LIVING GOD'S PUZZLE

DYC delivers strong message

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Surpassing the grandest temples around the world is the sanctuary of the human soul. When people unite, their souls fit together like the pieces of a puzzle and show a more complete picture of the kingdom of heaven, youth learned Feb. 18 at the Diocesan Youth Conference, themed, “United: Millions of Temples of Christ and Counting.”

After a welcome from Bishop Robert W. Muench, the opening skit reflected on events that challenged south Louisiana this past summer, particularly the flooding, and ended on a positive note showing people working together easing each other's burdens.

Speaker Mary Bielski, founder of All4HIM Ministries, said real life situations form the stories of our lives. "There's a variety of stories, good stories, bad stories, whether you like them or hate them," said Bielski.

She showed multi-media presentation at the Diocesan Youth Conference on Feb. 18 emphasized the importance of unity. In this skit, members of a youth group, from left, Lupita Arena, Grant Dupaty, Kara Hobbs, Jerrica Eaglin and Cody Waguespack, argue over what they should do on a project. They go on a scavenger hunt to find puzzle pieces that had Scripture on them. Once they read the Scripture verses, they realized they were all united under one mission searching for the same thing. Photo by Debbie Shelley | The Catholic Commentator

Lent offers spiritual opportunity to hear the Lord’s voice

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Lent can often be perceived as a season of sacrifice, those dreadful 40 days giving up one's favorite culinary yet sinful delights or perhaps even adult beverages.

Some even offer that Lent is a time of spiritual darkness before the promise of the new life of resurrection.

But those 40 days can also be a time of spiritual renewal, and more important a season of purging one's heart of sins, ultimately clearing previously clogged spiritual arteries to be able to hear God speak, which remains one of the greatest mysteries of the church.

“I think of Lent as the at-home retreat,” said Father Miles Walsh, pastor at Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Baton Rouge. “You don't have to go anywhere.”

“It is the most powerful time of the year,” he added. Jesus pours out so many graces at Lent. All you have to do is just sit there and bask in the grace of God and avail yourself to the help you will find in your powerful church.”

Dina Dow, director of Evangelization and Catechesis for the Diocese of Baton Rouge, said the Lenten liturgy is a guide to direct one through the season.

“When you starting hearing Revelation, when you are hearing God's voice through Christ, God has spoken out loud,” she said. “That is where we hear him.”

Perhaps contrary to what some believe, Dow said hearing God through the liturgy is easy. She said it's as simple as listening and opening one's ears and hearts.

“Is he going to sit there and whisper in our ear,” she said. “Maybe. Be ready for that. All you have to do is listen to Jesus.”

Dow said people tend to make hearing God more complicated than it should be. Personally, she said that once she found the simplicity of prayer and reading sacred Scripture, “I got all my answers.”

Dow and Father Walsh agree that after shaking off the revelry of Mardi Gras, Ash Wednesday provides the perfect stepping off point on the Lenten journey. And they both say confession should always be the first step of that journey.

“Talk to God and let it out,” Dow said. “Take away any barriers that block you and God. Your sinfulness is your barrier. “We put that up. God does not put it up. That is a fresh start.”

Father Walsh said of the seven sacraments, the Eucharist and reconciliation are the "two legs upon which we walk."

“We make more progress on two legs than one,” he added. “If you try to hop along on one leg, and many Catholics hop along with the Mass and not availing themselves of the sacrament (reconciliation) that (allows) us to receive God's presence in the Eucharist.”

SEE LENT PAGE 27
**DID YOU KNOW**

**A Catholic tradition**

Amid the zaniness so often associated with Mardi Gras, it’s easy to forget that the Carnival season is deeply rooted in the Catholic faith.

The roots of Mardi Gras run as deep as the pagan Roman celebration of Lupercalia, a February holiday that honored the Roman god of fertility and included feasting and drinking (two Mardi Gras staples).

As the Catholic Church began its rise in ancient Rome, Christian morality and teachings began to spread, creating a need to blend ancient Roman practices with Christianity. As the fledgling church continued to spread across Europe in the first century, cultures began to develop their own practices to celebrate the last day before Lent began.

In France, the popular tradition was to feast on foods that would be given up for Lent, such as meat, eggs and milk, thus the day was tagged with the moniker Mardi Gras, which means Fat Tuesday.

Almost paradoxically, many Christians received the sacrament of reconciliation on Mardi Gras so Fat Tuesday is also known as Shrove Tuesday. Shrove is the past tense of the word shrive, which refers to a priest hearing confession.

However, church officials were not always so receptive to the excesses of Mardi Gras and often made efforts to temper the mirthfulness. In 1747 through a special constitution from Pope Benedict XIV a plenary indulgence was granted to those who took part in the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament to be carried out daily for three days during the Carnival season.

Those same European traditions of gaiety were carried across the pond with the early settlers, and from the beginning Mardi Gras was celebrated with the same fervor in the New World as in Europe.

Naturally, none celebrated with the same enthusiasm as in southeast Louisiana. Today, those Catholic traditions remain very much a part of the Mardi Gras tradition.

**CLARIFICATION & REVISIONS**

St. Patrick Church in Baton Rouge will have its Knights of Columbus Lenten dinners on March 3, March 10, March 24, March 31 and April 7.

Holy Rosary Church in St. Amant has revised its Taize prayer service to March 6 at 7 p.m. at the church.

Holy Rosary has also revised its mission dates to March 13-15 at the church. Father Donald Blanchard is leading the mission.

**PICTURES FROM THE PAST**

Bishop Robert E. Tracy, second from left, seems to be talking a little smack to Msgr. John Naughton as he takes a swing during a round of golf with priests in the Diocese of Baton Rouge in August, 1971. Also in the foursome were Father Donald Songy, far right, and Msgr. Leo Guillot at the far left. Two years earlier, Bishop Tracy was able to spend time with the legendary Arnold Palmer at the CYO-Arnold Palmer Golf Exhibition at Sherwood Forest Country Club, although it is unclear if the bishop offered a similar critique of the King’s swing. Photo provided by the Department of Archives | Diocese of Baton Rouge

**The Lenten journey**

By Dina Dow

Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you. Our soul waits for the LORD, who is our help and our shield. May your kindness, O LORD, be upon us who have put our hope in you.

– Psalm 33:20-22

The liturgical season has dramatically changed. Streams of purple symbolizing the spirit of penance and fasting adorn the sanctuary as the church begins her journey through Lent. The Old Testament readings resonate with the telling of God’s loving plan of salvation for “the many” and his promise of blessings, while the New Testament readings and Gospels illuminate the realities of salvation through Jesus, the temptations along the way and the transformative power of faith.

**Salvation Begins with a Choice**

The story of creation, God forming man out of clay and giving life with his very breath, reveals the significance of salvation. “Living beings” are made by God in his image to share in his divine life. Because of this, humans are able to think, reflect, analyze, act and come to know God. The gift of life is accompanied with the gift of free will. This freedom is tested in the garden. The result of suggestive doubt placed in the minds of Eve and Adam by Satan is separation: separation from Eden, separation from God, separation from one another. Consequently humanity was imprisoned, only to be set free by one who is to come, who was born, who resists temptation and conquers evil once and for all.

**40 Days to Fortification**

Our entire history is steeped in the battle against evil. We are similar to Jesus as we face temptations urging us to succumb to evil ways. During the 40 days spent in desert solitude, Jesus was tested by Satan three times, and three times Jesus refused the power, glory and honor of worldly pleasure. Rather, he opened the path of hope for our personal desert journey, reinforcing our call to remain close to the one who gave us life, trusting in his promises and forsaking evil.

**Prayer, Fasting & Sacrifice**

Lent is a time to fortify ourselves as faithful Christians in order to combat the evil which nips at our heels each day. These 40 days invite the faithful to prayer, fasting and sacrifice. We are “constantly being called by God to the mysterious encounter known as prayer” (Catechism #2567). Jesus prayed. He taught us how to pray alone and in community. It is in prayer where we converse with God, albeit in meditation, devotions, reading sacred Scripture, going to Mass or sitting in silence. And remember, God hears our prayers. All of them!

Fasting is foreign to many. Yet, those I know who practice this imitation of Christ express great joy and little anguish. Jesus refrained from food and drink while in the desert. This is recommended on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, as we significantly reduce the amount of food and drink consumed on these days. The purpose of fasting is to strengthen our spiritual life by emptying ourselves of “bread” and relying fully on God’s graces to be perfect “food” for our soul. What can you fast from this Lent in order to satisfy your “hunger” through God?

**Sacrifice**

The perfect sacrifice has come to us through Jesus. His passion and death opened the doors to heaven. Our sacrifices during Lent are ways to offer our deep gratitude to God for what we need, put pleasures to the side and offer reparations for sin. Offering a sacrifice is another way to release the world and grab on to God. What can you let go of in order to dedicate more time to do something for God?

**Transformed**

Why pray, fast and sacrifice? Simply put, when we put aside ourselves and commit our entire being to God we are transformed. A glimpse of the eternal rewards is revealed as Jesus is transfigured before Peter, James and John. The glory of God radiating from Christ unveils our heavenly destiny. We are made for heaven! But we also have a choice, which brings us back to Genesis: how strong are we at resisting temptation? Do I trust in God’s plan for me? Am I relying on God’s grace to satisfy my hungry heart? Do I trust in Jesus? Can I see the promise of joy through a desert of suffering?

Dou is the director of evangelization & catechesis for the Diocese of Baton Rouge.
Third Order of Mary carries out the mission of the Blessed Mother

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

(Second in a series)

It was a heaven-made connection that led to a closer relationship to Jesus through Mary, said Diana LeBlanc, a member of the Third Order of Mary (TOM).

After LeBlanc’s parents’ death, she wanted to use her home health experience as their caretaker to help someone “really in need.” A woman needed someone to help her take care of her mother, who had been bedridden for nine years because of a stroke that caused her health to deteriorate. LeBlanc met the woman’s mother, said, “This is what I want to do” and became her night sitter.

LeBlanc striving to make the woman’s quality of life better in the little over a year left before her passing. She began by playing “Doing it Their Way: Stations of the Cross,” by Father Jeff Bayhi, pastor of St. John the Baptist Church in Zachary, and singer Aaron Neville. The woman’s positive responses encouraged her to play other inspirational CDs and Cajun music as well as pray with the woman. The night before the woman died, LeBlanc, who was out of town at the time, said she had a vision in which the woman got up out of her bed, walked over to her and said, “I am going home.”

LeBlanc said she enjoyed the trips to the woman’s home, which had a peaceful atmosphere.

“I told her daughter I felt like I was going to a retreat,” said LeBlanc, who stated the home’s atmosphere was permeated with the Blessed Mother.

The woman’s daughter, who was a member of TOM, introduced her to the lay organization. According to LeBlanc, who serves as mistresses of novices for TOM, the order strengthens her to do many other ministries.

Some think it’s easy to be a Catholic, but it’s not,” she said. “We are held to a higher standard because often times the church is in defense of its teaching of its values and we have to stay grounded and rooted in the church’s teachings. One of the ways we can stay grounded and rooted is to be in a third order because it keeps in context what our mission and journey is. We have a mission. We are not just taking up space – if we are, we are not fulfilling our mission.”

She acknowledges the mission is challenging.

“If you’re not careful, if you don’t build yourself up and are always giving, you can really be drained. You reflourish your soul so you can go out and do your mission work and it’s not easy,” said LeBlanc.

One of the hardest ministries for LeBlanc is the prayer line at St. Joseph Cathedral in Baton Rouge.

“You realize there’s a real person on the other end of the prayer request because people are asking for prayers concerning alcoholism, drug abuse, child abuse or wounded warriors. That makes me so much more grateful that I am in a third order,” she said.

To join TOM, which is open to men and women of all stages of life, one must be recommended by a professed member of the order. After approval from the TOM council and chaplain, Msgr. Robert Bergreen, pastor of St. Mary of False River Church in New Roads, they will be accepted to become a member. Then they will receive instructions from the mistress of novices regarding their duties for profession.

“Have you to be in good standing with the church,” said LeBlanc. “That doesn’t mean you have to be a saint or perfect, just that you are willing to follow the rules and regulations of the church, because you are an example of the church; you are an extension of the church.”

There is reading of the “Imitation of Christ,” which is considered the next widely read devotional to the Bible, prayers, especially Marian-based prayers, daily praying of the rosary, with intentions for TOM members, and at least 15 minutes of daily meditation, said LeBlanc.

During formation, one is challenged to “let go” of worldly dispositions such as animosity, anger and fear, and to give their mind, body and spirit to God, said LeBlanc.

“We come from a worldly view. As Catholics we are called to step out into the deep,” she said. “During formation, it’s easy to backslide into old habits and you have to decide whether you are going to embrace this lifestyle and change your thinking and separate yourself from the worldly views and give to Caesar what is Caesar’s but to give to God what is God’s.”

At the end of the formation, one enters the order as a postulant in a ceremony.

“It’s very moving, very touching and I always cry because I have been along with them on their formation journey. It’s like rededicating yourself to your baptismal promises,” said LeBlanc.

She beamed when she noted her son and daughter-in-law will be entering TOM around Easter. She said she is proud to be part of their formation as well as the other TOM members, who influenced the couple to join their order by taking them “under their wings” especially when they lost their first child. They now have two children.

There is a TOM habit, a pale blue one with a simple straight-line white dress under it for women. It’s not mandatory for members to wear, but LeBlanc said she has the pattern for it and hopes to make some for those who would choose to wear it.

The truest habit of the TOM members, however, is their willingness to answer the call of social justice and “do the work of Mary.”

“It (TOM) has made me very aware of society’s needs and it makes me emboldened that I can make a difference,” said LeBlanc. “I am emboldened to make a difference. That’s why I am able to question my own behavior, my family’s behavior, society’s behavior. I feel it’s okay. That’s who we are as a Third Order of Mary.”

People interested in learning more about TOM are invited to attend one of its meetings on the second Sunday of each month, 3 p.m., at St. Agnes Church, 749 East Blvd., Baton Rouge.

Next: The Order of St. Francis Secular.

Join Father Matt Lorrain
of St. John the Baptist Church in Brusly
London & Country
September 22 – 30, 2017

Join one of our
Special Presentations
March 7 at
10:30 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.
at Pearson’s Travel World.

Patrick Ludvigsen
with Gloubus will be present to answer any questions.

Pearson’s Travel World
7949 Jefferson Hwy., Baton Rouge
225-926-3752
### Diocese of Baton Rouge Seminary Scholarship Funds

#### Contributions from October 2016 thru January 2017

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**Total for 2016-2017:** $3,059,591.63

#### Additional Scholarship Funds

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**Total for Additional Funds:** $1,395,816.35

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**Deacon Schlette dies**

Deacon Peter “Pete” B. Schlette Sr., passed away after a long illness at the age of 78.

Ordained a deacon for the Archdiocese of New Orleans in 1996, he later moved into the Diocese of Baton Rouge and served at Immaculate Conception Church in Denham Springs for 18 years.

Deacon Schlette served with the U.S. Coast Guard for 21 years, retiring as chief petty officer. During his career, he crossed the equator multiple times on icebreakers and has been to both the North and South Poles.

He was a chief radarman and an air traffic controller.

Because of his experience, Deacon Schlette was the chief petty officer selected for the implementation of the Vessel Traffic System on the Mississippi River in New Orleans, Morgan City and Vicksburg, Mississippi.

In addition, he held a 100 Ton Captain License.

Deacon Schlette is survived by his loving wife of 56 years, Ruth D. Schlette; children, Teresa F. Lawaii and her husband, Jason, Michael L. Schlette and his wife, Michelle, and Joanne S. Danna and her husband, Michael; grandchildren, Peter Schlette III, Grace Schlette, Keeno Fuqua Jr., Jessica Fuqua Mason, Ashley Schlette, Sarah Schlette, Landon Schlette, Matthew Danna, Katie Danna, and Josh Danna; great-grandchildren, Kaley Fuqua and Madilyn Fuqua; brother, Theodore “Ted” Schlette; and numerous nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his son, Peter B. Schlette Jr., granddaughter, Emma Schlette; son-in-law, Keeno Fuqua Sr.; great-granddaughter, Kenley Fuqua; parents, Wilbur and Nina Schlette; and brother Wilbur Schlette Jr.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated at Immaculate Conception on Feb. 25. Interment followed on the grounds of Evergreen Memorial Park with full military honors.
CCDBR official explains refugee status

She explained that an immigrant can return to his or her native country at any time. Generally, immigrants choose to leave their homeland for better work or to be near relatives or friends living in another country.

A refugee, however, is someone forced to flee his or her native country “in order to escape war, violence, persecution or a natural disaster,” said Dresley.

In most cases, refugees are afraid for their lives or the lives of their family, she explained, and while they are allowed to return to their native country with proper documentation, for many, going back to their homeland means difficult consequences, including certain death.

For some people who have lived their whole life in a stable country like America, the idea of living in fear can be difficult to understand. But in a country dealing with war or fighting among different political or religious factions, law and order may no longer exist, and groups that were once tolerant of each other may resort to violence instead.

Danger can also come from a natural disaster, Dresley said. She noted that in 2016, Hurricane Matthew, the category four storm that destroyed parts of Haiti, leaving behind widespread destruction in an already impoverished nation, forced many residents to seek basic necessities in another country.

According to statistics from the U.S. Department of State, the United States welcomed nearly 85,000 refugees in the fiscal year 2016. Roughly, 72 percent were women and children.

To qualify for refugee status, families or individuals must first leave their native country. Once in a new place, typically in a refugee camp, they can apply for refugee status through the United Nations Commission for Refugees, an international body in charge of protecting and assisting refugees.

If this commission determines refugee status is met, then the family or individual is referred to resettlement in a third country. If the United States is chosen, additional guidelines established under the Refugee Act of 1980 must be met.

The Refugee Act of 1980 was passed in the aftermath of the Vietnam War when thousands of people fled the brutal treatments of that country’s new government, and was intended to give more flexibility to the United States’ earlier Immigration and Nationality Act and the Migration and Refugee Assistance Act.

The U.S. process for accepting refugees involves a rigorous and often lengthy vetting process that includes the Department of Homeland Security, the FBI, the Department of Defense and multiple intelligence agencies.

In addition, certain health conditions, such as active TB and Hansen’s disease, will exclude a refugee from entering the United States.

When a refugee receives permission to come to America, groups like CCDBR assist with adjusting to cultural differences and creating a new life. Refugees have the same rights and responsibilities as regular U.S. citizens. They pay taxes and many are also obligated to pay back loans issued to them from the U.S. government for their travel expenses. Refugees, however, cannot vote unless they become citizens.

Since 2002, CCDBR has resettled 1,500 refugees in the Baton Rouge area, according to statistics on the agency’s website. Refugees have come from many countries, with many from Burma, Iraq and Somalia. Since October, 2016, CCDBR reported it assisted 20 refugees from overseas and 21 Cubans.
Distractions during prayer/Crediting parish with diocesan donation/Shopping on Sunday?

Q I have heard that it is sinful to let oneself be distracted in prayer. This makes sense to me as regards to prayers that are obligatory: e.g., Sunday Mass, the Divine Office for priests and religious or the penance assigned during confession.

But what if one is not required to say that prayer in the first place: the morning offering, for example, or weekday Mass? Would it be better not to say those prayers at all, because then there would be no sin?

And at what point do distractions become sinful — when they are intentional of course, but what about a quick thought regarding something I must remember to do when I get home from church?

Also, when I have a weighty decision to make or a stressful situation on my hands, I like to say the rosary because it seems to help me to think clearly and be calm. But should I not be using that time to think things through (in the context of prayer) to think things through? (Omaha, Nebraska)

Relax, and don’t be so tough on yourself. Distractions during prayer are not necessarily sinful even during prayers that are obligatory; they come to everyone, even to the saints, who have written often about this.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church recognizes the universality of the problem, calling distraction “the habitual difficulty in prayer” (No. 2729).

Purposely to allow one’s mind to wander during prayer onto non-spiritual paths would be wrong, and the distracted thought itself might be sinful: dwelling deliberately on thoughts of adulterous pleasure, for example, or thinking vindictive thoughts.

But much more often, the distraction is a neutral one morally – such as in the example you offer of thinking of something you need to do as soon as you get home. When distractions do occur, the strategy is simply to pause, refocus and move forward.

St. Paul of the Cross said, “Concerning distractions and temptations that occur during holy prayer, you don’t need to be the least bit disturbed. Withdraw completely into the upper part of your spirit to relate to God.”

As for your practice of “thinking things through” while you pray the rosary, I have no problem with that: You are using the soothing backdrop of the repeated words of prayer to commune with the Lord in a meditative way and to seek his guidance. Would it be appropriate for me to assign my contribution for our archbishop’s annual appeal to a nearby smaller church that I sometimes visit?

Our own parish always exceeds its obligation comfortably, while I suspect that the smaller parish is challenged to do so. (To be completely honest, I would probably join that other parish if it were a bit closer.) (Atlanta area, Georgia)

Q I attend a very large Catholic parish that has some 4,000 families and 10,000 parishioners. The “rules” of the church on Sunday shopping are appropriately short on detail; instead, they place the responsibility on individual Catholics to determine whether their Sunday activities impact the day’s primary purpose of rest and prayer.

The responsibility to attend Mass on the Sabbath is, of course, a serious obligation for every Catholic. As for activities during the rest of the day, here is the general guideline: The Code of Canon Law says that the faithful “are to abstain from those works and affairs which hinder the worship to be rendered to God, the joy proper to the Lord’s day, or the suitable relaxation of mind and body” (No. 1247).

In my mind, the deciding question about Sunday shopping ought to be this: How necessary is it? There is a big difference between dashing to a convenience store because you ran out of orange juice and making Sunday the shopping day for the rest of the week.

And you make a valid point about causing others (store clerks) to have to observe the Lord’s Day, or the seventh day (Sunday) as holy, a day of rest and worship, is it right to go shopping on Sunday (which means that store clerks have to work on that day)? After all, there are six other days to buy and sell. (Bedford, Virginia)

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Q I heartily endorse your idea and can speak from my own experience. In our diocese – and I suspect this is replicated widely – each parish is given a specific assessment for the annual diocesan appeal. If a parish does not make that figure during the campaign, it supplies the difference from its own parish funds.

But if it exceeds the assigned amount, 50 percent of the excess is rebated to the parish. In the parish from which I recently retired (after 24 years as pastor), parishioners were exceedingly generous and always pledged considerably more than the assessed figure.

More than once, a person who was enrolled in our parish but sometimes attended Mass elsewhere would ask if they could credit their bishops’ appeal donation to that other parish, knowing that it was struggling to make its quota.

I always encouraged them to do exactly that; the church is wider than one’s own parish, and blessings should be shared.

A

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Employee unification program helps serve local communities

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

“Happy New Year” and “Free Cabbage” read the signs held by members of the volunteer group #lettucehelp, who stood on the roadside in downtown Hammond the day before New Year’s Eve and handed out more than 500 pounds of cabbage. The group had been brainstorming ideas to take #lettucehelp further in the New Year at the Salad Station Corporate office in Hammond. Suddenly the idea came to give out cabbages to passersby. The members ran and got some poster boards, made signs, put on their “lettucehelp” T-shirts, jumped in the back of the pickup truck of their organization’s leader, Scott Henderson, and were soon handing out the “good luck” vegetable to people, said Haleigh Sharp, marketing director for The Salad Station.

The giveaway was a spur of the moment idea, but one that comes easily when people constantly look for ways to help others, said Sharp.

“We strive to serve our community. We call our volunteer platform for our team and family, #lettucehelp,” said Henderson, the 2017 distinguished graduate for St. Thomas Aquinas High School in Hammond. “We have raised money for Alzheimer’s, breast cancer, schools, the food bank, under privilege kids for school supplies, visited nursing homes for Christmas and participated in a number of fundraising runs. We are very proud of the generosity of our guests and team members."

Henderson’s sister, Amy Henderson Shaw, said she and Henderson developed #lettucehelp last year.

“Scott and I wanted a way to unite our employees from different markets in order to make a difference and show the community what our brand stands for,” said Shaw, who is head event coordinator.

“I love how rewarding it is to see our employees come together for a great cause and the good that we bring to the community." One of the events that had the most impact includes the walk to end Alzheimer’s, said Shaw.

“With the help of my mom, we created a coupon book (for businesses owned by the Hendersons) to sell to raise money for the Alzheimer’s foundation. By selling the books we were able to raise and donate $2,500. After losing my grandfather to Alzheimer’s disease, it was incredible to see my coworkers come together to help find a cure,” said Shaw.

Another event that has had a big impact is giving gifts to the residents at a Hammond nursing home, according to Shaw.

“Seeing the joy our small gifts brought to patients was awesome,” said Shaw. “I loved seeing how appreciative they were to our efforts.”

“I am so proud to be apart of the #lettucehelp group and an employee of a faith-based company.”

The nursing home visit is also particularly memorable for Kevin Laurent, who also helps coming up with ideas for the organization to give back.

“We felt it was a perfect way for us to end the year by visiting those who could be alone on this holiday, which should be filled with family and friends,” said Laurent. “Each store brought different items we could wrap and distribute to those living there.

“We went out in two teams. One team arrived at the Brookdale Memory Care Center in Mandeville. About 30 residents were sitting around a fireplace watching TV when we arrived. As a team we handed out presents and snacks and started to make conversation. As we were finishing up I challenged each team member to sit and talk with the residents for a few minutes, just getting to know them and wishing them Merry Christmas. This was one of the best experiences I’ve witnessed.”

He added, “Their willingness to serve and dive right in was humble for me. Not one employee shied away from the task and I watched every team member strike up a conversation with the residents. They probably won’t remember us as most of the residents had some form of dementia or Alzheimer’s, but for those few minutes they talked about who they were and their eyes lit up. Many residents even hugged us on the way out. As we left many team members were asking when we could return and I knew we built something special together. It was an emotional day, but those moments will always stick with me.”

People often respond to the organization helping them, said Laurent.

“At our Mandeville location, we received a ‘thank you’ card from a family who was struggling from the flood and were able to use the supplies we collected. It was a touching gesture. It is currently hanging up on our bulletin board and it reminds me and our team members there are opportunities everywhere and small acts of kindness can go a long way for anyone in need,” he said.

Handing out free cabbage to passersby to celebrate the new year were #lettucehelp team members, from left, Amy Henderson Shaw, Haleigh Sharp, Cindy Liuzza Henderson, Susan Nguyen and Virginia Pittman. Photo provided by Amy Henderson Shaw.

CELEBRATING MARRIAGE – St. Mark Church in Gonzales recently held its annual Honor Marriage evening. The event, which is held near Valentine’s Day, honors St. Mark parishioners that have been married for 15 years and longer. The evening began with a Mass which was followed by dinner and dancing. Each of the approximately 50 couples were presented with a certificate to honor their years of marriage. Photo provided by Mary Kruse.

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St. Joseph Altars scheduled throughout the Diocese of Baton Rouge

March 8
St. Thomas Aquinas High School
School Gym
14520 Voss Drive, Hammond
10 a.m. Altar open for viewing
10:30 a.m. Blessing of altar and rosary in Italian
Noon – 1 p.m. Students will view and eat from the altar
Grace Gambel 985-542-7662

March 12
Cypress Springs Mercedarian Prayer Center

Tree Care By... Free Estimates
LeBlanc’s
TREE & STUMP REMOVAL, INC.
LICENSED ARBORIST
2920 Myrtle Ave. • Baton Rouge, LA 70806
225-383-7316 Fully Insured

March 16
Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University Administration Building
5414 Britanny Drive, Baton Rouge
11:45 a.m. Blessing of altar
Sister Barbara Napoli OFS 225-202-0265

March 16 – 19
Ladies of Mater Dolorosa Church Community
Mater Dolorosa Church
KC Hall
232 Dileo Lane, Independence
Thursday: Food donations
Friday: Dressing of the altar
Saturday: Blessing of the altar following 4 p.m. Mass
Sunday: 10:30 a.m. Feeding of the saints
Noon Feeding of the public
4 p.m. St. Joseph Parade
Cheryl Santangelo

March 17 & 18
Immaculate Conception Church
865 Hatchell Lane, Denham Springs
Main Hall, enter administration building near flag pole
Friday: 7 p.m. Mass following blessing of altar in hall
Saturday: 11 a.m. Feeding of the saints and viewing
Noon meal open to public
Church office 225-665-5359

March 17 & 19
St. Joseph Altar Society
Our Lady of Pompeii Church
Pompeii Hall directly behind the church
4450 Hwy. 442, Tickfaw
Friday: 6 p.m. Blessing after stations of the cross followed by novena and viewing until 8 p.m.
Sunday: 10:35 viewing begins, rosary in Italian, feeding of the Saints
11 a.m. – 2 p.m. feeding of the public
Melanie Tallo 985-429-0100 or 985-351-7091
Deacon Al Levy 985-345-8957

March 18
St. Joseph Church
15719 LA Hwy. 16
French Settlement
5:30 p.m. Blessing and breaking of the bread with the Mass
Holy Family Church
Parish Hall
368 N. Jefferson Ave., Port Allen

March 18 & 19
Grandsons of Italy
Sacred Heart Church
2250 Main Street
Baton Rouge
Saturday: viewing
10:30 a.m. – 6:30 p.m.
4 p.m. Mass,
procession to Sacred Heart School Gym followed by the blessing of the altar
Italian cookies and wine will be served
Sunday: 12:30 p.m.
The Holy Family Tableau (ceremonial breaking of bread) followed by an Italian Feast will be served to public
Anthony Musso 225-769-3781, 225-936-1614
St. John the Evangelist Church
KC Hall
58715 Price Street, Plaquemine
Saturday: 4 p.m. Mass at the church followed by Blessing of Altar
Sunday: Noon at KC Hall
Betty Aucoin 225-687-2111

March 19
St. Joseph Society
St. Francis Church Parish Hall
888 W. 10th Street, Donaldsonville
10 a.m. Blessing of altar
10:30 a.m. Ritual of the saints
11:30 a.m. Feeding of the public from the altar and spaghetti with Italian gravy and Italian salad
Marvin Gros 225-717-3280
Holy Ghost St. Joseph Altar Society
Holy Ghost Church Parish Hall
601 N. Oak Street, Hammond
(Novena to St. Joseph begins March 10)
11 a.m. Feeding of the saints
Noon Feeding of the public
Chickie Gennerdo 985-345-1888
San Giuseppe Ladies
St. Ann Church Parish Hall
182 Church Street, Morganza
11 a.m. Mass
Noon Blessing of the altar and meal
Bonnie Francois 225-694-3593

March 20
St. Joseph Cathedral
Main at North streets, Baton Rouge
Noon Mass, blessing of altar and Lenten meal
Sheila G. Juneau 225-387-5928
Homeless find message of hope in Father Burns’ words

By Rachele Smith
The Catholic Commentator

Some six months ago, “Tony” moved to Baton Rouge from his hometown of New Orleans. As a youth, Tony was a high school football standout. He received a full scholarship to play ball at a small college in Arkansas, but homesick, he returned to the Crescent City shortly after enrolling.

Tony would go on to have different interests, meet new people and hold several jobs, but then something happened. Through a series of decisions he made, Tony is homeless.

Yet, despite his daily struggle, Tony keeps an eye on the positive. He sincerely believes in showing gratitude, something he found easy to do several weeks ago at the Bishop Ott Men’s Shelter.

“I was just really encouraged,” Tony said after listening to a Scripture reflection by Father Gerald Burns, a retired priest in the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

“I was able to relate to what he said about the heart of Christ; that he too was homeless during certain times. It helps to know that Christ knows what I’m going through,” he explained.

For Tony, listening and connecting with Father Burns was easy.

“When he talked about being poor in spirit and having a total dependence on God, just like a child, that’s me. I rely on God now more than ever, but even with riches you are still totally dependent on him. I understand that,” he said.

Connecting with people like Tony and others at the men’s shelter is not new for Father Burns. He has been offering reflection and spiritual counseling once a week (or as often as his schedule allows) for more than a year.

“We are so pleased that Father Burns can do this for us. The men receive so much from his generosity and knowing that he cares means so much,” said Michael Acalado, CEO of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, which operates the Bishop Ott Men’s Shelter as well as other ministries that help the needy.

For Father Burns, the feeling is mutual.

“A board member at St. Vincent de Paul for many years, Father Burns said he was helping with the planning of the organization’s 150th anniversary Mass when he realized he just needed more. No, he didn’t need more administrative or planning work (although he would gladly assist where ever he was needed).

“I told Michael I really needed to listen to Pope Francis’ example (and his call for mercy). I needed to be in touch with the people at St. Vincent. Somehow I needed to be in service directly to the people St. Vincent serve,” said Father Burns.

“Without even batting an eye, Michael knew exactly what I could do,” he explained, ultimately creating the Tuesday evening position.

Father Burns stated his reflections focus on Scripture, and he always gives “a cameo selection” of his Sunday homily. Typically, his talks last from two to three minutes “unless I get carried away, then it might go for five minutes, but it’s never really long,” he said, smiling.

Father Burns remarked that during his time at the shelter, he has met many men who have impressed and inspired him with their faith, prayer life and resilience. Most notably, he shared the story of a man who was released from prison and forced into homelessness after being diagnosed with cancer. According to Father Burns, the man had to ride to and from radiation treatments on the city bus. It was a difficult situation, to say the least, but eventually he regained employment, discovered his cancer was in remission, married and was able to create a better life for himself.

Stories like this and others that show the adaptability and endurance of the human spirit can also be empowering. That’s why Father Burns noted he and Acalado are working on the creation of a “success” group, one composed of formerly homeless men who have fought back, to inspire and educate others.

The group, however, will not take away from Father Burns’ present ministry at the men’s shelter. Not only is it something the retired priest enjoys doing (in addition to his wildlife photography) but it is also something that continues to give him, like Tony, hope.

“It doesn’t matter to me what religion these men are or if they have no religion. But what does matter, I feel, is for me to convince them that God loves them and they can have a relationship with God,” Father Burns said.
**Movie Reviews**

USCCB Office for Film & Broadcasting classifications:

- A-I – General patronage
- A-II – Adults and adolescents
- A-III – Adults
- A-IV – Adults, with reservations
- L – Limited adult audience
- O – Morally offensive

**A Cure for Wellness**

Creepy, but otherwise pointless horror exercise in which a Wall Street business executive (Dane DeHaan) is dispatched to a Swiss spa to convince a higher-ranking colleague (Harry Groener) who has mysteriously decided to remain there permanently that he must instead return to headquarters to sign off on a big pending merger. As the young wheeler-dealer eventually discovers, however, despite the soothing manner of the resort’s proprietor (Jason Isaacs), something is profoundly soothing about the place are remote. Working from a script by Justin Haythe, director Gore Verbinski effectively conjures up a sinister atmosphere. But as things go from unsettling to gothic and then become downright lurid via plot developments involving the hotelier’s daughter (Mia Goth), viewers will increasingly wonder why they’ve subjected themselves to this ultimately hellish, hallucination-ridden journey. In fact, as its logically unsatisfying wrap-up approaches, the film hovers permanently that he must instead return to headquarters to sign off on a big pending merger. As the young wheeler-dealer eventually discovers, however, despite the soothing manner of the resort’s proprietor (Jason Isaacs), something is profoundly soothing about the place are remote. Working from a script by Justin Haythe, director Gore Verbinski effectively conjures up a sinister atmosphere. But as things go from unsettling to gothic and then become downright lurid via plot developments involving the hotelier’s daughter (Mia Goth), viewers will increasingly wonder why they’ve subjected themselves to this ultimately hellish, hallucination-ridden journey. In fact, as its logically unsatisfying wrap-up approaches, the film hovers

**The Lego Batman Movie**

*Warner Bros.*

With his longtime adversary the Joker (voice of Zach Galifianakis) leading an army of bad guys in a bid to prove that he is Batman’s (voice of Will Arnett) most important enemy, the amusingly self-absorbed version of the Dark Knight first seen in 2014’s *The Lego Movie* will have to learn some lessons in humility, teamwork and emotional openness if the villains are to be vanquished. Specifically, the isolated, relationship-shunning Caped Crusader will have to accept the help of the trio of supporters who have rallied to his side. Fast-paced fun is the order of the day in director Chris McKay’s animated treat for viewers of almost every age. Still, scenes of danger and a bit of potty humor as well as a few joking turns of phrase designed for grownups suggest that small fry would best be left at home. Perilous situations, including explosions, a couple of instances each of vaguely curse language, scatological humor, mature wordplay. A-II; PG

**The Comedian**

*Sony Classics*

Mirthless story of an aging insult comic (Robert De Niro) who tries to revive his career and get out from under the burden of being best-known for his role in a catchphrase-laden 1980s sitcom. But his anger issues get in the way both at work and in his relationships (most significantly with girlfriend Leslie Mann). Director Taylor Hackford and a quartet of screenwriters capture a bickering, yet affectionate view of the business milieu. But in De Niro’s sour protagonist they have too unpleasant a character to sustain a compelling story. References to nonmarital sexual activity, occasional profanity, frequent rough language. A-III; R

**Fifty Shades Darker**

*Universal*

Sordid sequel in which a sadist billionaire (Jamie Dornan), yearning to revive his relationship with a book editor (Dakota Johnson) who doesn’t share his interest in dungeon doings, struggles to control his urges. Whether Mr. Kinky Boots can kick the habit is one of the least compelling questions imaginable and the nonsexual scenes with which director James Foley pads out his adaptation of E.L. James’ novel range from the boring to the ridiculous. So anyone with a higher interest than mere prurience will be disappointed. Excessive sexual content, including aberrant acts, graphic activity and much nudity, several uses of profanity, occasional rough and crude language. O; R

**Lion**

*Weinstein*

The incredible true story of Saroo Brierley (Dev Patel) and his 20-year odyssey to locate his birth mother (Priyanka Bose) in India, is retold in this uplifting and emotional film, directed by Garth Davis. As a 5-year-old boy, Saroo (Sunny Pawar) falls asleep in a boxcar and is transported 1,500 kilometers from home. Unable to remember his family name and home village, he is put up for adoption, and winds up in Australia in the care of a loving couple (Nicole Kidman and David Wenham). Yet, as he grows into manhood with a promising career and a girlfriend (Rooney Mara), he is haunted by his lost childhood, and sets out on an epic quest to retrace his long-ago train journey and locate his relatives. A celebration of family, the movie also sends a strong pro-life message by underscoring the joys and merits of adoption, and showing that a child can be loved and shared equally by two sets of parents. Unfortunately, the elements listed below preclude endorsement for younger viewers who might otherwise have profited from this touching narrative. Mature themes and two brief nongrafic nonmarital sex scenes. A-III; PG-13

**Rings**

*Paramount*

Third film in an American horror franchise based on a 1998 Japanese feature. The series concerns a spooky black-and-white video, viewers of which are doomed to die seven days after watching it unless they pass the curse on by exposing someone else to the images. Director F. Javier Gutierrez and screenwriters David Loucka, Jacob Estes and Akiva Goldsman turn up the psychological-thriller elements, having two of the latest victims of the footage (Matilda Lutz and Alex Roe) pursue the origins of its vengeful possessing spirit (Bonnie Morgan), a girl who perished after being thrown down a well. With gory sights kept mostly in check, many parents may consider the film acceptable for mature adolescents. Occult themes, some violence but with little blood, brief drug use, references to nonmarital sexual activity. A-III; PG-13

**Motion Picture Association of America ratings:**

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

When you don’t part the waters, I wish I could walk through
When you don’t give the answers as I cry out to you
I will trust, I will trust, I will trust in you

(Repeat refrain.)

You are my strength and comfort
You are my steady hand
You are my firm foundation, the rock on which I stand

(Repeat refrain twice.)

Your ways are always higher
Your plans are always good
There’s not a place where I’ll go, you’ve not already stood

Sung by Lauren Daigle | Copyright © 2015, Centricity Music

On The Record
Charlie Martin

We might even discover what we first felt as a loss is actually guidance toward a better situation. We learn the best path for our lives is not always immediately visible, and sometimes we walk down one only to be led to a different and better one.

How do we live by faith when we are not sure where our lives are headed?

As members of Jesus’ community, we strive to become the presence of God for all who need such love. This is what Jesus asked us to be for each member of God’s family. We will need to accept mystery in our lives. God’s view is bigger than our view. To accept this statement is to live by faith. May we truly help each say, “I will trust in you.”

MARTIN is an Indiana pastoral counselor who reviews current music for Catholic News Service. Write to: cmartin@hughes.net, or at: 7125 West CR, 200 South, Rockport, IN 47635, or like “Charlie Martin’s Today’s Music Columns” on Facebook.

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Men’s conference offers tips for spiritual battle plan

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Men of the Catholic Church must be willing to be soldiers on the frontline in the battle against enemies of the spiritual life, which include lust of the flesh, lust of the world and the pride of life.

Each person’s predominant fault, the area where one sins the most, falls into one of those three categories and is Satan’s weapon as he engages in his own battle of spiritual welfare on one’s soul. The only clear path to victory to answer that call is through prayer, which paves the way to eternal salvation.

That was the message of inspiration delivered by several speakers during the inaugural Men of the Immaculata Men’s Conference on Feb. 11 at Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Baton Rouge. Nearly 600 attended the informative, devotional and at times humorous conference, which had as its theme, “A Call to Battle: Challenging Every Man to Fight for Holiness.”

“We had been praying for the Holy Spirit to bless the event and the turnout of over 600 men participating in the conference with humble and receptive hearts was beyond our expectations,” said an ebullient Hunter Harding, one of the event’s organizers and a member of the Men of the Immaculata.

The event featured an impressive lineup of speakers that touched on several tenets of Catholicism and included clergy members, lay Catholics and even a short talk by chef John Folse.

“(The speakers) understood the hunger we have for solid, traditional teaching and made themselves available for the event,” Harding said. “We prayed fervently as a group over the focus and direction for the conference and these speakers seemed like a great fit.”

The day also included a welcoming address by Bishop Robert W. Muench, eucharistic adoration, vendors, exhibitors, Mass and lunch prepared by Folse.

“The battle begins at the level of your heart,” Mark Harfiel, the national program director for That Man is You men’s program in Houston and a 2004 graduate of Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio, said. “The starting point of our spiritual life is holy desire. What stands in the way between our holy desire and actually becoming a saint?”

“(Satan) is out there to suffocate it, choke it, steal those desires out of your heart.”

Harfiel said holy desire is given by Christ but men must search their own hearts to determine what those desires might be. He said Satan is constantly trying to steal those holy desires, creating daily skirmishes on the spiritual battleground.

“You will win some and lose some,” he said. “Don’t beat yourself up when you lose battles. You want to get strength from God’s grace against those things.”

Harfiel said sins of the flesh include being sexually unfaithful, viewing pornography, visiting a topless bar, flirting with women other than your significant other, an unhealthy diet or no exercise and the abuse of drugs and alcohol.

He said such things as giving less than 10 percent of one’s salary to the church, gossiping, working on Sundays, missing dinner with the family at least twice a week because of work and spending more time viewing media devices than on one’s spiritual life make up sins of the world.

Sins of conscience might include missing Mass on Sunday and not spending time in daily prayer.

Father Michael Champagne, who is a traveling priest throughout southern Louisiana in his converted ambulance and mobile confessional and heads the Community of Jesus Crucified in St. Martinville, said men are needed in the battle of the church. He said all men are sons of God, and that “we know what it’s like to be lost,” using the parable of the prodigal son as an example.

“The good news is we are sick and we get to know the doctor (Christ) pretty well,” he said.

Father Champagne said all men are created in God’s image and likeness but even when losing the likeness through sin, the image is retained with “our back to the light.” He said one’s shadow gets longer and longer, and soon “we are afraid of our own shadow because the light is behind us. The prodigal son is lost.”

“There is always famine when we lose God,” he added. “And the pain comes when we turn our back on God.”

In that dank cell, however, Father Champagne called the Holy Spirit the “finger of God,” always giving a push, pointing out what is contrary to life.

“He is restoring you. Love is what removes shame,” he said.

He urged those in attendance to frequent confession, at least monthly. Father Champagne said absolution removes guilt and offers medicinal and sanctifying grace.

“Be men of the sacrament of confession,” he added. “Don’t just go once a year. If you get back to confession, you will become saints. We just don’t need more men in the church, we need more saints.”

Renowned national author and professional of sacred Scripture at Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans Dr. Brant Pitre kicked off the conference by explaining the Eucharist is the source and summit of men’s lives. He added that anyone wanting to understand Catholicism must first understand the Old Testament. He said the first and more important sign of the Eucharist in the Old Testament is the Passover and explained how God told the Israelites to eat unleavened bread. Moving forward to the New Testament, Pitre called the Lord’s Supper the new manna from heaven and the food for eternal life.

Harfiel closed the conference by offering several tips on how to develop a spiritual battle plan, essentially breaking them down into encountering Christ, identifying enemies, frequently examining one’s conscience, and re-evaluating one’s desires.

“You still can’t do it on your own,” he said. “Without Jesus Christ, you can’t do it alone.”

Harding said he was encouraged by the response of those in attendance and was humbled to have been part of the actualization of years worth of intercessory prayer for the ministry to bear fruit in the hearts of men.

“Our primary goal is greater holiness and deeper conversion to the most Sacred Heart of Jesus, as evidenced through action in our own hearts, our families, our church parishes and the community at large,” he said, adding that providing events filled with the Holy Spirit to encourage men to be active in their faith is the charism of the Men of the Immaculata.

The 2018 conference is scheduled Feb. 17, which falls on the first weekend of Lent.
MBS students produce advertising campaign to help the needy

By Rachele Smith
The Catholic Commentator

They cheered; they clapped; they even spelled out words “D to the O to the N-A-T-E.”

And in the end, Ainsley Lagarde, Giulia Arion and Reese Orrso, third-grade students at Most Blessed Sacrament School in Baton Rouge, used a tagline that would make any advertising exec proud, “Don’t be greedy, help the needy.”

The students’ commercial, delivered “live” during the school’s morning announcements, was just one of many student-produced advertising campaigns designed to not only encourage the MBS school community to donate needed items to the Bishop Ott Men’s Shelter, but to also teach third-grade students the importance of serving others.

“It’s all about our faith,” said David Planche, religion coordinator at Most Blessed Sacrament Church & School.

By helping to provide items, such as toothpaste, shampoo and other needed toiletries, Planche said, the children are learning that everyone is called to love and serve God’s family.

“They begin to understand that they can help; that what they do can change someone’s life,” said Roslyn Landry, a third-grade teacher at the school.

“These items, like toothpaste and shaving cream, help make someone feel better. They’re not just a bottle of something. They make others feel better, and that helps them (the homeless men) know that someone cares. It can really change a life,” she added.

But the commercials are just the start of the students’ lessons, said Landry.

She explained that the theme of helping others is incorporated all year throughout the third-grade curriculum with many lessons tied into academic subjects, such as a unit on persuasive writing that was used in writing those morning commercials.

Landry noted the lessons reach a pinnacle during the students’ annual retreat, held this year on Feb. 8, where a special project was completed.

“We made soup and homemade bread for the men during our retreat,” said Landry, adding the third graders followed a tradition of preparing dinner for the homeless men that began in the early 1990s at the school.

“We have this down to a science now,” laughed Planche, who said that each grade at MBS has an assigned age-appropriate service ministry, all designed to showcase the many faces of God’s family.

As the third graders and their teachers, Landy and Lesley Cranow, gathered for this year’s retreat, Planche started the cooking segment just like in years past: with prayer.

“Lord, we ask you to bless this soup. We know that God loves everyone, and we know that it is so important that we help these men,” he began as students and parent volunteers extended their hands in prayer over two large, but empty soup pots.

By the end of the afternoon, however, each pot was filled to capacity as one by one the students carefully added and stirred together all of the ingredients of a hearty soup, including green beans, carrots, tomatoes and other vegetables as well as several pounds of stew meat (cooked in advance by Landry’s mom). Alongside the soup making process, other students prepared and kneaded six loaves of bread, making sure they were ready for parent volunteers to bring home and bake.

Once all of the food was completely prepared, it was packed and transported to Bishop Ott Men’s Shelter by Michael Acaldo, CEO of St. Vincent de Paul Society.

Acaldo said he thanked the students for their hard work and reminded them that what they do really matters. He added that many of the students and their parents also came to the shelter to help serve the soup and bread.

“This is faith in action,” Acaldo said, noting that getting children involved in ministry is important because it develops a lifetime of service and an appreciation of why it is important to love and help one another.

Acaldo explained when he picked up the food at MBS, he asked the students why they thought it was important to prepare the meal and collect toiletries for the men at the shelter.

“The students responded, ‘Because this is what God calls us to do,’” said Acaldo.

“They get it. These kids are 8- to 9-years-old, and they are living their faith. Now, that’s just beautiful,” he added.

For parents wanting to add the beauty of service to their own family life, especially during Lent, Acaldo said there are many opportunities available at St. Vincent de Paul. He recommended preparing a meal as a family to share with the homeless men or the women and children at the Sweet Dreams shelter, spearheading a collection drive of needed items or participating in the annual “Build a Basket” ministry, an effort that is very popular this time of the year, especially with younger children.

“We also want to encourage families to remember St. Vincent de Paul and all of the folks that we serve with prayer. Prayer is so important and it is especially important to be remembered in someone else’s prayers when you are lonely and might not have anyone to pray for,” Acaldo said.

Hospice is About Living

- We rely upon the intercession of our Blessed Mother to assist us in imitating the healing ministry of Jesus Christ as we care for terminally ill patients and their families.
- We call forth the compassion and kindness of our staff, who serve in this health care ministry, to respond to the physical, spiritual and emotional needs of our patients and their families.
- We believe in the sacredness of life from conception to natural death, and we devote ourselves to supporting patients and families through the dying process at the end of life’s journey on this earth and new life in eternity.

Notre Dame Hospice does not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, disability or age in admission, treatment, ability to pay, or participation in its programs, services and activities, or in employment.
Following the morning session, youth attended workshops and played games. The sacrament of reconciliation was also offered periodically during the event.

In her afternoon talk, Bielski said Satan disrupted God’s story by inserting his own, leading humanity’s brokenness. Bielski said while the heavenly promises of Scripture passages and God’s desire for them to have a beautiful, holy life are true, there is the reality of brokenness. She said brokenness stems from Adam and Eve’s disobedience.

“The fall. What went wrong with the story?” asked Bielski. “I want to talk about what happened. This world is imperfect. It’s upside down. People don’t know the truth.”

She asked the attendees to list ways they have noticed brokenness in their community. The youth responded with such things as relationships at school, dating relationships and between neighbors.

Speaking of God’s grace, Bielski said without brokenness, they wouldn’t know why Christ came. She said Satan questioned God’s case for humanity when he asked Eve, “Did God really say, ‘You shall not eat from any of the trees in the garden?’” He then interlepted the lie, “You certainly will not die! God knows well that when you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods, who know good and evil.”

The devil still whispers lies into people’s ears to separate them from God, stated Bielski. The biggest lie, she said, is God does not love them and their worthiness is based on their beauty, what they own, their accomplishments and other worldly measuring sticks.

“The culture says stay behind your performance,…” “We’re so focused on behavior and not relationships,” said Bielski.

In struggling to be great, people don’t know they are good in God’s eyes, Bielski said. The biggest lie, she said, is God does not love them, and they are not important, calls them to be holy and supports them in their hopes and dreams.

“Have faith in yourselves,” the bishop said. “That doesn’t mean you are the greatest gift to the world, but you are a unique gift to the world.”

At the end of Mass, Father Andrew Merrick, director of vocations for the Diocese of Baton Rouge and parochial vicar for Christ the King Church and Catholic Student Center in Baton Rouge, urged youth who feel God may be opened and you will be like gods, who know good and evil.”

The final session focused on the youth’s journey back to unity with the Father through the redemptive work of Jesus, which was highlighted by a humorous adoration. Cooper Ray and his band led praise and adoration music.

“We’re so focused on behavior and not relationships,” said Bielski.

The atmosphere and messages helped reinforce the theme of the day, said conference attendees.

“They are people having fun,” said Isaac Winders, a mem-

ber of the youth group at Immaculate Concep-

tion Church in Baton Rouge, who partially enjoyed the praise and worship. “It was great for people to enjoy themselves and learn what their faith is all about.”

Corry Brust, youth director at Holy Ghost Church in Hammond, said Bielski’s messages and the presenta-

tions showed him that people working together can get much more accomplished, keep each other motivated, and make changes when needed.

“It’s important to keep going and not give up,” said Brust.
The Diocese of Baton Rouge has thirty schools in eight civil parishes, with strong Catholic identity the focus in all schools. The district is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and standardized test scores are above state and national averages.

Catholic schools in the Diocese of Baton Rouge
Evangelize Hearts, Educate Minds, Encourage Talent and Embrace the Future

St. Jude the Apostle School provides Catholic formation to approximately 600 students in Grades PK4 – 8. Founded in 1983, the school strives to provide a Catholic family environment dedicated to the formation of each student’s relationship with Christ through faith, academics, and excellence.

Applicants must meet the following criteria:
– Practicing Catholic
– Minimum of 5 years of Teaching or School Administration Experience
– Demonstrated Leadership Ability
– Master’s Degree, Preferably in Education
– Must be Available on or before July 1, 2017

Mail resume, copies of all college transcript(s) showing degrees, and three letters of recommendation to
St. Jude the Apostle Principal Search
Diocese of Baton Rouge
Catholic Schools Office
P.O. Box 2028
Baton Rouge, LA 70821-2028

Deadline for application: March 31, 2017

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

TOOTH TROUBLES – Acadian Ambulance EMT Andy LeFebvre, left, examines Thomas Brauner, right, a kindergarten student at Sacred Heart of Jesus School in Baton Rouge. LeFebvre, a 1966 graduate of the school, was on campus to discuss health and safety issues with pre-kindergarten through fifth-grade students when Thomas lost a tooth. No first aid was required. Photo provided by Lisa Cosse | Sacred Heart School

DUKE QUALIFIERS – Several seventh-grade students at Holy Ghost School in Hammond qualified for the Duke University Talent Identification Program based upon their standardized test scores and were invited to take the ACT or SAT, the same tests taken by high school students for college admission. They are, front row from left, Jacob Farrell, Madison Templet, Sarah Graziano, Parker Perrilloux and Kaitlyn LeBlanc; back row from left, Jake Slaton, Braden Moore, Nathan Drummond and Nicholas Faulk. Photo provided by Cindy Wagner | Holy Ghost School

FINALISTS NAMED – Nine Catholic High School seniors have been named National Merit Scholarship finalists for 2017. They are, kneeling from left, Nicholas Mueller, Andrew Ford, Michael Krysztofowicz and Jordan LeBas, and standing, from left, Dominic Maggio, Brian Long, Andrew Schoonmaker, Harold Miller and Matthew Berdon. The students were selected from a nationwide pool of 16,000 semifinalists, representing less than one percent of U.S. high school seniors. As National Merit Scholarship finalists, they have the opportunity to compete for some 7,500 National Merit Scholarships worth more than $33 million to be awarded later this spring. Photo provided by Richard Beaugh | Catholic High School

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March 3, 2017
Retreat centers located in the Diocese of Baton Rouge

**Bishop Robert E. Tracy Center**
Baton Rouge

The Bishop Robert E. Tracy Center is available for spiritual renewal and growth, professional training and adult and youth formation. As part of the Catholic Life Center, the Tracy Center can provide space for day and overnight retreats and conferences.

The three-story overnight facility has 30 sleeping rooms. Each of 24 rooms can accommodate up to four people. Five of the six suites consist of a bedroom with two single beds (one king if beds are joined) and a sitting room with two sofa sleepers. The smaller suite has one bedroom with two single beds and a love seat and chair in the sitting area. All rooms have a private bath.

The Westerfield Conference Center, adjacent to the overnight facility, is a state-of-the-art meeting facility with audio/visual technology. The conference center provides space for 120 people or can be divided into three separate meeting areas for smaller groups.

The Tracy Center Education Building has eight rooms available for day retreats, workshops or breakout sessions. Also available are two chapels, a theatre with fixed-style seating for 196, a ballroom that can seat up to 500 people and three dining rooms. A full-time kitchen staff provides all meals and snacks.

The Tracy Center welcomes private groups, prayer groups, small Christian communities and Bible-study groups. Though there is no spiritual director on staff, retreatants may bring their own director.

Our office hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and tours of the facilities are available by appointment. Please visit us at website or on Facebook under The Tracy Center.

Phone 225-242-0222; website tracycenter.org; email tracycenter@diohr.org; mailing address P. O. Box 2028, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-2028.

Directions: I-10 to Acadian Thruway exit; go north 3/4 of a mile. The Catholic Life Center and Bishop Robert E. Tracy Center are on the left.

**Magnificat Center of the Holy Spirit**
Ponchatoula

Magnificat Center of the Holy Spirit provides a relaxed setting for all types of retreats.

Opened in 1982 and located in the pine forest of the Florida Parishes, the center has 30 acres of wooded grounds for inspirational walks and porches for quiet reflection as well as outside stations of the cross.

The center offers a conference room with seating for up to 100 people, a dining hall and a small chapel in the main building. Overnight housing for retreat-
Retreat centers located outside the Diocese of Baton Rouge

Archdiocese of New Orleans Retreat Center
Metairie

The Archdiocese of New Orleans Retreat Center, dedicated to Our Lady of the Cenacle, continues the tradition of the Cenacle Sisters begun in 1958 of providing a place to nurture the soul. Its location on the south shore of Lake Pontchartrain in Metairie offers a serene environment for spiritual contemplation.

The center has a full schedule of weekend retreats and weekday Days of Prayer. You may view the details of the offerings at retreats.arch-no.org. Please consider attending a retreat or Day of Prayer that most closely fits your spiritual need.

The Retreat Center is also available as a venue to host events for faith-based groups including overnight retreats, days of prayer or staff reflection days.

Located about an hour east of Baton Rouge, 15 minutes west of New Orleans, the retreat center has a chapel, dining room with buffet-style meals, a meeting hall, a library, a large parlor and several breakout rooms. The 12-landscaped acres offer grounds conducive to prayer and reflection that nurture spiritual lives.

For more information, call 504-887-1420 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Email retreats@arch-no.org; website retreats.arch-no.org; 5500 St. Mary St., Metairie, LA 70006.

We welcome you to draw near to God as you experience the peace and serenity that the Retreat Center has to offer.

Christian Life Center
St. Benedict

Located four miles north of Covington on the grounds of St. Joseph Abbey, the Christian Life Center is open to individuals and groups seeking peace and recollection in a monastic setting suitable to their spirituality.

St. Joseph Abbey is home to the Benedictine monks, who conduct Retreat League Weekends approximately 26 times per year for men, women and married couples. On the remaining weekends and during the week, the Christian Life Center is open to groups for religious, educational and charitable purposes.

The center has accommodations for 41 persons in modest but comfortable private rooms with private baths. Guest rooms, a chapel, a library and a dining room are located in the center. The larger St. Joseph Abbey Church is located on the grounds.

The 1,200 acres of pined woods and tranquil ponds offer retreatants the opportunity for quiet and reflective leisure. The center strives to continue the tradition set down more than 14 centuries ago by St. Benedict, who believed that the stranger or guest who comes to the monastery gate is to be received as Christ, but, it reserves the right to decide which programs meet the stated goals of the facility.

Phone 985-892-3473; website saintjosephabbe.com/clc; email clc@sjac.edu; location 75376 River Road, St. Benedict, LA; mailing address Christian Life Center, St. Joseph Abbey, St. Benedict, LA 70457.

Directions: Take I-12 to Exit 63-B Covington (U.S. Hwy. 190) north; continue past Hwy. 437 to Hwy. 25 (traffic light); continue north on Hwy. 25 about 300 yards; turn right on Airport Road and continue to the stop sign; turn left onto River Road; travel to the sign for St. Joseph Abbey and turn right onto the bridge.

Carmelite Spirituality Center
Lacombe

Cradled among 72 acres of towering pine trees, a picturesque lake and trails slicing through the property, the Carmelite Spirituality Center in Lacombe offers retreats to people of all faiths.

The center, which opened in 2005, is operated by the Sisters of Mount Carmel. The center offers monthly mornings of prayer, directed and guided retreats, private groups, parish retreats, spiritual workshop and even the ability to design your own program.

Overnight facilities accommodating up to 50 people in semi-private and private rooms are available as well as two cottages. Along with the piney woods, the grounds include a swimming pool, library and provides an idyllic venue for reflection and prayer.

While enjoying a meal from the full-service kitchen, diners can bask in a beautiful view of the azalea-lined patio, which nudges up against the dining room.

The library contains numerous resources and can also serve as a meeting room. The chapel can seat up to 50 people comfortably.

Phone 985-882-7579 or 985-264-074; website carmeltesspirituality.org; email carmeltesspirituality.org; P.O. Drawer D, Grand Coteau, LA 70541-0743. Directions: From I-12 west take Exit 74 (LA Hwy. 434), turn toward Lacombe. Follow on LA Hwy. 434 to U.S. Hwy 190. At round-about, take first right and cross bridge over Bayou Lacombe. Take first right at Davis Avenue which becomes Fish Hatchery Road (Capital One Bank is the landmark). Proceed 1.9 miles and the center is on the right.

Jesuit Spirituality Center
Grand Coteau

The Jesuit Spirituality Center located in the heart of Acadia, 11 miles north of Lafayette on I-49, is open to men and women of all faiths.

The former St. Charles College became the Jesuit Novitiate in 1922 and a retreat center in 1972, providing a quiet and restful environment for those seeking to listen and respond to God with generosity and openness through the experience of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola.

The century-old building, located on 900 acres of farmland, has undergone a complete interior and exterior renovation. It now provides 33 rooms with private baths and individual air control, as well as new furnishings.

Year-round offerings of three-, five-, eight- and 30-day individually directed retreats, and a variety of weekend programs and retreats, are scheduled throughout the center.

An individually directed retreat differs from more common group or preained retreat in that the retreatant meets privately each day with a spiritual director. In these sessions, the director listens to the retreatant’s description of what has happened in prayer since the day before and then selects additional exercises and Scripture passages to assist the Retreatant in the journey of faith as a companion of Jesus.

The center has bicycle and walking paths and roads, several chapels, a bookstore and a large meeting room that can accommodate up to 50 people.

Phone 337-662-5251 Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. for more information or to request a brochure detailing upcoming events; website jesuitspiritualitycenter.org; email office@jesuitspiritualitycenter.org; mailing address St. Charles College, P.O. Box C, Grand Coteau, LA 70541-1003.

Directions: 1-10 west to I-49 north at Lafayette; about 10 miles to the Sunset/Grand Coteau Exit 11 (LA Hwy. 93); turn right immediately and proceed over bridge.

Our Lady of the Oaks Retreat House
Jesuit Fathers and Lay Associates

Weekend and Mid-Week Retreats
For Men, Women and Married Couples

For more information, visit our website or contact
Phone: 337-662-5410 • Fax 337-662-5331
www.ourladyoftheoaks.com
Email: oloaks@centurytel.net
P. O. Drawer D, Grand Coteau, LA 70541

SEE OUTSIDE PAGE 19
right and follow Martin Luther King Drive (LA Hwy. 93). The center is on the left, at 313 M. L. K. Dr.

Our Lady of the Oaks Retreat House
Grand Coteau
Our Lady of the Oaks Retreat House was built by the Diocese of Lafayette in 1938 and was donated to the Society of Jesus. The Jesuits have administered and cared for the house since that time. For more than 70 years, this oasis provides a retreat to explore nearby.

Based on the teachings of St. Ignatius of Loyola, a 15th century Basque saint and mentor to the Jesuits, Our Lady of the Oaks Retreat House offers conference style retreats for men, women and couples. These retreats, directed by Jesuit priests and thoroughly trained lay directors, are based on St. Ignatius of Loyola’s famous Spiritual Exercises. Mass, reconciliation, stations of the cross and the rosary are also featured during the retreat experience. The room capacity is 51 and most of the rooms have private baths. A gracious library, newly renovated chapel and colorfully landscaped grounds provide the backdrop for wonderful retreats. Also available is a private visit chapel that many enjoy. Meal service is available.

Built in Spanish mission style, the facility features an enclosed courtyard with the peaceful sounds of a flowing fountain and lots of seating area. Old oaks grace this central patio and squirrels and birds make themselves at home — to the delight of those who visit. There are many vistas to explore nearby.

For more information about the center and programs available, call Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Phone 337-662-5410; website ourladyoftheoaks.com; email oloaks@centurytel.net; mailing address P. O. Drawer D, Grand Coteau, LA 70541.

Directions: From Baton Rouge take I-10 to Lafayette; take I-49 north; go approximately 12 miles to Sunset/Grand Coteau exit 11 (Hwy. 93); turn right at the exit and go about 2 blocks; turn right on Martin Luther King Drive; go two blocks and turn left at the traffic light; Our Lady of the Oaks Retreat House entrance is the third driveway to the right, past the church and school.

Prairie Ronde Cursillo Center
Opelousas
Prairie Ronde Cursillo Center is open on weekends for Catholic men and women only. Cursillo means a short course in Christianity. The Cursillos are scheduled for men and for women on separate weekends throughout the year. Overnight facilities are available for up to 60 people in a dormitory-type setting, with shared bathrooms and showers. Separate housing is available for priests or deacons leading retreats. There is a chapel and a bookstore with a vast selection of books for reading. Handicapped facilities are available. Each person will need a sponsor for the weekend. The center can help with a sponsor. The local contacts to assist with that are Carla James 225-229-5510; or Linda Daigle 225-627-6448.

Phone 337-543-7425; website whowillisit.com; mailing address 3651 LA Hwy. 104, Opelousas, LA 70570-1808.

Rev. William Kelley Retreat Center
Bay St. Louis, Mississippi
The Rev. William Kelley Retreat Center in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi features 55 acres for peaceful reflection, located a block off the Bay of St. Louis. The center, which is operated by the Divine Word Missionaries, is available for lay people, clergy, religious, singles and married persons.

The center offers 30 rooms with two beds in each room with private bathrooms. Some additional housing is available if needed.

The Tracy Center
Day or Overnight Retreat Center
YOUTH & ADULT FORMATION - RENEWAL

Join us for a weekend of spiritual renewal . . .

March 8-10
God’s Power Within Us
Rev. Paul Hart

Tuesday, March 14
Day of Prayer - Praying with Lenten Scriptural Readings
Archbishop Alfred Hughes

Thursday, March 16
Becoming a Woman of Faith
Rev. Dan Doersey

March 17-19
Forgotten Among the Lilies: Learning to Love Beyond Our Fears
Rev. Donald Blanchard

March 24-26
The Passion and Death of Jesus Christ
Rev. Joe Nausal

March 29-31
Role Models: Mentors for Mercy and Mission
Rev. Joe Nausal

The Tracy Center
5500 St. Mary Street. Metairie, LA 70006
Call Susan Halligan (504) 267-9604 * retreat.arch-no.org
Toll-free number 1-800-937-9170

dclement@diobr.org    eldringhoff@diobr.org
www.tracycenter.org    www.facebook.com/thetracycenter
1800 South Acadian Thruway, Baton Rouge, Louisiana
Phone: 225-242-0222
**Spirtual Retreats**

March 3, 2017

Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.  

Isaiah 41:10

**Manresa House of Retreats**

Manresa House of Retreats opened in 1929 as a retreat center for men. Since then, the Jesuit-run center has become a favorite retreat facility for men in the south. Manresa sits on 130 wooded acres along the Mississippi River.

Manresa offers sleeping accommodations for 111, all having private bath facilities, a main chapel and four reflection chapels, a library, gardens and shrines.

All retreats are in the manner of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola.

While most of the retreats are preached retreats for men, some spaces are available for individually directed retreats for men and women.

For more information, call between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Phone: 225-772-9431; website manresala.org; location 5858 LA Hwy. 44, Convent; mailing address P.O. Box 89, Convent, LA 70723-0089.

Directions: I-10 to Sorrento/Tickfaw; take exit 36 Tickfaw/LA 44; turn left on Hwy 442 west; proceed 0.8 miles to Antioch Road; take right and go 0.7 miles; the center is on the right.

**Rosaryville Spirit Life Center**

Rosaryville Spirit Life Center is located approximately 45 miles east of Baton Rouge off of LA Hwy. 22 in Ponchatoula. Situated on 500-manicured acres of a 1,700-acre tract, it is a place for renewal of spirit, mind and body. Visitors can stroll the beautiful grounds, tour the facilities and see the picnic area complete with tables, pool and bathhouse. Beach and召开 of trees along the meditation path stand outdoor shrines, grottos and stations of the cross. There is also a covered dock on the two-acre pond, a perfect place for reflection.

Rosaryville is staffed by the Dominican Sisters of Peace, formerly the Congregation of St. Mary, and their lay colleagues. Rosaryville Spirit Life Center opened in 1981, when the community of professes sisters in residence returned to a newly renovated motherhouse in New Orleans. It was at this time the congregation began its ministry of hosting and/or sponsoring retreats, days of prayer, workshops and other activities for religious, clergy and laity.

Rosary Hall, erected in 1955, is a three-story building. On the first floor are offices, an informal gathering area, three dining rooms and two kitchens. On the second floor is a library, an audio-visual center, a small conference room, a suite for visiting retreat directors, the Holy Rosary Chapel and a smaller area, the Upper Room that may be used for workshops and/or conferences for groups from 35 to 50 people. On the third floor are eight semi-private rooms and a private bath. St. John Hall, erected in 1966, is adjacent to Rosary Hall and houses a large conference room, a small parlor, the gift shop, the massage therapy room and 34 private and semi-private bedrooms.

Kateri Hall has eight dormitory rooms with bunk beds. Five rooms can sleep eight people. A main chapel and four reflection chapels, a library, gardens and shrines.

All retreats are in the manner of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola.

While most of the retreats are preached retreats for men, some spaces are available for individually directed retreats for men and women.

For more information, call between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Phone: 985-782-9431; website manresala.org; location 5858 LA Hwy. 44, Convent; mailing address P.O. Box 89, Convent, LA 70723-0089.

Directions: I-10 to Sorrento/Tickfaw; take exit 36 Tickfaw/LA 44; turn left on Hwy 442 west; proceed 0.8 miles to Antioch Road; take right and go 0.7 miles; the center is on the right.

**Our Lady of the Way**

DIOCESE ▼

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each, two rooms can sleep 10 each, and the one remaining room can sleep four. The hall has a spacious recreation/conference room and separate renovated bathrooms with showers for boys and girls. It is ideal for youth groups and Rosaryville’s Camp Kateri for boys and girls each summer. There is also a chapel named Queen of the Most Holy Rosary that can hold about 80 retreatants. There is also a sports court adjacent to Kateri Hall as well as ample space for outdoor games.

Shalom House is a one-story, self-contained hermitage. It has sleeping capacity for six or more, a fully equipped kitchen, two bathrooms, washer/dryer and large worktable. It is ideal for those seeking an extended private retreat or for small groups needing a meeting facility.

Rosaryville hosts retreats, conferences and events planned by church and civic organizations. It also sponsors retreats, workshops, prayer days as well as directed and/or individual retreats.

Rosaryville Retreat Center offers a new Memorial Cemetery to serve all families with both mausoleum and in-ground availability.

Massage therapy and individual spiritual direction are two programs offered by Sister Mary Noel OP, who is a nationally certified massage therapist and a spiritual director.

Phone 225-294-5039; email scallais@oppeace.org; website rosaryvillela.com; mailing address 39003 Rosaryville Road, Ponchatoula, LA 70454.

Directions: 1-12 to Pumpkin Center exit 35; turn south; at Hwy. 22 turn left; go two miles to Rosaryville Road; turn right, go one mile to the Rosaryville gate.

St. Joseph Spirituality Center
Baton Rouge

To awaken and deepen spirituality to impact our world is the mission of the St. Joseph Spirituality Center, a sponsored ministry of the Congregation of St. Joseph.

Faithful who feel growth in their spiritual life through the integration of spirituality with social responsibility are welcome to join in conversations, companionship and activities. The Spirituality Center’s Word and Deed program promotes spiritual growth in people committed to consistent prayer and working on systemic change.

Spiritual life is also deepened and stirred awake at the Spirituality Center through ongoing spiritual direction in a group setting or on an individual basis by appointment. Group spiritual direction is offered through a nine-month program on The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius in Everyday Life. Peer supervision is available on a monthly basis in a group setting for spiritual directors.

There are no overnight accommodations at the center. Center staff are available as guest directors at retreat centers; at your venue for days of prayer and retreats; for workshops on self-understanding and improving relationships, social teaching, prayer and Scripture.

For more information about the St. Joseph Spirituality Center, go to stjocenter.org or call 225-383-3349; email ecumpspirit120@yahoo.com.

Directions to the center, 2010 Kleinert Ave., 70806: I-10 to exit 157 B South Acadian Thruway; go north to Broussard St., turn left; go one block to Parker St., turn right; go one block to Kleinert Ave., turn left. At a Spirituality Center sign on Kleinert turn left at the back of SJA property. The Spirituality Center is a little blue house at the end of a long lane off of Kleinert Ave.

OUTSIDE ▼

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imately six miles; pass seven red lights, after the seventh red light turn right on 2nd Street (a large Sacred Heart shrine is on the right shortly before reaching 2nd Street; go approximately one-half of a mile, entrance to the retreat center is on the right.

St. Charles Center
Lake Charles

Opened in 1996 and operated by the Diocese of Lake Charles, the St. Charles Center offers preached and directed retreats in addition to a variety of other programs. Located near the Calcasieu River, the center provides a deep woods setting with walks along the swamp leading to the river.

Accommodations include separate facilities for 72 adults and 78 youth in double-occupancy rooms. Bath facilities are private on the adult side and shared on the youth side. Other amenities include three libraries, the Chapel of the Assumption, two small conference rooms for 50 people, two large conference rooms for more than 100 people and a dining room.

The center is staffed by spiritual directors and retreat directors and is open to people of all denominations. For more information, call 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (closed between noon and 1 p.m.), Monday through Friday.

Phone 337-855-1232; website live.ldiocese.org/retreats; mailing address 2151 Sam Houston Jones Pkwy., Lake Charles, LA 70611.

Directions: I-10 to Lake Charles; take Exit 33 to LA Hwy. 171; travel 5 miles to LA Hwy. 378; turn left onto LA Hwy. 378; travel 2.5 miles; entrance is on the left.

Manresa House of Retreats

5858 La. Highway 44
Convent, Louisiana 70723
1-800-782-9431 • www.manresala.org

Magnificat Center of the Holy Spirit
23629 Faith Road, Ponchatoula, LA 70454

An outreach of the Center of Jesus the Lord, New Orleans, LA

Surrounded by the beautiful pines in Ponchatoula, the Magnificat Center offers a serene retreat environment for retreats of all kinds.

- Large conference room and separate dining area
- Outdoor Stations of the Cross
- Large front porch with a beautiful view of the grounds

Join us at Magnificat the last Thursday of every month for a Day of Renewal including featured speakers and Eucharistic celebration.

For information about reserving the Magnificat Center for your youth group, adult retreat or even just a for a private personal retreat please contact Cindy Scardina at 225-773-9583.
KC volunteers help pregnancy center reopen after flood

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

As August’s heavy rains turned into historic flooding, fears gripped Dorothy Wallis, not so much out of concern for her house, which would take on a foot of water, but for a ministry she birthed and has since nurtured for nearly 40 years.

Wallis, founder and director of the Crisis Pregnancy Center in Baton Rouge, was concerned that her dream, indeed her life’s work, would be washed away. “I fear went right through me,” Wallis said. “I said, Lord, what am I going to do?”

Indeed, the center, located on North Flannery Road in Baton Rouge, was inundated with up to four feet of water, but unbeknownst to Wallis, who was trapped in her own neighborhood, volunteers had immediately responded, ripping out drywall and carpeting and moving furniture.

“The smell,” Wallis said wincing, recalling her first impression when she was finally able to reach the center, which, by her estimate, has saved the lives of more than 80,000 unborn children since its humble beginnings in a 400-square foot building on Monticello Boulevard.

“It is a miracle just to know when I got here the church and people were already working,” she added. “It looked a mess.”

Not only did she have to cope with the damage at the center and her own home, five of her 12 staff members left for various reasons in the immediate aftermath. But a little water was not going to dampen her ministry, so it was with a steady resolve she began the difficult process of rebuilding.

“I was determined we were going to start serving girls, even if I did not have a house or a pillow to lay my head on,” she said. “I was going to open it has it was there were times when I questioned God, asking, ‘is my time up?’”

“He told me, ‘Dorothy, I am not concerned about building your comfort. I am concerned about building your character.’

“Pruning happens before growth happens.”

Pregnancy centers from as far away as Pennsylvania and North Dakota began sending in donations, including recreational vehicles that included an ultrasound machine. Baby supplies and formula came in, along with clothes, and playpaks.

A motel in Shreveport and a bank in Baton Rouge undergoing renovations donated their used furniture, which is placed in the clinic and the administrative offices, located directly behind the clinic.

In a little more than three weeks after water first lapped at the center’s doorstep, staff members were once again counseling young girls who were at their most vulnerable with the sole mission of saving a baby’s life.

By the end of the year, Wallis estimated that the lives of perhaps as many as 80 unborn babies had been saved.

Wallis received an unexpected boost when several local councils of the Knights of Columbus pitched in with Saturday work days to assist in the process.

“Part of our mission,” said the Knights’ Louisiana State Event Chairman Vince Whittington, a member of the KC council at St. Jean Vianney Church in Baton Rouge. “It was obvious there was a lot of work to be done. We offered our service to do a work day and get a jump start.”

The projects included painting walls, relocating furniture under Wallis’ direction to set up the offices and even some minor electrical work. The first work day was a week before Christmas and even with unusually sultry December weather and only a few days advance notice, eight Knights showed and worked for several hours.

“We saw this as a great opportunity to help a pregnancy center in town,” said Sam Mistretta, who along with his wife are the chairpersons for the Knights Culture of Life statewide pro-life program and a parishioner at St. Aloysius Church in Baton Rouge.

“I think it is natural once you really commit to the faith, really want to live out your Catholic faith, it’s obvious you need to go help out people in need,” added Mistretta. “You are drawn to do it. When you have something devastating in your own community it is really easy to find opportunity to help other people, really make an impact with so little effort.

“This is a morning doing stuff that is easy to do. And you can see the impact it has immediately. I think it’s important.”

Through a national program sponsored by the Knights, Whittington said a new ultrasound machine was able to be purchased for the clinic. He said the national council donates half of the funding for the ultrasound if the local council is able to raise half of the money. The total cost of the machine was $33,000.

Using contacts on the state and national levels, Whittington was able to secure donations from councils throughout the country, including $500 from a Knights council in Wyoming and the St. Aloysius council, with a donation of a little more than $3,000.

“We are here to serve those in need,” Whittington said. “If we don’t have those in need right now, I don’t know what it is. It’s dead in our mission. It’s a service.”

Wallis said she was “beyond grateful” for all of the assistance. “It’s starting a ministry all over again,” she added. “Truly, the people that have helped us have a heart for the life issue, which is close to God’s heart.”

Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge
Associate Director for Youth & Young Adult Ministries

General Statement of Duties
The Associate Director for Youth and Young Adult Ministries in the Office of Evangelization & Catechesis of the Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge seeks to foster within all young people and those who minister to them a deeper, life-giving relationship with Jesus and the Church. The Associate Director strives to provide the vision and leadership necessary to serve parish youth and young adult ministry efforts in a culturally diverse church, according to the goals and objectives outlined in the United States Catholic Bishops’ documents Renewing the Vision and Sons and Daughters of the Light.

Education and Experience Requirement
- Master’s degree in Theology, Pastoral Ministry, Religious Education or a related field required.
- Minimum of five years direct experience at the parish or diocesan level working with youth ministry programs, adolescents, young adults, and adults who minister to youth.
- National certification in Youth Ministry preferred.
- Demonstrated knowledge of the United States Catholic Bishops’ document “Renewing the Vision” and pertinent documents and their application in ministry with young people in the United States is required.
- 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 parish and possesses a working knowledge of Catholic teachings and doctrine.

Other Requirements
- Ability to relate to the catechizing and evangelizing component of youth and young adult ministry in collaboration with the Office of Evangelization & Catechesis.
- Ability to exercise good judgment in handling difficult and/or sensitive situations, with ability to maintain strict level of confidentiality and discretion as required by diocesan policy and legal requirements.
- Ability to effectively recruit, train, and support the youth, young adults, adults who minister to young people, and parishes/schools of the Diocese of Baton Rouge.
- Ability to develop, plan, coordinate, and implement training programs to teach leadership skills.
- Ability to teach, facilitate online courses, and train others to facilitate online coursework.
- Technological, organizational, analytical, and problem solving skills required.
- Strong knowledge and understanding of the Charter for the Protection of Young People.
- Large-scale event planning, record keeping/administration and attention to detail required.
- Requires working weekends and evenings regularly.

Please submit letter of interest, resume, and references to hr@diobr.org

Application Deadline is Friday, March 17, 2017.

Several Knights of Columbus councils assisted Dorothy Wallis in helping her reopen the Crisis Pregnancy Center in Baton Rouge. The center, which Wallis estimated has served nearly 80,000 unborn babies in the past 40 years, took up to four feet of water in August’s flood. Photo provided by Tim Mueller Photography.
Bishop Muench to celebrate welcoming rite at St. Joseph Cathedral

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Nearly 500 baptized and non-baptized individuals will gather for a welcoming ceremony on March 5 at St. Joseph Cathedral in Baton Rouge.

Bishop Robert W. Muench is scheduled to celebrate both of the Rite of Election and Call to Conversion of Candidates rites, including one at 1 p.m. and the other at 4:30 p.m.

“The Rite of Election is a powerful reminder that each of us is called to a relationship with God and that whether or not that relationship develops depends on our response,” said Darryl Ducote, director of the Marriage and Family Life Department for the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

He said church parish staff members oversee the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults) process to determine if those who seek membership in the church are in fact demonstrating their desire to become Catholic. Those approved will have their call confirmed by Bishop Muench.

The Rite of Election is for adults, adolescents and children of catechetical age who are unbaptized catechumens. They will be baptized at the Easter vigil.

The Call for Conversion is for previously baptized individuals who have not received sacraments such as confirmation, reconciliation and the Eucharist, and may have been baptized in another Christian denomination.

“Anyone who decides to become a Catholic Christian is ultimately responding to a call from God,” Ducote said.

“The church believes that the Holy Spirit is continually at work in the hearts of all people drawing them to a relationship with God.”

“However, not all respond to that urging by the (Holy) Spirit,” he added.

“Those who do respond become disciples of Christ and members of his body, the church.”

The church recognizes all of these individuals on the first Sunday of Lent with the RCIA ritual. Ducote emphasized the term “election” does not refer to voting but rather to a Latin phrase that means “to choose or to call.”

He said the process can last for months or even years as a person, “moved by the Holy Spirit, discerner if he or she is able to accept the good news of Jesus Christ and change their lives in order to live as a disciple of Christ.”

Ducote also reminded all Catholics that Lent is an opportunity for a re-examination of their lives to “determine if we are living according to the demands we accepted at our baptism so that we might honestly renew our baptismal promises at the Easter vigil.”

Catholic Charismatic Renewal marks 50th anniversary of founding this year

By Peter Finney Jr.
Clarion Herald

NEW ORLEANS – For the past 50 years, Patti Gallagher Mansfield has kept the Champion Wiremaster stenographer’s notebook, 5-by-8 inches, safely tucked away among her most cherished, sacred items in her dresser drawer.

The notebook has 80 ruled pages. It cost $25. One was given to each of the 25 students from Duquesne University and La Roche College who attended a weekend retreat in February 1967 at The Ark and The Dove Retreat House just outside of Pittsburgh.

Between the slightly faded, tan covers are page after page of Mansfield’s handwritten reflections in blue ballpoint pen of the mysterious things that happened on that three-day retreat, a weekend that ultimately changed the course of the Catholic Church worldwide.

“Who would have ever imagined – 80 pages, Patti Gallagher – that what I would record in this notebook would have any significance to over 120 million Catholics all over the world?” Mansfield, now 70, said. “It is amazing.”

The weekend – now called the “Duquesne Weekend” – is acknowledged as the birth of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal movement in the United States, which has spread throughout the world. The Charismatic Renewal movement centers on the “baptism of the Holy Spirit” in which God’s Spirit renews and fills a person with grace. Mansfield talks about releasing the graces already conferred through baptism and confirmation.

“As far as I know, there were individual Catholics who had been baptized in the Spirit,” said Mansfield, who added the Duquesne Weekend was the first known case in which a group had “a common experience” that then spread quickly to college campuses, rectories, hospitals and church parishes across the country.

“That could not have happened unless the Lord were behind it and that he willed for this grace of being baptized in the Holy Spirit to become more widely experienced by the whole church,” she said.

She made the comments in an interview with the Clarion Herald, the New Orleans archdiocesan newspaper, in advance of the movement’s golden anniversary celebration, held Feb. 17-19 in the same retreat house chapel in Gibson, Pennsylvania.

Mansfield, who was a 20-year-old Duquesne junior in 1967, and her husband, Al, now serve as liaisons for the Charismatic Renewal in the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

While at Duquesne, she had been a regular member of a Bible study group, and there was talk from two professors who had attended an interfaith prayer meeting a few weeks earlier that they had received baptism in the Holy Spirit.


Mansfield recalled hearing a presentation about surrendering her life to Jesus that prompted her to write: “Jesus, be real for me! She tore out a page from her notebook and posted a message on the bulletin board: “I want a miracle!”

That night, two members of the group were supposed to celebrate their birthdays with a party, but “there was a listlessness in the group,” Mansfield recalled.

She went upstairs to the chapel, now called the Upper Room, to pray. She remembered giving her life to God.

“I’m grateful I wrote everything down,” Mansfield said. “It’s not like I remember everything that was said, but I remember how I felt. I remember feeling like my body was on fire. I asked the priest (on the retreat), ‘Who should I tell?’ and he said, ‘The Lord will show you.’”

Two female students from La Roche College approached Mansfield, and one of them asked, “What happened to you? Your face looks different.”

“Well,” Mansfield told them, “I’ve experienced what we’ve been talking about.”

Mansfield said she led the women to the front of the chapel and said, “Lord, whatever you did for me, do for them.”

Mansfield said she remembered hearing one of her professors say, “What’s the bishop going to say when he hears that all these kids have been baptized in the Holy Spirit?”

Mansfield said the Charismatic Renewal has always been and will always remain at the center of the church.

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Phone (for use only if clarification is needed)
Lent, a time to let our prayers go up as our eating goes down

Lent has been an intense spiritual experience for followers of Christ throughout the centuries. Christians of ancient Rome early developed impressive Lenten liturgies. For medieval Europeans, Lent was a time for prolonged prayer, severe bodily discipline and generous alms giving. During the 1900s our parents and grandparents observed Lent with frequent, even daily Mass, public devotional practices and austere fasting. As a boy, I can remember our pastor, Right Rev. Msgr. Leonard Robin, preaching in detail the requirements of fasting; for breakfast – two slices of toast, no butter or jam, coffee – black, no cream or sugar; for lunch – a sandwich or something else small enough so that lunch and breakfast together were lighter than the evening dinner; and, of course, no meat on Fridays. I don’t remember alcohol being mentioned. But then, my pastor had his own wine bar.

Fifty years ago the Second Vatican Council emphasized the dedication of Lent to “a period of closer attention to the Word of God and more ardent prayer” (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, #109). To assist this emphasis, the church constructed a new Lectionary of biblical readings for the Sundays and weekdays of Lent. Since Vatican II, a Catholic attending all weekday and Sunday Masses throughout the year will hear most of the Bible, Old Testament and New Testament, proclaimed over a period of three years. There is also some continuity in the epistles and Gospels that are read during the various seasons of the church year.

To compare, I dug out my copy of the pre-Vatican II Roman Missal, all in Latin, which contained everything Scripture; collect, offering and post-Communion prayers; ordinary prayers and eucharistic prayer for every Mass of the Liturgical Year in 221 pages. (It was a nostalgia moment, because this “Missale Romanum” had belonged to Msgr. Patrick Gillespie whose signature was on the first page. He used to write this column in The Catholic Commentator.) I found that the Gospels for the first full week of Lent were the same as now on some days, but not on others. There must have been some rationale for not following the normal sequence of the Gospels, but that was not readily apparent. No wonder Catholics of that time were reluctant to admit any knowledge of the Bible.

In Matthew 13:51 Jesus praises the wise steward for drawing from his storeroom of spiritual tradition both the old and the new. We could imitate that steward this Lent as we work on our spiritual lives. A new emphasis in prayer and Scripture and an old practice of fasting might be just what we need to whip ourselves into spiritual shape.

I found that the Gospels for the first full week of Lent were the same as now on some days, but not on others. There must have been some rationale for not following the normal sequence of the Gospels, but that was not readily apparent. No wonder Catholics of that time were very reluctant to admit any knowledge of the Bible.

Our Lord invites us through his prophet Isaiah (55:1-3, 11) “All who are thirsty,/ come to the water. Why spend your money for what is not bread;/ your wages for what fails to satisfy?/ Heed me, and you shall eat well,/ you shall delight in rich fare./ Come to me heedfully,/ listen, that you may have life ... / So shall my word be/ that goes forth from my mouth,/ it shall not return to me void,/ but shall do my will,/ achieving the end for which I sent it.”

A good introduction to praying Scripture would be to meditate on the daily Mass Scriptures of Lent. God’s word speaks most effectively at the eucharistic liturgy. Here it resounds from many hearts and resonates at once the rich diversity and strong unity of God’s people. The word we hear and share at liturgy is a word enriched by sacrifice, memorial and Communion. It is a word that becomes alive in sacrament and now seeks to become alive in the service and ministry of the community.

Another form of prayer which should claim additional parishioners in Lent is eucharistic adoration. What better way to pass the weeks of Lent than in the presence of our eucharistic Lord. What a perfect place to meditate on the scriptures of the Lenten Masses. Many of our parishes have adoration chapels. Some are open 24 hours a day.

Ever since the time of the apostles there has been a practice of fasting in the Catholic Church. While the church today only requires this of us on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, Christians throughout history have seen a religious value in imitating Christ’s 40-day fast in the desert. Jesus fasted and prayed to resist temptation. We who are sinful have more reason to follow his example. Fasting clears the mind and cleanses the heart. It sharpens our moral and spiritual determinations while reminding us that only the love of God fulfills our deepest hunger.

Jesus challenges all of us to become “poor in spirit” because the poor realize that their poverty is a source of grace, while the rich realize that their wealth is an obstacle. Fasting prepares us to become poor in spirit this Lent.

Another Perspective
Father John Carville

Mar. 8 Rev. Thomas F. Clark SJ
Dcn. John W. Veron
Br. Xavier Werneth SC
Mar. 9 Rev. Michael J. Collins
Dcn. J. Peter Walsh
Sr. Linda Songy SCSC
Mar. 10 Rev. Paul D. Counce
Dcn. James E. Wax
Br. Renzo Alvarado MCM
Mar. 11 Rev. Randy M. Cuevas
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Mar. 15 Rev. Al M. Davidson
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Mar. 20 Rev. Matthew C. Dupre
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Bourgeois Jr.
Br. Ramon Daunis SC
Mar. 21 Rev. Reuben C. Dykes
Dcn. Eugene F. Brady
Sr. Doris Vignaes CSJ

Clarification of photo

Let me offer a quick note of clarification and correction relative to the “Picture from the Past” you published on page 2 of the Feb. 3 issue of The Catholic Commentator. It shows the present St. Joseph Church (since 1961 our cathedral) shortly after its construction.

The “1853” scribbled on the photo indicates the date church-construction began, not when it was taken. The cornerstone for St. Joseph Church was laid in 1853; the building was completed in 1856. The picture must have been taken between 1856 and 1862 when cannon fire from Union gunboats in the Mississippi River hit the church, causing the northern wall and then the roof to collapse. (The building wasn’t rebuilt until after the Civil War.)

But thanks for doing such a good job highlighting history, not only at St. Joseph but throughout the diocese!

Father Paul Counce
Pastor, St. Joseph Cathedral
In Exile
Father Ron Rolheiser

Guest Columnist
Richard Doerflinger

Welcoming the stranger
But Jesus sides with the Hebrew prophets. For him, God not only makes a preferential option for the poor, but God is in the poor. How we treat the poor is how we treat God. Moreover the prophets’ mantra, that we will be judged religiously by how we treat the poor, is given a normative expression in Jesus’ discourse on the final judgment in the Gospel of St. Matthew, Chapter 25. We are all familiar, perhaps too familiar, with that text. Jesus, in effect, was answering a question: What will the last judgment be like? What will be the test? How will we be judged?

His answer is stunning and, taken baldly, is perhaps the most challenging text in the Gospels. He tells us that we will be judged, seemingly solely, on the basis of how we treated the poor, that is, on how we have treated the most vulnerable among us. Moreover at one point, he singles out “the stranger,” the foreigner, the refugee: “I was a stranger and you welcomed me … or … you never welcomed me.” He ends up on the right or wrong side of God on the basis of how we treat the stranger.

What also needs to be highlighted in this text about the last judgment is that neither group, those who got it right and those who got it wrong, knew what they were doing. Both initially protest: the first by saying: “We didn’t know it was you we were serving” and the second by saying: “Had we known it was you we would have responded.” Both protests, it would seem, are beside the point. In St. Matthew’s Gospel, mature discipleship doesn’t depend upon us believing that we have it right, it depends only upon us doing it right.

These scriptural principles, I believe, are very apropos today in the face of the refugee and immigrant issues we are facing in the Western world. Today, without doubt, we are facing the biggest humanitarian crisis since the end of the Second World War. Millions upon millions of people, under unjust persecution and the threat of death, are being driven from their homes and homelands with no place to go and no country or community to receive them. As Christians we may not turn our backs on them or turn them away. If Jesus is to be believed, we will be judged religiously more by how we treat refugees than by whether or not we are going to church. When we stand before God in judgment and say in protest: “When did I see you a stranger and not welcome you?” Our generation is likely to hear: “I was a Syrian refugee, and you did not welcome me.”

This, no doubt, might sound naive, over-idealistic and fundamentalist. The issue of refugees and immigrants is both highly sensitive and very complex. Countries have borders that need to be respected and defended, just as its citizens have a right to be protected. Admittedly, there are very real political, social, economic and security issues that have to be addressed. But, as we, our churches, and our governments, address them we must remain clear on what the Scriptures, Jesus and the social teachings of the church uncompromisingly teach: We are to welcome the stranger, irrespective of inconvenience and even if there are some dangers.

For all sorts of pragmatic reasons, political, social, economic and security, we can perhaps justify not welcoming the strangers; but we can never justify this on Christian grounds. Not welcoming strangers is antithetical to the very heart of Jesus’ message and makes us too easily forget that we too once were the outsider.

OBLATE FATHER ROLHEISER, theologian, teacher and award-winning author, is president of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas. He can be contacted at ronrolheiser.com, or on Facebook at facebook.com/ronrolheiser.

Being Catholic first
in the Hebrew Scriptures, that part of the Bible we call the Old Testament, we find a strong religious challenge to always welcome the stranger, the foreigner. This was emphasized for two reasons: First, because the Jewish people themselves had once been foreigners and immigrants. Their Scriptures kept reminding them not to forget that. Second, they believed that God’s revelation, made known, comes to us through the stranger, in what’s foreign to us. That belief was integral to their faith.

The great prophets developed this much further. They taught that God favors the poor preferentially and that consequently we will be judged, judged religiously, by how we treat the poor. The prophets coined this mantra (still worth memorizing): The quality of your faith will be judged by the quality of justice in the land; and the quality of justice in the land will always be judged by how orphans, widows and strangers fare while you are alive.

Orphans, widows and strangers! That’s scriptural code for who, at any given time, are the three most vulnerable groups in society. And the prophets’ message didn’t go down easy. Rather it was a religious affront to many of the pious at the time who strongly believed that we will be judged religiously and morally by the rigor and strictness of our religious observance. Then, like now, social justice was often religiously marginalized.

But our social teaching is a seamless garment, the left or right sleeve can’t be ripped off without risking loss of the foundation that gives it ultimate purpose. So being Catholic first means seeing all issues on their merits, not through a partisan lens, and under God intended – culminating in the right to religious freedom, which allows us to develop our friendship with God and other people.

But an agonizing dilemma does face Catholic voters who, every election, are asked to choose between two parties who fall short of that vision. At their worst, both parties appeal to people’s basest instincts. One promises maximum sexual freedom, ignoring the victims of the sexual revolution – most often women, their born and unborn children, and the family. The other promises maximum economic freedom, ignoring the way this prosperity Gospel pushes aside the poor and marginalized.

Choosing your party can look like a quiz: What’s your favorite deadly sin, lust or avarice?

Each party also has positions that coincide with elements of Catholic teaching. Even here, though, discernment is needed. To quote T.S. Eliot, “the greatest treason” is “to do the right deed for the wrong reason.”

If our social teaching is a seamless garment, the left or right sleeve can’t be ripped off without risking loss of the foundation that gives it ultimate purpose. So we Catholics should be involved in politics and even seek party leadership roles. Both parties need the church’s vision of the human person. But we need to ask ourselves: “Do I want to lobby my church to see things the way my party does or lobby the party to come closer to the church’s vision? Am I Catholic first?”

If the answer to that last question is yes, we will engage in public life without giving ultimate allegiance to party or political ideology – we will be “in the world but not of the world.” Our guiding star will be the church’s comprehensive Gospel of life.

And we will take on the risks of following in the footsteps of our Master – who had his garment ripped from him and was crucified between two thieves. So being Catholic first means seeing all issues on their merits, not through a partisan lens, and understanding how all of them are joined at their roots in God’s unconditional love for each and every human being. In future columns, I’ll have more to suggest about a distinctive Catholic approach to politics.

DOERFLINGER worked for 36 years in the Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. He writes from Washington state.
COMING EVENTS
March 3, 2017

Organ Recital – Emmanuel Arakelian, young artist in residence at St. Louis Cathedral in New Orleans, will present an organ recital Thursday, March 9, 7 p.m., at St. Aloysius Church, 2025 Stuart Ave., Baton Rouge. For more information, call 225-343-6657.

Lip Sync Battle – The Mother’s Club of Catholic High School in Baton Rouge will host a fundraiser, “Lip Sync Battle with the Bears,” Saturday, March 11, 7 – 10 p.m. There will be a cocktail hour and the show will begin at 8 p.m. For more information, email tebleblanc@cox.net or call 225-767-3437.

St. Alphonsus Events – St. Alphonsus Church, 14040 Greenwell Springs Road, Greenwell Springs, will show the movie, “Full of Grace,” and follow with reflection Sunday, March 12, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. Eric Groth, of “Outside da Box” will facilitate. On March 28, Mike Fulmer will present “The Fourth Cup and Lamb of God,” in the St. Francis Room of the church. For information, call 225-261-4644.

Pro-life Mass – A monthly pro-life Mass will be celebrated Tuesday, March 14, 5:30 p.m., at St. Agnes Church, 749 East Blvd., Baton Rouge. For more information, call 225-383-4127.

St. George Events – St. George Church, 7808 St. George Dr., Baton Rouge, will host an open house of its new church, “Lifting the Veil,” Sunday, March 19, 1 – 4 p.m.; Father Michael Allelo, pastor of St. Louis King of France Church in Baton Rouge, will lead a mission at St. George Church, “Repurposed,” Monday, March 13 – Wednesday, March 15, 7 p.m. For information call 225-293-2212.

Rosaryville Retreats – A retreat open to women of all denominations will take place Friday, March 10 – Sunday, March 12, at Rosaryville Spirit Life Center, 3009 Rosaryville Road, Ponchatoula. Rosaryville will also offer Lenten Days of Prayer on Tuesdays, March 14, 21 and April 4. Sister Rose Bowen OP will offer a Day of Prayer, “The Way to Inner Freedom,” Tuesday, March 28. For more information, email slavis@opppeace.org or visit rosaryvillela.com.

Holy Rosary Mission – Father Donald Blanchard will present a mission, “Mercy, Suffering and Hope,” Monday, March 13 – Wednesday, March 15 at Holy Rosary Church, 44450 Hwy. 429, St. Amant. Father Blanchard will be the celebrant at the weekend Masses prior to the mission. Childcare will be offered for children 3-years-old and up, with a “kid friendly” dinner served each night. To register for this service register at the church’s website at holyrc.org.

Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites – The Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites welcomes all who are interested in developing their prayer life according to the Carmelite saints. The next meeting will be Sunday, March 12, 1:30 p.m., at Our Lady of Mercy Parish Activity Center in St. Gabriel’s Room, 444 Marquette Ave., Baton Rouge. For more information, call 225-343-3181 or 225-803-3391, or email robertwhite456@att.net.

Marriage Encounter Weekend – Married couples looking for time away from distractions to focus on their marriage are encouraged to attend the next World Wide Marriage Encounter Weekend. It will be held Friday, March 24 – Sunday, March 26 at the Bishop Robert E. Tra- cery Center, 1800 S. Acadian Thwy., Baton Rouge. For more information, contact Jack & Angel LaBate at 470-297-9560 or 678-232-0080 or email jackandangel@bellsouth.net.
Father Walsh said going to confession is a good way to begin any spiritual journey because of the cleansing of the soul the sacrament provides.

“Open your heart, take a risk, dispose yourself,” Father Walsh said. “The other thing to always remember prayer is a gift of the Holy Spirit. You have to ask the Holy Spirit and the Blessed Mother to teach you how to pray the rosary.”

Dow said God speaks to each individual differently, so a person must find a way that is most comfortable to have a conversation with God. She recommended finding a good Lenten reflection book to guide you through the season and attending Mass more than just Sunday because “it all counts.”

“We have a great tendency to box God in,” she said. “If you think of God as a friend and companion it is easier to have this casual conversation with him.”

“Feed your mind with thoughts of God and not of the world because the world does not always give the full story.”

According to Father Walsh, there are three means by which people approach the Lord during Lent, including prayer, fasting and alms giving, which are a means to an end, the end being in communion with Christ. Once that relationship is established, hearing God is relatively simple.

“We sense the Lord speaking to us in a spiritual sense,” he said. “We hear him in our souls. Our senses come alive in our souls.”

Father Walsh said there are extraordinary moments when God speaks to individuals in an audible voice, either through prophetic words from a friend or words directly from the Holy Spirit.

“I guess the bigger question is our faith as such that we have to hear exactly God’s word talking to us tangibly,” Dow said. “Do we have to hear the divine speaking in word to trust in God.”

“Do you hear in your mind, in your heart or in your ears?” Dow reiterated that having a relationship with God is the definition of prayer. She said that through conversations, or prayer, doors will be opened, set in motion.

“God will continually call you for something that he needs you to do and he will equip you to do it even though it is completely out of your range,” she said. “You can’t let doubt come into your mind. If doubt comes into your mind, figure out where that doubt is coming from and pray about it, because we have a very good way of resisting what God calls us to do.”

Hearing God’s voice is easier for some than others. As Father Walsh and Dow pointed out, he speaks to all people, only in different manners.

And they both agree that only through the silence of meditation and prayer will one be able to hear when he does speak, through minds and hearts. But before that can happen, each individual must be open to hearing God’s word, and that can only occur through the purging of sin. The next 40 days provide an excellent starting point.

**Diocese of Baton Rouge Catholic Schools Office**

**Principal Opening**

**Sacred Heart of Jesus School**

Baton Rouge

Sacred Heart of Jesus School, founded in 1929 and currently serving 340 students in Grades PK-8, seeks a principal with strong sense of Catholic identity, strategic vision, creative management, and focused leadership. With approximately thirty professional staff members, Sacred Heart School is a diverse community, dedicated to educating the mind, body, and spirit. As a community of faith, the school’s primary purpose is to create an environment permeated with the Gospel spirit of love and freedom, providing a holistic approach to the development of each child’s potential.

The Diocese of Baton Rouge has thirty schools in eight civil parishes, with strong Catholic identity the focus in all schools. The district is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and standardized test scores are above state and national averages.

Catholic schools in the Diocese of Baton Rouge

**Evangelize Hearts, Educate Minds, Encourage Talent and Embrace the Future**

Applicants must meet the following criteria:

1. Practicing Catholic
2. Master’s Degree, Meeting Louisiana Requirements as NonPublic Administrator
3. Five Years Minimum Experience in Education, Catholic Schools Preferred
4. Demonstrated Leadership Ability, Catholic Education Preferred
5. Must be Available on or before July 1, 2017

Mail resume, copies of all college transcript(s) showing degrees, and three letters of recommendations to:

Sacred Heart of Jesus Principal Search
Sacred Heart Catholic Schools Office
P.O. Box 2028
Baton Rouge, LA 70821-2028

Deadline for application: March 30, 2017

The Catholic Commentator

March 3, 2017

For help placing your classified ad, call 225-387-0983. All classified ads are pre-paid. Credit cards are now accepted.
WASHINGTON — (CNS) Catholic Church leaders in a Feb. 16 statement said they were encouraged that President Donald Trump may be considering an executive order to protect religious freedom and said they would be grateful if he would move forward with the pledge that his administration would “do everything in its power to defend and protect religious liberty.”

“As Christians, our goal is to live and serve others as the Gospel asks. President Trump can ensure that we are not forced out of the public square,” said the statement from committee chairs of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. The statement was jointly issued by: New York Archbishop Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan, chairman of the Committee on Pro-Life Activities; Philadelphia Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, chairman of the Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth; Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori, chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty; and Bishop Frank J. Dewane of Venice, Florida, chairman of the Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development.

The church leaders said an executive order would “implement strong protections for religious freedom across the federal government in many of the areas where it has been eroded by the preceding administration, such as health coverage, adoption, accreditation, tax exemption, and government grants and contracts.”

“We ourselves, as well as those we shepherd and serve, would be most grateful if the president would take this positive step toward allowing all Americans to be able to practice their faith without severe penalties from the federal government,” they said.

A draft version of the executive order was leaked in late January called “Establishing a Government-Wide Initiative to Respect Religious Freedom.” When it failed to appear on the president’s desk, rumors were circulating that a scaled-back version might appear at his desk but there has been no word about it from the Trump administration.

The U.S. bishops posted an online letter for Catholics to send to the president urging him to sign the order after the draft version was leaked.

The Feb. 16 statement said the order would restore “the federal government’s proper relationship with the First Amendment and other laws protecting conscience and religious freedom will enable us to continue our service to the most vulnerable of Americans.”

The statement stressed that U.S. Catholic bishops have long supported religious liberty, adding that during the last several years “the federal government has eroded this fundamental right,” most notably with the Affordable Care Act’s contraceptive mandate for religious employers who do not fit the mandate’s narrow exemption including the Little Sisters of the Poor.

Trump urged to protect religious liberty

WAYS YOU CAN HELP THE NEEDY THIS LENTEN SEASON!

Join Bishop Robert Muench, Chef John Folse and Father Cleo Milano

at the 2017 Count Your Blessings Supper

Friday, March 10, 2017 at 7:00 PM - Our Lady of Mercy Parish Activity Center

Bishop Robert Muench and Chef John Folse are ready to Stir it Up! Come and Count Your Blessings with us. Join us for a simple Lenten supper of soup and bread – a meal that will nourish you physically and spiritually. This year’s Count Your Blessings Supper is scheduled for 7:00 p.m. on Friday, March 10th, at Our Lady of Mercy’s Parish Activity Center. Order your tickets today using the order form or give us a call at (225) 383-7837, extension O. Tickets will also be available at the door. If you are unable to attend, please consider making a Count Your Blessings Lenten gift to St. Vincent de Paul to help in our work with God’s poor. Financial gifts can be mailed to: Count Your Blessings, P. O. Box 127, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-0127, or made online at www.svdpbr.org.

BUILD A BASKET FOR NEEDY KIDS

When families are struggling to exist on minimum-wage incomes, just paying the rent and putting food on the table is difficult. Needy children learn at an early age that there’s nothing in the budget for extras. Things like Easter baskets are luxuries their families simply cannot afford. Join St. Vincent de Paul and Catholic Community Radio-WPYR 1380 AM in providing Easter baskets for needy children. To find out how you can help with this year’s Build a Basket effort, call us at (225) 383-7837, ext. O.

FILL A PRESCRIPTION FOR THE NEEDY

Join WBRZ-Channel 2, Pat Singleton, the Baton Rouge Clinic and St. Vincent de Paul in filling prescriptions for the needy. Retail prices for brand name and generic prescription drugs have risen greatly in the past year. Our St. Vincent de Paul Community Pharmacy provides a solution for low-income individuals who cannot keep pace with the rising cost of prescription medicine. We are seeing more people who are breaking tablets in half and skipping doses of life-sustaining medicines in a desperate attempt to make ends meet. For more details on how you can save someone’s life by filling a prescription, visit our website at www.svdpbr.org.

You Can Answer a Prayer and Save a Life Today!