Hope in the Lord.
Bishop Duca has been a ‘friend’

By Jessica Rinaudo
Special to The Catholic Commentator

In December 2007, newly married and stepping into a budding career as a graphic designer and journalist, I was hired as the editor of The Catholic Connection, the official magazine of the Diocese of Shreveport. It was a time of limbo at the diocese – we had no bishop, and the long wait time between the retirement of Bishop William Friend and the anticipated naming of a new bishop fueled both excitement and anxiety amongst the staff.

Would our new bishop like a magazine? Would he insist we move to a newspaper? Would he even want a publication? Similar questions floated through every office of the chancery. And then, in April of 2008, a priest from the Diocese of Dallas was appointed to be ordained the Bishop of the Diocese of Shreveport. Once he was named, things began to happen very quickly while everyone waited on pins and needles, eager to find out what our new shepherd would be like.

I have been fortunate enough to visit Bishop Duca’s office many times since that day – and rarely has it ever felt like I’ve been called to the principal’s office. For just as he is a bishop, he is also a pastor. I have sat in front of him, relatively fresh off maternity leave, nervously and emotionally explaining that I was pregnant once again – this time with twins, no less – and I had no idea how I was going to make my life and my job work. He sat with me, listened, and told me, “We will do whatever it takes to keep you.” Very few responses have ever meant so much to me and inspired me to move forward when all felt impossible.

The twins made their appearance, and even though it wasn’t always easy, we did what it took to make it work. In that time since, I have seen Bishop Duca kneel down before my children and earnestly ask them about their favorite parts of Disney World and listen with sincerity and as all the names of My Little Ponies were listed off and explained to him. I’ve seen him joyfully present them with candy bars – purchased from me to benefit their Catholic education.

He even once told me he would like to come over to our home for dinner. I said a quick prayer that I would somehow whip my house into a functional state in the couple of weeks I had to prepare. He insisted we did nothing special, but we couldn’t let our Italian bishop go without trying the Rinaudo family meatballs. He visited with us from the couch, allowing Sarah to place a unicorn helmet atop his head and laughing as tiny Vera stared at him nervously from the corner. And any time the Rinaudo children visited the Catholic Center, you better believe we had to make a bee-line for Bishop Duca’s office to tell him hello.

Bishop Duca and I had a conversation outside in the hall during a retreat recently. At the time we were talking about the plan God has for our lives. The reflection he had written for the upcoming magazine that month had touched me. In it he said, “It was as though no matter what I imagined my life to be, God was leading me in another direction that was very different. When I was finally able to accept (i.e., I gave up) that God may have a different direction and a deeper understanding of my life, I stopped fighting and second guessing God’s will for my life. Instead I embraced His will and with that surrender came a new freedom and wisdom that allows me every day to accept with joy this wonderful call to be your bishop, even though I often feel unworthy.”

During our conversation, I told him how I could have never anticipated having four children in four years – it completely derailed me, but it also made me who I am. His words encouraged me; by choosing to accept God’s will in my life, I’m a better person.

Welcome Bishop Michael G. Duca

The worshiping community of St. Joseph the Worker extends a warm welcome to our new Shepherd, Bishop Michael G. Duca, praying that Mary, the Mother of God, wraps him in her mantle and prays to her Son for his episcopal ministry.

We welcome Bishop Duca to join us at our Marian Shrine known as the Blessed Virgin Mary Island. It is located on a small Island near the parish rectory along the Pierre Part Bay known to us as “God’s Country.”

The parishioners of St. Joseph the Worker have a deep devotion to our Mother, Mary because there is a strong belief that she protects us from disasters.

Parishioners gather daily on the Island to recite the Rosary and again on the Fourth of July to recite the Patriotic Rosary. Mass is celebrated on the Island in May and October in honor of our Mother, Mary.

In 1909, after a severe hurricane, a cypress wood board designed in the form of an arch was placed on the Shrine that read “O MARIE PROTÉGÉ NOUS” (Oh Mary Protect Us). Until this day, the parishioners still pray...

“O MARIE PROTÉGÉ NOUS”
Church of St. Joseph the Worker
‘I’m just a pastor’

Richard Meek, editor of The Catholic Commentator, recently visited Shreveport and sat down with Bishop Michael G. Duca for an exclusive interview. The interview was three weeks before Bishop Duca was installed as the sixth bishop of the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

Q Thank you Bishop Duca for taking the time to talk to us. The Diocese of Baton Rouge is certainly eagerly anticipating your arrival. Just talk a little bit about the transition.

A I guess it’s like any transition. There is a sad side, an exciting side.

I’m getting letters from people in Baton Rouge and getting excited about their excitement about me coming to take over after Bishop (Robert W.) Muench who’s done a great job, who’s left a great diocese and so it makes it easy for me to be excited about coming in to a new diocese that looks to me to be in good shape and well organized. It has its challenges like any but it looks like a good place for me to start in this new adventure.

Q Talk about your vocation. Was it something you thought about as a child or did the calling come a little later in life?

A Well I can’t tell you exactly when. I do remember one time I was at Mass with my parents and I looked up (at the altar) and the priest was doing what he does at Mass. I said to myself “I can do that.” It must have been a grace because there’s no reason why I should have said that, why should I be identifying with the priest. But I did. And it gave me a start down a road to pursue in a very kind of small way that vocation to the priesthood.

I would always tell the nuns in grade school (when they would ask) what are the three things you want to do in life. And, always I would mention priest, not number one but maybe second, maybe third. I also found out that got me special privileges with the sisters, you know, I could hang back and come late to Stations of the Cross and clean the chalkboards and get a little special attention. But I was genuine, I was really thinking about it. And I remember when I was in eighth grade I went to my mother and said “Mom, I want to go into the seminary.” I’m sure her face dropped. She saw that I was so young, in eighth grade. Well that year we had a minor seminary in Dallas and that year, in the summer, the minor seminary, the high school seminary, closed, which for me, I think, was an act of grace as well because I went on to Bishop Lynch Catholic High School. It was a very important time in my formation, where I really learned how to relate with people, grew up, matured a little, discovered girls and developed some friendships there that were very meaningful in my life.

But, after (high school) I still thought about the priesthood and entered Holy Trinity Seminary in Dallas. It was a very important time in my formation, where I really learned how to relate with people, grew up, matured a little, discovered girls and developed some friendships there that were very meaningful in my life. But, after (high school) I still thought about the priesthood and entered Holy Trinity Seminary in Dallas. There, I think, somewhere along the first or second year, I stopped thinking "(Baton Rouge) looks like a good place for me.”

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‘Life of faith’

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

When Bishop Michael G. Duca was installed as the new bishop of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, Shreveport diocesan vicar general Father Rothell Price said he was planning to be there with plenty of tissues.

“I have not given any thought to controlling my emotions. I think I’m going to get in (St. Joseph) Cathedral and the Mass is going to start and I think I’m just going to burst out (makes sobbing noises) and I’m just going to make sure I carry handkerchiefs ... so I can just fall out!” laughed Father Price.

Even in jest, though, the emotions are real and powerful for the vicar general, who referred to Bishop Duca as “a great spiritual father in the best sense of the word.” Father Price has served as vicar general for eight of the 10 years that Bishop Duca has been bishop of the Diocese of Shreveport. He said Bishop Duca is “just a wonderful man, a great guy.”

In describing the bishop, Father Price said the first thing that comes to mind is the bishop’s “genuine joy.”

“Life delights him; the life of faith delights and energizes him; but, I think more than anything else, people delight him,” said Father Price. “He loves being with people and he has a reputation that he goes to any parish function, any event people invite him to, and he’s one of the first ones at the reception and he’s one of the last ones to leave. He really likes being in the company of people.”

The bishop, according to Father Price, also enjoys entertaining and cooking for others, including the diocesan priests, whether it was making breakfasts or even recruiting a few to assist in making the bishop’s famous Italian sausage.

“He gets you there at the counter and he’s got his ground meat in there in the bowl,” recalled Father Price. “He says, ‘Stick your hands out,’ and you put your hands over the bowl and he pours olive oil over your hands and a little on the meat. ‘Now, knead that.’ Then, he turns around with his back to you and he’s peeking over his shoulder as he’s putting in his quantities of herbs and spices. He doesn’t mind you knowing what he uses but he’s not giving away the family recipe. So he will turn around and dump it in there and then say, ‘Work that in there’ ... And, while we’re doing that he is converting the machine from grinding function to stuffing function. So now we’re stuffing sausage. And then once it’s all done he’ll say, ‘OK, now it’s time for the tasting.’”

Father Price said if the sausage does not pass the bishop’s lofty standards, the bishop will continue to work on adjusting the spices and will only distribute “the good batches,” keeping the inferior product himself.

Such attention to detail translates to the bishop’s spiritual life as well, according to Father Price, who said Bishop Duca has a strong relationship with the Lord.

“He really believes in and has a real clear understanding of the mission of the church, and the mission of the church is to proclaim the good news,” said Father Price. “He really has a wonderful way of preaching that is energizing, it’s engaging and it’s things that stick with you, so you have stuff to feast on long after the homily has been completed.”

Father Price and the bishop have shed many tears over the bishop’s departure from the Diocese of Shreveport, but the bishop is also excited about the opportunity to be the sixth bishop in the Diocese of Baton Rouge, the vicar general said.

“It’s exactly like pastors who have been in a parish and they get a new assignment,” said Father Price. “They’re excited about their new assignment but they’re terribly sad about leaving these people that they have formed a bond with, that they become family with.”

Father Price said one of the biggest lessons he learned from Bishop Duca was to be attentive to the person or the circumstances and doing what is in the “spiritual advantage of the person in front of you, "
Our Vincentian Family in the Diocese of Baton Rouge Welcomes Bishop Michael G. Duca

We look forward to working with you in service to those in need throughout our Diocese. Together, we will feed the poor, clothe the naked, and shelter the homeless.

We promise to be faithful in our commitment to grow in holiness as we witness God’s love by embracing all works of charity and justice. We will continue our collaboration with other people of goodwill in relieving need and addressing its causes, making no distinction in those served, because in them, we see the face of Christ.
Holy Ghost Catholic Church & School and Dominican Friars of Hammond join in the Baton Rouge community in joyful welcoming

Most Reverend Bishop Michael G. Duca, 6th Bishop Of the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

We are privileged and grateful to have you as our shepherd. We pray that the blessing and guidance of God may be with you always, especially as you lead our Diocese

“The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you, the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.” – Numbers 6:24-26

601 North Oak Street, Hammond, LA 70401 • www.hgchurch.org
Bishop Duca brings personal touch to clergy

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

When Father Matthew Long was ordained a priest in 2009 for the Diocese of Shreveport, it was the first ordination performed by Bishop Michael G. Duca who had taken over the diocese one year earlier. It was not the first encounter of the two men. When Father Long was still a seminarian at St. Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in Indiana, studying for the Shreveport diocese, he sent a congratulatory note to Bishop Duca about the bishop's new appointment.

"By the end of that week he had phoned me and we had our first conversation and it was so exciting because here was the man who was going to be our bishop taking a personal interest in a seminarian," recalled Father Long. "And from that moment on I think it was just the start of the type of relationship that he tries to cultivate with his seminarians and with his priests."

According to Father Long, that personal touch from the bishop never waned even on points of disagreement or discord. He credits Bishop Duca's unwavering support with "helping me to become the priest that the people of God need here in our diocese."

"I always knew that no matter what was going on, that I had his full support," said Father Long. "Now, there are limits to that, you know if we're doing something immoral or illegal, he is not going to support us, but he always had our (priests') backs."

Father Long said he'll miss that support and the accessibility of the bishop, who was always readily available "any day of the week or even using text or a phone call, if something is really going on when he's out of town, to seek his advice."

The bishop also made sure he was accessible to the faithful of the Diocese of Shreveport. According to Father Long, Bishop Duca would always take the time during visits to parishes and schools to "be there and be present" and stay as long as possible in order to visit with people.

"He's an amazing shepherd to the people," said Father Long. "I think if there was one word to describe him it would be openness. He's not afraid to do what Pope Francis asks all of us to do, which is to be

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Congratulations and Best Wishes

Bishop Michael G. Duca

May the Lord Bless You With Every Grace and Blessing As You Begin Your New Ministry

From Bishop Louis F. Kihneman and the Priests, Deacons, Religious and Laity of the Diocese of Biloxi

The Catholic Church in East St. James Parish, St. Michael the Archangel, St. Joseph and Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, offer greetings to our new chief shepherd, Bishop Michael Duca.

We pray that your time serving in the Diocese of Baton Rouge will be spirit-filled and a source of grace for all God's people.

May we all grow together in Christ’s love.
Cooking binds friends, bishop

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

For Joe and Ann Fertitta of Shreveport, getting to know Bishop G. Michael Duca during the past 10 years has been like getting to know a long-distance family member who finally moved into the house next door. Not only do Joe Fertitta and the bishop share a family history and traditions, but a strong faith in God and devotion to the Catholic faith.

“Basically, he’s always himself, what you see is what you get,” said Joe. “He has a personality of being your best friend, being your best confessor, being the person you want to be around in church.”

“He’s powerful, he’s a strong man,” said Ann Fertitta. “He has a golden heart and a basket full of reality. He’s down to earth. He’s just so welcoming but it’s not fake, it’s not fake at all. He is just golden.”

The Fertittas, like Bishop Duca, were members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher and had met Bishop Duca before he was appointed to lead the Diocese of Shreveport. The bishop asked the Fertittas to participate in the ordination in Shreveport. Almost immediately, the discovery of common ground forged a strong friendship between the couple and the bishop.

Each year, the Fertittas have hosted a Thanksgiving dinner for the 30 priests in the Diocese of Shreveport but after selling their restaurant in 2017, the family had to recruit family members to serve as wait staff and servers and moved the dinner to the Catholic Center.

“It was just a great evening and probably one of the most fun times we have had in a long time,” said Joe. “You do catering jobs for people and, you know, you get involved with the food and with serving it … but, these guys are priests we know.”

Baton Rouge is getting a wonderful bishop and they will just melt because that’s what he pretty much did to everyone (here),” said Ann. “I’ve never heard anyone say anything negative against the bishop in 10 years.”

The Fertittas recalled “so many good occasions we have been with him” and have formed a strong bond with the bishop’s family, including his two sisters who have been to Shreveport for visits. And, there will always be fond memories from around the supper table. As far as a goodbye dinner, Joe knows exactly what he would cook for Bishop Duca.

“He likes fish a lot, and he likes seafood, so if I could find some fresh scallops, that’s under 10 to a pound, and

Sicily, worked in the food industry, with Fertitta’s father selling imported items from the business of Bishop Duca’s family in Dallas, which is located just three hours away from Shreveport on I-20.

“I kind of knew the family name but I didn’t know him and then one day I walk into the store on a Saturday with one of my daughters and we walk in and there’s a picture of the bishop hanging there on the wall and I said, ‘Now I put it together,’ ” recalled Joe.

A love of food and a love of cooking also strengthened the bond between the bishop and the Fertittas, who once owned a popular restaurant in Shreveport.

“You know, he’s the best Italian sausage maker in this part of the country,” said Joe, who said the bishop often makes his famous sausage for parties as fundraisers and even shows others how to make it.

“You know, (the bishop) teaches us the church and the Bible and the Mass and everything, but then he teaches how to cook a little bit, so that makes it fun. I’ll cook pasta. He says I do my pasta different than his mother and I said, ‘Well, every grandmother gave us a different recipe,’ ” laughed Joe.

The two men even share a favorite wine, made from the Nero d’Avola grape, found in the Sicily region.
The Catholic Commentator

May God’s blessings be on Bishop Michael Duca as he begins his ministry as Bishop of Baton Rouge.

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Bishop Michael G. Duca’s impact on the Hispanic community in the Diocese of Shreveport will be long lasting, and one that is likely to be remembered with a special fondness.

Rosalba Quiroz, director of Hispanic Catholic Ministry for the Shreveport diocese, experienced the full gamut of emotions, from boisterous laughter to tears of sadness, as she recalled the past 10 years she served with Bishop Duca.

“Where do we start?” she said with a chuckle. “He’s a person very close to us, not just as a bishop but a friend, somebody that was very approachable. He’s been very close to (the Hispanic community) since the very day he got here. He has been proactive.”

Quiroz said the bishop has enhanced the services she had previously started within the ministry. She recalled how he was always open to visiting with families and individuals in the Hispanic community and attended as many of their events as possible, and always making a point to visit every table.

She was also quick to point out how the children all loved him and gravitated to him.

“It is very important that a bishop is close to Hispanics because when they come (to the United States) many of them feel very out of place,” Quiroz said. “They know the church is one of the places they feel safe, so it is very important that we make them feel welcome. Bishop Duca does that.”

The bishop said it should be a priority to reach out to the Hispanic community and provide them with opportunities to connect to the church and feel as if they are part of the church. He said welcoming Hispanics as brothers and sisters in Christ is a critical part of the mission, although he pointed out some of the challenges in a society that is polarized on immigration policies.

“Now this is where a lot of things get mixed up,” the bishop admitted. “Politics getting mixed up in here and people’s opinions about immigration.

“As Catholics we cannot forget that (the Hispanic community) are the members of the body of Christ,” he added. “These are our brothers and sisters. And we’re really not embracing the missions of Jesus until we really have a way of inviting them in and giving them a place around the table.”

 Quiroz said because of that genuine concern, the bishop is treated with respect among the Hispanic community, with people always trying to find ways to kiss his ring or his hand. She added the community has taken pride in the fact that he is so close to them and always takes the time to visit.

That type of support has also played a significant role in the success of the ministry, Quiroz said.

“He’s very approachable so when we come to him for a specific need on how

SEE QUIROZ PAGE 11B
Bishop Duca’s coat of arms honors St. Joseph

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Bishop Michael G. Duca’s new coat of arms joins the rich symbols of things reflecting his identity and goals with his new role as shepherd of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, according to Father Paul Counce, Judicial Vicar for the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

The bishop’s coat of arms was designed by Deacon Paul Sullivan, director of deacons for the Diocese of Providence, Rhode Island, who also designed the coat of arms for Bishop Robert W. Muench, Archbishop Alfred C. Hughes when he was bishop of the Baton Rouge diocese and Bishop Joseph V. Sullivan.

Father Counce noted the bishop’s coat of arms is composed of a shield, which is central and the most important part of the design and tells to whom the design belongs. The shield is framed by external ornamentation, which is a galero, or green hat that indicates his rank. A bishop’s galero is dark green with six tassels on each side. The color originated in Spain, where bishops formerly wore green hats.

Father Counce noted Bishop Duca’s coat of arms is divided in half.

“The left side of (Bishop Duca’s) coat of arms is changed from the coat of arms of the Diocese of Shreveport (where he was formerly shepherd) to the Diocese of Baton Rouge. On the right side is his personal coat of arms,” said Father Counce.

The coat of arms of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, which was designed in 1961 by Bishop Robert E. Tracy, the diocese’s first bishop, with assistance from W.F.J. Ryan and Msgr. Patrick J. Gillespie, consists of a yellow field on which are placed a red scepter between two arrowheads to signify the name of the See.

Stories say a red pole was planted on the high ground overlooking the Mississippi River marking the boundary between the territories of the Muskogean and Choctaw Native American tribes. Seeing this, early French explorers called the site “Baton Rouge,” which is French for “Red Stick.” In the coat of arms’ design, the two Indian arrowheads and the red scepter are used to cant (“play on”) the location where the diocese is now headquartered. The red and the yellow of the field are those of Spain, which ruled Louisiana as a colonial power for a significant part of its history. The red scepter signifies the royal status of Christ the King and “that we are his subjects,” Father Counce said.

The upper portion of the design, called “a chief,” is blue, for the Blessed Virgin Mary, and is “embattled” with a castle like border that reflect the towers and the upper structures of the Old State Capitol building. The gold fleur-de-lis in the chief are taken from the arms of Baton Rouge’s mother See, the Archdiocese of New Orleans, and also honors the French heritage of Louisiana.

For his personal coat of arms, Bishop Duca retained the design that he assumed when he was installed as bishop of the Diocese of Shreveport in 2008. Deacon Sullivan also designed that coat of arms.

The bishop’s coat of arms are divided into four quarters. The upper left quarter is silver and contains a representation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. For his personal coat of arms, Bishop Duca’s belief “That all we do as Christians is motivated by true and complete confidence in God’s promise of salvation.”

Welcome

Fr. Jamin David and all of the faithful of St. Margaret, Queen of Scotland Parish are so pleased to welcome Bishop Michael Duca to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge.

Congratulations and Prayerful Best Wishes!
Bishop Michael G. Duca has the gentle, personable approach that is perfect for helping families navigate modern society, according to David and Lauren Merrick of Shreveport, whose family grew close to Bishop Duca during his time with the Diocese of Shreveport.

The Merricks got to know Bishop Duca when they approached him about bringing the Domestic Church, an organization devoted to fostering spirituality and holiness in the family, to the Diocese of Shreveport. The Domestic Church also exists in Baton Rouge.

“He was excited about it,” said David Merrick. In fact, part of the element is that we have a priest at our monthly meetings. He (Bishop Duca) said ‘I’ll be the priest for you guys with Domestic Church.’ And we really got to know him.

The Domestic Church has social gatherings, which Bishop Duca sometimes hosted at his residence. Lauren Merrick said, “He’d cook for us and he’d prepare Italian sausage and the bread and it was a feast. It was great.” “The Italian sausage was as good as it ever got,” laughed David Merrick.

The Merricks described Bishop Duca as a faithful shepherd who is kind and in love with Jesus. “He’s not this authoritative rule giver, but he lets God guide him and is a faithful follower if Christ,” said Lauren Merrick.

“He’s very down to earth. I think he’s easy to talk to and he’s interested in you and he’s not just shaking hands and moving on, he really cares about you. And people know that he likes to develop relationships with people and will ask how your kids are doing and gets to really know people.”

When couples would gather for Domestic Church and discuss how they’ve been doing in the past month, they would sometimes beat themselves up. Lauren Merrick, “He (Bishop Duca) would say ‘Just relax, you know you are striving goodness for holiness. Just assess where you’re at but be good to yourselves.’ He’s very good with being real with you.” They said Bishop Duca will be a natural fit with the Baton Rouge diocese and encourage people to put their heart into what they do, rely on the Holy Spirit and accept God’s grace in the situation.

David Merrick, whose brother is Father Andrew Merrick, director of vocations for the Diocese of Baton Rouge, said Bishop Duca should be a natural draw for vocations because of his love of children.

“The Merricks desribed Bishop Michael G. Duca as a faithful shepherd and someone in love with Jesus.

“We want to foster vocations in our family,” said David Merrick. “And we all have one in life, and whether it’s a vocation to married life or whatever — it’s important to have our children in the presence of a priest and bishop who are very happy and fulfilled because they are responding to God’s call.”

According to the Merricks, Bishop Duca, who is enamored with the New Orleans Saints, will, no doubt, be in the midst of people “rooting on the team,” especially when it comes to the Catholic Church and its families.
Bishop Duca's vision led to formation of CCS

By Lucy Medvec
Catholic Charities of North Louisiana

When Bishop Michael G. Duca arrived in 2008 as the second bishop of the Diocese of Shreveport, he was surprised to see that there was not a Catholic Charities agency in northern Louisiana. Up until that time, outreach in the community had taken place through Christian Service and at the parish level through the works of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Bishop Duca envisioned the formation of Catholic Charities as the Diocese of Shreveport's response to helping those in need and being an agent of positive change in the lives of those being served.

Jean Dresley, Catholic Charities' first executive director, and current director of Mission Engagement for Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, remembers seeing the position advertised in her parish bulletin. After several weeks of contemplation, she applied for the position and went through the interview process. In her second interview, she met with Bishop Duca and was offered the job at the end of the interview. She recalls feeling “scared to death” at the time, but also believed that “God was pulling me to this moment to use whatever small gifts I had to serve him.” With a new executive director in place, Catholic Charities of Shreveport (CCS) opened its doors in August 2010.

In the early days of the organization, Dresley received guidance and mentoring from both Bishop Duca and Sister Pat Cairns. Sister Cairns had supervised two other Catholic Charities agencies and understood the challenges of a young organization. Dresley credits Sister Cairns' experience and presence during this time as making a huge difference in the success of Catholic Charities.

Some of the initial challenges CCS faced included forming a board of directors, finding a place to start serving clients and most important, securing funding for the organization. Dresley began seeing clients immediately and it soon became apparent that CCS would need its own location. The organization moved into the rectory and sanctuary of the former St. Catherine of Siena Church in one of Shreveport's poorest areas.

As the organization grew, so did its service area, expanding across the Diocese of Shreveport's 16 civil parishes. Catholic Charities of Shreveport changed its name to Catholic Charities of North Louisiana in 2014, with satellite offices opening in Lake Providence and Monroe. Under the guidance of its current executive director, Meg Goorley, CCNLA has expanded its staff to nine full-time and six part-time employees, and provided services to over 3,500 people in 2017.

“Sometimes it takes a fresh set of eyes to see how to fix a problem,” explained Goorley. “Ten years ago when Bishop Duca arrived, he could immediately see that the Diocese of Shreveport was in the middle of one of the poorest sections of Louisiana and he was committed to doing something about it. Because he knew that Catholic Charities in Fort Worth and Dallas were effectively helping the poor and vulnerable, Bishop Duca laid the groundwork for Catholic Charities of Shreveport by hiring Jean Dresley to create an organization worthy of its name.”

Throughout its existence, Bishop Duca has been unwavering in his support of Catholic Charities of North Louisiana. Whether it is giving much-needed financial support, donating his time and culinary skills as auction items, calling bingo numbers at our annual fundraisers or just lending words of advice, he has been the organization's number one cheerleader.

Because of his vision and actions, thousands of people throughout north Louisiana have received education and assistance through Catholic Charities' many programs, including Money School financial literacy, emergency assistance, and much more.
Bishop has ‘a gleam in his eye’

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

LSU fans still talk about how deceased running back and Heisman Trophy winner Billy Cannon returned an 89-yard punt against Ole Miss that helped the Tigers come from behind and defeat the Rebels on Halloween night in 1959. In the same way, Bishop Michael G. Duca, who was installed as the Diocese of Baton Rouge’s sixth bishop on Aug. 24, is memorable for stepping into people’s lives with his friendship and spiritual presence, said long-time friend Ken Ardoin.

In an interview with The Catholic Commentator in Dallas, Ardoin, who is originally from Lafayette, talked about how Bishop Duca embraced the people he has served and what the people of the Diocese of Baton Rouge can look forward to.

Ardoin, who has known Bishop Duca since 1977, said he first met Bishop Duca at All Saints church in Dallas. Bishop Duca was assigned as parochial vicar to the new church.

“The first meeting I had was when he said his first Mass,” said Ardoin. “My first impression of him was he was a young guy. And he came across with quiet enthusiasm. It’s the best way I can describe it. And he had a gleam in his eye. And he always had this smile ... it was almost a mischievous look. You can see him with this little grin. And he was up to speed on things and he loved to participate.”

The bishop’s relationship with Ardoin and his friends started through a newly formed men's club at the parish. Ardoin was the second president and he announced they would give the church a taste of south Louisiana’s culture by having a shrimp boil “funraiser.”

“It was 7 o’clock in the morning and we had all the pots lined up in the back, I had 24 men, four men to a pot and a pot captain,” said Ardoin when Bishop Duca blessed the pots, seasoning and men participating in the boil.

The fundraiser was a big success, with the building seated to capacity, and was held annually for many years.

“He (Bishop Duca) was in and out and intrigued by the boil,” said Ardoin.

At the entertainment portion at the end of the meal, Bishop Duca even delighted people by singing “Barbara Ann.”

As a bishop who loves cooking, many of Bishop Duca’s friendships were seasoned around the table. In a Baton Rouge connection, Ardoin, who is also friends with Tony Pizzaloto, owner of Tony’s Seafood, flew in shrimp for events he was cooking for, and he shared some with Bishop Duca.

The bishop also made many friends on the ball field. When All Saints entered a softball and baseball team in the Catholic League, Bishop Duca participated. He also played soccer.

The bishop also engaged people with his homilies.

“The 7 a.m. daily Mass in the All Saints chapel was packed if people knew Bishop Duca would be the celebrant because they loved his homilies,” said Ardoin.

“I’ve never seen him read any homilies. He usually leaves and gravitate to him.

Welcome!

Bishop Michael G. Duca

Congratulations on your appointment as the sixth Bishop of the Diocese of Baton Rouge
We are delighted to have you as our Shepherd.
May God bless you and your ministry.

ST. PATRICK CATHOLIC CHURCH
Baton Rouge, LA

Best Wishes to Bishop Michael Duca from Bishop J. Douglas Deshotel and the Diocese of Lafayette
Welcome
BISHOP MICHAEL G. DUCA
August 31, 2018

Bishop Michael G. Duca
Diocese of Baton Rouge
Catholic Schools

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Gabriel’s Closet parenting program, healthy eating classes, disaster relief and immigration legal services. The Diocese of Shreveport and all of north Louisiana have benefited from his presence, guidance and leadership. Catholic Charities of North Louisiana is honored to be a part of his legacy.

Thoughts from CCNLA staff members:

“In my interview with Bishop Duca after he offered me the job, he told me to let him know if I ever needed help. He gave me his cell phone number and told me to call him if I needed something. I never needed to use that cell phone number, but it speaks to his commitment to CCNLA and to me personally. I am still humbled that he offered me the job.” – Dresley

“What I will remember most about Bishop Duca is how intelligent he truly is and how carefully he makes decisions by taking into consideration everyone and everything involved. I will always appreciate him giving me the opportunity two years ago to lead this organization which is so close to his heart (and now mine), and I pray that I can continue to uphold his admirable legacy.” – Meg Goorley, Executive Director

“Bishop Duca is an admirable, kind, generous, thoughtful, funny man. In the past few years, I have had the pleasure of getting to know him personally. I am still humbled that he offered me the job.” – Carl Piehl, Diocese of Shreveport, Rektor of Financial Stability

“I am thankful to Bishop Duca for his mission to help those in need, show Christ’s love and start Catholic Charities of North Louisiana. With his continual support of our organization, we have grown from assisting less than 100 the first year to well over 3,000 this past year in three locations.” – Allison Kulbeth, Intake Coordinator

“Because of Bishop Duca’s vision of CCNLA, we have been able to help so many mothers through our Gabriel’s Closet program. What started out as a small program helping just a few mothers, has now blossomed into a bigger program that has helped hundreds of mothers in the past few years. Whenever meeting with Bishop Duca, his kind, caring and humorous characteristics always shine through. We will definitely miss him and wish him nothing but the best in his next journey!” – Suhad Salamah, Benefits Manager and Gabriel’s Closet Coordinator

“Bishop Duca’s immeasurable support of Catholic Charities has allowed us to help thousands of individuals and their families throughout North Louisiana. His enthusiasm and love of people has helped make our annual bingo fundraisers fun and successful events for our organization. His homilies and speeches are always memorable and teach valuable lessons. We were blessed to have him lead our diocese for the past 10 years.” – Lucy Medvec, Director of Development and Communications

“Bishop Duca was the first, and has continued to be one of the most ardent and dedicated supporters of the Immigration Legal Services Program of Catholic Charities of North Louisiana. Words cannot express how grateful we are and how much he will be missed.” – Briana Bianca, Immigration Attorney

“Bishop Duca has been a champion for the poor, the underprivileged and the immigrants in our community. He has been our leader and the backbone of support for Catholic Charities of North Louisiana. Simply put, he is just a wonderful human being and will be greatly missed by our social services community and by those of us who have had the pleasure of getting to know him personally.” – Carl Piehl, Director of Financial Stability

“As a Catholic woman living in the Diocese of Shreveport, I have a great deal of admiration for Bishop Duca. For me, his final words in the promotional video for CCNLA in 2014… when the doorbell rings (at Catholic Charities), I’ll make sure there is somebody there to answer that door, every time,’ is a moment of blessing. I am also very grateful to him for being so clear in his stand on the side of immigrants and for showing Christian love towards them.” – Gilda Rada-Garcia, Immigration Advocate

“Bishop Duca has impressed me greatly over the years with his humility, approachability and wisdom. While his preaching and conversation are extremely practical and relatable, his insights into the person of Jesus Christ and his confident proclamation of the Gospel consistently inspire me to greater zeal and love for God. I am grateful for his constant support of Catholic Charities, as well as his ecumenical work and other endeavors around the diocese, but especially for his witness as a man of God, a man of faith, and a servant of the people.” – Joe Bulger, Case Manager

**CONGRATULATIONS**

**AND PRAYERFUL BEST WISHES TO**

**Most Rev. Michael G. Duca**

**SIXTH BISHOP OF THE**

**DIOCESE OF BATON ROUGE**

**MAY YOU ENJOY**

**GOD’S GRACE AND BLESSINGS**

**IN THE YEARS AHEAD**

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**FERTITTA**

From page 88

they were a real nice big size, I would sever them for him and I would put them in a broth of fresh fennel, a little tomato, a little saffron and put it over a little pas-
The Diocese of Baton Rouge WELCOMES YOU

Congratulations Bishop Duca

The Staff of The Catholic Life Center
Bishop helps others answer the call

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Bishop Michael G. Duca’s experience in fostering religious vocations as well as his expressed interest in supporting the clergy in the Diocese of Baton Rouge show his commitment to helping people answer the call to priesthood and religious life, according to friend Father Tony Densmore, pastor of St. Anthony Church in Wiley, Texas.

Bishop Duca attended Holy Trinity Seminary in Dallas from 1970-1978. He has served as the director of vocations and was rector at Holy Trinity Seminary from 1996-2008 before being appointed bishop of the Diocese of Shreveport.

In Louisiana, Bishop Duca serves on the board of trustees to Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans and St. Joseph Seminary College in Covington.

Father Densmore said he met Bishop Duca during his later years of seminary.

“He made you feel very comfortable,” said Father Densmore, who at the time was studying for his masters of divinity degree at St. Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in Indiana while Bishop Duca was serving as vocations director.

The priest described Bishop Duca as humble, but at the same time forward looking.

Father Densmore said Bishop Duca made many improvements at Holy Trinity under his leadership, as the seminary had one of the most favorable reports from Vatican officials following their visits to seminaries in the United States while he was rector. And not long after that he was appointed the bishop of the Diocese of Shreveport.

Bishop Duca’s leadership style is based on respect and friendship, said Father Densmore.

“He has a very genuine personality,” said Father Densmore. “I felt very supported.”

Describing Bishop Duca as “very generous,” Father Densmore said, “He had no airs. He was very sociable.”

Father Densmore, who attended Bishop Duca’s installation in Shreveport, remembered the bishop talked about religious vocations from the onset by noting that some people don’t encourage their sons to pursue a vocation to the priesthood. He asked that with priests spending their lives serving and loving others as the tangible presence of Christ, “Why don’t you want your son to be that kind of person?”

“That made an impression on me,” said Father Densmore, who believes it was also an affirmation to all ordained priests.

“I put that in my back pocket when I talk about vocations,” said Densmore.

He said appointing Bishop Duca as shepherd of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, which has a larger Catholic population than the Diocese of Shreveport, is an affirmation of his role as a bishop. Father Densmore, who plans to attend the installation, said he recommends to Bishop Duca that he “be the person that he is, because that’s what makes him special.”

The 136,894 Catholics in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Lubbock, Texas, their priests, deacons, women religious, and

Most Rev. Robert Coerver
Bishop of Lubbock

pray God’s richest blessings upon

Bishop Michael Duca

and their brother and sister Catholics in the Diocese of Baton Rouge

on his installation as Sixth Bishop of Baton Rouge.

MAY GOD CONTINUE TO BLESS YOU!
La Comunidad Hispana, especial para el Obispo Duca

Por Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

El impacto del Obispo Michael G. Duca en la comunidad hispana de la Diócesis de Shreveport va a perdurar por mucho tiempo, y seguramente será recordado con un cariño especial.

Rosalba Quiroz, directora de la Oficina del Ministerio Hispano de Shreveport experimentó toda la gama de emociones, de fuertes risas a lágrimas de tristeza, cuando recuerda los pasados diez años que sirvió con el Obispo Duca.

“Donde empezamos? Dijo con una pequeña risa. “El es una persona muy cercana a nosotros, no sólo como obispo, pero como un amigo, alguien que es muy accesible. El ha estado muy cercano (a la comunidad hispana) desde el día que llegó aquí. El ha sido proactivo.”

Quiroz dijo que el obispo ha realzado los servicios iniciados en el ministerio. Ella recuerda cómo el siempre ha estado abierto a visitar a las familias e individuos de la comunidad hispana y ha atendido muchos de los eventos posibles, haciendo hincapié en visitar cada mesa.

También fue rápida al comentar como los niños lo querían mucho y siempre estaban gravitando a su alrededor.

“Es muy importante que un obispo este cerca de los hispanos, porque cuando ellos llegan (a los Estados Unidos) muchos se sienten fuera de lugar”, dijo Quiroz “Ellos saben que la iglesia es uno de los lugares donde se sienten seguros, así que es importante que se sientan que son bienvenidos. El Obispo Duca hace eso”.

El obispo dijo que para él sería una prioridad acercarse a la comunidad hispana para darles la oportunidad de conectarse con la iglesia y hacerlos sentir como parte de la iglesia. Dijo que darles la bienvenida a los hispanos como hermanos y hermanas en Cristo, es una parte crítica de la misión, aunque apuntó algunos de los retos en una sociedad que está polarizada en cuanto a políticas de inmigración.
“Ahora, es ahí cuando muchas cosas se confunden. Admitió el obispo que la política se confunde aquí, con la opinión de la gente acerca de inmigración. "Como católicos no podemos olvidar que (la comunidad hispana) son miembros del cuerpo de Cristo" el agregó. "Estos son nuestros hermanos y hermanas." "Y realmente no estamos abrazando la misión de Jesús hasta que no tengamos una forma de invitarlos y darles un lugar en la mesa."

Quiroz dijo que por esa preocupación genuina, el obispo es tratado con mucho respeto en la comunidad hispana, con gente siempre tratando de encontrar formas de besarle el anillo o su mano. Ella agregó que la comunidad está orgullosa del hecho de que él esté tan cercano a ellos, y siempre se da el tiempo de visitarlos. "Ese tipo de apoyo ha jugado un papel importante en el éxito del ministerio", dijo Quiroz.

El es muy accesible, así que cuando venimos a el con una necesidad especial de cómo podemos ayudar a una persona o a un grupo en especial, o señalamos una necesidad, él nos da el apoyo en cuánto a lo que podemos hacer "dijo ella. El Obispo Duca entiende las necesidades únicas de la población hispana y esta siempre receptivo en cuanto a cómo se pueden resolver esas necesidades, dijo Quiroz. “Pienso que es una de las bendiciones que hemos tenido aquí y eso es una gran ventaja que él tiene” ella agregó. “El es muy sensible y preocupado acerca (de nuestras necesidades). El esta muy cercano a nosotros y juntos sentimos que trabajamos como equipo con él”.

Dijo que siempre que intentó llamarlo o ponerse en contacto con el por e-mail, el siempre respondió. Dijo Quiroz que ella le enviaba su calendario anual al Obisp Duca y que él seleccionaba las fechas en que podría atender, no solamente confirmaciones, pero muchos eventos familiares y de la comunidad también. Y mientras estaba en esos eventos, el obispo siempre se comunicaba en inglés y español.

Cuando celebraba la misa para la comunidad hispana, frecuentemente hacía su homilía en español también. El obispo Duca decía que él podía hacer un sermón en español sin el tiempo adecuado o dar uno en español que haya sido preparado para él. “Pero tengo dificultad en hablar el español espontáneamente”, agregó el obispo, quien ha requerido que varios sacerdotes en la diócesis de Shreveport aprendan y hablen el español, “pero tengo un amor por la gente hispana y realmente quiero que sean parte (de la iglesia).”

Quiroz dijo que el obispo disfruta estando entre la gente y dio palabras de aliento para Julia Scarnato, directora del Apostolado de Baton Rouge, diciendo que ella va a disfrutar con el Obispo Duca. Quiroz reconoció que los retos para Scarnato son muy exigentes, incluyendo el servicio a la diócesis con un número limitado de sacerdotes que hablan español. Pero Quiroz cree que el Obispo Duca va a tomar medidas para asegurar que las parroquias de habla española en la Diócesis vayan a ser apoyadas por sacerdotes que hablan el idioma fluido.

Dijo que la Diócesis de Baton Rouge es afortunada en tener “tantos abogados de inmigración que hablan el español e inglés fluido, así como la ventaja de tener a Caridades Católicas de Baton Rouge y al Apostolado Hispano sirviendo a la comunidad hispana. Por ahora, el periodo de duelo para Quiroz continua, ya extrañando a su amigo, a su jefe, y a su compañero de cenas ocasionales.

“Vamos a tener un gran vacío y siempre vamos a tener un gran vacío por el “dijo “Como he dicho, él siempre ha sido accesible, amigable, humilde y graciosos. Perdemos a un amigo y desde luego, nuestro pastor, me gusto desde el principio”.

Welcome 
BISHOP DUCA

Praying your new assignment in the Diocese of Baton Rouge will be a source of joy for you.
May God give you peace of mind and heart as you continue to faithfully carry out God’s will.

Congratulations and Welcome!

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Bishop Michael G. Duca never hesitates to pose for selfies.

PRICE ▼
From page 48

their best interest.”

“You know, I think I was doing that before but I think he has taken me to much greater heights and being aware of that and then acting on that. What is in the best spiritual interest of this person?” said Father Price.

In spite of the anticipated tears at the bishop’s installment in the Diocese of Baton Rouge, Father Price said he will also be happy for the people of Baton Rouge.

“I really, really mean it when I say that the people of the Diocese of Baton Rouge are really getting a wonderful bishop,” said Father Price. “He loves priests. He loves people and he loves being around people. You know he is what Pope Francis has talked about in shepherds that, you know, when the situation warrants he’s out in front, leading the flock when the circumstances require it; he is behind the flock urging them forward and picking up stragglers; sometimes, he’s right in the thick of things and other times, he’s on the left or the right flank so he doesn’t have a fixed position. He moves where the spirit tells him; he is where you need him to be to the benefit of these people.”

CONGRATULATIONS AND BLESSINGS TO

BISHOP MICHAEL G. DUCA

NATIVE SON AND PRIEST OF THE DIOCESE OF DALLAS AS YOU BEGIN YOUR NEW MINISTRY AS THE BISHOP OF BATON ROUGE

BISHOP EDWARD J. BURNS

AND BISHOP GREGORY KELLY ALONG WITH THE CLERGY, RELIGIOUS AND LAY FAITHFUL OF THE DIOCESE OF DALLAS PRAY THAT GOD WILL ABUNDANTLY BLESS YOU WITH GREAT HEALTH, WISDOM AND HAPPINESS
doesn't stay behind a podium and walks out, and he's telling what's on his heart. And he usually incorporated into it the experiences he had with people or when he was growing up," he added.

Ardoin described Bishop Duca as one of the most unique spiritual leaders he has ever met.

"He's engaging. I don't believe in all these years he has ever demonstrated a loss of temper. I'm sure he's human like all of us, but I've never seem him have a loss of temper ... He's never abrasive and he can diffuse things with his mannerism. And what's special about him is he really has lived life. You know his Italian family is big, and you know you can't have families with that many brothers and sisters and all that and not have a spat. But he's learned something through this and knows how to maneuver life.

"Where he's been, (from Dallas to Shreveport to Baton Rouge). I compare him a lot to Billy Cannon's story – wherever he's been he's never forgotten."

Ardoin, who planned to attend Bishop Duca's installation, said, "My message to Baton Rouge is, as we say in Lafayette, 'laissez les bon temps rouler with Mike Duca.' Baton Rouge is getting a fine bishop in ways that you can't isolate in any one term. You're getting a man, you're getting a person that loves families and reaches out to people and families. And they will want to reciprocate."
The Catholic Commentator

ARCHDIOCESE OF LOUISVILLE
archlou.org

Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz and the clergy, religious, and lay faithful of the Archdiocese of Louisville send congratulations and prayerful best wishes to Bishop Michael G. Duca on his installation as the sixth Bishop of the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

RINAUDO ▼
From page 2B

I have been blessed to have a bishop who always supports our magazine, always looks over each issue before it goes to press. He has written articles each month without fail, even when I had to chase him down at deadline time and knock on his office door, or call for him as he ran past my office door, his hand in front of his face yelling, “I know! I know! I’m working on it!”

Bishop Duca has taught me much, most importantly how to be a gracious servant of the Lord and listen with compassion in both difficult times and in the good ones. I am truly grateful to have worked with him these 10 years. He has been a pastor, a supervisor, a friend. I wish him the very best in Baton Rouge.

Rinaudo is editor of The Catholic Connection magazine, the official diocesan magazine for the Diocese of Shreveport.

LONG ▼
From page 7B

amongst the sheep.”

Father Long said the bishop is loved throughout the 16 parishes of the Diocese of Shreveport, and many are sad to say good-bye. The bishop was truly “embraced” by the faithful. Farewell Masses followed by a reception for the bishop were held in each of the three deaneries of the Shreveport diocese, the weekend before his installation in Baton Rouge.

Father Long also credits Bishop Duca with the increase in vocations in the northwestern portion of the state, with regular ordinations for the past six years. Father Long expects the openness, accessibility and compassion that Bishop Duca has shown during the past 10 years, to continue in the next 10.

“I would tell (priests in the Diocese of Baton Rouge) to trust him, to trust his judgment and to trust his wisdom, that every decision that he makes, he carefully discerned,” said Father Long. “And even when I did not agree with what he initially told me, it was only upon further reflection in my own life that I realized that it truly was the will of God and that he was following the direction of the Holy Spirit and that he will never do anything that is harmful to a priest or to a parish or to people; that he always takes all three of those things into consideration before he makes any decision.”

Bishop Michael G. Duca enjoys visiting families in their homes.
declined. Today, he continues to celebrate weddings, baptisms and funerals.

Bishop Duca even recently traveled to Italy to baptize his niece.

And he’s always just a phone call away, no matter the time, according to his relatives. Mike DiCarlo recalls once calling the bishop at 2 a.m., when experiencing personal challenges and his cousin was there to advise and console.

Paul DiCarlo said his best memories are when he decided to get married and Bishop Duca guided him through the process. He said that Bishop Duca, who has become quite the bocce ball player, helped he and fiancé prepare for marriage and that his cousin was there to advise and console.

Bishop Duca has celebrity status when visiting Jimmy’s, with people greeting him and asking him to pose for selfies. Mike DiCarlo said people are drawn to the bishop, because of his integrity as a priest and bishop.

“He’s just a very charismatic person without being charismatic,” he said. “People feel very confident around him. He’s just that kind of person.

“She’s very spiritual. To me part of being a good priest is being Christ like, and not just when he’s at church. I can honestly say I’ve never heard anybody say one bad thing about him.”

Francis said her cousin treats everyone with the same respect and never refuses to talk to anybody. She recalls once when Bishop Duca was attempting to leave the store and beat the nightmarish Dallas traffic when someone stopped to talk to him. Naturally, she said he stayed and spoke to the person.

“He wants to leave but you don’t get the sense that he’s in a hurry,” she added. “That’s one of the best things I like about him; he’s genuine. And he was born that way, has always been very good and a nice man.

“Baton Rouge is just very fortunate to get him and they’re going to love him. It’s not going to take long at all for them to love him. And he’ll love them too.”
about if I wanted to be a priest and began to fully focus on becoming a priest.

Was there a deciding point or was it just a progression?

It was a progression. I’d describe it as like walking down the hallway as my vocation path. And I would see at the end a door or a wall, like that. “OK, if I can’t get over this question I’m going to have to end.” But, when I got to that point, there was a turn. There was another answer, another insight that I had. I think God had been calling me to this. And so it just was a matter of me kind of quietly accepting it but also it wasn’t hard to accept because I saw myself reflecting the person who I was as someone who could easily fit into this ministry. My parents were very supportive of my vocation although they were also very kind of hands-off so they said, “If this is what you want to do, fine – we’re behind you, but if you want to stop at any time, we’re behind you.”

It was only at the time of my actual ordination that I got the full kind of joy they had for me becoming a priest. My mother especially; my dad, too, was very proud. But, they kind of held back so they would not influence me.

How enjoyable was it to be able to work in Jimmy’s, your family’s Italian grocery in Dallas?

Of course, one of the largest influences in your life is always going to be your extended family.

So, growing up, my cousins, we were all very close. When I was 15 years old, I wanted a job and you could not get a job officially until you were 16. My cousins owned a grocery store in Dallas. At that time it was just a neighborhood grocery store. They just moved there a year or two before to (the current) location. And my Aunt Marie said, “Yeah we’ll give you a job over here.” So I went over after school and I did everything (including) sacking groceries and racking bottles. When you returned your bottles for a deposit someone had to divide those up and rack them and put them in order, clean the store, stock the shelves. I would also deliver food to shut-ins in the neighborhood. It was a low-income area with ‘cigar box’ credit, you might say, and that’s where I got my first experience in life, really, because it was kind of a rough neighborhood. I saw the sort of things there that I did not normally see in my daily life. But it was a great connection with family and work.

Working in the low-income area, taking care of the needy, how did that impact your priestly life?

Well, I think it was just something that you care for those in need. It wasn’t even talked about it; you just did it. It was part of what you were expected to do. And, often I could see the way that they dealt with that neighborhood. It was interesting that store, which has been there over 50 years, but in a time when it was a much rougher neighborhood. And, someone could come in and they could charge groceries for that week and pay the next week. You would see at the end a door or a wall, like that. And, one of the largest influences in your life is always going to be your extended family.

It was a progression. I’d describe it as like walking down the hallway as my vocation path. And I would see at the end a door or a wall, like that. “OK, if I can’t get over this question I’m going to have to end.” But, when I got to that point, there was a turn. There was another answer, another insight that I had. I think God had been calling me to this. And so it just was a matter of me kind of quietly accepting it but also it wasn’t hard to accept because I saw myself reflecting the person who I was as someone who could easily fit into this ministry. My parents were very supportive of my vocation although they were also very kind of hands-off so they said, “If this is what you want to do, fine – we’re behind you, but if you want to stop at any time, we’re behind you.”

It was only at the time of my actual ordination that I got the full kind of joy they had for me becoming a priest. My mother especially; my dad, too, was very proud. But, they kind of held back so they would not influence me.

In which sports did you participate in growing up?

I played baseball in eighth grade and football. I was a bit of a heavy backer or stood up and did stuff I think I would have enjoyed it. So, when I got into high school I didn’t pick up any sports after that. But, I should say, after I graduated from high school, a group of guys met from high school. We got together one Saturday and said they’re starting a soccer league. This was 1970. Soccer? What’s soccer? So, we had no idea but we said we’re going to put a team together.

So we did. During that summer and the summers I would come home come home from the seminary, those first few years, we would play soccer, like in a little league in the day in the city of Dallas. I played a little bit of soccer.

You fly fish. What other hobbies do you enjoy?

I do like to fish, that’s really relaxing to me. Just fishing is enough. You know they don’t call it catching, they call it fishing. The fishing part I really like, and I could catch fish, too. But because I vacation up in northern New Mexico quite a bit I’ve picked up fly fishing a little bit more and I enjoy fly fishing. But, also I like bass fishing in lakes. I haven’t done too much deep sea fishing but I’m not set up for that, but that would intrigue me, too, as well. I hear there’s a lot of that and I’m getting closer to that down in Baton Rouge.

Southeast Louisiana, I’m thinking you are going to bring your rod and reel?

Yes, a lot of it needs to be oiled up and put back together again, but yeah, I’m ready to go.
Blessings and Best Wishes to

Bishop Michael G. Duca

Our prayers are with you.

FROM THE

the People

OF THE

Diocese of Shreveport
Welcome
Bishop Michael G. Duca

We’re happy you’re here – We’re glad you’re happy to be here!

The fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Generosity, and Faithfulness
Galatians 5:22

St. Joseph Cathedral
Q I wanted to ask about ministering to the priests. How important is that to you and how do you reach out to your priests?

A Well I try to reach out to my priests by listening to them and giving them a chance and an opportunity to come speak to me whenever they want. So, anytime anyone comes by they could knock on the door and come into the office. And so I’m always available to the priests when they come. I try when I get ready to make assignments to talk to them beforehand and try to see what their desires are, give me some suggestions or tell them where I need them and so we can make things work together. I find it I can get them on board, it makes for a much better transition. Find out which priests are willing to take on a hard job if they need to. I always explain it to them and give them a sense of why it’s important that they be there now. I try to be with them whenever they are in the hospital. I’ll try to visit them and get there as soon as I can and let them know that I will listen to them. I hope they feel that I’m approachable.

I don’t know what it’ll be like in Baton Rouge, in a bigger diocese. The demands are bigger but I can’t imagine changing that policy. I think in this case, every priest would have an open door policy to come by whenever they wanted to.

As you alluded to earlier the Diocese of Baton Rouge has more than 200,000 Catholics. How are you going to be able to get out and meet the people?

A I don’t know. I mean they’ve been asking me those questions. What kind of schedule are you going to keep, what are you going to do, how are you going to eat lunch, or what are you going to do for dinner? And I don’t know yet really because there’s really going to be a different rhythm of life in Baton Rouge. I don’t know how much busier I’m going to be and what times I’ll be available and so I’ll just kind of have to let that develop and get a feel for it.

But my hope is that in the first year or year-and-a-half, I have a chance to visit every parish at least for some event and get to know and meet every priest. When I first arrived in Shreveport, after the first month or so, I’ve had a every priest come by visit me for 30 minutes at least. And so over the course of a month-and-a-half, I encountered every priest in some way or another. And then I tried to get around to every parish to do something, if not for all the Masses, do something in that parish. Probably my first year, I will have a GPS, trying to find these places. I usually drive myself, at least I have here in Shreveport. So, trying to find out where everything is and being there on time will be a major challenge the first year.

How will you keep the balance with work, your personal life, but also your spiritual life?

A Sometimes, I think there is a light heresy that says that there actually is the possibility of bringing perfect balance to your life. It’s not, there’s no way. Ask any mother or father, anyone whose job is demanding. There are times when you have good balance and other times you gotta give 100 percent to the job or 100 percent of the family and let other things go.

And, so I think that that’ll be kind of the way that I start out. I have to tell you that I think a priest’s life or a bishop’s life is blessed because when they get home at night they usually have a quiet home. You might have other priests in the parish but their time is their time. I think a father might come home at night and they had a full day of work, and now they got to start all over again, lovingly, and it’s a good thing but there was no time to put their feet up. And so I think part of the way I balance is to capture those times early in the morning and late at night to catch up on prayer in times like that. Usually, I like to try in the middle of the day after lunch, take 30 minutes or so to say my daytime prayer and kind of take a breather, especially if I’m going to be working into the evening, take a little time after lunch to kind of catch my breath and do some personal things. But again I have to try to find the rhythm here but you know every parish priest, everyone knows, that every day’s different and so you just you keep your focus on the essentials and make sure you make those happen during the day in some way and as long as you take time for prayer, being aware of who you are and how you’re acting and make sure that the Lord is at the center of your life then I think everything just kind of falls into place, even though it may look very messy.

How do you like to relax?

A Well I like to watch movies from time to time. For a while there I got hooked on the Turner Classic channel and was watching a lot of old movies.
I like to get out and walk around. I like to get out in the city, if I can. Sometimes, I like to go out to eat and grab a bite at a restaurant. I like to walk the malls.

I like to just get out because usually I can be (in the office) and not even go outside, you know just stay in the building all day. But I feel disconnected. And so hopefully I’ll be able to get out from time to time. I like to visit with friends. I like cooking.

You are known for your love of cooking. Why do you enjoy getting in the kitchen so much?

It’s kind of a way of relaxing. Here’s the thing about my cooking. I don’t (cook) for anybody else. I cook for myself pretty much and I don’t get too much from recipes. Most of what I cook are simple things like simple pasta dishes and things. I did make sausage in Dallas and in Shreveport, but I don’t think I’m going to be able to do it in Baton Rouge. I used it as a fundraiser and so I would go to someone’s house and make Italian sausage at their house and they would maybe prepare a pasta or something to go along with the evening.

But, all I promised to do was to make the sausage. In Shreveport, I began to invite people over to my house to prepare a less amount and sausage but then I would serve them a meal.

That’s when I found out how hard it is. At that moment, I began to become unbelievably grateful for all the dinners I’ve had from families and my mother that was able to put a dinner on the table in order, hot, and then be present to the guests while they were preparing their meal. I was amazed with what cooks do in the home. It’s hard. It’s not easy to do that.

How important is the pro-life movement to you personally and in your ministry?

That’s very important because it’s the fundamental right in which all other rights are based. If you don’t have a right to life you don’t have a right (to) anything else. And so it’s a right that I want to keep protected but I mostly also want to reach out to the women who are pregnant or the parents who are pregnant and are finding it difficult to see their way through the pregnancy.

So often times people lose hope. They have lack of support, and they have lack of resources and they don’t know how they’re going to make this work. They see their life falling apart. It’s Pope Francis’ idea to reach out and accompany people in their difficulty. Just give people some hope some encouragement. Let them know that you’re with them and that changes. Many people don’t want to have an abortion. They just don’t see another way.

How important is your family connection not only with your cousins but with your two sisters and brother?

It’s just strong. I mean we still are very well connected. Well you know since my parents died a couple of a couple years ago, it’s getting harder now to get together. They were kind of a gathering point. We still get together regularly, I spent (a recent) fishing trip with my brother for the first time in a long time. We actually shared a room and did okay.

Family is very important to me. And I think I approach pastoral ministry with that image as well, that we are one family.

And when you get together with your family, are you Bishop Duca?

Mostly I’m Uncle Mike. To my brothers and sisters, I’m Michael. In public, they’ll call me Uncle Father Mike or Uncle Bishop Mike. Mainly, it’s Uncle Mike.

I just baptized my niece’s first child in Italy about a month ago. That was fun to do. The third generation is coming out and that’s fun.

The one question people ask is who is Bishop Duca?

I think Bishop Duca is a priest, he’s just a pastor. I see my life through that vision, that kind of perspective. And I don’t see myself as a great administrator although over the years I’ve learned how to take care of things and make things work. But I always view things even when I make decisions like that through the pastoral lens and how it’s going to affect not just the priest but the people, how it’s going to affect the future of the diocese and our family and the ministries we have that reach out to the needy. And so I think that’s one thing you’ll know about me.

I’m a man of family. I like connections with people. I tend to look like an extrovert. But I like to be out there. I don’t stand too much on ceremony. Usually I like feel like I’m approachable. I just try to be friendly with everyone I meet. I think pastor is really the one term that sums it up.

Welcome Bishop Duca

We look forward to working alongside you in the communities we are privileged to serve.