The sixth bishop of the Diocese of Baton Rouge was greeted with applause, smiles and hugs as he approached the podium for his introduction to the people June 26, just hours after the Vatican announced the appointment by Pope Francis.

Bishop-designate Michael G. Duca replaces Bishop Robert W. Muench, who is retiring after 16 years. The two bishops arrived together, with Bishop Muench handling much of the introductions for the press event, which contained a variety of emotions from both men, who had clearly formed a special camaraderie.

“I was completely surprised by this appointment and while I am sad to leave the good people of the Diocese of Shreveport, I immediately accepted the appointment without reservation as I see this as the will of God in my life and, I guess by extension, the will of God in the life of the Diocese of Shreveport and Baton Rouge,” said Bishop-designate Duca to the dozens of priests, deacons and staff of the Diocese of Baton Rouge after being introduced as the sixth bishop for the diocese. Bishop-designate Duca is currently the bishop of the Diocese of Shreveport.

Bishop-designate Duca has been bishop of the Diocese of Shreveport for the past 10 years, his first bishop assignment. A native of Dallas, Texas, Bishop-designate Duca was ordained a priest in 1978 for the Diocese of Dallas. After serving in several parishes in that diocese, he served as rector of Holy Trinity Seminary in Irving, Texas from 1996 to 2008.

In 2008, Pope Benedict XVI appointed him as bishop of the Diocese of Shreveport, with a Catholic population of 40,000. In contrast, the Diocese of Baton Rouge has a Catholic population of 227,052.

“I have to tell you I’m not clear about the ‘why me’ part,” said the bishop-designate. “I have to admit I have been surprised or puzzled by most of the pastoral assignments I have received over my life. But, no matter how quick I had to move, or how unprepared I felt or overwhelmed or humbled, in every case, when I embraced the assignment, without reservation, I found the joy and blessings I know now that God intended.”

Bishop-designate Duca then broke down in tears in recalling the special bond he had developed with the people in Shreveport, saying, “I fell in love with those I served, and I also found that in every case, I discovered the goodness in the people of God.

“I intend to do no less here in Baton Rouge,” he continued. “And, I will give myself to you as your bishop and the work before us to build the kingdom of God, here in this portion of south Louisiana.”

Bishop Muench celebrates jubilee

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Bishop Robert W. Muench’s 50-year spiritual odyssey as a priest and bishop has taken him from New Orleans to Covington, Kentucky and back to familiar territory along the banks of the Mississippi River in Baton Rouge.

Bishop Muench celebrated the Gold-

Left, Bishop Robert W. Muench was all smiles as he celebrated his Golden Jubilee Mass on June 24 at St. Joseph Cathedral in Baton Rouge. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

en Jubilee of his ordination June 24 on a steamy Sunday afternoon at St. Cathedral. Several hundred family members, many of who traveled long distances to be in attendance, and friends gathered for the Mass.

Also attending were retired Archbishop Alfred C. Hughes of New Orleans, who was Bishop Muench’s predecessor in Baton Rouge; Archbishop Gregory M. Aymond of New Orleans; New Roads native Bishop Shelton J. Fabre, who is currently the bishop in the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux; and several bishops from the state of Louisiana.
Silent time with God

Today’s frenetic lifestyle undoubtedly extracts a toll on one’s physical being and psyche, as Americans are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain a healthy work/personal balance.

Mental health experts constantly stress the need to, in modern parlance, “unplug,” a reference to the torrent of modern gadgets consuming our daily lives.

Often lost in this dialogue is the spiritual health of our own souls, and how that can be nurtured, allowing for the fanatical pace we all try to maintain.

Fortunately, the Catholic Church provides an easy, relatively low cost answer, and that is a retreat of varying length at a retreat house or spirituality center. Traditionally, retreats are either two or three days, although some can be much longer.

However, there are also excellent one-day retreats that are available for those that are time-challenged.

The purpose of a retreat is for devotion, prayer and meditation to grow in one’s spiritual faith. Traditionally, retreats are silent, meaning no talking is allowed while in the retreat house, including at meals.

Silence is required to allow retreatants to spend quiet time with God and to reflect on the messages of the retreat. As part of the retreat, the use of electronic devices, including cell phones, is strongly discouraged, if not downright prohibited. After all, can one really hear God in one ear with the cell phone in the other?

Typically, each retreat includes a daily Mass, and the sacrament of reconciliation is almost always offered.

Some retreats do allow talking away from the main house, but others require silence at all times.

Although retreats are relatively new in the church, not being introduced until the 16th century, the model goes back to the 40 days Christ spent in the desert.

The Society of Jesuits was the first religious order to introduce retreats into their practice.

During the 17th century St. Francis De Sales and St. Vincent de Paul heavily promoted retreats and by the 19th century they had become much more popular.

Today, many retreats are specialized, including those for married couples or those whose marriages might be in trouble.

There are several retreat center in the Diocese of Baton Rouge, including the Bishop Robert E. Tracy Center in Baton Rouge, Manresa House of Retreats in Convent, Rosaryville Spiritualty Center in Ponchatoula, Our Lady of the Way Spiritualty Center in Tickfaw and the St. Joseph Spiritualty Center in Baton Rouge.
THE FINAL WORD

Bishop Muench is ready to pass the ‘baton’

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

With a bounce in his step and a twinkle in his eye, Bishop Robert W. Muench expertly guided his replacement past Diocese of Baton Rouge employees, staff, priests and deacons, through four television cameras and a row of seated reporters to the front of the room at the Westfield Center on the campus of the Catholic Life Center. The bishop has been eagerly awaiting this moment since sending his letter of resignation to Pope Francis on his 75th birthday in December, as required by canon law.

“With gratitude to God and to Pope Francis, and with open hearts and open arms we welcome the appointment of Bishop Michael Duca, current bishop of Shreveport, to be the bishop-elect of Baton Rouge,” said Bishop Muench with great enthusiasm during a press conference announcing the appointment of Bishop-designate Michael G. Duca.

“By nature, person, character, disposition, education and experience, Bishop Duca is eminently qualified for this position as one who radiates the love and joy of Jesus Christ. He brings unique skills, training and expertise in areas of theology, spirituality, canon law, psychology, seminary and vocation ministry, healthcare, ecumenism and administration. We look forward to the celebration of his installation on Friday, August 24, 2018, the Feast of St. Bartholomew, at 2 p.m. in St. Joseph Cathedral, Baton Rouge. I extend my deepest congratulations to Bishop Duca and assure him of my personal support of him and to his anticipated ministry to the church in and of Baton Rouge.”

Bishop-designate Duca appeared reserved and awed by the attention that comes with the job. In his first words to the media, Bishop-designate Duca even mentioned that Bishop Muench had not stopped smiling since the newly appointed bishop arrived in Baton Rouge the night before the 10 a.m. press event.

Bishop Muench, who had been released from Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center one day earlier after becoming dehydrated during the reception of his 50th anniversary of his ordination as a priest, smiled playfully with those crowded into the room when asked during the press conference how he was feeling.

“I feel fine because I have such pleasant memories, deep memories, deep-seated memories and as I mentioned at the (anniversary) Mass before I ran out of water inside of me, as I looked around the congregation, I had such a profound emotional experience of individuals and families and clergy, religious who have been an essential part of the 50 years I’ve had the privilege of being a priest. And, one of the great things about being a bishop emeritus, you’re still a priest, you’re still a priest and you’re still a bishop, but you don’t have to make the decisions. You don’t get to go to the meetings. So, if you’re worried that I’m going to be lonely, pray for me! I don’t think I’m going to be lonely. And, no one will be pulling harder for Bishop Duca than Bishop Muench!”

The bishop then talked about the first time he was appointed a bishop in the diocese of Covington, Kentucky, and how he

SEE FINAL PAGE 9
**BISHOPS of the DIOCESE OF BATON ROUGE**

**BISHOP ROBERT E. TRACY** was appointed the founding bishop for the newly formed Diocese of Baton Rouge in 1961. The bishop was installed Nov. 8, 1961 and served until his resignation on March 21, 1974.


**BISHOP JOSEPH V. SULLIVAN**, born Aug. 15, 1919 in Kansas City, Missouri, was appointed the second bishop of the Diocese of Baton Rouge by (Blessed) Pope John Paul VI on Sept. 4, 1974. Bishop Sullivan was a prominent leader in the pro-life movement and committed to the doctrines of the Catholic faith. He was vigorous in his promotion of Catholic schools within the diocese. Bishop Sullivan died on Sept. 4, 1982.

**BISHOP STANLEY J. OTT** was born June 29, 1927 in Gretna and installed as the third bishop in the Diocese of Baton Rouge on March 25, 1983. He was ordained to the priesthood in Rome on Dec. 8, 1951.

Bishop Tracy had previously appointed Bishop Ott judicial vicar of the diocese and he later became chancellor. On June 29, 1976 (Blessed) Pope Paul VI appointed him Auxiliary Bishop for the Archdiocese of New Orleans, and he served there for more than six years. In 1991 Bishop Ott was diagnosed with inoperable cancer and gave a unique personal witness to the faith in the way he accepted his illness and pending death. He died on Nov. 28, 1992.

**BISHOP ALFRED C. HUGHES** was appointed the fourth bishop of the diocese on Sept. 7, 1993. Born Dec. 2, 1932, Bishop Hughes was educated in public schools in his native Boston until he entered the seminary. He was ordained to the priesthood for the Archdiocese of Boston on Dec. 15, 1957 and ordained an auxiliary bishop for the Archdiocese of Boston on Sept. 14, 1981.

Bishop Hughes was installed in Baton Rouge on Nov. 4, 1993 and later appointed the Archbishop of New Orleans in 2002. Under his episcopal leadership in the Diocese of Baton Rouge, special emphasis was given to promoting the new Catechism of the Catholic Church in parishes and schools. He initiated a comprehensive Strategic Planning Process, the successful Campaign for Tomorrow, renovation of the Tracy Center into an overnight retreat facility and expansion of the Catholic Education Trust Fund.

**BISHOP ROBERT W. MUENCH**, a native of Louisville, Kentucky and raised in New Orleans, was appointed the fifth Bishop of the diocese on Dec. 15, 2001 and installed March 14, 2002. Bishop Muench was ordained to the priesthood on May 18, 1968 and to the episcopacy as Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of New Orleans on June 29, 1990.

He was installed as Bishop of Covington, Kentucky on March 19, 1996, where he served until being installed in Baton Rouge. Through his words, actions and many appearances, Bishop Muench has used his characteristic good humor and enthusiasm to spread the message of Christ’s redeeming love. He has displayed a unique ability to touch the lives of young people and families through his ministry.

**BISHOP-DESIGNATE MICHAEL G. DUCA** was appointed the sixth bishop of the Diocese of Baton Rouge by Pope Francis on June 27, 2018. Bishop-designate Duca was born in Dallas, Texas on June 5, 1952. He attended Holy Trinity Seminary in Irving, Texas from 1970 to 1978 and was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Dallas on April 29, 1978. After serving in several parishes in the Dallas area and as vocations director for the diocese, he served as rector at Holy Trinity Seminary from 1996 to 2008. On May 19, 2008, Bishop-designate Duca was installed as the second bishop of the Diocese of Shreveport.

He presently serves as a member of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Louisiana Conference of Catholic Bishops and immediate past president of the Louisiana Interchurch Conference. He serves as a trustee to Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans and St. Joseph Seminary in Covington. His installation as bishop of the Diocese of Baton Rouge is tentatively scheduled for Aug. 24, the Feast of St. Bartholomew, at 2 p.m. at St. Joseph Cathedral in Baton Rouge.
**Bishop-designate Duca welcomed by employees**

**By Debbie Shelley**  
The Catholic Commentator

“He’s a man who’s not afraid to roll up his sleeves and get to work until the job is done,” said Jean Dresley, refugee resettlement director for Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge in describing Bishop-designate Michael G. Duca, who has been appointed by the Vatican to replace retiring Bishop Robert W. Muench.

Dresley worked with Bishop-designate Duca in establishing Catholic Charities in the Diocese of Shreveport. She served as executive director there from 2010-2016 before she and her husband moved to Baton Rouge.

“It was a holy time,” said Dresley, saying that Bishop-designate Duca “has a heart for the marginalized.”

In an effort to better serve the people in the Shreveport Diocese, which is 11,129 square miles, a satellite office for Catholic Charities was opened in Monroe in 2016.

Dresley said her phone “blew up” from the number of phone calls from people after it was announced that Bishop-designate Duca was appointed as the sixth bishop of the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

“I am thrilled,” said Dresley. “I have so much respect and admiration for him. He’s a fantastic shepherd.”

She noted that the bishop-designate put an “incredible amount of mileage on his car” to visit the parishes and people of the Diocese of Shreveport.

“He’s very serious about getting around and being a real presence to them,” said Dresley.

She further pointed out that Bishop-designate Duca is a man who respects the talents of the people whom he works with and “lets them do what they do best.”

At the conclusion of the press conference announcing his appointment at the Catholic Life Center on June 26, Bishop-designate Duca personally shook hands with and talked to diocesan employees who were present to greet him.

He left a good first impression on many employees who occasionally saw him in the past or met him for the first time.

“I have met Bishop (designate) Duca at different meetings before. He seems so warm, welcoming and approachable. I see how he connects with people so well,” said Linda Fjeldsjo, coordinator of the Prison Ministry Office and St. Joseph Homes.

“I am excited for the incarcerated as they hopefully get to meet him – that he will continue the traditions of the bishop visiting them,” she added.

She was also encouraged as she looked around at the representatives of the various ministries in the diocese who welcomed the bishop-designate and expressed their enthusiasm for the work going on in the diocese.

“Theres just a lot of excitement,” said Fjeldsjo.

Dina Dow, director of the Office of Evangelization for the Diocese of Baton Rouge, said, “He (Bishop-designate Duca) has a great sense of humor, humility and service. I think this is a great opportunity for him personally to walk into the doors of a diverse, vibrant diocese.”

She said the bishop-designate conveyed his support and enthusiasm for evangelization in his comments and looks forward to working with him in proclaiming the Gospel Message.

Darryl Ducote, director of the Office of Marriage and Family Life, also liked Bishop-designate Duca’s personal greeting of employees at the press conference.

“I was very impressed with how personable he was and how pastoral he was in his concern for people,” said Ducote.

“I was also inspired by his intent to reach out to all the difference cultures in the diocese, especially when he offered his welcoming comments to the Hispanics in Spanish.”

He was also encouraged by Bishop-designate Duca’s recognition of the importance of families in south Louisiana culture.

“It’s assuring that he will be supportive of the outreach and programs our office offers,” Ducote said.

Ducote said the bishop-designate’s meeting with the people indicates that his support of the “pastoral needs for the people will filter to all the ministries of the church, both ordained and lay.”

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**Diocese of Baton Rouge**

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Donating body to science/ Flags on the altar

Q I would like to donate my remains to medical science. Does the Catholic Church approve or disapprove of this action? (Chesapeake, Virginia)

A The Catholic Church not only allows this but encourages it. Your donation could enable doctors, nurses and medical researchers to understand the human body better and save lives in the future.

The U.S. Catholic bishops in their policy document Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services state that Catholic health care facilities should provide the means for those who wish to donate organs and bodily tissue both for transplant and for research (No. 63). Likewise, St. John Paul II in 1995 encyclical “The Gospel of Life” called organ donation an act of “everyday heroism” that nurtures a genuine culture of life (No. 86).

A couple of cautions are in place, though. First, a Catholic funeral Mass may and should still be held, even without the presence of the body (i.e., a memorial Mass), to entrust the deceased person to the Lord and to allow the family to mourn and pray together.

Next, following the medical research, any bodily remains should be entombed or buried in consecrated ground. And finally, it is wise for someone intending to donate his or her body to communicate that desire to family members well in advance to avoid surprise or family friction at the time of death.

Our parish is meeting in temporary quarters for Mass because we are building a new church. This place has the American flag and the Arkansas state flag flanking the altar. Should those flags be removed during the Mass? (Jonesboro, Arkansas)

A Perhaps surprisingly, the Catholic Church has no binding regulation on the placement of flags within a church building neither in the Code of Canon Law nor in any of its liturgical books. It is left to the judgment of the diocesan bishop, who most often leaves it to the discretion of the local pastor.

Having said that, it is true that the U.S. bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy has encouraged Catholic parishes not to place a national flag in the sanctuary itself and so, more often, it is displayed in a church’s vestibule. Underlying that suggestion is the fact that Catholics belong to a universal faith community that transcends national borders and that, as St. Paul tells the Philippans (3:20), our primary citizenship is in heaven.

This same thinking guides the placement of flags on a casket during a funeral Mass, and here there actually is a rule that governs. The Order of Christian Funerals provides that “any national flags or the flags or insignia of associations to which the deceased belonged are to be removed from the coffin at the entrance of the church. They may be replaced after the coffin has been taken from the church” (No. 134). During the Mass itself, a white funeral pall normally covers the casket as a symbol of the person’s baptism.

It sounds to me from your question, though, that you may be borrowing a Protestant worship space while your own new church is being built. If this is the case, I think that as a grateful guest you would be cautious about doing any “structural rearrangement” and might be tempted to leave the national and state flags just where they are.

A I am a cradle Catholic and a product of 16 years of Catholic education. Thirty-seven years ago, I met and married a very nice Methodist girl. (The wedding ceremony was conducted in her church, with both her Methodist minister and a Catholic military chaplain officiating.) We have been blessed with four children who were all baptized Catholic.

Now that the children are grown, my wife and I typically attend separate church services on Sundays, but occasionally (perhaps twice a year) I will go to church with her or she will come to Mass with me. When she is with me at Mass, I usually remain in the pew with her at Communion time. But at her church, the minister regularly announces that all who are present are welcome to receive communion.

So my question is this: What is the Catholic Church’s teaching about receiving communion at other churches? (Fisherville, Virginia)

A Except for very limited circumstances, a Catholic is not permitted to receive communion at a non-Catholic service. The church’s Code of Canon Law provides that the faithful “receive them (the sacraments) licitly from Catholic ministers alone” (Canon 844.1).

This is based on the Catholic belief that there is an unbroken chain of valid ordination from Jesus and the apostles down through succeeding generations of Catholic bishops, and that the same continuous line does not apply with Protestant ministers.

There is an exception made in Canon 844.2 that allows Catholics to receive the sacraments in Orthodox churches (i.e., “in whose churches these sacraments are valid”) in a circumstance where “it is physically or morally impossible to approach a Catholic minister.”

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.
Buying into First Beatitude
investment in spiritual future

This article will focus on the first of the Eight Beatitudes: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Whether one has millions or only a few dollars to spend, they can invest their future in the kingdom of heaven by living the first of the Eight Beatitudes: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

Father Howard Adkins, pastor of Mater Dolorosa Church in Independence.

“Every time I read that (first beatitude) I think of individuals, who are economically rich or poor, who use their free will to accept whatever God sends their way. Whether it be something easy or hard, something they know about or they may not know about, it’s the fact that they use their free will to do whatever God says is necessary,” said Father Adkins.

He said the Catechism of the Catholic Church has a good breakdown of the beatitudes.

“We tend to forget that book, but it is important,” smiled Father Adkins.

The catechism states: “The beatitudes are at the heart of Jesus’ preaching. They take up the promises made to the chosen people since Abraham. The Beatitudes fulfill the promises by ordering them no longer merely to the possession of a territory, but to the kingdom of heaven.”

It also states that the beatitudes respond to the natural attitudes of the people who use their free will to accept whatever God sends their way.

Father Adkins often refers to the beatitudes in his homilies. He noted that they are something we must “do,” along with the Ten Commandments and two commandments of love: love God with all you heart, soul and mind and your neighbor as yourself.

“They (beatitudes and commandments) are like a road-map, a ‘how to’ book of instruction,” said Father Adkins.

He saw fellow students at LSU live out the beatitudes when he studied there.

“There were people from good families who would help people at the Student Union Center,” said Father Adkins. “That’s the first time I noticed that you don’t have to be rich economically to serve others.

“Even in the Marine Corps (which Father Adkins served in), there were people who would do what’s necessary to help people, and not just in Marine Corps training. Marine Corps life can be difficult.”

Father Adkins said he would see sergeants spend whatever time is necessary helping younger Marines.

One of the biggest role models for Father Adkins in living out the beatitudes was his father, who worked for the CIA.

“He would tell us things he was doing that would make us pull our covers over our head,” said Father Adkins. “He would be gone six to eight months at a time. We knew he was alive, but there was no contact. But he was doing whatever was necessary to help. He did his work quietly, and he did it very well.”

He said that his father was well regarded, and after he passed away from health issues, once a year his mother would receive visitors from the CIA who asked one question: “Do you need anything?”

The parishioners at Mater Dolorosa and its mission chapel, St. Dominic in Husser, have also shown Father Adkins that they abide by the spirit of the first beatitude.

“I have seen people I know that were completely giving of themselves. Not only in donations, but giving of their time and talent. If they couldn’t do it themselves, they would certainly find someone who could do it,” said Father Adkins.

The beatitudes can be challenging for people who want to know “what it takes” and “what I must do to get into the kingdom of heaven.” And because no one can say with certainty where their lives are headed in a physical sense, they can be secure about their eternal destination by being poor in spirit.

Next: Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Whether one has millions or only a few dollars to spend, they can invest their future in the kingdom of heaven by living the first of the Eight Beatitudes: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.
Though the geographical area of the Diocese of Baton Rouge pales in comparison with that of Shreveport, 5,513 square miles versus 11,129 square miles, the bishop-designate inherits a much denser population concentration that includes 64 church parishes, one Catholic university, 31 schools, 51 diocesan priests, 56 active permanent deacons and more than 100 combined religious brothers and sisters. In his first public address, the bishop-designate said he is committed to supporting those who serve in the church. “I look forward to meeting the priests and deacons of the diocese and also the diocesan staff,” said Bishop-designate Duca. “But, at the end, the priests, deacons and lay leaders of the parishes and institutions are those that I want most to be seen as in solidarity with. They are the ones we, the Catholic staff, are here to support because they are the ones, the outreach, that touch the people of God.”

Bishop-designate Duca, a self-described foodie, said he anticipates “hitting the ground walking” as opposed to “running” when he officially takes possession of the diocese because “there is a good organization, a good structure, a good spirit in the church” in the Baton Rouge diocese. He also mentioned an acquaintance in Shreveport, whose brother is a priest in Baton Rouge and stated that the Baton Rouge diocese has “the best group of priests in Louisiana.”

“That was very encouraging and Bishop Muench has given me the same kind of encouragement and so I come with a great enthusiasm and excitement,” he said. “And, I’m anxious to meet all of you over the next years of my life as a bishop of the Diocese of Baton Rouge.”

In a nod to his Texas roots and the large Spanish-speaking population in his home state, the bishop-designate made a statement in Spanish, “especially now when things are so uncertain for so many people.”

“Basically, what I said was that I want them to know that they are part of our family, we are one church and I can say that openly because I know that this is a city of much diversity,” he added. “When I moved to Louisiana, I thought that I would have shrimp and seafood in my freezer, more than I could eat. I moved to Shreveport, Louisiana, and ended up with meat pies and tamales, which have been a great gift. But, I first experienced in Shreveport, the diversity of culture and influence throughout this whole Louisiana state.”

“It’s a wonderful diversity, and I know we have Vietnamese, African-American; we have other cultures that are here all around, and I just want to say, we all have to consider that we are one family and when one part of the family suffers, we all suffer, and we need to have that kind of unity together.”

Bishop-designate Duca then referenced a speech made at the recent U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops meeting “about the importance of being close to one another” and getting to know each other and each other’s struggles.

“We need to get close to (the poor) to understand their lives because in the end, we all want the same thing,” he said. “So to our brothers and sisters that don’t speak English, I want them to know that they are part of our family. If I could say this in Vietnamese, I would, but that’s way beyond me and I’m not going to try to say it in south Louisiana because I would mess that up, too.”

In follow-up questions, the bishop-designate acknowledged that the transition from “the north to the south” will not be an easy one, saying, “I’m in way over my head here.”

“I don’t even know enough to know that this is a city of much diversity, culturally, I know that I’m in a different place so I have to learn the culture and the way people interact.”

“I know that there’s north Louisiana, there’s south Louisiana and there’s New Orleans.”

But he also emphasized the universality of the church, saying “even though there may be a great difference in culture, there is one church language, you might say, the language of the Mass, the language of the sacraments, the language of prayer. So we start off together with that.”

Bishop-designate Duca is tentatively scheduled to be installed on Aug. 24 at 2 p.m. at St. Joseph Cathedral.
I’ve had 16 years here. I’ve had 28 years being a bishop along with 22 years prior to that being a priest and frankly, being a deacon priest is one of the greatest privileges any of us can have,” said Bishop Muench.

“And, with the challenges of being bishop, there also comes great joys, closeness to people, and Sunday at that (anniversary) Mass, as I was looking at the congregation and the people in the sanctuary, it just put inside of me, intangible as well as tangible memories of the joy of priesthood. And, if I can make a commercial, it will be this: For any potential candidates for the Catholic priesthood, think about it, pray about it, consult about it.”

From the time he entered the seminary at 13-years-old in 1956, through the 12 years of studying to be a priest and his 50 years as a priest, the bishop said he never had any regrets concerning his vocation.

“I’ve had long days, I’ve had hard days, I’ve had difficult days. But, there was never an instant in which I wanted to be anything other than a priest,” said Bishop Muench.

“Being a Catholic priest means you give up your own personal family, although, obviously, you maintain your family of origin but (you have) the family of the church and the community. How people are so good to us and what it means ... to pray with people, privately or publicly, to be a member of their family by extension. This will not cease but it will be in a new situation. And, I welcome this time. It is time for someone younger, with more energy to take the baton, the red baton, Baton Rouge, and to take it down the road.”

Bishop-designate Michael G. Duca and Bishop Robert W. Muench face the media together, hours after the Vatican announced the appointment by Pope Francis. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

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• We rely upon the intercession of our Blessed Mother to assist us in imitating the healing ministry of Jesus Christ as we care for terminally ill patients and their families.
• We call forth the compassion and kindness of our staff, who serve in this health care ministry, to respond to the physical, spiritual and emotional needs of our patients and their families.
• We believe in the sacredness of life from conception to natural death, and we devote ourselves to supporting patients and families through the dying process at the end of life’s journey on this earth and new life in eternity.
The Mass was celebrated two days before the Vatican announced Bishop Michael G. Duca of Shreveport as the sixth bishop of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, replacing Bishop Muench.

“As I gaze on all of you here, I am overwhelmed,” Bishop Muench said in his homily. “It would be impossible for me to adequately thank every one of you who is here and to acknowledge what you mean to me and how I assure you I do not take you for granted.”

Throughout the Mass, a smile rarely left the bishop’s face, and his homily was sprinkled in with equal doses of humor, theology, reflection and appreciation.

He offered special thanks to his parents, Sister Mary Alice, a former principal at St. Leo the Great Elementary School in New Orleans and two clergy members for encouraging him to join the priesthood as well as offering guidance and support during the 12 years of his seminary life. He recalled walking into St. Joseph Seminary in St. Benedict in 1956, when it still had a high school on campus, and from that time forward “never wanting to be anything other than be a priest.

“(God) has opened new people and opportunities to be part of my life and ministry. I thank God for the call to priesthood.”

Bishop Muench said his jubilee was a celebration of the priesthood, and offered special thanks to his brother priests.

“By its very essence, the priesthood is relational, relational to Jesus and relational to others,” he said. “One of my favorite aspects of being a priest is to pray with people one-on-one and in groups, privately and publicly.”

He mentioned several of the many responsibilities of a priest, including proclaiming the word of God, baptizing, anointing the sick, imparting the apostolic blessing on the dying, performing marriages, counseling the disheartened or confused and being an effective minister of hope.

“Additionally, the priest is a beneficiary of goodness beyond measure,” Bishop Muench added. “The appreciation, the trust, the bonding with the people of the faith, those seeking to understand the faith, what gifts they bring to the priest.

“God has graced me. I thank God for the call to priesthood and for the ministry of priesthood. And I thank those of you who have been a part of that ministry. What a tremendous gift and resource you have been. I love you and I always will.”

A reception at the parish hall followed. Shortly into the reception, Bishop Muench was overcome with dehydration and transported by ambulance to Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center, where he was held overnight and released the following morning. He resumed his normal duties on June 26, which included welcoming Bishop-designate Duca during a press conference June 27.

Following the Mass, Bishop Muench greeted several well-wishers during a reception at the parish hall, including his sisters, pictured right. From left, are Jo Ann Tallien, Mary Pringle and Marsha Morse.
New name, same ministry for Blessings Mission

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

“You’ve got to be really quick and keep up the good work ethic. Not slacking off is the key to getting the job done,” said Joseph Parson, a youth from Most Blessed Sacrament Church in Baton Rouge. Youth learned that time was critical in helping the homeowners, including those on fixed incomes in the Labadieville, Napoleonville and Thibodaux areas.

Sixty-four youth worked with about 30 college mentors and adults on seven work sites throughout the Baton Rouge area.

Most of the youth had personal experiences of flood recovery because they had friends and family whose homes were impacted. Parson said he had an uncle whose home flooded. Through the experience he learned how to “face challenges and keep going. You’ll be OK.”

“SBP does good work in the community,” said Parsons, who is open to doing future mission work.

Olive DeJohn, a member of the STM youth group, did everything from nailing boards, helping to put up shelves, painting stairs and cleaning the bathroom.

While DeJohn’s home, was spared, nearby homes were flooded. Her aunt and uncle lost everything and stayed in a FEMA trailer. Her grandmother’s home was badly damaged as well, and she stayed with them.

“Olive, I’m really happy to be here,” said DeJohn. “It’s great to see how you can impact lives,” she said.

The biggest challenge of the mission for Mire was meeting new people, going into unfamiliar situations and having new experiences.

“By the end of the mission, I’m glad I can help,” said English. You can see how we are blessed. How people have homes and nice things in those homes. You can also see devastation in our community,” said LeFeve.

He added, “Once you see that just a few miles away someone has lost everything, you feel connected to the person.”

The best part of the mission for LeFeve was interacting with the owners.

“You can see the complexion of the homeowner when you finish. They are so happy,” he said.

Homeowner Stephanie Walker beamed and chatted with the missionaries and expressed her appreciation.

Walker was in denial that her home would flood and did not leave until she saw water in her carport. Her home took on more than three and-a-half feet of water. It took her a year-and-a-half to get back in her home, which still needed many repairs that she could not afford.

They’ve been awesome,” said Walker as she looked glowingly upon the youth as they worked like bees. “They didn’t even know how to do it. Now look at them, they sound professional, like it’s their job.”

Lifting up such people in need tugged at the heart of Jakob Greer, also of St. Aloysius, as he saw poverty during a trip to Europe.
BLESSINGS ▼

From page 12

rope last summer.

“lsaid, ‘Man I wish I could help them.’ But I had to leave,” said Greer.

When the opportunity to participate in Blessings on the Bayou came up, he jumped at the opportunity to help people who had “strife and troubles.”

Greer said he has participated in Habitat for Humanity builds in the past, but did it for service hours. The Blessings mission was different because he was intentionally participating.

“I will always remember about the impoverished people – how disaster effects people personally rather than statistically,” said Greer. “It more than a block of text on paper or text.”

Greer would like to become a public servant and help set policy.

“Whether I help the less fortunate with a hammer and nail or fountain pen my inspiration is to make the world better,” said Greer.

STM Youth Ministry Coordinator Rosie Vutera was pleased with the enthusiasm and spirituality expressed by the missionaries.

“I always love watching them coming in the first day with fears and anxieties of what may be something as simple ‘where am I going to sleep or shower?’ to what they are missing at home,” said Vutera.

“All of these anxieties will build strong walls up and by the end of the week, the majority of the walls will be broken down. The community that is built within the large group and within their small groups is absolutely incredible.”

“As a youth minister, I’m seeing the change in my youth as individuals, as leaders both in our group and parish and strong witnesses to Christ in their actions.”

The Back to School special section will be in the July 20 issue of The Catholic Commentator. Find out what will be happening in the Diocese of Baton Rouge Catholic Schools for the 2018-2019 school year.

Deadline is July 10!

To inquire about advertising your products and services to this specialized market or space reservation contact Wanda Koch at 225-387-0983 or email wkoch@diobr.org.

THE CATHOLIC COMMENTATOR
This subtly creepy horror tale keeps the audience guessing exactly what lies behind the string of macabre occurrences besetting a middle-aged couple (Toni Collette and Gabriel Byrne), their high schooler son (Alex Wolff) and 13-year-old daughter (Milly Shapiro). An unusual blend of intense family drama and a foray into the occult, writer-director Ari Aster’s feature debut mostly pays off. Co-writer and co-producer Olivia Milch will also get an eyeful of glamor. Less easily sloughed off than the principal thief is a subplot involving the revenge-driven frame-up of the selfish art dealer (Richard Armitage) whose cowardice sent Bullock’s character to the slammer in the first place. A vengeance theme, a bedroom scene involving handcuffs, brief nonmarital sensuality, drug use, a couple of profanities, at least one rough and several cruel terms. A-III; PG-13

Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom
Universal
Follow-up to the 2015 reboot of a franchise that began with Steven Spielberg’s blockbuster 1993 screen version of Michael Crichton’s 1990 novel “Jurassic Park.” With the last of the cloned dinosaurs at the heart of the series facing extinction due to a volcanic eruption, the former head (Bryce Dallas Howard) of the theme park that once featured them and an ex-trainer (Chris Pratt) from the same facility agree to help transport them to an isolated sanctuary. But there’s a conspiracy afoot to abduct the outsized critters and use them as weapons. Beyond the refreshingly innocent, on-again, off-again romance between the two leads, and the dubious appeal of watching dinos run amok and chow down on the occasional extra, director J.A. Bayona’s action adventure has little to offer. Much animal violence with occasional gore and a few gruesome images, some gunplay, a couple of profanities and milder oaths, a single rough and several cruel and crass terms. A-III; PG-13

Race 3
Yash Raj
With this wild action thriller, in Hindi with English subtitles, director Remo D’Souza reboots the Bollywood franchise with a new cast and a stand-alone story. It’s a whirlwind of a movie, part family soap opera, part James Bond adventure, and part “Dancing with the Stars.” An Indian mobster (Amil Kapoor) lives in exile in the Middle East with his extended family, including his spoiled twins (Daisy Shah, Saqib Saleem). A love triangle among the gangster’s nephew (Salman Khan), the family henchman (Bobby Deol) and a con woman (Jessica Jacqueline Fernandez) plays out amid gun battles and explosions (often filmed in slow-motion), as well as on the dance floor in elaborately choreographed sequences. In the end, the film’s central theme about family loyalty is at odds with its skewed morality according to which crime, in this case at least, pays very well indeed. Relentless but mostly stylized action violence, including gunplay and torture, a possible nonmarital encounter, some sensuality, a few crude and crass terms. A-III; not rated by the Motion Picture Association of America.
CCDBR earns high honor

From Staff Reports
The Catholic Commentator

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge was recognized nationally for its work with immigrants as the recipient of the 2018 Midsouth Pro Bono Champion Award by the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA).

AILA praised the agency for “tirelessly fulfilling its mission of ‘welcoming the stranger’ for decades.” With a staff comprised of immigration attorneys, paralegals and Department of Justice accredited representatives, CCDBR provides pro bono and low cost legal representation to individuals with immigration legal needs, and also works within the state’s two primary immigration detention facilities to educate detainees on their rights.

“We are grateful that AILA recognizes the work we’ve been doing to protect one of the most vulnerable groups of people in our community. Our Gospel mission is even more relevant today with the federal government’s policy of separating children from their families,” said David C. Aguillard, Executive Director of CCDBR.

Aguillard said that while the Catholic Church has long recognized the need for enforcement of lawful immigration policies, the separation of families fails to recognize the fundamental truth that “we are one family in God’s eyes.” He joined the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in condemning the practice.

“This is not how one nation under God responds. In fact it is contrary to the Gospel. We are called to welcome those in need, not tear apart their families,” he said.

With the expansion of immigration enforcement policies, Aguillard anticipates an increased demand for immigration legal services, and seeks to grow the Immigration Legal Services Division by hiring another bilingual immigration attorney to add to its award-winning staff.

CCDBR recently secured a grant from the Kellogg Foundation to partner with Southern University Law Center to establish the Southern University Immigration Law Clinic for Inclusivity and Racial Healing. The clinic is set to launch in September and will provide opportunities for law students at an HBC to gain hands-on experience in immigration law and work with individuals from other cultures to forge cross-cultural relationships.

Child nutrition program to be funded

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

A third special session of the Louisiana Legislature proved to be the charm in securing more than $15 million in state funding for nonpublic schools.

The legislators on June 24 broke what had been an almost six-month stalemate by agreeing to a .45-cent sales tax, replacing the temporary one-cent sales tax that had been approved in 2016 and expired June 30. Revenue from the new tax will allow for the funding of child nutrition services and required services for nonpublic schools.

“I was so very grateful and thankful,” a much-relieved Lynne Carville, director of Child Nutrition Services for the Diocese of Baton Rouge, said. “I was truly very concerned for our students, parents, our educational system as well as my staff that we were not going to be here.

“I’m grateful for our legislators to understand that we are important to our community and they have a sense of loyalty to our students.”

However, funding for required services for nonpublic schools did take a $768,000 hit, according to Rob Tasman, director of the Louisiana Conference of Catholic Bishops. He said the funding was cut from $8,357,204 to $7,589,213.

He said he does not have accurate figures on the financial impact on individual schools but his hope is it will not be too great once spread out among all participants.

Tasman said the cuts were unavoidable but said agreeing to the required services cut was necessary to save the school lunch salary supplement, which was not funded heading into the special session.

“This particular session, with all of the challenges that we faced and in many respects, the sort of imminent reality that some parties were going to be dramatically impacted by the cuts that were going to be necessary, I was really concerned about how those areas we were watching out for would be impacted,” he said. “It was clear to me that essentially we were going to have to take a cut. It was a trade off.

“As many agencies and institutions and good causes that were taking millions and millions of dollars in cuts I think we still fared well in the end.”

Tasman said the logic behind agreeing to the required services cut to save child nutrition was that the salary supplement dramatically impacts so many individuals and parties. Carville had said that without the funding her program would likely close, and 180 employees would have lost their jobs.

Additionally, her program, which is expected to receive approximately $1.3 to $1.5 million in funding for the upcoming school year, had more than 1,400 students served, it would clearly have impacted three free meals a day at the school.

“If (the funding) was not received, it would clearly have impacted the students in our schools, not the least of which those that are there on the free and reduced lunch program and may only be receiving their best meal of their day in our schools,” Tasman added.

He also expressed relief that other areas in which he had funding concerns, including the Louisiana Department of Health and food stamps programs were fully funded. His concern with the LDH funding was mental services for those who have addictions as well as nursing homes and long-term care programs could be at risk.
The soul of America is in danger

Worrying about our children, our relatives, and our friends who begin to go down a dark path in their lives. Whether it is infidelity in marriage, dishonesty in business or addiction to alcohol or drugs, we see the light of goodness dim in their lives, and we wonder if their souls are being lost. Our nation too has a soul, a soul that for many years has burned brightly, as expressed so beautifully on monuments like the Statue of Liberty and the Lincoln Memorial.

“Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door.” These words on the Statue of Liberty anticipated a future world that would need a generous, big-souled America.

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation’s wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and maintain among ourselves and with all nations.” With victory almost assured, in the last days of the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln ended his second inaugural address pledging to bind up the nation’s wounds, the whole nation, which he had fought to keep united. Historian Ronald C. White in his book, “Lincoln’s Greatest Speech,” wrote that “Neither vindication nor triumphalism is present in the second inaugural. At the bedrock is Lincoln’s humility.”

From such men and women as Lincoln and Emma Lazarus, who wrote the poem, “The Great Colossus,” which included the words on the Statue of Liberty, the soul of America has been formed. That soul is now imperiled. We are separating children from their parents in families who present themselves at our borders, fleeing from wars and death threats in Central American countries like Guatemala and Honduras. Most are begging for asylum here, not sneaking across the border. Our draconian policy of taking children, even infants, away from their parents is deliberately designed to discourage refugees from coming at all. The “golden door” has turned into a wall and a threat. “You apply for asylum; we take away your children.”

Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Houston, president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, said recently that separating mothers from their babies was “immoral.”

Attorney General Jeff Sessions’ cited St. Paul in Romans Chapter 13 approving law and order, “You must obey in all;” Bishop Robert W. McElroy of the Diocese of San Diego is certainly familiar with this particular instance of America’s shrinking soul. The “Wall” begins in his diocese. On April 18, he gave an address at Loyola University, Chicago. It was entitled “Civic Virtue & the Common Good: Forming a Catholic Political Imagination.” The bishop declared that there is “a profound sickness of the soul in American political life ... undermining the core democratic consensus that is the foundation of our identity as Americans.” He traces this back to the disintegration of bipartisanship relationships in Congress that has resulted in a culture “where political campaigning never ends and authentic governance never begins.” Also, instead of news helping to build consensus, we have competing media giving us “alternative facts.” Both the Gospel and the Catholic Church’s social teaching are being hijacked to promote partisan thinking. This makes it difficult for our church whose mission is to foster “a political culture that seeks and sustains the common good.”

Bishop McElroy’s solution was to go back to Pope Francis’ address to Congress in 2015. The pope didn’t offer political analysis, but rather chose to emphasize the virtues that helped famous Americans unify us in the past. He spoke of Lincoln who fought for freedom for everyone. He praised Dorothy Day who sought economic justice with a special care for the poor. Then he invoked the dream of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. that led to nation-wide participation in promoting racial equality. Finally, he cited the Trappist monk Thomas Merton whose life and writing fostered the conviction that only through genuine dialogue and encounter can we create a world conformed to Gospel values.

Bishop McElroy says that Pope Francis was suggesting that, before we can return to good politics, we need deep conscience formation. We have to change our attitudes by acquiring better civic virtues. Only then can we be unified enough to produce good laws and policies that will serve the common good of all our citizens and the other nations of our world.

These virtues are: 1) Solidarity: We are all debtors of the society of which we are a part. We owe much of who we are to our society and should pay back by being committed to the good of one’s neighbor. The founders of our country called this “civic virtue.” 2) Compassion for all who are suffering: This is a Gospel virtue that will promote actions which will unite us and promote the common good of everyone. (I think we just experienced this in Baton Rouge with the 2016 flood.) 3) Integrity: This is a virtue always demanded in others while often neglected in our own behavior. In our political lives we excuse hypocrisy in members of our own party while raging at the supposed hypocrisy of political opponents. 4) Hope: Without hope we settle for all the ugliness and meanness of what is politics now. When we do this, the new normal is always a step down, a lessening of whatever common good there was. And only those who hope can achieve the last virtue. 5) Being peacemakers: Democracy cannot be a zero-sum power contest. My side gets it all; your side gets nothing.

These virtues of heart and soul, which are Gospel virtues, can make America a golden door, a leader for the common good of her citizens and for the world of nations to which we are joined.

FATHER CARVILLE is a retired priest in the Diocese of Baton Rouge and writes on current topics for The Catholic Commentator. He can be reached at johnnygeycarville@gmail.com.

Mission Statement
The mission of The Catholic Commentator is to provide news, information and commentary to the people of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, Catholics and their neighbors alike.

In doing so, The Catholic Commentator strives to further the wider mission of the Church: to evangelize, to communicate, to educate and to give the Catholic viewpoint on important issues of the present day.

The soul of America is in danger

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O  ur culture doesn’t give us easy permission to mourn. Its underlying ethos is that we move on quickly from loss and hurt, keep our griefs quiet, remain strong always and get on with life.

But mourning is something that’s vital to our health, something we owe to ourselves. Without mourning our only choice is to grow hard and bitter in the face of disappointment, rejection and loss. And these will always make themselves felt.

We have many things to mourn in life: We are forever losing people and things. Loved ones die, relationships die, friends move away, a marriage falls apart, a love we want but can’t have obsesses us, a dream ends in disappointment, our children grow away from us, jobs are lost, and so too one day our youth and our health. Beyond these many losses that ask for our grief there’s the need to grieve the simple inadequacy of our lives, the perfect symphony and consummation that we could never have. Like Jephthah’s daughter, all of us have to mourn our inconsummation.

How? How do we mourn so that our mourning is not an unhealthy self-indulgence but a process that restores us to health and buoyancy?

There’s no simple formula and the formula is different for everyone. Grieving, like loving, has to respect our unique reticence, what we’re comfortable with and offer for everyone. Grieving, like loving, has to respect all of us. How do we do it?

First, there’s the need to accept and acknowledge both our loss and the pain which with we’re left. Denial of either, loss or pain, is never a friend. The frustration and helplessness within which we find ourselves must be accepted, and accepted with the knowledge that too there’s no place to put the pain except, as Rilke says, to give it back to earth itself, to the heaviness of the oceans from which ultimately comes the saltwater which makes up our tears. Our tears connect us still to the oceans that spawned us.

Next, mourning is a process that takes time, sometimes a lot of time, rather than something we can achieve quickly by a simple decision. We cannot simply will our emotions back to health. They need to heal and healing is an organic process. What’s involved?

In many instances there’s the need to give ourselves permission to be angry, to rage for a time, to allow ourselves to feel the disappointment, loss, unfairness and anger. Loss can be bitter and that bitterness needs to be accepted with honesty, but also with the courage and discipline to let not let it have us lash out at others. And for that to happen, for us not to lay blame and lash out at others, we need help. All pain can be borne if it can be shared and so we need people to listen to us and share our pain without trying to fix it. Pride is our enemy here. We need the humility to entrust others to see our wound.

Finally, not least, we need patience, long-suffering, perseverance. Mourning can’t be rushed. The healing of soul, like the healing of body, is an organic process with its own non-negotiable timetable for unfolding. But this can be a major test of our patience and hope. We can go through long periods of darkness and grief where nothing seems to be changing, the heaviness and the paralysis remain, and we’re left with the feeling that things will never get better, that we will never find lightness of heart again. But grief and mourning call for patience, patience to stay the course with the heaviness and the helplessness. The Book of Lamentations tells us that sometimes all we can do is put our mouths to the dust and wait. The healing is in the waiting.

Father Henri Nouwen was a man very familiar with mourning and loss. An over-sensitive soul, he sometimes suffered depressions and obsessions that left him emotionally paralyzed and seeking professional help. On one such occasion, while working through a major depression, he wrote his deeply insightful book, The Inner Voice of Love. There he gives us this advice: “The great challenge is living your wounds through instead of thinking them through. It is better to cry than to worry, better to feel your wounds deeply than to understand them, better to let them enter into your silence than to talk about them. The choice you face constantly is whether you are taking your hurts to your head or to your heart. In your head you can analyze them, find their causes and consequences, and coin words to speak and write about them. But no final healing is likely to come from that source. You need to let your wounds go down into your heart. Then you can live them through and discover that they will not destroy you. Your heart is greater than your wounds.”

We are greater than our wounds. Life is greater than death. God’s goodness is greater than all loss. But mourning our losses is the path to appropriating those truths.

OBELATE 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.

School shootings

W  hen plane hijacking became a national threat, we immediately addressed the problem by upgrading preventive measures at our airports. Ex-ray surveillance, body searches, luggage inspections were all resisted at first, but these stricter methods worked. The immediate public reaction was to complain: it’s too invasive, too time-consuming, too annoying, etc. But now people feel safer, and the threat of hijackings is no longer on everyone’s mind.

The problem needs to be addressed from a two-pronged perspective: Tighter preventive measures are needed against outside intruders: metal detectors, armed guards, etc., and-increased mental health vigilance must be introduced. Too many suicidal youngsters have access to unsecured firearms. How can a person raging with enough hatred to commit mass-murder, be at the same time sweet and innocent looking to one and all? Most parents know when they have a troubled child; maybe not a mass murderer, but a potential problem. We must turn to the parents more for their cooperation.

To the trained eye the normality or abnormality of a person can be surmised. Right now, there is too little emphasis on the students. Many of these atrocities have been committed by students with mental health issues. This is a spiritual problem more than a gun control issue. Too much emphasis has been placed on the moment of combat, and not enough on the remote cause, the brooding dysfunctional killer lurking in the shadows. This must change! I’ve tweeted about this problem, but none of my critics offered adequate solutions. The most serious objection was concern over the constitutionality of any invasion of privacy. That’s what they said about airport searches. My answer is simple: take only those measures that are constitutional. Cooperating parents can tell us a lot. Refusal to cooperate might be a wake-up call. Some homes are virtual arsenals. Safety measures need to be secure. Can these homes be identified without violating the Constitution?

All lawmakers should be concerned about the common good. Teddy Roosevelt insisted that the Constitution was made for the people not the people for the Constitution. Our children are terrified by the fear of being murdered at school. We are failing them if we do nothing more than flight to ban guns. The Second Amendment is not the issue. This is a spiritual and a mental-health problem. We need just laws to protect us against disasters. Also, people who have arsenals in their homes should be subject to legal inspections. We owe our teenagers respect enough to make their safety a top priority.

I know how much harm a demonic presence can do. I ran a drug and alcohol rehab for a few years. All of our clients were struggling with their own demons, and they weren’t afraid to admit it. A demonic influence is part of the mental health issue. I’m calling upon all police departments and federal law enforcement agencies to flush-out potential killers by upgrading their preventive measures against school-shootings. Working within the letter of the law, you can make a difference. Lives can be saved, by fostering a spirit of cooperation among all concerned.

May God protect you always, and may the Lord be your strength and your joy.

Father Ron Rolheiser

Father John Catoir

Spirituality For Today

In Exile

Father Ron Rolheiser
Blessed Mother Feast – Our Lady of Pompeii Church, 14450 Hwy. 442, Tickfaw, will celebrate its Blessed Mother Feast Saturday, July 7 – Sunday, July 8. On Saturday, there will be a procession with the statue of the Blessed Mother from the church’s chapel on Fedele Road at 4:45 p.m. to the church. The procession will arrive at the church in time for the 5:30 p.m. Mass. On Sunday, there will be a benediction at 6 p.m., followed by a procession with the statue of the Blessed Mother from the church back to the chapel. For more information, call 985-345-8957.

Discalced Carmelites – The Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites will meet Sunday, July 8, 1:30 p.m., at the Our Lady of Mercy Parish Activity Center in the St. Gabriel Room, 444 Marquette Ave., Baton Rouge. For details, call Ethlyn White at 225-343-3181 or 225-803-3391 or email robertwhite456@att.net.

Pro-Life Mass – A monthly pro-life Mass will be celebrated Tuesday, July 10, 5:30 p.m., at St. Agnes Church, 749 East Blvd., Baton Rouge. All are invited. For more information, call 225-393-4127.

Vocal Concert – On Wednesday, July 11, 7:30 p.m., Voices ad Opus (Voices at Work), an a cappella vocal group quartet from New Orleans, will present their debut concert, Primo, at St. Jean Vianney Church, 16066 S. Harrells Ferry Road, Baton Rouge. The program will include sacred works from Tallis, Palestrina, Byrd, American Folks Music and music from Billy Joel. The concert is free, though donations will be accepted. For more information, call 225-753-7950.

Humane Vitae Presentation – A documentary concerning the fallout of the free-love experiment against the backdrop of Pope Paul VI’s 1968 encyclical about love, sex and marriage, “Humanae Vitae,” will be shown Thursday, July 26, 6:30 p.m., at the Catholic Life Center Main Auditorium, 1800 S. Acadian Thwy., Baton Rouge. For more information, visit mfdiobr.org.

Men’s Retreat – A men’s retreat, hosted by St. Dominic Church in New Orleans, will take place Friday, July 20 – Sunday, July 22, at Rosaryville Spirit Life Center, 39003 Rosaryville Rd, Ponchatoula. The retreat is based on the Scripture passage, “The appearance on the road to Emmaus.” For more information, call Norman Madere at 504-481-0411, David Drude, 985-974-0675 or John Fisk at 504-427-6601.

Day of Renewal – Catholic Charismatic Renewal of the Diocese of Baton Rouge will host a Day of Renewal, “Praise Rally,” Saturday, Aug. 4, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m., at the Our Lady of Mercy Church Parish Activity Center, 444 Marquette Ave., Batn Rouge. There will be praise and worship, personal testimony, prayers for healing and baptism of the Holy Spirit. No registration will be required. Lunch will be provided. For more information, call 225-636-2464.

Supper and Substance – The Diocese of Baton Rouge diocesan-wide Supper and Substance, “The Ultimate Date Night,” will be held Saturday, Aug. 4, at the new activity center at St. John the Evangelist Church, 15208 LA Hwy. 73, Prairieville. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. There will be food, adult beverages, live music, talk by Janice Charbonnet and the “Not So Newly Wed” game. Cost is $75 per couple. Register at mfdiobr.org by Monday, July 23.

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Prayer, music help celebrate World Refugee Day

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Dramatic shifts in national immigration and refugee policies have created a sense of confusion and fear among those who are in the country without legal status and among others attempting to navigate the bureaucratic minefields to enter through legal channels.

Those new policies along with a much more stringent vetting process have caused seismic changes in the makeup of those entering the country, according to Jean Dresley, director of Mission Engagement for Catholic Charities Diocese of Baton Rouge.

Dresley said Louisiana has seen a significant bump in the number of asylees compared to refugees. She said through the first six months of the year the state has already welcomed 53 who have been granted asylum, as opposed to 41 in all of last year.

Conversely, only six refugees have arrived, compared to what is traditionally close to 100 by this time.

“Federal policies being set and the new vetting standards are making it very difficult to make it through the process,” Dresley said. “It’s like a funnel and very few are making it through.”

Dresley’s comments came during the celebration of World Refugee Day on June 24 at Christ the King Christian Center in Baton Rouge. More than 100 people representing countries from across the globe gathered for a day of prayer, riveting music, Gospel readings, preaching, informative talks, fellowship and a reception that included a variety of multi-cultural culinary dishes.

Organizer Dauda Sesay, himself a refugee from Syria, said the goal of the event was to create awareness among refugees, immigrants and asylees as to what assistance is available and also to empower families in their new surroundings.

“When they feel empowered they are able to engage in the community and allow for them to become a better citizen,” Sesay said.

He added that most refugees carry with them the fear they have lived with the majority of their lives. Sesay said that fear continues to haunt them even in the United States, especially those with illegal status.

“There is a fear that maybe one day (immigration officials) will grab them and they will be in trouble,” he added.

Dresley explained that during the past several months the state has welcomed refugees from a number of countries. She said the biggest challenge those and all newcomers face is understanding their rights and the benefits and assistance that are available.

Perhaps most daunting is the language barrier and because of that many entering the country are unaware of what they are entitled to in terms of public assistance, health care and numerous other benefits.

“That is why I need you to be my ambassadors to get the word out because there are so many people who do not realize (what is available),” Dresley said. “They receive a letter (from the State Department) saying congratulations but they can’t understand everything that is in that letter.”

Among other challenges, Dresley said, is the trauma of their past lives and how that can be addressed, integration into a new culture and society, professional education and licenses obtained in other countries not being recognized in the U.S. resulting in highly educated refugees being forced to work in menial and low paying jobs, money, bullying in schools and affordable housing, especially in Baton Rouge where high occupancy rates have fueled significant increases in rental rates.

Dresley also explained that a significant problem is children being granted asylum and joining their parents, who are already in the country but do not have legal status. She said that puts the family at great vulnerability and risk.

“We are trying figure out how to help,” she admitted.

Ann Sperry, state refugee coordinator for the Louisiana Office of Refugees, agreed with Dresley for saying the year has been difficult for refugees because of the new policies and vetting process.

“The problems are across the board, not just Baton Rouge, not just Lafayette, not just New Orleans,” she said “It’s across the country.”

Financial cutbacks from the federal government is also creating the potential of closing many of the offices that help newcomers acclimate to their new environment.

“If those offices close who’s going to care for the people?” she said.

World Refugee Day was June 20 and celebrations were held around the country throughout the entire week.

“I want to tell you I will always stand with refugees in this country,” Dresley said to a round of applause. “This is what we are called as Christians to do.”
Father-son breakfast encourages mentorship

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

In the parish hall of St. Paul the Apostle Church of Baton Rouge, fathers and sons gathered for a special prayer breakfast on the day before Father’s Day, June 17. But, they were feasting on more than just fruit, coffee and sausage and egg casserole. They were also served a heaping serving of positive messages along with words of wisdom for their families, their fatherhood and their faith.

“It’s like bonding time to sit down and listen to the issues raised by the speakers. Sometimes you live in your bubble and you don’t realize there’s other people that went through the same thing with the same concerns and you get little helpful nuggets from the speakers and just in general conversation with other men,” said E’Vinski Davis, who attended the breakfast with his young son, Ethan Davis, and father-in-law, El. Stewart.

The format of the event involved prayer, and three speakers followed by table discussions. At one table, the topic of conversation centered around diligence.

“When you’re diligent about your work and you do it well, people are going to know who you are when you walk through the door,” said Ra’Sawn Lawson. “There’s a difference when you walk in a room and people know flock to you for fame, as opposed to someone approaching you and knowing your worth and wanting to be around you and involved with you and interact with you because you can help them build themselves. It’s a different fulfillment as opposed to just having an image.”

Being a role model, setting a good example and making good choices was the name of the game for the prayer breakfast, entitled “Men on a Mission, Living ‘Godly’ in an ‘UnGodly’ World.”

St. Paul parishioner Gerald Kennedy, along with his son Justin Kennedy, helped organize the event, which is now in its third year. He said the goal was to encourage men to mentor younger men and “lead with God and lead with church as keeping them on the right road.” He added that with so many distractions and bad influences, this is one way to encourage men of all ages to continue making “the right choices.”

“It’s just a tie in with Father’s Day because we want to remind fathers why they are fathers and what’s your role as a father, just not in name but what you have to do as a father to encourage young men not only to a son but a father to a kid in the neighborhood or a father to a kid at church, somebody to be a role model, somebody they can follow and somebody they can look up to and do the right thing in life,” said Kennedy.

Major Reginald Brown, Baton Rouge constable, was one of the keynote speakers and talked about “the three Cs in our lives – choices, chances and change.” Brown described the choices he faced when he learned he was going to be a father at 19-years-old. With the guidance of his mother, he said he took a chance and changed the course of his life by going to work while attending college and supporting his new family.

“I was in college, trying to go to school and work at the same time at my first job, that my mother helped land, on the back of a trash truck in the city of Baton Rouge in 1965; then, to a service station, changing oil, fixing flats,” said Brown. “But, that was a choice I made, the decision was simple.”

Brown added that he had three more children but his first child, Reggie Brown, Jr., who worked as an investigator in the district attorney’s juvenile court division, was killed by an impaired driver on Florida Boulevard in 2003.

“He worked with youth just like I did and he coached and he touched the lives of many youths,” said Brown. “The point is the choices you make in life, if you make the wrong choice, you can turn it around and make it right by doing the right thing.”

The story had a profound impact on 19-year-old Southern University civil engineering student Ethan Sam, who was attending the breakfast with his father, Carlos Sam, and 16-year-old brother, Isaiah Sam.

“I’m learning about those that had it tough coming up and they’re really successful now and you wouldn’t know meeting them,” said Ethan. “But, whenever they start talking about their background it’s like, ‘Wow! They had it hard but they got through it and now look at them.’ So, it’s like motivation because you think you have it hard. (He was) 19 and raising a child and now (he’s) a constable and ‘Godly’ so, it’s like motivation because you can do anything. They did it, so you can do it.”

According to Kennedy, the prayer breakfast attracted more than just dads, there were “uncles, church leaders, coaches (and) community leaders also attending.”

“Just anybody can be a role model by making the right choices and in a Godly way, trying to do the right thing,” he said.

“(This event is) important because we want, first of all, to acknowledge and celebrate the gift of manhood, something that is, in our community, often overlooked,” said Father Rick Andrus, pastor of St. Paul. “(It’s) something that, too often because of television and music and media, carry negative stereotypes and images. We want to celebrate the goodness and the strength and the positivity and the spirituality of men in our community and not only to celebrate that but to encourage it. You know it isn’t just something that happens once a year, but through this coming together once a year, we find the strength and the encouragement and the excitement to move beyond this and to continue to be strong, positive images of healthy men in our families, in our jobs, in our community, in our churches.”

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