By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

(The person in the story has asked that her identity not be revealed, and thus will be referred to as "Mary").

Mary lives her life in fear. Certainly not the intense fear she experienced in Mexico, where her life was constantly in danger, but the fear of being deported, being separated from her three young children, her mom and a new life that while has undoubtedly been a struggle is far better than the one she left behind.

Mary is one of thousands of immigrants across the country living in that same fear, to the point where some children even stay home from school, afraid that their parents could potentially be arrested when dropping them off at school.

There are also concerns from students that their parents will not be home when they do come home from school, having been arrested and deported. "Unfortunately, that is a reality and there are reports that has been happening," Baton Rouge attorney Flavia Roche said, adding that at times current immigration policies can "seem like a witch hunt."

Roche said many people are living in peril, afraid of a knock on the door. Reports surfaced during the August 2016 flood that many immigrants in the Baton Rouge area elected to stay in their homes and risk their own safety rather than evacuating to a shelter and face the potential of being arrested and deported. Indeed, during those chaotic days Homeland Security officials attempted to persuade officials from the vacuum Oblates of Mary Immaculate seminary for $1.

In 1978, the priests held the first Marian Days retreat in celebration of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. About 1,500 Vietnamese from the surrounding area attended. Today, the event draws estimated crowds of 70,000 or more. Even local residents enjoy the festivities, especially the Vietnamese food and other goods sold in kiosks.

"We always have positive feedback," said Father Paul Tai Tran, assistant provincial minister at CRM. "Everybody talks about it and it keeps growing. I've been part of it for 30 years."

Brother Nguyen, a seminarist at Incarnatio Consecratio Missio (ICM), has only been in the United States since June. But he's always known about the Marian Days. "I heard about it many, many times in Vietnam and in the Philippines and now in the U.S.,” he said.

Marian Days are held on the 28-acre campus of the CRM. Because of the size of the crowd, many people travel in RVs and campers, but the majority sleep in tents. The overflow reaches into the front and back yards of nearby homes.

Father Tran, a member of the organizing committee for Marian Days, said priests and nuns traveled from Europe and in the United States, displaying an ankle bracelet she is being forced to wear by immigration officials. She has to pay for the bracelet, and at one point it came so painful the bracelet was moved to her right leg. Submitted photo

"Mary," who immigrated from Mexico and has legal status in the United States, displays an ankle bracelet she is being forced to wear by immigration officials. She has to pay for the bracelet, and at one point it came so painful the bracelet was moved to her right leg. Submitted photo
The Civil War

By Ann Boltin

The period leading up to the Civil War in Baton Rouge saw great changes to the church. The Jesuit order had been ministering to St. Joseph since their arrival in 1849. Their time in Baton Rouge had ushered in progress with Catholic education by soliciting assistance from religious sisters to teach the children in the city. With the growth of the population it was determined that a new church be built to accommodate the needs of the congregation. Father John Cambias SJ was the primary architect for the new St. Joseph Church. He had previously designed Immaculate Conception, the Jesuit church in New Orleans. This “Gothic Revival” style church completed in 1856 was originally built without a steeple to cut costs. The church structure still stands today.

The Jesuits witnessed difficult times in Baton Rouge. Several yellow fever epidemics plagued the city in 1853 and 1855 and five of the priests and brothers serving St. Joseph succumbed to the disease. By 1861 at the start of the Civil War the population of the city had grown to around 5,500 residents. Father Frederick Larnaudie SJ arrived in 1861 and served for the remainder of the war until 1865. Baton Rouge was quickly brought into the fray when on May 28, 1862 Union gunboats opened fire on the city. The bombardment of Baton Rouge lasted only a few hours but did immeasurable damage to the riverfront, including St. Joseph. A cannon shell hit the church which would later cause the collapse of the roof, vault, and part of the sanctuary wall.

The Battle of Baton Rouge would commence a few months later in August 1862. Union and Confederate soldiers fought for control of the city with the majority of the battles taking place near St. Joseph Cemetery where the Union soldiers had their encampment.

The costs to repair the damage to the church were estimated at close to $5,000 which was a blow to a congregation still in debt for the construction of the new building that was completed before the war. Father Larnaudie wrote several letters to Archbishop Odin describing the deplorable conditions of St. Joseph and the waning morale of its parishioners. Father Larnaudie left Baton Rouge for Spring Hill College in 1865 and was the last of the Jesuits to serve St. Joseph.

Boltin is the director of the Archives Department for the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

In Jesus we trust

By Dina Dow

“Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God…” (Mt 16:16)

Ordinary Time is filled with extraordinary faith-filled followers who acknowledge Jesus as the Christ through their actions and words. The 20th and 21st Sundays bring to mind three areas of reflection which will further open our minds and hearts to receiving the Christ. We see these perfectly manifested in the actions of the Canaanite woman, a Gentile, who graciously approached Jesus with trust, persistence and humility. This sets the stage for St. Peter’s declaration of who Jesus is.

Trust

“Lord, help me” (Mt 15:25). These pleasing words spoken by the Canaanite woman asking Jesus to help her daughter who is possessed by a demon, offer a striking contrast to others around them who lack trust in Jesus’ mission. Despite pagan descent, her trust in Jesus strengthens her belief in his curative power and his goodness. The chosen Jewish people struggle to see who he is and exercise their impatience as he listens to her. Yet, Jesus stretches her faith, realizes its authenticity and answers her plea saying “O woman, great is your faith. Let it be done for you as you desire” (Mt 15:28).

We, too, cry out to Jesus for help. Facing life’s realities can lead us to moments of despair. The tendency is to keep our struggles hidden and within ourselves. But Jesus will respond to our trusting pleas for comfort, support, resolution and peace. Ask yourself, “What am I holding inside that I should, instead, cry out to Jesus for help?”

Persistence

“...and knelt before him…” (Mt 15:25). The disciples are aggravated because this woman is not going away. Despite this resistance, the Canaanite woman persists in her plea for Jesus to cure her daughter. Instead of walking away in discouragement and frustration for lack of response, she draws nearer to Jesus filled with hope and patience.

Sometimes our prayer may seem to fall on deaf ears. We must persist in prayer whether or not we receive an immediate response or even, perhaps, endure more suffering. Today many people wear colored, plastic wristbands as a reminder to pray for those who are ill. We never cease to pray for them and their caregivers. Ask yourself, “Am I persistent when I pray? Do I doubt the prayer will be answered or is my prayer filled with hope?”

Humility

“Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David…” (Mt. 15:22). Capuchin Father Raniero Cantalamessa writes, “(Humility) is looking at God first before oneself and measuring the abyss that separates the finite from the infinite. The more people see this, the more they become humble.”

The Canaanite woman realizes her limitations. She knows she cannot help her daughter, yet she can ask for help. She also knows Jesus will help. There is a power in him like no other which she honors in asking for his healing charity upon her, who is pleading on her knees for the cure of another.

Our posture precedes our prayers. Ask yourself, “Do I kneel in humble awe before Jesus in prayer? Is my heart filled with humility or is it seeped in entitlement? How am I approaching God?”

Faith

“Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God…” (Mt 16:16). A rock sits on the desk in my office. A dear friend who traveled to the Holy Land returned with it and gave it to me as a gift. I asked, “Why did you bring me back a rock from the Holy Land?” She chuckled and replied, “It’s from the site where Jesus told Peter...’And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it.’” Tears of humility immediately filled my eyes.

St. Peter is like Abraham, the father of faith. The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains, “When God calls him, Abraham, goes forth ‘as the Lord had told him;’ Abraham’s heart is entirely submissive to the Word and so he obeys.” (Parag. 2570) St. Peter is commissioned by Jesus to be the supreme authority of the church, serving God’s Word and deed. All of a sudden his role, and the role of the unbroken lineage of popes, becomes one of trust, persistence and humility encompassed in deep faith. St. Peter’s model of joy-filled humility and trust in Jesus continues to infuse the church with zeal and life-giving faith. Together let us pray, “Lord, increase my faith, trust, persistence and humility. Lord, help me.”

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

St. Joseph Cathedral was built in 1856 and designed by Father John Cambiaso SJ. This is the third St. Joseph church in Baton Rouge and is still in use today. Photo provided by the Archives Department | Diocese of Baton Rouge
St. Jean parishioners generous in darkest hour

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Through the effort of many, St. Jean Vianney Church and School in Baton Rouge recovered from nearly $2 million in damage caused by the flood of 2016 and is reaching out to its parishioners and others who have experienced such terrible events, said SJV pastor Father Tom Ranzino.

The flood of 2016 inflicted heavy damages to the church and school, including its new gymnasium, the parish hall, two of the school’s kindergarten classrooms, the library and the rectory.

“There was a strong leadership of lay parish members and the Diocese of Baton Rouge and Catholic Mutual Group), which has arrived at recovery of all buildings and properties,” said Father Ranzino. “A great deal of work was accomplished in a team effort, including parishioners who helped other parishioners whose homes have been flooded. A lot of parishioners lived in the midst of recovery.

He added, “There is still a lot of work to be done. Parishioners who live within the parish boundaries who are still not in their homes, and we are helping them with their needs.”

Like many churches in the diocese, SJV provided food, clothing, money and appliances to flood victims, according to Father Ranzino.

SJV also hosted two workshops to help people deal with the emotional impact of loss because of the flood.

That was a beautiful thing — people were generous in helping.”

He was also grateful for the prayers and financial support from people across the country who, after learning about the flooding, held collections and fundraisers to help.

“Every dollar we used was for that effort,” said Father Ranzino.

On a personal note, he said he learned that “getting leadership in the room as quickly as possible” helps the parish and school move forward

“The importance of communication was also emphasized during the recovery, such as making announcements at Mass during the weekend and posting information on SJV’s website.

That was critical, that kept people informed,” said Father Ranzino. He added “We are more sensitive to people who have flooded.”

The church, for example, sent donations to Albany, New York to help with recovery from flooding in July.

It awakened us to the effects of flooding — it’s so hard to recover from,” said Father Ranzino.

Bishop asks for peace after deadly rally

WASHINGTON (CNS) — In the aftermath of a chaos- and hate-filled weekend in Virginia, Catholic bishops and groups throughout the nation called for peace after three people died and several others were injured following clashes between pacifists, protesters and white supremacists in Charlottesville, Virginia, Aug. 11 and 12.

A 32-year-old paralegal, Heather D. Heyer, was killed when a car plowed into a group of Charlottesville Aug. 12. Various news outlets have identified the driver as James Alex Fields, who allegedly told his mother he was attending a rally for President Donald Trump. Reports say the car allegedly driven by Fields plowed into a crowd during a white nationalist rally and a counter-rally the afternoon of Aug. 12.

Attorney General Jeff Sessions said early Aug. 14 the “evil attack” meets the legal definition of domestic terrorism and suggested pending charges for Fields who was in custody and has been charged with second-degree murder, among other charges. He was being held without bail.

The bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Richmond, Virginia, was one of the first to call for peace following the violence in Charlottesville late Aug. 11, which only became worse the following day.

On the evening of Aug. 11, The Associated Press and other news outlets reported a rally of hundreds of men and women, identified as white nationalists, carrying lit torches on the campus of the University of Virginia. Counter-protesters also were present during the rally and clashes were reported. The following day, at least 20 were injured and the mayor of Charlottesville confirmed Heyer’s death later that afternoon via Twitter.

“In the last 24 hours, hatred and violence have been on display in the city of Charlottesville,” said Richmond Bishop Francis X. DiLorenzo. “I earnestly pray for peace.”

Charlottesville is in Bishop DiLorenzo’s diocese.

On Aug. 13, Bishop Frank J. Dewane of Venice, Florida, chairman of the USCCB Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, issued a statement saying: “We stand against the evil of racism, white supremacy and neo-Nazism. 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.”
One year after the flood destroyed their home and disrupted their lives, Dana and Carlos Sam and their three sons, Ethan, 18, Isaiah, 15, and, Aiden, 7, have a new perspective on what’s really important.

“We just really had to rely on our faith when everything unfolded,” said Dana, a member of St. Paul the Apostle Church in Baton Rouge.

Besides their home, the couple had to worry about their jobs and other people that were affected. Carlos is the superintendent of East Feliciana Parish Public Schools while Dana works for East Baton Rouge Parish Public Schools.

The Sams’ faith came into play as the family returned to their Baton Rouge home off O’Neal Lane for the first time after evacuating.

“We were driving back into our neighborhood,” Dana said, “with all of the debris piled up along the road and my youngest son asked why God let this happen. So, I had to think really fast and said, ‘God may have allowed this to happen but if you trust him a big blessing will follow.’ My son immediately said, ‘I trust him.’”

While their home was undergoing repairs, the Sams moved to a friend’s camp in Batchelor, on the banks of the Old River. The slower pace of the community brought calm in the midst of chaos for the family.

“I ended up immediately recognizing that I was blessed in the affliction,” said Sam.

Father Rick Andrus SVD, pastor of St. Paul, said many blessings have followed the flood. When the water began to rise, a group of volunteers from the church, including Father Andrus, went to help with the influx of evacuees at the Martin Luther King Center. After the state fire marshal made some people leave, the volunteers opened the church hall and moved in 100 people.

For the next six weeks, St. Paul became the feeding and distribution center for Catholic Charities and the American Red Cross. Father Andrus posted the story on Facebook and wrote to his superior, Very Rev. Paul Kahan SVD in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, who then emailed other pastors throughout the South.

“Friends of mine reposted my story and donations were sent,” said Father Andrus. “The response was very generous.”

For the next few months, St. Paul members continued to minister to those affected by the flood. Father Andrus and church member Vera Dunbar formed a flood committee to check on everyone and to make sure they had what they needed to recover. They also hosted gatherings at the church every two weeks in order to let people take a break and “get out of the mess.”

“We had home cooked meals, prayers and story telling,” said Father Andrus. “One night I fixed spaghetti and meatballs for everyone. We had about 120 to 130 people. We sent people away in a better state than when they came.”

Now, one year later, those feelings of goodwill continue.

“The flood brought the best out of Baton Rouge and showed that we can really be brother and sister to one another,” said Father Andrus. “Symbolically, the flood didn’t cover the bridge but it built the bridge in a way that I don’t think Baton Rouge has ever seen. From that, we have seen so many faith-based communities begin to build across racial lines and denominations like we’ve never seen before.”

Besides the new sense of community, there has also been a new sense of priorities, especially toward material things. Father Andrus says it’s evident even among the younger generation.

“I’ve seen young teenagers say, ‘That costs an awful lot. Do we really need that?’ ” he said.

Dana Sam agreed that the flood has changed her family.

“I think we have a new appreciation for simplicity,” she said.

“God may have allowed this to happen but if you trust him a big blessing will follow.” My son immediately said, ‘I trust him.’”

With her house repairs almost complete, Dana joined other St. Paul parishioners for a special prayer service called “Celebrating The Rebirth of Homes and Lives Touched by the August Flood.”

“We didn’t want to go back into the water,” said Father Andrus. “We wanted to know about the rebirth: where has God taken you and what has he brought you through.”

The event included prayers, songs, testimonials and the release of 112 butterflies in the prayer garden on the church grounds. Each butterfly represented a family affected by the flood.

“The flood brought about change for so many families,” said Dunbar, an organizer of the service. “As a Christian, I see the butterfly as a symbol of resurrection. Many people around the world view the butterfly as representing endurance, change, hope and life.”

Father Andrus said that once the initial shock of losing homes and belongings began to wane, many people began to look at what really mattered.

“More than anything a lot of people are talking about realizing what they have and finding a great value in their families, that material possessions are not as important,” he said. “It was relationships, faith, church and family that got them through.”

The Catholic Commentator

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Franciscan Experience helps youth serve the needy

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Summer vacation?
For many high school students that perhaps entails a week at the beach, working on a bronze tan to display proudly on the first day of school.

For one group of rising juniors and seniors, however, summer vacation took on a different twist, interacting with homeless men and women, breaking bread with them, taking a peek into their hearts and souls. And when not eating with their new friends, the students were cleaning the bathrooms and performing other duties at the men and women’s homeless shelters at St. Vincent de Paul Society.

“We were down on our hands and knees, deep in dirt,” one student said. “It felt so beautiful to do this. It really felt amazing to be able to help.”

The students were participating in the inaugural Franciscan Experience, a program developed by staff members at Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University to implement the mission and Franciscan identity of the university and Our Lady of the Lake Hospital.

Tyler Trahan, an admission specialist at FMOLU and also the director of the Franciscan Experience, said the week was aimed toward helping students learn about St. Francis and who he was as a person and as a “servant of God and his radical idea of service and how do we implement that.”

“St. Francis was one of community,” Trahan said. “He started his Franciscan order and made it into an organization of service. And so we have been trying to teach these teens to grow in your faith and to learn more about who you are in the image and likeness of God.”

“But also helping students learn about their vocation and learning what their gifts are and who they are,” he added.

Each morning began with the Liturgy of the Hours followed by a theological lesson that set the foundation for the rest of the day. Trahan said the purpose was to have students go deeper into their thinking about their own service and formation.

Mornings were spent at St. Vincent de Paul, not only cleaning bathrooms but also preparing snack bags for the homeless, and unloading pallets of water into a trailer. The students ate lunch with the homeless, offering a glimpse into a segment of society that is often forgotten.

“That helps the students practice seeing the face of Christ in those who are less fortunate than we are,” Trahan said.

“It’s been the greatest experience of my life,” one student exclaimed. “It’s been so amazing to serve these people. The women were so grateful that we were there.

“We felt peace while we were there and (the homeless) felt peace while we were there.”

After returning to the Bishop Robert E. Tracy Center, where the students stayed for the week, the afternoons varied, with much of the time devoted to vocations, including the vocations of married life and the clergy.

“There’s a place for both of that,” said FMOLU associate professor of religious studies David Whidden. “We (spent time) helping students learn who they are called to be.”

“So what we (were) trying to do is high level theology relative to their age to give them what the full riches of the Catholic tradition are,” he added. “And to challenge them to think more carefully about their faith, to go deeper into their faith, and not in a sort of an emotional sentimental way, but truly into an intellectual way.”

A grant through the Lily Endowment, an Indianapolis-based, private philanthropic foundation created in 1937, funded the week. According to the foundation’s website, the ultimate aim of the grant program is to deepen and enrich the religious lives of Christians across the country primarily by helping to strengthen their congregations.

FMOLU was awarded a $450,000 grant for three years. Whidden said each proposal had to be vetted but added there was flexibility built in by the foundation to tailor the program to meet the needs of a particular environment.

“We wanted something to reflect who we are as a Franciscan institution,” he said. “This is the only youth oriented five-day program where it’s heavily theological influenced which is such an important factor in their discernment.”

Trahan, FMOLU director of campus ministry Tammy Vidrine and professor Brian Pedraza collaborated planning the Franciscan Experience, which helped students meet the needs of the less fortunate while being exposed to deep theological lessons. Organizers said they were thrilled the week attracted 15 participants and hope to double that number for the event’s sophomore year in 2018.

“I saw so many blessings,” Trahan said. “It’s the why factor. It’s not so much as what the Catholic Church believes as to why they believe it, which brings so much more than intentionality to it. So that way they can really get that connectedness with Christ and other people. It creates a purpose.”

As the week closed, FMOLU President Dr. Tina Holland addressed the students, telling them the Franciscan education reveals the goodness of God and has a purpose, serving the greater goodness of God.

“It was a message that appeared to resonate with the young people, with one saying that “even though we all sin, (God) is there to pick us up.”

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OBITUARY

Deacon Albert Ellis will be missed

Deacon Albert Robinson Ellis Jr., of Baton Rouge, passed away Aug., 8, 2017, at home surrounded by family. He was 87 years old.

Deacon Ellis was a husband, father and grandfather. He was ordained a deacon in 1980 and spent his deaconate career at his home church parish, St. George Church in Baton Rouge. From 1997 to 2003, he was the Director of the Permanent Diaconate. He was the last surviving member of his diocesan class and the oldest deacon in the diocese.

Father Mike Schatzle, pastor of St. George, said in a statement, “Deacon Albert Ellis has served St. George for over 30 years as deacon and also as the church business manager. Deacon Ellis has been a faithful steward. He has a servant’s heart. He will be missed.”

He was preceded in death by his beloved wife of 56 years, Mildred Dugas Ellis. He is survived by his five children, Jan Ellis; Joni Luce and husband, Steve Luce; Robby Ellis; Andrew Ellis and Michael Ellis; and, seven grandchildren.

A funeral Mass was Aug. 12 at St. George, celebrated by Father Schatzle, Vicar General Father Thomas Ranzino, Bishop Robert W. Muench and numerous other priests of the Diocese of Baton Rouge. The Mass was followed by internment at St. George Cemetery.
Is yoga commuting with devil?/ Military action against the Islamic State group?

Q My wife was recently at a gathering of her prayer group that meets every week. At the end of this particular meeting, a deacon spoke to the group and said something that has disturbed both of us. He said that when you practice yoga, you are communicating with the devil.

Neither of us practices yoga, but our daughter who is in her 30s does. She has even gone on yoga retreats. Should we be concerned, and is there any church teaching on the matter? (New Brunswick, New Jersey)

A The issue is a bit complex and has been the subject of a fair amount of controversy. Classic yoga is a discipline that grew out of Hindu mysticism; it seeks enlightenment through a series of exercises designed to align the body, mind and spirit.

Simply because it has its origin outside the Christian tradition, this doesn’t necessarily mean that it conflicts with Catholic teaching.

The Vatican pointed this out in a 1989 document from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith called “Some Aspects of Christian Meditation,” stating: “Genuine practices of meditation that come from the Christian East and from the great non-Christian religions, which prove attractive to the man of today who is divided and disoriented, (can) constitute a suitable means of helping the person who prays to come before God with an interior peace” (No. 28).

The bodily postures assumed during yoga as well as the breathing techniques are themselves morally neutral. (Catholic institutions – including Chicago’s Holy Name Cathedral – have at times sponsored classes in “Catholic yoga.”)

The real issue lies in what these techniques are designed to accomplish – what they are supposed to connect you to – and herein lies the difficulty with certain forms of yoga: They assume a basic pantheism, the goal being “for the person to become ‘one with the divine.’”

It is sometimes heard that Pope Francis, in a January 2015 homily, dismissed yoga, saying that such practices as yoga and Zen meditation cannot free people to open their hearts to the Lord; but to be fair, the pope said the same of church teaching and Catholic spirituality, noting that only the Holy Spirit can “move the heart” and make it “docile to the Lord.”

The safest course might be for her to discuss this with a knowledgeable priest.

Q How does a Catholic react to a terrorist group like the Islamic State group (IS)? Praying for their salvation is important, but it may not be sufficient.

Negotiating with them seems impossible, since IS is evidently determined to kill anyone who opposes their ideology. President Donald Trump has vowed to defeat IS through military means. Can a Christian support such a policy? (Edison, New Jersey)

A Up until very recently, the traditional answer from the perspective of Christian morality would have applied the church’s long-held “just war doctrine.”

That teaching, first enunciated by the fourth-century theologian St. Augustine, is detailed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (No. 2309). The four conditions that would allow a military response to an unjust aggressor are these:

“The damage inflicted by the aggressor on the nation or community of nations must be lasting, grave and certain; all other means of putting an end to it must have been shown to be impractical or ineffective; there must be serious prospects of success; and the use of arms must not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated. The power of modern means of destruction weighs very heavily in evaluating this condition.”

But a Vatican conference in April 2016 has called into question the present validity of this just war teaching. The 80 participants voiced their opinion that today “there is no just war.”

That opinion seems largely based on the power of nuclear weaponry, which does not discriminate between combatants and noncombatants, and on the final provision of the just war doctrine, which holds that any use of weapons of war must never result in even greater evils.

All of this seems to argue for making military response an absolutely last possible resort. It also brings into play what Pope Francis told journalists in 2014 on a flight back to Rome from South Korea: “A single nation cannot judge how to stop this, how to stop an unjust aggressor.”

Q My daughter is married and has four children. Her husband is not a Catholic, but he often attends Mass at the local Catholic parish with his wife and children. But at Christmas time, when they are visiting his parents, they all go together to the Lutheran church.

My daughter says God understands that family is important and that, especially at Christmas, they should all worship together. I worry, though, about the message this sends to the children – that it’s OK to go to the church of a different denomination and not receive the Eucharist.

What is the right answer? (Rockwell City, Iowa)

A Here is what the Catechism of the Catholic Church has to say: “The faithful are obliged to participate in the Eucharist on days of obligation, unless excused for a serious reason (for example, illness, the care of infants) or dispensed by their own pastor. Those who deliberately fail in this obligation commit a grave sin” (No. 2181).

Other situations commonly presented by church moralists include the necessity to work to support one’s family, personal sickness or the care of the sick, necessary travel – all of which might excuse a person on a particular occasion.

So your daughter’s pastor might well recommend that, on the occasion of an annual visit to her husband’s parents, the value of family harmony could allow for attendance at a Lutheran service rather than a Catholic Mass on that one particular day.

If the pastor agrees, and depending on the age of the children, your daughter might explain to them that, as Catholics, they believe in (and are grateful for) the importance of regular Sunday Mass but that, on this one occasion, it seems important for all of them to worship God together as a family.
Supper feeds marital substance to couples

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

“What is your husband’s least favorite food?” asked Father Ryan Hallford, parochial vicar at Holy Family Church in Port Allen, of the 90 couples packed into the Kleinmeyer Activity Center at St. George Church in Baton Rouge. Everyone wrote down their answers on the slips of paper provided on tables; however, only the two couples seated in front of the audience shared their answers. The first wife answered, “He’ll eat anything!” Her husband answered, “Nothing! Because I like everything.”

That was just one of the questions asked in the “New and Not So Newlywed Game” featured at Supper and Substance, July 29, at St. George. This is the second year for the Diocese of Baton Rouge to host the event.

“It’s very simple. It’s a date night with hundreds of other couples,” said Darryl Ducote, director of the Office of Marriage and Family Life.

“There is a meal, which is the ‘supper’ and a presentation about marriage, which is the ‘substance.’”

Emily and Jason Froeba, who attend St. John the Evangelist Church in Prairieville, headed up the group of volunteers who organized the diocesan-wide event.

“It’s a date night with a purpose,” said Emily. “It’s a time for fellowship and evangelization with parishioners. And, we hope it’s a springboard for this ministry so that couples will do this on a parish level at their own churches. This is large scale.”

The $75 tickets featured food, live music with The Carolina Chocolate Drops band. Something Blue Band and guest speakers Jan and Lloyd Tate, of New Orleans, on the topic, “What I Wish I Knew Before I Got Married.”

Elaine Strenski gets ready to play the “New and Not So Newlywed Game” with her husband of 60 years, Ted, at Supper and Substance. They lost to newlyweds Dina and Bill Dow. Photo by Bonny Van | The Catholic Commentator

The $75 tickets featured food, live music with The Carolina Chocolate Drops band. Something Blue Band and guest speakers Jan and Lloyd Tate, of New Orleans, on the topic, “What I Wish I Knew Before I Got Married.”

“Most people have not heard it but the church’s view of marriage is really rich,” said Ducote. “It’s priests and academicians that understand it and it’s not gotten down to lay people. As we reflect on how God created mankind as male and female, we come to understand what God intended for marriage. That’s why marriage is a sacrament because it both symbolizes and makes present God’s faithful love.”

Among those attending Supper and Substance were Keith and Maria Horcasitas, parishioners at St. Agnes Church in Baton Rouge, “This is the night before our 34th wedding anniversary,” said Keith. His wife added, “We knew we’d be in good company here.”

Also seated at their table were Deacon Benjamin Dunbar and his wife Vera, from St. Paul the Apostle Church in Baton Rouge, who have been married for 24 years and minister couples through the Re-Marriage Program.

“I’m thinking about organizing a Supper and Substance event at our own church,” said Vera.

Ken and Shannon Mayeaux, members of St. Louis King of France Church in Baton Rouge, were also seated with the group.

“We’ve been involved with Supper and Substance since we were young,” said Ken. “We’re still young!” joked Shannon. The couple has been married 28 years.

“I think that part of the reason it’s good is that it’s not heavy,” said Ducote. “It’s a combination of fun activities, food and faith.”

The “New and Not So Newlywed Game” pitted the longest married couple, Ted and Elaine Strenski of St. Aloysius Church in Baton Rouge who have been married 60 years, against the shortest married couple, Dina and Bill Dow, members of St. Thomas More Church in Baton Rouge. The Dows have been married only eight months.

Questions ranged from knowing your spouse’s favorite food, vacations and flowers.

The audience cheered for the Strenski’s when their answers matched up on the least favorite food question. But, overall, they didn’t have enough answers that matched up, leaving the newlyweds the winners.

“Now, you know why we’ve been married so long,” quipped Ted Strenski to the audience. After so many years, they are still learning things about each other.

“I think this is great. It gives couples a chance to have quality time together which is at the heart of their relationship,” said Father Hallford.

Catholic photographer honored by LSU

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

While preparing for a fiddle lesson at a camp in Seattle, Marie Constantin answered a call that would have her taking a different type of bow.

On the other end was Jerry Ceppos, dean of the LSU Man ship School of Mass Communications, informing Constantin she had been elected to the school’s Hall of Fame, along with New Orleans native and Wall Street Journal editor Alex Martin and political pundit Lou Bur nett, who is also a veteran Capitol Hill communications chief.

The trio is scheduled to be inducted Sept. 14 at Juban’s Restaurant in Baton Rouge.

“I had no idea,” admitted Constantin, who was taking lessons from renowned fiddler Rhiannon Giddens, a member of the Carolina Chocolate Drops band.

“I was just stunned.”

“The university is kind of like your mother,” she added. “You have a special relationship. I can’t really think of an honor I could be given to mean more to me than have the LSU school of journalism give me an award.”

Constantin’s remarkable career is punctuated by the iconic photo she took of St. Teresa of Calcutta during the venerable nun’s visit to Baton Rouge in 1986. Yet, it was a career that nearly never happened.

“I had a terrible time in school,” said Constantin, who was held back in the fifth grade. “As a little kid you think, I must be dumb.’

“Whenever I am successful I immediately reflect back on those times that were so dark. Thank God through different critical periods I had people that got me through that.”

Constantin, who possesses an amazing knack to capture human emotions through the lens, did not even take her first picture until the age of 32, when she was working at Christ the King Student Center and volunteered to be the photographer for the LSU Catholic because “no one else would.” Before then, she admitted she had “zero interest” in photography.

But it was that first shutter that would send her on a different career path.

“I took a writing class and fell in love with journalism,” Constantin said.

Immediately smitten with the media, Constantin, who had earned a general studies degree from LSU in 1980, returned to LSU and earned her journalism degree in 1986.

“I can’t imagine being a photographer and not having that journalism ethic because if I had been just a photographer that had not gone through journalism school it would have been a lot different,” said Constantin, who is a Connecticut native but lived in New York, Massachusetts, Arizona and California while growing up. “I don’t think I would have carried myself as well, but I knew that this was a tough business. And there were times you had to be tough and you had to fight for your spot. I don’t think I would have had that.”

While working at various positions, she began her own photography business, and three years later went out on her own full time. And despite raised eyebrows, Constantin, who admitted she once considered becoming a nun, said it’s a decision she has never regretted.

“I was too naive to know it was such a bad idea,” she said with a smile. “But I never had a bad month. It was an amazing thing.”
St. Vincent de Paul’s dining room 35 years strong

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

The multiplication of loaves and fishes written about in Scriptures can be seen daily at the St. Vincent de Paul Society Dining Room, which celebrates its 35th anniversary this year. An initial “just do it” spark of faith among the society’s lay volunteers moved the dining room from its humble beginnings in a house on 21st Street in Baton Rouge to its much expanded facilities within the St. Vincent de Paul complex serving a variety of needs of the poor and marginalized.

In the early 1980s, SVPD lay leaders Fred Griggs, Rosie and Laura Martina, Marvin Ourso, Bill LeBlanc, Jewel Newman, Claude Doucet and others worked together to address the issue of hunger in the Capital City.

“Fred knew of someone who had a house on south 21 Street. That was vacant at that time, and the owner agreed to let St. Vincent de Paul open a dining room at that location,” said Michael Acaldo, president and CEO of SVPD.

Rosie Martina, who recently celebrated his 94th birthday and remains active in SVPD, said Griggs, who is now deceased, asked for his help in establishing the dining room in the 1980s.

“He said, ‘Rosie, do you have a truck?’ I’m thinking of starting a dining hall for St. Vincent de Paul and I need some help,” said Martina. “I said, ‘Yeah, I’d be glad to.’”

Martina, who was already actively involved in the social justice committee of St. Jude Church in Baton Rouge, delivered food to Victory Baptist Church on Greenwell Springs Road, where the donated items would be transferred to trucks from different religious denominations.

“There was no dining hall at the time,” he said.

Griggs was also looking for a food storage facility when someone donated the house on 21st Street, which became the first St. Vincent de Paul Dining Room.

Martina recalled, “We had a cast iron stove and small pots, and we were feeding 25 to 30 people seven days a week,” Martina said. “We had no air-conditioning, no dishwasher and only a single sink.”

In 1984, St. Vincent de Paul purchased a lot on 15th Street and constructed a dining hall and kitchen. Martina said Griggs put him to work helping to build the two-story building. When the kitchen and dining hall opened up, the agency was able to feed 200 to 300 people a day.

Martina, with the help of his daughter and “limo driver” Patricia, still picks up donations from restaurants and stores within the community and brings them to the dining hall, where he is warmly greeted by staff, volunteers and diners.

“Humbly considers his service just part of who he is. Growing up on a family farm with a poor family, his family gave sweet potatoes and other vegetables from the garden to migrant workers passing through, he said.

“You do what you can and do what God tells you to do,” said Martina.

“This ‘role up your sleeve’ attitude allows SVPD to be the organization that provides more meals than all local dining halls combined,” said Acaldo. He said this year the dining room will serve more than 250,000 meals, by the end of the year or early next year, the dining room will have served five million meals to the poor and marginalized since its beginning.

“This is made possible through the generosity of donated items, finances and time of many people,” said Acaldo.

Among those people include Crystal Chatelain, who see CELEBRATION PAGE 15

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*NEW* Poche’ Law Firm
Bishop’s message inspires educators

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Students’ faces register a range of emotions as they enter the classroom at the beginning of the school year, from “I want my mommy,” of pre-k students to “My last year of school, time to test my wings,” of the soon-to-be graduating seniors. At the 2017 Catholic Educators’ Conference at Most Blessed Sacrament Church in Baton Rouge on Aug. 1, attendees learned they play such a vital role in the lives of their cocooning students they themselves must be molded by God.

“Like Clay in the Hand of the Potter,” was the theme of the conference, based on Isaiah 64:8: “Oh Lord, you are the father, we are the clay, and you are the potter; and all of us are the work of your hand.”

Dr. Melanie Verges, superintendent of Catholic Schools, welcomed the attendees, then Bishop Robert W. Muench lead a prayer service.

“I have a sense that I am in a room of a team of all-stars. Give yourselves a hand,” Bishop Muench began in his reflection.

The bishop reminded the educators that they are a gift of creation of a holy God.

“God has created us with value, with meaning, with purpose and mission,” said Bishop Muench.

He urged the educators to support, encourage and challenge each other.

“He (God) calls us to accountability, just like we do the students,” the bishop said.

Bishop Muench noted having crucifixes in the classroom doesn’t make a school Catholic.

“God has created us with value, with meaning, with purpose and mission,” said Bishop Muench.

He urged the educators to support, encourage and challenge each other.

The students who give you the most trouble will earn you a better place in heaven.”

“The students who give you the most trouble will earn you a better place in heaven.”

“The students who give you the most trouble will earn you a better place in heaven.”

He concluded by challenging the educators to be involved and be instruments of God’s grace and change in their schools, communities and the world. He left them with the questions, “If not you, who? If not now, when? If not this, what else?”

The attendees were further told by speaker Katie Prejean, “You have one of the most important occupations in America.”

Prejean, a teacher and author, said because teachers hold such an important role in the direction the students take in their lives, it is critical that they engage the students’ hearts and souls as well as their minds.

She pointed out that Pope Paul VI, in his encyclical Evangelii Nuntiandi, wrote, “Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.”

“It doesn’t matter if you know your stuff,” said Prejean, adding if the students only see the knowledge in their head and nothing else, they won’t make an impact.

Prejean said the teachers who have touched her life most are the ones who helped her grow in her relationship with Jesus and her appreciation of the Eucharist.

“Who are we talking about when we are talking about the person of Jesus Christ?” asked Prejean.

She said people have “many pictures in their head” of who Christ is, but the one definite thing known about him is that he came to encounter people and continues to do so.

“He’s knocking on the door to get inside us. You get to open the door to that relationship. He dwells among us and invites us to dwell with him. We have the opportunity to say ‘yes’ said Prejean.

She said she in John 1:35-37, John points to Jesus as God becoming flesh when he proclaims, “Behold the Lamb of God.”

In the following verses, when people ask Jesus questions about himself, he invites them into a relationship by saying, “Come and see.”

She told the teachers when they discuss their faith in school, they should not “teach the curriculum of the cross” but point the way to Christ who is alive through their faith.

The teachers attending the conference said they received the inspiration they needed as they prepared to meet and lead a new group of students.

“It’s kind of bittersweet for me,” said Tonya DeSoto, a third-grade English language arts teacher at Our Lady of Mercy School in Baton Rouge. Mixed in with the excitement of the “new beginnings” for the school through OLOM’s “Traditions for Tomorrow” campaign is sadness that the youngest of her three children, Sydney, will be graduating from OLOM.

Traditions are important to DeSoto’s family. She is the sister of Father Trey Nelson, pastor of St. Jude Church in Baton Rouge, and the family grew up at Our Lady of Mercy.

“I want to pass on the history and traditions to teach them that they are part of that history too,” said DeSoto.

This school year will be one of transition for Tammy Matirne, who after several years teaching seventh- and eighth-grade math and science, will be teaching senior high school biology.

An Ascension Catholic High School graduate, Matirne said she graduated from college with a degree in biology, but went back to college to get a teaching degree.

“It will be a personal challenge to teach seniors, but it will be a new, exciting experience for me. Change is good, that’s what I say,” said Matirne.

She said her goal for her students is “to send them out in the world with the skills for professional success and, through their experiences, to have grown spiritually.”

Ruth Oliver, a fourth-grade teacher at Redemptorist St. Gerard School in Baton Rouge, said she would like to help generate more parental involvement in the school and would like to see more emphasis on science, technology, engineering and math in the classroom.

“In this world we live in it’s so important to be efficient in math and science,” said Oliver.

Helping students to be whole in mind, body and spirit is the mission of Brian...
By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

Five days before the start of the school year, Paula Fabre, principal of St. Francis Xavier School in Baton Rouge, was providing lunch for teachers and staff as they decorated and organized their classrooms.

“It all comes together so beautifully. We’re so excited we just can’t stand it. I love it. I like everything,” she said.

Newly decorated bulletin boards posted around the school include one near the office, which displayed the diocesan theme “Like Clay in the Hand of the Potter.” Pointing to another billboard, located in the hallway outside of the school library, Fabre explained that she had decorated it.

“Now I can let these teachers have all the fun,” she said with a grin.

LaKisha Scott, who teaches third- and fourth-grade math and science, is one of three new teachers at St. Francis.

“It’s a beautiful Christian school. It’s very peaceful and very family oriented. And, everything we’ve got,” she said.

Wally and Milling Washington helped carry classroom supplies of paper towels and disinfectant for their three children, Mikalen, fifth grade; Milenzee, fourth grade; and, Mlassen, first grade. Milling Washington said “the family atmosphere” at St. Francis is what draws them to the school.

Eighth-grade Alana Buckley agreed.

“What I like about St. Francis Xavier is the home environment,” she said. “It feels like home.”

Sisters Jaleigha Turner, fifth grade, and Madison Turner, fourth grade, also love their school.

“Because I get to learn about new things and I get to learn about bullying,” said Jaleigha.

“They taught me things I didn’t know,” said Madison. “We get to learn things about Jesus.”

For the Henderson family, the first day of school was full of anticipation. Di’Naunee, seventh grade; Di’Anane, sixth grade; and, William, second grade, are starting their first year at St. Francis. Though the night before was busy with getting uniforms and backpacks ready, the morning ran smoothly.

“They turned up before the alarm clock,” laughed their mom, Lacy Henderson, “It was exciting.”

“We hope to have a good year,” said Fabre. “We’re going to give it everything we’ve got.”

“Welcome Back”

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

Stirring up a nest of fun and smiles during the first day of school at St. Alphonsus School in Greenwell Springs Aug 10 are, from left, SAS students Lane Billings, Anthony Igiede (wearing the school’s Hornet mascot costume) and Owen Jeansonne. Photo by Debbie Shelley | The Catholic Commentator

(2) Students at St. Alphonsus School in Greenwell Springs were holla to the new school year on Aug 10. Photo by Debbie Shelley | The Catholic Commentator

(4) A ebullient Ava Alston expresses her emotions during the first day of school for freshmen at St. Thomas Aquinas. Photo by Richard Broux | The Catholic Commentator

(1) St. Thomas Aquinas Diocesan Regional High School freshman Jonah Schmitt looks over at his new classmates during the first day of school at STA. Photo by Richard Broux | The Catholic Commentator

Back to School

A statement by Dr. Melanie Verges, superintendent of Catholic Schools for the Diocese of Baton Rouge

Catholic schools serve families by providing children with excellent programs that focus on the growth of the school child and a positive culture in which students build life-long relationships. The 2017-18 school year will be one in which the tradition of excellence is continued. We look forward to experiences that evangelize hearts as students discover the joy of the Gospel through faith formation and service projects, educate minds as students are challenged and supported in rigorous and relevant curriculum, and encourage all students have the opportunity to develop skills in athletics, art, and various special interest clubs and embrace the future as schools provide 21st century learning practices for their students. We are grateful to all educators, staff, board members, parents, community members and clergy who give of themselves to continue the ministry of Catholic education in the Diocese of Baton Rouge.
Youth energized at ecumenical prayer service

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Fourth-grader Cleopatra Marie Harris, a member of St. Francis Xavier Church in Baton Rouge, and third-grader Ashlyn Palmer, a member of Rosehill Baptist Church in Baton Rouge, chatted, giggled and munched on sandwiches, chicken and sweets as if they were old friends, but they had only met a few moments before at an ecumenical service on Aug. 5 organized by the youth of St. Paul the Apostle Church in Baton Rouge to fill area youth spiritually before they returned to the classroom.

Harris and Palmer’s conversation, which included their love for dance, pizza and the LSU Tigers, was among many that showed the St. Paul youth brought home the culture of encounter they experienced at the 12th National Black Catholic Congress July 7-9 in Orlando.

The youth, who attended the Congress, were energized after hearing the messages and participating in the evangelization-focused event, themed, “The Spirit of the Lord is Upon Me: Act Justly, Love Goodness and Walk Humbly with Your God.”

Toward the end of the event, two St. Paul youth who attended the Congress, Demond Garner and Rudolph “Trey” Richard III, told St. Paul pastor Father Rick Andrus SVD they were having a great time and shared what they had learned.

“Demond asked me, ‘Father, what’s next?’” said Father Andrus.

When they returned to Baton Rouge from Orlando, Father Andrus consulted with the youths’ parents and answered, “Before school starts, we need to do something to motivate the youth.”

“We said, ‘Make this yours. Do it with what you want,’” said Father Andrus.

This was different than anything the youth had done before. While they were active in the church and assisted with many programs, they had never gone “solo” in planning an event. And they only had three weeks to plan it.

One of the messages that Richard and Garner wanted to get across to their audience was that they are vital in the life of the church.

The two youth leaders, who are also on the Diocesan Youth Board, said they had heard the concerns of the youth at the congress. They felt they were not a part of the church and that the church did not really value what they have to say.

“We wanted to make sure that the youth knew they were the future of the church,” said Richard.

And they wanted that message to go beyond St. Paul to the wider community.

“I didn’t want it to be just Catholic,” said Richard. “We’re all trying to do the same thing. I didn’t want to select or cut off any denomination because we are in the same boat. It was never about that.”

With a few suggestions from Father Andrus, parents and adults, an announcement at Masses the following weekend invited youth to participate. The youth from Immaculate Conception Church and St. Francis Xavier, both in Baton Rouge, and other local churches received the invitation.

The youth produced a program filled with music, dance, prayer and motivational talks.

“What we got was a good little group that proved they are a lot of fun and get things done because there are active members in the church already,” said Richard.

Garner said a lot of talent surfaced during the planning and rehearsals.

“I didn’t know Tavin (Anthony) could play the drums,” said Garner about the young Catholic who provided an anchoring beat to the soulful song “Give It All Away,” with Jermon Dunn singing lead vocals and Richard and Garner singing backup.

Richard, who played piano for the number, drew upon his musical talent. Self-taught on the piano, Richard, a student at Lee High School, has also played violin for the Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra and with the Baton Rouge High Orchestra, which played at Carnegie Hall.

Garner, who enjoys speaking, used his talent as an emcee at the event.

Adult contributions to the program included a talk peppered with humor by Earl Singleton, emphasizing the importance of being prepared, not bullying and talking about Jesus at school.

Questions about the upcoming school year were fielded from high school and college students and an LSU staff member. The panel provided answers, positive direction and advice about time management, student-athletics, classmates and friends involved in drugs, alcohol and sexual activity.

Taking a battle front approach to facing seemingly insurmountable problems in school and life in his talk, Father Andrus referred to the passage in 1 Samuel 17 in which the Israelites and King Saul are trembling in fear of Philistine giant, Goliath, when David, a young shepherd, killed him with a sling, one of five smooth stones he had and the power of God.

“Let no one stop you from achieving your dreams. Go for it and let no one or nothing stop you,” said Father Andrus.

He said there are a lot of “Goliaths out there” and encouraged students to take five smooth stones with them to school in order to succeed including: preparation, more education, motivation or internal drive, spiritual inspiration and salvation.

He then invited the students forward to be blessed.

The attendees said they received good information and encouragement from the prayer service.

“I learned that when you have a question, raise your hand and ask. If you don’t ask the question no one else will,” said fifth-grade student Jeremiah Dixon, a member of New Hope Baptist Church in Baton Rouge. He said he liked the idea of having an ecumenical service. “It think it will be more interesting to hear different ideas.”

Kyra Harleaux of St. Paul, who will

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PRAYER ▼
From page 12

be a freshmen at McNeese University in Lake Charles this fall, said, “The panel gave us a lot of information about stress. I think it’s helpful with the transition.”

She said because young people organized the program for young people, she was more comfortable asking questions.

Harleaux’s sister, Zaria, a liturgical dancer, said dance opens her up to prayer and she especially likes group prayer.

“If you do things by yourself it’s hard. But if you have a group that supports you, it’s easier,” said Zaria, adding that prayer keeps a person connected to God.

“If you stay in-tune with God, you can get through anything,” said Harleaux.

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GOD’S UNCONDITIONAL LOVE – Seminarians Joseph St. Cyr and Austin Young recently spoke to eight-grade students at St. Jude the Apostle School in Baton Rouge on God’s unconditional love. Students were reminded that bad choices can often lead to unhappiness, but that it’s okay to change one’s mind and go down the path where God wants people to be happy. St. Cyr and Young are graduates of St. Jude. Photo provided by St. Jude School
The Catholic Commentator

MOVIE REVIEWS

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

The Dark Tower
Columbia

Dull sci-fi fantasy in which a psychic teen (Tom Taylor) first dreams about, then travels to a distant world where he gets caught up in the cosmic battle between a villainous wizard (Matthew McConaughey) and the lone remaining member (Idris Elba) of a group of Old West-style gunmen still resisting him. Their struggle concerns the supernatural structure of the title which somehow keeps the evil lurking at the edges of the universe at bay. Awash in such high-flown hooey, director and co-writer Nikolaj Arcel’s film, which extends rather than adapts a series of novels by Stephen King, is inappropriate for the impressionable. As for grown viewers, should they slog through all the exposition of non-scriptural ideas, they may be touched by the bond that eventually develops between the fatherless lad and his initially gruff mentor. Occult themes, much gunplay and other violence, including torture, but with little gore, a few uses of profanity, a couple of crude terms. A-III; PG-13

A Ghost Story

This compact thriller is less a story about a mother’s (Halle Berry) enduring love and sacrifice for her abducted young son (Sage Correa) than a long drive in an amazingly durable minivan. Director Luis Prieto and scriptwriter Knate Lee have no interest in character development and motivation. Berry merely reverts to primeval maternal-warrior instinct, and the race is on to catch up with the cretinous kidnappers (Chris McGinn and Lew Temple). Gun and physical violence, considerable vehicular mayhem, fleeting profanity and rough language. A-III; R

Kidnap

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This compact thriller is less a story about a mother’s (Halle Berry) enduring love and sacrifice for her abducted young son (Sage Correa) than a long drive in an amazingly durable minivan. Director Luis Prieto and scriptwriter Knate Lee have no interest in character development and motivation. Berry merely reverts to primeval maternal-warrior instinct, and the race is on to catch up with the cretinous kidnappers (Chris McGinn and Lew Temple). Gun and physical violence, considerable vehicular mayhem, fleeting profanity and rough language. A-III; R

The Tribunal

freestyle

Strong Catholic values are filtered through some faulty filmmaking in this romantic drama from screenwriter Michael C. Mergler and director Marc Leif. A divorced musician (Chris Petty) sees an annulment so that he can wed his devout girlfriend (Laura Mock). But his case requires the testimony of his estranged former bandmate and best friend (Ryan Wesley Gilreath) who was also once the boyfriend of the bride-to-be, and still carries a torch for her. Though religious themes, including the counter-cultural message that sex before marriage is a damaging mistake as well as a sin, will resonate with viewers of faith, sometimes subpar acting and unlikely plot developments chip away at this small-scale project’s credibility. Possibly acceptable for older teens. Bedroom scenes, including a non-graphic premari- tal sexual encounter, some irreverent images, a mild oath, a few crass terms. A-III; PG-13

Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets

FLASHY but lightweight sci-fi adventure, set in the 28th century, in which a duo of intergalactic law enforcement agents (Dane DeHaan and Cara Delevingne) share romantic tension as well as a series of crime-busting exploits involving the legacy of a destroyed planet and the fate of the titular metropolis, a mega-space station under threat from an unidentified force. Director Jean-Claude Mézières, writer-director Luc Besson accelerates such sequences as an interdimensional chase through an exotic bazaar. Yet his sometimes baroquely overwrought film is longer on style than ultimate impact. Though the love story sees DeHaan’s playboy character anxious to mend his ways in favor of marital commitment, moreover, his first priority is to brave its fleeting scenes of breathtaking aerial combat and gunplay and other stylized violence, a prostitution theme, scenes of sensuality with partial nudity, a mild oath, a couple of uses each of crude and crass language. A-III; PG-13

Annabelle: Creation

Warner Bros.

Despite a pattern of irrational behavior from those confronting the figure- haunting demon at the center of this horror prequel, there are some old-fashioned shivers awaiting those grown viewers willing to brave its fleeting scenes of graphic gore. In 1950s California, a group of displaced orphans (most prominently Talitha Bateman and Lulu Wilson) shoulderized by a nun (Stephanie Sigman) are offered refuge in the spooky home of a dollmaker (Anthony LaPaglia) and his invalid wife (Miranda Otto) both of whom are still overcome by grief following the death of their young daughter (Samara Lee) in a tragic car accident a dozen years before. Along with the counter-scriptural concept that infernal fiends can steal human souls, director David F. Sandberg’s spinoff of “The Conjuring” franchise features an incidental portrayal of Catholi- cism so wildly inaccurate that it will annoy and distract the faithful. A distorted presentation of Catholic faith practices, mostly stylized but briefly very bloody violence, numerous gruesome images, at last one mild oath. L; R

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

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Dark Tower: Columbia

Entertainment

August 18, 2017
St. Jude dedicates cafeteria

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

The first day of school at St. Jude the Apostle School in Baton Rouge opened with a dedication ceremony for its newly renovated cafeteria.

“They updated the entryway (with) new light fixtures and new flooring,” said Michelle Gardner, the school’s new principal. “There is a beautiful wood cross that was a gift from last year’s eight-grade class to the school. Then, inside the cafeteria itself, it has new wash stations, bathrooms – the boys and girls bathrooms have been totally renovated.”

From floors to ceiling and everything in between, the cafeteria at St. Jude school features everything a modern lunchroom needs in order to feed hundreds of hungry students, quickly and efficiently. “We worked closely with the child nutrition program so there’s an updated serving line,” said Gardner.

“This is the first work done on the cafeteria since it was built in 1990,” said Father Troy Nelson, pastor of St. Jude the Apostle Church. “It’s just brighter and it even has light jazz during the lunch hour.”

“It’s the work of the Lord and we are grateful for the generosity of the community, the parents, the children, the parishioners, the community leaders,” said Father Nelson.

Gardner, the school’s new principal, called the renovation “amazing.”

“Open My Eyes.”

Father Nelson said it was the hard work of parents over the years that helped make the renovations possible. “The funds that went for this were raised through fundraisers and a lot of donations so we didn’t need to borrow any money,” he said.

Students gather for a dedication ceremony for the newly renovated cafeteria at St. Jude School. Photo by Bonny Van | The Catholic Commentator

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LICENSED ARBORIST

Solution on page 18

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Solution on page 18
EDITORIAL

A new healing

One year ago, Mother Nature unleashed her fury on the Baton Rouge area, drowning thousands of homes and forcing hundreds of thousands of residents to flee to higher ground. In a strange twist, the flood waters, albeit briefly, also doused the flames of racial mistrust that had erupted only weeks earlier in the wake of the shooting of Alton Sterling and the ambush of six law enforcement officials two weeks later.

Not surprisingly, the recovery effort was unified. During and after the flood was a remarkable example of how a community should function year round – neighbors reaching out to others in need, blind to skin color or ethnicity or gender of the hand they were pulling to safety.

Sadly, one year later racial mistrust appears to be on the rise.

This is not the city that was unified in its darkest hour, nor is it the city that has built its reputation as being welcoming, respected for its extreme generosity and unparalleled commitment to assisting others in need.

Healing what divides begins with developing a respect for one another, with every citizen looking into the eyes of another and finding a commonality, finding the goodness deep in a person’s heart. It’s a message Jesus preached 2,000 years ago and finding a commonality, finding the goodness deep in a person’s heart. It’s a message Jesus preached 2,000 years ago and finding a commonality, finding the goodness deep in a person’s heart. It’s a message Jesus preached 2,000 years ago and finding a commonality, finding the goodness deep in a person’s heart. It’s a message Jesus preached 2,000 years ago.

Unfortunately, a natural disaster was required to heal a wounded community, to build bridges over the prejudices that separate us. And it appears that might be fleeting. Only through prayer and treating each other with the respect that God teaches his disciples and live it as well as teach it.

The readings that you are hearing now are important because they describe the Apostles’ preparation time for their ministry. They were chosen and sent out by Jesus to repeat St. John the Baptist’s job of “making straight the way of the Lord.” We have already heard in past weeks how Jesus sent them to announce that “the kingdom of God is at hand.” He taught them through parables that not everyone would accept his words nor theirs. If they were accepted, they should stay and teach, if not, just go on to the next town with their message.

The kingdom of God is like yeast in the loft of humankind. Not everyone at any time will accept it. But it will spread. Jesus himself taught in parables to invite his listeners to know the father as he knew him and to challenge them to accept a life of service and love that he was showing them to be God’s will. He healed the sick and fed the hungry, and called his disciples to imitate him. He announced that “the kingdom of God is near.” It was perfect for Ordinary Time. Like a parable, it can be understood to have more than one meaning. Literally, it means “Do what you are doing.” So it could mean “Focus your attention on what you are doing.” “Do well what you are doing.” “Recognize the value of what you are doing,” etc.

St. Francis of Assisi changed the Christian world of the 13th century and had some influence on the Muslim world, too, by understanding Jesus’ call to simplicity of life in his beatitudes and parables. Recently I came upon a book entitled “Sermons for Sermon Haters” by Father Andre Papineau, a Salvatorian priest. Father Papineau shares St. Francis’ emphasis on imitating Jesus in the ordinary events of life. The following is his take on the parable of the sower in his sermon, “Is Their Dirt in the Kingdom?”:

“Where does God’s word take root? In the dirt! ... Where in the kingdom do we find it? It is in us. In us, the us we want to sweep under the carpet of our lives. It is what we regard as the crap of our lives, everything we fear and regard as negative or unseemly about ourselves. That is the dirty dirt. But it is here that God’s word thrives in the manure pile ... Imagine! Salvation in a dung heap! We don’t need to be scrupulously from top to bottom before receiving God’s word. We don’t need to be clean all over. All we need to do is let the word in, into the dirt, deep, down.

“Is there dirt in the kingdom? There sure is! And we’re all standing in it right now.

“Remember this: The compost heap of today is the Garden of God tomorrow!”

That is certainly a message for Ordinary Time. None of us can think that it applies just to other people. St. Francis could identify with it. It sounds like Pope Francis, who would have to admit that Father Papineau “smells like the sheep.” At least, that’s a little better than the manure pile. I told you that parables had many meanings ... and applications. Go to Mass in Ordinary Time, and you will hear more of them.

FATHER CARVILLE is a retired priest in the Diocese of Baton Rouge and writes on current topics for The Catholic Commentator. He can be reached at johnny-carville@gmail.com.
Suicide redeeming the memory of a loved one

One year ago, virtually everyone who knew him was stunned by the suicide death of the most prominent American Hispanic theologian that we have produced up to now, Virgilio Elizondo. Moreover, Virgilio wasn’t just a very gifted, pioneering theologian, he was also a beloved priest and a warm friend to countless people. Everyone dies, and the death of a loved one is always hard, but it was the manner of his death that left so many people stunned and confused. Suicide! But he was such a faith-filled, sensitive man. How could this be possible? And those questions, like the muddy waters of a flood, immediately began to seep into other emotional crevices, leaving most everyone who knew him with a huge, gnawing question: What does this do to his work, to the gift that he left to the church and to the Hispanic community? Can we still honor his life and his contribution in the same way as we would have had he died of a heart attack or cancer? Indeed, had he died of a heart attack or cancer, his death, though sad, would undoubtedly have had about it an air of healthy closure, even of celebration, that we were saying farewell to a great man we had had the privilege to know, that we were saying farewell to a great theologian, he was also a beloved priest and the originator of the Hispanic theology in San Antonio, Texas. He is president of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas. He is a father and award-winning author, of which one is viewing family photos with a child and telling them stories about when they were little. It’s a small practice that forms their memory in ways that remind them that they are part of a family and a stream of memories, part of something much larger than themselves.

Are technological ‘practices’ affecting your memory?

Meanwhile, the practice of using the technology is forming our perception in small ways that often go unnoticed. One example is the blue light that is emitted from smartphones and tablets that interferes with the neurotransmitters that bring on sleep. Reading before bed can be a relaxing activity but doing it from a screen can tell your brain just the opposite, to wake up. Media technology practice also has an effect on memory. How many times have you opted to Google something rather than try to remember it on your own? How many photos have you taken at a party or on vacation for fear that you might not remember how fun or beautiful everything was?

Practice forms habits and when they are properly ordered, habits can be salutary for the soul. However, habits can also turn into disordered obsessions or addictions. Today, we hear a lot about technology addiction but not a lot about technology practice.

There are certainly addictive qualities about media technology, but even if we are not addicted, we are still engaged in the practice of using those technologies regularly. And those practices can alter our perception in ways that change our understanding of others, ourselves and God.

The question that needs asking is, What is all of this technology practice forming us for?

Our devices, even when they are put away, haunt us with the possibility that a new message or bit of news is ready to be consumed. It starts with a practice like using the computer for hours a day (required for most office workers) that spills over into leisure time with social media, games and plenty of Netflix.

For children, it is the threat of boredom that drives them to the screen. Boredom, a state once reserved for the free play of the imagination and memory, is conquered by their thirst for constant stimulation that can only be slaked by streaming media.

Catholic philosopher Josef Pieper said that leisure was the basis of culture. It’s leisure that gives us the time and space to contemplate God. Without it—in lives that are dictated by labor and the digital tools required to perform it—we lose our capacity to perceive the capaciousness of God. The ways that we spend our leisure time says a lot about what we ultimately value.

But there are upsides to the new technology’s effects on the senses, memory and imagination. There are practices that help us recognize the pain of another human being or get in touch with something transcendent.

One example is viewing family photos with a child and telling them stories about when they were little. It’s a small practice that forms their memory in ways that remind them that they are part of a family and a stream of memories, part of something much larger than themselves.

If the goal is finding a healthy balance with our technological creations, then we have to start with practice. Just as a doctor practices medicine, a Catholic practices religion. We know it’s the cure for our spiritual maladies, but sometimes we shirk our duty to pursue the good.

Take a moment to revisit the practices in your daily life and to ask how they are forming your memory and imagination. As Catholics, we call to mind Christ’s passion, death and resurrection so that we can imagine a life of hope.
Women in Spirit – Shauna Sanford, communications director for the Office of the Governor of Louisiana, will speak at the Women in Spirit Meeting, Thursday, Aug. 24, noon, at St. Joseph Cathedral, Fourth and Main streets, Baton Rouge. Women in Spirit is an interfaith gathering of women seeking spiritual growth and networking opportunities. Lunch will be provided. To RSVP email wis.stj@gmail.com or call cathedral office at 225-387-5928.

Parish Respect Life Coordinator Meeting – Respect life coordinators from the Diocese of Baton Rouge will meet for networking, support and information concerning upcoming events Tuesday, Aug. 22, 12 – 2 p.m., at the Catholic Life Center, 1800 S. Acadian Thwy., Baton Rouge. Lunch will be provided. To RSVP, email dvanhaute@gmail.com by Monday, Aug. 21, at noon.

40 Days for Life – 40 Days for Life Baton Rouge, part of a world-wide campaign consisting of prayer, fasting and peaceful witness to an end to abortion, will take place Wednesday, Sept. 27 – Sunday, Nov. 5. A prayer vigil will be held outside the Delta Clinic abortion facility between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. each day of the event. For more information about how you can be a part of the event, visit 40daysforlifebr.com or contact Danielle Van Haute at 225-242-0164 or email dvanhaute@diobr.org.

Willwoods Married Couples Retreat – Couples wishing to enrich their marriage are encouraged to attend a Willwoods Married Couples Retreat Saturday, Aug. 26 – Sun. Aug. 27, at the Archdiocese of New Orleans Retreat Center, 5500 St. Mary St., Metairie. Suggested donation is $275. To register and for more information, call Jason Angellette at 504-830-3716 or visit willwoods.org.

Retrouvaille – Married couples experiencing relationship problems, difficulties or crises are invited to attend the next “Retrouvaille Weekend,” Friday, Sept. 8 – Sun. Sept. 10 at the Bishop Robert E. Tracy Center, 1800 S. Acadian Thwy., Baton Rouge. For more information or to register, call Randoll and Robin Bellard at 225-271-4092 or visit helpourmarriage.com.

Catechist Certification – The Office of Evangelization and Catechesis will hold its fall course, with the first beginning Saturday, Sept. 9. Class topics include church history, the Catholic faith, prophecies, sacraments and healing service, the Catholic Scriptures, Catholic identity in the Catholic school and more. For dates, times and to register, visit evangcatbr.org.

Magnificat Prayer Breakfast – Father Johnson Kuriappilly, chaplain of Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center, will speak at the breakfast prayer meeting of Magnificat, a ministry to Catholic Women, Saturday Sept. 16, 9 a.m., at Oak Lodge Reception Center, 2894 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 9650 Victory Lane, Denham Springs, LA 70726.

Catholic Divorce Survival Guide – On Wednesdays, 6:30 p.m., St. Alphonsus Church, 14140 Greenwell Springs Road, Greenwell Springs, is hosting a 12-week DVD ministry to men and women who have suffered divorce. ‘The Catholic’s Divorce Survival Guide.’ Topics featured include shock, denial, anger, grief, guilt, forgiveness, money, the courts, kids, the ex-spouse, annulment, dating, sexuality, spirituality, remarriage or staying single and more. Cost is $20 per person. For more information, call 225-261-4644.

Survivors of Suicide Meetings – People who have, or know someone who has, lost a loved one to suicide, are invited to attend a Survivors of Suicide non-denominational free support group meeting every first and third Monday of the month, 6 p.m., at the St. Albert Student Center, 409 W Dakota St., Hammond. For more information, call Angie Arnone 985-351-1073.
Procession of the Blessed Sacrament around the square of the Congregation of Mother of the Redeemer for Marian Days. Officials say attendance this year set a record.

Photo by Brother Peter Hieu Nguyen

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Immigration ▼
From page 1
Hispanic Apostolate for the Diocese of Baton Rouge to reveal names and address of immigrant families, under the guise of helping them. The apostolate refused.

"(Imigration officials) are doing collateral arrests; so many (other) things we have not seen in a long time," Roche said. "Everybody has their priorities but those priorities (are in) peril right now."

Hispanic Apostolate director Julia Scarnato is on the frontline advocating for the rights of immigrants and refugees. She said that while she agrees there has to be some order regarding immigration people have their rights.

"We have to respect their rights like a human being," she said. "We are on the peoples’ side because of our faith and willingness to be like Jesus, to go and protect the stranger, welcome the stranger."

Mary’s odyssey is not unlike so many others. She, her mother and children escaped Mexico and legally crossed the border in McAllen, Texas on June 14, 2016, arriving in Baton Rouge four months later. She has a valid work permit expiring in early October and a document granting her asylum. Yet, on more than one occasion she has been threatened with deportation by immigration officials.

Unfortunately, jobs have been difficult to find because of the language barrier, transportation challenges and a requirement that she report to the Immigrants and Customs Office (ICE) in New Orleans every two weeks. She is also forced to wear a monitoring bracelet, although she has not been given a plausible explanation as to why.

The pain from the bracelet, which she was forced to wear, was so intense that she had to switch it to a different leg, and although that request was granted, it also came with a threat of her and her children being deported.

"I don’t understand why," Mary said through an interpreter.

Roche explained that ICE has complete discretion as to who will wear a monitoring bracelet, although she and her children are being deported.

"It’s so sad," she said. "That’s Mary’s anxiety was heightened earlier this spring during one of her visits to ICE when she and eight other female immigrants were detained and locked in a small room with no food or water or ability to use the bathroom for eight hours. Mary said no explanation was given as to the reason for being detained, and immigrant officials checked their wallets, cell phones and the amount of money they were carrying, although no cash was taken.

"We were treated really badly," she said, adding that the agents told the women they would be watched on every visit.

Exacerbating the problem, according to Scarnato, is that even among the Hispanic community people are taking advantage of each other. She noted that Mary has to pay up to $150 a month for the trips daily, netting more than $500 for each round trip. Additionally, these same drivers will charge up to $50 to bring a person to a local grocery store.

"It’s a business and people are taking advantage of the opportunity," Scarnato said. "It is the same community taking advantage of (other Hispanics)."

Unfortunately, Mary’s case is similar to many more that unfold daily, according to Scarnato.

"We have a lot of people in the apostolate we want to help but we don’t have enough income to solve all kinds of problems people have," she added. "We just try to do our best and request help from community members."

"Where are the human rights?"

Anyone wishing to help the Hispanic Apostolate should contact Scarnato at 225-927-8700 or visit apostolado-hispano.com or diobr.org

TEACHER ▼
From page 9
Bass, physical education teacher at Holy Family School in Port Allen.

“My main goal is to instill the Gospel into our workouts and to work in the Bible as part of a motivational experience,” said Bass. "I want to stay out of my own interpretation and lean on the Bible versus and let them interpret it for themselves."

"Even though they’re in P.E., it’s not just physical. We want to give them a mental and spiritual education as well."

Getting students excited about what they are going to learn is important for Cole Cataldo, theology teacher and campus minister at St. Thomas Aquinas High School in Hammond.

“I like to make class fun to keep the students engaged,” said Cataldo. “Learning about Jesus Christ — that’s what’s more fun than anything.”

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