On Thursday afternoon, April 12, the lobby area of Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center was abuzz with activity. There were balloons, signs and two tables set up where every seat was taken by people busy creating art. But this paint party was not your typical work of art, it was the scene of a “random act of kindness” social media initiative sponsored by the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Sisters.

The Baton Rouge Kindness Rocks Project began when FMOL marketing director Natalie Herndon found a rock while walking along Lake Ponchartrain in St. Tammany Civil Parish and pitched the idea to her bosses to sponsor the project, but with a twist.

“The (rocks) were mainly art, just little images, you know, Ninja turtles, lady bugs and I thought, ‘Wow, wouldn’t this be great if every rock had a message of encouragement,’ ” said Herndon. Sister Barbara Arceneux, FMOL Regional Minister, was immediately on board, noting how people were suffering from violence, societal discord and natural disasters. The Kindness Rocks program was launched in October and has taken off, even earning an Addy Award for Herndon, both locally and regionally and is now competing on the

SEE ROCKS PAGE 10

Youth earn spiritual ‘wings’

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

First of a two part article series

Confirmation comes at a crucial time for youth who are ready to “spread their wings and fly” and make important decisions about the course of their lives. Youth in the Diocese of Baton Rouge who have recently received or will receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit said the sacrament enables them to soar and fully experience life on wings of faith.

For youth confirmed April 14 at Sts. Anthony of Padua and Le Van Phung Church in Baton Rouge, preparing for the anointing of the Holy Spirit was a bonding time with peers whom they have been with all their school years.

“It was an emotional experience,” said Anh Nguyen about the three-day confirmation retreat. “I feel we became close as a community and friends.”

She said they did the unexpected, including washing each others’ feet, which helped those who weren’t particularly close to bond.

Retreatants also read letters from their parents and wrote letters back to them.

“We all cried,” said Nguyen.

She said she learned to trust her church community and plans to volunteer more.

“I feel confirmation is my first step into the life of the church,” said Nguyen.

Francis Dinh, also of St. Anthony, said his thoughts as Bishop Robert W. Muench sealed him with the Holy Spirit, was, “Wow! I’m finally
St. Winifred’s Well

Perhaps one of the more unusual shrines, albeit certainly one where thousands of people make annual pilgrimages, is that of St. Winifred in Wales.

According to legend, in 664 Caradoc, the son of a local prince, severed the head of St. Winifred after she refused his advances. Legend says a spring rose from the spot where her head fell.

St. Winifred was later restored to life by her uncle St. Beuno, a well-known seventh century Welsh Abbot who is credited for bringing Celtic monasticism to north Wales.

The well, originally known as the “Lourdes of Wales,” and now referred to as St. Winifred’s Well, has been a pilgrimage site since the seventh century, although the shrine was first mentioned as a pilgrimage site in the early 12th century.

King Henry V made a pilgrimage there in 1415 before his victory at Agincourt, and King Edward IV made a similar visit before a major battle in 1461.

The two-story building at the well, known for its unique architecture design, is set into a hillside and dates to the late 13th century. It is believed the building was built for King Henry VII’s mother, Margaret Beaufort. The richly ornamented exterior features a frieze of animals and the badges of King Henry VII and Thomas Stanley, Beaufort’s third husband.

A clear water spring in the shape of an eight-pointed star is in a central basin, with steps in the front accessible for the sick. Water flows into a swimming pool, which has been modernized with more recent additions.

There is also a chapel located in the building.

Numerous cures have been reported at the well in the past several hundred years, thus making it a popular pilgrimage site.

St. Winifred eventually became a nun at a convent of a double monastery in Gwytherin in Denbighshire. She died there, 15 years after being restored to life.

Rooted in love

United in love, we are called to gather as one faith in Jesus Christ. The Easter season continues with the fifth and sixth Sundays. Mass readings point to our oneness in God. We grow in a deeper understanding of community, truth and love.

Community

The readings from the Acts of the Apostles tell of how the early church, led by the Holy Spirit, grew primarily through the preaching, teaching and prayers of the apostles, disciples and unlikely witnesses, including St. Paul, of Tarsus and a Roman centurion. The readings pick up immediately after St. Paul’s conversion, given to him by the abundant grace and mercy of God. Even the apostles were afraid of this murderer of Christians turned follower of Christ. Yet Barnabas affirmed that St. Paul had indeed been baptized, preached the good news of Jesus to the very same people who stoned Stephen, and was not fearing from those who wanted to stone him. This least likely man became one of the greatest apostles of Jesus. What happened to him? What was so powerful that caused him to turn?

Cornelius, a Roman centurion, was given a vision by an angel to seek out St. Peter. At the same time, St. Peter was given a vision by an angel to eat what was considered common, “for God has cleansed.” This vision also included that he would be sought out by three men and to go with them hesitatingly. This did happen. St. Peter went with the men even though they were Gentiles, ones who were considered unclean by the Jews. Yet, God “has cleansed.” St. Peter, upon meeting Cornelius and those with him, proclaimed what Jesus had done. The Holy Spirit came upon the Gentiles and they were baptized that day!

The least likely became part of the community. What happened to them? What was so powerful that a group of Gentiles became Christian that day?

This still happens today. Recall those who were just recently initiated into the church at Easter Vigil. All were called by God to seek him in the fullness of truth through Jesus Christ. The community of believers then guides them on a journey of faith formation, witnessing what is known to be true in Jesus Christ with the help of the Holy Spirit. Subsequently, they are given the sacraments of baptism (community), confirmation (strength) and Eucharist (fortification) to further receive the abundance of God’s mercy and grace! What joy!! Of course the foundation of this community is love.

Love

God is love. God is truth. The root of our existence is the love of God, for we are anchored, as branches, to him on the vine who is Jesus. Grace and the gifts of the Holy Spirit flow like water through “xylem,” offering us the ability to bear “fruit;” that is to glorify God as true witnesses in all we do. We, therefore, remain in him in order to be good fruit.

We must love as he loves. One may ask, “How does God love?” He loves by the greatest act of love: He laid down his life for us, whom he calls friend. This intimate union with God, fully visible in Jesus, is a call to love...
Proposed budget slashes funding to schools, health care

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

A state budget approved by the Louisiana House of Representatives and currently up before the Senate shreds funding for nonpublic schools, threatening child nutrition programs feeding thousands of underprivileged young people throughout Louisiana.

HB1, which House members approved April 19, cuts more than $8 million in state funds to nonpublic schools. Funding statewide for school nutrition services was slashed from $7.5 million annually to $3.5 million, and funding for required services was cut to $4.1 million, down $4.3 million.

Also under attack in HB1 is the Louisiana health care system, and if passed in its current form could be devastating to senior citizens. Funding to higher education also took a hit, as well as the state’s medical schools and residence programs.

However, 80 percent of the TOPS funding remained in tact, although full funding was originally proposed but suffered a late-minute reduction.

“The problem is this is an untenable budget,” said Rob Tasman, executive director of the Louisiana Conference of Catholic Bishops. “What HB1 chose to do was essentially choose TOPS over other programs. And it deeply decimated the health care system in the state, calling into question how health care can be delivered to many Louisiana residents.”

“I don’t believe this is a budget the governor (John Bel Edwards) is willing to sign,” he added.

Tasman acknowledged the funding cuts could result in the elimination of the school nutrition service programs throughout the state. The Child Nutrition Program of the Diocese of Baton Rouge program receives a little more than $1 million annually, helping to feed approximately 600 students.

“Many of those students are being provided breakfast, lunch and supper, all free of charge, through the program.

“My understanding is there would not be enough money to go around to even keep those programs active,” Tasman said. “(For the Diocese of Baton Rouge) what (the) actual take-away would certainly be a deep cut.”

Regarding the reduction in required services, Tasman said the money received from the state is funneled directly back to the school in terms of academics, curriculum, extracurricular activities and teacher development.

“Many of these strands are institutional, meaning that they only benefit the institution.”

“That is absolutely not true,” he emphasized. “It certainly trickles down to the students in the school.”

Tasman also said the proposed cuts would be potentially catastrophic for nursing homes heavily funded through the state, to the point where they would not be able to provide that critical care.

However, he noted the structure of HB1 likely would undergo a dramatic facelift in the Senate Appropriations Committee and ultimately the full Senate. He said traditionally by the time the original House budget leaves the Senate it has a much different look.

“So what the (Senate Finance Committee) will do is look at its own priorities, which very well may differ from the House’s, and try to add those into the bill,” Tasman said. “The Senate will consider those and likely the bill will wind up in a conference committee (of both chambers) and (legislators) will try to reach some kind of an agreement on the differences.”

He is cautiously optimistic that by the time the final bill is approved by both chambers, full funding for nonpublic schools will be restored, based on past actions of the Senate Finance Committee and the fact that many legislators “realize the importance and value of nonpublic schools that they will work diligently to restore this funding.”

Those funding sources faced a similar fate a year ago but were salvaged during 11th hour negotiations. However, Tasman said the difference in 2018 is a question as to whether or not more revenue will be raised. And if revenue is raised through tax increases or other sources, will it be sufficient to fill the current budget gaps.

“This is new territory and I think that is what really threatens the process,” he said. “The budget is always about priorities but it’s about shifting monies around. This is different, not so much about shifting money around but will there be sufficient money around to adequately fund critical programs within our state? That’s the real question.”

Tasman explained the current budget negotiations are based on no new revenue streams but added that the sense around the Capitol is a special session will have to be called once the regular session adjourns. For more than a year, lawmakers have recognized the looming fiscal cliff of more than $600 million for the 2018-19 budget. In 2016, a temporary one-cent sales tax was approved, and that tax expires June 30, creating the budget shortfall.

Special sessions in 2017 and one earlier this year have proved fruitless and Edwards has urged lawmakers to end the regular session early and go straight into a special session, thus reducing the taxpayers’ cost of overtime.

Pastoral appointments announced

Bishop Robert W. Muench has appointed Father Matthew Graham pastor to the cluster parishes of St. Jules Church in Belle Rose and St. Elizabeth Church in Paincourtville.

Bishop Muench also appointed Father Ryan Hallford parochial vicar at St. Jude Church in Baton Rouge and Father Michael O’Rourke OP chaplain at St. Albert the Great Chapel in Hammond.

The appointments are effective July 2.

Father Graham was ordained May 30, 2015 by Bishop Muench at St. Joseph Cathedral and has been serving as administrator at St. Jules and St. Elizabeth since 2016. He also served one year as parochial vicar at Christ the King Church and Student Center in Baton Rouge.

Father Hallford, a native of Slidell, was ordained May 27, 2017 by Bishop Muench at St. Joseph Cathedral. He was appointed parochial vicar at Holy Family Church in Port Allen effective July 1, 2017.

Father O’Rourke is currently the parochial vicar at St. Peter Church in Memphis.

Father O’Rourke will replace Father Michael Miceli, who has been appointed pastor at St. Patrick Church in Baton Rouge, also effective July 2.
WASHINGTON (CNS) – The president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops said he is grateful to Pope Francis for “his powerful, straightforward words” in “Gaudete et Exsulitate” (“Rejoice and Be Glad”), his apostolic exhortation on “the call to holiness in today’s world.”

“Pope Francis is very clear,” said Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston. “He is doing his duty as the vicar of Christ, by strongly urging each and every Christian to freely, and without any qualifications, acknowledge and be open to what God wants them to be – that is ‘to be holy, as he is holy’ (1 Pt 1:15).

“The mission entrusted to each of us in the waters of baptism was simple – by God’s grace and power, we are called to become saints,” the cardinal added in a statement April 9, the day the Vatican released the document.

All Christians are called to be saints, not “plastic statues of saints,” the pope wrote, but real people who make time for prayer and who show loving care for others in the simplest gestures.

“Do not be afraid of holiness. It will take away none of your energy, vitality or joy,” the pope said in his apostolic exhortation, which he signed March 19, the feast of St. Joseph.

Pope Francis is calling each Christian to “acknowledge and be open to what God wants them to be,” Cardinal DiNardo said.

He said the words from the document that jumped out at him when he first read them were: “Do not be afraid of holiness.”

“In a way, each one of us has a fear of striving for holiness – a fear that we would be mocked, ignored or even hated by others because we would stand out,” Cardinal DiNardo said in his statement.

“Yet that is what the Lord has called each and every person to! Pope Francis calls us out: A Christian cannot think of his or her mission on earth without seeing it as a path of holiness, for this is the will of God, your sanctification.”

Pope Francis “describes how holiness comes through the daily struggles each of us face,” the cardinal said. “In the ordinary course of each day, the pope reminds us, ‘We need to recognize and combat our aggressive and selfish inclinations, and not let them take root.’ Yet, he says, this ‘battle is sweet, for it allows us to rejoice each time the Lord triumphs in our lives.’”

Cardinal DiNardo also pointed in particular to a paragraph that discusses “the continuing need we have for civility in all our interactions, especially in the media.”

“Christians too,’ the Holy Father writes, ‘can be caught up in networks of verbal violence through the internet and the various forums of digital communication,’” the cardinal said, quoting from the exhortation. “This can be true even in Catholic media. Even in our heated disagreements with one another, we always need to remember that it is God who judges, not man” (Jas 4:12).

The cardinal encouraged all Christians, in celebrating the joy of Easter and Christ’s resurrection, to “rekindle their baptismal call” by reading “Gaudete et Exsulitate,” especially “the beautiful section on the beatitudes.”

By exploring the eight Beatitudes and “offering examples of how to live out our call to holiness in everyday life, the Holy Father has given us a wonderful tool for renewing our love for God and for each other,” Cardinal DiNardo added.

Reaction to the pope’s new document from around the U.S. included a reflection from New Jersey Bishop David M. O’Connell of Trenton.

“Reaction to the pope’s new document from around the U.S. included a reflection from New Jersey Bishop David M. O’Connell of Trenton.

“The pope cautions the reader that this document ‘is not meant to be a treatise or an academic, doctrinal text,’” the bishop said. “It is proposed and intended to be a personal, pastoral and practical invitation to each and every one of us in the church to draw closer to the Lord Jesus Christ in our everyday lives.”

“This exhortation … however, speaks in simple, accessible language in an attempt to redirect our attention to the everyday ‘holiness’ that we are called to live,” he said.

Bishop O’Connell opens his reflection with a description of the mosaic of “Christ in Majesty” that adorns the apse behind and above the high altar of the Great Upper Church of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C.

“If you turn around to look back at the narthex, you will see a white bas relief that stretches from side to side across the back of the shrine. The artist labeled his work, ‘The Universal Call to Holiness,’” he said. “But, just what is a ‘universal call to holiness?’ What does it mean?” Pope Francis answers these questions in his new document, Bishop O’Connell said.

“As the pope says in the exhortation, ‘We are all called to be holy by living our lives and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves,’ he added.
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Retreat focuses on the spirituality of aging

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

By the year 2020, the United States will have the largest elderly population in its history. Asking “who?” “what?” “where?” “when?” “how?” and “why?” can help seniors map out their later years spiritually as well as logistically, according to Dana Territo, director of services of Alzheimer’s Services of the Capital area.

Territo gave a spirituality of aging retreat April 21 at the St. Joseph Spirituality Center.

While many people financially plan for their later years, they may not think much about planning spiritually for the future.

“As we age and retire, it’s time for us to go to our inner compass and decide on the direction of our later life,” said Territo.

“As Americans, we live in an achievement-oriented society in which worth is decided by accomplishment and success. In this context growing old seems meaningless.”

With aging come graces, said Territo. Among them are acceptance of what cannot be changed; affirmation of what is good; courage to overcome adversities; and in all things, faith is the ultimate rescuer.

“God created me and he is calling me to learn and to know, to become even more important, more focused, a more spiritual being than we have ever been before,” said Territo.

The task of spiritual enfolding involves the graces of looking at their identity as they age (who); their purpose and what God sees them doing (what); meeting God and anticipation, fear and acceptance of death (when); looking at what is in my windshield and not my rear view mirror (where); and the tools and graces for the journey (how).

Contrary to what many people think, retirement is not a red light signaling “stop” but a green light to “keep going,” emphasized Territo.

She noted that Father Gerald M. Fagin SJ has written many books about Ignatian Spirituality and how it applies to later years. He wrote that the reason God adds years to people’s lives is because there is more that he wants them to do.

That’s where asking questions come in.

Once people’s children have moved out or they’ve retired and don’t have a job anymore, they have to ask “Who am I now?” Seniors also have to discern, “What am I to do now – travel, volunteer, spend more time with family? What is my destination?”

Answering the question “what?” means, “What are tools I need if I am going to age gracefully?” This can include praying in a group or contemplatively alone or volunteering. This process should also include anticipating how one can become engaged with others.

Territo said discerning the question “when?” involves coming to terms with one’s mortality. “Everyone has an inherit fear of death. But if we are strong in our faith and work with others, we realize each Good Friday has an Easter Sunday. With the resurrection, God is with us, but death is conquered,” said Territo.

And the biggest grace of “why?” looks at the whole process of aging. Territo said, “Aging is the opportunity to not just grow old, but whole.”

She noted how society focuses on youth and “staying young.”

“Aging is a natural process of living, but not necessarily a natural process to our mind,” said Territo.

“We can’t deny aging. We start aging when we’re born. But you don’t necessarily think about it. Some people fight it all the way – you see it in commercials about changing your appearance and Botox,” said Territo.

But there is something special about growing older, as people are able to distribute a lifetime of valuables, in a spiritual sense, to their heirs.

“We walk about the heirs that we will give our material things to, our children, or whomever we deem. But what about our social heirs?” asked Territo.

She said sharing stories and knowledge with the younger generation is very important.

Those gifts should also be shared in community as well, Territo emphasized. She noted that many baby boomers grew up in church and are used to being in community and should continue to be engaged with the rest of the world.

She said the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at LSU Continuing Education Program focuses on lifelong learning. There’s a wide variety of subjects, field trips and opportunities to network. For more information on the program, visit outreach.lsu.edu/Enrichment/OLLI-at-LSU.

She said seniors can further go on retreats and seek spiritual direction.

Territo further urged aging people to come forward and share who they are.

“It takes education, awareness and people coming forth and celebrating positive images of aging,” said Territo.

She said family members/caregivers should walk the journey together with their aging loved one – with the emotions, the anger and the loss – and have those difficult discussions about what the loved one wants, etc.

Caregivers should also network to realize they are not alone.

Even the dying process itself can be a beautiful process filled with graces, as everyone looks to the resurrection beyond the cross, said Territo.

She pointed out that St. Thérèse of Lisieux’s father suffered from dementia while she was in the convent. She thought it was the worse thing, but she eventually saw the suffering of Christ on the cross through him.

As he grew more dependent on people, she recalled Jesus’ words, “Let the children come to me” and understood God was inviting her to allow her father to come to him.

“She was overwhelmed with gratitude for her experiences with her father,” said Territo. “When her father died, she said he was in heaven wearing a crown of glory.”

One of Territo’s favorite Scripture passages that older people can draw comfort, strength and hope from is Matthew 28:20: “And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”

Boudreaux to be honored

Special to
The Catholic Commentator

Catholic High School in Baton Rouge coaching legend Pete Boudreaux will be among several people honored April 28 at the 28th annual Cathedral Evening, which features a special Mass and banquet at St. Joseph Cathedral.

The Mass is scheduled for 4 p.m. and the catered banquet, which will feature music and the recognition ceremony, is scheduled for 5:15 p.m.

Boudreaux, a 1959 Catholic High graduate and the school’s athletic director, will be presented with the prestigious Cathedral Community Award, recognizing not only his coaching ability and dedication but also the impact of his examples of Christian values and humility on countless student-athletes, their families, faculty and alumni for more than 50 years.

The award was created six years ago to honor Catholics who have helped make the Baton Rouge community a better place to live.

Past recipients of the award include Michael Acalda, Chef John Folse, Pat Shingleton, Davis Rhoer and the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady.

Volunteers Dickie Howze, Barry Miles, Michele Nardini, Dr. Irby and Betty Dupont and John and Nancy Toorean and their family will receive St. Joseph Apprentice Awards for their contributions to the liturgical and service ministries at St. Joseph Cathedral.

For more information, call 225-387-5928.
Pope Francis and hell/ Divorced, remarried sponsor for confirmation?

Q Did Pope Francis just say that there is no hell? (Chesapeake, Virginia)

A No. Pope Francis did not say that there is no hell. That misinformation comes from a March 2018 article in the Italian newspaper La Repubblica. The article written by that newspaper’s co-founder and former editor, Eugenio Scalfari, claimed that the pope had told Scalfari in a recent conversation that “the souls of those who are unrepentant, and thus cannot be forgiven, disappear” and that “hell does not exist; the disappearance of sinful souls exists.”

In a statement in response, the Vatican (in notably low-key fashion, apparently so as not to offend Scalfari, with whom the pope has had frequent conversations) said that Scalfari’s piece was “a product of his own reconstruction” and that “no quotes of the aforementioned article should therefore be considered as a faithful transcription of the Holy Father’s words.” Scalfari, a 93-year-old avowed atheist, has admitted that he does not take notes or use a tape recorder when doing interviews with the pope.

In fact, Pope Francis has spoken on a number of occasions of hell as a real and final destination for serious sinners who do not repent. In 2014, for example, speaking to families of those victimized by the Mafia, the pontiff pleaded with members of the Mafia to turn their lives around. “Convert,” said Pope Francis, “there is still time for not ending up in hell. It is what is waiting for you if you continue on this path.”

The Catechism of the Catholic Church says, “The teaching of the church affirms the existence of hell and its eternity. Immediately after death the souls of those who die in a state of mortal sin descend into hell, where they suffer the punishments of hell, ‘eternal fire.’ The chief punishment of hell is eternal separation from God, in whom alone man can possess the life and happiness for which he was created and for which he longs” (No. 1035).

Q I am a divorced and remarried Catholic and have been asked by my grandniece to be her sponsor for confirmation. Forty years ago, I was divorced and remarried. At that time, I was told by my pastor that I could not receive Communion, and so I have not done so for all these years. I still, though, go to Mass every Sunday, believe in Jesus as my Lord and God, and try to live a good Catholic life. But does this mean that I cannot be her sponsor? (Baltimore)

A A sponsor must be a practicing Catholic eligible to participate fully in the sacramental life of the church, including holy Communion.

The church’s Code of Canon Law expresses it this way: “To be permitted to take on the function of sponsor a person must … be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist and who leads a life of faith in keeping with the function to be taken on” (Canon 874).

That prescription is commonly taken to require full sacramental eligibility. The reason is that a sponsor serves as a role model in the faith for the person being baptized or confirmed and so, logically, must be able to share completely in the church’s sacramental life.

And so, sadly, at this time you would not be able to be a confirmation sponsor for your grandniece. I certainly compliment you, though, on remaining faithful to Mass attendance over all this time. That is exactly as it should be; you are still a member of the Catholic Church and you no doubt benefit spiritually from your regular presence at Mass.

(You would also, by the way, be able to receive the anointing of the sick when seriously ill and to have a Catholic funeral.) But have you ever thought about talking to a priest about your particular situation? It may be that an annulment of your first marriage is possible, so that you could return to reception of the Eucharist (and be able to be a sponsor).

Q Has the church ever considered Mother Angelica for sainthood? I recently read a book on her life, and she was an amazing woman. She not only started the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN), but she had a radio station as well. I am sure that her strong faith, humor and common sense have touched many people. (Thornville, Ohio)

A Mother Angelica, a member of the Poor Clares of Perpetual Adoration, died in Alabama on Easter Sunday 2016 at age 92. In 1981, with $200 in capital, she had founded the Eternal Word Television Network, which today reaches more than 200 million homes in 145 countries and transmits 24 hours a day in several different languages with a variety of religious programming, including interviews, historical pieces and devotional services.

Three days after her death, Pope Francis spoke to members of the EWTN staff in Rome and, pointing to the sky, said of Mother Angelica, “She is in heaven.” A formal process of canonization, though, has yet to begin and normally does not start until five years after death — although exceptions have been made recently for St. Teresa of Kolkata and for St. John Paul II.

In 2009, Pope Benedict XVI conferred on Mother Angelica the highest papal honor for laypeople and clergy, the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice Cross. Upon her death in 2016, tributes came from many Catholic leaders, including Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz, then-president of the U.S. bishops’ conference, who said that Mother Angelica “reflect- ed the Gospel commission to go forth and make disciples of all nations” and that, “like the best evangelists, she used the communications tools of her time to make this happen.”

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 30 Columbia Circle Dr., Albany, NY 12203.
By Debbie Shelley  
The Catholic Commentator

Theresa Bonapartis crouched on the bathroom floor of her home and reached for Jesus by repeatedly crying out, “Jesus I trust in you.” Bonapartis said she believes Jesus pulled her out of years of despair after having an abortion as a youth and set her on the path to co-creating with the Sisters of Life the Entering Canaan program, which helps those who have suffered abortion find hope while addressing the impact of abortion spiritually, emotionally and psychologically.

The Diocese of Baton Rouge’s, Marriage and Family Life Office will sponsor an “Entering Canaan: Day of Prayer and Healing,” on Saturday, May 5.

Bonapartis said while her life story is unique, women who have had similar abortion experiences can connect with it.

“At 18 I honestly believed I was the only one not having sex,” said Bonapartis. “I gave in to peer pressure and slept with someone I was seeing occasionally. I remember vividly the day I phoned the doctor for my test results and learned I was pregnant.”

She was happy at the thought that a child was growing in her but feared telling her parents, that a child was growing in her nant.”

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Marriage and Family Life Office

Addressing the Impact of Abor

The Entering Canaan program,

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ing an abortion as a youth and

she was determined not to have an abortion.

She stayed at a friend’s home. She was hopeless and had no idea how she would support her baby and herself. Her father sent several messages urging her to have an abortion and offered to pay for it. She refused, but out of desperation, she eventually decided “to let the abortion happen.”

“Thirty years later, I still can’t remember how I got to the hospital,” said Bonapartis. “But I do remember being alone in the hospital room when a doctor entered, and I’ll never forget the sadistic look on his face as he injected saline into my abdomen.

“No one explained to me the baby’s development or what the abortion would be like. I had no idea what was going to happen. I lay there just wishing that I could die. I could feel the baby thrashing around as his skin and lungs were burned by the saline. He was dying. Labor began. After 12 hours of labor, alone in the room, I gave birth to a dead baby boy.

“I looked at his tiny feet and hands. All I wanted to do was pick up my son and put him back inside of me. I couldn’t fathom what I had done. I ran for the nurse. She came in, picked up my son and dumped him in what looked like a large mayonnaise jar, a jar marked 3A. Then she left the room and I was alone again, filled with hatred for myself.”

Bonapartis went through the motions of living and thought about suicide.

She spent time with sister’s family in California, sharing a room with her two-year-old niece and begged God to forgive her.

She then moved to New York. She was not in contact with her father, but her mother occasionally slipped out to meet her. She later moved to Florida.

“During my two years there, I called my dad and we began speaking again, although never mentioning my abortion,” Bonapartis said. She found a job and outwardly things seemed to be fine, but her abortion still clouded her mind and spirit.

Desperate to be loved, she married a man who emotionally and psychologically abused her. Bonapartis said she was thrilled when she became pregnant with their first child. But the marriage unraveled after the birth of the baby. Her husband abused alcohol and drugs. She said the birth of her second son was not joyous. She kept her sanity by reading the Bible. Her husband promised to stay sober, but never was able to do so.

One day her husband was drinking and she left with the children.

Her sister took her into her already full apartment. With her family’s support, Bonapartis attempted to put her life back together.

She had grown spiritually, and attended Mass, but kept her distance from God.

“By then my older son was seven and ready to make his first penance. At a meeting for the parents, a priest talked about God’s mercy and his desire to forgive any sin, even the sin of abortion,” Bonapartis said. “I remember thinking: Can this be true? Did I hear him correctly? Will God really forgive abortion? That evening I left with the first inkling of hope I had known in 10 years.”

She went to confession and sought spiritual counseling from a priest. Yet she realized full healing would come in time.

One night she was depressed and suicidal, but felt a deep trust in God. After putting her children to bed, she professed her trust in Jesus and her life changed.

Knowing that she must share her story about her abortion and God’s love and mercy, she told her boys and understood when they, too, needed time to heal.

Bonapartis then began pro-life advocacy and worked with the Sisters of Life to start the Entering Canaan program.

“I have been blessed to see countless miracles of his mercy over the years,” said Bonapartis. “I think just hearing others tell their stories is healing. . . they have what you want. There is much to learn on many levels, spiritual and also psychological, regarding abortion.

“God wants to heal us all to our core so it takes different amounts of time for each person. If they go to confession they need to claim his forgiveness because he has forgiven them, then they need to acquire the tools to help. In the ministry we teach them tools for identifying connectors and we are there for ongoing support.”

Bonapartis acknowledged, “Healing from a traumatic experience like abortion takes time. Entering Canaan is ongoing, being there and walking with them through their healing. It begins with days but we have monthly groups and weekend retreats as well. God is longing to heal them.”

Danielle Van Haute, Respect Life coordinator for the Diocese of Baton Rouge, said, “For women and men who have in some way participated in an abortion, it is not uncommon to think that this is the ‘unforgivable sin.’ God is greater than any sin, and he desires to draw all to himself. Those who are part of the Entering Canaan ministry realize that healing is found only in Christ. The Entering Canaan ministry aims to accompany those who have suffered abortion on their journey to healing, provide a safe haven and understanding community while recognizing that each person’s journey is different and healing is found only in Christ.”

For information and confidential registration for the May 5 program, email Tara at EnteringCanaanBR@yahoo.com or call 225-568-6004.

GOSPEL ▼

From page 2

beyond measure. God’s love for us is real, authentic, unconditional, creative, sustaining, life-giving and “is on earth as it is in heaven.” We, thus petition, “Give us this day, our DAILY BREAD and FORGIVE US our trespasses as WE FORGIVe those who trespass against us…”

Our daily bread is the bread from heaven, the glorified body, blood, soul and divinity of our Lord, Jesus in the Eucharist. His real presence flows through our veins by the power of the Holy Spirit. We are called to turn away from sin which weakens our ability to remain attached to the vine. But how can we remain in him, firmly attached to the vine? Simply put, follow the Ten Commandments, live a virtuous life, make sacrifices out of love for others before self, perform works of mercy, seek forgiveness of sins by way of reconciliation, become fortified in Christ Jesus by attending Mass, weekly, and if possible, daily. But most of all we are called to be a community of love. It is important to love, but it’s most important to BE love. Be the Love that loves you. Be Christ’s love for all.

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

The Diocese of Baton Rouge in collaboration with Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University

Who: As part of its mission to serve the Diocese of Baton Rouge, Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University offers programs in collaboration with various diocesan offices for deacon candidates, lay persons, college and high school students.

What: Courses for laypersons and the proposed undergraduate major will begin in the Fall semester.

Where: All courses will be taught at Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University in Baton Rouge.

When: Most courses will be taught on nights and weekends.

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For More Information Contact: Dina D. Dow, M.A.
Director of the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis
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For More Information Contact:
Dr. David Whidden
Associate Professor of Theology Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University
David.Whidden@franu.edu; (225)490-1651
St. Michael breaks ground on new building

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

From concerts to choirs and from Masses to mass gatherings, St. Michael the Archangel High School in Baton Rouge will soon have a new building that will play host to such events and more. A groundbreaking ceremony for construction of the new 22,000 square-foot multipurpose building was held on Monday, April 23.

Plans for the facility have been in the works for four years with fundraisers aimed at getting the $6.4 million dollar project started. Besides providing much needed space for the school, the new building will have state-of-the-art equipment for a variety of productions that might include actors, athletes or musicians.

“It will also serve as a place for liturgy,” explained SMHS principal Ellen Lee. “Right now, we have a physical stage that we have to put up and take down but this will allow us to have a permanent place to have programs that require a stage or some sort of elevated surface.”

There will also be backstage dressing rooms and new lockers. Currently, the school’s lockers are located in a different area than the gym.

“This will enhance our physical education and athletics program by allowing students to have that locker room facility right there,” said Lee.

Athletic director Rob Smith said he is excited to see the construction begin, and added that this is another way that the school can enhance students’ lives.

“Currently, when we have basketball and volleyball practice, they’re having to use the same gym and one team has to practice after the other one,” said Smith. “This will help with that and we’ll be able to get kids home earlier for more family time, more time with friends and more time to spend on homework.”

The school’s gym, built five years after the 34-year-old school was constructed, will continue to host the school’s basketball and volleyball games; however, the multipurpose building, with its new sport court floor, will provide extra space during tournaments.

The multipurpose building will also double as the band room, allowing the band to practice without disrupting other classes.

“The band will be isolated and sound proofed in the new building,” explained Lee, “so that when you have band class, you’re not listening in the math class to the music from the band class.”

Construction on the multipurpose facility is expected to take a year to complete.
ROCKS

There were many local and national needs that could use messages of peace and encouragement, and we felt that this effort would fit with our mission, and it was definitely a part of the spirit of St. Francis, our patron,” said Sister Barbara. “We want to be a spiritual presence in our community and this project gives us an opportunity to express our connectedness with others.”

Cancer survivor Ellen Sessions, who was among those at the rock painting session, said she thought the program was a “great thing” and hoped to find a rock while out walking one day. For her rock design, she painted the words ‘hope’ and ‘strength.’

“(We’ve had) fantastic response,” said Herndon. “Several organizations, schools and companies now are starting to paint rocks. Some work on the rocks for team building.”

Some of those organizations include Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center, City Year of Baton Rouge, LSU University Lab School, St. Joseph’s Academy Art Club, Crito Bay Franciscan High School and Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center. At this painting session, the second one held so far, there wasn’t an empty seat. Even Sister Martha Ann Abshire, FMOL Vice President for Mission Identity, had a seat at the table, painting a message of hope for someone who needed it.

“You can keep the rock but make sure you do another rock and put it somewhere for somebody else to find it. It’s a simple thing of just saying, ‘I’m caring about you whether I know you or not.’” said Sister Martha Ann.

On the back of each rock are instructions on how to share the love through social media: Baton Rouge Kindness Rocks on Facebook and #BRKindnessRocks on Instagram.

The Baton Rouge Kindness Rocks Project is a social media initiative developed for the community by the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady sisters. The movement invites participants to write messages of encouragement on rocks and place them in an area where they can be found by others. Those who find the rocks are asked to take a selfie and post it to Facebook or Instagram. Pictured, top right, Sister Martha Ann Abshire joined in the most recent painting session hosted by Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center. (Photo by Bonny Van | The Catholic Commentator)
By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

While some people might get a song “stuck in their head,” 12-year-old Isabella Hays gets melodies “stuck” in hers. She has always loved music and there is hardly an activity that is not accompanied by the sound of music. Even while going to classes at St. Jean Vianney School in Baton Rouge, Hays hears it.

“Music plays a huge part of my life,” said Hays. “It’s just in my head all the time and I listen to music with almost everything I do, when I’m doing homework, when I’m getting ready in the morning, almost everything. I mean, it’s pretty crazy!”

Sometimes, she’ll just hear a melody and that’s when she knows she might have the beginnings of a new song. One of those melodies recently won first place in the 10 – 12-year-old division of the Louisiana Federation of Music Clubs Junior Composers Contest. It’s only the second time she’s entered a piece of music for the contest. Last year’s entry landed in second place.

“This year, I wanted to write another piece because it was fun,” explained Hays. “At first, I didn’t really have a certain story to go by, I just started playing random notes. But then, I tried to do a kind of ‘Moana’ (Disney movie) sort of thing and then that’s actually how it sort of came out. It started off really upbeat, just happy, and the middle part got really stormy so it kind of represented like a storm coming and setting her back, and then at the end, there was a high key change and it symbolized her resolve of the problem.”

Hays worked on the piece, entitled “The Final Adventure,” with her piano teacher, Rebecca Bellelo of Baton Rouge, for several months before submitting it to the contest in February. Hays admitted she didn’t like the song at first but has started to warm up to it.

“So basically what would happen, I would tell her what was on my mind and what I wanted to play, of course I couldn’t play it, and I would just ask her to play it and she would play a bunch of ideas and I would pick which one I liked the best because I couldn’t really put out what I was thinking on the piano,” she explained. “But now that I’m actually learning it, I like it a lot better than I did when we working on it.”

Hays’ mom, Niki Hays, said her daughter “spent forever on the beginning” of the song, delaying the completion of it.

“But Rebecca told her that if she was going to enter it, she had to finish it so she was kind of rushed to finish it and I think that may be why she doesn’t like it as much.”

Even Hays’ grandmother Diane Gardner, who taught young Isabella how to play, said the complicated piece sounded “off.”

“When I heard it, I thought she was actually making mistakes because it sounded kind of off,” said Gardner. “But, the judge, when we read his comments, was like, this would not be allowed, you’ve gone against the grain, you had us expecting you were going to do this.”

In his comments on “The Final Adventure,” the judge noted that a number of famous composers “could hardly wait to break a certain tradition from theory class” while they were still students. His last remark was also very telling: “Writing in a traditional form and yet injecting your own creativity into it is always an adventure and I am confident that this will not be your ‘final’ one.”

Bellelo said the winning song is “more along the lines of classical harmonies and forms and theory.” Bellelo, who has a doctorate in music, said the process of writing a song can be a long one and some students might run into writer’s block.

“So, when Izzy and a couple of other students have come and say they’re interested in composing, they have these melodies floating around in their head and ideas, and they like to sit down and just sort of play around with melodies and that sort of thing,” explained Bellelo, “So I say, ‘Tell me where this is going.’ I do ask them to come up with some sort story, some kind of idea to try to get a grasp on what is going to be the mood of this piece or the character.”

“The first overall melody can be really simple and that can come easy to me but then elaborating on that can be pretty tough, just composing music,” said Hays, who plans to start working on new music during the summer.

Hays, who makes straight A’s in her seventh-grade classes, also takes voice lessons and is a member of her school’s choir, the drama club, the Beta Club, the math club and a member of the Quiz Bowl Team. And, while she does plan to continue writing and playing music, she already knows what she wants to do if that doesn’t work out.

“I want either a degree in music, which would probably be the best, and a back up would be accounting because I love math and that’s what my mom does,” she said.

Meanwhile, her music is headed to the National Federation of Music Clubs Southeastern Region Competition. Hays isn’t sure when that will take place or if she’ll win. For now, she is still trying to absorb the fact that she won.

“And, I was like, there’s no way because, of course, like I said, at the time I didn’t really like it that much but when my mom told me that I was like ‘There’s no way!’ And, she said, ‘Yeah!’ and I was like, ‘No! There’s no way!’ I was just shocked,” said Hays.
BISHOP OTT ESSAY WINNERS – The Bishop Ott Fourth Degree Assembly honored its top Patriotic Essay Winners for seventh and eighth grade students on the topic, “What are some freedoms we/i enjoy because of the service and sacrifice of our military veterans?” A total of 252 essays from five different schools were submitted. Student Cooper Smither won first place. Second place went to Jesse Smith and Evelyn Carley, left, placed third (pictured) received a plaque and $100 check from Co-Patriotic Chairman Delmas Forbes Jr. with the Knight of Columbus. Both Smith and Carley are students at Our Lady of Mercy School in Baton Rouge. Photo provided by Delmas Forbes Jr.

SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS – St. Michael the Archangel High School students Abigail LeBlanc and Thomas Smith were awarded Second Generation Warrior Scholarship, sponsored by the St. Michael Alumni Association. LeBlanc and Smith pose with their alumni parents and Khloe Page, right, SMHS Alumni Director. Photo provided by LeighAnn King | St. Michael High School


PURPLE PASSION – Students at Holy Ghost School in Hammond donated money to wear a purple top with jeans to school on Friday, April 13. The school collected more than $1,200 for the Tangi Humane Society. Pictured from left, are Caroline Dutruch, Lelia Jones, Macy Cerdes, Sarah Beth Thompson, Hayden Horzelski and, in front, Lilah Brown. Photo provided by Cindy Wagner | Holy Ghost School

CARRYING THE TORCH – Students at St. Alphonsus Liguori School in Greenwell Springs get a treat during opening ceremonies for Field Day on April 13. LSU baseball players Nick Coomes, pictured at left, and Josh Smith, alums of St. Alphonsus School, carried the torch to start the games. Both players said they were excited to be asked to be part of the event. “I thought it was kind of cool being asked because I remember growing up and being that kid just watching it and it’s cool getting to come here and be the guys kind of leading it,” said Smith. Photo by Bonny Van | The Catholic Commentator

A Special Section of The Catholic Commentator

A keepsake special section is designed to honor graduates from the Diocese of Baton Rouge naming each graduate from the Catholic high schools in the diocese with pictures of the valedictorians and salutatorians.

This is a great opportunity to say congratulations to the graduates and/or promote your school’s accomplishments, or promote your business to these young future leaders and their parents.

Issue date: May 25
Advertising deadline: May 16
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

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

Sherlock Gnomes
Paramount
Busy but flat animated adventure in which the hero (voice of James McAvoy) and heroine (voice of Emily Blunt) of 2011’s “Gnomeo and Juliet” team up with the detective of the title (voice of Johnny Depp) and his sidekick, Dr. Watson (voice of Chiwetel Ejiofor), to stop a spate of garden gnome kidnappings taking place across London that they suspect may be the work of the sleuth’s arch-nemesis, Moriarty (voice of Jamie Demetriou). Easily satisfied kids may be willing to accept the rudimentary plot and unfocused proceedings on display in director John Stevenson’s film. But, despite a positive lesson about not taking friends or loved ones for granted, but, despite a positive lesson about not taking friends or loved ones for granted, the movie’s cumulative effect is undermined by the overly broad humor. A-I; PG

Acrimony
Liongate
Lurid drama about an apparently long-suffering wife (Ajaia Alexis in youth, Taraji P. Henson in maturity) whose ne’er-do-well inventor husband (first Antonio Madison, later Lyriq Bent) runs through the sizable inheritance she received from her mother, then endangers the family home she was also allotted in Mom’s will. But the end of her patience and a change in his fortunes coincide in a way that unleashes her usually suppressed yet extreme mean streak, sending her on a vengeful rampage. Writer-director Tyler Perry pulls out all the stops in an initially wild, ultimately over-the-top tale that plays on the divide between perception and reality but emphasizes passion-driven spectacle over insight or believability. The treatment of sexuality as unbridled as all the other aspects of his film. Scenes of gory violence, strong sexual content, including brief graphic nonmarital activity and rear nudity, a divorce theme, frequent mild oaths, numerous rough terms, pervasive crude and crass language. L; R

God’s Not Dead: A Light in Darkness
Pure Flix
Problems beset an earnest pastor (David A.R. White) as the state university on the campus of which his church stands (led, among others, by Ted McGinley) invokes eminent domain to force his congregation to move and the ensuing controversy causes a riled-up student (Mike C. Manning) to commit an act of vandalism on the sanctuary that has unintended but disastrous consequences. Forgiveness and reconciliation are the foremost themes in writer-director Michael Mason’s drama, the second sequel to the “God’s Not Dead,” which sees the clergyman reaching out to his estranged brother (John Corbett), a lawyer, for representation in his court battle. A less strident tone and a timely message about intertemporal political and cultural discourse may recommend this follow-up to at least some viewers outside its built-in audience, though a momentary treatment of divorce in the dialogue requires discernment on the part of Catholic moviegoers. Brief violence with slight gore. A-II; PG

The Miracle Season
Mirror
Directed by Sean McNamara, this fact-based sports drama follows the Iowa City West High School girls’ volleyball team after they lose their captain and star player (Daniella Yarosh) to a moped accident. Thrown into near-paralysis by grief, under the wise direction of its coach (Helen Hunt), the ensemble pulls together thanks to the encouragement of the deceased player’s father (William Hurt) and the leadership of her best friend (Erin Moriarty). Though screenwriters David Aaron Cohen and Elissa Matsuda delay the film’s positive twist too long to keep the audience engaged, and largely sideline their characters’ religious beliefs, in the end this salute offers uplifting entertainment suitable for a broad audience. One instance of innuendo. A-I; PG

A Quiet Place
Paramount
This compact, stylish horror film might be a parable about resisting tyranny. Taken strictly on its surface, it’s a story about how strong, trusting family ties can overcome any obstacle, especially if the members of the clan in question (led by John Krasinski, who also directed and co-wrote the screenplay) are as technically adept as TV’s MacGyver. Krasinski’s character, his wife (Emily Blunt) and two surviving children (Millicent Simmonds and Noah Jupe) initially evade and eventually battle the invading aliens, armed with incredibly acute hearing, who killed his youngest. Gun and physical violence with fleeting gore, the death of a youngster, a scene of childbirth. A-III; PG-13

Blumhouse’s Truth or Dare
Universal
Rather than chilling viewers, director and co-writer Jeff Wadlow’s thriller merely succeeds in endangering its cast via a supernatural version of the titular game from which there is no apparent escape. While visiting Mexico for spring break, a group of friends (most prominently Lucy Hale, Tyler Posey and Violetta Beane) becomes trapped in the pastime after playing it inside an abandoned and accursed mission church. The stranger (Landon Liboiron) who led them there explains the rules, and the fact that the only way for him to stay alive was to expand the circle of players, before making his escape. Back home, fatalities follow as do relationship-altering revelations. But these have little impact on the audience since the imperiled band of college students are, one and all, mere types. Given that the backstory involves a priest molesting young nuns and that one of the dares sends two of the characters to bed together, only grown-ups should subject themselves to this mediocre piece of moviemaking. Much harsh violence with some gore, semi-graphic nonmarital sexual activity, shadowy rear nudity, a homosexuality theme, a couple of same-sex kisses, considerable crude and crass language. A-III; PG-

Chappaptiickid
Entertainment Studios
Somber but intriguing fact-based drama about the infamous 1969 car accident on the New England island of the title involving Sen. Edward M. (Ted) Kennedy (Jason Clarke) and Mary Jo Kopechne (Kate Mara), a former staffer for Kennedy’s assassinated brother Robert, who died in the mishap. The legislator’s bizarrely irresponsible behavior in the immediate aftermath of the tragedy is portrayed rather than explained by screenwriters Andrew Logan and Taylor Allen and director John Curran. But Clarke conveys with a quiet intensity the conflicted emotions and sense of isolation his character may have been experiencing as well as the toll his torturous relationship with his impossible-to-satisfy father, Joseph (Bruce Dern), may have exacted on him. Kennedy cousin and family fixer Rosemary (Ed Helms) provides the film’s moral compass while former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara (Clancy Brown) wears the black hat, leading a troupe of spin doctors who encourage Teddy to play fast and loose with the facts. Mature themes, a few profanities, about a half-dozen milder oaths, a couple of rough and several crude terms. A-III; PG-13

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April 27, 2018
Pope, Christian leaders condemn use of violence against Syria

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Sharply criticizing a failure to find nonviolent means of bringing peace to Syria and other parts of the world, Pope Francis appealed to world leaders to work for justice and peace.

“I am deeply disturbed by the current world situation, in which, despite the instruments available to international community, it struggles to agree on joint action in favor of peace in Syria and other regions of the world,” he said after praying the “Regina Coeli” with people gathered in St. Peter’s Square April 15.

“While I unceasingly pray for peace and invite all people of good will to keep doing the same, I appeal once again to all political leaders so that justice and peace may prevail,” he said.

The pope’s appeal came after the United States, France and the United Kingdom launched missiles on Syria April 13, targeting sites intended to weaken the nation’s chemical weapons capability. The missile strikes came one week after an alleged chemical attack in the Ghouta region, outside Damascus.

Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill of Moscow telephoned Pope Francis after the missile attack, he told reporters April 15 at his residence outside of Moscow.

“We shared the common concern about the situation in Syria, and we talked about how Christians should influence this situation to stop violence, war and so many tragic victims as we have seen in these days,” he said, according to AsiaNews.

The patriarchate launched an initiative to unite Christian leaders from the East and West to promote peace and prevent a humanitarian crisis in Syria, said Father Aleksandr Volkov, spokesman for the Russian patriarchate.

Christians “cannot be silent when things like those of these days are taking place in Syria,” Patriarch Kirill said.

Other patriarchs taking part included Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, Greek Orthodox Patriarch Theophilos III of Jerusalem, Greek Orthodox Patriarch Theodore II of Alexandria and Greek Orthodox Patriarch John X of Antioch and all the East, according to Patriarch Kirill.

“Each of them has expressed a willingness to continue consultations to find a way to stop the bloodshed,” he added.

The Syrian Catholic and Orthodox patriarchs of Syria also publicly condemned the “brutal aggression” of the U.S.-led allied missile attack and called upon all churches in the countries that participated to likewise condemn the attack and urge their governments to work toward international peace.

In a statement issued April 14 from the Syrian capital of Damascus – the patriarchal seats of their respective churches – the patriarchs said they “condemn and denounce the brutal aggression that took place this morning against our precious country Syria by the U.S.A., France and the U.K., under the allegations that the Syrian government has used chemical weapons.”

The statement was signed by Melkite Catholic Patriarch Joseph Abi; Syriac Orthodox Patriarch Ignatius Aphrem II and Greek Orthodox Patriarch John. The brother of Patriarch John X – Greek Orthodox Metropolitan Boulos Yazii – is one of two bishops who were kidnapped near the Syrian city of Aleppo April 22, 2013, and whose fate is still unknown.

Referring to the April 14 air strikes, the Catholic and Orthodox patriarchs said the timing of
Pope Francis’ new exhortation is a must read

Pope Francis has just published a new exhortation on the call to holiness. Its Latin name is Gaudete et Exsultate (Rejoice and Exult). Massimo Faggioli, Roman journalist and correspondent for National Catholic Reporter, calls it “one of the most important magisterial text on holiness since Vatican II’s Lumen Gentium (The Constitution on the Church). That may be a stretch, but Gaudete et Exsultate is very good, a must read.

“My modest goal,” says Pope Francis, “is to repropose the call to holiness in a practical way for our own time with all its risks, challenges and opportunities.” The use of Scripture throughout the document is beautiful. For back-up here, he uses St. Paul: “Be holy, for I am holy” (11:44). Then he throws in the saints as our encouragement: “The whole life of Jesus was a mystery of redemption. Pope Francis stresses that the spiritual genius of women” for reflecting God’s holiness in the world. He gives saints as his examples: Therese of Lisieux, Theresa of Avila, Catherine of Siena and many unknown who “sustained and transformed families and communities by the power of their witness.” Each of us has to make his or her own the choices and attitudes of Jesus that showed his self-sacrificing love. The “only great tragedy in life is not to become a saint.”

According to Pope Francis, there are today in our modern church two false forms of holiness: gnosticism and pelagianism. Actually, these are two ancient heresies that keep reoccurring in the history of the Christian church. (I wonder if the pope isn’t chiding some of his critics without naming them personally.) Gnosticism is the claim of some Christians to elite status and intellectual knowledge. Their view of religion does not have much emphasis on charity or mercy. They absolutize theories and ways of thinking that promise an answer for every question. But the God of Jesus Christ transcends us. He is full of surprises. Pope Francis insists that “We can and must find the Lord in every human life.” Gnostics can’t accept this. It is beyond their control. Yet, what we have received from the Lord is truth and mystery. Our way of understanding that “does not authorize us to exercise a strict supervision over others’ lives.” And he (Pope Francis) adds, “Doctrine is not a closed system... The wondering of our people helps us to ponder, their questions question us.” In pelagianism, the power that gnostics attribute to the intellect, pelagians attribute to the human will, to human effort. It is a pick you up by your own bootstraps type of spirituality. Our human will power takes the place of mystery and grace. Twelve step programs for the addicted did not become successful until they realized the futility of this approach and the need on dependence on a higher power. God. “Everything depends not on human exertion, but on God who shows mercy” (Rom 9:16). St. Augustine, who debated Pelagius, taught that God commands you to do what you can, and ask for what you cannot.

Modern day pelagians, says Pope Francis, are marked by “obsession with the law, and absorption with social and political advantages, a pugnacious concern with the church’s liturgy, doctrine and prestige, a vanity about the ability to manage practical matters, and an excessive concern with programs of self-help and personal fulfillment.”

Pope Francis does not want the church to become a “museum piece” or the possession of an elite few. Pelagian thinking reduces and constricts the Gospel, “subjecting the life of grace to certain human structures.” In contrast, we need to keep in mind a hierarchy of virtues and seek what is essential. And that essential is, in St. Paul’s words, “faith working through love” (Gal 5:6). For, “love is the fulfillment of the law” (Rom 13:10).

The beatitudes, which begin “Blessed are the poor, etc., are a Christian’s ‘identity card,’” says Pope Francis. “They describe the virtues of Jesus that we are supposed to imitate. We don’t have to actively seek all of them, but persecution may well come our way, as it did to Jesus. We can only practice them,” the pope says, “if the Holy Spirit fills us with his power and frees us from our weakness, our selfishness, our complacency and our pride.” The world tries to force us to live the opposite way. Wealth gives us the illusion of security and helps us forget our dependency on God. It gates us away from the poor with whom Luke’s Jesus says we should share our lives. Advertising promotes to us the “reign of pride and vanity” and scorches the neck. The desire for comfort keeps us from mourning and sharing the pain of others, while St. Paul urges us to “weep with those who weep” (Rom 2:19). We like to follow the winners in this life, but the righteous hunger and thirst for justice for the poor and weak. We all want mercy, but St. Luke’s Jesus says, “Be merciful to others” or just as your father is merciful” (6:34). The pure in heart are those who love God and neighbor. They will see God in their neighbor and one day face to face. And peacemakers are those who avoid gossip, try to include even the troublesome and welcome immigrants fleeing persecution.

One of the final chapters of this exhortation is on signs of holiness in our modern day. The first is a solid grounding in God who is our inner strength. Second is joy and a sense of humor. Third is boldness and passion in the desire to evangelize and make the world better. Fourth, we grow in holiness through journeying with others in community. Fifth, “I do not believe in holiness without prayer, even though prayer need not be lengthy or involve intense emotions.”

The exhortation is only 38 pages on my computer. Google Pope Francis’ new exhortation.

FATHER CARVILLE is a retired priest in the Diocese of Baton Rouge and writes on current topics for The Catholic Commentator.

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**PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PRAY FOR US**

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

**May 1**
- Rev. Paul D. Counce
- Dcn. Samuel C. Collura
- Sr. William Cawley SC
- Rev. Randy M. Quevase
- Dcn. William Corbitt
- Sr. Joan Manuel CSJ

**May 2**
- Rev. Gregory J. Daigle
- Dcn. David L. Dawson III
- Br. Eldon Crifasi SC
- Rev. Peter Ai Dang
- Dcn. Guy E. Decker

**May 3**
- Sr. Alphonse Maria CMC
- Dcn. Benjamin J. Dunbar Jr.
- Br. Ramon Daunis SC
- Rev. Al M. Davidson
- Dcn. Kirk Duplantis
- Sr. Ann Maria Mathew SOM
- Rev. Christopher J. Decker
- Dcn. W. Brent Duplessis
- Br. Alan Drain SC
- Rev. Bradley A. Doyle

**May 4**
- Dcn. Jeff R. Easley
- Sr. Carmen Medina HMS
- Dcn. Ronald J. Hebert

**May 5**
- Rev. Jamin S. David
- Dcn. Bruce J. Dufrene
- Dcn. Natale (Nat) J. Garofalo
- Br. Clement Furno CSJ
- Rev. Thomas P. Duhe
- Dcn. Edward J. Gauthreaux
- Sr. Evelyn Mee CSJ
- Rev. Matthew C. Dupre
- Dcn. Steven C. Gonzales
- Br. Harold Harris SC

**May 6**
- Rev. Vincent J. Dufrene
- Dcn. Natale (Nat) J. Garofalo
- Br. Clement Furno CSJ
- Rev. Thomas P. Duhe
- Dcn. Edward J. Gauthreaux
- Sr. Evelyn Mee CSJ
- Rev. Matthew C. Dupre
- Dcn. Steven C. Gonzales
- Br. Harold Harris SC

**May 7**
- Rev. Vincent J. Dufrene
- Dcn. Natale (Nat) J. Garofalo
- Br. Clement Furno CSJ
- Rev. Thomas P. Duhe
- Dcn. Edward J. Gauthreaux
- Sr. Evelyn Mee CSJ
- Rev. Matthew C. Dupre
- Dcn. Steven C. Gonzales
- Br. Harold Harris SC

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Moral outrage is the antithesis of morality. Yet it’s everywhere present in our world today and is everywhere rationalized on the basis of God and truth.

We live in a world awash in moral outrage. Everywhere individuals and groups are indignant and morally outraged, sometimes violently so, by opposing individuals, groups, ideologies, moral positions, ecclesiologies, interpretations of religion, interpretations of Scripture and the like. We see this everywhere, television networks outraged at the news coverage of other networks, church groups bitterly demonizing each other, pro-life and pro-choice groups angrily shouting at each other, and politics at its highest levels paralyzed as different sides feel so morally indignant that they are unwilling to contemplate any accommodation whatever with what opposes them.

And always, on both sides, there’s the righteous appeal to morality and divine authority (however explicit or implicit) in a way that, in essence, says: I have a right to demonize you and to shut my ears to anything you have to say because you’re wrong and immoral and I, in the name of God and truth, am standing up to you. Moreover, you’re immorality gives me the legitimate right to bracket the essentials of human respect and treat you as a pariah to be eliminated – in the name of God and of truth.

And this kind of attitude doesn’t just make for the angry divisions, bitter polarizations and the deep distrust we live with today within our society, it’s also what produces terrorists, mass shootings and the ugliest bigotry and racism. It produced Hitler – someone who was able to capitalize so powerfully on moral outrage that he was able to sway millions of people to turn against what was best inside themselves.

But moral outrage, however much it tries to justify itself on some lofty basis, religion, morality, patriotism, historical hurt or personal injustice, remains always the opposite of genuine morality and genuine religious practice. Why? Because genuine morality and religious practice are always characterized by the opposite of what’s seen in moral outrage. Genuine morality and genuine religious practice are always marked by empathy, understanding, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, respect, charity and graciousness – all of which are glaringly absent in virtually every expression of moral outrage we see today.

In trying to draw us into a genuine morality and religiousity, Jesus says this: “Unless your virtue goes deeper than that of the scribes and the pharisees you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.” What was the virtue of the scribes and pharisees? On the surface, theirs was a very high virtue. To be a good scribe or pharisee meant keeping the Ten Commandments, being faithful to the prescribed religious practices of the time, and being a man or woman who was always just and fair in your dealings with others. So what’s lacking in that?

What’s missing is that all of these things (keeping the commandments, faithful religious observance and being fair to others) can be done with a bitter, accusatory, unforgiving heart just as easily (and perhaps even more so) than with a warm, empathetic, forgiving heart. Keeping the commandments, going to church and being a just person can all be done (as is only too clear sometimes) out of moral outrage. To paraphrase Jesus: Anyone can be gracious to those who are gracious to you. Anyone can love those who love you. And anyone can be good to those who do good to you … but can you be gracious to those who are bitter towards you? Can you be loving towards those who hate you? And can you forgive those who kill you? That’s the litmus test for Christian morality and religious practice – and nowhere inside of anyone who passes this test will you still find the kind of moral outrage where we believe that God and truth are asking us to demonize those who hate us, do us evil or try to kill us.

Moreover what we do in moral outrage is deny that we are ourselves morally culpable in the very things we demonize and pour out our hatred on. As we watch the world news each day and see the anger, bitter divisions, violence, injustices, intolerance and wars that characterize our world, a deep, honest, courageous scrutiny should make us aware that we cannot fully separate ourselves from those things. We live in a world of longstanding and present injustice, of ever-widening economic inequality, of endemic racism and sexism, of countless people living as victims of plunder and rape in history, of millions of refugees with no place to go, and in a society where various people are branded and ostracized as “losers” and “sickos.” Should we be surprised that our society produces terrorists? However sincere and innocent we might personally feel, how we’re living helps create the ground that breeds mass killers, terrorists, abortionists and playground bullies. We’re not as innocent as we think we are.

Our moral outrage is not an indicator that we are on the side of God and truth. More often than not, it suggests the opposite.

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.

Pope Francis

Pope Francis has my admiration because I hear the voice of love speaking through him. He always stresses God’s infinite mercy.

Recently, a 93-year-old atheist accused him of denying the existence of hell. This man, who has nothing but contempt for Christianity, delighted in causing an uproar. The pope denied his claim as a bogus reconstruction of what he misheard.

One thing is certain from what the pope said was this: anyone who commits mortal sin and dies unrepentant does not enter the kingdom of heaven. Purgatory exists for those who receive mercy because of some excusing causes like ignorance and/or human weakness. Nevertheless, until their sins are washed away by their repentance they cannot enter heaven.

“God so loved the world... He sent his only begotten Son not to condemn it, but to save it” (Jn 3: 16-17).

Mercy seems like laxity to those who became alarmed when Pope Francis urged Catholics to rely more on their conscience in resolving personal moral issues.

Affirming freedom of conscience is an act of intellectual honesty and a way of being both merciful and understanding. These are God-like qualities.

Very few annulments were granted in the 1960s and 70s, because of canonical rigidity. When Pope Francis was elected, it wasn’t long before he began urging Catholics to rely more on their consciences, and that was music to my ears. Reliance on conscience is a long-established principle of moral theology.

Father Federico Lombardi, the Vatican spokesperson at the time, reported that Pope Francis was saying that in grave situations a well-formed conscience can be relied upon. The responsibility and gravity of the situation was to be determined by the parties themselves.

On July 29, 2013, he said, “If someone is gay, and sincerely searches for the Lord, and has good will, who am I to judge?” He immediately received a flood of criticism for that quote, but the parents of gay children felt genuine solace. While he did not endorse same sex marriage, he did say there could be some sort of civil union to protect their civil rights. He opposes promiscuity in general.

Spirituality For Today

Father John Catioir

The pope’s denial is good enough for me.

Conservative Catholics are usually fearful that any relaxation of the laws pertaining to marriage and divorce and contraception would threaten the church’s broader stance on medical ethics and sexual issues. This is understandable concern, but not an insurmountable one.

Freedom of conscience is a human right. Granted it can be abused, but it must be protected. Every right can be abused.

Pope Paul VI affirmed the immoral nature of artificial contraception in his encyclical, “Humanae Vitae.” Pope Francis is preparing for the canonization of Pope Paul, and he has remained firm in his opposition to those who refuse to have children because it interferes with their lifestyle. Nevertheless, he respects the consciences of those who are struggling to find the strength to raise children in today’s world.

Pope Francis agrees with the various national hierarchies who have instructed the laity that they may use private conscience in resolving these matters. He also highlighted Paul VI’s instruction to priests, urging them to show compassion in the confessional in matters involving human weakness.

What I admire most about Pope Francis is his Christ-like qualities, humility, compassion and kindness. May the Lord be your strength and your joy.
**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.

**Interfaith Concert** – The Interfaith Federation of Greater Baton Rouge will host a Sounds of CommUNITY concert Sunday, April 29, at Broadmoor Methodist Church, 10230 Mollylea Dr., Baton Rouge Sunday, April 29, 4 p.m. The musical selections will be primarily performed by white and black congregations who have partnered together. Among the churches who will perform include St. Paul, St. Aloysius and Immaculate Conception churches in Baton Rouge. The concert is free, with donations being accepted. For more information, visit ifedgbr.com.

**Recrealed Treasures and Car Show** – St. Isidore Church, 5657 Thomas Road, Baton Rouge, will host its Recrealed Treasures Show Friday May 4, 7 a.m. – 5 p.m., Saturday, May 5, 7 a.m. – 4 p.m. and Sunday, May 6, 12 p.m. – 3 p.m. In conjunction, there will be a car show Saturday, May 5, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. For more information, call 225-775-8850.

**Plates for Life** – Pam Tebow will speak at the Woman's New Life Center “Plates for Life” fundraiser Saturday, May 5, 7:30 – 11 p.m., at the Hilton Baton Rouge Capitol Center, 201 Lafayette St., Baton Rouge. There will be a patron party from 6:30 – 7:30 p.m. The evening will include dinner, music and silent and live auction. For more information, visit platesforlife.com.

**Golf Scramble** – The Men’s Club of St. George Church in Baton Rouge will host a three-man scramble Monday, May 7, at University Club, 15333 Memorial Tower Dr., Baton Rouge. Registration begins at 10:30 a.m., and there will be a shotgun start at 11:30 a.m. To register and for more information, visit st-george.org or call 225-293-2212.

**Pro-Life Mass** – A monthly pro-life Mass will be celebrated Tuesday, May 8, 5:30 p.m., at St. Agnes Church, 749 East Blvd., Baton Rouge. All are invited. For more information, call 225-383-4127.

**Nun Run** – Rosaryville Spirit Life Center, 39003 Rosaryville Road, Ponchatoula, will host its Nun Run and “Anything Goes” cookoff Sunday, May 12, 8:30 a.m. There will be a 1K Fun Run and 5K Trail Run. There will be a Kateri Kidz Corner with games and activities and live music. For more information, call 225-294-5039.

**Tickfaw Retreat** – Father Philip Scott FJ will present a retreat for men and women, “Live No Longer As An Orphaned, But as a Son and Daughter in the House of the Father,” Friday, May 18 – Sunday, May 20, at Our Lady of the Way Spiritual Life Center, 50332 Antioch Road, Tickfaw. For details and registration, visit ourladyofthewaythrive.org.

**Metairie Retreats** – Father Richard Buhler SJ will present a retreat, “The Risen Christ Comes to Strengthen and Encourage Us,” Friday, May 18 – Sunday, May 20, at The Archdiocese of New Orleans Retreat Center, 5500 St. Mary St., Metairie. For information about cost and to register, visit retreats.arch-no.org, or call 504-887-1420.

**Arise Exercise Classes** – Our Lady of Mercy Church, 445 Marquette St., Baton Rouge, will host ARISE yoga-style, 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 amaysihuge@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.

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CONFIRMATION ▼
From page 1

initiated into the church!”

He said the sacrament has enabled him to make sound judgments and view the world with eyes of faith.

“It has given me strength and courage. I am more accepting to the idea of becoming a priest,” said Dinh.

Katherine Ashy said she is looking forward to receiving the gifts of the Holy Spirit when she is confirmed at St. George Catholic Church in Baton Rouge on May 7.

“During my preparation for confirmation, I had the opportunity to spend time with Father Josh (Johnson) of Holy Rosary (Church in St. Amant),” she said.

“He helped me immensely, by deepening my knowledge and how each of my gifts are meaningful and will be strengthened through this special sacrament. He helped me understand how I could use my gifts in the community, in the church and with my family and friends. From the development of my faith, this makes me want to get out in the world and help all I can. I want to educate others on how wonderful this confirmation journey has been for me personally and how it can be the same for them too. Our gifts are meant for others, not ourselves, and we are meant to go into the world and execute God’s plan.”

Lucy Wendell, also of St. George, hopes to use the gift she receives through confirmation to teach other youth about Catholic apologetics and church teachings as well as share with them her own “little revelations and miracles that God blesses me with.”

“While I hope to share God with all those I encounter, I desire especially to educate (teens) on the Catholic faith, because I find that at this age, taking for granted the incredible truths of the Catholic Church is a sad happening, yet an often happening,” said Wendell. “The difference of knowing the Lord or not knowing the Lord in this stage of life prepares one for either a life of resting in the Lord or a life of gambling with temptation.

“And so many of the teens misunderstand the Catholic Church for a structure of imposing, outdated and irrelevant rules, which encourages the path of temptation. Thankfully, however, the Catholic Church is not a structure of constricting rules, but rather a living body of freeing truths that reveals to her willing members a God who loves them beyond their comprehension.”

Clarice Krousel, who was confirmed at Holy Ghost Church in Hammond in October, said teenagers get caught up in social media and movies, but through confirmation, God calls them to spend time with him to clarify their life mission. For her, it strengthens her calling to work with children and become a strong role model as a peer minister. She also plans to become a Eucharistic minister.

“I think it’s incredible to distribute the body and blood of Christ and to see people consume, and be consumed, by it,” said Krousel.

Sarah Labbe, also of Holy Ghost, said confirmation enkindled a fire in her soul and faith.

SYRIA ▼
From page 15

“This unjustified aggression against Syria” undermines the work of the independent International Commission for Inquiry, which was about to carry out its investigation in Syria into the alleged chemical attack.

“The allegations of the U.S. and other countries that the Syrian army is using chemical weapons and that Syria is a country that owns and uses this kind of weapon, is a claim that is unjustified and unsupported by sufficient and clear evidence,” the Christian leaders said.

“This brutal aggression is a clear violation of the international laws and the U.N. Charter, because it is an unjustified assault on a sovereign country,” the patriarchs said of the April 14 air strikes, emphasizing that Syria is a member of the United Nations.

“It causes us great pain that this assault comes from powerful countries to which Syria did not cause any harm in any way,” they said.

The Syrian Catholic and Orthodox patriarchs warned that the “unjust aggression” of April 14 encourages terrorist organizations “and gives them momentum to continue in their terrorism.”

“This brutal aggression destroys the chances for a peaceful political solution and leads to escalation and more complications,” they said. The patriarchs urged the U.N. Security Council “to play its natural role in bringing peace rather than contribute to escalation of wars.”

“We call upon all churches in the countries that participated in the aggression to fulfill their Christian duties, according to the teachings of the Gospel, and condemn this aggression and to call their governments to commit to the protection of international peace,” the Syrian Catholic and Orthodox prelates said.

The Christian leaders commended the Syrian Arab Army, “which courageously protects Syria and provides security for its people,” and offered prayers for the victims of the April 14 missile strikes.

“We are confident that the army will not bow before the external or internal terrorist aggressions; they will continue to fight courageously against terrorism until every inch of the Syrian land is cleansed from terrorism. We, likewise, commend the brave stand of countries which are friendly to Syria and its people,” the patriarchs concluded.
Engquist family donation helps OLOL

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Little did John Engquist realize how a request for a simple favor 25 years ago would forever change his life and that of his family, but also benefit thousands of critically ill children.

Engquist, who owns an equipment services company in Baton Rouge, fondly remembers the day a quarter of a century ago when one of his employees asked if he could use the Engquist family farm in Clinton to take a child who was battling cancer and was also a patient at St. Jude's Research Hospital in Memphis.

"Of course, I said ‘certainly,’" Engquist recalled, not knowing how providential his response would become.

During the weekend when his employee was at the farm, it so happened that Engquist and his wife were also there and able to meet the family. He was struck by the demeanor and positive attitude of a young child battling chemo and who was simply “not feeling well.”

Engquist was also impressed with the child's parents in the way they were coping, watching their child battle what was essentially a death sentence.

"I was blown away by their admiration of St. Jude and the way they spoke of the hospital and the love and care (the hospital staff) gave their son," Engquist said. “It was really impressive to me.”

Shortly after that weekend, Engquist said he became aware of how many children in the Baton Rouge area were battling cancer and being treated at St. Jude. His concern ultimately led him to founding the Dream Day Foundation in Baton Rouge to help assist in fundraising for the hospital, and which hosts the annual Fishin’ Galore event in Clinton, in which former and current St. Jude patients and their families from around the world descend on the farm for a day of fishing, children's activities and networking for the parents.

"So it was only natural that his deep concern for young people battling cancer would lead Engquist and his family to donate $1.5 million to the new freestanding Our Lady of the Lake Children’s Hospital. OLOL is one of only eight St. Jude affiliates in the country. According to hospital officials, Engquist’s donation is going toward the hematology and oncology floor of the new facility.

"When Our Lady of the Lake decided to build a children's hospital and have a hematology and oncology affiliate with St. Jude, it was a no brainer for me to support it," said Engquist, who is an OLOL board member. "It is very special to me and something I’m very, very proud to be able to support.

“I'm proud to be on the board and the fact they are collaborating to treat children cancer patients made it a pretty simple decision.”

The Engquist family gift brings Our Lady of the Lake Children’s Hospital to more than $46 million of its initial fundraising goal of $50 million for the Let's Build Amazing Capital Campaign.

“For more than a quarter of a century, John and Marty Engquist have given extraordinary amounts of their time and the gifts they have been blessed with to help some of the most vulnerable children in our society,” said Our Lady of the Lake Foundation Executive Director Kelly Hurtado. “Much like the mission of our Franciscan sisters, their support and love for children facing the arduous battle with cancer is strong and unwavering. We are very fortunate to have the Engquist family in our community and we greatly appreciate their most generous gift to our new children’s hospital.”

The freestanding hospital is set to open in October 2019. For more information on the project or to view live video feed of the construction process, visit letsbuildamazing.com.
Major Life Changes
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Potential long-term expenses to account for in retirement

Retirement planning involves more than just investing in a 401(k) and/or IRA. Individuals who hope to live comfortably in retirement must account for various expenses, including those associated with their health.

A report from the U.S. Senate’s Commission on Long-Term Care found that each year an estimated 12 million adults in the United States require some type of long-term care. Planning for the following potential expenses can help men and women ensure they will have enough money to live well in retirement.

- Housing: Many individuals would prefer to spend their golden years living in their own homes. However, adults who can no longer take care of themselves and/or their homes may need to move. Homeowners who simply want to downsize may be able to finance their transitions to retirement communities by selling their existing homes. But those who need to move into assisted living facilities may find that even selling their homes might not provide enough capital to pay for such residences. According to Genworth’s 2016 Cost of Care Survey, the annual cost of assisted living facilities greatly varies by state, with costs as high as $65,550 in Massachusetts and as low as $30,438 in Missouri. Whether they invest in long-term care insurance or develop another plan with their financial advisors, men and women must consider ways to finance potential housing costs in retirement.

- Renovations: Home renovations are another potential cost in retirement. Aging men and women who can no longer comfortably navigate staircases but are otherwise healthy may need to renovate their homes to account for their limited mobility. Such renovations might include the installation of a staircase chair lift and/or a ramp connected to the entryway of a home. Some may even need to convert a first-floor den or living area into a bedroom, which may also require adding a full bathroom.

- Maintenance: Homeowners who want to stay in their homes in retirement must also factor potential maintenance costs into their retirement plans. Aging men and women may no longer be capable of maintaining their properties in retirement. Consider the potential costs of landscaping, home maintenance and maid services when making a retirement plan.

- Transportation: Diminishing vision and slower mobility may also impact transportation costs. Planning for these expenses can help men and women ensure they have enough money to live well in retirement.
Live comfortably on less

Many people look toward retirement with mixed feelings. There is the anticipation and excitement of no longer having to stick to a set schedule. However, there may be some trepidation about living without a steady income.

Financial advisors recommend men and women begin saving for retirement as early as possible. The longer people delay opening a retirement account, the less time they have to grow. Those who never open such accounts may not be able to meet their cost of living in the future.

Many people are not getting the message. Despite countless television ads touting the virtues of retirement planning, it seems many people are not getting the message. According to a survey from GOBankingRates.com, one-third of Americans have nothing saved for retirement. The picture is not any rosier in Canada, where Statistics Canada reports that just 65.2 percent of the country’s 14 million households contributed to a retirement plan in 2015.

Many restaurants, stores and service centers offer discounts to seniors. The starting age for discounts may vary from store to store, so always ask before cashing out.

• Use alternative transportation. Cars can be expensive. A budget-friendly alternative to driving is to use public transportation or transportation services provided to seniors free or for nominal fees.
• Take advantage of senior discounts.

• Invest in health care. Unexpected health care costs can quickly deplete individuals’ finances. That’s why it is essential to have a solid insurance plan in place. Health care planning also may include thinking ahead to long-term care, such as assisted living and nursing homes. One may have to make concessions elsewhere, but investing in health care can assuage concerns men and women might have about the cost of living in their golden years.

While retirees may need to alter their spending habits, it is possible to live happily on less. Here are some ways to do just that.

• Accurately assess home expenses. The National Foundation for Credit Counseling says the cost of home-related expenses accounts for roughly 45 percent of spending for retirees. Individuals can add up exactly how much their homes are costing them and then decide if downsizing is a practical solution. Downsizing has a host of benefits, not the least of which is reducing housing-related expenses.

• Invest in health care. Unexpected health care costs can quickly deplete individuals’ finances. That’s why it is essential to have a solid insurance plan in place. Health care planning also may include thinking ahead to long-term care, such as assisted living and nursing homes. One may have to make concessions elsewhere, but investing in health care can assuage concerns men and women might have about the cost of living in their golden years.

• Use alternative transportation. Cars can be expensive. A budget-friendly alternative to driving is to use public transportation or transportation services provided to seniors free or for nominal fees.
• Take advantage of senior discounts.

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While retirees may need to alter their spending habits, it is possible to live happily on less. Here are some ways to do just that.

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Finding work after 50

Special to The Catholic Commentator

Unemployment isn’t easy for anyone, regardless of their age. But unemployed men and women over 50 may find it especially difficult to find work.

Whether it’s a byproduct of age-related discrimination or any of a host of additional variables, jobless older workers often struggle to find work. In a 2016 analysis of government figures, the Schwartz Center for Economic Policy Analysis at the New School estimated that the jobless rate for workers 55 and older in August of 2016, six years after the Great Recession, was nearly 9 percent. At the time, the national jobless rate hovered around 5 percent.

Unemployed men and women over 50 who are struggling to find work can consider the strategies in the article as they look to rejoin the workforce.

• Revisit your résumé. Unemployed men and women over 50 have no doubt updated their résumés to reflect their most recent professional experience. But they may need to trim some of the fat in regard to their work life 10 or more years ago. Today’s hiring managers may only be concerned with recent experience that illustrates skillsets that are relevant to today’s jobs. Men and women over 50 may consider their experience from 20 years ago invaluable, but if that experience does not meet the specific needs of the jobs they’re now seeking, then they should remove it from their résumés so hiring managers can quickly access the more relevant information from their work histories.

• Embrace 21st century job hunting. Finding a job in the second decade of the 21st century is unlike job hunting in decades prior, and wholly different from how men and women over 50 looked for jobs upon beginning their professional lives. Networking can mean the difference between unemployment and landing a job. Go to job fairs attended by hiring managers and join professional organizations that host events where professionals in your field can gather.

• Turn your age into a positive. Men and women over 50 should make an effort to show their enthusiasm about working with and learning from younger colleagues, while also noting their desire to commit long-term to a company. Some hiring managers may surprise older applicants, viewing them as potentially more reliable than younger workers simply looking to gain some experience in a particular industry before moving on to the next opportunity.

• Make use of your existing down time. Another strategy unemployed men and women over 50 can try as they look for work is to make better use of their existing downtime. Enrolling in online courses can give prospective employers the impression that applicants over 50 are both tech-savvy and willing to learn new things. Each of those things can help men and women over 50 overcome any unjustified, tech-related stigmas that hiring managers may attach to older job candidates.

Finding work after 50 is not always easy, and job seekers may need to adjust their approach before they can get back in the workforce.

Unemployed men and women over 50 who are struggling to find work can consider the strategies in the article as they look to rejoin the workforce.

Sleep loss can affect memory

Poor sleep can leave people feeling groggy, disoriented, depressed and not up for facing the day. And now there’s new evidence that insomnia can contribute to memory loss and forgetfulness among the elderly.

A study — the first of its kind — unveiled a new link between lack of sleep and memory loss. Researchers at the University of California, Berkley found that during sleep important brain waves are produced that play key roles in storing memories. These waves transfer the memories from the hippocampus to the prefrontal cortex, a portion of the brain where long-term information is stored. Sleep loss can cause the memories to remain in the hippocampus and not reach the long-term storage area, found researchers. This can contribute to forgetfulness and difficulty remembering simple details, such as names.

Seniors are frequently plagued with deteriorated sleeping patterns that lead to shallow sleep and more awakenings, says those at the University of California. This can contribute to the prevention of memories being saved by the brain each evening.

This is not the first time sleep and brain health have been measured. A 2008 University of California, Los Angeles study discovered that people with sleep apnea showed tissue loss in brain regions that help store memories.

WebMD says imaging and behavioral studies show the role sleep plays in learning and memory and that lack of sleep can impair a person’s ability to focus and learn efficiently. Combine this with the necessity of sleep to make those brain wave connections for memories to be stored, and the importance of deep sleep is apparent.

Another study, published in the journal Brain, conducted by doctors at Washington University in St. Louis, linked poor sleep with early onset of dementia, especially Alzheimer’s disease. Although poor sleep does not cause Alzheimer’s, it may increase brain amyloid proteins believed to be intrinsic to the disease. When slow-wave deep sleep is disrupted, levels of amyloid can grow and clog the brain. This is corroborated by data published in the journal Neurology. Getting deep sleep is important for reducing these proteins.

The American Academy of Sleep Medicine recognizes the difficulties elderly people may have in regard to sleep. The quality of deep sleep among older adults is often 75 percent lower than it is in younger people. Doctors can be cognizant of how sleep impacts memory and the onset of dementias and discuss insomnia treatment options with their patients.
Handling major life changes

Special to The Catholic Commentator

In the 1960s, researchers Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe studied the potential link between stressful life events and illness. After examining the medical records of thousands of patients, Holmes and Rahe discovered that there was a strong correlation between the two, ultimately developing the Holmes and Rahe Stress Scale.

Holmes and Rahe found that the death of a spouse, divorce and imprisonment were among the most stressful life events. But a person need not be widowed, recently divorced or newly imprisoned to be dealing with stress sparked by a major life change. In fact, Holmes and Rahe found that marriage and retirement, two things many people would consider positive changes, were among the 10 most stressful life events.

Change can be both exciting and frightening. Men and women facing major life changes like moving, switching careers or retiring can take the following tips to heart to make such transitions go as smoothly as possible.

• Embrace the positive. Change has its advantages and disadvantages, but once men and women have decided to make changes, they should shift their focus toward the positive aspects of changing instead of worrying about the potential negatives. For example, if moving, focus on the adventure of living somewhere new and the opportunities to explore new places and make new friends.

• Accept your decision. Many people spend ample time mulling the pros and cons of major decisions before ultimately deciding to make major changes. People who decide to change careers may have spent years trying to decide if such a change was the right move. Once they have come to a decision and started the process of changing, whether it’s giving a boss two weeks notice or putting a house on the market, men and women should accept their decision and rest easier knowing they exercised their due diligence before making a final decision.

• Commit to your decision. Fully committing to change can increase your chances of making a successful transition. If moving to a new place, look for opportunities to connect with neighbors and other members of your new community. Professionals can make a concerted effort to connect with coworkers in an effort to build strong relationships that can help their transition go smoothly.

• Maintain existing relationships. Professionals who are moving on to new companies and adults moving to new communities don’t have to give up their relationships with current coworkers, neighbors and friends.
friends. Maintain contact with valued friends, neighbors and coworkers through channels such as social media, email or even the telephone. These people have likely been valuable resources and friends for years, and there's no reason you cannot continue to look to them for support and provide a source of support for them should they make a major change in the years ahead.

Change is rarely easy, but men and women can take several steps to make transitions go smoothly.

- Sign up for an employer-sponsored retirement account. Many employers arrange for retirement savings accounts like a 401(k) for their employees. Such accounts are typically tax-deferred. As a result, men and women likely won’t even notice the money missing from their paychecks each month. Take advantage of such offerings if they exist. Such opportunities can be even more beneficial to late bloomers whose employers match contributions up to a predetermined percentage.

- Start saving as much as possible. Many people contribute six percent of their pay to a retirement savings account such as a 401(k). That rule of thumb may be enough for young workers, but late bloomers may need to contribute a higher percentage of their incomes if they hope to catch up. If 10 percent is doable, then contribute 10 percent, being sure to diversify how that 10 percent is invested. Workers who can afford to contribute more might want to explore other retirement account options so they avoid putting all of their eggs into one basket.

- Avoid high-risk investments. Investors trying to catch up on retirement savings may be tempted to invest their money in high-risk funds with the hope of making up ground quickly. But investors typically want to reduce risk as they get older. That approach should still govern late bloomers’ investing decisions, as high-risk funds that don’t perform well could leave aging investors with little to nothing come retirement. Prospective investors who need help choosing the right funds for themselves should contact a financial advisor.

- Cut spending. Men and women getting a late start on retirement saving should examine their monthly expenses, looking for places to cut costs so they can reallocate those funds for retirement savings. Some ways to considerably reduce monthly expenses include cutting the cord with a cable provider, driving a preowned vehicle instead of a new model and downsizing to a smaller home.

Financial freedom in retirement is a goal for many working professionals.

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The Carpenter Health Network

Proudly Serving the Diocese of Baton Rouge

STAT Home Health, St. Joseph Hospice and The Carpenter House respect life from conception to natural death.

The Carpenter Health Network

STAT Home Health offers aggressive, rehabilitative treatment and education to those recovering from illness, accident or surgery. A Medicare certified and award winning agency, STAT provides traditional healthcare services in the home including skilled nursing, certified nursing assistance, therapy services (physical, speech and occupational), medical social service and more. Through STAT’s AIM Palliative Home Health, patients diagnosed with a terminal illness can receive necessary care while they learn more about their treatment options (chemotherapy, radiation or dialysis).

St. Joseph Hospice provides pain/symptom management, as well as emotional and spiritual support, to patients and families facing a life-limiting illness who are no longer seeking treatment. Comprised of Board Certified Hospice and Palliative Care physicians, hospice-trained registered and licensed practical nurses, certified nursing assistants, medical social workers, non-denominational chaplains and pastors, bereavement professionals and hospice-trained volunteers, they offer Routine, Respite and Crisis Care.

The Carpenter House serves as a place of peace for hospice patients whose symptoms are not well managed at home. Offering the confidence of a hospital, with the comforts of home, patients and family members can receive around the clock nursing, spiritual care, medical social services and more as they prepare for long-term arrangements at home.

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STAT Home Health: 225-769-4764  St. Joseph Hospice: 225-769-4810

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reaction times compel many retirees to give up driving. But retirees who still enjoy getting out and about will still need a way to get around. Moving to a retirement community with daily shuttle service to and from town centers is one way for seniors who no longer drive to get around. But men and women who do not want to move to such communities will need to find alternative means of transportation, the costs of which can add up quickly.

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Financial freedom in retirement is a goal for many working professionals.
How aging adults can maintain their mental acuity

Aging is associated with or linked to a host of mental and physical side effects. For example, many adults expect their vision to deteriorate as they grow older. Such a side effect can be combated with routine eye examinations that may indicate a need for a stronger eyeglass prescription, a relatively simple solution that won’t impact adults’ daily lives much at all.

While physical side effects like diminished vision might not strike much fear in the hearts of aging men and women, those same people may be concerned and/or frightened by the notion of age-related cognitive decline. Some immediately associate such decline with Alzheimer’s disease, an irreversible, progressive brain disorder that gradually destroys memory and cognitive skills, ultimately compromising a person's ability to perform even the simplest of tasks. But age-related cognitive decline is not always symptomatic of Alzheimer’s disease. Learning about Alzheimer’s and how to maintain mental acuity can help aging men and women better understand the changes their brains might be undergoing as they near or pass retirement age.

**Is Alzheimer’s disease hereditary?**

The National Institute on Aging notes that only a very rare form of Alzheimer’s disease is inherited. Early-onset familial Alzheimer’s disease, or FAD, is caused by mutations in certain genes. If these genes are passed down from parent to child, then the child is likely, but not certain, to get FAD. So while many adults may be concerned about Alzheimer’s because one of their parents had the disease, the NIA notes that the majority of Alzheimer’s cases are late-onset, which has no obvious family pattern.

**Can Alzheimer’s disease be prevented?**

Studies of Alzheimer’s disease are ongoing, but to date there is no definitive way to prevent the onset of the disease.

- Exercise regularly. Routine exercise may be most associated with physical benefits, but the NIA notes that such activity has been linked to benefits for the brain as well. For example, a 2011 study published in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America found that aerobic exercise training increases the size of the hippocampus, leading to improvements in spatial memory. The NIA also notes that one study indicated exercise stimulated the brain’s ability to maintain old network connections and make new ones vital to cognitive health.

- Read more. Avid readers may be happy to learn that one of their favorite pastimes can improve the efficiency of their cognitive systems while delaying such systems’ decline. A 2013 study published in the journal Neurology by researchers at Chicago’s Rush University Medical Center found that mentally active lifestyles may not prevent the formations of plaques and tangles associated with Alzheimer’s disease, but such lifestyles decreases the likelihood that the presence of plaques or tangles will impair cognitive function.

- Stay socially connected. Maintaining social connections with family, friends and community members also can help men and women prevent cognitive decline. Epidemiologist Bryan James of the Rush Alzheimer’s Disease Center studied how social activity affected cognitive decline, ultimately noting that the rate of cognitive decline was considerably lower among men and women who maintained social contact than it was among those with low levels of social activity.

The idea of age-related cognitive decline strikes fear in the hearts of many men and women, but there are ways for adults to maintain their mental acuity well into their golden years.
Visiting loved ones in assisted living facilities

Special to The Catholic Commentator

For many seniors, a day arrives in their lives when it is no longer safe or practical to live at home alone. Assisted living facilities can help seniors adjust to their new situations. Such facilities typically offer comfortable surroundings, caring staff and all the amenities of home. Although fellow residents can provide companionship and friendships can develop over the course of time, assisted living facility residents also enjoy regular visits from family and friends. Such visits keep seniors connected with their loved ones and break up routines that, over time, may become monotonous.

Some people may feel anxious or awkward visiting assisted living facilities because it may shed light on the frailties or specialized needs of loved ones. This may be especially true if a loved one has a physical, neurological or mental illness. Rather than avoiding visits, individuals can follow these guidelines.

**Time visits right**
Many residents have the most energy in the morning or early afternoon right after meals. Call ahead to find out if there are any medical appointments or outings planned. Visiting during meals or activities can be fun because you’ll be engaged and will have something to keep both of you busy.

**Limit distractions**
Find a quiet and comfortable place at the facility where you can spend time with your loved one. This way you can focus most of your attention on the person you are visiting, and he or she can do the same. A sitting room or an outdoor area can be a nice place to spend time away from television or other people’s conversations.

**Plan an excursion**
If you are able to take the resident off of the property, arrange to take them somewhere that would interest them. Do not plan too much, because you want the excursion to be fun, not taxing.

**Bring along items**
Gifts are not necessary, but photos, books, puzzles or even keepsakes from home can serve as catalysts for wonderful conversations.

**Help the conversation along**
If a loved one has dementia, visits can be especially challenging. However, simply being present can be comforting for the person even if conversation is stilted. Be patient and positive. Find topics that stimulate responses, and fill in if things get quiet.

Visiting someone in an assisted living facility can buoy residents’ spirits and make for an enjoyable afternoon.

Comprehensive Resources for Seniors

We understand the unique needs of mature adults and tailor our ministries to them. Whether you are interested in supportive services, short-stay skilled nursing, residential living, respite care, or long-term care, we have the resources for you.

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**Geriatric Behavioral Center**
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(800) 864-9003

**Short-Stay, Respite, and Long-Term Care Facilities**
- Ollie Steele Burden Manor
  (225) 926-0091
- St. Clare Manor
  (225) 216-3604

**Home Assistance/Adult Day Programs**
- PACE Baton Rouge
  (225) 490-0604
- Home Visits
  (225) 765-3076

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