EASTER REFLECTIONS

Diocese marks triduum

Staff Report
The Catholic Commentator

Bishop Robert W. Muench celebrated the annual Chrism Mass at St. Joseph Cathedral on March 28, one day before the start of the triduum, which marks the holiest time of the liturgical year. Bishop Muench was joined by priests, deacons and diocesan employees representing various agencies, church parishes and schools from throughout the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

In his homily, Bishop Muench touched on various topics including prayer for peace and unity for the city of Baton Rouge. He also noted the great work of priests in the diocese, many of whom attended the Mass, and he recognized those priests who were celebrating special anniversary years marking their ordinations. The bishop also talked about the need for more vocations.

On Holy Thursday, churches celebrated Masses remembering the Last Supper and Jesus’ washing the feet of his disciples. At Sts. Anthony of Padua and Le Van Phung Church in Baton Rouge, pastor Father Peter Nguyen Viet Tan ICM and Deacon Hieu Nguyen marked the event by washing the feet of students from St. Anthony’s Parish School of Religion. During his homily, Deacon Hieu talked about the meaning of bearing crosses.

"Don’t lose hope when you have crosses in your life because Jesus is always with you," said Deacon Hieu. "Without Jesus, your cross is meaningless."

On Good Friday, most churches hosted the Stations of the Cross, commemorating Jesus’ last...
The Catholic Commentator  April 13, 2018

The Good Shepherd

By Dina Dow

Fidelity in the Holy Name of Jesus: To This We Are Witnesses

Happy Easter! As the joyful journey of this glorious season continues, the daily and Sunday Mass readings share accounts of Jesus’ appearances after the resurrection. Also given are inspiring testimonies of the disciples in the name of Jesus, as well as the power in them to continue the ministry of the Lord.

Fulfillment

The Liturgy of the Word begins with readings from the Acts of the Apostles. The testimony and actions of the early church, particularly those of the apostles, signify a deep faith and transforming power of the Holy Spirit. St. Peter explains the fulfillment of God’s plan of salvation as foretold through Moses (the Law), the prophets (the coming of the Messiah) and the Psalms. He has come through the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the one the crowd had rejected. Despite this, Jesus, the cornerstone, forgave them from the cross offering the promise of new life as a child of God through the repentance of sin and baptism into his life. So we ask, “When have I rejected Jesus? What do I need to repent of and turn back to God? As I renew my baptismal promises, am I truly rejecting the empty promises of Satan in order to be refreshed in the waters of life through the sprinklingrites? Am I open to the power given by the Holy Spirit, similarly given to the apostles, in order to fulfill my calling by sharing the good news in the name of Jesus?

We are witnesses

The Gospel reading on the Third Sunday of Easter is a continuation of the road to Emmaus account. It picks up as the disciples who recognized Jesus in the breaking of the bread have run back to the upper room to witness what they had just experienced. Upon this testimony, Jesus “stood” among them saying, “Peace be with you” (Lk 24:36). What was their reaction? They were “startled and frightened.”

Take a moment to consider how you would react. Jesus knows what they are thinking. He reassures them he is the risen Lord, showing his wounds of the crucifixion and then eating. This scene is just mind-blowing!

Jesus reiterated how he fulfilled all that was promised, increased their understanding of the Scriptures and said, “You are witnesses of these things” (Lk 24:48). Same is true for us, today, now in this moment. So we ask, “How can I witness the joy of the resurrection? Am I focused on the works of mercy during the Easter season? When can I set aside time to meditate with the Bible in order to know God? When have I recognized God’s action in my life and how am I able to share this story with others?”

Good Shepherd

“I am the Good Shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (Jn 10:11). St. John Paul II stated in a homily, “He can we fail to see in these words an implicit reference to the mystery of the Lord’s death and resurrection? Christ freely offered himself on the cross and rose by virtue of his own divine power. Christ is the Good Shepherd who, by dying on the cross, lays down his life for his sheep. Thus a profound communion is established between the Good Shepherd and his flock.”

A picture of Jesus carrying a lamb as he tends a flock sits in my office. It serves as a constant reminder of the presence of Jesus. There are days when “life happens” and restlessness enters invoking suffering, sadness and, perhaps, despair. Yet, Jesus’ staff gently guides the faithful to “restful waters” of baptismal graces flowing within. He leads us to the green pastures, if we allow him to do so. He seeks us in the

The Good Shepherd

Even the wick has special meaning. Made of beeswax, as is the candle itself, the wick signifies Christ’s humanity.

The paschal candle will remain in the sanctuary for the 50 days of the Easter season, always being lit for liturgical services, before being placed next to the baptismal font after Pentecost. At various times throughout the year the candle will be lit for a number of services, including baptisms, and frequently at funerals, when it will be placed next to the casket, serving as a reminder of the death and resurrection of Christ.

Although the origin of the paschal candle is uncertain, tradition suggests it is derived from the Lucernarium, which is the evening office early Christians believed to be inspired by the Jewish custom of lighting a lamp at the conclusion of the Sabbath.

Evidence shows that the Lucernarium rite began in the fourth century. St. Jerome mentions the rite in a letter written in 384 and Sts. Ambrose and Augustine also composed Easter proclamations regarding the rite.

At one point, the candle was broken up after the Easter Vigil, its fragments distributed to those in attendance. But since the 10th century the candle has been placed on the altar, first until the feast of the Ascension and now until Pentecost.

Paschal candle

Shortly before the start of the Easter Vigil Mass, the faithful gather outside, in front of the church, to celebrate what is one of the most sacred moments of the Easter season. It is then the priest lights the paschal candle outside in a metal bowl called a brazier. During this time, the eucharistic prayer, “Praeconium Paschale,” is chanted by the deacon, who then carries the candle inside the church during the opening procession.

Those few moments are rich in tradition and symbolism. The new fire of the candle symbolizes life in Christ, with the candle representing the risen Lord. Following the procession, the candle is placed in a special stand on the altar, and five grains of incense are inserted to symbolize the spices that were used to prepare Christ’s body for the tomb, and the wounds in his hands, feet and side.

During the Mass, the candle will be dipped three times into the baptismal font, accompanied by a prayer petitioning the Holy Spirit to come down in the fullness of the fountain. Inscribed in the candle by the priest are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, signifying the Alpha and the Omega, or the beginning and the end. Also inscribed are a cross, the symbols of wheat and grapes or perhaps a chalice to represent the Eucharist.

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Dialogue on Race designed to create understanding

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

At the impressionable age of seven Maxine Crump looked up into her father’s eyes and asked, “Why don’t white people speak to black people?”

His answer would become a seminal moment in Crump’s life. Crump said her father told her all Americans have certain rights and went on to say the Constitution does not support what some then believed was a white superiority.

Crump, quite astute for someone that young, then asked, “So I’m an American?”

“And he said yes,” Crump remembers with a broad smile. “That was pretty heady stuff for a seven-year-old.”

Crump is also preparing to roll out a Race series that was originally presented at the YWCA in Baton Rouge but has since expanded into north Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama.

“We believe we can end institutional racism,” Crump said with no hesitancy. “I absolutely believe it. You will find if we properly talk about it we will see that we can end it.”

“We built this racial structure in this country and anything that is built can be dismantled.”

Crump describes the series as an educational process focused on race.

“We have created a way of talking about it that is structured and backed by factual material,” she said. “All of that is to design a process of talking about it that creates a safe environment for open, honest conversation, brave conversation.”

Crump explained that each series consists of six, two-hour sessions, facilitated by two trained presenters, with the first session including an orientation on the series and what participants can expect. Each series is limited to 15 people because research has shown that people are comfortable sharing their thoughts in a group that size.

Crump said definition of key terms, which comes immediately following the orientation, establishes the foundation for the remainder of the series. She said that she does not expect participants to accept definitions in the way they are presented but allows those individuals who disagree to use their own as long as the presenters are aware of their intent.

One of the myths Dialogue on Race attempts to debunk is equating racial prejudice with racism. She said racial prejudice came about because of a race structure of grouping people by the way they look and ranking them from superior to inferior.

Crump said racial prejudice was born of that structure but was quick to point out that if someone is prejudiced that does not necessarily mean that person is racist.

She defined racism as an institutional structure where institutions were given the power to limit or offer full or limited access based on color in that racial hierarchy. Although illegal, Crump said it still operates in the 21st century.

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Refugee sees hope through the darkness of uncertainty

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Nearly 18 months in his new life, Diego Galindo says he’s comfortable, and at times even allows himself a moment of peace.

Gone, at least for now, is the threat of persecution he and his family feared in their native Ecuador. Gone are his every day worries about the threat of violence or hunger. In his darkest hours Galindo contemplates returning to his native country, knowing he would have to live in hiding or potentially face death if he was discovered.

“Emotionally, it has been difficult,” Galindo said through an interpreter recently at the Hispanic Apostolate, which has provided assistance to the family.

“I’ve gotten to the point where I feel in limbo, and I don’t know which way to go,” he added. “There has to be a purpose for us to be here. It’s God’s will to be going through this situation, but I wish it would stop.”

Julia Scarnato, director of the Hispanic Apostolate, has witnessed similar scenarios as families adjust to a new life and culture, often swapping their professional careers at home to settle for more menial jobs but a safe environment in the United States.

“It’s the same picture for everybody,” Scarnato said. “Every person who came to this country has a reason. It can be political or violence or hunger.”

“Refugee sees hope through the darkness of uncertainty.

“It was their dream because they knew it would be better. That’s why we have a government. We need to improve the way we handle immigrants. Just a few institutions are helping immigrants, and it should be more.”

Galindo is also haunted by an uncertain future. He has filed for political asylum, forced to endure a seven-hour hearing, more than three times the length of a typical hearing. He believes he came under increased scrutiny because as a political analyst for the government in Ecuador he handled important documents but which he insists were of no harm to anyone.

He was told he has better than a 50-50 chance of being allowed to remain in the United States, but given the recent seismic change in immigration and refugee policy nationally nothing is certain. Expenditures have already exceeded $15,000, forcing him to receive assistance from his family in Ecuador.

Galindo’s troubles at home began in 2011 when government officials began following him and his wife, who worked at a hospital in Lago Agrio, a border town where Columbian guerrillas operate and is considered one of the most dangerous cities in the world.

Galindo says he believes government officials feared he would leak sensitive information to the media.

“That’s why they had it against me,” Galindo admitted. “I was frightened.”

At that time, his wife asked Galindo if it was time to leave Ecuador but he insisted they stay.

During the next several years, the threat appeared to diminish, only to re-surface in 2016, when government officials began to follow his young son. Galindo and his mother-in-law, who was an attorney for the government, were both fired, although he said it was made to look as if he resigned.

Weighing their options, Galindo initially considered moving to Chile where resuming his career as a journalist was a possibility, but an extradition treaty between the countries made it too dangerous.

They eventually moved to the United States, first staying with family members in New Jersey before moving to Baton Rouge to be with his wife’s cousin.

“I put a lot of resistance to coming to the United States,” he said. “I knew that it was the safest place but I knew I would have to start all over. I want to continue (his career as a journalist).”

Galindo, who has been a reporter, editor, copy editor and publisher in his media career, has been relying on his Catholic faith to carry him through the difficult times. He has spent hours praying in St. George Catholic Church in Baton Rouge. He continues to work on developing his English skills, but with time such a precious commodity he must do it on his own.

Galindo’s children have also been forced to endure their own difficulties, to the point where his oldest daughter, who is 14, has expressed a desire to return to Ecuador to be with her extended family.

“This is not what I had planned,” he said, tears trickling down his cheek carrying the past several years of fear and frustration.

“This is a person that needs an opportunity,” Scarnato said. “This is what we want, give people an opportunity to learn.”

“Sometimes people think because we don’t speak English we are not able to do something. You will be surprised how people with a lack of language can be creative. You don’t need to talk all the time.”

Despite his current challenges, Galindo believes in a brighter future. His hope is it’s sooner rather than later.
Lobbying for life

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

The voice of the unborn reached the ears of Louisiana legislators on April 4, when the House Health and Welfare Committee approved four abortion-related bills, say pro-life advocates, who hosted a Pro-Life Day at the Capitol to lobby legislators.

Three of the bills (House bills 287, 273 and 338) clarify three similar laws that have been tied up in a federal court battle since they were first approved during the 2016 legislative session.

HB 287 clarified the language of a bill, which restricted abortion facilities from receiving public funding.

HB 273 clarified the language of a law that requires providers of an abortion to make sure that the remains of the child are disposed by burial or cremation.

HB 287 clarified the language of the law requiring abortion providers in Louisiana to provide pregnant women who have received a diagnosis of fetal genetic abnormality an informational document that discusses alternatives to abortion and includes information on resources, programs and services for infants and children born with disabilities.

The “featured bill” of the day was HB 449, the Adoption Option Act, which proposes the Louisiana Department of Health offer information about adoption from agencies not affiliated with an abortion provider as an alternative to abortion on its website, along with easily comprehensible first steps to aid pregnant women seeking to confidentially explore the option of placing her child for adoption, and indicating whether the adoption agency allows the woman to choose the adoptive parents. The website would be accessible by redirecting from the domain name AdoptionOptionLa.Gov.

Under present law, the Louisiana Department of Health must provide printed materials which abortion providers are required to give to a woman prior to an abortion in order for consent to the abortion to be deemed voluntary. HB 449 further requires the materials include the adoption-related information provided on the abortion alternatives and informed consent website.

A governor’s task force would assist LDH in the preparation of the printed and website materials and develop public education initiatives to publicize such information on abortion alternatives.

Pro-life Day at the Capitol activities included a closed “leadership lunch” for leaders of pro-life pregnancy centers and agencies. Gov. John Bel Edwards addressed the group.

A closed meeting was also held with Attorney General Jeff Landry for an update on a state law that bans dismemberment abortions. The Center for Reproductive Rights filed a lawsuit on behalf of several abortion providers challenging some of the abortion restrictions.

A “birthday cake” was also distributed to legislators and others at the Capitol rotunda.

Among the voices around the rotunda were youth who have participated in the PULSE pro-life leadership training program.

“T.J. Burgess, a student at Brother Martin High School in New Orleans, said he was intrigued by the idea of coming to see the legislative process in action.

“It’s your responsibility to share about the beauty of adoption, because her family adopted her brother out of the foster care system and she cannot imagine her life without him.”

Sarah Massey, who is homeschooled, said she has her own story to share about the beauty of adoption, and her family adopted her brother out of the foster care system and she cannot imagine her life without him.

Youth who have participated in the Louisiana Right to Life’s PULSE pro-life leadership training program were among the people lobbying for the passage of abortion-related bills at Pro-Life Day at the Capitol on April 4. Photo by Debbie Shelley | The Catholic Commentator

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

With a growing population over 50, articles in the issue will share how this generation continues to live life to the fullest and make a difference to their communities.

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

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Q I confessed a grave sin more than 40 years ago and received absolution for it. I have, however, been haunted by this over the years and still feel guilt. My sin was that I had taken my 16-year-old daughter to our family doctor to have an abortion. So I not only committed a serious sin myself but caused her to do the same.

We both confessed these sins to our priest. But now I continue to be plagued by this memory. Am I committing another sin now by not trusting enough in God's mercy?

(City of origin withheld)

No, you are not committing another sin. On the intellectual level, you acknowledge that God has forgiven you; on the emotional level, you are just having a hard time feeling God's mercy. And wrapped up in all of this are the long-term psychological effects of abortion.

Many years ago, a young woman told me: “My roommates in college told me to have an abortion, and I did. But where are they this week, when it would have been my daughter's third birthday – and I am all by myself to think about what that would have been like?”

But God's forgiveness is wider than we can ever imagine. I am guessing that you and I are contemporaries; and when many Catholics our own age grew up, our primary image of God was of a giant scorekeeper in the sky, keeping track of our misdeeds.

Now, though – and thankfully – my image of God is much different: I picture God first of all as the father of the prodigal son – running down the road to throw his arms around his wayward child who has come back. The boy wants to pour out his story of sorrow, but the father says, “It doesn’t matter now. You’re home. Let’s have a party.”

And Jesus told that story to let us know that this is just the way his Father forgives us when we come back to him.

A

Q

Stephen Hawking died recently.

As I understand it, Professor Hawking claimed to have proven that God does not exist. And yet the pope met with him and recognized his studies; why would the pope do that and celebrate an atheist? (central Virginia)

A

Professor Stephen Hawking, the renowned British theoretical physicist, died at age 76 on March 1, after a long battle with Lou Gehrig’s disease, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. Though many commentators called him an avowed atheist, I would see him rather as an agnostic.

He once told ABC News, “One can’t prove that God doesn’t exist. But science makes God unnecessary. The laws of physics can explain the universe without the need for a creator.” The origin of the universe, in Hawking’s mind, lay billions of years ago in the Big Bang theory – and whatever may have occurred before that could not be observed by science, it was irrelevant to him.

Over the years, Hawking met with four different popes, the last being Pope Francis in November 2016. In 1986, Hawking had been named by John Paul II to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. That group, which includes scholars from several religions and none, exists to foster dialogue between science and faith, and its members are chosen primarily for their academic credentials.

In the past, the academy has discussed such topics as the potential perils of nuclear war; the focus of its 2016 gathering was ecology – the impact of technology on the planet – and Pope Francis spoke to them of the profound need for an “ecological conversion” in which people recognize their responsibility for caring for creation and its resources.

Hawking always respected the church’s contribution to this dialogue, and upon his death, the Vatican observatory said, “We value the enormous scientific contribution he has made to quantum cosmology and the courage he had in facing illness.”

Though Hawking professed no belief in an afterlife (once telling the British journal The Guardian, “I regard the brain as a computer which will stop working when its components fail”), the Vatican prayed at his death that the Lord would now “welcome him into his glory.”

Q

Years ago, as I recall, special prayers were offered just before the end of Mass for the conversion of Russia. I believe that those prayers, to a certain extent, worked.

Why can’t we say similar prayers now for the elimination of terrorism throughout the world? It couldn’t hurt. I do say one myself before Mass starts for this intention, but I need several persons. (Eugene, Oregon)

A

In the 1880s, Pope Leo XIII asked that prayers be offered to St. Michael the Archangel at the end of Mass, asking for an end to violence. At the time, Pope Leo’s principal concern was the rise of Masonic power in Catholic countries of Europe, where the liberty of the church was under attack by revolutionary forces.

In 1930, Pope Pius XI “redirected” those Leonine prayers and asked that they be offered for the tranquility and freedom of the Catholic Church in Russia; the practice was discontinued in the 1960s.

Since then, church leaders have from time to time authored prayers against terrorism, most notably Pope Francis during a 2016 visit to Poland for World Youth Day.

That prayer says, in part: “We come to you (God) today to ask you to keep in peace the world and its people, to keep far away from it the devastating wave of terrorism, to restore friendship and instill in the hearts of your creatures the gift of trust and of readiness to forgive.

“Touch the hearts of terrorists so that they may recognize the evil of their actions and may turn to the way of peace and goodness, of respect for the life and for the dignity of every human being, regardless of religion, origin, wealth or poverty.”

Thus far, there has been no call for the universal use of such a prayer at every Mass, but I think it is excellent that you are praying personally for this same intention.

FATHER DOYLE is a retired priest in the Diocese of Albany, New York. Questions may be sent to Father Kenneth Doyle at askfatherdoyle@gmail.com and 90 Columbia Circle Dr., Albany, New York 12203.
By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Easter Sunday is the beginning of a huge 50-day celebration in which the faithful can fully give themselves to understanding Jesus’ resurrection and what it means for them – which is heaven – because that is their destiny, according to Dina Dow, director of the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis for the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

“During the Easter season, the resurrected Lord comes to earth in his glorified body and teaches the disciples, so for them, it’s just the beginning of their fortification of walking with the resurrected Lord,” said Dow. “Can you imagine that?

“When Easter happens, it’s just the beginning of a new life for them, which is what he promised. He promised new life and this new life is given to them through the cross and resurrection, redeeming their bodies and souls to be more effective disciples for him.”

For 40 days Jesus is on earth appearing to the apostles and teaching them, and their eyes were opened about everything they had learned because they see him and understand who he is, according to Dow.

She noted that the first readings of the Sunday Mass during the Easter season change from the Old Testament to the Acts of the Apostles, which is their response and actions as recorded by St. Luke.

According to the USCCB, in Acts, St. Luke has provided a broad survey of the church’s development from the resurrection of Jesus to Paul’s first Roman imprisonment, the point at which the book ends. In telling this story, St. Luke describes the emergence of Christianity from its origins in Judaism to its position as a religion of worldwide status and appeal.

“So everything we’ve sacrificed and done for Lent should have, in some way, transformed us to the point that there’s a newness inside of us,” said Dow. “And if not, that’s okay, we still have the Easter season to work on it.

“The sacrifices and promises made (during Lent) shouldn’t just be going away, we should be transformed by them. This is the hope in us walking in our own resurrected bodies with Christ.”

Dow noted that after Easter Catholics hear the stories of the apostles and what they did after Jesus was raised from the dead until he ascends to heaven and the Holy Spirit descends upon them at Pentecost.

“We’re in a beautiful, beautiful time,” said Dow.

During Easter weekend, Dow said there are baptisms, confirmations and first Communions as people enter the church and Catholics are renewing their baptismal promises.

“So much so, that each weekend we are sprinkled by holy water and that continues the whole Easter season. So there’s a whole lot of sprinkling added to the liturgy,” Dow said.

The weekend after Easter is Divine Mercy Sunday, a fairly recent addition to the liturgical celebration given to the church by St. John Paul II and inspired by St. Faustina. Jesus appeared to St. Faustina and she wrote about his mercy in her diary.

“So you have this incredible act of love and sacrifice, followed by the cross, followed by Jesus’ resurrection and are reminded of his mercy. So divine, so real. There’s no sin greater than his mercy,” said Dow.

One of Dow’s favorite Scripture passages is when St. Peter and others go back to fishing after Jesus’ resurrection.

“What else can you do when someone rises from the dead, but go fishing?” Dow mused.

Then the scene is set – Jesus is on the shore and has made a fire, he’s cooking fish, he feeds them. He then asks St. Peter three times if he loves him, which is symbolic of Peter’s three denials that he knew him after his arrest. Christ helps St. Peter recover from his denials through his question.

“How many times have we denied Christ in our lives?” asked Dow. “How many times have we said we love him…? … That mercy, falling away from the Lord, then coming back to the Lord and saying ‘Yes, I love you.’ ”

Dow then posed the question, “What does ‘I love you Jesus’ mean to us?”

The Acts of the Apostles is essentially about the apostle’s love for Jesus.

“The apostles are saying, ‘Yes, I love you, and here’s what I am going to do.’ They are doing missionary work, they are baptizing, they are healing and teaching. They couldn’t do it on their own, he (Christ) had to tell them what they needed to do.

“For 40 days after he’s teaching and telling them what they need to do, he said, ‘Hey, I’ve got to go, I’m leaving you, but I’m giving you the paraclete, I’m sending the advocate to you, so I’m always with you.’ ”

In St. Matthew 28, “The Great Commissioning,” Jesus gives instructions to his disciples that also apply to us today, according to Dow: “Go, therefore, and 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.”

“As Catholic Christians that’s what we are called to do. Bring them to Jesus, invite them into the body of Christ, teach them about God’s love. Do you have to have a master’s degree in theology to do that? No. Does it help? Sure. But you can teach people how to love by the way you love,” Dow said.

LIFE ▼

From page 5

better represent the people,” said Burgess, noting that the people of Louisiana have clearly stated that they are pro-life.

Danielle MacNamara, a senior at Central Private High School, said her life experiences have been pro-life and it was “pretty cool” to be talking to and walking with other pro-life leaders as well as lawmakers.

MacNamara said she encountered members of LSU-Pro-Life and has plans to join them when going to college.

She was also excited about the governor’s luncheon with pro-life leaders.

“I’m ready to visit with the people and will enjoy hearing the people talking about adoption,” MacNamara said.

Kamie Sanchez and Clelie Carpenter of Baton Rouge Right to Life were grinning widely at support they were receiving in the mission.

“What happened today is a joyful celebration of life,” said Carpenter. “It’s a pro-life atmosphere.”

She and Sanchez said they were blessed to have the support of the attorney general and other pro-life legislators support.

Yesterday, I met with a nice couple about their estate plan because the wife attended one of my seminars and thought they needed a plan. It was immediately apparent that the husband took care of all of the finances and the wife never engaged in the process. The husband did all the talking for the two of them and thought that by simply having a hand-written Will, everything was covered. WRONG! Once the husband realized that he was unintentionally exposing his wife to significant court costs, unnecessary delays, protracted litigation, nursing home poverty and more, he gladly acted with her in setting up their estate plan to avoid the “7 Stupid Mistakes” people make when they don’t take the time to plan:

1. No tax protection
2. No protection from children and their spouses
3. No protection from the court system
4. No periodic review of estate plan
5. No protection from long term care costs
6. No interdiction protection
7. No ongoing relationship established with a trusted estate attorney

If you pass away before you put certain types of Trusts into place to protect your hard earned assets and take care of your loved ones, these are some of the unintended consequences that are likely to occur. STOP worrying about your estate once and for all!

“I attended Laura Poche’s presentation in Port Allen undecided if I’d go ahead with creating a Trust. By the end of the presentation, I felt I had found someone who could explain everything in terms I could understand, and at an affordable price. I’m happy to say that I have completed my Trust and would recommend Laura Poche to anyone.” Mary Guarisco, Port Allen, LA

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Workshop 5 - Mandeville
Thursday April 26th
Poche’ Estate Planning Office
2315 Florida St. Bld. 200, Suite 202
10:00am - 12:00pm
Refreshments After Workshop!

Workshop 6 - Mandeville
Thursday April 26th
Poche’ Estate Planning Office
2315 Florida St. Bld. 200, Suite 202
2:00pm - 4:00pm
Refreshments After Workshop!

IMPORTANT: Seating is limited, so please call or register online as soon as possible! These events are specifically suited for people who want/need to put a Legal estate plan in place in the near future. If married, both spouses Must attend the event for maximum benefit (unless, of course, a spouse is homebound or has physical limitations making attendance impossible).
Bishop Muench’s Chrism Mass homily

I begin this homily with a renewed call for prayer, respect for and dialogue with fellow citizens of our community as well as those responsible for ensuring security for us. In this regard I acknowledge the conscientious efforts of our Diocesan Racial Harmony Commission. At the Last Supper, Jesus said: “This is my commandment: Love one another, as I love you.” (Jn 15:12).

For this annual Chrism Mass we joyously assemble, representing the church in and of Baton Rouge in microcosm, through the unity and diversity of our six deaneries, spanning 5,500 square miles, as priests, deacons, deacon candidates and wives, consecrated religious, seminarians and vocational prospects, lay faithful from our 65 church parishes, diocesan and church parish employees, masters of ceremonies, readers, servers, musicians, television technicians, administrators, teachers and students from Franciscan Missionaries of our Lady University, Catholic secondary and elementary schools, the elect and candidates for Full Communion, delegates from other various church entities and ministries, as well as prayer partners through television. Since 2003, we also include representatives who will, at the end of the ceremony, officially receive the blessed oils and transport them to their individual places of honored enshrinement and sacramental distribution. We participants in this liturgy can be considered to be symbolically present for every use of these oils.

Oil is frequently mentioned in the Old Testament in relation to the anointing of priests, prophets and kings. The oil for the Sacrament of the Sick mirrors Jesus’ instruction for his apostles to anoint the infirm, as also commended by Apostle James advising the sick to summon presbyters of the church for this purpose. The Oil of Catechumens is administered at baptism, symbolizing the priestly and royal power of Christ in which the baptized participate (1 Pt 2:9). Chrism, a mixture of olive oil and fragrant balsam, is administered at Baptism, Confirmation, Ordination of Priests and Bishops, and Consecration of Churches and Altars. The Blessings of the Oils has been documented back to the early 200s at an Easter Vigil ceremony where the Oil of the Sick and the Oil of Exorcism (Catechumens) were blessed and the Oil of Chrism consecrated. In the 400s this liturgy was moved to Holy Thursday in a separate, but connected, Mass with that of the Lord’s Supper. This Chrism Mass and its texts accentuate the priesthood and express the desired communion, solidarity and collegiality of bishop and priests. It also highlights the spiritual solemnity, beauty and emotion of the occasion.

The church is one, holy, catholic and apostolic, blessed with...
“He rose so we can live.”

Father Greg Daigle
St. John the Evangelist in Plaquemine

EASTER ▼
From page 1

day on earth as a man, while the Hispanic Apostolate held its annual live re-enactment of The Passion in north Baton Rouge. And at St. Stephen the Martyr Church in Maurepas, a crowd of about 200 participated in the Good Friday walk, observing the Stations of the Cross.

On Saturday, parishioners of St. John the Evangelist Church in Plaquemine gathered at dusk in the courtyard to celebrate the Easter Vigil Mass. After pastor Father Greg Daigle blessed the paschal candle, Deacon Alfred Ricard lit it from an Easter fire. From the paschal candle, people lit each others’ candles and proceeded into the church, creating a soft glow in the

SEE EASTER PAGE 11
darkened building. The lights were turned on just before the singing of the Gloria. The congregation also sang the Alleluia before the Gospel reading for the first time since the beginning of Lent.

"Tonight is a night of victory," declared Father Daigle in his homily.

He said the church does well to enter into the sacred mystery of Jesus’ passion, death and resurrection and receive his body and blood, which is a meal for the spirit as well as the anticipation of the heavenly banquet.

“We come to God in our sinfulness, and he died for us, we know this,” said Father Daigle. “We know that we put him to death, through sin, we put him to death.”

But Father Daigle’s voice brimmed with excitement as he said Jesus overcame the grave and rose for us.

“He’s forgiven us of our sins, brothers and sisters, Jesus rose for us,” he said.

That is the joyful response that people can make to Jesus’ resurrection, according to Father Daigle.

“He rose so we can live,” he said.

In a scene similar in other churches around the diocese during the Easter Vigil, St. John the Evangelist welcomed five Catechumens into the Catholic faith.

And, on Sunday, church bells sounded throughout the diocese, welcoming parishioners to Mass while choirs raised their voices in celebration, “Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia!”

EASTER ▼

From page 10
By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

“Make Baton Rouge a better place!” 20 fifth-graders shouted in unison at St. Francis Xavier School in Baton Rouge.

It was in the spirit of that one voice the group was able to put together a poster showing they know, care and are concerned about their community. Suggestions range from stopping violence and racism to sharing with and respecting each other.

The poster project, which focused on ways to improve the state’s capital city, was the idea of principal Paula Fabre. She said the goal was to get students to take a closer look at their community and think “in terms of how they can be a good citizen both now and in the future and how they interact with others.”

“I feel (this project is) important because it allows our students to practice, with their families and in their communities, the Catholic values that we share with them every day and that (St. Francis pastor) Father (Edward Chiffriller SSJ) shares with them at weekly Mass,” said Fabre. “It gives them an opportunity to apply what we’re teaching them about how to function in society without violence.”

Students began work on the project in September and learned many important lessons along the way, the first being how to work together as a team. Each idea for the poster, from the title to the issues to the colors and design, was presented for a vote among the 20-strong group. So what was the first thing they worked on?

“The title,” said everyone.

“That’s how it went,” said Marsha Perkins, librarian and project coordinator. “We decided there was going to be a king ruling over everybody, it was going to be a democracy. So every voice matters. Every opinion matters.”

The poster depicts each of the children holding a sign calling for societal action to make Baton Rouge a better place. Among the slogans were Stop the Killing; Stop Hatred; Stop Racism; Stop Child Abuse; and Stop Kidnapping.

“We learned how to respect others and to respect others’ opinions,” said Jeydon Sparrow.

“We learned how every voice matters,” said Mikalen Washington.

Perkins said she was taken aback by the ideas the poster generated. She said it was indicative of “how aware they were to community and societal problems.” But, she was “saddened that they knew what was going on.”

“I wish it could be peace and love but it’s not,” Perkins said. “But, when you read this and you’re feeling a certain kind of way, you can see where these students can kind of uplift your spirit and let you know that everything is going to be alright because this is our future standing before us. It kind of made me hopeful.”

Attached to the top of the poster are three versions of the state of Louisiana with Baton Rouge marked, an indication of the importance of the capital city to the rest of the state.

“I drew a picture of the state because I thought it would be better to pinpoint Baton Rouge and start where we should make Baton Rouge a better place,” said Kaci Hamilton.

Another attached sheet, at the bottom of the poster, says No Guns. The idea, a last minute suggestion from student Brandon Williams Jr., was voted on and approved.

“I think we should put (the poster) somewhere special where everybody could see it,” said Williams.

“I think we should put it in a museum in Baton Rouge so everybody could see it,” said Treylon Thompson.

“It should be hung somewhere to let people know that in communities such as this, we’re not all bad people, you know — we’re not all about ‘let’s pick up a gun and settle the problem,’” agreed Perkins. “These children are letting you know, ‘No, we’re not even about that. We want the abuse to stop. We want love. We want peace.’”

Perkins said she hopes that others can see “that children are concerned about what’s going on.” And, she hopes that it does create some talking points and action.

“Let’s start some dialogue and let’s do something about it and let’s make Baton Rouge a better place to live,” said Perkins.

Fabre summed up the project with one thought, “We’re going to have to change society, one child at a time.”

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SERVICE TO OTHERS – Students at Holy Ghost School in Hammond celebrated Holy Thursday with the washing of the feet. In showing their service to others, students in PreK-4 and their fourth-grade buddies commemorated this event. Lily Verburg gets her feet washed by her fourth-grade buddy Brody Jones. Photo provided by Cindy Wagner | Holy Ghost School

SAINTS – Mater Dolorosa School and Church in Independence held its annual Saint Joseph’s altar on March 18. Students from PreK-3 through eighth grade participated as saints and re-enacted the Last Supper. Pictured, from left, are Emily Brouillette, Brayden Hernandez, Katy Jo Johnson, Blayne Husser, Brason Costa, Bailey Bell, Joshua Thiel, Emma Bellavia, Sarah Dreher, Ethan Lemane, Sophia Lemane and Melissa Mixon holding Charlie Canale. Photo provided by Erin Mendez | Mater Dolorosa School

SCHOLARSHIP STUDENTS – Sara Lavastida and Miranda Petty, students at St. Michael the Archangel High School in Baton Rouge, received The Barefoot Pedals Foundation Scholarship for the 2018-2019 school year. The Barefoot Pedals Foundation honors the legacy of Jeffrey David Nola, and the values and characteristics he lived his life promoting. The annual scholarship is given to students entering their senior year who are members of the student ministry team or band and exemplify Nola’s quiet leadership, spirituality, commitment to academic success and a skill in playing a musical instrument. Pictured, from left, are Andrew Brown, foundation chair, Sara Lavastida, Miranda Petty and Mike Nola, Jeff Nola’s father. Photo provided by LeighAnn King | St. Michael the Archangel High School

PRAYER BUDDIES – Sixth-grade students at St. Jude the Apostle School in Baton Rouge make rosaries for their second-grade “prayer buddies” during Mary Ann Reech’s religion class. The rosaries will be distributed to the second-graders after Mass on April 18, before they make their First Communion. Photo by Bonny Van | The Catholic Commentator

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Gringo
Amazon Studios

Moral dilemmas come fast and furious in this dark, but somehow not cynical, comedy about avarice and its near-instant consequences. Sent to Mexico by his corrupt bosses (Joel Edgerton and Charlize Theron) to seal a crooked deal for his pharmaceutical company, a gullible executive (David Oyelowo), driven by financial desperation, instead pretends that he’s been kidnapped and held for ransom. This moment of raw greed sets numerous subplots in motion, including a drug cartel’s pursuit of the businessman. Had they dealt with this material more elegantly, director Nash Edgerton and screenwriters Anthony Tambakis and Matthew Stone might have ended up with an Alfred Hitchcock.

Pacific Rim Uprising
Universal

Directed and co-written by Steven S. DeKnight, this sequel to 2013’s “Pacific Rim” is a noisy, violent and utterly ridiculous sci-fi adventure. When a new threat appears from aliens intent on world domination, two hot-shot pilots (John Boyega and Scott Eastwood) must train a group of green cadets, including a gifted 15-year-old (Cailee Spaeny), to command the giant robots that will save the day. The duo is out to counter the wicked plans of a once-heroic doctor (Charlie Day), who has gone over to the dark side. DeKnight sacrifices plot and subtlety for relentless and repetitious action, laying waste to much of Tokyo in the process in the spirit of the “Godzilla” films of yore. Intense but bloodless violence, brief sexual banter, occasional profane and crude language, an obscene gesture. A-III; PG-13

Paul, Apostle of Christ
Sony

Bible-based drama in which St. Paul (pleasingly sonorous James Faulkner), imprisoned in Rome and facing martyrdom in the wake of that city’s Great Fire of AD 64, which the Emperor Nero notoriously blamed on the followers of Jesus, is visited by his longtime collaborator and friend St. Luke (Jim Caviezel) to whom he recounts the circumstances of his conversion and some of the other events chronicled in the Book of Acts. This new text is meant to give encouragement to the capital’s persecuted Christians, led by husband and wife Aquila (John Lynch) and Priscilla (Joanne Whalley). But it also draws the attention of St. Paul’s chief jailer (Olivier Martinez), an essentially humane man vaguely attracted to the Gospel and troubled by the grave illness of his beloved daughter. Writer-director Andrew Hyatt’s film works better as an easy and enjoyable introduction to its two central figures’ lives and works than it does considered strictly as a piece of cinema. The somewhat flawed script fleshes out the human details in a believable way, but unwisely presents famous verses and whole passages of Scripture as deriving from Paul’s spontaneous conversation. Valuable chiefly as a catechetical resource, it makes acceptable and worthwhile fare for teens. Scenes of brutality and torture with some gore, a few gruesome images, mature references, including to prostitution. A-III; PG-13

7 Days in Entebbe
Focus

All the tension of a daring military raid has somehow been drained from this historical drama based on the 1976 hostage rescue in Uganda by Israeli commandos. With a better script and bigger budget, director Jose Padilha and screenwriter Gregory Burke could have made an effective thriller. But neither is in evidence here, nor is there a vital historical or moral context. Instead the film attempts to give a sympathetic gloss to two German leftists (Daniel Brühl and Rosamund Pike) who, as affiliates of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, helped plan the hijacking that kicked off the crisis. Occasional gun and physical violence, fleeting gore, a single use of rough language. A-III; PG-13

Unsane
Bleecker Street

Suspense drama that demonstrates why the “trapped in a mental asylum” subgenre has become a rarity. A stalking victim (Claire Foy) left with mental health issues by her experience is involuntarily committed by a predatory facility that leeches payments from its captive patients’ insurance companies. Things take an even darker turn when she becomes convinced that her former pursuer (Joshua Leonard) is working there under an assumed name and dispensing her medication. As directed by Steven Soderbergh and scripted by Jonathan Bernstein and James Greer, the film advances along predictable lines with the significant weakness that, despite all the efforts to show that the protagonist and reality are not tightly welded, the audience is tipped to the truth early on. Mature themes, a scene of attempted sexual assault, physical violence, some sexual references, frequent rough language. L; R.

Midnight Sun
Open Road

This remake of the 2006 Japanese film “Song to the Sun” is a sweet, heartfelt movie, directed by Scott Speer, that presents a refreshing view (for Hollywood, that is) of young people who are not behaving badly. A teenager (Bella Thorne) suffers from an incurable disease due to which any exposure to sunlight could prove fatal. Housebound during the day, she is cared for by her overprotective father (Rob Riggle) and best friend (Quinn Shephard). Venturing out one evening, she meets her long-time crush (Patrick Schwarzenegger), whom she has secretly watched from her bedroom window for years. They fall in love, but he is unaware of her condition. Mature teens will benefit from this old-fashioned romance with its positive role models and good lessons in love and compassion, the elements listed below notwithstanding. Scenes of underage drinking, some mild sensuality, one crude term. A-II; PG-13

Ready Player One
Warner Bros.

Director Steven Spielberg’s adaptation of the 2011 novel by Ernest Cline (who co-wrote the screenplay with Zak Penn) offers a dizzying immersion into virtual reality via an alternative universe called the Oasis. In the dystopian world of the year 2045, everyone straps on goggles and uses a device to escape their miserable existence and embrace narcissism. Before he died, its creator, an eccentric scientist (Mark Rylance), designed a contest for his gamers the winner of which would not only inherit his fortune but gain control of the Oasis. Motivated by greed, a wicked CEO (Ben Mendelsohn) harnesses the resources of his corporation to solve this puzzle. Out to thwart the powerful villain’s scheme are an intrepid teenager (Tye Sheridan), the lad’s love interest (Olivia Cooke) and a gaggle of his friends. Spielberg’s sci-fi fantasy initially offers relatively wholesome escapist fun. But it becomes suitable for mature viewers only once key scenes from the inventor’s favorite movie, 1980s’ “The Shining,” are recreated. Intense violence with gore, stylized mayhem, brief sensuality and partial nudity, one use of profanity, occasional crude language. A-III; PG-13
El Apostolado Hispano recrea la Pasión de Cristo.

El Apostolado Hispano realizó una emotiva presentación del Vía Crucis viviente el Viernes Santo en la Iglesia de San Pío X en Baton Rouge. En esta escena, Poncio Pilatos tiene a Jesús, interpretado por Aristides Álvarez, azotado en el pilar y luego se lo presenta a la multitud, que demanda su Crucifixión.

Fotos de Debbie Shelley | El comentarista católico

Eighth Avenue
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Fotos de Debbie Shelley | El comentarista católico
The Last Supper is a year-long meal

Holly Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday are the high holy days of the Catholic liturgical year. They are more important than Christmas or Ascension or Pentecost or Trinity Sunday, St. Patrick’s Day, St. Joseph’s Day or Ash Wednesday, even if Ash Wednesday for some reason seems to draw the highest church attendance. Sunday Masses and, to some extent weekday Masses too, are extensions of what happened on Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Jesus Christ, the son of God, took on flesh to prove God’s love for all humankind. He accomplished that through his life and death. He proved that love was the unending will of God and our destiny too by his resurrection.

Jesus died on the cross saying, “It is finished” (Jn 19:30). His mission given to him by his father in heaven as “the son of man,” our kind of mortal human being, was over. On Holy Thursday night he explained the complex final mission to his disciples at the Last Supper. He did this in the context of the Jewish Passover ritual and told his disciples, “Do this in memory of me.” As Catholics, we take this ritual of the Mass as a solemn gift and obligation. It is both a meal of thanksgiving and an offering of sacrifice by Jesus, and now together with him, by us his disciples.

To understand and appreciate what we are really doing in keeping Jesus’ command to offer Mass in memory of him, it helps to understand what he and his disciples were doing on that Holy Thursday night. I had the good fortune of studying for two years with a Norbertine priest, Father Alfred McBride O. Praem. at Catholic University in Washington, D.C. Father McBride was already a well-known author and retreat director, and has given a number of conferences he gave to retreatants entitled “The Seven Last Words of Jesus.” A lot of the details that follow are due to him, and his exact words will be in quotation marks.

Passover for the Jews was their liberation day from slavery in Egypt. It was always celebrated on the evening of the full moon, roughly between the last two weeks of March and first two weeks of April. Moses, God’s great servant in the Old Testament, had led the Jews out of Egypt and had given them God’s commandments as their response to his promise (covenant) to be their true God and protector in a land he would give them. They celebrated God’s acts and teachings through Moses with five kinds of ritual sacrifices: holocaust, libation, bread-offering, friendship meal of reconciliation and sin-offering. Jesus participated in these ritual celebrations as a boy with his parents and later as an itinerant rabbi with his disciples.

In his life and in the Mass Jesus combined all these kinds of sacrifices. Holocaust was an offering of a burnt fat animal. It caused a sweet smoke to rise to the heavens like the faith and prayers of the people. Jesus often told his disciples that when he was “lifted-up,” meaning on the cross, they would see his total obedience to his father’s will. And when he was “lifted up” by his resurrection, it would be a sign of God’s total acceptance of his life and sacrificial death.

When the high-priest Melchizedek celebrated Abraham’s victory over some neighboring enemies, he poured out a jar of wine over a sacred stone. It was a ritual way of giving the credit to God, “somewhat like toasting God for his generosity.” In the Mass, the words of consecration say, “for this is the chalice of my blood, the blood of the new and eternal covenant which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.” Jesus will become the sacrifice to show God’s love and compassion for us even though we are sinners.

At the time of the wheat harvest the Jewish high-priest placed a loaf of bread on the altar and waved sheaves of newly harvested wheat over it to symbolically send the first wheat to God’s table in heaven to thank God for the people’s daily nourishment. The loaf was then burnt. In his Bread of Life discourse (Jn 6:22-71), Jesus says that his flesh sacrificed on the cross will become the bread of the Eucharist, the daily food for Christians’ growth in grace.

“The Passover supper is a friendship meal.” It is celebrated by the father of a household for family, servants, friends and even strangers. The blood from the sacrificial main course of lamb was smeared on the doorpost to assure God’s protection. That was one reason for the full-moon timing. They wanted to make sure that God’s angels saw the blood on their doorposts and knew they were to be protected. All in the house were to greet each other with the Hebrew “shalom,” (peace). Grudges had to be settled beforehand. At the Last Supper Jesus spoke of friendship: “I no longer call you slaves ... I have called you friends ...” “The early Christians incorporated these themes of friendship and peace into their Eucharists.” Thus they followed their master, who on the cross forgave those who killed him and gave paradise to the repentant thief.

Sin offering is the final type of Jewish sacrifice. Jews kept and still keep the feast of “Yom Kippur.” On that day they tried to shed their selfishness and sins and ritually placed them on a goat (the scapegoat) and drove it out into the wilderness. With the crucifixion Jesus willingly took our sins upon himself, winning for us the possibility of union with God. Good Friday is not the end of the story. Easter Sunday is. St. Paul calls Jesus the “first born of the dead.” Indeed, on his third day in the tomb, Jesus fulfilled another Jewish prophesy, Ezekiel’s vision of the dry bones. “I will open your graves and have you rise from them, O my people! I will put my spirit in you that you may live ... (Ez 37:13-14).”

With Jesus’ resurrection, this, the greatest promise of the new covenant, is fulfilled. As St. Paul tells the Corinthians, “We know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and see CARVILLE PAGE 17.”
When time stands still

The theory of relativity tells us that space and time are not what they appear to be. They’re relative, meaning that they don’t always function in the same way and they aren’t always experienced in the same way. Time can stand still.

Or can it? This side of eternity, it would seem not. Ever since the universe started with a mammoth explosion some 13.8 billion years ago the clock has been running non-stop, like a merciless meter, moving relentlessly forwards.

However, our faith suggests that time will be different in eternity, so different in fact that we cannot now even imagine how it will be in heaven. As St. Paul tells us in his letter to the Corinthians: Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have been imagined now.

As we’ve just affirmed, that can’t be imagined now. But what does it mean to “adore” God and why is that the highest form of prayer? Lohfink answers: “In adoration we ask nothing more of God. When I lament before God it is usually my own suffering that is the starting point. Even when I petition God, the occasion is often my own problem. I need something from God. And even when I thank God, unfortunately I am usually thankful for something I have received. But when I adore, I let go of myself and look only to God.”

Admittedly, lament, petition and thanksgiving are high forms of prayer. An old, classical, and very good, definition of prayer defines prayer as “lifting mind and heart to God”, and what’s in our hearts virtually at all times is some form of lament, petition or thanksgiving. Moreover, Jesus invites us to ask God for whatever is in our heart at a given moment: “Ask and you will receive.” Lament, petition and thanksgiving are good forms of prayer; but, in praying them, we’re still focused in some manner on ourselves, on our needs and our joys.

However in adoration we look to God or at some attribute of God (beauty, goodness, truth or one-ness) so strongly that everything else drops away. We stand in pure wonder, pure admiration, ecstatic awe, entirely stripped of our own heartaches, headaches and idiosyncratic focus. God’s person, beauty, goodness and truth overwhelm us so as to take our minds off of ourselves and leave us standing outside of ourselves.

And being free of our own selves is the very definition of ecstasy (from the Greek, EK STASIS, to stand outside oneself). Thus, to be in adoration is to be in ecstasy – though, admittedly, that’s generally not how we imagine ecstasy today. For us, ecstasy is commonly imagined as an earthshaking standing inside of ourselves, idiosyncrasy in its peak expression. But true ecstasy is the opposite. It’s adoration.

Moreover, for Lohfink, not only is adoration the only true form of ecstasy, it’s also a way of being in heaven already right now and of experiencing time as it will be in heaven. Here’s how he puts it: “In the miracle of adoration we are already with God, entirely with God and the boundary between time and eternity is removed. It is true that we cannot now comprehend that adoring God will be endless bliss. We always want to be doing something. We want to criticize, intervene, change, to be doing something. We want to be in adoration. We want to do something. We want to be doing something. We want to be in ecstasy – though, one moment like a thousand years and a thousand years like one moment.

When we adore, time stands still – and we’re in heaven!

OBLATE FATHER RON ROLHEISER, theologian, teacher and award-winning author, is President of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas. He can be contacted through his website ronrolheiser.com and facebook.com/ronrolheiser.

Sweet spots and sacrifices

I have no business singing high C.

The second a hymn starts, I can tell by the notes whether the song’s range is in my comfort zone. Solidly alto, I am happiest singing F, G and A above middle C.

But B thins out, C stretches and D screeches. (I don’t even attempt E – leave that to the sopranos.)

Yet when I’m tempted to sit out a song, I remind myself: This is Mass, not the opera. When we worship, it’s not a performance but a time for praise of God. We each have daily tasks we don’t mind and we do them because it needs to be done but because we love the people we serve.

Certain stages of parenting feel like sweet spots, too. I have friends who revel in the teenage years and friends who wish for smaller, simpler days. Some parents adore babies while others enjoy having young adults launched.

But we don’t get to pick and choose. All the years must be lived through (and loved through). All the day’s tasks must get done, even if we want to play to our strengths. We have to pitch in together.

We’re singing the whole song here.

And it’s not just the business of raising children. Caregiving can be a calling that’s unplanned or unwanted. Marriage is far from smooth sailing in every season. Family life, friendships, professional work, parish life – any vocation where we deal with humans (spoiler alert: all callings) requires us to move from our sweet spot into unfamiliar territory.

Adult children often feel unprepared to care for aging parents. Blended families navigate the delicate balance between biological parents and stepparents. But we sacrifice out of love for the ones we serve.

And it’s not just the business of raising children. Caregiving can be a calling that’s unplanned or unwanted. Marriage is far from smooth sailing in every season. Family life, friendships, professional work, parish life – any vocation where we deal with humans (spoiler alert: all callings) requires us to move from our sweet spot into unfamiliar territory.

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Too often vocation gets narrowed to just one thing: the magical point “where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet” (according to a well-defined definition by Frederick Buechner).

Instead, most of us find that our lives, relationships and work are a muddy mix of duties and delights, limits and circumstances, gifts and responsibilities.

God calls to each person within the circumstances of his or her life, with the gifts each has been given for the good of the community, beyond the limits of our comforts or desires, for the service of others.

On any given day, I can face the tasks of my callings the same way I start a new hymn. I might want to stick to what feels smooth, but the greater good lies in the beauty of the whole.

Where we feel weak, others may be strong. At church and at home, we’re singing the whole song together.

CARVILLE ▼

From page 16

place us with you in his presence” (2 Cor 4:14). Every Mass celebrates what the Mass Preface II of Easter proclaims, “Through him the children of light rise to eternal life … for his death is our ransom from death, and in his rising the life of all has risen.”

We should think of this all through the year as we celebrate Mass in memory of Jesus.

Same for our callings. Life at home brings its own sweet spots. We each have daily tasks we don’t mind and chores we detest. But we know we are working toward the whole good of the household. So we scrub the crusty pans, file the taxes or drag the garbage cans down to the curb, not only because it needs to be done but because we love the people we serve.

Caretaking at Home

Laura Fanucci
**Coming Events**

**April 13, 2018**

**MBS Adoration** – Most Blessed Sacrament Church, 15615 Jefferson Hwy., Baton Rouge, will host an adoration night Tuesday, April 17, 7 p.m., at the church. Praise and worship music will be provided by the MBS house band. Adoration will begin after the Divine Mercy chaplet at 7 p.m. and end with benediction and blessing with the Blessed Sacrament. All are welcome. For more information, call 225-752-6290.

**Allons Manger Festival** – St. Jules Church, 7165 Hwy. 1, Belle Rose, will host its Allons Manger Festival, “A Caju Extrava’ganza,” Sunday, April 15. The festival kicks off with beignets and coffee at 7 a.m., followed by lunch at 11 a.m. There be entertainment, raffles, children’s games and auction. For more information, call 225-473-8560.

**Day of Prayer** – Agnes Bitature and Yvette Fouchi will present a day of prayer, “Living Joy in the Arms of Jesus,” Tuesday, April 17, 9:15 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. at the Archdiocese of New Orleans Retreat Center, 5500 St Mary St, Metairie. Registration begins at 8:45 a.m. Minimum donation is $35. For more information and to register, visit retreats.arch-no.org. Call 504-267-9604 or email retreats@arch-no.org.

**Knights Of Peter Claver Conference** – The State Conference of the Knights of Peter Claver and Ladies Auxiliary will be held Friday, April 20 – Sunday, April 22, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, 4728 Constitution Ave., Baton Rouge. Bishop Robert W. Muench, who will celebrate the 4 p.m. Mass on April 21, will be honored by the Knights and Ladies of District II. Bishop Shelton Fabre of the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux, national chaplain of the KPC, will be the guest speaker at a banquet April 21, 7 p.m., at the Crowne Plaza. He will also be honored by the Knights and Ladies of District II.

**St. Jude Fair** – St. Jude Church and School, 9510 Highland Road, Baton Rouge, will host its parish fair Friday, April 21 – Sunday, April 22. There will be rides, food, live music, games and raffle. For more information, contact the church office at 225-766-2431.

**Charismatic Mass** – A monthly Charismatic Mass will be celebrated on Sunday, April 22, at St. Joseph Church, 15710 Hwy. 16, French Settlement. Praise and worship begins at 1:30 p.m., and Mass begins at 2 p.m. Prayer for individuals who desire it will be available after Mass. For more information, email guysignoring@icloud.com.

**Women in Spirit** – Donna Brit, long-time reporter with WAFB news, will speak about “My Very Eventful 2017,” at the Women in Spirit Meeting Thursday, April 26, 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. To RSVP, email wisk@cathedralbr.org or call the cathedral office at 225-387-5928.

**Festival of Two Rivers** – St. Alphonsus Church, 14040 Greenwell Springs Road, Greenwell Springs, will host its Festival of Two Rivers, Friday, April 27 – Sunday, April 29. There will be food, games, crafts, rides and live entertainment. For more information, call 225-261-4650.

**KC Dance** – The Knights of Columbus of Immaculate Conception Church, 865 Hatchell Lane, Denham Springs, will host a “Dance, Dance, Dance Spring Fling” dance in the main hall on Saturday, April 28. The doors will open at 6 p.m., and music by River Express will be from 7–10 p.m. There will be jambalaya, water, soft drinks and adult beverages will be available for purchase. Tickets are $20 each. For more information, call 225-665-4422.

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**Ascension Catholic School**

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GOSPEL ▼
From page 2

darkest of nights, leaving all behind to find the one. This is how important the faithful are to God: collectively and personally.

We are the flock who hear the voice of the good shepherd calling us back to his loving care. Jesus became a lamb, identifying with the needs of the flock then ultimately he laid down his life for atonement of our sins. This is how important we are to God. He died for us. He rose for us. Why? To give us new life: a life at peace with God the father, once lost in the fall and regained in the resurrection.

So we ask, “Have I told God ‘I love you’? Have I heard his voice calling me to his side? Have I accepted the grace of his love and mercy, poured out most abundantly through the sacraments of reconciliation and Eucharist? Am I following the good shepherd and bringing others to him?

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

Homily ▼
From page 9

inspired word, sacred tradition, magisterial authority, dynamic faith, rich history and impressive ritual. This ceremony is being celebrated in each of the approximately 200 Catholic dioceses in our country and some other 2,600 dioceses throughout the world. By the 1967 decree of Pope Paul VI, pastoral reasons allow it to be scheduled in anticipation of Holy Thursday, the anniversary of Jesus’ institution of the priesthood.

For us priests, through being ordered to Jesus himself, we assume the person and role of Jesus to proclaim and preach the Word, confect the Eucharist, absolve sinners, anoint the sick, baptize, lead prayer, bless, witness marriage promises, bury the dead and comfort the beleaguered.

Today again as I affirm all other members of the church, on this feast day for priests I particularly praise, commend and thank our priests for their devotion and loyalty to Christ, the church, one another and the flock. We are rightfully proud of our priests. We know we have one of the highest quality groups of priests anywhere. They are dedicated, faithful, talented, motivated, hard-working, courageous, valiant and emphatically pastoral. The afore-mentioned 1967 papal decree also provided for the assembly of priests to renew their ordination Commitment to Priestly Service and the congregants to pray for them. This ceremony enables us to express our support, affection and gratitude for our priests. Following the priests’ pledge, in the apostolic office entrusted to me I request prayers to be a more perfect image of Christ the priest, good shepherd, teacher and servant. Again I attest to the personal honor of being a member of this presbyterate and particular diocesan church.

Since last year’s Chrism Mass, while we rejoice that none of our priests have died, we do acknowledge the passing of two of our devoted deacons, Albert Ellis and Eugene Brady. May they rest in peace.

This year marks the anniversaries of a number of beloved priests: 60 years, Father Hank Vavasseur; 55 years, John Carville and Jerry Young; 50 years, Doyd Levely and Rodney SSJ; 45 years: Gerry Martin and Bob Stine; 40 years: Dave Allen, Tom Duhe and Tom Ranzino; 35 years: Richard Andrus SVD, Vincent Dufresne, Charlie Landry and Cleo Milano; 30 years: Trey Nelson; 25 years, Greg Daigle. Not counting a year apiece for initial diocesan service, these 17 priests represent over 700 combined years of ordained service. Would they please stand?

Thank you.

In closing let us: "Ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest" (Mt 9:38) and for renewed prayer and attention to promote racial harmony and peace. In heart and mind, spirit and voice let us praise and thank the God of all Father, Son and Holy Spirit — for bringing us here at this precious time, in this sacred place, for this hallowed purpose. With Peter before Jesus on the mountaintop, we say: “Master, it is good that we are here” (Lk 9:33). Amen.

EVENTS ▼
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Arise Exercise Classes – Our Lady of Mercy Church, 445 Marquette St., Baton Rouge, will host ARISE yoga-styled, created to connect with God through Scripture, prayer and movement, Mondays, 10 a.m., in the parish activity center. Cost is a $10 donation. For more information, call 225-773-0204 or email amayshuye@gmail.com.

MAT Summer Courses – Registrations are being accepted for the summer session of the Ministry and Theology (Mat) program, hosted by the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis. Topics include sacraments, the spiritual life, the Catholic Scriptures, Mariology, Johannine literature, Catholic identity in the Catholic school, the Catholic faith and more. For dates, times and to register, visit evangcatbr. org. For more information call 225-336-8760.
RELICS

From page 1

The Catholic Commentator  April 13, 2018

tour marks the 50th year since St. Pio’s death.

The relics included St. Pio’s glove; the crusts of his wounds; cotton-gauze with his blood stains; a lock of his hair; his man-tle and his handkerchief soaked with blood just hours after he died. “It was awe inspiring,” said Sacred Heart parishioner Phyllis Territo. “It sent a chill throughout my body to be in the presence of so many people. The fervency of the people at Mass was most inspiring.”

Before a noon Mass, Maestro Luciano Lamonarca, president of the St. Pio Foundation in New York City, said he was overwhelmed by the sheer number of people who came to Sacred Heart and the other tour stops in the United States to venerate the relics of the friar who suffered so much even as he healed others.

“You feel so blessed when there are people who come from around the state, and other states, just to touch the relics,” said Lamonarca.

Many are intrigued with the mystic, who is said to have had the gift of reading souls, the ability to be present, communicate with angels and work favors and healings before they were requested of him. He is most likely well known for bearing the stigmata, or wounds corresponding to the crucifixion of Christ. The glove relic covered the constant wounds on St. Pio’s hands.

Lamonarca said he has his own miracle related to the saint’s remains.

After his wife, Valentina, had a miscarriage, Lamonarca and his wife visited Italy and met a man who kept a handkerchief soaked with St. Pio’s blood.

He noted that after the man pulled out the item, “it was as if somebody has brought 1,000 roses in the room.” It was so intense that he and his wife cried. Not long after that, he and his wife conceived a child.

An opera singer, Lamonarca ended his talk with a moving performance of “Pains Angeli cus.”

Jessica Citron, originally from Lafayette, said she has a special connection with St. Pio, through her engagement, and Lamonarca’s talk gave her some “food for thought” concerning her future family.

In March, 2017, just before Citron’s fiancé, Brandon, proposed to her, they were walking to the adoration chapel at Our Lady of Mercy Church in Baton Rouge when a woman asked if they were married. The woman said, “I have something for you” and gave them what she said was a relic of St. Pio, whom people would come to if they had a question of whether they should get married or marry a particular person.

“We turned around and she was gone,” Citron said.

After the holy hour was finished, they stepped outside the adoration chapel and Brandon dropped on one knee, brought out the engagement ring and asked her to marry him. They will marry April 27 at Sacred Heart Church in Broussard.

The bride-to-be said she is pondering if Lamonarco’s talk was a further message to her that St. Pio’s blood stains on it that was brought to her.

Erica Looney, also of Pierre Part, was looking for his granddaughter, Gabrielle, 5, when she reached out to touch the relics of St. Pio and heard about the veneration. The saint appeared to be making connections with many families.

The veneration was part of a family vacation for Traci and Troy Ducote of Lake Charles and their children Annie, 10, Todd, 9, Addie, 5, and Alan, 2½. A friend from Baton Rouge told her that St. Pio’s relics would be displayed at Sacred Heart. They had been camping in Robert and a friend had told her about the veneration, so they worked it into their vacation plans. Traci Ducote’s sister from Lakes Charles also planned to meet them.

Ducote said her grandmother, Pearl Ortego, and mother, Cheryl Gremillion, have a big devotion to St. Pio. Her grandmother, who passed away five years ago, prayed the Padre Pio prayer every day.

“I’ve loved him all my life,” said Traci Ducote.

When Ducote was an infant, the doctor told her mother that Ducote had incurable facial nerve damage. Her grandmother and mother prayed for St. Pio’s intercession and she was healed. Her mother continues her devotion to St. Pio.

Because faith has played such an important part in her life, Ducote wants her children to have the same rich experiences.

“I want my children to be educated about the Catholic faith and the saints,” said Ducote.

These sentiments were echoed by Joni Landry, of Pierre Part, who was there with her children John Paul, 9, and Sarah, 7, and Sophie, 4, who enjoyed the attention of her doting godmother, Erica Looney, also of Pierre Part.

“He (St. Pio) is our family patron saint, who is with us and for us. There seems to be a connection. There’s so many stories and the miracles.”

Which is what Stan Lemelle was looking for his granddaughter, Gabrielle, 5, who has cerebral palsy.

He recently discovered St. Pio and heard about the veneration. He lovingly cradled his granddaughter and helped her as she reached out to touch the relic of the cotton gauze with St. Pio’s blood stains on it that was brought to her.

“The gifts that he (St. Pio) brought clearly make him a great intercessor for us,” said Lemelle.

Erica Looney holds her godchild, Sophie, so she can get a good look at the relics of St. Pio on April 6 at Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Baton Rouge.