“I am their voice.”


Metanoia Manor is a Baton Rouge shelter for young female victims of human trafficking. It has been up and running for the past few months.

“Coming here to talk about Metanoia Manor and human trafficking is not all about me, it’s all about the girls that are living in Metanoia Manor; that is why I am here,” Sister Norma said. “If they’re not there, I’m not here in front of you.”

Sister Norma read the words of one of the girls now living at the safe house: “Metanoia Manor is a comfort from my nightmares. Being here I can break the chain of addiction. Here, I can strengthen my education, my faith and my family, helping others while I am here at Metanoia … Finally, I can make my own choices.”

Deacon John Vu, right, ordained Deacon John Vu as a transitional deacon during ordination ceremonies on May 26 at St. Joseph Cathedral in Baton Rouge. Deacon Vu is scheduled to be ordained to the priesthood in May 2019. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator
Sowing the word of God

By Dina Dow

The Sunday Mass readings for the upcoming weeks begin with a “fall” and end with an agricultural lesson. The messages from each yield insight into reasons for redemption, reasons for hope and reasons for courage.

You can hide, but not for long.
The account from the Book of Genesis begins with the effects of original sin. Adam and Eve, knowing what evil is, experience the brokenness of inner harmony with God so much so they attempt to hide from him. To us this sounds ridiculous. Yet, think of a time when you made a personal choice that you wish God would just look the other way? The original fracture chosen by humanity not only broke harmony with God, it also broke union with people and creation, and thus opened the gates of evil into the world resulting in decay and death.

But, as we pray in Psalm 130, “With the Lord there is mercy, and fullness of redemption.” We also connect to Genesis 3:15 (aka the “Proto-Evangelium” – first announcement) the promise of hope, inclusive of love and mercy. God punishes the serpent, placing it at odds with the woman. God tells the evil tempter that the woman’s offspring will crush its head in defeat. This is the first promise of redemption for humanity, giving a reason for hope in the one that is to come, and pointing to the Messiah. The woman is Mary. Thus, the knot caused by Eve’s disobedience was untied by Mary’s obedience, as Jesus, her “offspring” by the power of the Holy Spirit, came to restore humanity and free all from the enslavement of sin.

We walk by faith
Courage. St. Paul writes in his Second Letter to the Corinthians that it takes courage to walk by faith, for we live for what we are unable to see but we know and believe it to be true. Hence, our reason for courage is because Jesus showed courage by his mission. There were days where critics were his own relatives, who were concerned he had gone off the deep end, labeling him a crazy. Even the scribes accused him of being the devil, despite the fact they witnessed miracles performed by him.

We know Jesus acted out of love in all he did. This love is steeped in passion, zeal, consistency and power; a power that heals, restores and redeems. Jesus shows us the power of courage when faced with rejection, especially from those closest to him. Instead of running away from his critics, he invites them to a deep understanding of forgiveness, with a warning that “offense against the Holy Spirit is an everlasting sin.” On the other hand, those who faithfully follow him, as modeled by his mother, Mary, and do the will of God will be redeemed. Thus, we walk by faith in the light of love and mercy of God, without fear but with trust in his will for us. Here again are more reasons for faith and hope, through redemption. (Dedicated to Todd F. #walkbyfaith)

Finally, we hear an agricultural lesson in seed sowing. Jesus, teaching in parables, explains the “how-to” of sowing a field. This analogy reveals that the seed is the word of God and Jesus is the sower. He “sows” abundantly by his teaching and example. He desires the entire field to be covered in seed, knowing it will eventually grow, and counting on a crop ready for harvest will aid in growing in the kingdom of God.

We are the soil of this field. Our receptivity depends on the granules of our heart. Am I like fertile soil, ready to do God’s will with love, trust and mercy? Am I like dry dirt, parched with bitterness or anger? Am I like specks of dust blown away by the breeze of the world? Am I in need of rehydration through reconciliation to clear the clutter in order to receive the seed? Am I becoming a sower of the word of God, a disciple of Christ, who, like the apostles, share the word of God, continue to care for the field, cultivate good fruit and build the kingdom? All it takes is one seed the size of a mustard seed to yield a life-giving field glistening with light of love and mercy of God, without fear of evil but in the light of our faith.

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Dow is the Director of Evangelization and Catechesis for the Diocese of Baton Rouge.
Mellifluous chords of unity filled St. Joseph Cathedral on June 3 during a prayer service that brought together people from all cultures and ethnicities.

The 90-minute Our Unity in Diversity and Our Diversity in Unity on the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Our Lord prayer service was sponsored by the Diocesan Racial Harmony Commission.

“We are church, and we are celebrating church in a very powerful, unique, way,” said Bishop Robert W. Muench during his closing remarks. “As a Catholic Church, we are not a local church, we are not a state church, we are not a country church, we are not a national church. We are a church universal and this is what we are celebrating in a very powerful way.”

Bishop Muench said several images came to mind during the service, including those of a rainbow, prism and even a kaleidoscope. He noted that “in our uniqueness is our strength. Our diversity enriches us. We have the gift of one another. This is who we are and who God expects us to be.”

And he said reflecting that image beyond the church into society is a requirement and commandment of God.

The service also included eucharistic adoration and a brief benediction.

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“It was just wonderful for us to be able to experience our diversity, experience the richness that God has gifted us with,” Father Clark said. “And to know that we are all one and that we all worship one God, one Jesus, and we are part of the same church.”
Irish voters approve referendum allowing abortion

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

A St. Amant teenager preparing to embark on a mission to Ireland said she is heartbroken by that country’s vote opening the door to abortion on demand.

Yet, she said, the vote is only further evidence that God is leading her where she is needed.

Results from the nationwide referendum showed that 66.4 percent of citizens opted to remove the Eighth Amendment from the Irish constitution, while 33.6 percent voted to retain it. Turnout was 64.5 percent.

Voters inserted the original amendment in the constitution in 1983 by a margin of 2-1, and it “acknowledges the right to life of the unborn and, with due regard to the equal right to life of the mother, guarantees in its laws to respect, and, as far as practicable, by its laws to defend and vindicate that right.”

That text will now be deleted and replaced with an article stating that “provision may be made by law for the regulation of termination of pregnancy.”

“I have personally always had a massive heart for the pro-life movement, and it absolutely breaks my heart to know that this is something we will be battling over the next year while serving,” said Rachael Duchmann, 18, who is a member of Holy Rosary Church in St. Amant.

“To me personally, this is just one more affirmation that this is where I am needed,” added Duchmann, who will be a missionary in Ireland for 11 months beginning this fall through NET Ministries.

Duchmann was with a friend when they learned of the repeal and believes it was “truly all in God’s plans for me to be there with my pro-life voice. I think it will shape our mission because these kids will be growing up in an Ireland that is carefree with life as we are. In a sense it’s one more way we will be able to relate to them and help them to grow in their faith.”

Minister for Health Simon Harris has said he would introduce legislation that would allow abortion on demand up to 12 weeks, up to 24 weeks on unspecified grounds for the health of the mother, and up to birth where the child is diagnosed with a life-limiting condition that means he or she may not live long after birth.

An exit poll conducted by the Ireland’s national broadcaster RTE asked voters what motivated them to opt for either “yes” or “no.” Among “yes” voters, the most important issues were the right to choose (84 percent), the health or life of the woman (69 percent), and pregnancy as a result of rape (52 percent).

Among “no” voters, they cited the right to life of the unborn (76 percent), the right to live of those with Down syndrome or other disabilities (36 percent), and religious views (28 percent).

“I think (the vote) is tragic for a number of reasons,” said Danielle Van Haute, pro-life coordinator for the Diocese of Baton Rouge. “We see Ireland taking a step back but doing it by proclaiming that it’s a step forward and a right gained for women.

“But it’s anything but that. It’s taking away from the dignity of women, it’s taking away the protection that was given to the unborn and it’s taking away from society as a whole.”

Van Haute said there is no way to calculate how many lives are going to be affected by the vote. She said when the life of an unborn child is taken through abortion, not only does it affect the mother and the father of that child but also current or future siblings and other family members.

Bishop Brendan Leahy of Limerick told Mass-goers on May 26 that the result “is deeply regrettable and chilling for those of us who voted ‘no.’

He said “the final result of the referendum is the will of the majority of the people, though not all the people.”

John McGuirk, spokesman for Save the Eighth, which campaigned for a “no” vote, described the outcome as “a tragedy of historic proportions.”

“The Eighth Amendment did not create a right to life for the unborn child, it merely acknowledged that such a right exists, has always existed and will always exist,” he said, insisting that “a wrong would be made.”

Fate of funding unresolved

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

The Louisiana Legislature is likely headed into a third special session of 2018 with the fate of funding for nonpublic schools still hanging in the balance.

At risk is $16 million in funding for child nutrition programs and required services, which was not included in an underfunded budget adopted at the conclusion of a special session June 4.

Although legislators adopted the budget, an accompanying revenue-raising bill was not. Gov. John Bel Edwards vowed that the bill that was adopted would not be the budget going into the 2018-19 fiscal year beginning July 1.

Legislators rejected two sales tax proposals. A one-half cent tax proposal by Rep. Walt Leger was defeated 64-40, falling six votes of the two-thirds majority 70 votes needed. A one-third cent proposal by Rep. Lance Harris fell 68-38. Any new tax would replace the temporary one-cent tax that goes off the books June 30.

Rob Tassin, executive director of the Louisiana Conference of Catholic Bishops, said he believes the school funding would have been salvaged if the one-half cent proposal had passed.

“Obviously, there was a breakdown at the very end of the session,” Tassin said. “It was a breakdown between whether they would raise revenue by one-third or one-half of a penny and they could not muster enough votes for either one. And once those votes did not come, it was clear the whole thing was going to fall apart.

Legislative maneuvering created a sense of chaos as the session wound toward its midnight deadline, with some lawmakers even screaming at each other.

“I was disgusted by what I saw,” Tassman said. “To have things fall apart at the very last minute of a special session when obviously there was compromise on the Senate side and at the same time still a clear majority to support the half-cent tax increase, and you had someone try to run out the clock was unbelievable.”

Eliminating funding for nonpublic schools would likely result in the closing of the child nutrition program that feeds thousands of low-income students statewide. In the Diocese of Baton Rouge, more than 1,700 Catholic school students participate in the free or reduced lunch programs, with 769 of those taking advantage of a government program where they are served breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Also jeopardized is the funding for required services at the nonpublic schools.

“That is why heading into a special session it will be critical how much revenue is generated,” said Tassman. “I really believe that our best chance of being fully funded is if the half-penny is passed.”

Lynda Carville, director of the child nutrition program for the diocese, said after the session ended she is hopeful the program will be fully funded in the next special session. She also expressed her appreciation to the legislators in both chambers who understand the importance of “what we do.”
Spiritual nourishment weapon in weight battle

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

The triggers can come at any time ... after fighting with the Tigers, Jaguars or Saints during game time with friends and family. But no matter the situation, when one gives into the temptation to overeat, he or she can be weighed down bodily as well as mentally and spiritually with guilt.

Through Beneath the Weight, sponsored by the non-profit organization Self-Care Health Initiatives, people can address overeating in response to stress, moods and emotions. Workshops are conducted throughout Southeast Louisiana civil parishes in public libraries, as well as for faith-based organizations, such as Rosaryville Spirit Life Center in Ponchatoula, which focuses on Bible verses and meditations.

Beneath the Weight was started by psychologist Dr. Lynn Brayton, Paul Waldman and nutritionist Danielle Paciera. The program does not have lectures, prescribed diets, exercises or services.

“We looked at the power of human interaction and discovered that human interaction needed to be a primary consideration in our program,” said Waldman. “We looked at the concept of what creates change in a person. We looked at it from the standpoint that if you tell someone what to do, no matter how wise it may be – it’s not as strong as when a person realizes themselves what needs to be changed and what needs to be done to address the change.”

The workshops are centered around the idea that everyone has the ability to reach their desired weight, but there is something going on in their mind that stops them from getting there.

“We wanted to help people find the switch in their brains that allows a natural process for eating and lifestyle change,” said Waldman.

He said the workshops are meant to be fun, which includes dividing people into groups of 6-10 to talk about their eating issues.

“And it’s the interactions of the people that create the realizations, thoughts, emotions and sharing that can lead to change,” Waldman said.

The Rosaryville program begins with the participants looking at themselves and who they are before God. One of the meditations is taken from the book “Sadhana, A Way to God: Christian Exercises in Easter Form,” by Father Daniel de Mello SJ. In the meditative exercise, participants are to imagine looking at a statue that a sculptor was commissioned to make of them that is ready for public viewing.

They are encouraged to think about what their first impression is, then say something to the statue. The people are then guided to imagine that they have become the statue and how it feels to be the statue. Lastly, they imagine that Jesus walks into the room and looks at it and they dialogue.

In another meditation, participants are encouraged to take deep breaths, express their appreciation to God, talk to him about weight challenges they will face that day and ask Jesus and the Holy Spirit to guide them through their journey to their right weight.

“We encourage them to see God as a source of strength and guidance and a partner for this high mountain of challenge of losing a substantial amount of weight,” Waldman said.

“In between activities, there are Bible verse discussions which address using food as a coping strategy (focusing on Jos 1:9); guided meditations to right weight (focusing on Zep 3:17); danger zones and core issues (featuring Is 41:10); and planning a healthy weight lifestyle (focusing on Ps(9) 32:8).

“The Scriptures are used to help to get them through the difficulty of this self-awareness project and be inspired,” said Waldman.

And there can be some painful self-awareness as people check off items from a list of danger zones and stress points that indicate their weaknesses concerning overeating.

But through honest self-evaluations, sharing them in group discussions and learning how to envision positive outcomes to negative or vulnerable situations, they are given the tools to create a concrete plan of action, such as what specific foods they will add or eliminate within the next 24 hours and how they can be prepared for those “trigger point” moments.

And particularly in the faith-based programs, the emphasis is helping them to see that God can help them turn the key to becoming their right weight self.

“I hope they come away with, ‘I have the most powerful force/partner and all I have to do is ask,’” said Waldman.

For more information about Beneath the Weight and future workshops, including one that will be held at Rosaryville on Saturday, Oct. 20, visit beneaththeweight.org.

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Strange wording in Our Father?/ Sausage on Ash Wednesday?

Q For years I had been puzzled by the words “lead us not into temptation” in the Our Father. It always seemed to me unlikely that God would do that, and I wondered whether the phrase had been mistranslated. Now that Pope Francis has agreed that this wording is strange, I wonder if something like “leave us not in temptation but deliver us from evil” would be more correct. (Crozet, Virginia)

A You should be credited for having seen the difficulty. (Many people, I’m afraid, have prayed the Our Father for years without reflecting on that phrase, without seeing a problem.) And now you have Pope Francis in your corner. In December 2017, in a series of televised conversations about the Lord’s Prayer with an Italian Catholic prison chaplain, the pope said, “It’s not (God) who pushes me into temptation to see me fall. ... The one who leads us into temptation is Satan.”

While not ordering a new translation of the prayer, the pope noted that French bishops had decided that, beginning on the first Sunday of Advent in 2017, French Catholics would say the equivalent of “do not let us enter into temptation.”

The prayer is taken from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, written originally in Greek. The revised edition of the New American Bible, which is the basis for the Lectionary used at Masses in the United States, translates the petition as, “do not subject us to the final test.”

The Catechism of the Catholic Church admits the difficulty of translating the Greek verb by a single English word, noting, “the Greek means both ‘do not allow us to enter into temptation’ and ‘do not let us yield to temptation’” (No. 2846).

Q I am old (not just “elderly”) and sometimes forgetful. I did the unthinkable this past Ash Wednesday and prepared my usual breakfast of egg with sausage. I had actually eaten half of it before I realized what I had done. (My dog finished it up.) I have since been troubled, wondering whether this was a sin that should be confessed to a priest. I did ask God’s forgiveness that day, and many times since. Is there a relationship between sinfulness and intent to sin? (Mt. Airy, Georgia)

A Lucky for your dog, who apparently is not a Catholic! Seriously, though, your question makes me a little sad. I would guess that you grew up as I did in the 1940s and 1950s, when our primary image of God was of the “Great Enforcer,” ever-vigilant to punish us for stepping out of line. That is not what Jesus taught us about God. The Lord loves us, created us for a reason, is on our side and wants to bring us to heaven.

And, of course, “intention” is key to sinfulness. Do you remember learning as a kid that one of the requirements for serious sin was “full consent of the will”? The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines this as “consent sufficiently deliberate to be a personal choice” (No. 1859). So relax; you didn’t mean to do anything wrong, so you didn’t even need to be forgiven.

One story. Some years back, I was in Albany on a day when Catholics from across New York state were gathering to learn about, and lobby on, issues where public policy and morality intersect. A bishop from downstate and I were at a lunch counter near the Capitol enjoying bacon, lettuce and tomato sandwiches when at virtually the same moment we realized, to our dismay and embarrassment, that it was Ash Wednesday.

As I recall, we finished the sandwiches rather than wasting them, and I am quite certain that neither of us ever felt compelled to confess it.

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.

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as well as your local church parish.
Monthly rosary meeting offers a jambalaya of faith

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

The scent of heavenly roses seasoned with Louisiana’s emblematic dish, jambalaya, formed a banquet for spirit and body at a “A Morning with the Blessed Mother” prayer meeting at the home of Betty Robert of Gonzales on May 1.

Steam billowed from Robert’s backyard as her son, Todd, stirred a cast iron pot filled with the Cajun cuisine that was started early in the morning to provide lunch for the large group of attending people, who brought side dishes. Todd said he began cooking jambalaya for groups and different events several years ago.

“I love cooking for mom,” said Todd, who was joined by his cousin Roy and family friend Anthony Bruno.

But for many, the savoiest “main course” took place inside during the prayer meeting. Betty Robert started the monthly meetings four years ago after receiving materials about Our Lady of Fatima prayer groups in the mail. The first group had 18 attendees and Father Matt Dupré was the speaker. Now the rosary group averages up to 100 people and a clergy member has always been present to speak.

The May meeting, which was the last one before a summer break, included praying the rosary, Marian hymns, crowning of the Blessed Mother and a talk by Father Donald Blanchard, who discussed how the Blessed Mother teaches people to say, “Let it be done to me as you say,” during those moments of “wrestling with the Spirit.” The meal followed.

“I’m excited to do this,” said Celeste Veillon, who sang Marian hymns for the event and was accompanied on the keyboard by her mother, Romona, whom Celeste has sung with “for as long as I can remember.”

“My joy is when I can touch the hearts of the people here,” said Celeste.

She said Robert “sets a beautiful example in her devotion to Mary.”

Ramona, who was choir director at St. Theresa of Avila Church in Gonzales for many years, said she strongly believes in Jesus’ saying, “where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

“I believe in a congregational rosary. I like the socialization and getting together with people I don’t see all the time,” said Ramona.

Anne Gregory, a member of St. John the Evangelist Church in Prairieville, said she enjoys the presence of the priests at the meetings, which she said grew through “word of mouth.”

Theresa Morales, also of Gonzales, who brings her granddaughter Amily, 3, to the meetings, said, “I wouldn’t miss it for the world. I’m thankful to be able to develop my prayer life with the help of the Blessed Mother.”

She said she believes Christ answers prayers in a gathering of people who are devoted to Mary.

Attending the Marian meeting is also a chance for long-time friends Rowena Marcel, Kathleen Durocher and Barbara Ficaro, all of Thibodaux, to begin a day together on a prayerful note.

Marcel said, “We all have a deep devotion to the Blessed Mother. We’ve been through painful times, challenges and sufferings together. They (Durocher and Ficaro) are prayer warriors.”

She said she comes to the meetings out of a “love of the Lord” that is evident there.

“You feel the spirit of the Lord,” said Marcel. “You don’t meet a stranger here.”

Durocher said she particularly enjoys the Marian hymns.

“IT really believe that when two or more gather, God listens,” said Durocher. “He always hears us, but we don’t always know it.”

Ficaro described the meetings as a spiritual family gathering.

“I think it’s a church family environment here. A family celebrating around the church,” she said.

The RCIA coordinator for Christ the Redeemer Church in Thibodaux, Ficaro said the meetings have helped her in her own ministry.

“It’s good to know that there’s a time to be with other people for my spiritual growth. We all need a time to let God take care of us in his own way,” Ficaro said.

The prayer meetings are held at 10 a.m. on the first Tuesday of the month from September through May. For more information, call Robert at 225-933-9508 or email berobert@eatel.net.

Pictured during the crowning of Mary during A Morning With the Blessed Mother at the Gonzales home of Betty Robert are, from left, vocalist Celeste Veillon, Ruth Hanson and Mary McGovern. Photo by Debbie Shelley | The Catholic Commentator

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Governor signs abortion law

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Louisiana pro-life leaders praised state lawmakers and Gov. John Bel Edwards for passing a bill banning abortions after 15 weeks during the recently completed regular session of the Legislature.

Senate Bill 181 carries a prison sentence of up to two years for any medical professional who performs an abortion after 15 weeks. Also, women who elect to have abortions after 15 weeks would not face criminal charges.

The bill would only take effect if a federal court and potentially the U.S. Supreme Court upholds a similar abortion law in Mississippi.

“I’m happy to see that it passed,” said Danielle Van Haute, respect life coordinator for the Diocese of Baton Rouge. “I’m cautiously optimistic, as we are waiting to see what happens (with the Mississippi case).

“It was encouraging to see that it was supported by so many legislators.”

Edwards signed the bill into law May 30.

“The heart (of an unborn baby) is beating twice as fast as the mothers, and especially with abortion, that gruesomely crushes the body,” said Alexandra Seghers, the Legislative Liaison and Youth Program director with Louisiana Right to Life.

Bill sponsor Sen. John Milkovich has been a strong pro-life advocate and said his bill is in an important first step to protect unborn children.

“We thank and commend our pro-life governor for signing this bill and once again taking a stand for life,” Milkovich said.

“Recognizing that really no woman grows up wanting to have an abortion, so how can we help a woman who clearly is in crisis?” Van Haute said.

Mississippi enacted its 15-week abortion ban in March but it was challenged immediately and put on hold by a federal judge. It faces what many expect to be an extended legal battle.

Seghers said women facing an unwanted pregnancy do have the option of adoption, and said the Adoption Option Act “empowers women, especially in those instances where she may not feel ready to be a parent.

“Where she’s scared. Where she feels alone. It’ll help give her concrete alternatives to abortion so she doesn’t have to subject her body to the trauma of abortion or subject her baby to the trauma of abortion.”

Van Haute said the vote further cements Louisiana’s tradition of being the country’s strongest pro-life state.

“Louisiana is definitely not shy about bringing forward laws that will help to strengthen or help to further protect lives of the unborn in whatever way they can,” she said. “And also provide options for women who are abortion vulnerable.”

Louisiana and Mississippi would have the earliest abortion bans in the country if the law is ultimately upheld.
Deacon Bains’ faith shines through the darkness

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

On July 13, 2002, Frank Bains of Baton Rouge was ordained a deacon in the Diocese of Baton Rouge. Two years later, his life changed in a way he could never have imagined.

“I first noticed it down in Manresa (House of Retreats in Convent) in October 2004. My left eye started acting funny,” recalled Deacon Bains. “I had something called NAION or Non-Arteritic Anterior Ischemic Optic Neuropathy and that was in October of ’04. I didn’t know it at the time, but if you have that, it’s inevitably going to hit the other eye and in August of ’05, it hit the right eye. It took about a month from the time it hit until the time I lost it, and since August ’05, I’ve lost sight in both eyes.”

Deacon Bains overcame the challenge to serve 16 years in the diaconate at St. Jude the Apostle Church in Baton Rouge. He marked his retirement by celebrating his last Mass on May 6.

“Frank was a (U.S.) Marine Corps pilot in Vietnam, so we knew he had good vision and we never worried about his sight; I mean that’s nothing that ever came across as a problem,” explained his wife, Mary Margaret.

As Bains’ eyesight began to deteriorate, the couple was referred to a specialist in Atlanta for a second opinion. The appointment was set for Aug. 29, 2005. With a massive hurricane churning in the Gulf of Mexico, the couple left at 3:30 a.m. to avoid the traffic overflow of evacuees. The Bains made it to the appointment, but returning to Baton Rouge was another challenge.

“No gas stations were open. It’s like the desert,” Bains said. “We limped on to O’Neal Lane trying to get to a gas station,” said Deacon Bains. “We limped on to O’Neal Lane trying to get to a gas station,” said Deacon Bains. “We limped on to O’Neal Lane trying to get to a gas station,” said Deacon Bains.

For each occasion, Mary Margaret wrote a special liturgy, which was recorded the reading and it was played back through an earpiece for Deacon Bains to repeat.

“When he came back up on the altar it was almost like everybody was just lifting him up, you know,” said Mary Margaret. “It was a true witness to the people and the congregation, when you come from the depths of despair, ‘What am I going to do with my life?’, you know – so he started doing baptisms and weddings and funerals.”

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With special computer software for the blind, Deacon Bains continued his job as an engineer for two more years. After retiring from that job, he was recruited to work for the Department of Environmental Quality, a job he held for nine years, and during it all, he continued to minister, eventually memorizing the Gospel readings.

“Over the years I’ve had so many people come up and say that through his courage and inspiration and continuing to do this in spite of his disability, he’s inspiring them not to give up in certain things,” said Mary Margaret.

“I was at Mass one time and the Gospel was about the agony in the garden,” said Deacon Bains. “In that Gospel, that’s a Thursday, and he’s getting ready to face what he faces on that Friday. And, Jesus is praying and the Bible says he’s praying so hard that his sweat becomes like drops of blood and he prays, ‘Father, if it’s your will, let this cup pass me by’ and then he went on to say, ‘Nevertheless, not my will but thy will be done,’ and hearing that,
On the morning of Saturday, May 5, downtown Baton Rouge came alive with the lights and sirens of patrol cars on a special mission. The officers were escorting chartered buses filled with patients of St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital and their families to the 3 Bar E Ranch in Clinton for the annual Fishin’ Galore. Baton Rouge businessman John Engquist has hosted this event at his ranch for the past 24 years.

“The gate opens at four o’clock, we have some of the patients get here real early to fish,” said Engquist.

Activities included more than just fishing. There were carnival games with prizes, face painting, music, volleyball, arts and crafts, pony rides, petting zoo, Baton Rouge Police K-9 demonstrations and, of course, lots of food.

“It takes a lot of people to put this on and the support we get from volunteers is just amazing,” said Engquist. “We've got volunteers that have been with us since the first year. We get a lot of support from the various police organizations too. The Baton Rouge police, state police, all the local sheriff’s offices and police departments. It’s amazing the support we get.”

Elvira Blackledge-Lee, a cancer survivor, from Memphis, has had three of her four children treated at St. Jude’s for the past 10 years for brain and spinal tumors. According to Blackledge-Lee, tests have been conducted on everything from their home, pipes and neighborhood to even the church they attend. She said the next step is research into her “ancestral history.” But, on this particular day in May, her family was full of smiles.

“This is vacation,” said Blackledge-Lee. “This is our third time here. We usually sign up every year but somebody will get sick and we wouldn’t go or they didn’t want us to go that far. But, this year, they (doctors) let us go.”

“It’s just a really special day and let’s those kids get away from needles and chemo and the pressures they deal with everyday and just have a day out in the country and just have fun being kids,” said Engquist. “So, it’s a great day for them and a special day for us.”

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

FISHIN’ GALORE
24TH ANNUAL

“It takes a lot of people to put this on and the support we get from volunteers is just amazing.”

John Engquist
Fisher Galore host
Blessings on the Bayou comes to Baton Rouge

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

The mission work started in the Labadieville area through Blessings on the Bayou. It was inspired by the work of St. Thomas More Catholic Schools. The mission was established to help the less fortunate in the Baton Rouge area.

“Right in their own backyard” by helping those on fixed incomes in the Labadieville, Napoleonville and Thibodaux areas.

In seven years, approximately 1,000 people across the Diocese of Baton Rouge have come together to help the less fortunate, according to Father Alello.

The mission took a two-year hiatus due to the flood of 2016 and Father Alello being reassigned as pastor of St. Louis King of France, which was amalgated with St. Thomas More under his leadership.

The mission will resume again this year under the banner Blessings Mission and will focus on helping people in the Baton Rouge area.

“We have been overwhelmed by the support from St. Thomas More,” said Father Alello. “It’s been a great opportunity to move outside of the church into the community.”

This year, STM will partner with St. Bernard Project (SBP), a local organization assisting rebuilding efforts of homes damaged from the flood of 2016.

SBP will provide the volunteer sites.

According to Demitria Larry, volunteer coordinator/program manager for SBP, Zack Rosenberg and Liz McCartney, who originally lived in Washington DC, started SBP after they volunteered in Louisiana’s St. Bernard Parish following Hurricane Katrina and saw the slow progress of institutional or the “traditional” rebuilding process.

They were inspired by the residents’ collective spirit and fierce determination to rebuild.

With the support of donors, volunteers and corporate partners, the organization has grown from its New Orleans corporate headquarters to other areas, including Baton Rouge. Its focus is to help shrink the time between disaster and recovery.

Larry noted that after a disaster, SBP rebuilds for low-to-moderate income residents with a special focus on families with small children, the elderly, disabled persons, war veterans, the under- and underinsured, as well as victims of contractor fraud.

Nationally, SBP rebuilds a disaster impacted home in an average of 61 days at 40 percent of the cost of market rate contractors by relying on the national service organization Americorps volunteers and corporate labor, according to Larry.

The STM volunteers will receive orientation and training and will help rebuild a family’s home, which may include hanging insulation or drywall, mudding/spackling, texturing, priming, painting, laying floors and or hanging trim, doors and baseboards.

By working with Americorps volunteers, Blessings Mission participants are exposed to the program and they can decide if they would like to join, Larry said.

Stephanie Shaw, former director of religious education at St. Philomena who helped organize Blessings on the Bayou and will also assist with the Blessings Mission, said the Blessings Mission will be “about the simple things.”

She said while rebuilding efforts are “a portion of it,” youth will also be visiting the elderly and homebound and forming relationships with members of the community.

“We incorporate the manual labor, but we also incorporate prayer and visiting people,” said Shaw.

Through their mission work, Shaw said the youth will disconnect from their everyday concerns and distractions and live their Catholic faith in a deeper sense.

“You don’t have to go outside of the country where there is no cell phone service to disconnect,” said Shaw.

She noted that while the participants may have a hesitation when they first begin the mission, “by Sunday they are in tears and don’t want to leave.”

She said the mission also pulls in the STM community as they help “the young church” by either directly volunteering in the work, serving as mentors or adult supervisors, providing shower facilities, serving on a food line, providing dessert or praying.

Rosie Vutera, STM youth director said, “We are keeping a lot of what Blessings on the Bayou was when we held it in Labadieville – serving our community.

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.
LIVING ROSARY – Second-graders at St. Jude the Apostle School in Baton Rouge presented a “living rosary” on May 22. The students, dressed in their first Communion outfits, began the service by crowning Mary, then they were seated in the shape of a rosary on the floor of the activity center. Altar servers moved behind the students as each one stood to represent a bead in the rosary. Photo provided by Starr Driesse | St. Jude School

CLOSING CEREMONY – Kindergarten classes at Holy Ghost School in Hammond held a closing ceremony on May 18. Students led the ceremony with songs and Scriptures and teachers presented all students with an award for their accomplishments. Pictured, from left, are, front row, Caroline Caves and Layne Pegler; back row, Laila Domiano, Preston Dow, Selena Florian, Hannah Fontenot and Rory Franks. Photo provided by Cindy Wagner | Holy Ghost School

MAY CROWNING – Second-graders Robert David, left, and London Griffin of Sacred Heart of Jesus School in Baton Rouge were honored to crown Mary at the annual May Crowning on May 2. Photo provided by Lisa Cosse | Sacred Heart School

Catechism of the Catholic Church
IN HONOR OF THE FEAST OF THE SACRED HEART ON FRIDAY, JUNE 8:

CCC 478: Jesus knew and loved us each and all during his life, his agony and his Passion, and gave himself up for each one of us: “The Son of God ... loved me and gave himself for me.” He has loved us all with a human heart. For this reason, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, pierced by our sins and for our salvation, “is quite rightly considered the chief sign and symbol of that ... love with which the divine Redeemer continually loves the eternal Father and all human beings” without exception.
**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

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**Batman Ninja**

*Warner Home Entertainment*

Produced in Japan in the “anime” style, with its distinctive settings, frantic action scenes and unique character design, this is a thrilling, confusing, gorgeous and bizarre straight-to-video film. A time machine built by a supervillain ape (voice of Fred Tatasciore) transports Batman (voice of Roger Craig Smith) as well as most of his usual supporting cast to feudal Japan sometime around the 16th century. As he battles Gotham’s nastiest (voices of Tom Kenny, Eric Bauza, Tara Strong, Tony Hale and Tatasciore) who have taken on the role of Japanese warlords, the Caped Crusader is aided by host of ninjas (their leader voiced by Matthew Yang King) and some friends from back home (voices of Adam Crossdell and Yuri Lowenthal). Mostly stylized combat violence and some lapses in language make director Junpei Mizusaki’s luxuriously detailed movie unsuitable for children. But it’s possibly acceptable for older teens. Intense battle sequences, a few mild oaths and crass expressions.

A-III; PG-13

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**Deadpool 2**

*20th Century Fox*

An ensemble of friends, all ladies of a certain age, find a renewed interest in amour after their book club takes on E.L. James’ sadomasochistic “Fifty Shades” trilogy. Timid recent widow Diane Keaton lets the patronizing attitude of her dupe of over-solicitous adult daughters stand in the way of her romance with wealthy pilot Andy Garcia. Promiscuous, emotionally detached hotel owner Jane Fonda reconnects with Don Johnson, the ex whose proposal she long ago turned down. Buttoned-up federal judge Candice Bergen tries an online dating service and meets Richard Dreyfuss. And Mary Steenburgen and Craig T. Nelson struggle to reignite the flames of passion in their decades-old marriage. There’s hardly a line of dialogue in director and co-writer Bill Holderman’s romantic comedy, penned with Erin Simms, that doesn’t contain an innuendo, a smutty pun or some other tiresome joke about an aging woman’s right to satisfaction in the bedroom, a cause for which the film crusades relentlessly without regard to marital status or any other circumstance. Only Fonda’s tilt away from licentious past and Steenburgen and Nelson’s commitment to fidelity partially retrieve the lowminded proceedings. A misguided view of human sexual- ity, an offscreen premarital encounter, implied cohabitation, pervasive sexual humor including an extended tasteless sight gag, several profanities and milder oaths, at least one rough and a couple of crude terms. L; PG-13

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**Solo: A Star Wars Story**

*Disney*

The origins and early adventures of future freebooter Han Solo (Alden Ehrenreich) are explored in this pleasing but unsubstantial addition to the blockbuster franchise. Indebted to one of the villainous chiefs (Paul Bettany) of the intergalactic crime syndicate that has ensnared his childhood sweetheart (Emilia Clarke), the skilled but boastful pilot joins with a cynical thief (Woody Harrelson) and the apelike creature (Joonas Suotamo) destined to become his sidekick and first mate, both of whom are also beholden to the gangster, in an against-the-odds scheme to purloin a stock of valuable fuel. Working from a script by the father-and-son team of Lawrence and Jonathan Kasdan, director Ron Howard serves up action aplenty and some engaging plot twists while Ehrenreich exudes cheeky charisma. But depth of character is lacking. In keeping with his later persona, as portrayed by Harrison Ford, Solo’s rough-and-ready approach to property rights is offset by his weakness for a good cause, making this early chapter in his biography possibly acceptable for older teens. Much stylized violence, occasional innuendo, a few mild oaths, a couple of crass terms. A-III; PG-13

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**Wraith**

*Out Cold*

Earnest but flawed horror tale about a family of three parents Jackson Hurst and Ali Hillis and teen daughter Catherine Frances whose Victorian home in Neenah, Wisconsin, becomes the venue for some unwholesome supernatural activity. Consultation with a priest (Lance Henriksen) raises the possibility that the haunting is connected to the mother’s unexpected pregnancy and her plan to abort her baby. The no-nonsense message of writer-director Michael O. Sajbel’s film is as honorable as it is unmistakable. But blending this theme with well-worn exoticism and poltergeist tropes turns out to be a dubious decision. Possibly acceptable for older teens. Some nonlethal violence, a sexual predation plotline, a nonmarginal marital bedroom scene, a few sexual references. A-III; PG-13
Chilean priests say they felt welcomed, listened to by pope

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – After meeting with Pope Francis for more than four hours, a Chilean priest who suffered abuse and a priest whom ministers to survivors said they felt comforted and hopeful for the church’s future in their country.

The pope met June 2 with five priests who the Vatican described as being “victims of abuses of power, of conscience and of sexual abuse.”

Two priests who have accompanied the survivors “in their juridical and spiritual journey” and “two laypeople involved in this suffering” also were invited by Pope Francis. They were all guests at the Domus Sanctae Marthae, the Vatican residence where Pope Francis lives.

Speaking to journalists after the groups’ final meeting with the pope June 2 and met with members of the group together and individually, a Vatican statement said:

The aim of the meetings was to achieve a greater understanding of “the reality lived by some of the faithful and Chilean clergy,” the Vatican statement said.

“With the help of these five priests, the pope seeks to remedy the internal rupture of the community. Thus, rebuilding a healthy relationship between the faithful and their shepherds can begin, once all are conscious of their own wounds,” the Vatican said.

Like the three laymen Pope Francis hosted in late April, the priests were abused by Father Fernando Karadima and his followers in the parish of Sagrado Corazon de Providencia, also known as the community of “El Bosque” (“The Forest”).

Known as an influential and charismatic priest, Father Karadima founded a Catholic Action group in the wealthy Santiago parish and drew hundreds of young men to the priesthood. Four of Father Karadima’s proteges went on to become bishops, including Bishop Juan Barros Osorno.

However, several former seminarians of “El Bosque” revealed in 2010 that the Chilean priest sexually abused them and other members of the parish community for years. One year later, Father Karadima was sentenced by the Vatican to a life of prayer and penance after he was found guilty of sexual abuse.

Before the meetings began, Father Astaburuaga told Catholic News Service he was going with an “open heart and mind to be surprised by God.”

“Tomorrow I go with an open heart to speak with the pope. He wants to listen to us and we want to share with him,” he told CNS June 1.

Although Father de la Fuente did not provide details of the decisions the pope has made with regard to the culture of abuse and cover-up in the Chilean church, he said that they would take time and involve steps for “the short, medium and long term.”

Father Astaburuaga said that he was greatly consoled by the pope and confirmed that his over 20 years of counseling survivors of abuse “was not in vain.”

The pope celebrated a private Mass with the group June 2 and met with members of the group together and individually, a Vatican statement said.

Holy Rosary Church in St. Amant pastor Father Josh Johnson, left, and Deacon Alfred Adams, director of the Office of Black Catholics, kneel during benediction of the Eucharist during the Our Unity in Diversity and Our Diversity in Unity in Solitude of the Body and Blood of Our Lord prayer service at St. Joseph Cathedral in Baton Rouge on June 3. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator
Irish tragedy

America’s culture of death is inherently catching on across the pond. On May 25, voters in Ireland overwhelmingly approved a referendum to overturn that country’s ban on abortion, paving the way for abortion on demand for up to 12 weeks.

Two-thirds of the electorate voted in favor of the referendum, with only 33.6 percent against.

Perhaps most telling is 90 percent of young voters aged 18-26 approved the referendum. Additionally, the vote is further evidence of the marginalization of the church’s once powerful influence in Ireland, a country that only three years ago approved same-sex marriage.

The referendum removes the Eight Amendment to the constitution approved by a 2-1 margin in 1983, which acknowledges the right to life of the unborn.

Of course, supporters stressed, likely with a wink and a smile, that laws governing abortion will be restrictive. Where have we heard that misleading diatribe before? Perhaps it was in 1973, when Roe v Wade became the law of the land in the United States, allegedly with restrictions.

However, that law evolved into an open invitation to abortion on demand, leading to the legalized murder of millions of young babies who never had the opportunity to experience life outside of their mother’s womb.

There is no reason to expect anything different among the Irish. Already, legislation is expected to be introduced permitting abortion for a child up to birth who is diagnosed with a life-limiting condition (think special needs). So the millions of special needs children who are yet to be born but would bring so much love to the proper home could potentially be massaged right up to delivery.

Also, getting caught up in the tide is Northern Ireland, where momentum appears to be gaining to legalize abortion in that country.

Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar, who campaigned for the referendum, reacted to the outcome by saying his country is now

**Another Perspective**

FATHER JOHN CARVILLE

The church, institution or people?

About a month ago I was at my brother’s house for a gathering of friends and relatives. After about 8 p.m., most of the guests were gone, leaving only the two of us, my sister-in-law, and a couple from out of town who are close friends to the three of us and who were spending the night.

We began talking about the younger generation’s attitudes towards the Catholic faith. Before we realized it, the clock was showing midnight. Apparently parents as well as priests are very bewildered by what the generation that has grown up in the “information age” chooses to believe or not believe about religion.

I woke up thinking about our conversation, picked up the morning paper, and in the “eatpraylove” section of The Advocate was a long article entitled “Most Americans believe but not always in the God of the Bible.” According to the Pew Research group, about 30 percent of Americans don’t believe in the God of the Bible or any other power. They are the real atheists. “But among the so-called ‘nones’—a broad category of atheists, agnostics and those who answer ‘none of the above’ on questions about religion—fully 72 percent believe in a higher power of some kind.”

There seems to be a lot of confusion about this “God of the Bible.” In the survey report he is described as “the conventional all-loving, all-knowing, all-powerful God of the Bible.” One could wonder whether the survey-takers have read the New Testament where Jesus says that no one has seen the father except himself who has come down from heaven. Whoever believes in him, Jesus, will have eternal life. He goes on to say, “I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world” (Jn 6:46-51).

Jesus came to show us a different image of God than the Jewish people of his day had, and a different image, I suspect, than the one the younger generation of today is rejecting. Yes, the Bible Old Testament and New Testament pictures a God who is all-loving, but not a Pollyanna kind of God who never lets us suffer. The God of the Bible is all-knowing, but Jesus’ God is not God the scientist, not Einstein’s fine-tuner of the universe, but the God who knows the hearts of everyone and can be our consolation in a confusing, and often very cruel, world. Nor is Jesus’ God all-powerful in the sense of controlling our every action. Jesus invited from everyone he met a response of love, a conversion of heart, a gift of service to others. He never forced anyone, but asked us to choose. “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” If we freely follow his way of love, we will find the truth of goodness, of God’s Spirit, and live the light of the Bible with Jesus and the father forever.

God is not Pollyanna, nor, however is he a vague higher power. God is our father who is imaged for us in his son, Jesus, who told us, “If you know me, then you will also know my father ... Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (Jn 14:7-9). The Jesus that I know is the embodiment of self-sacrificing love is the image of God. It is not, I think, this God nor his image in human flesh, Jesus, who is being rejected by the young people of today. This God is a personal God who speaks through Jesus to our hearts more than to our minds. Could it be an impersonal church that they are leaving, a church that appears more like an institution than like the “people of God” described in Vatican II’s document on the Church?

Pope Francis has convoked another Synod of Bishops to meet this coming October to address the question of how we do keep and/or call back to the church our younger generation. Many of them have become “nones.” In preparation for the synod, he has sent questionnaires to all of the world’s Catholic dioceses to canvass ground level opinions on the problem and solutions to it. How do we evangelize the millennials? So far, participation in the survey has not been strong, according to the National Catholic Reporter Newspaper (March 23 – April 5).

A conference was held recently, March 5-7, at Notre Dame University in South Bend, to address cultural issues that may be a cause of the exodus of so many young people from our Catholic Church and many Protestant churches as well. Speakers blamed the culture so influenced by excessive use of smartphones and media technology encouraging users “to focus on what is new, not what is important, creating ‘suckers for irrelevancy.’” They also spoke of reduction of all knowledge to the scientific method, excessive individualism and pornography. Suggestions to address these negative influences from breakout sessions included involving young people in pilgrimages and service projects.

An editorial in the same issue of NCR criticized blaming young people for the culture in which they are growing up. While it might be true that young people seem turned off by institutions, it is up to us to put a more Christ-like face on our church. We have to be more inviting, less exclusive, more focused on charitable works and less on imposing rules. The people of God, especially those 34 and under, are looking for inspiration and authenticity. “Examples of people who walk the faith and live the heart of the Gospel are more convincing than hours of apologetics and glitzy presentations on up-to-date delivery platforms.”

Pray for the synod, for the pope, the bishops and our young people.

**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 johnnycarville@gmail.com.**
Recently a student I’d taught decades ago made this comment to me: “It’s been more than 20 years since I took your class and I’ve forgotten most everything you taught. What I do remember from your class is that we’re supposed to always try not to make God look stupid.” I hope that’s true. I hope that’s something people take away from my lectures and writings because I believe that the first task of any Christian apologetic is to rescue God from stupidity, arbitrariness, narrowness, legalism, rigidity, tribalism and everything else that’s bad but gets associated with God. A healthy theology of God must underwrite all our apologetic and pastoral practices. Anything we do in the name of God should reflect God. It’s no accident that atheism, anti-clericalism and the many diatribes leveled against the church and religion today can always point to some bad theology or church practice on which to base their skepticism and anger. Atheism is always a parasite, feeding off bad religion. So too is much of the negativity towards the churches which is so common today. An anti-church attitude feeds on bad religion and so we who believe in God and church should be examining ourselves more than defending ourselves.

Moreover more important than the criticism of atheists are the many people who have been hurt by their churches. A huge number of persons today no longer go to church or have a very strained relationship to their churches because what they’ve met in their churches doesn’t speak well of God. I say this in sympathy. It’s not easy to do God adequately, let alone well. But we must try, and so all of our sacramental and pastoral practices need to reflect a healthy theology of God, that is, reflect the God whom Jesus incarnated and revealed. What did Jesus reveal about God? First, that God has no favorites and that there must be full equality among races, among rich and poor, among slave and free, and among male and female. No one person, race, gender or nation is more favored than others by God. Nobody is first. All are privileged.

Next, Jesus taught that God is especially compassionate and understanding towards the weak and towards sinners. Jesus scandalized his religious contemporaries by sitting down with public sinners without first asking them to repent. He welcomed everyone in ways that often offended the religious propriety of the time and he sometimes went against the religious sensitivity of his contemporaries, as we see from his conversation with the Samaritan woman or when he grants a healing to the daughter of a Syro-Phoenician woman. Moreover he asks us to be compassionate in the same way and immediately spells out what that means by telling us that God loves sinners and saints in exactly the same way. God does not have preferential love for the virtuous.

Shocking to us too is the fact that Jesus never defends himself when attacked. Moreover he is critical of those who, whatever their sincerity, try to block access to him. He surrenders himself to die rather than defend himself. He never meets hatred with hatred and dies loving and forgiving those who are killing him. Jesus is also clear that it’s not necessarily those who explicitly profess God and religion who are his true followers, but rather those, irrespective of their explicit faith or church practice, who do the will of God on earth. Finally, and centrally, Jesus is clear that his message is, first of all, good news for the poor, that any preaching in his name that isn’t good news for the poor is not his Gospel. We need to keep these things in mind even as we recognize the validity and importance of the ongoing debates among and within our churches about whom and what makes for true discipleship and true sacrament. It is important to ask what makes for a true sacrament and what conditions make for a valid and licit minister of a sacrament. It is important too to ask who should be admitted to the Eucharist and it is important to set forth certain norms to be followed in preparation for baptism, the Eucharist and marriage.

Difficult pastoral questions arise around these issues, among other issues, and this is not suggesting that they should always be resolved in a way that most immediately and simplistically reflects God’s universal will for salvation and God’s infinite understanding and mercy. Admittedly, sometimes the long-term benefit of living a hard truth can override the short-range need to more quickly take away the pain and the heartache. But, even so, a theology of God that reflects the compassion and mercy of God should always be reflected in every pastoral decision we make. Otherwise we make God look stupid – arbitrary, tribal, cruel, and antithetical to church practice.

Marilynne Robinson says Christianity is too great a narrative to be written by any lesser tale and that should forbid in particular its being subordinated to narrowness, legalism and lack of compassion.

OBLET 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.

Why is this? Was it simply a technological limitation of the time because nearly all communication was oral? Or is there something peculiar about hearing that makes it a privileged sense for perceiving faith? The church’s newest feast, that of Mary, Mother of the Church, provides a clue. How is it that Mary received Christ into her womb? By hearing the word of God and assenting to it. As then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger explained, “Mary welcomes the Holy Spirit into herself. Having become pure hearing, she receives the word so totally that it becomes flesh in her.”

Stephen Beale writes about this as well and points out that it is the liturgy where the fullness of hearing is experienced. We hear God’s word, but we also receive him bodily under the species of bread and wine. And it doesn’t stop there. We are transformed by this Communion, attuned to God’s grace and prepared to exercise our theological senses of faith, hope and charity in the world by proclaiming the Gospel.

All of our senses are engaged in the Mass, but hearing is first. The Liturgy of the Word precedes the Liturgy of the Eucharist because our hearts must be tuned to God’s frequency before we receive him in the Eucharist. The external senses must give way to something internal – where real conversion takes place.

ROBINSON is director of communications and Catholic media studies at the University of Notre Dame McGrath Institute for Church Life.

More “open and respectful.” He also said this vote was for the “next generation.”

No, Mr. Varadkar is not correct. Irish voters have done nothing more than invoke the death sentence on millions of babies who will fall victim to the selfishness of one or more of their parents and the willingness of a doctor to end that life. And we who believe in God and church should be examining ourselves more than defending ourselves.

Laws, by their nature, are mirrors of a country’s conscience. Certainly that is evident in America, where not only is abortion legal, so is capital punishment, another form of state sponsored execution. We have become a country where death is big business, and morality has gotten caught up in its wake.

Unfortunately, it now appears Ireland is now headed down that same path of moral turpitude.

Our senses often deceive us. The recent “yanny vs. laurel” debate on the internet saw those who heard the word “laurel” arguing with those who heard the word “yanny” when listening to a vocabulary.com recording of the word “laurel.”

Very reasonable people had rather intense disagreements about what they were hearing. (I heard “laurel” and my son heard “yanny.” We simply had to agree to disagree.)

It may seem like a trivial dispute, but like most things that garner attention, it reflects a healthy theology of God and what makes for true discipleship and true sacrament. It is important to ask what makes for a true sacrament and what conditions make for a valid and licit minister of a sacrament. It is important too to ask who should be admitted to the Eucharist and it is important to set forth certain norms to be followed in preparation for baptism, the Eucharist and marriage.

Difficult pastoral questions arise around these issues, among other issues, and this is not suggesting that they should always be resolved in a way that most immediately and simplistically reflects God’s universal will for salvation and God’s infinite understanding and mercy. Admittedly, sometimes the long-term benefit of living a hard truth can override the short-range need to more quickly take away the pain and the heartache. But, even so, a theology of God that reflects the compassion and mercy of God should always be reflected in every pastoral decision we make. Otherwise we make God look stupid – arbitrary, tribal, cruel, and antithetical to church practice.

Marilynne Robinson says Christianity is too great a narrative to be written by any lesser tale and that should forbid in particular its being subordinated to narrowness, legalism and lack of compassion.

OBLET 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.

Why is this? Was it simply a technological limitation of the time because nearly all communication was oral? Or is there something peculiar about hearing that makes it a privileged sense for perceiving faith? The church’s newest feast, that of Mary, Mother of the Church, provides a clue. How is it that Mary received Christ into her womb? By hearing the word of God and assenting to it. As then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger explained, “Mary welcomes the Holy Spirit into herself. Having become pure hearing, she receives the word so totally that it becomes flesh in her.”

Stephen Beale writes about this as well and points out that it is the liturgy where the fullness of hearing is experienced. We hear God’s word, but we also receive him bodily under the species of bread and wine. And it doesn’t stop there. We are transformed by this Communion, attuned to God’s grace and prepared to exercise our theological senses of faith, hope and charity in the world by proclaiming the Gospel.

All of our senses are engaged in the Mass, but hearing is first. The Liturgy of the Word precedes the Liturgy of the Eucharist because our hearts must be tuned to God’s frequency before we receive him in the Eucharist. The external senses must give way to something internal – where real conversion takes place.

ROBINSON is director of communications and Catholic media studies at the University of Notre Dame McGrath Institute for Church Life.
**Displaced Carmelites** – The Secular Order of Displaced Carmelites will meet Sunday, June 10, 10:30 a.m., at the Our Lady of Mercy Parish Activity Center in the St. Joseph Room, 444 Marquette Avenue. 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, June 12, 5:30 p.m., at St. Agnes Church, 749 East Blvd., Baton Rouge. All are invited to attend. For more information, call 225-383-4127.

**Workplace Series** – Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge will sponsor a Success in the Workplace series Tuesday, June 12 & 19, and Thursdays, June 14 & 21, 1 p.m. – 3 p.m. The classes will help people identify their strengths and talents, write resumes and cover letters, develop computer skills and complete and submit resumes and online job applications. For information and to register, call Jean Dresley at 225-376-6840.

**Summer Leisure Learning** – Immaculate Conception Church, 865 Hatchell Lane, Denham Springs, is hosting a Summer Leisure Learning Series Thursdays, 7 p.m., June 14 – Aug. 9, in the small hall. Topics will include why the church has a pope and the authority of the pope, the Eucharist and Mary. For more information, call 225-665-5359.

**Kid's Fun Fest** – Our Lady of the Lake Children's Health will sponsor a Kid's Healthy Fun Fest Saturday, June 23, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m., for kids near the Mall of Louisiana, 6401 Bluebonnet Blvd., Baton Rouge. There will be games, giveaways and health information for the entire family. The first 300 children will receive a free T-shirt. Register online at olohchildrens.org.

**Blue Mass** – St. Gerard Majella Church, 5334 Plank Road, Baton Rouge, will celebrate its annual Blue Mass for police officers and first responders on Sunday, July 15, 10 a.m. Lunch will follow at the parish hall. For more information, call 225-355-5553.

**Day of Refreshment** – Catholic Charismatic Renewal of New Orleans (CCRNO) will sponsor a Day of Refreshment for Women Saturday, June 23, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m., at Our Lady of Perpetual Help School gym, 531 Williams Blvd., Kenner. Cost is $90 and includes lunch. Register online at ccrno.org by noon Wednesday, June 20, to order lunch. On-site registration is available, but lunch is not guaranteed. For more information call CCRNO at 504-828-1368 or visit their website.

**Hats Off Gala** – St. Aubry Ladies’ Auxiliary will host its Hats of Gala Sunday, June 24, 3:30 p.m., at the North Iberville Community Center, 7500 Rosedale Road, Rosedale. There will be entertainment, food and door prizes. Tickets are $10 each and can be purchased by calling Daisy Hawkins-Thomas at 225-625-2185, Thresa Thomas at 225-776-5392 or Trymeka McCoy at 225-439-4346.

**Byzantine Icon Workshop** – Registration is being accepted for a Byzantine icon workshop that will be held Monday, July 30 – Friday, Aug. 3, 9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., at the Burden Botanic Gardens Conference Center, 4650 Essen Lane, Baton Rouge. A team of iconographers will provide instructions, which are guided and paced, to produce a finished icon of the prophet Elijah. Cost of the workshop is $350 and includes all materials and lunch for five days. Checks should be made payable to Friends of the Gardens and mailed to Kitty Hessburg Wiemer, 7666 Claret Ave., Baton Rouge. For more information, call Wiemer at 225-284-7440.

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Sister Norma said the four residents under the 24-hour care of the Hospitality Sisters of Mercy range in age from 16 to 17. She said the girls have suffered abuse for several years, including one who, at a young age was introduced to drugs and molested daily by her father. She was later sold to a trafficker.

Human trafficking is characterized as modern slavery with traffickers using violence, threats, deception and other manipulative tactics to force victims to engage in prostitution, pornography or provide labor against their will, according to polarisproject.org. It is big business during “high-profile sporting events like the Super Bowl,” said Sister Norma.

The schools of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, admit students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin. They do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school administered programs.

HELP WANTED

Diocese of Baton Rouge Catholic Schools Office Principal Opening 2018-19 School Year
St. Francis Xavier School
Baton Rouge, LA

St. Francis Xavier Elementary School, founded by the Sisters of the Holy Family in 1920 and currently serving 168 students in Grades K–6, seeks a principal with a commitment to growth, collaborative spirit, and strategic vision. With approximately 18 professional staff members, St. Francis Xavier Catholic School strives to create a holistic Catholic environment to encourage students to develop their unique talents and skills to achieve academic excellence.

The Diocese of Baton Rouge has thirty schools in eight civil parishes, with strong Catholic identity the focus in all schools. The district is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and standardized test scores are above state and national averages.

Catholic schools in the Diocese of Baton Rouge

Evangelize Hearts, Educate Minds, Encourage Talent and Embrace the Future!

Applicants must meet the following criteria:
1. Practicing Catholic
2. Master’s Degree, Meeting Louisiana Requirements as NonPublic Administrator
3. Five Years Minimum Experience in Education, Catholic Schools Preferred
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Mail resume, copies of all college transcript(s) showing degrees and three letters of recommendation to
St. Francis Xavier Principal Search
Catholic Schools Office
P.O. Box 2028
Baton Rouge, LA 70821-2028

Deadline for application: June 15, 2018

HELP WANTED

IRLAND ▼

Ireland ▼ does not become right simply because a majority support it.”

Vutera also warned of those abortion supporters who insist any news laws will be restricted. She recalled how when the Roe v Wade decision legalized abortion in the United States in 1973 many pro-abortion supporters cited the alleged restrictions.

“Regardless of restrictions that are in place, once you go down this road, it’s just a matter of time before the restrictions are gone or just become meaningless,” she said.

(Catholic Commentator assistant editor Debbie Shelley and Catholic News Service contributed to this report.)

BLESSINGS ▼

From page 12

with our hands as well as working on cleansing our hearts throughout the week. Along with the community service we bring the kids to, we journey along with them through their Catholic faith in the evenings. We offer reconciliation, adoration, anointing of the sick and evening talks to challenge them.”

Van Haute also warned of those abortion supporters who insist any news laws will be restricted. She recalled how when the Roe v Wade decision legalized abortion in the United States in 1973 many pro-abortion supporters cited the alleged restrictions.

“I have swum in the deepest of waters but now I walk along beaches with a seashell in my pocket for every step I take toward my peace.”

Mentanoia Manor Resident

“If I have swum in the deepest of waters but now I walk along beaches with a seashell in my pocket for every step I take toward my peace.”

Blessings
a journey that seem preordained but also strewn with spiritual potholes.

After graduating from LSU with a degree in biological science, he recognized the crossroad he faced in his life. He had already been accepted into LSU Medical School but the call to priesthood was still beckoning. Deacon Vu also understood that if he started medical school he would never likely pursue the priesthood.

Paradoxically, he also recognized that if he entered the seminary and it did not work out, there would be little chance of him entering medical school.

“So I thought I would give it a try to see if the Lord is calling me to serve him in a different way,” Deacon Vu said. “The thing with following God’s call — it’s not always easy to do it completely.

“There’s a reluctance to following God’s call and the devil is always pushing you the other way. Even though I had the feeling of being called to the priesthood) I pushed it off throughout high school and college because I always felt a strong desire to be a biological father, to have a family. I always thought the priesthood is not suited for me; that I would not have that kind of family.”

Deacon Vu acknowledged that it was only through God’s will he was accepted on such a tight timeline.

But those early days as a seminarian were not easy as he confronted two significant obstacles. The first was a sense of belonging, and for the first 18 months doubt was his daily partner, wondering if he was meant to be there because “I was just looking around at the people and thinking these people are so holy.”

“They pray 24/7. I was thinking I don’t belong there.”

An introverted personality added another layer of complexity. He even admitted that during the first year he was “pretty much anti-social” and besides the events he was required to attend “you would not see me around.”

The second major obstacle confronting Deacon Vu was “embracing celibacy and not being able to have a family or be a biological father.”

Calling it the natural desire for every human being, he said he faced one of his most difficult moments when serving a summer at St. Margaret Queen of Scotland Church in Albany with pastor Father Jamin David.

Deacon Vu said watching the families interact with each other during Mass and other events rekindled his paternal yearning.

But a life changing talk with his spiritual director opened Deacon Vu’s heart to his vocation. During the conversation, he asked his spiritual director how does anyone know for certain if the priesthood is where they are called to be.

“He told me that the way I was I would be a good father biologically or spiritually,” Deacon Vu said. “For me that helped tremendously, knowing that I had the option to be a biological father or spiritual father, and it was up to my choice along with God’s will.

“That was a very freeing moment for me.”

At that point, he cast aside all doubt and became engaged in the seminary life, to the point where this past semester at Notre Dame he was involved in numerous activities, to the surprise of his classmates, several who later admitted they did not know him except by name.

“It’s very beautiful how I have seen myself transformed in seminary and how God has changed me from being very much anti-social to becoming very open,” he said. “Just seeing the change in me is a very beautiful thing.”

Deacon Vu is looking forward to his final year of formation, eager to soak up the knowledge he will gain by working with Father Uter, learning the daily routine of a priest. But he is even more eager for a year from now, to begin his role as a father, just not the father he anticipated.

And like so many callings, it all started with a simple prayer.

## PROJECT BRANT

Callie Broussard Polozola, chairman of Project Books Readily Available to all in Need of Teaching (BRANT) for the Diocesan Council of Catholic Women (DCCW), distributed books to students at Glen Oaks Park Elementary School in Baton Rouge to take home with them as they prepared for summer break on May 16. Looking on are Glen Oaks librarian Connie Corrill, left, and executive secretary Kashi Sherman. Project BRANT promotes literacy in the home as well as school. Polozola said with the support of the diocese, a donation from Carmel Mask and other generous Catholic families, DCCW provided 635 books for the students at the Title 1 school.

## Last Day of School

Students from Catholic schools through the Diocese of Baton Rouge celebrated the last day of school with Mass, awards, pictures and good-byes for the summer break. Most schools dismissed during the week of May 21. Principal Michael Comeau of Holy Family School in Port Allen visited with students, parents and posed for photos as he closed out the 2017-18 school year.

### Be An Action Angel!

Every day, needy people in our community are praying for help. You are the answer to their prayers. Make a small miracle happen by becoming an Action Angel.

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- **Help us provide services to the homeless at the Bishop Ott Shelter.**
- **Help us serve the poor at the St. Vincent de Paul Community Pharmacy.**
- **Become an Angel and help with Uniforms for Kids.**

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