WARREN BRAUD REMembers being adamantly opposed to serving as coordinator of the perpetual adoration chapel at St. Mary of False River Church in New Roads. A little nudge from his wife, however, quickly changed his mind.

“I tried to find all the excuses not to do it,” he said, “and my wife told me I had to.” That was in 1992. Twenty-five years later, the perpetual adoration chapel is still going strong.

“It has brought a lot of peace,” said Janet Lucia, who along with her husband was a part of the original adorers. “We both still go, and we both look forward to it.”

The chapel was set up in a small vacant house next to the rectory on church grounds. “It was perfect,” said Father Walsh. “There was a large entrance foyer for the sign up, a bathroom, a place for a telephone for emergencies, then you walked into the main area which was perfect for adoration.”

Father Walsh said the decision was made to dedicate the chapel on a Marian feast day. “I’ll never forget that day,” said Father Walsh, remembering how an unusual August cool front had come through the area. “It was a crystal clear, cool day with a breeze literally sent by God from heaven, a sign of divine favor if I’ve ever seen one.”

For 22 years, Braud and his wife, Margaret, who passed away two years ago, went to the chapel for one hour a week.

The perpetual adoration chapel at St. Mary of False River celebrated its 25th anniversary Aug. 15.

Youth retreat ‘life changing’

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

“A maximum security prison does not seem like the most ideal place to learn about God, but it turned out to be filled with love, kindness and a heart-warming experience I will remember forever,” said Bryanne Pierce, a confirmation candidate from St. John the Baptist Church in Brusly. Pierce is part of the growing number of church parish confirmation groups in the Diocese of Baton Rouge visiting Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola each year for a retreat and discovering with wide-eye surprise God’s love and grace is everywhere.

“In Angola, there are prisoners who have committed murder, robbery and other major crimes,” said Babin. “You go in with the mindset that these people are cruel and don’t deserve redemption, but as I was hearing the prisoners bravely tell me the crimes committed and how they found their way to be not only trustees, but men of God, I realized that God’s intended version of someone is often brought out through second chances and learning from their past mistakes. The surrealness of the person allowed me to face a reality that God can be found in any darkness and strengthen you, even in your greatest weakness.”

St. John’s first Angola retreat on July 22
Catholic lay groups

By Amy Jones

As the Catholic Church continued to grow in the 1800s, Baton Rouge parishioners wanted to become more involved with their faith and community. A number of benevolent lay groups were established at the turn of the 19th century. One of the largest charitable organizations in the world, the St. Vincent de Paul Society, was founded in Paris in 1833 by Blessed John Frederick Ozanam. This organization was brought to Louisiana when William Blair Lancaster (godson of Ozanam) presented Father Cyril Delacroix a manual of the society. In 1865, Father Delacroix was assigned to St. Joseph Church in Baton Rouge. The St. Joseph Conference was officially started Nov. 21, 1867; however, the society recognizes 1865 as its founding date because this is when Father Delacroix arrived in Baton Rouge.

The Baton Rouge Conference helped finance schools in Baton Rouge, including St. Vincent’s Academy (now known as Catholic High School) and St. Joseph’s Academy. The society continues to do charitable work for the poor, orphans and the homeless.

L. Paul Amiss and Eugene Cazedessus, two prominent Catholics, started the first Knights of Columbus Council in Baton Rouge on Sunday Jan. 22, 1905. Father Joseph Solignac celebrated Mass at St. Joseph Cemetery on Main Street. Currently there are five courts in Baton Rouge. The local Catholic Daughters of America courts hold a number of charitable fundraisers, such as selling cookbooks, hosting dinners and other social events. The organization also campaigns to local legislative authorities.

Through Operation Morning Star, members are encouraged to learn about the laws which may influence the Catholic faith, and contact their state representatives to make their personal positions known.

The Knights of St. Peter Claver is an international benevolent organization of African-American Catholic men. The order was founded in Mobile, Alabama in 1909. In the fall of 1914, Father Francis Rombouts invited Father C. Rebescher of Mobile to come to Baton Rouge to organize a council in the capital city.

Frank St. Ro- main acted as the first Grand Knight, while Father Rom- bouts took the role as order chaplain. Today the organization continues to provide programs and projects to build strong communities in underserved areas. Members have served as religion teachers for the parish religious office, chaperoned youth nights, and served as teachers for Vacation Bible School. Donations collected by the Knights of Peter Claver are used to purchase back-to-school supplies, Christmas gifts for children of incarcerated mothers, as well as fund local annual college scholarships.

These lay groups which had early beginnings in Baton Rouge, have expanded outside city limits and are still functioning and carrying out the mission of the Catholic Church today.

Jones is the associate archivist for the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

Living missionary disciple

By Dina Dow

May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ enlighten the eyes of our hearts, that we may know what is the hope that belongs to our call (Eph 1:17-18).

The faithful are immersed into the life of Christ through baptism. This life includes the call to be living missionary disciples, which happens to be the theme of the 2017 Catechetical Sunday celebration taking place in a couple of weeks (Sunday, Sept. 17). The Mass readings from the 22nd and 23rd Sundays in Ordinary Time present basic characteristics of how to be a living missionary disciple. This is the heart of evangelization. These traits include a faithful proclamation of the word, a hopeful response to an encounter with Christ, a preservation of the heart all rooted in prayer and love.

Faithful proclamation of the word

Living missionary disciples are called to not only know the word of God, but to also share it with others who cross their path. Some receive the faith with char- ity, while others will reject it outright. Despite the interaction, the faithful are called to persist in search of truth, articulate the faith and engage in dialogue to share the message of hope.

As we hear in the reading from the great prophet Jeremiah, this does not always end up well. He expresses his frustration to God by saying, “...you duped me” in current terms, “...you tricked me!” Jeremiah’s message of “re- pentance” has backfired on him. Instead of the people turning away from sin and converting back to God, they laugh at Jeremiah and consider him to be nuts. Yet, he persists, because the fire of the word of God outweighs the mockery. Eventually the people will turn their icy hearts toward God.

Ask yourself, “Who am I called to talk to about God’s love and mercy? Am I re- minding them it is never too late? When have I been mocked because of the faith?” How can I respond to this rejection and invite others to a deeper faith in God?”

Hope in the encounter

The purpose of a living missionary disciple is to lead people to encounter Christ. This encounter offers hope to those who suffer because with the joy of discipleship also comes suffering and self-denial.

Jesus prepares his apostles for his looming Passion. He encourages them to remain hopeful and vigilant. Pope Francis, during his Wednesday audience on Aug. 2, encouraged the faithful to strive to be living signs of hope for the entire human family. He stated, “We must help one another in the many needs of everyday life, but also when we are in need of hope, especially in times of darkness and dif- ficulty, hope is no easy virtue, yet when the Holy Spirit dwells in our hearts, it is he who teaches us to trust in the Lord’s provident care and to strive constantly, in our communities, to be living signs of hope for the entire human family.”

Ask yourself, “Who am I accompany- ing to Jesus? Am I a living sign of hope in my family, my workplace, my friends, my faith community and the world? Who is suffering and needs encouragement and hope?”

Obstacles in discipleship

We are called to be “watchmen” of the faith, guarding the truth and speaking out against falsehood. Many times the truth falls upon “hardened hearts.” When the “heart is hard,” there is an obsta- cle for receiving the truth. What makes one’s heart hard? Paragraph No. 1873 of The Catechism of the Catholic Church states, “The root of all sins lies in man’s}
Sidewalk counselors on the frontline at Delta Clinic

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Noise can be a major contributing factor leading women with crisis pregnancies to choose to have an abortion. The clamor can come from boyfriends or husbands saying, “Get rid of it or the relationship is over,” embarrassed parents or grandparents saying, “You have the rest of your life ahead of you, don’t ruin it,” or the mothers saying to themselves, “My life will be over.”

A last distracting voice comes from volunteers quickly ushering them into the abortion clinic saying, “Don’t listen to those protestors” trying to drown out the trained sidewalk counselor’s message, “God loves you, you don’t have to do this.”

During 40 Days for Life, scheduled for Sept. 7–Nov. 5, a peaceful community-wide vigil of prayer, sidewalk counseling and other peaceful vigil activities will take outside the Delta Clinic to let God’s “still small voice” override such noise.

Chris Sellars and Newman Roblin, known as one of the “patriarchs” among the pro-life ministers at Delta, are often the first to come into contact with people coming to Delta. They hand out literature to people in their car before they pull into the parking lot of the clinic.

“We try to be non-confrontational,” said Sellars, a member of Our Lady of Mercy Church in Baton Rouge. He said three things counselors must do are “be nice, be nice and be nice.”

He estimated that 95–98 percent of the women coming to the clinic are young and unmarried. Often they are pressured into having an abortion.

Roblin said, “I look them in the eye,” adding conversations may start with a simple, “Hey that’s a nice looking truck or car” before asking if they need help. This can lead to deeper conversations. He said some of the women need someone to talk to. But he leaves the results up to God.

Roblin and Sellars said counselors work hard to convey love, support and abortion alternatives to the women before they enter the clinic, because often once they enter it, “it’s a done deal.”

Sellars conceded, “It’s a miracle if they change their minds,” but he sees it happen. Especially when it’s evident the mothers are hesitant to have an abortion, it can take changing the mind of the people accompanying them.

Sellars recalled a young man from Africa brought in his girlfriend for an abortion. The counselors prayed with him and he went into the clinic and got his girlfriend before she had the procedure.

“God performs miracles all the time,” said Sellars.

During the first year, the counselors await outside the Delta Clinic to pray. He estimated that 95–98 “confirmed saves” meaning the mothers told the counselors they were not going through with the abortion. They were given rosaries and baby gifts and ongoing support from the counselors, said Sellars. He also writes their names down to include in a weekly “activity report” he emails to pro-life ministers and requests prayers for them.

Roblin also started a prayer line so people of the local church parishes can pray for the women the counselors have spoken with.

Sellars and Roblin said there are a lot of “ups and downs” concerning the abortion issue, but counselors stay committed to their ministry.

“We’re going to be there no matter what,” said Sellars. This was echoed by other counselors, some who drive long distances to get to Delta.

Jaqueline Martin, a member of St. John the Baptist Church in Zachary, has been sidewalk counseling for two years in the midst of family and medical problems.

“Standing on the sidewalks is hard,” said Martin. “But I give it up for the children. My prayers have caused me to get over it and get on with it. They (the babies) are dying. But they are not alone. We are at the foot of the cross with them. They are not alone.”

She and the other counselors also pray for the conversion of the volunteers, referred to as “deathscourts,” who usher the people from their cars into the clinic. They are often young adults who are misled by concepts about when life begins and “choice,” according to Martin.

“They (the children) are aware of what’s going on. They know children are losing their life and there is death going on in the building. They know more than most kids their age,” said Hanks.

“The kids are such a beautiful witness to life. Jesus said ‘Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.’”

O’Neill and her husband were house directors with Gabriel Project, which assists women with crisis pregnancies.

Julie Hanks and her friend, Amanda O’Neill travel with their children, who are home-schooled, from Ponchatoula to Delta. The group is known among pro-life ministers as “The Demon Busters.”

Hanks said she was volunteering at the Restoration House Pregnancy Resource Center in Hammond when she felt God calling her to be involved in pro-life ministry at Delta.

She said it is unsettling for some of the people coming to the clinic to see the young children, who send a pro-life message with their presence.

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Julie Hanks, Amanda O’Neill and their children, known as “The Demon Busters,” pray outside of Delta Clinic in Baton Rouge. Photo by Debbie Shelley | The Catholic Commentators
Father Donald G. Bahlinger SJ, a native of Baton Rouge, died Saturday, Aug. 19 at St. Alphonsus Rodriguez Pavilion in Grand Coteau. He was 88 years old, a Jesuit for 71 years and a priest for 58 years.

Father Bahlinger will be remembered as a man of zeal and compassion, according to family members.

“His gift was to teach us to serve ‘the least of these’ without fear,” said Allyson Mayeaux, a niece of Father Bahlinger.

His life was celebrated in a Mass of Christian Burial on Aug. 26, at St. Charles College Chapel in Grand Coteau. Burial was at the Jesuit Cemetery in Grand Coteau and continued in St. Charles College.

Father Bahlinger was born Aug. 24, 1928, to Julius A. Bahlinger Jr., and Mathilda Fabacher Bahlinger, who predeceased him in death. He had six brothers and two sisters. His brothers Julius, Vernon and Charles and sister, Sister Kathleen Bahlinger CSJ, also died before him. He is survived by his brothers Marion, Reginald and Harold and sister Sister Barbara Bahlinger CSJ.

Father Bahlinger attended Sacred Heart of Jesus School and Catholic High School, both in Baton Rouge. After graduating from Catholic High, he entered the Society of Jesus on July 30, 1946 at St. Charles College.

Following first vows he studied humanities in Grand Coteau and continued his studies at Woodstock College in Woodstock, Maryland and Spring Hill College in Mobile, Alabama, earning a bachelor’s degree in philosophy and classics. He studied theology at St. Mary’s College in St. Marys, Kansas, earning a licentiate in sacred theology and later earned a master’s degree in counseling at Loyola University in Chicago.

He was ordained to the priesthood on June 17, 1959 in St. Joseph Chapel at Spring Hill College.

Father Bahlinger was part of two pioneering efforts in the former New Orleans Province, first in Houston and then in Paraguay. He was one of five Jesuits who founded Strake Jesuit College Preparatory in Houston, Texas. From 1961 to 1976, he served as director of guidance and was principal at Strake from 1970-72. He also taught Latin, English, religion and speech and moderated several extra-curricular activities. He is still remembered fondly by Strake alumni, for whom he was an important mentor.

After a sabbatical in 1976-77, Father Bahlinger began to focus his energy on ministering to the Hispanic community. He spent two years working in Guatemala, from 1977-79, then volunteered to go to Paraguay when that province requested assistance. He served there for 16 years in the pastoral ministry, often working with the very poor.

Father Bahlinger returned to the U.S. as assistant pastor at St. Joseph Church in Houston from 1996-98, but soon returned to Central America as pastor at San Bartolome in Arcatao, El Salvador from 1998-2005.

He later ministered in various places including Our Lady of Guadalupe in San Antonio, Texas, and in the offices of Hispanic Ministries in the Archdioceses of Mobile, the Archdiocese of New Orleans and the Diocese of Lafayette.

He was serving at Sacred Heart Church in El Paso, Texas, when his failing health dictated that he be missioned to the St. Alphonsus Rodriguez Pavilion in Grand Coteau in 2015.

Father Bahlinger is remembered as serving those most in need and was happiest serving in pastoral ministry to the poor.

Memorial gifts may be made to the USA Central and Southern Province of the Society of Jesus at 4511 West Pine Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63108 or online at jesuitscentralsothern.org.

“His gift was to teach us to serve ‘the least of these’ without fear.”

Allyson Mayeaux
Niece

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Students view history through the eclipse

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

St. Theresa School art teacher Pamela Gyan loves the moon. As a child, her mother woke her up “for every (space flight) lift off and every splash down.”

“My nickname when I was young was ‘Moonbeam,’ So I just love the moon. I love space period – just all space,” said Gyan, with tears in her eyes.

That is why she incorporated the solar eclipse into art projects at the Gonzales school. The Aug. 21 event was the first coast-to-coast total solar eclipse since 1918. The 70-mile-wide path of totality stretched from Oregon through South Carolina, transforming day into night for two minutes at a time. For Gyan, news that south Louisiana would have a glimpse at a partial eclipse was enough to inspire her artistic eye. She logged onto NASA’s website to download lesson plans and ideas for artwork, including viewing boxes.

“We always want (students) to be safe and I’ve been showing them how you can construct the box so that you can project it through the pinhole into the inside of the box and safely view the eclipse,” she said.

“I think it’s really cool how they’re building them (viewing boxes) and how it can work,” said eighth-grader Ellen Adcox.

For the younger students, Gyan used black construction paper and white chalk to recreate the sun’s corona, the fiery crown of the sun, during totality. Students were going to view the eclipse through eclipse glasses, viewing boxes and through a cutout in the shape of the state of Louisiana to highlight the shadows. Gyan said she doesn’t think the students had grasped the importance of the historic event.

“I think they will once they see it because it’s so cool,” she said. “I remember I was probably 16 and I was at Oak Alley (Plantation) and an eclipse happened, and I don’t think it was a full eclipse, but I knew not to look at the sun so I looked down at the ground and through the shadows of the oak trees all these tiny crescent shapes showed up and that is the eclipse of the moon and the NASA site even shows that.”

Just before viewing time, hundreds of students gathered in the gym where a large screen played a live stream of NASA’s eclipse coverage. Fourth-grade teacher Beth Sinanan ordered NASA approved glasses, but because of the demand across the country, she only received half of her order.

“I ordered 100, but they only sent 50,” she said. “So, I ordered some more and they turned out to be fakes.”

“And, that’s fine,” Gyan quickly added, “because we can only watch 50 kids at a time to be careful.”

“Put on your glasses and look up!” came the instructions and all heads were bowed. Then she let them have one more look.

“We always want (students) to be safe and I’ve been showing them how you can construct the box so that you can project it through the pinhole into the inside of the box and safely view the eclipse.”

Pamela Gyan
St. Theresa School

Students at St. Theresa School in Gonzales look in awe at the solar eclipse Aug. 21. Photo by Bonny Van | The Catholic Commentator

For just a few seconds, they were able to experience something that created a memory of a lifetime.
More narrow gate?/ Refuse to baptize?

Q At dinner recently with two Catholic priests, they happened to observe that it will be more difficult for them to reach heaven than for most people. I dismissed that opinion rather quickly until I read a passage from section 14 in “Lumen Gentium.” Speaking of Catholics, it said: “He is not saved, however, who, though part of the body of the church, does not persevere in charity. He remains indeed in the bosom of the church, but, as it were, only in a ‘bodily’ manner and not ‘in his heart.’

“All the church’s children should remember that their exalted status is to be attributed not to their own merits but to the special grace of Christ. If they fail moreover to respond to that grace in thought, word and deed, not only shall they not be saved but they will be more severely judged.”

Is the “gate of heaven,” therefore, narrower for Catholics because more is given and expected? (Vacherie, Louisiana)

Let me say first that I have always believed that the vast majority of the people God created will wind up in heaven. Why would God have made all of us in the first place, if that experiment were destined to fail?

And I do not think that the gate is more narrow for Catholics; in fact, I think the opposite — namely, that Catholics have a head start on eternal salvation. We Catholics have access to abundant graces through the seven sacraments that help us to live as God wants; and we have, from Christ, the guarantee of fundamental truth and of continual guidance in theological teaching.

What the Second Vatican Council was cautioning against (in your quote from “Lumen Gentium”) was the same kind of formalism Jesus had detected in the religious leaders of his day — the conviction that merely by officially “belonging” to the church, righteousness and eternal salvation were certainties.

The council noted that salvation is worked out “on the ground,” by sharing God’s love with those we meet. (Didn’t Jesus say the same thing in Matthew 25, when he suggested that the ultimate thing we’ll be judged on is whether we helped people when they needed it?)

It is true that, as Luke’s Gospel says (12:48), “much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more.” But that heavier responsibility can be balanced by the opportunities that life offers. (Priests, for example, have the daily Eucharist, the Divine Office and the frequent chance to minister directly with the compassion of Jesus.)

Can a priest refuse to christen a child born out of wedlock? (Mason Neck, Virginia)

The answer which may not be the one you were expecting or wanted is, “It depends.” Simply that the child’s parents are unmarried would not justify refusing a baptism, and I would call Pope Francis as my witness on this.

In 2014, on the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, Pope Francis was reported by the Italian press as having baptized the child of an unmarried couple in a ceremony in the Sistine Chapel. That would have squared with what Pope Francis, in 2009 while still a cardinal in Argentina, was quoted as telling the Italian magazine 30 Giorni: “The child has absolutely no responsibility for the state of the parents’ marriage. And often a baptism can be a new start for the parents as well.”

There may, however, be other circumstances that would warrant delaying a baptism. The church’s Code of Canon Law requires that, for an infant to be baptized, “there must be a founded hope that the infant will be brought up in the Catholic religion” (No. 868.1.2).

Priests vary somewhat as to just what evidence is needed for that assurance, but pastoral sensitivity is always critical; I am personally inclined to give the benefit of the doubt to the parents.

Nearly all parishes require parents to attend a class or two of baptismal preparation, which can help to bring them back to regular church attendance and sometimes, if the circumstances permit, to have a marriage blessed in the church. (And even if there is virtually no likelihood that the parents will bring the child to Mass regularly, sometimes a grandparent is willing to step into that role.)

Q I have been divorced for three years and need to proceed with getting an annulment. My ex-husband is getting remarried next month, and I am getting married again next spring (eight months from now).

I did not pursue this before because I had been led to believe that my ex-husband would have to sign something, and I knew that he would never give up that control. (Now, from a recent column of yours, I understand this is not so and that is such a relief.)

But I do have a few questions. I no longer live in the diocese where I got married: Can I just go to the priest in my current parish and get the application form, and where do I submit it?

And is it true that if I get an annulment, then my children will have been born out of wedlock? And how long does the annulment process take? (Richmond, Virginia)

You may file for an annulment either in the diocese where the marriage took place, or in the diocese in which you now reside or in the diocese in which your husband now resides.

You would be well-advised to consult your parish priest right away and ask him which of the dioceses he thinks might be able to process the case more quickly.

There is some variation on this, depending on the size of the marriage tribunal staff and the number of cases that are pending. In many dioceses, once the paperwork is submitted it could take upward of a year for the testimony to be evaluated (including that of the witnesses), any necessary follow-up questions to be asked and a decision to be rendered.

So your time frame already may be a bit ambitious if your hope is to get married in a Catholic ceremony. (And parishes are generally not permitted to schedule a wedding until an annulment has been granted.)

Ask your parish priest for the necessary forms. He will either have them or ask the diocese to send them to you.

Finally, as to the legitimacy of your children, not to worry — the church’s Code of Canon Law speaks to this: Canon 1137 says that “children conceived or born of a valid or putative marriage are legitimate,” and Canon 1064.3 explains that a “putative” marriage is one that had been entered into in good faith by at least one of the parties.

FATHER DOYLE is a pastor in the Diocese of Albany, New York. Questions may be sent to Father Kenneth Doyle at askfatherdoyle@gmail.com and 30 Columbia Circle Dr., Albany, NY 12203.
Retrouvaille offers healing to troubled marriages

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Marriage can often seem a lost ideal in modern society where divorce rates are estimated as high as 50 percent and broken homes and consolidated families are caught up in the carnage.

One Denham Springs couple, however, having endured their own share of marital struggles, are hoping to make a difference by bringing a fresh perspective to a ministry that has been active in the Diocese of Baton Rouge for the past 27 years. Randall and Robin Bellard, parishioners at Immaculate Conception Church in Denham Springs, are one year into their new roles as community coordinators for Retrouvaille, a Christian-based program designed to help couples work through and resolve issues that may be causing trouble in their marriage.

“We believe God led us to Retrouvaille to save our marriage,” Randall Bellard said. “Writing and presenting our personal story has helped us to heal our marriage. In thanks for this blessing, we want to give back and help other hurting couples.”

He said Retrouvaille, which was established in the diocese in the spring of 1990 by couples who were volunteering in Marriage Encounter, is a three-phase program beginning with a weekend experience, followed by post-weekend follow-ups and monthly small group support meetings.

The weekends last from Friday evening through Sunday afternoon and are presented by three couples and a priest. Bellard noted the presenting team has experienced disillusionment, pain and conflict in their own lives, and through their own personal struggles of reconciliation and healing, offer hope.

Bellard, who has been married to Robin for 28 years, said couples will find courage and strength in the realization that they are not alone in their struggles.

“Couples will not be asked to share their problems with anyone else (but) will be encouraged to put the past behind them and to look beyond the hurt and pain in order to rediscover each other in a new and positive way,” Bellard said, adding that the weekend provides “tools to help them with communication, forgiveness and trust. It teaches a dialogue process of meaningful communication on a feeling level.”

Acknowledging that healing cannot take place in one weekend, the follow-up sessions include a series of two-hour talks by volunteer couples during a six-week period. Bellard said the majority of couples find the follow-up sessions to be the most productive components of the program, and where significant growth occurs.

The final phase is a monthly small group support meeting, called “Continuing Our Retrouvaille Experience (CORE) that allows for a casual and supportive interaction with other Retrouvaille couples. Bellard said the meetings reinforce the communication tools learned on the original weekend.

By any account, Retrouvaille has been a success, especially when considering that in the past 40 years 76 percent of couples who have attended a Retrouvaille weekend and the subsequent meetings were still married five years later.

“In our society today, with the pressures of work, family life and other conflicting demands, marriage relationships are often taken for granted,” said Bellard, who makes it a point to try to eat dinner with his wife and their adult children daily while enforcing a strict “no electronics” policy. “Without attention and care, marriages wither and couples slowly and quietly drift apart and the children are often torn apart by hurtful actions.

Far too many couples live in misery and do not know the joy of a loving relationship.”

Bellard said he and his wife were first approached about becoming involved in Retrouvaille in 2016 while attending a CORE meeting. It was during that meeting when Erroll and Mary Grace, one of the founding couples, asked the Bellards if they would be interested in serving in the ministry.

“Robin and I want to serve as many hurting couples as we can,” Bellard said. “One of our goals is to fill every weekend program. The more couples we serve, the more marriages we can hopefully save.

Just taking time to share your story with other couples and having them tell you, ‘Thank you,’ after hearing your story is the best feeling in the world. We are helping hurting couples and they are helping us to continue to heal our marriage.”

“Robin and I are very excited,” he said, adding that he and his wife are involved in several ministries at Immaculate Conception, including the Knights of Columbus and vacation Bible school. “Robin and I allow God in our marriage and we pray together, because marriage takes three.”

Weekends are held in the fall and in the spring, with the next one scheduled Sept. 8-10 at the Bishop Robert E. Tracy Center in Baton Rouge. Each couple pays a registration fee, and after the weekend, couples are asked to make a donation to help cover the expenses if they can. All materials and meals are included in the cost.

Bellard emphasized no couple is ever denied the chance to attend because of financial difficulties and added that assistance is available. For more information, call 225-271-4092 or visit HelpOurMarriage.com.
WASHINGTON (CNS) – Saying there is an “urgent need” to address “the sin of racism” in the country and find solutions to it, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has established a new Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism and appointed one of the country’s African-American Catholic bishops to chair it.

Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, USCCB president, initiated the committee Aug. 23 “to focus on addressing the sin of racism in our society, and even in our church, and the urgent need to come together as a society to find solutions.”

He appointed Bishop George V. Murry of Youngstown, Ohio, chairman of the USCCB’s Committee on Catholic Education, to chair the new ad hoc committee.

“Recent events have exposed the extent to which the sin of racism continues to afflict our nation,” Cardinal DiNardo said in a statement. “The establishment of this new ad hoc committee will be wholly dedicated to engaging the church and our society to work together in unity to challenge the sin of racism, to listen to persons who are suffering under this sin, and to come together in the love of Christ to know one another as brothers and sisters.”

The appointing of members to serve on the new body will be finalized in coming days, the USCCB said in an announcement. It added that the committee’s mandate “will be confirmed at the first meeting, expected very shortly.”

“I look forward to working with my brother bishops as well as communities across the United States to listen to the needs of individuals who have suffered under the sin of racism and together find solutions to this epidemic of hate that has plagued our nation for far too long,” Bishop Murry said in a statement.

“Through Jesus’ example of love and mercy, we are called to be a better people than what we have witnessed over the past weeks and months as a nation. Through listening, prayer and meaningful collaboration, I’m hopeful we can find lasting solutions and common ground where racism will no longer find a place in our hearts or in our society.”

The new ad hoc committee also will “welcome and support” implementation of the U.S. bishops’ new pastoral letter on racism, expected to be released in 2018. In 1979, the bishops issued a pastoral in racism titled “Brothers and Sisters to Us,” in which they addressed many themes, but the overall message then as today was “racism is a sin.”

Creation of a new formal body that is part of the USCCB formed on the USCCB Executive Committee’s “unanimous recommendation” - speaks to how serious the U.S. Catholic Church leaders take the problem of racism in America today.

In addition to the Executive Committee’s recommendation, the USCCB said, the decision to initiate the new Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism also was made in consultation with members of the USCCB’s Committee on Priorities and Plans.

The formation of the ad hoc committee also follows the conclusion of the work of the Peace in Our Communities Task Force. The task force was formed in July 2016 by then-Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville, Kentucky, who was then USCCB president. Bishop Robert W. Muench is a member of that committee.

Archbishop Kurtz initiated it in response to racially related shootings in Baton Rouge as well as in Minneapolis and Dallas.

To head it he appointed Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory of Atlanta, one of the nation’s African-American prelates who was the first black Catholic bishop to be president of the USCCB (2001-2004).

The task force’s mandate was to explore ways of promoting peace and healing around the country. Archbishop Kurtz also wanted the bishops to look for ways they could help the suffering communities, as well as police affected by the incidents.

On Nov. 14, during the USCCB’s fall general assembly, Archbishop Gregory told the bishops to issue, sooner rather than later, a document on racism.

“A statement from the full body of bishops on racism is increasingly important at this time,” said the archbishop in reporting on the work of the task force.

He said the president of the bishops’ conference and relevant committees need to “identify opportunities for a shorter-term statement on these issues, particularly in the context of the postelection uncertainty and disaffection.”

He also urged prayer, ecumenical and interfaith collaboration, dialogue, parish-based and diocesan conversations and training, as well as opportunities for encounter.
Redemptorist principal brings stability to school

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Aimee Wiles joyfully glided through the hallways at Redemptorist St. Gerard School in Baton Rouge, eagerly seizing every opportunity to spend time with a student, much to the delight of both.

Wiles’ exuberance and her sense of peace were apparent.

“I’m happy, I’m much more relaxed and I don’t plan on going anywhere,” said Wiles, who is in her first year at Redemptorist.

For a school that has been through four principals in a little more than 15 months and three in 10 months, Wiles’ commitment to the north Baton Rouge school is welcome, a fact she understands.

“If you want a school to have longevity, the parents and the students need to feel like they are wanted, that it’s stable to be here,” she said, adding that one of her goals is to get to know every student and help them feel comfortable. “That stability and caring atmosphere does matter to students and to staff.”

Wiles is no stranger to an inner city school environment, having previously taught at the now shuttered Redemptorist High School and spending the past school year as founding principal at Cristo Rey Baton Rouge Franciscan High School, which, ironically, is her new neighbor. She also taught at a Cristo Rey school in Chicago, but it was her time as an administrator at a public school in west Chicago, which was compromised of all African-American students, that she called the most enjoyable of her career.

“We did a lot of things to turn the school around,” she said. “It was fabulous.”

Wiles admitted her first goal, and perhaps most important at this point, is to gain the trust of parents and provide an environment of learning and safety. One of her initial tasks was to rid the classrooms, closets and other areas of clutter.

The floors were waxed and replaced where needed, many areas received a much-needed fresh coat of paint, leaks in the ceiling and windows were repaired, and a faulty air conditioning system is now in working order.

A grant from the Diocese of Baton Rouge helped defray some of the costs and the school picked up the tab for the rest.

“I want an environment that is inviting to the kids, and I always think, ‘Would I want my kid to come here,’” she said. “If it’s not presentable enough for my kid to come here, then it’s not presentable for anyone.”

Educationally, Wiles made the decision to institute block scheduling for the middle school. Block scheduling is unique in that students have four 90-minute classes daily, rather than the standard 45- to 50-minute structure.

According to Wiles, students will attend math and reading classes daily, where she said students appeared to be weaker, with social sciences and social studies being taught every other day. The fourth class is an elective of the student’s choosing, whether it’s physical education, art, library, etc.

“It brings a lot of structure and we felt like it was needed,” Wiles said. “So far it’s working great. You get much more done, especially in science where you can do an entire experiment in a class and you are not rushing.”

Along with providing the students with their best opportunities to succeed, Wiles is equally as emphatic in her commitment to the teachers and administrators. She called the staff “fabulous” and said they “work so hard and what they do with some of the kids is amazing.”

“That’s the other thing,” she quickly added. “You want people around your children that like children, that want to be there, that want (the students) to succeed. We have these amazing teachers that go above and beyond all of the time.”

Despite the turmoil of the past year, Wiles said all but two teachers have returned for the new school year and admitted part of her job is to make them feel like family. Having previously served in an inner city environment, she can relate to teaching in a school with little resources and a smaller payroll.

“But you love what you do,” she said. “They are excited and I think they want the stability, someone who is going to be here, someone who is going to work with them. The school is their passion.”

Redemptorist opened the school year with 230 students going through the turnstiles, a 15 percent increase from a year ago. Wiles is hoping that number will continue to trend upward, as she remains committed to becoming a fixture in north Baton Rouge.

“I get the struggle, I get why people want a safe school, a faith-based environment,” said Wiles, who was raised by a single mother who worked two jobs so Wiles and her brother could attend a Catholic school. “And a lot of people are willing to make that happen. I was given that opportunity and I want to provide that opportunity for others.

“Every child deserves a good education, and this is the place I want to be.”

Retirees have plenty to offer and more time to do it. This special section circulates some 40,000 copies will highlights grandparenting, stresses the importance of having financial and practical plans, staying connected with friends and family, and keeping physically, mentally and spiritually fit. Also warns seniors about potential scams and the dangers in the home.

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Deadline is Sept. 15.
RETURNING TO GLORY

Ascension of Our Lord Catholic Church Restoration

By Debbie Shelby
The Catholic Commentator

A pew and flooring restoration proj-
ect at Ascension of Our Lord Church in Donaldsonville unearthed the reverence and care that the founders of the church saw in building the facility, said Doug Schexnayder, project coordinator.

“The current project stems back to 2013, when the interior of Ascension of Our Lord was painted, with the cost of $16,000,” Schexnayder said. “So we installed cushions and care at Ascension of Our Lord Church in Smoke Bend, Arkansas.”

But even the best “patch jobs” couldn’t keep the pews from needing to be replaced. “Some of the crack-
ing on the seat was so intense that people were actually getting pinched. So we installed cushions to prevent the pinching,” said Schexnayder.

The maintenance committee of Ascension of Our Lord and its clus-
ter parish, St. Francis of Assisi pastor Father Paul Yi and the “over-
whelming generosity” of the congregations and commu-
nities, the church was able to proceed with the project, said Schexnayder.

“Once the church received substantial dam-
age from Hurricane Betsy,” said Schexnay-
der. “Those who had donated to the new pews were offered one of the old pews for their homes. Because the pews were 18 feet-long, making them too long for the inside of many houses, the place they need to be is to prevent further deterioration, local carpenters and ‘handy people’ cut the pews to a smaller size. With the pews removed, the project leaders decided it would be a good time to replace the wiring of the sound system and improve the lighting fixtures, which all now have LED bulbs.

The pews were scheduled to arrive from New Holland Church Furniture in Pennsylvania on Sept. 11 and should take about two weeks to install. After the floors are complete, new carpet will be put in the sanctuary area, and the church will be cleaned. The newly renovated church should be open Sept. 30.

Father Yi said the renovation project has been a good way for the church to celebrate its past while looking to the fu-
ture.

“The impressive church that the faithful of Donaldsonville built reflects their great passion and love for Our Lord Je-
sus Christ,” said Father Yi. “Since its in-
ception this beautiful church served as an instrument of evangelization. Pa-
rishioners and visitors over the years have marveled at the sheer size, symme-
try and art of this worship space.

Even non-Catholics visiting this church connect in mystical ways to the beauty and the dignity of their soul cre-
ated by God himself. We hope that in coming years, this worship space will continue to help people encounter Christ who is present.”

A fundraiser is scheduled for Saturday, Oct. 28 at the Ascension Catholic High School gym. All proceeds will go towards this project, said Schexnayder.

By Debbie Shelby
The Catholic Commentator

The Catholic pew and flooring project.
Shelley | The Catholic Commentator

Photos by Debbie
Schexnayder.

“We noticed that Ascension of Our Lord and St. Francis have a ‘pay as you go’ philoso-
phy concerning projects, Schexnayder
said. ‘At that time (2014) we did not have
the cash in the bank to af-
ford the pews, so we decided to hold off on the project un-
til we could pay for the proj-
ect without getting a loan.

‘Volunteers continued to patch pews until we had money for new pews,’ said Schexnayder.

“The contractor that’s refinishing the floor of this high of quality and there are
fourth generations attending Mass here,” said Father Yi.

The old pews were installed in 1965 af-
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leaders decided it would be a good time to replace the wiring of the sound system and improve the lighting fixtures, which all now have LED bulbs.

As with any large project, there were obstacles to overcome. “The challenge, when working with an old building like this one, which opened for service in 1896 and took 10 years to construct, is to stay focused and stay on budget because everywhere you look there’s something to do,” said Schexnay-
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Volunteer Raymond Templet said one big challenge is moving the church’s beautiful piano.

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der.

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was fruitful, said June Hebert, director of religious education at St. John.

“When looking for a new venue for our confirmation retreat, the Holy Spirit led me to explore the option of participating in the Angola State Penitentiary Retreat,” said Hebert. “I had heard how it impacted the candidates in several of our surrounding church parishes. I must admit I was somewhat skeptical and a little afraid of going to a maximum-security prison myself, much less taking a group of high school juniors. After meeting with Pat Chidester at St. George Church (in Baton Rouge), she alleviated many of my concerns. She did say it was a retreat that the young adults would never forget and she was right.”

St. John pastor Father Matt Lorrain said, “The retreat started with a visit to the hospice unit where we heard talks from two inmates who volunteer to help care for the dying. They set the tone for the group as we looked for the sick and dying. They also showed us much love and care for the dying. They set the tone of high school juniors. After meeting with Pat Chidester at St. George Church (in Baton Rouge), she alleviated many of my concerns. She did say it was a retreat that the young adults would never forget and she was right.”

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BETA WINNERS – St. Thomas Aquinas Regional High School junior Rachel White, middle, and Claire Krousel placed fourth national National Beta Club Convention in Orlando, Florida this summer in the Banner division. Each year students who place at the state level are eligible to compete at the national convention. White and Krousel won first place at Louisiana’s State Convention. Pictured with White and Krousel is Nick Stoulig. Photo provided by Michelle Chauvin | St. Thomas Aquinas High School

Students at St. John Interparochial School in Plaquemine are all smiles on the first day of school, Aug. 11. Photo by April Hedges | St. John School

WELCOME BACK – The Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE) teachers from the University of Notre Dame in the Diocese of Baton Rouge were honored at a welcome back to school dinner on Aug. 20 at the home of John and Jeanette Beck in Donaldsonville. Teachers, mentors, principals, pastors and chaplains from the three schools were invited. The schools hosting the five ACE teachers in the Diocese of Baton Rouge are Ascension Catholic Regional Elementary School in Donaldsonville, St. John the Evangelist Interparochial School in Plaquemine and St. Elizabeth School in Paincourtville. Attending the dinner were, from left, Father Ryan Hallford, parochial vicar at Holy Family Church in Port Allen; Kathleen Herpich, principal at St. Elizabeth; Father Paul Yi, pastor of Ascension of Our Lord in Donaldsonville; Bishop Robert W. Muench; Audrey Tatum; Patrick Scheuring; Charlie Labuz; Cherie Schlatter, principal at St. John; Zach Zamora; Sandy Pizzolato; and John Beck, principal at Ascension Catholic. Photo provided by Michael Miller | Catholic Schools Office, Diocese of Baton Rouge

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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

The Glass Castle

Lionsgate

Film version of Jeannette Walls’ 2005 memoir of her impoverished childhood tries to put a cheery gloss on everything, as if all the excruciating history was somehow not as bad as it seemed at the time. Together with her alcoholic, wannabe-engineer father (Woody Harrelson) and failed artist of a mother (Naomi Watts) as well as her three siblings Walls (Ella Anderson, mostly, as a child; Brie Larson from high school on) leads a peripatetic existence one step ahead of the law and bill collectors before ending up in Dad’s hometown of Welch, West Virginia. There are no moral forces at work in the story. There’s only the feral ability to survive. Yet director Destin Daniel Cretton, who co-wrote the screenplay with Andrew Lanham, avoids all the most wretched material from the book to invoke some kind of rosy Appalachian glow. A brief scene of implied child sexual abuse, physical violence, fleeting profanities and rough language. A-III; PG-13

The Hitman’s Bodyguard

Summit

When a paid assassin (Samuel L. Jackson) becomes the key witness in the trial of a murderous dictator (Gary Oldman) an Interpol agent (Elodie Yung) turns to a once highly regarded physical violence, fleeting profanities and rough language. A-III; PG-13

The Nut Job 2: Nutty by Nature

Open Road

Frenzied but bland animated children’s comedy pits a corrupt mayor (voice of Bobby Moynihan) against the band of animals (their leaders voiced by Will Arnett and Katherine Heigl) who inhabit his city’s main park as he schemes to bulldoze the space, and turn it into a profit-making amusement concern. Respectable themes about protecting the environment and the value of friendship and teamwork make director and co-writer Cal Brunker’s sequel to the 2014 original acceptable for a wide swath of age groups. But the outsized special effects, seen from the small creatures’ perspective, together with the many menacing situations to which the plot gives rise, may be too scary for little kids. Cartoon violence, including explosions, recurring peril, mild gross-out and scatological jokes. A-II; PG

All Saints

Sony

Low-key, fact-based story of a dwindling Episcopal Church in Smyrna, Tennessee, and the pastor (John Corbett) assigned by the local bishop (Gregory Alan Williams) to shut it down and sell off its property. Partly due to the revitalizing influence of an influx of devoutly Anglican refugees from Southeast Asia (led by Nelson Lee), the clergyman sees unexpected hope for his congrega-
Rodeo donates to OLOL

The Swolfest Fishing Rodeo recently donated $250,000 toward the new Our Lady of the Lake Children’s Hospital, which is currently under construction, and has pledged another $250,000 to be fulfilled during the next five years, according to hospital officials.

In recognition of the combined $500,000 donation, the cafeteria in the new facility will be named after the rodeo, which has grown into a premier fishing event in the past 20 years.

“This partnership with Swolfest is an incredible blessing for all of the children who will be treated in the new state-of-the-art Our Lady of the Lake Children’s Hospital,” said John Paul Funes, president and CEO of Our Lady of the Lake Foundation. “Dr. Nick Rauber and his team have built the most successful fundraising tournament in the Gulf South, and we look forward to continued teamwork with Swolfest as together we aim to improve healthcare for children in Baton Rouge and across the state of Louisiana.”

Rauber, a Baton Rouge dentist, began the tournament in 1997 as a high school student and awarded the winner with a $5 trophy. His dedication over the years not only to running a top-notch event but also to giving back to the community has catapulted Swolfest into a successful weekend-long event that also includes live music, artists and food.

Swolfest held its 20th annual fishing rodeo at the Sand Dollar Marina in Grand Isle in June, hosting more than 750 registrants. The organization has raised more than $1.4 million in 20 years to benefit various charities.

“Our mission has always been to help children and armed service veterans,” Rauber said. “Knowing we had the perfect opportunity to combine all of our assets to help this wonderful hospital, right here in our own backyard, was a true honor. It will allow us a physical space to acknowledge our donation and continually help the children of Louisiana for years to come.”

The new freestanding Our Lady of the Lake Children’s Hospital is set to open in 2019.
Bishop Muench’s statement on Charlottesville tragedy

I join my brother bishops throughout the United States and our Diocesan Commission on Racial Harmony in condemning the shameful display of racism that took place in Charlottesville, Virginia.

I embrace the words of the Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo, president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and Bishop Frank Dewane, chairman of the USCCB Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development:

“We stand against the evil of racism, white supremacy and neo-Nazism. At the same time, we stand with our sisters and brothers united in the sacrifice of Jesus, by which love’s victory over every form of evil is assured.”

We cannot remain silent in the face of such blatant hatred, which denies the dignity of each human person created in the image and likeness of God, regardless of race, ethnicity, language, religion or way of life. I also quote Archbishop Charles Chaput of Philadelphia: “Racism is a poison of the soil. It’s the ugly, original sin of our country, an illness that has never fully healed.”

God can always bring good out of evil and counts on us as believing men and women of all faiths to stand up for what we know is right. Let us work together to heal our nation and create a beloved community where all fellow human beings are understood and seen as sons and daughters of God and brothers and sisters to each other.

Bishop Robert W. Muench

Being Catholic and Christian in America after Charlottesville

We live in a world that seeks ever greater division ISIS against the west and anyone else it is convenient to murder (including their fellow Muslims), Russia against Ukraine, Boko Haram against weaker Africans and now white supremacists against African Americans and Jews.Yet, our Catholicism, our common belief with other Christians that Jesus is Lord of all, and the values written into America’s Declaration of Independence and Constitution demand that we work for the unity of our nation and our world.Charlottesville is a grim reminder that we must work for unity at home before we can hope to be a leading force for world unity.

Fear and hatred of others because they differ from us by virtue of race, nationality or culture contradicts the very mission of Jesus whom we claim to follow. The Gospel two Sundays ago that we heard in church highlighted the universality of Jesus’ mission to save everyone. It told the story of Jesus being approached by a Canaanite woman begging him to heal her daughter. At first he refused. It is not clear whether Jesus was inhibited by preconceptions that his mission was only to the Jews, or whether he was using the Jews’ fear and scorn of pagans to shock them out of their wrong-thinking.

When the woman persisted, he used the Jews’ put-down word for Canaanites, “dogs,” to refuse a second time. But she would not give up and indicated that she knew he could do it. Her power to heal was enough for the “dogs” too. It was Jesus’ turn to be amazed and won over. Because of her great faith it was done for her. His disciples who had wanted to chase her away must have had much to ponder. Was Jesus’ God-given mission, and therefore theirs too, intended to save even pagans? Were there any limits to God’s mercy?

In the next chapter of St. Matthew’s Gospel, which you heard Aug. 27, Jesus asked his disciples who did they really think he was. St. Peter answered, “You are the Christ (God’s anointed one, savior), the Son of the living God.” If Jesus was the Son of God, one with God, as he said at the Last Supper, and he died and rose for us, then we all are his brothers and sisters. St. Paul understood this clearly, and so could say to the Galatians (3:28) that because Christ was sent to save all of us, the ethnic differences of Jew and Greek, the legal differences of free person or slave, the gender differences of male and female, do not matter, for “you are all one in Christ Jesus.” If St. Paul were writing today, would he not add the racial differences, “white or black?” After the resurrection and Pentecost, it was all clear. Before leaving them, Jesus gave his disciples the great commission, “Go make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always until the end of the age” (Mt 28:19-20). No one was excluded in that command. We are all equal in God’s sight.

While supremacy contradicts the whole Christian message. No one in God’s eyes is born “better” than anyone else. At the height of the civil rights movement, Martin Luther King Jr. warned us about occurrences like Charlottesville. He said that the civil rights movement would prevail, but that it was always taking two steps forward only to be driven one step back by forces that, for political gain, or economic privilege, or plain bigotry, would always say, “that’s enough equality, they should be satisfied with that.” We have learned that separate but equal is never really equal. Selfishness, greed and bigotry always seek a privileged position over others. Assuring fundamental human rights requires continual work.

When for any of the above bad reasons, particular groups of people in our country races, immigrants, women, religion-sare attacked with violence, hatred and disrespect, those who attack them must be condemned clearly and strongly. After Charlottesville, that condemnation has come from many.

Cardinal Daniel DiNardo of Houston, the president of the USCCB, as spokesperson for all the Catholic bishops of the United States, declared forthrightly, “We stand against the evil of racism, white supremacy and neo-Nazism.”

Our bishop, Robert W. Muench, has followed suit with his own statement in this issue of The Catholic Commentator. “We can’t be silent,” he says, in the face of “such blatant hatred, which denies the dignity of each human person created in the image and likeness of God.”

Our former president, Barak Obama, responded to the controversy by posting a series of tweets of his own quoting South African president Nelson Mandela, “No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin or his background or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they learn to hate, they can be taught to love... for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.” The

Viewpoint

Father John Carville

Another Perspective

P R A Y F O R T H O S E W H O P R A Y F O R U S

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

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

Sept. 6 Dcn. Jodi A. Moscona  Br. William Cawley SC
Sept. 11  Dcn. Stanley J. Ott  Br. Clement Fumo CSfR
Sept. 13  Br. Harold Harris SC
Sept. 16  Dcn. Thomas M. Robinson  Sr. Demetria Castro HMSS
The power of ritual

I don’t always find it easy to pray. Often I’m over-tired, distracted, caught-up in tasks, pressured by work, short on time, lacking the appetite for prayer or more strongly drawn to do something else. But I do pray daily; despite the fact that I often don’t want to and despite the fact that many times prayer can be boring and uninteresting, I pray daily because I’m committed to a number of rituals for prayer, the office of the church, lauds and vespers, the Eucharist and daily meditation.

And these rituals serve me well. They hold me, keep me steady and keep me praying regularly even when, many times, I don’t feel like praying. That’s the power of ritual. If I only prayed when I felt like it, I wouldn’t pray very regularly.

Ritual practice keeps us doing what we should be doing (praying, working, being at table with our families, being polite) even when our feelings aren’t always onsite. We need to do certain things not because we always feel like doing them, but because it’s right to do them.

And this is true for many areas of our lives, not just for prayer. Take, for example, the social rituals of propriety and good manners that we lean on to sustain our relationships beyond feelings. We need help. Rituals can help.

Rituals not only can help sustain a marriage, they can also help sustain our prayer lives, our civility, our manners, our graciousness, our humor, our gratitude and our balance in life. Be wary of anyone who in the name of psychology, love, or spirituality tells you that ritual is empty and you must rely on your energy, mood and feelings as your guiding compass. They won’t carry you far.

Daniel Berrigan once wrote: Don’t travel with anyone who expects you to be interesting all the time. On a long journey there are bound to be some boring stretches. St. John of the Cross echoes this when talking about prayer. He tells us that, during our generative years, one of the biggest problems we will face daily in our prayer is simple boredom.

And so we can be sure our feelings won’t sustain us, but ritual practices can.

Bishop’s statement on Hurricane Harvey

We in the Diocese of Baton Rouge extend our hearts and prayers to all devastated by the path of Hurricane Harvey. We ourselves are well experienced with the devastation national disasters can bring to life, property, livelihood and security, and we identify and empathize with those so affected.

Arrangements will be made to offer financial as well as continuing spiritual support to show our solidarity with you and our commitment to assist in your recovery to the best of our ability.

In the midst of this great hardship, let us recall the words of St. Paul: “Since we have this ministry through the mercy shown us, we are not discouraged … We are afflicted in every way, but not constrained; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not abandoned, struck down, but not destroyed. For this momentary … affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to what is seen, but to what is unseen; for what is seen is transitory, but what is unseen is eternal” (2Cor 4:1b, 8-9, 16-18).

Bishop Robert W. Muench
COMING EVENTS

SEPTEMBER 1, 2017

PaPa George Fairchild Jambalaya Cook-Off – The 10th annual PaPa George Fairchild Jambalaya Cook-Off, benefiting St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, will be held Sunday, Sept. 10 at St. Gabriel Church, 3625 Hwy. 75, St. Gabriel. Serving will begin at 11 a.m. Jambalaya will be sold for $5 a plate, and pastalaya for $7 a plate. The meals will include white beans and bread. Sweets and drinks sold. A mini-pot cook-off for the children will take place at 10 a.m. Additionally, raffle tickets for $1 each will be sold for a chance to win an LSU quilt and other handmade quilts. Other trinkets will be sold. There will also be live music. For more information, visit papageorgefairchild.com.

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, Sept. 10, 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.

Magnificat Prayer Breakfast – Father Johnson Kuriappilly, chaplain of Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center, will speak at the breakfast prayer meeting Saturday Sept. 16, 9 a.m. – noon, at Oak Lodge Reception Center, 2834 South Sherwood Forest Blvd., Baton Rouge. Tickets to the breakfast are $22, and can be obtained by mailing a check made out to Magnificat before Tuesday, Sept. 12 to Kathy Simoneaux at 9630 Victory Lane, Denham Springs, LA 70726.

Mother/Daughter Program – “Growing Up Gracefully,” a mother/daughter program for girls in eighth through 12th grades and their mothers, will take place Tuesday, Sept. 19, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m., at the St. Thomas More Church Activity Center, 11441 Goodwood Blvd., Baton Rouge. Sunday dress, please. Cost is $25 (non-refundable) for mother and one daughter. Add $5 for each additional daughter. The event is hosted by New Woman’s Life Center, Baton Rouge, and Hope Woman’s Clinic, Metairie. Online registration is available at hopewomanclinic.com/growing.

Quilt Raffle – A handmade quilt will be raffled at the St. John Primary/St. Theresa Middle Festival of Friends Friday, Sept. 29 – Sunday, Oct. 1. The quilt will be on display and tickets will be sold for $1 each during the weekend of the festival. Raffle tickets cost $1 each or six tickets for $5. The winning ticket will be pulled on Oct. 1.

RHS Class of 1977 40-Year Reunion – The Re- demptorist High School Class of 1977 will celebrate its 40-year reunion on Friday, Oct. 6, 7:30 – 10:30 p.m., at Another Broken Egg, 2531 Citiplace Court, Suite 100, Baton Rouge. Tickets are $40 per classmate or $75 per couple. No tickets will be sold at the door. For more information, please go to RHS Class of ’77 on Facebook or email Jerry Landry at jlandr4@lsu.edu, Maureen Stewart Williams at maureenwilliams@msn.com or Laura Levreae Siemore at lisimore2@att.net.

St. Alphonsus Divorce Healing Program – The St. Alphonsus divorce healing program, a 14-week program for those who are in the process of being divorced or who are divorced will meet twice a month on Tuesdays (please visit alphonsus.org for exact dates). 6:30 – 8:30 p.m., at St. Alphonsus Church, 14040 Greenwell Springs Road, Greenwell Springs. The meetings cover topics of shock, grief, denial, anger, guilt, forgiveness, money, the courts, children, the ex-spouse, annulments, dating, sexuality, marriage, staying single and more. There will be a $20 one-time fee to cover books and materials. Registration can be accessed through alphonsus.org. For more information, call the church’s formation office at 225-261-4644.

Pro-Life Mass – A monthly pro-life Mass will be celebrated on Tuesday, Sept. 12, 5:30 p.m., at St. Agnes Church, 749 East Blvd. Baton Rouge. All are invited. For information, call 225-382-4127.
HELP WANTED

From page 1

“IT became part of our life, my wife and I,” he said. “Every Sunday morning from 1 a.m. to 2 a.m. It was just a part of us. We rarely missed.”

Cathie Crochet, one of 10 of the original 26 adorers who continues to serve, said she felt called to sign up after her prayers had been answered for a job in New Roads so that she could stop commuting to Baton Rouge for work.

“Then it was probably two months after that that Father (Walsh) started with the appeal for Baton Rouge for work. "It made it even more special to have Father Miles there. It was a beautiful, beautiful ceremony,” she said. "I was very privileged to be a part of that from the very beginning."

In a letter to parishioners, current pastor Mons. Robert Bergegreen said that continuous prayer before the Blessed Sacrament over the past quarter of a century equaled “approximately 219,000 hours.”

“A myriad of blessings and personal miracles have been shared throughout our 25 years of perpetual adoration,” he stated. "Most common are the testimonies of the deep inner peace experienced by adorers, as problems and burdens are presented to the Lord during this personal time."

“The amazing thing is that it’s been going on for 25 years,” said Father Walsh. “I saw many miracles, healings and conversions. The final encyclical from Pope John Paul II was on the Eucharist and he speaks about adoration of the Eucharist and he calls it lingering over the past quarter of a century as those coming for assistance to the Gabriel Clinic, before moving from Florida to Louisiana. She also felt the tug to become involved with pregnant women who are not as pro-life-minded as those coming for assistance to the Gabriel Project.

She said number-wise, it may not look like many babies are being saved, but she continues reaching out to the women.

"Like any spiritual battle, I believe the reward will be in heaven. You don’t always see the fruit, but I believe God is good and asking us not to be wrapped up in success, but to be faithful,” said O’Neill.

Which is where the children come in. She wryly said when she and Hanks don’t feel like going to Delta, the children will say, drawing out the word "Mom, we have to go save babies.” She noted that when she was sick, her daughter Claire asked to ride to the clinic with Hanks.

"I feel it’s important to be here to change people’s hearts," said Claire.

Those who are interested in the various ways they can participate in 40 Days for Life can contact Danielle Van Haute, respect life coordinator for the Diocese of Baton Rouge, at 225-242-0164 or email dvvanhaute@diobr.org.

CLASSIFIEDS

HELP WANTED

POSITION AVAILABLE

Director of Youth Ministry &
High School Religious Education
(Full-time w/benefits package)

Responsibilities – plans and oversees all facets of the youth ministry program/events/activities (7-12th grade – Lifeteen/Edge programs) as well as the high school religious education program for 9-12th grade youth including preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation (11th grade – every year). Candidate should be able to work Wednesday and Sunday evenings. Candidate should also be able to work well in shared, collaborative ministry with the Pastor, Associate Pastor, Director of Religious Education, Parish Staff, and the St. Francis Education Committee.

Qualifications: Candidate should be active in the Catholic Church and in good standing with the church’s moral teachings; youth ministry experience desired and should have a Bachelor’s degree. Please send resume and cover letter to St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church; application deadline is September 15, 2017.

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church
Attn: Youth Ministry Position
4000 W. Tidewater Lane, Madison, MS 39110
Phone (601) 856-5556
or by email: sallieann.inman@stfrancismadison.org

DISCIPLES

From page 2

...heart.” That being stated, the seven capital sins of anger, pride, greed, lust, envy, laziness or gluttony (an overconsumption of something) may be taking root (Catch. #1866). These are overcome by a balance of living a virtuous life filled with joy, humility, charity, modesty, gratitude, temperance, prudence, patience, etc. How can we soften our hearts? We can ask for forgiveness. The sacrament of reconciliation fortifies the faithful with the healing mercy of Jesus, restores graces and establishes peace. Even further, our hearts and minds are also restored back into communion with our brothers and sisters, the body of Christ.

Love & Prayer

Lastly, missionary disciples are sent to share the Gospel while being rooted in love and prayer. Intentional discipleship stems from a life seeped in love of God and love of neighbor. This immediately opens the door to relationship with God, whom, through prayer, we grow to know, love and serve. The more we love God, the more we want to do for others. St. John Paul II wrote, “people today trust in witnesses rather than teachers … in life and action.” All we have to do is share our stories of what God has done for us. And perhaps that one story can make a difference for another.

We are called to model the life of Christ, serving, caring and comforting, as well as witnessing, teaching, listening and forgiving. This is evangelization which we are called to DO always in ALL WAYS! We, as living missionary disciples, are called to lead, proclaim, invite, accompany, witness, love and pray. We are people of God, servants in action and followers of Jesus: Living Missionary Disciples! May the Holy Spirit rest upon our hearts and help us to be Christ for all.

Dow is the director of Evangelization and Catechesis for the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

Printing some 40,000 copies every other week for the Diocese of Baton Rouge

The Catholic Commentator
Serving the Diocese of Baton Rouge since 1963

TheCatholicCommentator.org

HELP WANTED

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Those who are interested in the various ways they can participate in 40 Days for Life can contact Danielle Van Haute, respect life coordinator for the Diocese of Baton Rouge, at 225-242-0164 or email dvvanhaute@diobr.org.
The Catholic Church must continue to work to understand the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council and why they were made, rather than rethinking them, Pope Francis said.

"After this magisterium, after this long journey, we can affirm with certainty and magisterial authority that the liturgical reform is irreversible," Pope Francis told participants in Italy’s National Liturgical Week.

Instead of reconsidering the council’s reforms, he said, priests and liturgists should work on “rediscovering the decisions made” in reforming the liturgy, “internalizing its inspirational principles and observing the discipline that governs it.”

Citing the Second Vatican Council’s Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, the pope said the reform responded to “real needs and the concrete hope for a renewal,” which would offer a living liturgy where the faithful were no longer “strangers or silent spectators.”

For this reason, he added, the church must continue to rediscover the reasons for the reform and “overcome unfounded and superficial readings, partial revelations and practices that disfigure it.”

“The liturgy is life for the entire people of the church,” he said. “By its nature, the liturgy is ‘popular’ and not clerical, because it is – as the etymology teaches us – an action for the people, but also of the people.”

The liturgy, he continued, unites church members through prayer, and it “‘gathers in prayer all those who seek to listen to the Gospel without discarding anyone; it summons the great and small, rich and poor, children and elderly people, healthy and sick, just ones and sinners.”

“In the image of the ‘immense multitude’ celebrating the liturgy in the sanctuary of heaven,” Pope Francis said.
HEALTH & FITNESS

INSIDE
Fitness at Any Age
Technology & Health
Diabetes Warning Signs
Wearable technology: trendy or habit changing?

By Carol Zimmermann
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON – The phrase “ignorance is bliss” really can’t apply to one’s physical health since people should be aware of what kind of shape they are in and they really have no excuse not to know with today’s technology.

Sure, people could keep track of what they’re eating and how much exercise they’re getting the old-fashioned way, by writing it down, but today there also are dozens of apps or gadgets that will do it for you – from counting steps or calories and keeping track of time spent sleeping.

The idea, or how this is marketed, is that the more information people get about their sleep patterns and exercise and eating habits the more they are likely to pay attention to what they do – or fail to do – and make healthy changes.

But just having a wristband, such as the Fitbit, which measures the number of steps one takes each day, or installing a calorie-counting app on one’s smartphone, will not necessarily make someone a better eater or exerciser.

The gadgets aren’t magic, in other words, as a report by the Journal of the American Medical Association indicated. It showed that some of these technological devices are not completely accurate and it also revealed that none of them has been successful in persuading reluctant exercisers to start exercising and stick with it.

The report points out that “using wearable devices to effectively promote changing health behavior is a complex, multistep process.” For starters, a person must be motivated to want the device and make the investment to purchase it and then they need to get over potential technological hurdles to use the device properly.

And as with any behavior change, there needs to be some type of motivation, which the activity monitoring devices alone might not be able to give.

But the mere fact that these items exist and have the potential to reinforce or start good habits has had plenty of people making the correlation that there should be a similar spiritual monitoring device.

In an article written by blogger Annie Turner in the Paulists’ Busted Halo website suggested that a spiritual Fitbit could record prayers, acts of charity and Mass attendance, but she also noted that this tallying could also be done each day with a simple examination of conscience that doesn’t require battery recharging.

But in this modern world where faith and technology are bound to intersect, it should be no surprise that there is an app for spiritual measurement: soulpulse.org.

Those who use the app answer brief surveys every day for two weeks reporting on their spiritual awareness, how thankful they feel and what they think of others. At the end of the two week period the users will get a report showing when they feel certain emotions and what daily activities foster spiritual awareness. The site claims that “from your report, you will learn things about your spiritual life that will help you to improve it – like habits to work on or activities to change.”

One of the founders of this spiritual tracking device, John Ortberg, a senior pastor at Menlo Park Presbyterian Church in California, told The New Yorker magazine that he learned something from using this tool.

He said he realized that his spirituality tended to peak when he was alone so he worked on making more time for solitary prayer and reflection in his busy schedule.

“Our capacity for self-deception is huge,” he said. “So finding ways to become more self-aware can be really worthwhile.”

Fitness at any age

By Craig W. Armstrong
Special to
The Catholic Commentator

Whether you have spent your life exercising or it’s something new to you, getting fit is never a bad idea, at any age. As we age, things change. We slow down, our minds are less sharp and our bodies begin to show wear and tear. But there is one thing that can help, exercise. They say a body in motion tends to stay in motion and this is absolutely true. If you are over 50, it’s a good time to start exercising. It’s okay to be old and it’s okay to be out of shape, but it’s not good to be old and out of shape.

So what are the benefits of exercising for older adults? First, it helps you lose and control your weight. Have you ever seen a young person pig out on pizza, burgers, fries, ice cream or all of the above, while you eat sensibly? They can do this because they are young and their metabolism is high. So was yours, once. But alas, it isn’t anymore. Thus you gain weight more easily. Exercising will help you shed those pounds or at least keep you from gaining more.

Next, exercise increases your mobility and flexibility. By building muscle, you are enhancing your balance and reducing your risk of falls. Some conditions such as arthritis can have their symptoms alleviated by strength training. In the same respect, exercise can reduce the impact of many other illnesses and reduce the risk of some diseases. People who exercise regularly are at a lower risk of Alzheimer’s disease, diabetes, osteoporosis and some forms of cancer.

It’s clear what exercise can do for your body, but it can also do great things for your mind and your mood. Exercise reduces stress and can reduce depression and anxiety. It can also help prevent memory loss.
Frequent exercise is important in the aging process, helping the body stay more mobile and flexible, reducing the risk of falls, improving balance and even helping with social skills.
Nurse and doctor find easy blend of faith into practice

By Sarah McCarthy
Catholic News Service

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. – Science and religion. Although the two entities may sometimes seem at odds with each other, Maggie Howland, a practicing Catholic and nurse, has found a way to align the two in her career, and has been doing so for the past 36 years.

Howland is a staff nurse in labor and delivery at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital in Washington, where she has worked since 1979.

“Nursing is just something I wanted to do my entire life,” she said. “From the time I was a little girl, there really wasn’t any doubt that that’s what I wanted to do.”

Howland admits it was initially the appeal of medical shows on television that made her want to be a nurse, but that initial lure has developed into a dedicated practice where her faith plays a part in her daily work.

“There have been many occasions where I have called ethics consult because I felt that something was not exactly ethical,” she said.

With patients ranging from pregnant women dealing with fetal complications to couples who come to the hospital after undergoing in vitro fertilization, Howland said having an ethical consultant on hand helps her “sort things out about the right thing to do” in those situations.

She also takes advantage of the many lectures the university offers, including talks on medical issues such as embryonic stem-cell research and its alternatives.

The information, Howland said, allows her to better connect with her patients and understand their unique needs.

Although the Georgetown hospital has partnered with nonprofit health care organization MedStar, Howland said she believes the Jesuit tradition of treating the whole person – mind, body and spirit – is still “alive and well” at the hospital.

“We do take care of the whole person and I do know that a lot of patients come there just for that reason,” she said.

The hospital offers pastoral care to patients, which Howland said is “wonderful,” especially in the labor and delivery division where parents can be faced with the reality of losing a newborn child.

In the case of a baby being born in serious condition, hospital staff also can baptize children at the parents’ request. “It is a wonderful feeling to be able to do that,” Howland said. “I don’t know if I were in a different hospital if I would feel as comfortable.”

Despite the obstacles that can arise when science and religion overlap, Howland maintained that her job has been a rewarding one and said reflecting on the things she has witnessed is “pretty unbelievable.”

“I just feel like every birth that I attend is such a miracle and so exciting to be part of,” she said.

Beyond bringing new lives into the world, Howland also expands on daily opportunities for teaching, a cornerstone of the Jesuit tradition.

“We’re always teaching,” she said. “We’re teaching parents all the time how to care for their newborns and how to take care of themselves, so it’s a wonderful part of the job.”

Mercy Sister Karen Schneider, a physician and assistant professor of pediatric emergency medicine at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, examines a boy at a clinic in Waipaqua, Guyana. (CNS photo/Bob Roller)

Mercy Sister Karen Schneider, a practicing Sister of Mercy, is a staff nurse in labor and delivery at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital in Washington, where she has worked since 1979.

She said bringing free medical care to people who have had little or no contact with doctors has been “profound and life changing.”

Like Howland, she also gives

Diabetes risk increases with age

By Craig W. Armstrong
Special to
The Catholic Commentator

As we age, many things change. Some things get better, like enjoying retirement and some things become a challenge, like our health. The risk of Type 2 diabetes increases with age so it’s important to know the signs and how to live with Type 2 diabetes.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 29 million people in the United States have diabetes. This equates to 9.3 percent of the U.S. population. There are two types of diabetes; Type 1 and Type 2. Type 1 occurs when the body makes little to no insulin. Adults can develop this type, but it is more common in children and young adults. Type 2 diabetes occurs when the body produces limited insulin or doesn’t use it correctly. This is the most common form of the diabetes.

Our bodies turn the food we eat into glucose (sugar). Insulin acts as a doorway and allows this glucose (sugar) into our cells. Once in our cells, the glucose gives us energy. A person with diabetes may not make enough insulin, or use it correctly, and therefore the glucose (sugar) can’t get in to their cells. The glucose then builds up in their bodies. Too much glucose (high blood sugar) causes many problems for the human body.

Uncontrolled diabetes can cause many serious health issues including; blindness, kidney disease, heart disease, nerve damage and circulatory problems, which can lead to amputation.

Symptoms of Type 2 diabetes include:
• Persistent thirst
• Frequent urination
• Fatigue
• Weight loss or weight gain
• Blurred vision
• Sores that heal slowly
• Frequent infections
• Numbness and tingling in extremities
• Gum disease

Developing Type 2 diabetes has three basic risk factors. They are your weight, your age and your family history. Two out of three of these factors can be controlled. Once diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes your doctor will most likely start you on medication and recommend weight loss and a reduced sugar or low carb diet. People with diabetes can still enjoy their favorite foods, they just can’t over indulge.

Controlling the risk of diabetes can help people, especially senior citizens, live a more enjoyable lifestyle and avoid health issues like high blood pressure, blindness or kidney disease.
Unplugging: The benefit of taking technology breaks

By Abbey Jaroma
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON – We live in a world brimming with constant distractions and noise. As soon as we get a free moment, our phones immediately begin buzzing to alert us of new emails, text messages and social media updates. Silence is becoming a thing of the past.

With social media and smartphones, our world is more connected than it ever has been. Our world also is more disconnected, though, on a human level. Our tiny screens yank us away from the physical world and immerse us into a virtual reality.

Joshua Becker, who writes the blog “Be-coming Minimalist,” said 84 percent of smartphone users claim they cannot go a single day without their device.

This inability to turn off our smartphones for even such short periods of time is limiting the amount of quiet time people have in their daily lives.

Becker, author of “Simplify” and “Clutterfree With Kids,” primarily advocates living with fewer material goods but he also emphasizes the need for less technology or at least reduced time on technological devices, noting that so much time is taken up each day by people checking their phones for messages, alerts or calls. In other words, this too is a type of clutter.

Our phones are turning into our extended third hand where we use them without even thinking about it and out of habit.

He also said traditional TV viewing eats up over six days (144 hours, 54 minutes) a month, so if you live to be 60, about one whole year of your life was spent watching TV. Is that how you want to spend a year that you could’ve been spending time with people you love, traveling, volunteering or learning?

Social media and technology also are negatively impacting relationships as people get more used to texting than communicating in person and also checking for messages and updates while they are with other people.

Becker’s message is not a new one, but one that might take some time to soak in.

Pope Francis has frequently spoken of the value of modern technology but also of the importance of time management and more importantly, the value of time in prayer and contemplation.

In a message to young people at the Vatican, the pope described the internet as a “gift from God,” but he also stressed that the high-speed world of digital social media needed to be balanced with calmness and reflection if it was to be “a network not of wires but of people.”

He also told the youths that “time is a gift from God” but, like other gifts, it must be used well.

“Perhaps many young people waste too much time in useless things: chatting on the internet or with your mobile phone ... the products of technology that should simplify and improve the quality of life, but sometimes take attention away from what is really important.”

Putting it all in perspective he added, that no matter what people do each day “one priority must be that of remembering that creator, who allows us to live, who loves us and accompanies us on our jour-neys.”

That’s a message that might not come through on the smartphone but is worth remembering before checking other updates.

DIABETES ▼
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The goal is to reduce the amount of sugar that the body has to process. Remember, a diabetic doesn’t process sugar correctly, so the less sugar to process, the better.

When most people think of sugar, they think of candy and cookies, but sugar also takes the form of carbohydrates. This means, breads, pasta and other starchy foods. Again these foods aren’t off limits; they just need to be enjoyed in moderation.

Our doctor will be able to tell you how many carbohydrates you should allow yourself for each meal and snack.

Exercise is also an important part of controlling your diabetes. This can be a challenge as we get older, but there are many ways to get some exercise. There are plenty of low impact ways to get cardiovascular exercise, the key is consistency. Again, your doctor will be able to offer suggestions on what is best for your situation. The reason weight loss is important to our general health is simple. The more we weigh the harder it is on our bodies. A healthy weight will reduce strain on our bodies and make it easier for them to function.

We will all face health issues as we age and Type 2 diabetes may be one of those issues. The thing to remember is that you can continue to lead a normal life; you just have to make some healthy adjustments. See your doctor and make your health a priority. Staying healthy means you can enjoy all the good things about aging, like retirement.

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Want kids to exercise? Show them how, experts say

By Carol Zimmermann
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Instead of bemoaning studies that show children are not getting nearly enough exercise, parents, teachers, family and community members need to get moving as good role models.

“Actions speak louder than words. Get out there yourself and do what you love or learn something new,” advises Joel Harper, author of “Mind Your Body,” who said the kids that he sees in the best shape are children of clients he trains who follow what their parents do.

“I can’t stress enough how important it is to show your kids how much better you feel and look from exercising,” he said in an email to Catholic News Service. “Have them join you: Go hiking, get a tandem bike, take a tennis lesson together, karate, dance. Find something you are genuinely interested in and get out there and do it with them.”

Harper, who also is a celebrity trainer, even suggested that parents watch athletic events with their children for some inspiration: “Like dancing? Watch ‘Dancing with the Stars’ together. (Like) tennis? Inspiration: ‘Like dancing?’ Watch ‘Dancercise’ with their children for some inspiration and get out there and do it with them.”

Instead of bemoaning studies that show children are not getting nearly enough exercise, parents, teachers, family and community members need to get up and be good exercisers.

“Let them know that you work out to feel and look from exercising,” he said in an email to Catholic News Service. “Have them join you: Go hiking, get a tandem bike, take a tennis lesson together, karate, dance. Find something you are genuinely interested in and get out there and do it with them.”

Lynn Bode, a fitness columnist for the website CatholicMom.com, similarly encourages parents to “set a good example” saying if kids never see their parents exercise or only hear them complain about it, they are not likely to take it up.

“Let them know that you work out to stay healthy, to be strong and to have more energy and stamina,” she wrote.

She said parents should incorporate exercising into their regular routines such as dancing with kids, playing at the playground with children instead of sitting on the sidelines and taking part in some physical activity with older children like bike riding, playing tennis or basketball or taking daily walks before or after dinner.

The national guidelines for recommended amount of daily exercise for children (and adults) is 60 minutes per day. Helpful tips for getting children more active are included in the Centers for Disease Control website: cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics/children.

When then first lady Michelle Obama started the “Let’s Move” campaign to tackle childhood obesity which also put the responsibility to make this happen on the community at large – parents, teachers and faith-based organizations.

Some of these efforts must be paying off because the CDC reported a small decrease in the percentage of obese preschool-age children but the agency also pointed out that preschool childhood obesity was more prevalent in lower-income families.

Rebecca Shenkman, director of the MacDonald Center for Obesity Prevention and Education at Villanova’s College of Nursing, similarly places the job of getting kids in shape on adults and says efforts to do this – simply with adding exercise into school routines and providing healthier food options – are paying off.

In an interview with CNS, she pointed out that the obesity rate for children in Philadelphia had dropped 4.7 percent in the city.

Shenkman is encouraged by the decrease but said there is still “a lot of work to do.” She also said efforts to help children adopt healthier lifestyles should also be taken up by church parishes.

For example, she said, food is often a major part of the activities of church groups, so they should consider monitoring the food they offer – not just the usual doughnuts – for example.

She advised parish leaders to provide water instead of soda and cut up vegetables instead of having chips as a way to “change the environment” at church functions.

Health practitioners are advised to practice what they preach

By Abbey Jaroma
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Health practitioners urge their patients to get plenty of exercise and incorporate healthy eating habits, but do they always practice what they preach?

According to some studies, they don’t. Often doctors, nurses and medical students say they don’t have a lot of time for exercise and also say lack of time has them dining on snacks from hospital vending machines.

But studies also show that health practitioners with a healthy body weight are more likely to advise their patients to live healthier lifestyles than overweight physicians and non-smokers are more likely to encourage their patients to quit smoking.

To find this balance, medical students at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore started an initiative a few years ago called Patient Promise urging medical and nursing students to sign a pledge to take better care of themselves so they can take better care of their patients.

Health care providers who sign the Patient Promise make a public commitment to exercise, eat right, avoid harmful substances and manage their levels of stress which are all things they ask of their patients as well.

The symbol of the organization is two interlocking gold P’s on a navy shield. Doctors are to wear it as a lapel on their white coat to provide awareness, as well as accountability. It also is intended to promote conversations in which patients can ask doctors and nurses about their health journey.

“Lots of health care professionals, including us, become too stressed and inactive and busy to keep up our end of the bargain. Eventually we would not be good role models for our patients,” Shiv Gaglani, one of the founders of the program told The Atlantic magazine. “If we can’t make changes in our own lives, how can we expect patients to do the same? So much of health care spending and disease burden in society is due to things that could largely be prevented by stopping smoking, losing weight, exercising 30 minutes a day and reducing stress.”

Mindful of the need to set a good example, many Catholic hospitals are becoming just as concerned about the health and wellness of their own staff as they are with the communities they serve. The Catholic Hospital System of Western New York has earned acclaim both for its in-house and outreach programs for promoting wellness.

At Mercy Hospital in Buffalo, New York, the associate council of representatives from hospital departments was established to make its employees more aware of their own health.

Assisted by employees’ nominal contributions and supported by hospital administration, Mercy has a fitness center/gymnasium; presents regular Zumba workouts and other exercise programs; offers an in-house “farmers’ market,” featuring items from local providers to promote healthier eating among its employees; and promotes an in-house contest to help employees lose weight and body fat.

As a way to connect its in-house health effort to the larger community, Mercy Hospital assemblies teams to compete in community athletic events for charity. And members of the associate wellness committee have participated in and hosted online presentations for hospitals around the world on their “associate-driven” wellness program model.

“It was exciting to be invited to share our information and ideas with hospitals as far away as Saudi Arabia,” said Denise Stutzman, Mercy’s manager of Non-Invasive Cardiology Services and a Wellness Committee member. “The experience showed us that we were further ahead than most hospitals with a program we developed ourselves.”

Contributing to this story was Mike Nelson in Los Angeles.
**Good for spiritual and physical health**

By Carol Zimmermann
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON – The notion that prayer is good for your spiritual health is probably no surprise, but what might not be as well known is that the practice is also good for one’s physical and mental health.

Recent studies have proved that spiritual or religious practices can ward off depression, alleviate stress and stress-related disorders and also speed up the physical healing process.

A study conducted by Lisa Miller, who is a professor and director of clinical psychology and the director of the Spirituality Mind Body Institute at Teachers College at Columbia University in New York, found that spirituality can protect against major depression by actually thickening the brain cortex.

By mapping the brain activity of participants in this study researchers found that those who regularly prayed had thicker cortices compared to people who did not. The thinning of the cortex, especially in certain areas of the brain, is said to be indicative of poor health linked to depression.

One of the key links between prayer and physical and mental health is the relaxing effects of prayer which minimizes stress. The ability to cope with stress also helps ward off stress-related disorders such as heart diseases, diabetes, hypertension, ulcers and migraines.

Dr. Andrew Newberg, the director of research at the Jefferson Myrna Brind Center of Integrative Medicine and a physician at Jefferson University Hospital in Philadelphia, has done extensive research linking the relationship between brain functions and spirituality.

He has found that brain activity during prayer or meditation “indicates that there may be very demonstrable reasons why people who frequently practice meditation experience lower blood pressure, lower heart rates, decreased anxiety and decreased depression.”

He also found in one study that praying can boost the level of dopamine, or what is often described as the “happy hormone,” in one’s brain.

But even those who are used to the idea of praying or learned traditional prayers at a young age are often unsure how to pray or even find time to pray in today’s busy world.

Vincentian Father Robert Maloney, former superior general of the Vincentians, wrote in an issue of America magazine that many young people are curious about prayer and he is frequently “struck by how earnestly people want to pray.”

In the article, he offered suggestions for prayer including:

- Find the right time and place to spend 10 to 15 minutes a day in silent prayer.
- Start the day by dedicating it to God and end it with an examination of conscience.
- Focus not so much on words said but on the communication.
- Read spiritual material and do works of charity.
- Offer thanksgiving and pray for the courage to accept and do God’s will.
- Be creative: play music, light a candle.
- Don’t worry about distractions.

“The search for God is a lifelong journey, in which we climb mountains, descend into valleys and sometimes get stuck on ledges,” he wrote, adding that “perseverance is the key to arriving at the top of the mountain.”

Father Maloney also wrote that “yearning to pray is itself praying” pointing out that Mother Teresa said “she spent years struggling to find God, though she took part faithfully in prayer all that time.”

“Sometimes we may feel that we are ‘wasting time’ in prayer, or we may experience long-lasting ‘dryness’ and be tempted to quit,” he wrote. “We should resist the temptation. The journey will bring great rewards.”

**Hospitals and parishes give tips, encouragement on healthy living**

By Mike Nelson
Catholic News Service

LOS ANGELES – Health care is not just necessary when ailments arise, but should be put into practice to avoid future problems, which is why hospitals, health care systems and even churches are stepping in to help.

For example, a longtime smoker, in desperation, enrolled in a seven-week “Freedom From Smoking” class and kept coming.

Even when everyone else had dropped out – and graduated, smoke-free.

And a 9-year-old boy who participated in a “Healthy Kids in Healthy Homes” program now reads the product labels and tells his mom on grocery store trips what should and shouldn’t go into their cart based on sugar and sodium content.

Thousands more people of all ages in Southern California during the past 25 years have benefited from these programs and a half dozen other services through the Community Wellness Program offered by Mercy & Memorial Hospitals of Bakersfield.

The programs represent efforts by Catholic health institutions throughout the country to serve their communities by promoting wellness education and overall health awareness.

Believing that preventive maintenance is as necessary for people as it is for pets, the Los Angeles Archdiocese has partnered with Mercy & Memorial Hospitals of Bakersfield to bring the program to the archdiocese.

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is for their cars and houses, is the impetus behind screenings, seminars and classes for free or at nominal costs.

Since the early 1990s, Mercy & Memorial Hospitals in central California emphasized the community outreach approach. “Our goal was to be out in the community, going to those geographic areas which had need, and set up our services,” said Debbie Hull, regional director of special needs and community outreach.

She said a major component is free screening for blood pressure, cholesterol, glucose and body fat. Some 33,000 people are screened each year, mostly in rural areas where people don’t have ready access to doctors.

“We try to have a health educator available at those times so the numbers can be explained,” Hull said. “Exercise and diet is the key to better health, and very often the problems detected in screening can be addressed that way. Those who follow through after being screened see huge improvements in their health, and their numbers get back to a normal, healthy range.”

Mercy & Memorial Hospitals partner with various agencies and associations “who support and participate in our efforts,” said Hull. “And our administration has been extremely supportive from the beginning. Our vision is to create a healthy community, to meet the needs of the underserved. That keeps costs down for everyone.”

Wellness programs and screenings are also sometimes available at the church level, particularly if health professionals, active or retired, are ready and willing to make that happen.

Eight years ago, oncology nurse Michele Stanco of Sacred Heart Church in Manassas, Virginia, attended a seminar addressing church health ministry and brought the idea to her pastor.

“He said, go for it – and we did,” smiled Stanco, now retired after 33 years of professional life, but very active as “faith community nurse” at Sacred Heart, a church parish with 1,800 families.

Stanco heads a core team of 11 – some working in health care, others not but with “important organizational or artistic gifts” – that plans and coordinates health fairs with free screenings, presents informational programs with local experts on key health issues, and provides brochures and handouts in the church vestibule.

“We’ve done diabetes education, with a dietitian speaking on healthy eating,” noted Stanco. “We’ve had a social worker speak on depression, a local hospice nurse speak on end-of-life care, an emergency care worker discuss preparedness and insurance specialists address health coverage.”

The team meets quarterly to decide what to emphasize or present in the weeks ahead and surveys parishioners to gauge their interest in topics, Stanco said.

“The feedback from the local community is very positive, especially for the blood pressure screenings,” she added. “They have a better sense of what being healthy means, and whatever promotes healthy living is good for our community as a whole.”

Nelson is former editor of The Tidings, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.