SEVEN DEACONS ORDAINED

Advocating for refugees

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

“The only difference is we don’t have a lot of crawfish.”

“Here, they like spicy but ours was super spicy,” he added, which might be considered surprising given the region’s signature is its fiery spices.

Because of his own experience and early struggles after touching down in Baton Rouge from the African country of Gambia, where he was in a refugee camp for several years, Sesay has become an advocate to refugees and

SEE REFUGEE PAGE 19

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

When arriving in Baton Rouge, Dauda Sesay and his family were strangers, being introduced to an unfamiliar world of culture, language and even as to where to live.

That is, until familiar victual scents stirred memories of their native Sierra Leone.

“We have a lot of fish, shrimp, crabs,” Sesay said of his native land.

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Bishop Robert W. Muench and a large crowd at St. Joseph Cathedral in Baton Rouge welcomed seven new permanent deacons during the Rite of Ordination of Deacons on June 10.

Bishop Muench ordained Deacon Stephen Brunet, Deacon William Corbett, Deacon Kirk Duplantis, Deacon George Hooper, Deacon Tim Messenger, Deacon Gary Mooney and Deacon Minos Ponville Jr.

In his homily, Bishop Muench said the morning was one of a “spirit of joy, excitement and enthusiasm.”

“All deacons are marked with an irremovable imprint, configuring them to Christ, the servant,” the bishop said.

“You, our deacons, and the diaconal community, who exercise your ministry with diligent commitment, are the source of much admiration and inspiration.”

During his homily Bishop Muench revealed how in the past 70 years the church has been significant developments in the diaconate. He said in 1947 Pope Pius XII declared the laying on of hands and prayer constituted the matter and form for the ordination of deacons, priests and bishops.

During Vatican II the case for permanent deacons was approved and in 1964 the final version was ratified.

Since 1976, Bishop Muench said the diocese has ordained or incardinated 83 deacons, and after the ordination there will be 60 permanent deacons in pastoral assignments.

“Can we not perceive the Holy Spirit’s continued dynamic action in the church?” he said.

Deacon Corbett and Deacon Messenger will serve as deacon assistants at St. Margaret Queen of Scotland Church in Albany; Deacon Brunet will serve as deacon assistant at St. George Church in Baton Rouge; Deacon Duplantis will serve as deacon assistant at St. Gabriel Church in St. Gabriel; Deacon Hooper will serve as deacon at Immaculate Conception Church in Denham Springs; Deacon Mooney at St. Joseph Cathedral; and Deacon Ponville at Holy Family Church in Port Allen.

Deacon Messenger will also serve as chaplain at the Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women in St. Gabriel.

Deacon Mooney will also serve as chaplain at Dixon Correctional Institute in Jackson.

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

BR HOPE – Students in the GIS Club at St. Aloysius School in Baton Rouge used their newly learned skills with the Geographic Information System (GIS) to help tackle problems facing the Baton Rouge area. Two students received an award at the state level in a national online GIS school competition, and on May 30 one advanced to the national level.

To read the article, see page 12.

Photo by Debbie Shelley | The Catholic Commentator

Bishop Robert W. Muench, center, ordained seven permanent deacons during The Rite of Ordination Deacons at St. Joseph Cathedral on June 10. Pictured, from left, are Deacon Minos Ponville, Deacon Steve Brunet, Deacon Kirk Duplantis, Deacon Gary Mooney, Deacon Tim Messenger, Deacon George Hooper and Deacon William Corbett.

Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

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**DID YOU KNOW**

Incorruptible bodies

Science tries but fails. Theories abound but fall short. The incorruptible bodies of saints remain one of the mysteries, and treasures, of the Catholic Church.

By definition an incorruptible body is one, traditionally a saint but not always, that has miraculously preserved after death, defying the normal process of decomposition. Incorruptible bodies were initially discovered in the centuries after the death of Christ, with St. Cecilia believed to be the first known saint to be incorrupt.

Modern science has a tendency to relegate incorruptible bodies to that of mummies, but that is clearly not the case, as incorrupt bodies have soft skin, and their limbs are pliable, unlike the dry and skeletal remains of mummies. Additionally, incorruptible bodies were never embalmed or treated in any manner, yet their remains are flexible and some emit a sweet, un-earthly odor.

Amazingly, some even produce blood or oils, which even the scientific arena is unable to explain. For example, when a finger was amputated from St. John of the Cross several months after his death blood began to flow from the wound.

Or the fact that fresh blood appeared on the finger of a medical examiner as he examined the body of St. Francis Xavier also, several months after his death.

Perhaps most startlingly there is evidence that the arms over St. Nicholas of Tolentino have continued to bleed 400 years after his death.

It was not unusual in the Middle Ages to exhume all beatification and canonization candidates in the presence of working people, doctors and medical specialists, making these miracles well documented.

**PICTURES FROM THE PAST**

Squired away in a meandering elbow of Bayou Lafourche, St. Augustine Mission Chapel in Klotzville is perhaps one of the least known churches in the Diocese of Baton Rouge but reflective of the rich history of Catholicism along the river parish -es. Its history dates back 150 years to around 1887 when St. Augustine became an outgrowth of nearby St. Elizabeth Church in Paincourtville, located a short pri- roque ride down the bayou. At the time, Father Lesaicherre was the pastor and another priest, both believed to be Assumption fathers, tended to the two church- es. It is believed that on Oct. 1, 1911, Father Favard came to Klotzville as well as Bertrandville. Father Favard also was ministering to a mission in Belle Rose, which would be established as St. Jules Church in 1912. In 1919, Father Van Baast made the decision to tear down the St. Augustine’s mission school and erect amore suit- able building. A windstorm blew the original St. Augustine structure off of its foundation and the current building, which features an iconic bell in front, was dedicated in 1949. Today, St. Augustine is a mission of St. Benedict the Moor Church in Bertrandville. Photo courtesy of the Archives and Records, Archdiocese of New Orleans

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**Discipleship: Living the call of Jesus**

By Dina Dow

“Forever I will sing the goodness of the Lord” – Psalm 89

The journey through Ordinary Time continues with the unveiling of the call to discipleship. Jesus’ extraordinary life is a path for baptized Christians to grow as life-giving disciples. It is through the example of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit that disciples are strengthened, encouraged and made holy.

**Be strong**

How are we strengthened as disciples? Initially, we are called to discipleship through the sacraments. First, we begin new life in the sacrament of baptism, where the graces of God, a free gift of love and mercy, are poured upon us by the power of the Holy Spirit. We become a member of the body of Christ.

The “Catechism of the Catholic Church” explains, “Confirmation perfects baptismal grace...” (3136) and because of this we become “deeply rooted” in God and, thus, enabled to proclaim, teach and witness more profoundly. Hence, the sacrament of confirmation is essential for from it flows life-giving grace that strengthens our openness to love God and others in what we say and what we do. We become more Christ-like seeking his will.

We are also strengthened by “our daily bread,” the Eucharist. This is the reason why Mass attendance is vital to our lives. United in prayer, sacrifice and praise with our faith community creates a bond like no other. Strength lies within the hearts of those we break bread with, for wherever two or more are gathered, Christ is there. (Mt 18:20) These three powerful sacra- ments initiate us into a life of discipleship resulting in fortification for the journey. These are more than just things we do, it is how we become.

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As we grow in faith through the sacra- ments we are also increasing our knowl- edge and wisdom of Jesus. Initiation and formation are simultaneous. Formation includes knowledge of sacred Scripture and sacred tradition. Both provide a solid foundation for disciples.

**Be courageously confident**

Dynamic Catholic speaker, Matthew Kelly, says, “Be bold. Be Catholic.” With discipleship comes victory and perse- cution. Jesus tells us in the Gospel of St. Matthew to fear no one. As a disciple we will encounter those who welcome us and those who reject us. We hear the prophet Jeremiah exclaim that everyone, including his friends, are out to get him. Why? Simply stated he preached to the people of Jerusalem to remain steadfast to the law and the covenant by opening their hearts to God in repentance and conversion, lest they face the terrible consequences sin. Yet, they ignored him. Despite the persecution Jeremiah perseveres, trusting in God.

Similarly, St. Teresa of Calcutta would ask the Lord to remind her of the good days when she faced the days of persecu- tion. It gave her hope amidst the crisis. When have you been ridiculed because of your faith? Did you stay strong or remain silent? If we are confident in the faith then the glory of God will lead us through the trials. It is a matter of trust, faith, hope and courage. Fear paralyzes, faith mobilizes!

**Be joyfully holy**

“Forever I will sing the goodness of the Lord!” (Ps(6) 89) A pressing virtue of a disciple is gratitude. We are grateful for the sunrise, but are we truly grateful to the one who causes the sun to rise? Gratitude for God’s goodness is more powerful than the sun’s energy, for one is eternal while the other will eventually extinguish.

Conditions for discipleship extend

**SEE DYK PAGE 4**

**SEE GOSPEL PAGE 6**
Bishop announces appointments

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Bishop Robert W. Muench has appointed chancellor Father Paul Yi as administrator at St. Joan of Arc Church in Bayou Pigeon and Our Lady of Prompt Succor Church in White Castle, effective July 1.

Bishop Muench has also appointed Father Peter Dang as chaplain at Baton Rouge General Hospital, also effective July 1.

Father Yi, a native of Seoul, South Korea, was born March 8, 1973 and ordained May 31, 2008 by Bishop Muench at St. Joseph Cathedral. He has served as pastor at St. Francis of Assisi in Smoke Bend and Ascension of Our Lord Church in Donaldsonville since 2011, and will continue to serve at these parishes.

Father Yi has served as parochial vicar at Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church in Denham Springs, Our Lady of Mercy Church and St. Aloysius Church, both in Baton Rouge.

He has also served as administrator at Mater Dolorosa Church in Independence and St. Aloysius Cathedral. He has served as parochial vicar at St. Thomas More Church and St. Aloysius Church, both in Baton Rouge, St. Mary of False River Church in New Roads and Holy Rosary Church in St. Amant.

Father Dang, a native of Hue, Vietnam, was ordained by Bishop Muench on May 26, 2012 at St. Joseph Cathedral. He has served as parochial vicar at St. Thomas More Church and St. Aloysius Church, both in Baton Rouge, St. Mary of False River Church in New Roads and Holy Rosary Church in St. Amant.

Church holds prayer service for Scalise

By Peter Finney Jr.
Clarion Herald

METAIRIE – More than 150 people attended a prayer service at St. Catherine of Siena Church in Metairie on June 14 to pray for the recovery of House Majority Whip Steve Scalise, R-La., and other victims of a shooting in Alexandria, Virginia.

Scalise, his wife Jennifer and their two children are members of St. Catherine of Siena Parish. The Congressman from the 1st District of Louisiana was gunned down by a lone gunman on June 14 while practicing with other Republican Congressmen and staff members for a charity baseball game. A tiny portion of the 1st District seeps into the Diocese of Baton Rouge and includes Ponchatoula and Hammond.

Scalise was listed in critical condition after sustaining a bullet to the hip that also caused serious internal bleeding. He has undergone additional surgeries since the shooting but is expected to recover.

Father Ronald Calkins, pastor of St. Catherine of Siena, said the prayer service was for the shooting victims and also for those who mourn for them.

“We come here to pray to God, who is always with us and always supporting us and always helping us,” Father Calkins said. “We pray especially for those who were injured. Of course, we also come just to support each other.

“Even if we all did was to come into this church and there was no prayer service, and all we did was spend time in prayer quietly, we’re together, supporting each other. That’s very important. We also need to recommit ourselves to being people of peace, people of justice. Violence is never really the answer. Our Lord Jesus was a person of peace, a person of non-violence, so we are his followers, his disciples. We call ourselves Christians because we follow Jesus Christ.”

Maria Naccari, who taught Scalise’s daughter Madison in pre-kindergarten at St. Catherine of Siena School, said she has always been impressed by the Scalise family’s down-to-earth attitude. When Scalise would show up with his security detail to pick up his children from school in the afternoon, she said, he never pulled rank or asked to come to the front of the line.

“They wait in line – there is no cut in line,” Naccari said. “They wait like everyone else, and he follows all the rules. It’s adorable. I think that’s what makes him so likable to everybody. They’re just regular people with a different job.”

“Sweet, sweet family. Mom and dad totally involved with walking them to class. They are just normal, everyday parents. Unless you knew who he was, you would not know who he was, if that makes sense.”

Madison is entering fifth grade, and Harrison Scalise, their son, just made his first Communion and is going into third grade.

“I was very, very upset, just because he’s a genuine person,” Naccari said. “He’s a real person. You don’t think of him as a politician, but as a real dad. You think of him as an involved, regular St. Catherine person. And you think of his wife in the same way. There’s no fluff about him. He’s a real dad, a common person, really a daddy.”
Father Robert Stine smiled radianty as he recently walked from his office to celebrate daily Mass at Christ the King Church and Catholic Student Center at LSU. Along the way he stopped to talk to a student seated at the receptionist desk who plans to get her master's degree in theology from St. Augustine Institute in Denver and who had brought with her such books to read as “The Bible Compass’ by Edward Sri and “A Father Who Keeps His Promises” by Scott Hahn. As Father Stine entered the church before Mass, a young sacristan grinned and approached him and conversation flowed between the two.

The interest shown by the young Catholics at CTK in their faith indicates to Father Stine that the future of the church is alive and well, and he has enjoyed his part in guiding them to living water to quench their thirst for spiritual growth.

“That’s the coolest thing about Christ the King – it’s the older generation passing on wisdom to the younger generation,” said Father Stine, who will retire in July after 44 years of priestly ministry in the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

Father Stine said he first felt the call to the priesthood during his junior year of high school after he and the other boys of Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Gramercy made a vocations trip to the Immaculata Seminary in Lafayette, which closed in 1975.

“When I came back I was taking my little sister for a walk – she was two years old,” said Father Stine. “She stopped to play, and I sat down and I had this feeling come over me that I could be a priest – it was God’s invitation to become a priest,” said Father Stine.

He spent his senior year discerning his call, and by the end of it, he decided God really was calling him to the priesthood and he entered seminary. A graduate of St. Meinrad in St. Meinrad, Indiana in 1969 and Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans in 1972, Father Stine has also served as pastor at St. Mary of False River Church in New Roads, Holy Rosary Church in St. Amant, St. Francis Xavier Cabrini Church in Livonia, St. John the Baptist Church in Zachary and at several other churches as parochial vicar.

Father Stine said the church reforms called for by Vatican II were being implemented just as he left seminary.

“It was an exciting time,” said Father Stine who said it has been good to see the laity bring forth their gifts to keep the church vibrant.

“There are a lot of charisms among the laity that can be used for the building up the church and society and a lot of spiritual gifts and teachings keeping people in touch with it and calling it (the gifts) forth,” said Father Stine.

He especially noticed then while pastor at Holy Rosary, when the church implemented “Christ Renews His Parish,” a program focused on engaging Catholics in church life.

“With Christ Renews His Parish the laity just came alive. All of the charisms came together. I was the coach on the sideline cheering them on,” said Father Stine.

He said he has learned many important lessons through each of his assignments. During his first assignment at St. Isidore Church in Baker for example, he learned to relax after mistakes are made and learn from them.

Father Stine plans the only Certified Elder Law Attorney through the National Elder Law Foundation accredited by the America Bar Association in Louisiana and Kent DeJean, Social Security Specialist and Attorney at Law.

“Your first one (assignment) is stressful because you’re trying to be a pastor for the first time. You’re afraid to make mistakes. Of course you do. I learned from them to just be yourself, don’t try to be perfect,” said Father Stine.

Other lessons include the importance of understanding the psychology of people and continuing to develop gifts and hobbies so that the demands of priesthood don’t exhaust them.

Father Stine said since a priest has many roles, keeping things in balance is a challenge, especially when there are more needs than can be met by one person.

“It’s like juggling so many balls in the air. You have to keep the ball moving,” said Father Stine wryly.

He compared retiring from priesthood to the changes that occur in a married couple’s relationship when their children leave home. This allows the couple to “one up” or intensify their relationship by spending more time together.

Father Stine will be taking a relationship renewing “second honeymoon” trip with the Lord through Europe right after he retires before spending more time with family and delving into spiritual direction and retreat work.

“It’s sort of like coming full circle,” said Father Stine, sporting an LSU hat, indicating the home of the Tigers left its own paw print on his heart as he completes a fulfilling priestly ministry.
Father Duhé retiring; plans new ministry

By Rachele Smith
The Catholic Commentator

As he celebrated Mass shortly before his retirement celebration on June 10, Father Tom Duhé, pastor of St. Thomas More Church in Baton Rouge, recalled some of his favorite moments at STM.

During his homily, he shared his gratitude with parishioners, recalling how they made him feel welcome when he first arrived in 2007 and how they have continued to support and uplift him with their prayers.

But what Father Duhé didn’t know at that time was that his parishioners were about to give him not one, but two more special memories.

The first would come immediately after his homily when the more than 700 people attending Mass would offer a standing ovation to their priest, a thunderous appreciation for his years of compassionate service.

Later, another standing ovation would follow. This one before the final blessing when parishioner Jerry Bellon, on behalf of the STM community, presented a photo book and beautiful plaque, featuring an engraved prayer, to Father Duhé.

“It was so special,” said Father Duhé, smiling.

Ordained on May 5, 1978 at St. Agnes Church in Baton Rouge, Father Duhé said his life as a priest began with a rather surprising calling he received as a 24-year-old.

At that time, he was already a college graduate with a degree in education from LSU and, at one point, even had plans to marry. He also admitted he had stopped going to church.

However, after talking with Bishop Stanley J. Ott and Darryl Ducote, who now serves the diocese as director of the Office of Marriage and Family Life, Father Duhé said he came back to Mass and soon realized that God was directing him to do more.

“I wasn’t totally sure if God was calling me to be a priest, but I thought I needed to find out,” he responded, adding that his time at Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans ultimately led him with a “feeling of peace” that he was definitely doing the right thing.

Following his graduation from seminary and ordination by Bishop Joseph V. Sullivan, Father Duhé was appointed to serve as parochial vicar at St. George Church in Baton Rouge. He would go on to perform similar duties at St. Mary of False River Church in New Roads and St. Alphonsus Liguori Church in Greenwell Springs as well as at St. Aloysius Church and St. Patrick Church, both in Baton Rouge.

Father Duhé recalled with fondness his first pastoral role at Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church in Lakeland as well as his later assignments as pastor at St. John the Baptist in Zachary, St. Alphonsus and STM.

Additionally, he served as co-pastor at St. Charles Borromeo in Baton Rouge and as administrator at St. Louis King of France Church, also in Baton Rouge.

True to his gentle and understanding nature, Father Duhé said one of the many joys he has experienced as a priest is getting to know and care for his parishioners, something that he has learned is of particular importance whenever a priest arrives at a new parish.

Starting with his assignment in Zachary and Clinton, Father Duhé said he began making home visits his first year.

“I read about how important it was, and I wanted to see if it worked. And it did,” he said, noting how once he learned the difference these visits made in his ministry, he continued doing them with every subsequent new assignment.

“I would spend at least a year visiting the people (of that parish). I would get to know them and know their ideas and thoughts of what they wanted and wanted to see in the future,” he said.

For Father Duhé, it was this type of concern and forward thinking that helped build and strengthen a mutual affection between priest and parishioner, and it was one that he said he relied on during some of his darkest hours, which included medical concerns.

During that time, Father Duhé said he grew in faith with Christ. While others may feel abandoned during difficult times, he said he “gave it all to God.”

Witnessing Father Duhé’s steadfast faith, even in the most arduous of times, has given others courage and hope.

“You have to trust enough to give it to God,” he said.

Now as he focuses on his next step as a priest, retirement, which officially begins July 1, Father Duhé said he will continue to trust God, just as he did more than four decades ago with his first calling.

So, what’s next during these so-called “encore years?”

It should come as no surprise that as someone who enjoys seeing new places and experiencing different cultures (he’s visited Medjugorje five times, Ireland twice and toured “all over” Italy), some of the first things Father Duhé plans to do are travel, travel and then travel again.

But as he returns to a newly renovated childhood home in the Garden District in Baton Rouge, tries out new recipes, focuses on his health and “piddles” in his flower garden, Father Duhé doesn’t plan to retire from ministry work.

Already on the horizon are opportunities to remain active in nursing home pastoral care and to help with RCIA on the diocesan level.

“I don’t want to get separated from ministry work because that’s what keeps you going,” Father Duhé said.

Dina Dow, director of the diocese’s Office of Evangelization and Catechesis, said she is excited to have Father Duhé on board.

“He has a real passion for RCIA,” she said, noting that he not only loves to hear the stories of why people want to join the church, but that he also enjoys walking the journey with them.

“Plus, he’s just really good at it,” she added.

Father Tom Duhé, center, pastor of St. Thomas More Church in Baton Rouge, enjoys meeting with friends and parishioners during his retirement celebration at the STM Activity Center on June 10. Photo provided by Bobbie Stiglets.
Recently a reader complained about irreverent behavior in church prior to Mass, including cellphone use. As part of your response, you stated that cellphone use is always inappropriate. Judging behavior is also ugly behavior, at least as repugnant as you stated that cellphone use is always offensive to others. (Lawrenceville, Illinois)

The letters above are indicative of those that arrive each week in response to this column. (Did you notice as I did a slight difference in tone between the two letters?) Such letters are valuable, serving to collate my own answers and offering observations that cannot be included in a few short paragraphs.

The original question had complained about people talking and laughing on cellphones or texting before Mass (in fact, during exposition of the Blessed Sacrament). I did offer my own view that “the use of cellphones is never proper in church – whether to speak or to text.”

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I take issue with your recent comments on cellphone usage in church, as appeared in your column in Our Sunday Visitor. I fully agree with the inappropriateness of talking or texting before, during or even after the service is over.

However, using the Laudate app, I read the daily Scriptures, the Loreto Rosary (after saying the rosary) and a number of other prayers before Mass. It never really occurred to me that what I do quietly on my cellphone is offensive to others. (Lawrenceville, Illinois)

Q

I am trying to learn the requirement as regards a forthcoming wedding. In this case, the husband-to-be is Catholic, and the wife-to-be is Baptist. Does the marriage have to be blessed before the wife can convert to Catholicism? Or is it the opposite? (City of origin withheld)

A

The wife-to-be may become a Catholic at any point she wishes — either before or after the marriage ceremony — but there is no requirement that she do so at all.

To become a Catholic, she would need to take a course of instruction in the Catholic faith. Typically, that would include weekly sessions over a period of eight or nine months, but the length is somewhat flexible depending upon the seeker’s familiarity with Catholic teachings.

My own pastoral instinct — and I have conveyed this to couples — is to put off the spouse’s reception into the Catholic Church until after the wedding. With the proper permission, the couple can be married — in a Catholic rite and by a Catholic priest — in a ceremony recognized by the church as a sacramental marriage, even though the le is still a Baptist at the time of the wedding.

There are really two vital decisions ng made – one, to marry, and the other, to become a Catholic. Theseions are separate and distinct and should not be conflated.

Waiting until after the marriage assures that the program of convert instruction will not be rushed. Also, I would not want the wife to feel, some years later, that she had become a Catholic mainly so that the marriage ceremony could be “nicer.”

My father is 86 years old and was raised in the Catholic Church. He was considered an intellectual and earned his PhD in philosophy. He became a nonpracticing Catholic and in fact rejected the church, although he had a thirst for justice and continued to treasure the church’s teachings on human rights.

Now he has dementia and has begun to join me at Sunday Mass. Last week, he followed me up to Communion and received the Eucharist. I feel conflicted and unsure as to whether I should encourage him to do so. Please advise. (Peachtree City, Georgia)

I would let your father take the lead; if he is inclined to take Communion, he is entitled to do so. Let me offer some background.

In the present-day Latin-rite Catholic Church, one must have the use of reason to receive holy Communion. (Eastern-rite Catholics are given Communion as infants, and this was also true in the early centuries in the Roman rite.)

In 1995, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops published a document entitled “Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities,” which included the following statement: “The criterion for reception of holy Communion is the same for persons with developmental and mental disabilities as for all persons, namely that the person be able to distinguish the body of Christ from ordinary food, even if this recognition is evidenced through manner, gesture or reverential silence rather than verbally.”

Quickly that same document goes on to note that “cases of doubt should be resolved in favor of the right of the baptized person to receive the sacrament.”

Since it is likely is difficult to ascertain exactly what your father comprehends, I would award him the benefit of the doubt and encourage him to take Communion, if that is what he wants. (Nor would I “grill” him on just what he understands the Eucharist to be; after all, how does it hurt anyone for him to be receiving reverently?)

If, on the other hand, and I have seen this on a couple of occasions in nursing homes, someone to take the host in and out of their mouth repeatedly and not consume it, I would not offer that person Communion again and would simply give a blessing instead.

Cellphones revisited/ Conversion before marriage? / Dementia and holy Communion

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There are really two vital decisions ng made – one, to marry, and the other, to become a Catholic. Theseions are separate and distinct and should not be conflated.

Waiting until after the marriage assures that the program of convert instruction will not be rushed. Also, I would not want the wife to feel, some years later, that she had become a Catholic mainly so that the marriage ceremony could be “nicer.”

My father is 86 years old and was raised in the Catholic Church. He was considered an intellectual and earned his PhD in philosophy. He became a nonpracticing Catholic and in fact rejected the church, although he had a thirst for justice and continued to treasure the church’s teachings on human rights.

Now he has dementia and has begun to join me at Sunday Mass. Last week, he followed me up to Communion and received the Eucharist. I feel conflicted and unsure as to whether I should encourage him to do so. Please advise. (Peachtree City, Georgia)

I would let your father take the lead; if he is inclined to take Communion, he is entitled to do so. Let me offer some background.

In the present-day Latin-rite Catholic Church, one must have the use of reason to receive holy Communion. (Eastern-rite Catholics are given Communion as infants, and this was also true in the early centuries in the Roman rite.)

In 1995, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops published a document entitled “Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities,” which included the following statement: “The criterion for reception of holy Communion is the same for persons with developmental and mental disabilities as for all persons, namely that the person be able to distinguish the body of Christ from ordinary food, even if this recognition is evidenced through manner, gesture or reverential silence rather than verbally.”

Quickly that same document goes on to note that “cases of doubt should be resolved in favor of the right of the baptized person to receive the sacrament.”

Since it is likely is difficult to ascertain exactly what your father comprehends, I would award him the benefit of the doubt and encourage him to take Communion, if that is what he wants. (Nor would I “grill” him on just what he understands the Eucharist to be; after all, how does it hurt anyone for him to be receiving reverently?)

If, on the other hand, and I have seen this on a couple of occasions in nursing homes, someone to take the host in and out of their mouth repeatedly and not consume it, I would not offer that person Communion again and would simply give a blessing instead.
Deacon Brunet stayed committed during challenges

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Deacon Stephen Brunet said he had the call to religious life since his early youth.

“I was an altar boy from third – 12th grade. I am a cradle Catholic from strong, faith-filled parents. I have been active in various church ministries since I first started dating my cradle Catholic wife, Danette, in 1993,” said Deacon Brunet, who was born in Eunice and lived his early childhood years in Basile before moving to Carencro. “In 1993, I received what I believe to be a definite call to a religious vocation at an altar call portion of a peace Mass at St. Peter’s Church in Carencro.”

Deacon Brunet did not answer the call then and pursued a marriage vocation instead, marrying Danette in 1996.

“In 2004, my wife planted the diaconate seed in me saying she thought I would make a good deacon,” said Deacon Brunet. “I thought it over and decided to inquire in 2004.”

After completing the prerequisite training through the Religious Studies Institute, Deacon Brunet applied for diaconate formation.

“I was told to delay my application to the next formation class while my wife and I addressed her concerns that the diaconate may take too much out of our marriage,” said Deacon Brunet.

“Over the next four years my wife and I took many long walks to talk it over and she reached out to other deacons wives to get a better feel for how the diaconate affects a marriage,” Deacon Brunet stated. “By the time the next application process came around in 2013, with my wife’s support, I decided to apply again and was accepted into formation.”

With talk being that RSI would be discontinued because of accreditation issues with St. Joseph Seminary College in St. Benedict, Deacon Brunet was concerned that having waited four years there was no guarantee that another RSI class would be offered, and if so, if he would be accepted. The program did close in 2014, but Deacon Brunet completed formation in the RSI program through a partnership formed in 2015 between the Diocese of Baton Rouge and Our Lady of the Lake College, now Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University.

Other challenges Deacon Brunet faced included working full time during formation.

“Having classes both on Saturdays and also sometimes on various days during the week was difficult, in addition to the related homework. Also, our diaconate internship was expanded from three to 10 months on top of classes, homework and working full time. Without ship, the Brunet’s home was 90 percent destroyed in the flood of 2016 and the family went through flood recovery in the fall semester of 2016.

Deacon Brunet, who has been assigned to St. George Church in Baton Rouge, said he will reflect on the nature of his diaconate vocation daily.

“The call to diaconia is to serve,” said Deacon Brunet. “I view my diaconate call as a vocational call to serve God and my fellow man, especially the poor, the hungry, the lonely, the sick and the dying.”

He added, “One of my goals is to help meet the needs of adult Catholic faith formation and evangelization. I hope to achieve this by leading Bible study groups, teaching catechesis, preaching homilies and writing articles and books for Catholic publications. Another goal is to just plain be a good deacon by word and example. I hope to live a Christ-centered life that will lead others to Jesus. In short, I hope in some way to help save souls for Christ,” Deacon Brunet said.

Deacon Stephen Brunet is vested by his wife Danette and Deacon David Harris. Photos by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

The Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge
Youth Ministry Project Coordinator

General Statement of Duties
Provides administrative support and collaborates in planning, coordinating, and implementing all youth ministry projects and events as well as collaborates with the office staff of Evangelization & Catechesis on department projects. Assists with event or ministry related accounts payable/receivables, complex electronic record keeping, website design, program management, and practical application of technology, planning, organizing and other duties to contribute to the functions of the office. This position also contributes to providing resources and support to all youth, parents, young adults, and youth ministry leaders of the diocese.

Education and Experience Requirements
• Minimum four years professional level event planning experience and minimum two years’ experience in direct Youth and Young Adult Ministry required; bachelor’s degree preferred.
• Requires a working knowledge of the United States Catholic Bishops’ document “Renewing the Vision” and its application in ministry with young people.
• Youth Ministry Specialization Certification required or must be obtained within three years of hire.
• Excellent typing/word processing skills and working knowledge of various computer programs to include Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Internet, and Web Design.
• Due to the nature of this position, it is required that the incumbent be a practicing Roman Catholic who is registered and active in a parochial or religious community and possesses a working knowledge of Catholic teachings and doctrine.
• Requires working weekends and evenings regularly.
Please submit resume and letter of interest to hr@diobr.org.
Deadline to apply is July 7, 2017.
Deacon Corbett allows faith to blossom

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Deacon William Corbett’s spiritual roots date to elementary school, when he served as an altar boy at an early morning Mass at St. Joseph Church in Ponchatoula. But it would be another two decades before his own faith would fully blossom.

Deacon Corbett was one of seven men ordained as permanent deacons in a Mass of Ordination celebrated by Bishop Robert W. Muench on June 10 at St. Joseph Cathedral.

“(Becoming a deacon) is definitely a vocation calling,” said Deacon Corbett, who is married and the father of two daughters and is also a grandfather. “To me it is the heart speaking out to the heart, asking permission of one’s self to go deeper and allow God to use me, to work through me for his greater glory.”

“But for me, the diaconate was something that I would avoid for many years, always telling myself that I was not ready and was not worthy of such a position,” he added. “But God and my wife (Debra) kept after me. God kept calling to my heart and my wife finally told me: ‘Quit talking about it and take the leap of faith,’ and so our journey began.”

Deacon Corbett said his own spiritual seeds were planted when he served the daily 6:30 a.m. Mass at St. Joseph and nurtured in high school by youth directors while he was a member of the Catholic Youth Organization. However, it was not until 20 years later when he was drawn back to youth ministry as an adult that he acknowledged God’s voice speaking to him.

“He was filling the pitcher of my heart and allowing me to pour out his message to the young men and women that I served,” said Deacon Corbett, a lifelong Ponchatoula resident who lives next door to his mother and father. “The more I learned, the more that I yearned to know and to serve him.”

He said he had an excellent role model in Deacon Larry Melancon, who is a deacon assistant at St. Joseph. Deacon Corbett said Deacon Melancon is always able to adapt to the moment, whether it’s assisting at Mass, Communion service, at a nursing home, teaching confirmation classes or conducting a funeral rite for a parishioner.

Deacon Corbett, who will serve as a deacon assistant at St. Margret Queen of Scotland Church in Albany, was also drawn to Deacon Melancon’s homilies.

“I like the way he draws you into the Gospel message and seems to make everyone a part of his homily,” he added. “Not only is he a good deacon, he is also a good friend.”

Although he embraced the challenge, Deacon Corbett said his own formation was lined with educational and logistical challenges. Having been away from the classroom for more than three decades, since he graduated from Ponchatoula High School in 1978, Deacon Corbett admitted some of the difficulties he had to overcome were the reading assignments, the writing of papers and spending time in the classroom.

Exacerbating the complexities, Deacon Corbett was working at an oil refinery in Chalmette and had to travel from there to Baton Rouge to attend night classes before returning home. The historic floods of this past August created even more of a scheduling frenzy.

“After the flood, everything was crazy,” he said. “I had a lot of encouragement from my professors and my wife was always there to proof read and critique my papers.”

Deacon Corbett said his mission will be to reach out and serve the church and its people. He wants to ease the burden priests face today by assisting in a sacramental role, including helping prepare those for the sacraments of baptism and marriage and to also teach RCIA.

“It is not a matter of choosing to be a deacon, but God choosing me to serve him, using me to serve his people,” he said. “I want people to truly come to know and love God. I want them to know the father who loves us very much and would do anything to have us spend eternity in paradise with him. I want God to be more than just one hour on Sunday, I want to allow him to be my life every day.”
Deacon Duplantis finds a sense of peace in ordination

By Rachele Smith
The Catholic Commentator

There is an overwhelming sense of joy in Deacon Kirk Duplantis’ voice when he describes the moment he and his wife told their children he was entering the diaconate.

The parents of nine children, Deacon Duplantis said he and his wife, Rosalyn, had gathered all of their children together.

“When we told them, they all clapped and said, ‘We’ve been waiting for this,’” he said.

It’s that support, not only from his family, but also from friends, spiritual advisors and others, which has helped Duplantis reach what he feels is God’s “final mission” for him.

“I clearly see what God wants me to do for the church,” he said.

On Saturday, June 10, Deacon Duplantis and six other men were ordained deacons for the Diocese of Baton Rouge. He will serve at St. Gabriel Church in St. Gabriel.

A native of New Iberia, Deacon Duplantis said he and his wife met as teenagers some 30 years ago. They were members of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church and were involved in youth ministry before moving to Denham Springs in 1997 for his work.

As parishioners of Immaculate Conception Church in Denham Springs, Deacon Duplantis said he and his wife were once again involved in youth ministry. But something happened when their oldest children became teenagers.

“I just felt like I was being called to do more with the church,” he said.

At that time in 2000, he began looking into the diaconate, something he easily attributes to watching Deacon Brent Duplessis, among others.

“Deacon Brent had such a vigor for the Catholic faith,” he noted, adding that he was most inspired by the help and service he and the other deacons provided.

The timing, however, just wasn’t right for his family. While today his children range in age from 30 to 14 years-old, back then he and his wife were still consumed with raising small children, homework and after school activities.

Some two years later, he accepted a job offer with the Knights of Columbus and almost felt the calling to the diaconate was gone.

But he was wrong.

Always willing to help when asked, Deacon Duplantis and his wife began to assist with marriage preparation at their church. Deacon Duplantis said he and his wife attended various classes and through that, he learned more and more about his vocation as a husband. He also learned that he could have another vocation, and over time, with the blessing of his wife, Deacon Duplantis began to seriously consider the diaconate again.

Since that time, Deacon Duplantis said it’s easy to see how God has prepared not only him, but also his family for the role he will now play in the church.

He said his journey during formation was not always easy. He had many struggles, including losing “just about everything” during the August flooding last summer.

At that time, he thought the best thing to do was quit the diaconate program, but God kept him steady.

“So many people reached out to us. The Holy Spirit showed me how we have been blessed tremendously. It was unbelievable,” he said.

Additionally, Deacon Duplantis remarked he grappled with a feeling of unworthiness throughout the program, and he admitted that he still has those feelings; however, he trusts that God will continue to be by his side.

“I’ve learned that we are not called to be successful, but we are called to be faithful. And if you are faithful there is a sense of peace,” he said.

With that in mind and thinking ahead to his new assignment in St. Gabriel, Deacon Duplantis said he hopes to help Father Charlie Landry, pastor of St. Gabriel Church, in any way possible and “serve as well as I can.”

Joining hands with Bishop Robert W. Muench, left, Deacon Kirk Duplantis promises his obedience shortly before he is ordained. Photos by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

Bishop Muench celebrates the liturgy of the Eucharist during the Rite of Ordination for the diocese’s seven new deacons on June 10.

The candidates for deacon prostrate themselves before the altar as the Litany of the Saints is proclaimed.
Deacon Hooper says ordination was God’s idea

By Rachele Smith
The Catholic Commentator

George Hooper didn’t set out to be a deacon.

The 77-year-old was ordained to the diaconate on June 10, but he said the idea to be a deacon wasn’t his. “God was the one. He kept on me. Finally, I couldn’t ignore it anymore,” said Deacon Hooper.

Originally from River Ridge in Jefferson Parish, Deacon Hooper and his wife, Eleanor or “Ellie” as she is called, moved to Baton Rouge in 1980 with their two daughters. They soon became parishioners of St. Thomas More Church, and the girls attended Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School.

Deacon Hooper said they have always been faithful Catholics, but he wasn’t even considering the diaconate until his wife returned home from a trip to Medjugorje. “She met someone on the trip who said he wanted to be a deacon. I started talking to him and found out more about it,” he said.

Deacon Hooper admitted at that time, he really didn’t know much about the role of a deacon in the church.

“I knew they served at Mass, like altar servers, but that’s all,” he said.

However, the more he learned, the more he realized God was calling him to be a deacon. “My wife was shocked when I told her,” he said.

During his diaconate formation, Deacon Hooper explained that he was given validation over and over again that he was on the right path. He even found proof coming from one of his family’s biggest challenges: the flooding of their Shewood Forrest home in August.

“I kept thinking how God gives to us and takes it away,” he said.

But for Deacon Hooper it was more than just dealing with the aftermath of the flooding, it was having the determination and drive (literally) to go on. He explains that while making repairs to their home, he and his wife lived with a daughter in Brusly. At the same time, Deacon Hooper was serving an internship in the diaconate program at St. Alphonsus Church in Greenwell Springs and had made an earlier commitment to be there every day. He said he knew everyone understood his circumstances, but he was determined to make good on that promise.

“There’s a lot of people that just want companionship,” Deacon Hooper said. “Assigned to Immaculate Conception Church in Denham Springs, Deacon Hooper remarked that he is ready to do whatever is needed and “whatever God wants me to do.”

Deacon Messenger hopes to broaden spiritual horizons

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

As a lifelong Catholic, Deacon Tim Messenger had always strived to live his faith by serving others.

As an ordained deacon, he is hopeful to expand those horizons and to be God’s messenger to the most vulnerable of society.

Deacon Messenger, along with six classmates, was ordained as a permanent deacon by Bishop Robert W. Muench on June 10 in St. Joseph Cathedral.

“As a deacon I feel like whole new horizons will open up to me that present themselves and imply some added level of commitment to serve our Lord and his church,” said Deacon Messenger, a resident of Hammond and a graduate of St. Thomas More Elementary School and Catholic High School, each located in Baton Rouge.

“For me, the more we are engaged in service to those who are economically and/or spiritually longing, the more we come to know Christ through the people he places in our life,” he added, noting that as the newly appointed chaplain at the Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women he will have that opportunity. He will also serve as a deacon assistant at St. Margaret Queen of Scotland Church in Albany.

“I am blessed with good health and for hopefully many more years and now is the time for me to fully devote my life to God,” added Deacon Messenger, who is pointing toward retirement in the next few years. “However, my vocation as husband must always be a higher calling. My greatest gift, my wife (Gloria), will help me balance both of those demands.”

He readily admits that Gloria was his biggest supporter during the challenging formation program. But he was also blessed by the support of Deacon Larry Melancon from St. Joseph Church in Ponchatula and Deacon Ray Parmalee, now deceased, from the Diocese of Toledo, Ohio.

He noted how Deacon Parmalee was an “instrument in God’s call to me.” “His perservance in his own journey to the diaconate was a real inspiration and the reason I never gave up,” Deacon Messenger said.

He added that he was also influenced by Deacon Melancon’s purposeful demeanor on serving the Lord through his diaconate.

“He is ready to do whatever is needed and “whatever God wants me to do.”

Bishop Robert W. Muench presents the Book of the Gospels to Deacon George Hooper. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

Bishop Robert W. Muench welcomes Deacon Tim Messenger during the Mass of Ordination on June 10 at St. Joseph Cathedral. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator
Military service led to Deacon Mooney’s ministry

By Rachele Smith
The Catholic Commentator

A retired major in the United States Navy, Deacon Gary Mooney is ready for his next assignment.

The 57-year-old Deacon Mooney, who was ordained to the diaconate on June 10, will serve as a deacon for St. Joseph Cathedral in Baton Rouge.

“I met with Father (Paul) Counce, (pastor of St. Joseph), and I just hope I can be an asset to him. I hope to become involved with the social responsibility committee and offer up any skills that I have,” he said.

In addition, Deacon Mooney, a parishioner of St. Gabriel Church in St. Gabriel, will also serve part-time as a chaplain at the Baton Rouge Civic Center.

Father Papania, who added that he had always wanted to become a deacon, said he made the right decision.

Deacon Mooney explained that he would set up the chapel for Mass, and after the celebration, they would talk. When the chaplain discovered the various ways Deacon Mooney had and continues to serve in the church, such as an altar boy (pastor of St. Joseph), and I just hope I can be an asset to him. I hope to become involved with the social responsibility committee and offer up any skills that I have,” he said.

When he was in sixth grade, Deacon Mooney was inspired by the works of Father Bernard (Papini), he added.

Faster Papianna served as a full-time priest at Angola (Louisiana State Penitentiary) and was inspired by the works of Father Bernie (Papani),” he added.

“During my formation, I made a retreat at Angola (Louisiana State Penitentiary) and was inspired by the works of Father Bernie (Papania),” he added.

Father Papianna served as a full-time priest at Angola for several years before returning to his home diocese in Biloxi, Mississippi.

Born in New Orleans, Deacon Mooney said his family moved to Baton Rouge when he was very young. He attended elementary school at St. Aloysius and

St. Thomas More, both in Baton Rouge, but transferred to California when his dad’s company took the family out west. They later returned to the Capitol City, following graduation from high school and the University of Louisiana in Lafayette.

Deacon Mooney joined the Navy. He later continued his education and ultimately earned a law degree from Southern Law School. He remained active with the military, serving as a combat engineer and JAG officer until 2015.

During his military career, Deacon Mooney served two combat tours of duty. The first was in Afghanistan in 2002, and the second in Iraq in 2008. During both tours, Deacon Mooney said he attended Mass daily, or as often as possible. But it was in Iraq that he really began to talk with the chaplain, who happened to be Polish. Ultimately, it was this chaplain, a man from another country, who would encourage Deacon Mooney to consider the diaconate.

Deacon Mooney explained that he would set up the chapel for Mass, and after the celebration, they would talk. When the chaplain discovered the various ways Deacon Mooney had and continues to serve in the church, such as an altar boy (pastor of St. Joseph), and I just hope I can be an asset to him. I hope to become involved with the social responsibility committee and offer up any skills that I have,” he said.

However, when they finished the course, Deacon Mooney received more encouragement to join the diaconate, this time from Father Charlie Landry, his pastor at St. Gabriel, and Deacon Tom Labat, who also serves as a deacon at the church.

Deacon Mooney said they helped him to recognize what he wanted to do all along. Reflecting on the strong devotion of his grandmother, who Deacon Mooney said played an important part in his early life, he joined the diaconate. He admitted wasn’t always easy and there were some challenges along the way, especially including the flooding of his family’s home after the August flooding, but he is sure about one thing: he made the right decision.

Deacon Mooney makes a promise of obedience and respect to Bishop Robert W. Muench and his successors during a Mass of ordination to the permanent diaconate at St. Joseph Cathedral on June 10. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

Deacon Mooney said he did not think any of the challenges he faced in formation were unique.

“In fact, since I am now retired from my career, I believe many of my brothers who were ordained with me and their wives faced far greater challenges, balancing family time, formation and full-time employment,” said Deacon Mooney.

The diaconate, however, is definitely a vocational said Deacon Ponville, who has been appointed to serve at Holy Family Church in Port Allen.

“We all have vocational callings throughout our lives. My primary vocation is to live the sacrament of matrimony with my wife Jo Ann and being father to our three grown children and grandfather,” said Deacon Ponville. “Now, I am also called to the sacrament of holy orders to the sacred order of the diaconate to serve in our church.

“I see diaconal ministry as another phase in following God’s path for my life by serving others through our Catholic Church.”
Technology aids students to improve Baton Rouge

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

There is “much to love” about Baton Rouge, including the LSU Tigers and Southern Jaguars, weekend festivals and galas filled with fun activities, entertainment and food (including the official state crustacean, crawfish), the State Capitol, a thriving arts community and the Mississippi River.

Students in the Geographic Information System (GIS) Club at St. Aloysius School in Baton Rouge love their community so much that they formed a technological think tank to help the city rise above its problems, including the devastation of homes and lives by the flood of 2016, high poverty and crime rates, which hit home with the students with the recent killing of McKinley High School football player Bryant Lee.

The GIS system is a computer system for capturing, storing, checking and displaying data related to positions on the earth’s surface. GIS can show many different kinds of data on one map. This enables people to more easily see, analyze and understand patterns and relationships.

The GIS Club was formed on Jan. 26, Patience Moreno, computer and robotics teacher and student newspaper advisor at St. Aloysius, said after she learned more about the GIS system through demonstrations for teachers at LSU, she believe it was something that the St. Aloysius students could connect with. Soon the students themselves were trained on it.

“Step by step things fell into place,” said Moreno.

She asked the club members what they wanted to do with it, and it didn’t take long for them to come up with an answer. Seeing that the community was suffering from its problems, one student said, “Let’s do something to help Baton Rouge.”

“Healthy Opportunities for People and Environments – Baton Rouge HOPE,” is the name of the GIS Club’s project. It targets zip codes 70802 and 70805, which are in the biggest need of help. The club members brainstormed together and each student worked on a different phase of how to tackle some of the issues of those communities.

Three of the students, Katherine Winchester, Isabelle Gruner and Jensen Holliday took the initiative in their projects, giving their free time to work on their projects, said Moreno.

Club members entered the ArcGIS online U.S. School Competition, and on May 30 Winchester and Gruner received awards and Winchester’s project went on to compete at the national level.

“I love our city and entire state more than I can say,” said Winchester. “Louisiana is rich in history and celebration and it is impossible to be bored here because there is so much to do and see. I find myself extremely lucky to live here, but our city has a problem. Segregation is still a massive issue here. Homelessness and poverty are widespread. But crime rates have taken the character and charm of a portion of our city, and the goal of this project is to restore it.”

Her project focused on healthcare facilities, parks, churches, schools, community service facilities and other safe places for people to go to receive help. Among the facilities are St. Paul the Apostle Church (which has an adult learning center), and St. Gerard Majella and St. Anthony of Padua and Le Van Phung churches, St. Joseph’s Academy and the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

Gruner’s project looked at how the safe places in and around the 70805 and 70802 zip codes could form partnerships to help the people of their communities.

“What if we could partner these safe places to make them stronger to teach classes together like sewing, cooking or baking,” said Gruner. “This would make a better community of areas that different people of all races can go to learn and better themselves.”

She gave an example that Sacred Heart of Jesus Church and School, in the 70802 zip code, could partner with the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center, also in that zip code. She also pointed out how the urgent care centers in the 70802 zip codes can provide supplies for shelters, such as the Bishop Ott Shelter, in that area. St. Joseph’s Academy, which is in the 70808 zip code, could also be a resource center for the less fortunate, according to Gruner.

Holliday, who is continuing to develop his project, said it takes an in-depth look at crime rates in the city.

“If we think about the crime rates then we will want to look at ways to do something about it,” said Holliday, who is still developing his project.

He, Winchester and Gruner said their projects don’t just point out problems, but bring attention on how people can help.

Moreno said the most important aspect of the projects is that they promote communication, critical thinking and references and the building up of community.

“The subject matter of these two story maps created by Katherine and Izzy could be very important for Baton Rouge,” said Moreno. “If nothing else it could be a conversation starter for ideas to help our city.”

Moreno said she would like to share the two projects with non-profit organizations.

“With Katherine’s and Izzy’s initial steps of planting the seeds, maybe, with more ideas from wiser volunteer adults, this project could go further,” Moreno said.

Winchester’s project can be viewed at arcgis/2pAthCX and Gruner’s project can be seen at arcgis/2pIz0yZn.
CHS EAGLE SCOUT GRADS – Eagle Scouts in the Catholic High School of Baton Rouge graduating class of 2017 are, from left, back row, Hagan Dalton, Daniel Ourso, Taylor Fontenot, Ryan Guerin, Chris Alumbaugh, Collin Hebert, Austin Tuminello, Jake Revira, Benton Alford, Byrne Kennedy; front row, Ezra Grant, Jacob Thornton, Andrew Schoonmaker, Collin Devillier, Ryan Devillier, Nicholas Thompson, Taylor Empson, William Martin and Alexander Van Biersel. Not pictured are Will de la Bretonne and Gabe Mengarelli. Photo provided by Richard Beaugh | Catholic High School

DAFFY DUDS – The students at Most Blessed Sacrament School in Baton Rouge celebrated the coming of the end of school with a Crazy Dress Day, sponsored by the Student Council. They wore mismatched clothes, shoes and socks. The students also put on wigs and hats. Some sprayed their hair bright colors. The students made individual donations to help support the ARC of Baton Rouge and Blessed Margaret of Castello REACH Program, the Diocese of Baton Rouge Program for Exceptional Students. The event raised in $1,000. Dressed in their zany outfits are, from left, Gabrielle Cefalu, Allie DeBarbieris, Madelyne Migliacio (facing fence), Brinley Bailey, Aliza Gary (squatting), Madeline Cox, Riley Daigle and Karson Nolan. Photo provided by Cindy Duenckel | Most Blessed Sacrament School

LOCAL HEROES HONORED – Cindy Ryals, from left, principal of St. Alphonsus Liguori School in Greenwell Springs, Bruce Simmons, a Baton Rouge police officer, and Simmons’ wife, Pam, enjoy an Olympic-themed day of games and activities during the school’s annual field day event. The school honored all parents of students serving as law enforcement officers and first responders during the day. Bruce Simmons, who was one of the officers shot in the line of duty during last July’s ambush, was selected as the event’s torchbearer. Photo provided by Cindy Ryals | St. Alphonsus School

WARRIOR BASEBALL – Rob Smith, left, athletic director at St. Michael the Archangel High School in Baton Rouge, welcomes Chris Harrell as the school’s new head varsity baseball coach. Harrell is a graduate of the University of the Ozarks in Clarksville, Arkansas and spent the last three years as head baseball coach at St. John High School in Plaquemine. As head baseball coach, he led the school Eagles to two district championships and three playoffs, developed 16 all-district players and was named District Coach of the Year in 2015 and 2017. Harrell also served as the defensive coordinator football coach and strength and conditioning coach for St. John and was the school’s athletic director last year. Following the announcement of his appointment, Harrell said, “I look forward to being a part of the St. Michael community and am ready to get to work for the team and its players.” Photo provided by Kristi Watts | St. Michael High School

The Back to School section will be July 7. Find out what will be happening in the Diocese of Baton Rouge Catholic Schools for the 2017-2018 school year.

Deadline is June 23!
To inquire about advertising your products and services to this specialized market or space reservation contact Wanda Koch at 225-387-0983 or email wkoch@diobr.org.
The Mummy
Clumsy horror flick charts the dire consequences that follow when a shady soldier (Tom Cruise) and an archeologist (Annabelle Wallis) unwittingly revive an evil Egyptian princess (Sofia Boutella) who was put to death for her crimes in the days of the pharaohs. Pagan mumbo jumbo aside, there’s not much to bother the days of the pharaohs. Pagan mumbo who was put to death for her crimes in (Annabelle Wallis) unwittingly revive an soldier (Tom Cruise) and an archeologist consequences that follow when a shady shift takes across centuries and continents, the unwieldy proceedings as the scene there’s a growing note of desperation in (Russell Crowe) into the plot suggests, Stevenson’s character Dr. Henry Jekyll as the eventual injection of Robert Louis spectable good-versus-evil theme. Yet, but the script fails to gain traction. Oc cult and nonscriptural religious ideas, much harsh violence with fleeting gore, numerous gruesome images, partial nudity, some sexuality, occasional sexual references and humor, a couple of mild oaths and crude words, several crass terms. A-III; PG-13

Wonder Woman
Warner Bros.
Enjoyable adventure for the DC Comics superhero (Gal Gadot) takes her from her home environment an island of Amazons isolated from the rest of the world into the thick of World War I. Her involvement in the conflict follows the accidental intrusion of an American (Chris Pine) who’s spying for the British into her native realm, an event she takes as a signal that her race is being called to bring peace to humanity. Since her mother (Connie Nielsen), who is also the queen of the warrior women, disagrees, she undertakes the mission on her own. Guided by the agent, and with the support of a high-ranking government of ficial in London (David Thewlis), she uses her military training (under Robin Wright) to take on real-life German commander Gen. Ludendorff (Danny Huston) and the fictional, sinister scient ist (Elena Anaya) who runs his chemi cal weapons program. Though director Patty Jenkins keeps the mayhem mostly free of gore, and the dialogue in Allan Heinberg’s script is unspotted by vulgarity, the sexuality that tinges the cen tral romance, though restrained, makes the film best for grownups. Possibly acceptable for older teens. Frequent stylized violence with minimal blood, nonscriptural religious ideas, implied premarital sexual activity, a scene of immodest behavior, some sexual humor, at least one mild oath, a single crass term. A-III; PG-13

Sexual abuse policy in the Diocese of Baton Rouge
Churches, schools and youth organiza tions have an obligation to provide chil dren and youth with a safe place to wor ship, study or participate in activities sponsored by the Catholic Church.

In its ongoing effort to ensure that this is being accomplished, the Diocese of Baton Rouge has established an office of Child and Youth Protection. With the establish ment of this office, the diocese has also im plemented a process for reporting alleged abuse of a minor.

The Diocese of Baton Rouge has trained professionals available to provide counsel ing and information about additional care if needed. Information about report ing an incident is printed here in the three languages that are more commonly used in this diocese: English, Vietnamese and Spanish.

Issues relating to the Protection of Children and Young People
Mrs. Amy Cordon serves as Child and Youth Protection Officer of the Diocese of Baton Rouge. Her offices are at the Catho lic Life Center, 1800 South Acadian Thru way, Baton Rouge. Her mailing address is P. O. Box 2028, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-2028; telephone 225-242-0202; fax 225 242-0233.

A special confidential “Sexual Abuse Victim Response Contact Line” to be used in reporting any instance of child sexual abuse by an employee of the Church or a volunteer in one of the Church’s programs has been set up: 225-242-0250.

Anyone victimized as a child or young person is urged to report this first to se cu lar authorities (Louisiana State Police or State of Louisiana Department of Social Services) as well as to the special diocesan “Sexual Abuse Victim Response Contact Line” (telephone 225-242-0250) or to the diocesan counselors at Catholic Charities (telephone 225-336-8708).

En Relación a la Protección de Niños y Gente Joven

Uno de los programas que la Iglesia ha establecido es la línea telefónica especial y confidencial de “Contacto para Responder le a la Victima del Abuso Sexual” cometido por empleados de la Iglesia o voluntarios: 225-242-0250.

Cualquier persona como un niño o un joven victimizado debe reportar el inci dente primero a las autoridades como la (Policía Estatal o al Departamento Estatal (Ministerio) de Servicios Sociales así como también a la línea de “Contacto para Responderle a la Victima del Abuso Sexual” (teléfono 225-242-0250) o a los consejeros de la Diócesis en las Casas Católicas (teléfono 225-336-8708).

Những Điều Cần Biết Về Bảo Vệ Trẻ Em và Người Trẻ

Những nạn nhân bị lạm dụng trước cân phải báo cáo lên các cơ quan chính quyền (Cơ Quan Cảnh Sát Tiểu Bang—Louisiana State Police hoặc Văn Phòng Xá Hội Tiếu Bang—State of Louisiana Department of Social Services), và thông báo lên Giáo phận qua đường dây đặc biệt (225-242-0250) hoặc qua những người hướng dẫn ở số (225-336-8708).

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The Mummy

Clumsy horror flick charts the dire consequences that follow when a shady soldier (Tom Cruise) and an archeologist (Annabelle Wallis) unwittingly revive an evil Egyptian princess (Sofia Boutella) who was put to death for her crimes in the days of the pharaohs. Pagan mumbo jumbo aside, there’s not much to bother grown viewers in director Alex Kurtzman’s film, which has a sketchy but respectable good-versus-evil theme. Yet, as the eventual injection of Robert Louis Stevenson’s character Dr. Henry Jekyll as the eventual injection of Robert Louis spectable good-versus-evil theme. Yet, but the script fails to gain traction. Occult and nonscriptural religious ideas, much harsh violence with fleeting gore, numerous gruesome images, partial nudity, some sexuality, occasional sexual references and humor, a couple of mild oaths and crude words, several crass terms. A-III; PG-13

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NBCC to explore the call to live the Gospel

WASHINGTON (CNS) Delegates attending Congress XII of the National Black Catholic Congress in Orlando, Florida, in July will take on new responsibilities this time around.

Rather than working from a draft of a pastoral plan developed prior to the congress as per tradition, the 2,000 attendees will be tasked with developing a pastoral plan during the July 6-9 gathering and taking it home to their parishes and dioceses.

“We’re interested in what the people have to say, what’s in their hearts. It’s what they want to see addressed (by the Catholic Church),” said Father Stephen D. Thorne, pastor of St. Martin de Porres Parish in Philadelphia and a congress leader.

“In the end, what is finally approved, we hope to see it reflected in the pastoral plan of the local bishop,” he told Catholic News Service. “Whatever the goals are -- an African-American Catholic saint, or Catholic education and Catholic schools being viable in our communities and supporting them, or the violence of young people -- can be included.

“It’s a real act of faith, an act of the Spirit, to come together kind of like in conclave, (and) have the people say what is in our hearts.”

The congress immediately follows the “Convocation of Catholic Leaders: The Joy of the Gospel in America.” Some congress participants are expected to be at both events.

Individuals in 50 dioceses have been discussing ideas for the pastoral plan in preparation for the congress, which is convened every five years. This year’s congress is the 12th. The theme is taken from the Gospel of Luke 4:18 and the Book of Micah 6:8: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me: Act justly, love goodness and walk humbly with your God.”

Father Thorne said the theme is meant to inspire how African-American Catholics “respond to the challenges we face in our world and our church.” From racism and the rise of white nationalism to youth violence, black Catholics are called to respond with love, understanding and resolve, he said.

The program for the congress includes daily plenary speakers and workshops focused on topics such as wisdom from black Catholic history; a discussion on the implementation of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ anticipated pastoral letter on racism; the Eucharist; domestic violence; prison ministry; and serving the spiritual needs of urban youth in a secularized society.

Cardinal Peter Turkson, prefect of the Vatican’s Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, is scheduled to address the opening session of the congress July 7. He also is to celebrate Mass for the delegates.

Other speakers include Bryan Stevenson, executive director of Equal Justice Initiative; Bishop Edward K. Braxton of Belleville, Illinois; Father Maurice Emelu, media evangelist and retreat leader; and Tricia Bent-Goodeley, professor social work at Howard University.

Liturgy, prayer and retreats also are on the daily agenda.

A particular focus will be on meeting the needs of young people, added Father Thorne, who has attended the congress since 1987, starting as an 18-year-old.

“We realized we have work to do especially to engage our young adults,” he explained. “If we don’t listen to them and their concerns, we’re not going to have another congress.”

Just as important, Father Thorne said, is the response of African-American Catholics to the rising tide of racism and polarized politics across the country.

The priest recalled Pope Francis’ visit to Philadelphia and his public comments that encouraged people to bring justice and mercy to a world wrought with violence and division. He said the pope’s apostolic exhortation “Evangelii Gaudium” (“The Joy of the Gospel”) can be particularly inspiring to carry on the necessary work.

“It’s unique times politically,” he said. “How do we live our faith in the public square? How do we create community in that challenged world? We cannot act for justice, love tenderly, without the Lord,” he said.

“That’s a message we can share to the wider community ... and offer an alternative to the discourse in our country.”

Father Thorne said he expects the role of African-American, Latino and Asian Catholics in church life will continue to grow in the future. He said faith and better understanding of the Gospel call for justice in the face of racism and violence will guide the evolving church.

“Black Catholics have been through challenging times before. We are called to be men and women of resilience,” he said.

“Our diversity is one of the gifts we can offer. It reminds us that the church is truly catholic, universal,” he added.

“The congress can help inspire the work ahead, Father Thorne said.

“We’re committed to being the beacon and lever of hope. Eucharist every Sunday gives us the strength we need to go out for the work of justice.”

Solution on page 18

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President Donald Trump has said that he was elected to care for the needs of Pittsburgh, not Paris. America should come first, before we do anything for the planet or the advantage of poor countries. That seems to make sense to many Americans today. At the end of May I was visiting former classmates in Detroit. They took me on a tour of the city which I had not seen in 40 years. Downtown Detroit is still intact, a little worn, but still looking like the prosperous city I remember as the hub of America’s auto industry. However, today one doesn’t have to drive far from that center to see some of the worst urban blight in our 50 states. Whole blocks are abandoned, boarded up. They look like the Lower 9th Ward in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. I thought to myself, “So this explains the vote in the presidential race.”

Where are those people now? They have moved, found new work – probably not as lucrative, without as good benefits as before – but they are finally back to work, according to labor statistics of last month.

America is resilient, America is wealthy. We have our ups and downs, but we can come back from financial recessions and natural disasters. This is not so in many other countries of our world. Before flying to Detroit I made an 11-day trip to Liberia, Africa, at the beginning of May to visit and work for a Catholic mission there. It was my third annual trip. Each yearly visit has taught me a little more about what we can do to help people who are caught in a terrible cycle of poverty.

Joe Sehnert, the chairman of the board of directors of Franciscan Works, the non-profit mission company that finances Liberia Mission, explains the cycle of poverty in this way: A child grows up in poverty lacking education and job skills; when he comes of age, he cannot find work; he begins his own family, and his children grow up in poverty lacking education and job skills; and the cycle continues.

One of Liberia Mission’s main objectives is not only to feed and house the mission’s 50 orphans but also to give them and 375 more children in the poverty area around it a solid education. This is the only way to break their cycle of poverty. Joe, who ran the mission in Liberia for four years during the Ebola outbreak, published the following statistics in the Franciscan Works 2017 Spring Newsletter: “Over 80 percent of its (Liberia) population lives on less than $1.25 USD a day. Sixty-five percent of primary school age children have no schooling. Only 20 percent of students enrolled in grade 1 stay enrolled until grade 12.” Liberia Mission began in 2003 as an emergency response to save orphans left by a 14-year civil war. There are still orphans to be saved, now from the Ebola epidemic that took so many lives three years ago. Children who lost their parents were often abandoned by their own villages out of fear that they could spread the disease. The Archdiocese of Monrovia asked the mission to take in 25 of these orphans. The Rucksuhl Foundation, founded by Dick Rucksuhl, a parishioner of St. Thomas More Parish in Baton Rouge, until his death four years ago, donated $10,000 to help these orphans. Three years ago the foundation gave another $10,000 to replace a burnt out generator, the mission’s only source of electricity. (I was there when the generator blew. That’s how it is in mission countries. If you want water, you dig your own well; food, you raise your own pigs, chickens, sheep, crops, etc.; electricity, you install your own generator.) Last year the foundation gave $30,000 to replace rusted, leaking roofs with new sheet metal on the K-9 school, boys dormitory and girls dorm. This year we hope to replace a totally dead truck, one of the only two vehicles the mission owns. The other is a rickety van used to retrieve visitors from the airport and high school students from their school, Booker Washington Institute, about 10 miles down the road.

No one who sponsors a child and visits him or her at the mission can not become attached to these wonderful children. The director of the mission when I first visited three years ago was a young and amazingly capable Irish girl from Dublin, Mary Anne O’Driscoll. She introduced me to the three youngest orphans, Ben, age 6 then, his younger sister, Ruth, whom Mary Anne dubbed “Pokey,” and her new best friend Willemena, both 5. Although I was already sponsoring a high school student, Aaron Karmbo, and, after his graduation, now am sponsoring a fifth-grader, Emmanuel Tokpah, I still am followed around by the three little ones. This was especially so last year after Mary Anne was killed in a tragic auto accident. I carry in my cell phone a picture of her and the little ones, also one of Ben with a school bag on his shoulders half his size, reading a sign above the dining hall door with the prayer, “Thank God, Ebola Gone!”

Liberia Mission is now in the charge of an American family – Greg and Karen Caudle, who brought their four children with them: Eleanna, 8, Lemuel, 6, Caleb, 4, and Lucas, 2. Eleanna is easy to spot every morning at the St. Anthony School assembly outside in front of the Liberian flag where the students line up by grade to pray and pledge allegiance. She lines up with the third grade and is the only child with blond hair and fair skin. Lemual is being homeschooled via computer and momma until he is prepared to assimilate into the school. Caleb is enjoying his last year of freedom before kindergarten and Lucas is happily learning to walk and talk. Greg is an ideal fit at the mission since he comes from serving as a middle-school principal in South Dakota.

It takes a yearly budget of $420,000 USD to run the mission and its school, to support 40 students in the vocational high school, and 10 of the eldest who are now at the University of Liberia. About $100,000 comes from tuition sponsorships. The rest must come from donations, grants and mission appeals in the United States. Liberia Mission lives a precarious existence financially. What it really needs is 100 generous persons to each give it $3,000 a year. St. Francis of Assisi counseled his followers, “Start by doing what’s necessary, then do what’s possible, and suddenly you’re doing the impossible.” When President Trump met with another (Pope) Francis in May, I hope the pope repeated to him what he has said to others like you and me, “To live and literally means not looking out for our own interests, but carrying the burdens of the weakest and poorest among us.”

FATHER CARVILLE is a retired priest in the Diocese of Baton Rouge and writes on current topics for The Catholic Commentator. He can be reached at johnmcarville@gmail.com.

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.
Bishop Muench praises deacons during homily

This morning a spirit of joy, excitement and enthusiasm pervades this cherished house of God, more precisely, a Holy Spirit whose special solemnity of Pentecost we celebrated last Sunday. I extend heartiest greetings to all, especially our candidates for the diaconate, wives, children, other family members and friends, as well as all clergy, religious and lay faithful. Particular acknowledgment is made to Father (Jami) David, Diaconate Formation Office Director, Deacon (John) Veron, Diaconate Ministry and Life Office Director, Dr. (Tina) Holland, Our Lady of the Lake College president and those who promote recruitment, selection and formation of candidates; to Father (Tom) Ranzino, Worship Office Director, liturgical ministers for this celebration, Father (Paul) Counce, St. Joseph Cathedral pastor, Mr. (Steve) Lee, Catholic Life Television director and Mr. (Richard) Meek, Catholic Commentator editor.

The early church as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles was very idyllic. In chapter 2, St. Luke wrote: “They (the disciples) devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. Awe came upon everyone and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. All who believed were together and held everything in common. They would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one’s need ... And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved” (42-45, 47).

Four chapters later, a conflict in the community arose. Among the Jewish disciples of Jesus, there were the Greek-speaking Hellenists and the Greek-speaking Hebrews. The Hellenists complained their widows were being neglected by the Hebrews in the distribution of food and clothing for the needy. The apostles directed the Hellenists themselves to choose seven men (what a special number) “filled with the Spirit and wisdom,” to fulfill this role, thus becoming freed to concentrate on the prayers. Awe came upon everyone and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. All who believed were together and held everything in common. They would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one’s need ... And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved” (42-45, 47).

From The Bishop

Bishop Robert W. Muench

Thus affirmed the sacramentality of the ordination of deacons. In 1956 Dutch Bishop Wilhelmm van Bekkum, serving in Indonesia, speaking for many colleagues, became the first bishop who suggested the restoration of the original diaconate for mission countries (The Liturgical Revival in the Service of the Missions, Assisi Papers, 1957). In 1957 Pope Pius indicated “The idea (for this), at least to today, is not yet ripe” (Pius XII, “Quelques aspects fondamentaux de l’apostolat des laïcs: Hierarchie et Apostolate,” AAS 49, 1957, 925). This papal pronouncement itself created significant publicity, curiosity, interest in and consideration for such a proposal.

In 1959 Father Johannes Hofinger SJ (whom years later I had the privilege to know and collaborate with in New Orleans) quoted Bishop Bekkum and actively promoted the case for this renewed diaconate. This ministry would include bringing Communion and viaticum to the sick, conduct worship services, perform baptisms and funerals, officiate at weddings, and include the deacon’s role in administration. (Hofinger, “The Case for Permanent Deacons,” Catholic Mind, 1959). At Vatican Council II Belgian Cardinal Suenens became a strong advocate for this concept, strategically and wisely proposing its application limited to those areas where local church authority determined it beneficial. In 1963, it received a majority of favorable votes. In 1964 its final version was ratified and placed in Lumen Gentium. How providential.

From 1976 through 2013 the Diocese of Baton Rouge ordained or incardinated 83 such deacons, of whom 27 have been called to eternal life. (May they rest in peace.) Factoring others who have formally retired (12) or otherwise no longer actively serving in the diocese (?), with today’s ordination, not counting our “pre-priesthood” deacon, we now have 60 such deacons in pastoral assignment. Can we not perceive the Holy Spirit’s continued dynamic action in the church?

On a personal note this past Wednesday marked the golden anniversary of my ordination to the diaconate. Over those years I have more and more appreciated and been awed by this foundational sacred order and its fundamental call to selflessness, humility, obedience, prayer, service of the Word, Eucharist and charity. You, our deacons, and the diaconal community, who exercise your ministry with diligent commitment, are the source of much admiration and inspiration. We also appreciate the indispensable sacrifice, support, companionship and partnership of your special allies — your loving wives.

“Blessing and glory, wisdom and thanksgiving, honor, power and might be to our God forever and ever. Amen” (Rv 7:12).
es wide Supper and Substance, “The Ultimate Married Couples Date Night” will be held Saturday, July 29 at St. George Church, 7608 St. George Dr., Baton Rouge. Doors will open at 6 p.m. Jan and Lloyd Tate will speak on, “What I Wish I Knew Before I Got Married.” There will also be dinner and dancing. Cost is $75 per couple. Register at mfldior.org. For more information, email brfroeba@gmail.com.

Vacation Bible Schools – The following churches will be hosting vacation Bible schools: Mater Dolorosa Church, 609 Third St., Independence, Sunday, July 16 – Friday, July 21, call 985-878-9699 for more information; St. Gabriel Catholic Church, 3625 Hwy. 75, St Gabriel, will host its vacation Bible school, Monday, July 17 – Friday, July 21, 6:30 – 9 p.m., call 225-642-8441 for more information. The theme of both vacation Bible Schools will be “Maker Fun Factory: Created by God Built For a Purpose.”

Camp Kateri – Rosaryville Spirit Life Center, 39003 Rosaryville Road, Ponchatoula, will hold Camp Kateri for boys and girls ages 7 – 13 Sunday, July 9 – Friday, July 14. Activities include canoeing, swimming, archery, sports, arts and crafts and campfires. For more information, call 225-294-5039 or email scallas@oppeace.org.

‘Outcasts’ Movie Screening – A screening of the movie, “Outcasts” will take place Thursday, July 13, 6 p.m., at the Catholic Life Center Main Auditorium, 1800 S. Acadian Thwy., Baton Rouge. The event is sponsored by the Office of Marriage and Family Life of the Diocese of Baton Rouge and the Franciscan Experience, a program of Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University. For more information, call Danielle Van Haute, respect life coordinator for the Diocese of Baton Rouge, at 225-242-0323.

World Wide Marriage Encounter – Couples wanting to learn unique communication techniques that will bring new life to their relationship are invited to attend a World Wide Marriage Encounter Weekend Friday, July 14 – Sunday, July 16 at the Bishop Robert E. Tracy Center, 1800 S. Acadian Thwy., Baton Rouge. For more information, visit LAMS-www.me or call Jack and Angel LeBate at 470-297-8560 or email jackandangel@bellsouth.net.

World Refugee Day Celebration – The second annual World Refugee Day Celebration, “Stand Together with Refugees/Immigrants,” sponsored by Louisiana African Solidarity Response, will take place Saturday, June 24, 2-3 p.m., at the LSU Student Union Ball Room. The event raises awareness of challenges of refugees forcefully displaced from their homes, the challenges they face after being resettled and the diversity of cultural experiences and assets refugees/immigrants bring to the Baton Rouge Community. A potluck dinner will follow at the LSU International Cultural Center featuring learning, story telling, cultural performances and fun. For more information email info@lasbr.org.

Blessed Mother Feast – Our Lady of Pompeii Church, 14450 Hwy. 442, Tickfaw, will celebrate its 90th annual Blessed Mother Feast Saturday, July 1; Sunday, July 2. The procession with the statue of the Blessed Mother will leave the church’s chapel on Fedele Road at 4:45 p.m. and end at the church, stopping at the cemetery to bless the graves. Mass will be celebrated at 5:30 p.m., after which there will be games and concessions, which will be open until about 10 p.m. On Sunday Bingo and concessions will begin at 2 p.m. A brass band will play outside the hall until benediction at 6 p.m. The statue of the Blessed Mother will then be taken back to the chapel in a procession, after which the feast will continue until 10 p.m. For more information, call 985-345-6675.

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 spirituality center 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 504-867-1420. For more information on the retreats, visit arch-no.org or call 504-267-9604.

Supper and Substance – The second annual diocesan wide Supper and Substance, “The Ultimate Married Couples Date Night” will be held Saturday, July 29 at St. George Church, 7608 St. George Dr., Baton Rouge. Doors will open at 6 p.m. Jan and Lloyd Tate will speak on, “What I Wish I Knew Before I Got Married.” There will also be dinner and dancing. Cost is $75 per couple. Register at mfldior.org. For more information, email brfroeba@gmail.com.

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REFUGEES

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immigrants, helping them to overcome the same old hurdles he was forced to navigate largely on his own. He is a co-founder and vice-president of Louisiana African Response, which is a statewide ethnic community group providing refugees with critical services to becoming integrated members of American society.

The assistance begins with volunteers greeting refugees as they land in Baton Rouge, which Sesay calls a “psychological boost.” “(Sesay) has a passion for helping refugees, (regardless of) race, color or ethnicity to be successful in their adjustment to the American way of life,” said Ann Sperry, program coordinator of the Louisiana Office for Refugees for Catholic Charities Diocese of Baton Rouge, which sponsored the Louisiana African Response attempts to fill in the gaps, providing families with an array of services that include a literacy class and from there how to seek out job opportunities.

He said that most refugees likely will have to go through a series of mental jobs, as was his experience, but ultimately the focus needs to shift as to how an individual can make the best use of his or her talent. That might include advancing one’s education, which Sesay did when he earned an associate’s degree at Baton Rouge Community College, and “learn going from minimum wage to a better living wage.” “The perception (among refugees) is America is full of roses,” he said. “Yes, the money is here but you have to do what is right to get it.”

Counseling, especially focused on conflict resolution, is also a critical component of the organization’s mission. Sesay noted that some African traditions are clash to what is the norm in the United States, including women’s rights, which creates familial conflicts. He said in the African tradition the men work and are regarded as the “boss of the house” while the women stay home.

“That is one of the biggest problems we have found in the refugee community,” he said. “Women want to know their rights and they step up. Problems arise. You just can’t change overnight.”

Along with an unfamiliar culture, refugees and immigrants alike are now faced with uncertainty because of a new policy launched by the Trump administration that puts their own status at risk.

“It is a serious concern,” Sesay said, adding that many of the families have come here illegally, or as farm workers or have overstayed their visas. And many of those families have children that are under five years old.

“They came with their little babies; they don’t want to leave them behind,” he said. “Those kids are growing up here from day one, elementary up to high school. And now those kids are fearful of their status.

“This is where they grew up. Now they are scared they are going (to be deported). This could be their last day in school. And they came here through no fault of their own, as early as six months old.”

Sesay calls it imperative to desensitize and educate community leaders and others regarding refugees. He is adamantly when he says an entire community should not be judged by the actions of a few misguided militants.

“We must find a way to defuse the panic and tension that exists within the community,” he said. “One isolated incident and (society) brands the rest of the community.”

“All we’re asking is let’s come together and show solidarity; we not asking for much,” Sesay said. “It’s all about sensitization.”

“We all know the challenges what we have right now. And the community is looking at it and saying what is going on? We just want them to put a human face to refugees instead of some of them at the top calling us names like rapists, criminals. And the majority of the refugees we don’t represent that.”

“In America there is a lot of hope, and that hope is what is driving us forward.”

“But with everything that is going on, I am just waiting to share my experience so the world knows about what we experience as refugees. It’s not a choice. We don’t get that choice to leave and come; we are forced to leave.”
Deportation feared as program protecting parents of citizen children ends

WASHINGTON (CNS) Advocates for immigrants expressed concern that millions of illegal alien parents of U.S. citizens and other permanent legal residents will be subject to deportation after Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly rescinded a memo that protected them.

Kelly's action June 15 revokes DACA, or Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents, a 2014 memo from President Barack Obama that protected law-abiding parents who are in the country illegally from deportation.

It also follows through on a campaign promise by President Donald Trump to overturn two Obama-era memos on illegal immigration. The DAPA memo was never implemented after it was challenged in federal court in Texas by 26 states that argued the program was illegal. The U.S. Supreme Court voted 4-4 last June after the lower court ruling was appealed, leaving that ruling in place.

A judge in the case set June 15 as the deadline to resolve the case. In response, Kelly rescinded the memo, saying there is "no credible path forward" in court. In announcing the revocation, a news release from the Department of Homeland Security said that the other Obama memo, dated June 15, 2012, that created the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, a similar protection program for young immigrants, would remain in effect.

Kelly told the House of Representatives Homeland Security Committee during a hearing on June 7 that the administration would not end DACA.

The potential for the breakup of families as a result of Kelly's decision on DAPA troubled advocates for immigrants the most.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has long called for keeping families together even when some members may be in the country illegally and has advocated for immigration reform measures that protect family unity.

"What it means is that they will be targeting parents of U.S. citizen children for deportation," J. Kevin Appleby, senior director of international migration policy at the Center for Migration Studies in New York, told Catholic News Service June 16. "This administration is looking to break up American families. There's no compassion for situations where there are mixed-status families and keeping them together.

It also means they have no consideration for U.S. citizen children and their interests. Why would we alienate a future generation of leaders from being part of this country? It terrorizes children who develop psychological and emotional issues when their parents are taken away. It really shows the administration is pursuing a mass deportation policy," said Appleby, former director of migration and refugee policy for the USCCB.

Representatives of other Catholic organizations also were uneasy by Kelly's stance.

"There's no hope for DAPA," said Michelle Sardone, director of the legalization program at the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.

"Although we're happy there are assurances that DACA will continue, I'm very disappointed that we're to continue separating families," she said.

Sardone said families must be protected under U.S. immigration policy and called for action by Congress to reform the country's immigration laws.

An official at Catholic Relief Services, the U.S. bishop's overseas relief and development agency, maintained that rescinding DAPA would hurt families.

"The government's first priority should be to protect families, which the church has long taught are the core unit of every society," Jill Marie Gerschutz-Bell, senior policy and legislative specialist, said in an email. "As Catholics, we urge the Department of Homeland Security to keep families together and allow them to remain in the United States."

Ashley Feasley, director of policy for the USCCB's Migration and Refugee Services, called Kelly's action "discouraging."

She said in an email to CNS June 16 that the decision places 4 million parents of citizens and lawful permanent residents under threat of deportation.

DACA and DAPA were created in Obama administration policy memos. The programs required participants to meet certain conditions, among them being a history of being free of serious crimes. Although the memos expanded federal policy to protect immigrant parents in the U.S. illegally, Obama administration officials also sought to provide young immigrants with work permits good for three years at a time. The federal court also blocked that provision.