intelligence.

The French psychologist Alfred Binet (1857–1911) is the first person to develop tests which measured children's ability to learn when France passed a law that children aged 6–14 attend school. The concept came to America during WWI; IQ (intelligence quotient) tests were used to place soldiers in suitable roles. Other uses and misuses, however, often created hardship for immigrants, minorities and mentally challenged people. The test results were sometimes used to analyze the impact and/or effects of culture, environment, race, genetics, brain size or other factors on a person's intellectual ability.

Figuring an individual's IQ is quite simple: divide the mental age (test result of same-age people) by the chronological age (how old the person actually is). That quotient (reminder: a quotient is the answer to a division problem) is then multiplied by 100: MA ÷ CA x 100. About 95 percent of a tested population usually has an IQ between 70 and 130.

An issue to consider: There is such an emphasis on students' IQs by those who esteem their definition of intelligence. But who designed the tests used to ascertain the IQ? What in their educational experience determined what should be tested? Are some students' IQs being measured against a standard that isn't even appropriate to their culture, experience or way of thinking?

So many students are impressed or intimidated by others' or their own IQ. Hopefully, their thoughts will be counterbalanced with a more complete perspective. In a culture that emphasizes intelligence (and beauty), pride in a high IQ can overshadow a more meaningful attribute.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in an article in 1947 written for the Morehouse College student paper, stated, "We must remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character that is the goal of true education. ... If we are not careful, our colleges will produce a group of close-minded, unscientific, illogical propagandists, consumed with immoral acts. Be careful, 'brethren!' Be careful, teachers!"

Character — now there's a lifelong important quality. Students do have the intelligence to pursue it.

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