SJA kicks off 150th year

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

The grounds of St. Joseph's Academy in Baton Rouge were quiet as a summer sun shone brightly on the school's newest addition, a 23,150-square-foot Student Activity Center. But inside the facility, there was a hubbub of activity as students filled the bleachers and faculty and staff greeted alumnae and visitors for a ribbon-cutting ceremony and special blessing of the new building that kicked off the school's year-long 150th Anniversary Celebration.

“I'm happy to be with you today for many reasons,” said Bishop Robert W. Muench. “One of which is I celebrate with you something that is twice as old as I am! It makes me feel young.”

The planning stages of the $6.7 million activity center began four years ago following a study revealing the former activity center was not large enough to accommodate the school's 1,110 students, let alone any parents, at a single gathering.

The new student activity center also includes a training facility and workout rooms with state-of-the-art equipment. But, it's the ability to bring everyone together, under one roof, that has generated the most excitement.

“We knew we needed a place where we could gather as a whole community to be able to invite parents to come participate in Masses and celebrations including alumnae or community members,” said Suzie Toups Adler, president of the SJA board of directors and chairman of the 150th Anniversary Celebration.

The timing of the completion of the building was not planned in the beginning but as we got closer, we thought ‘Wow! This might coincide with the 150th anniversary.’”

SJA athletics director Dorinda Beaumont said the building is not just for athletes but the entire SJA community.

“We're so excited, it's gorgeous,” said Beaumont, who has been with the school for 30 years. But that's not the only thing that's new at SJA this year. The school is also celebrating its 150th anniversary, and the new activity center is just one of many new additions.

Symbolism marks ceremony

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

The installation ceremony for Bishop-designate Michael G. Duca is steeped in tradition and one that is marked by its beauty, symbolism and acknowledgement of the past by linking it to the future, according to Father Tom Ranzino, vicar general for the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

Bishop-designate Duca will be installed on Aug. 24 at 2 p.m. at St. Joseph Cathedral in Baton Rouge.

“There are a lot of moving parts (in the ceremony); however, they fit together well,” Father Ranzino said. “They really comment on who we are as a church. The crucified Christ who greets Bishop Duca is also the resurrected Christ that we proclaim at the eucharistic table that will both console and inspire Bishop Duca.”

The Rite of Installation, which comes from the Ceremonial of Bishops, quite simply begins with a knock on the door from Bishop-designate Duca, perhaps the most dramatic of the symbolic components of the ceremony. The knock comes after the initial procession WELCOME BACK — Father Cleo Milano, pastor of Our Lady of Mercy School in Baton Rouge, greets students and their families on the first day of school on Aug. 9. Students in grades 3Y through first grade will be attending classes in the new 30,000 square foot Lower School building. Photo by Bonny Van | The Catholic Commentator

SEE ANNIVERSARY PAGE 19
Faith seeking understanding

By Dina Dow

Without a doubt the Scripture readings proclaimed during Mass for the 20th and 21st Sundays of Ordinary Time (Year B) invite all to a deeper awakening of faith. Those seeking to understand are invited to sit at the table, taste and see the goodness of the Lord, share life in community, receive living bread and become what you receive.

Invitation

The seven columns upon which wisdom has built her house (Prv 9:2) indicates perfection. Here all are invited to eat, yet before the guests enter they must put aside foolishness and move toward understanding. What home, built upon perfection, are we called to enter that provides food, namely meat and wine, for us to eat? What home with such a set up invites us to set aside our ways, and increase in understanding?

Taste and see the goodness of the Lord

Psalm 34 radiates with gratitude in what the Lord has done. A “taste” of God is a glimpse of eternity as we come to understand all the goodness he has bestowed. The eyes of faith help us to “see” the glory of God’s action, and to “taste” the sweetness of fatherly care, so much so we keep our eyes fixed on him and “be radiant with joy.” Pope Francis writes, “Christian joy is peace, peace that is deeply rooted, peace in the heart, the peace that only God can give.” Thus the root of joy is peace which comes from God for us to taste and see.

From the depths of our souls we bless and praise him, knowing he hears, rescues, saves, delivers, protects, and is beside us at all times. Think of a time when you “sought the Lord, and he answered you, delivered you from all your fears” (Ps(s) 34:5). The opposite of fear is trust. How can I trust to ask God to deliver me? What are my fears? Where can I deliver? What did he just say?

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Paragraph 1336 in The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains, “The first announcement of the Eucharist divided the disciples, just as the announcement of the Passion scandalized them: ‘This is a hard saying; no one can listen to it.’” The announcement of the Eucharist divided the disciples, just as the announcement of the Passion scandalized them: “This is a hard saying; no one can listen to it.” This implicates temperance rather than prohibition. We are to make good use of our time and fill it fully for the purpose of growing in understanding of the Lord.

Eeat and drink

We continue with some of the most significant Scripture passages for all to understand. The Bread of Life Discourse in St. John’s Gospel, 6:51, 53-55, begins with Jesus’ words, “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.” Jesus said to them, “Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.”

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Educators gather for prayer

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

Just before the start of the 2018-19 school year, more than 900 educators from schools throughout the Diocese of Baton Rouge converged for prayers, blessings and a reminder of their mission: evangelizing hearts, educating minds, encouraging talent and embracing the future.

“We have to be living extensions of Jesus Christ,” said Bishop Robert W. Muench during the prayer service. “I don’t care how well we know our subject matter. I don’t care how many years we’ve taught a particular lesson plan. If we don’t begin with realizing that we are doing more than just carrying out a secular pursuit ... we are not in public education where you’re required to keep your faith at home. And, we need one another as well as the Lord to help us.”

According to Dr. Melanie Verges, superintendent of Catholic Schools for the diocese, the school year’s theme of “Waters of Life” reflects the “flow of the Holy Spirit” and is a continuation of last year’s theme of “The Potter” and water flowing from one piece of pottery to another.

“We try to tie the themes together as we move along,” said Verges. “‘Waters of Life’ – what do we do in education to give life to the child, to the family, to the community, to our church? And, so we want the Spirit to flow and that we go with the flow and really be fluid in our work.”

New this school year was recognition of teachers who had completed certification for basic, intermediate and advanced religious education. It’s part of the Catholic Schools Office plan to promote strong Catholic identity in schools and the certification requirement has been a part of the educator contract since 2010.

“Achieving religious ed certification, whether you’re a math teacher, a science teacher or a P.E. teacher means that you are better able to infuse Catholic identity into your curriculum, and I really think that has supported our students learning,” said Verges.

According to Verges, student scores on the ACRE (Assessment for Catechesis and Religious Education) continue to rise each school year. She credits not only religion teachers but “the secular subject teachers who are reinforcing Catholic identity across the curriculum.”

“Through the ministry and theology classes, we’ve been able to support their roles as educators,” said Dina Dow, director of the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis for the diocese. “(They are) what I call ‘front line evangelizers’ in the classroom for the children, so the more (the educators) grow in their faith formation, the more they can pour out to the students beyond the academia because, first thing’s first, the students have to know the love of God.”

Besides the prayer service, teachers were able to visit with vendors who provided such goods as religious workbooks, computer software and school uniforms. And, they were able to reconnect with co-workers and fellow teachers in the diocese.

“It’s exciting,” said Elaine Politz, a teacher at Our Lady of Mercy School in Baton Rouge, of the gathering. “It gets you excited to come back refreshed and ready for a great new year.”

“The prayer service is nice just to have everybody together,” said Aaron Finley, a teacher at St. Michael the Archangel High School in Baton Rouge. “I got to see some of my old teachers so that was nice.”

Bishop Muench also reminded educators of the importance of their job and their ministry.

“We have to make a commitment of faith not only to God but in the work God calls us to – the ministry – and to try and never give up, even with the most difficult students, because I’m completely convinced, the best students teach themselves, they’re going to do fine,” said the bishop. “But, the students that most need our help are those that are struggling ... at home, with life, wherever. And, try to be patient, but there’s a limit ... but we try to reach out to that student and we never know when we might have that breakthrough one day, that may not even seem apparent now, but may be sometime in the future that we may never know. It makes a difference.”

The gathering ended with the bishop commissioning educators as ministers of the church at their schools, according to Verges, with the commitment to fulfill the vision of Catholic education in the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

“It’s definitely a motivational experience for myself,” said Leah Barbato, a teacher at St. George School in Baton Rouge. “It’s a good reminder that we’re here to minister to the children, while academics is important and remediation is important, but also their spirit. So, it was a good message from the bishop to remind us the importance of taking care of their souls.”
The Catholic Commentator

WASHINGTON (CNS) – Archbishop Theodore E. McCarrick “will rightly face” a Vatican canonical process regarding sexual abuse allegations against him, but the U.S. Catholic Church must take steps to respond to church leaders “moral failures of judgment,” said the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The accusations against Archbishop McCarrick, a former cardinal and retired archbishop of Washington, D.C., “reveal a grievous moral failure within the church,” said Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston.

“They cause bishops anger, sadness and shame; I know they do in me,” he said in an Aug. 1 statement. “They compel bishops to ask, as I do, what more could have been done to protect the people of God. Both the abuses themselves, and the fact that they have remained undisclosed for decades, have caused great harm to people’s lives and represent grave moral failures of judgment on the part of church leaders.”

To determine a course of action for the USCCB to take, Cardinal DiNardo said he convened the bishops’ Executive Committee.

“This meeting was the first of many among bishops that will extend into our Administrative Committee meeting in September and our general assembly in November,” he explained. “All of these discussions will be oriented toward discerning the right course of action for the USCCB.”

Such work will “take some time,” but he laid out four points to be acted upon immediately:

• He encouraged each bishop in their diocese “to respond with compassion and justice to anyone who has been sexually abused or harassed by anyone in the church. We should do whatever we can to accompany them.”

• He urged anyone who has experienced sexual assault or harassment by anyone in the church to come forward. “Where the incident may rise to the level of a crime, please also contact local law enforcement.”

• The USCCB “will pursue the many questions surrounding Archbishop McCarrick’s conduct to the full extent of its authority; and where that authority finds its limits, the conference will advocate with those who do have the authority. One way or the other, we are determined to find the truth in this matter.”

• “Finally, we bishops recognize that a spiritual conversion is needed as we seek to restore the right relationship among us and with the Lord. Our church is suffering from a crisis of sexual morality. The way forward must involve learning from past sins.”

Cardinal DiNardo said the failures of judgment by church leaders in the case of Archbishop McCarrick “raise serious questions.”

“Why weren’t these allegations of sins against chastity and human dignity disclosed when they were first brought to church officials?” he asked. “Why wasn’t this egregious situation addressed decades sooner and with justice? What must our seminaries do to protect the freedom to discern a priestly vocation without being subject to misuse of power?”

In conclusion, he asked all to “pray for God’s wisdom and strength for renewal as we follow St. Paul’s instruction: ‘Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.’”

On July 28, Pope Francis accepted the resignation from the College of Cardinals of then-Cardinal McCarrick and ordered him to maintain “a life of prayer and penance” until a canonical trial examines accusations that he sexually abused minors.

In late June, the 88-year-old prelate said he would no longer exercise any public ministry “in obedience” to the Vatican after an allegation he abused a teenager 47 years ago in the Archdiocese of New York was found credible. The cardinal has said he is innocent.

In the weeks that followed the announcement, another man came forward claiming he was abused as a child by Archbishop McCarrick, and several former seminarians have spoken out about being sexually harassed by the former cardinal at a beach house he had.

In other developments, two New Jersey dioceses where he served in the 1980s and 1990s said settlements had been reached in 2005 and 2007 in cases of abuse claims against him that dated to his years of service in those dioceses. He was the founding bishop of the Diocese of Metuchen, New Jersey, in 1981, then headed the Archdiocese of Newark, New Jersey, before being named to Washington in 2001. He retired in 2006.
Dress for success

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

It was the excitement of back to school shopping for school clothes, at least for girls, who walked out of the dressing rooms and twirled with delight in their new uniforms. The boys tended to roll their eyes and groan when sent back to try on another set of clothes.

But even more noticeable was the look of relief and gratitude on the faces of parents and caregivers coming to the Uniforms for Kids distribution at the St. Vincent de Paul Store on Plank Road in Baton Rouge.

The St. Vincent de Paul Society provides uniforms for children who will attend Head Start through eighth-grade in the East Baton Rouge public and charter schools. Since July 10, the St. Vincent de Paul Society has distributed about 3,000 uniforms to families who qualified based on their income, said Cheryl Scott, administrative assistant for Uniforms for Kids for SVDP.

Once school starts, left over uniforms will be given to the schools for the guidance counselors to give to children in need.

“Our goal is to give out 8,000 uniforms,” said Scott.

The children each received two sets of uniforms: one for warm and one for cold weather.

“I think this gives the kids a sense of ‘everybody’s wearing the same thing,’ they are not out of place. It builds their self-esteem,” said Scott. “I’ve seen plenty of smiles. When we pack the bags, each child wants their own bag. They say, ‘I’m going to start school in my new uniform.’”

Hilda Carrier, who is caring for two foster children, was thankful for the uniforms.

She had three foster children and the recovery is still ongoing for Carrier.

“But with the help of St. Vincent de Paul I was able to clothe them for another school year. I don’t know where I would be without them. Because I don’t want them to go back to school looking like foster children. I want them to go back looking like my own kids. And I was able to do that with the help of St. Vincent de Paul,” said Carrier with misty eyes.

Her face brightened as she noted that one of the three foster children was placed for adoption and her daughter is in the process of adopting the other two children.

Jalesia Allen looks over the new clothes her children, Janiah, left, and Jaiden tried on during the St. Vincent de Paul Society’s Uniforms for Kids distribution. Photo by Debbie Shelley | The Catholic Commentator

Brittney Sanders recently moved from the New Orleans area and is undergoing kidney dialysis and living with her sister and brother-in-law’s family. Because she has not received expected child support, Uniform For Kids has helped her focus on getting her children the things they need for school.

She said it’s also helpful for her children, Parker, 12, and Peyton, 8, adjust to their new schools.

“They’re already nervous because they are going to a new school,” said Sanders.

And she will also be able to focus on her health.

“I’m determined that I’m going to get a kidney. That’s a goal I’m working toward,” said Sanders.

She plans to attend fieldtrips and volunteer at the school as she is able.

“This helps to put things in order and get ready for school, for me and the kids,” said Sanders.

Jalesia Allen, a single mom and member of St. Agnes Church in Baton Rouge, said Uniforms for Kids helps her to apply money toward school supplies and other necessities.

“That (uniform costs) takes away from food,” said Allen. “It helps me to concentrate on what we need rather than where we’re going to get the next uniform. It’s a great help.”

Her children spoke about their dreams.

“I want to be a basketball player,” said Jaiden, 9.

Janiah brightly said, “I want to be a veterinarian.”

Madeline Acosta and Corrine Cook, seniors at St. Joseph’s Academy in Baton Rouge, said their time of volunteering together at Uniforms for Kids has turned their hearts even more toward helping people.

The two conceded if they have to get a new uniform “it’s no big deal,” so the experience of seeing how Uniforms for Kids helped families touched them.

“I want to go into law. I’ve always had that idea of wanting to help people,” said Acosta.

“She’s giving like that,” smiled Cook.

Cook, who plans to pursue a career in journalism, said the experience has fueled her desire to go on a mission trip to Central America.

“That would be cool,” agreed Acosta.
Civil wedding ceremony – should we go? Did Jesus die at 33?

Q My son is scheduled to be a groomsman for one of his best friends, who has been living with his girlfriend for several years. It is to be a civil ceremony held in a hotel. I told my son that I would not be able to go since I am a Catholic and my attendance would look like approval. Naturally, my son was annoyed. Am I able to go since I am a Catholic and my son, have no obligation to marry with at least one of them is a Catholic. If not, of course, there is no longer any relationship. As regards your son’s friend and his bride-to-be, I am assuming that at least one of them is a Catholic. If not, of course, there is no problem with your attending their wedding. Non-Catholics, it stands to reason, have no obligation to marry with the Catholic Church’s approval. But if at least one of them is a Catholic, then some other considerations enter in. Presumptively, their civil ceremony would not be a valid marriage in the eyes of the church since they are not being married by a Catholic priest or deacon or, in the alternative, with the required dispensation from the church. But perhaps surprisingly canon law has no explicit prohibition against Catholics attending an invalid wedding. That decision is left to the prudent judgment of a Catholic, after prayerfully considering several factors. Maintaining peaceful relationships within a family is important. Also, it is certainly better for the couple in question to solidify their commitment with a civil ceremony than simply to continue living together and this might even be the first step in their full return to fidelity to Catholic practice. On the other hand, one must not give the impression that the canonical norms of marriage do not matter, so you wouldn’t want your presence at the wedding to be seen as a stamp of approval by the Catholic Church. Weighing these several values, here is a course of action that I might suggest. Why not explain to your son that, after thinking and praying about it, you have decided to attend the ceremony out of loyalty both to him and to his friend? But tell him that you do have some reservations about doing so because of your strong belief that they should be married in a Catholic ceremony. Then, ask your son if he would feel comfortable passing on your feelings to his friend. The ideal outcome would be that the friend, upon reflection, would be reminded of his religious responsibilities and decide to have the marriage blessed by the church.

A Although we do not know with certainty at what age Jesus died, it is generally believed that he was 33. The Gospel of St. Luke says, “When Jesus began his ministry he was about 30 years of age” (3:23). And St. John’s Gospel notes that there were three annual feasts of the Passover during the course of Christ’s public life one in Chapter 2:13 (the cleansing of the Temple), another in 6:4 (the multiplication of the loaves) and a final one in 11:55-57 at the time of the crucifixion. Putting those references together, one is led to the conclusion that Jesus was probably 33 at the time of his death. The actual age, though, does not matter theoretically, as no doctrinal truths are built upon 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.
By Debbie Shelley  
The Catholic Commentator

Hungering and thirsting for righteousness means loving people enough to get involved in their lives and protect their dignity as sons and daughters of God, according to Father Rick Andrus SVD, pastor of St. Paul the Apostle Church in Baton Rouge.

In looking at the fourth beatitude, a key point to remember about “righteousness” is God alone is righteous, said Father Andrus.

“What Jesus is saying (in the beatitude) is that ‘Blessed are those who have a heart like God.’ God’s heart is not set on what is right for some, but for all,” said Father Andrus.

He recalls the pivotal point in his desire for righteousness came during his cross-cultural training for the Society of the Divine Word Missionaries when he witnessed injustices done by police to black youth he was accompanying after a Christmas Eve midnight Mass.

The Beatitudes

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Throughout his ministry, Father Andrus worked tirelessly for, and has served on a number of boards, addressing racial harmony, prison reform, rights of the unborn and elderly, as well as accessibility to education and socialization, healthcare, safe places to live and quality food. He’s helped former and current gang members find the right path in their lives and has worked with officials to develop a more just use of force police policy.

He noted that he is able to do what he does because he has the support of the “awesome people of St. Paul.”

“I’ve got a church full of missionary disciples, people who have the heart of God,” beamed Father Andrus. “So I’m not looking at myself, but at a host of people who are out doing the will of God.”

Prayer is vital when seeking justice. Father Andrus said he and his fellow missionary priests are thankful for the 24-hour prayer support of the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters and the Holy Spirit Adoration Sisters.

People may not become involved in addressing injustices because they fear retaliation, they don’t think they have the time or skills, or say, “it’s always been this way and it’s always going to be this way.”

The key to combating such reluctance is faith and hope, Father Andrus emphasized.

“There’s a lot of things that I am dissatisfied with, that I don’t like, that rubs me the wrong way. But I step out as a man of faith. I have that incredible hope that things get better if you invest yourself in it,” said Father Andrus. “You have to have a sense of something wrong. Because the Gospel brings me joy.”

Father Andrus’ face radiated as he talked about one of his favorite songs performed by the St. Paul Gospel Choir: “This Joy I Have.” The song states, “This joy that I have the world didn’t give me. This joy that I have the world can’t take it away.”

“That sums it up. I do what I do because I’m called to do it. I don’t look for immediate results. My relationship with God gives me a sense of joy. There are people who will try to take away my joy. They didn’t give it to me, and they can’t take it away,” said Father Andrus.

Thirst for justice satisfied through the joy of the Gospel

By Debbie Shelley  
The Catholic Commentator

Canadian to Mexico through the heartland of the United States is just. One major break and the land will be completely unusable ever again because of the type of oil that comes through American Native sacred grounds, coming through the American farmer's most precious fields, that are going through Acadian waterways.

Father Andrus’ role models include Bishop Dominic Carmon, auxiliary bishop-emeritus of the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

“He was a very humble, holy man, a man who led by example,” said Father Andrus. “Bishop Dominic has a shepherd’s heart. He knows about people’s lives, their stories their history, their joys and their pains.”

Another role model was Father Elmer Powell SVD, a former pastor of St. Paul.

“Father Powell taught me the importance of being a real fighter for justice. In my early ministry, he was the one in my order who spoke truth to power in the church, in the neighborhood and in society,” said Father Andrus.

Father Andrus acknowledged, “We all fall short of being who we are called to be. But by the grace of God, saints are no longer sinners and because of that we are called, and we have the ability to make the transformation of the communities we live in.”

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Deacons attend National Diaconate Congress

Staff Report

More 20 deacons along with their wives from the Diocese of Baton Rouge attended the 2018 National Diaconate Congress in New Orleans July 22-28.

There were over 2800 deacons and wives from the United States attending the Congress, which had its theme “Jesus Christ the Servant: Yesterday, Today, and Forever.” The Congress marked the 50th anniversary of the reinstatement of the permanent diaconate in the United States.

More than 50 years ago with his motu proprio “Sacrum Diaconatus Ordinem” Blessed Pope Paul VI issued general norms for restoring the permanent diaconate, which was a vital part of the early church.

The opening Mass was celebrated by Archbishop Christophe Pierre, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States.

The key note addresses were given by Archbishop Gregory M. Aymond of New Orleans; Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin of Newark, New Jersey; Bishop Frederick Campbell of Columbus, Ohio; Bishop W. Shawn McKnight of Jefferson City, Missouri; Bishop Emeritus Gerald Kicanas of Tucson, Arizona; Archbishop Samuel Aquila of Denver; and Archbishop Daniel Cardinal DiNardo of Galveston-Houston delivered addresses.

The recurring theme of the presentations was the deacon as servant, as a bridge to the pastor and the bishop for those on the margins; the poor, the imprisoned, the sick, the unchurched and those who you who would not normally see at Mass on Sunday. Although deacons today serve many roles, this diaconal charism of humble service to those on the outside is at the heart of the deacon’s call to ministry, according to the presenters.

The deacon brings with him to the Sunday liturgy the trials, sorrows, joys and pains of those souls who are not present and goes forth from the liturgy to proclaim the Gospel and nurture those same souls. Therefore, the deacon is the bridge for the pastor and those gathered in communal worship.

The speakers said the deacon is the church’s emissary to those the pastor does not regularly come into contact with. The deacon then should pray constantly and not just the required prayers of his promise to the bishop at ordination, the Divine Office, but a concerted effort to meditate and contemplate within the Gospels the very person of Jesus Christ the servant. Additionally, they emphasized the deacon must stay alert to his personal quest for holiness.

The role of the deacon continues to evolve and is now in the early stages of development within the Catholic Church. The permanent diaconate’s essential threefold ministry to word, liturgy and charity is shifting from primarily a liturgical one to one of word and charity, according to the speakers.

The deacon of today is prepared due to his formation program to preach and teach than in earlier years. The future of the deacon is envisioned to take on more roles within the church especially in leadership and service and especially in those parishes without a priestly presence.

The deacon’s education, training and allegiance and service to his bishop puts him in a unique position to serve as a clergy presence wherever there is a need.

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ST. PATRICK PASTOR INSTALLATION – Bishop Robert W. Muench, left, hugs Father Michael Micelli after instating him as pastor of St. Patrick Church in Baton Rouge on Aug. 4. Looking on is Deacon Pete Walsh. Photo by Debbie Shelley | The Catholic Commentator

PASTOR INSTALLATION – Bishop Robert W. Muench presents Father Matthew Graham to the congregation during a pastor installation ceremony on July 28 at St. Jules Church in Belle Rose. Father Graham was also installed as pastor at St. Elizabeth Church in Paincourtville on July 29. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator
By Debbie Shelley 
The Catholic Commentator

Sleepy teens from St. John the Baptist Church in Brusly boarded a bus around 6:45 a.m. on July 14 for the almost 2-hour drive to the Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola. Considered “the end of the road,” both geographically as well as the end of the lives for a majority of the inmates housed there.

As the bus ambled along I-69, 66 of the youth looked out their windows at the rolling hills of Justice Trace, teaped with var-ious hardwood and pine trees, and appeared to ponder what they would experience at their confirmation retreat at the maximum security prison.

When the bus reached the front gate, the teens looked at the imposing guard towers and razor wire fences around the property and visitors preparing to enter a building to visit their incarcerated loved ones, no doubt stories of broken lives. It seemed it would be a tough visit.

But many re-entrants’ assumption going into the day were flipped upside down as they found warmth, redemption and new life in the midst of the prison’s dark confines.

The youth’s first stop was Angola’s hospice program, considered the nation’s best-known prison hospice program. Inmate hospice volunteers do “the dirty work” in caring for dying prisoners, such as bathing the inmates and changing their dia-apers, after working their “regular jobs” during the day, said Jay Jackson, Angola chaplain.

In the hospice chapel, which walls were adorned with quilts made by inmates for the dying, the youth learned about the love, care and visitors preparing to enter a building to visit their incarcerated loved ones, no doubt stories of broken lives. It seemed it would be a tough visit.

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In the hospice chapel, which walls were adorned with quilts made by inmates for the dying, the youth learned about the love, care andress of redemption that occur at the prison’s hospice and said he saw a new side of prison.

Prison confirmation retreat attendees and their chaperones walk the hall of Angola Prison’s Red Hat Cell Block.

Youth listen to stories of redemption at Angola Prison Hospice chapel.

Confirmation candidates at St. John the Baptist Church in Brusly take a photo before boarding the bus for a confirmation retreat at Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola. Photos by Debbie Shelley / The Catholic Commentator

Inmate Emmerson Simmons said when it comes to faith people must...
Youth experience joy through helping the needy

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

A serenity that often accompanies a leisurely outing in a southeast Louisiana swamp was abruptly interrupted when a snake suddenly appeared on the side of the canoe in which Kathleen Helms was paddling.

The snake did not sliver its way into the canoe, but seeing a snake for the first time certainly left its mark on the Cristo Rey Baton Rouge Franciscan High School junior. Helms, seeing a live snake for the first time, admitted she was too busy trying to get away for fear to set in.

But the experience was one of many she and 11 of her Cristo Rey classmates and a total of 25 students from around the country shared during Loyola University’s Faith Acts summer program, held for one week at its uptown New Orleans campus. Through practical real life experiences, such as visiting the Lower 9th Ward and seeing areas that still have not recovered from the ravage of Hurricane Katrina to helping an elderly woman plant a vegetable garden, the students learned lifelong lessons about trust, faith and providing for the less fortunate.

“Being with people whose houses are messed up (in the Lower 9th Ward), and (helping) older people made me look at things differently,” Helms said. “When I see older people, I help them with their groceries, asking them if they need things.

“It helped me understand a lot of things but at the same time I felt if I do certain things (by helping others) things would be different.”

Materrinan Zehyoue, Faith Acts youth coordinator for the Loyola Institute for Ministry, said the program is a seven-day, residential youth theology institute for rising high school juniors and seniors. She said the focus is on environmental sustainability and the call for Catholics to care for the earth.

Zehyoue said the week is centered on “Laudato Si,” the encyclical letter Pope Francis wrote in 2015.

Upon returning to Baton Rouge, Cristo Rey junior Meleyah Murphy, based on her experience, is committed to launching environmentally friendly projects, including establishing a community garden that would involve friends and peers.

Murphy admitted to being stunned by the conditions she found in the Lower 9th Ward, including the conditions of the roads and even the trees that are dying.

Perhaps leaving even a more lasting impression was helping an elderly woman clean up the five vegetable gardens she maintains.

The lady told the youth she had requested assistance from several companies but they all refused.

“I was thinking ‘What would Jesus do?’” she said. “He would help people and to spread his word, spreading his word through nature.”

Asiah Mason, also a Cristo Rey junior, said the lady was “so appreciative” of the help, but for Mason the seeds planted will sow benefits far beyond a Lower 9th Ward garden. She said she learned to appreciate assisting people, not just for the money but “helping people to let God in your heart.”

“No one does a garden but I want to start one,” Mason said, adding that her grandfather is starting to grow his own tomatoes. “Instead of us buying vegetables and have all of those chemicals, you have natural grown vegetables.”

All three of the students agreed the week helped deepen their own spiritual lives. Murphy said she learned to keep an open mind, be accepting of others and always look for the good in others.

“I was already close to God but it helped me draw even closer to him,” she added. “My goal this (school) year is to tell people to come (in 2019).”

Mason said her lesson was rooted in trust, to trust others and to always have faith.

Helms said the week brought her closer to God and provided an understanding in many areas of life, including stewardship of the environment. She said counselors discussed such topics as recycling and water use.

“We can use that a lot in our community to make it better,” she said.

In addition to living on a college campus for a week and learning a variety of disciplines, Zehyoue noted the students had the option to earn either 60 service hours or three college credits.

She added this year was the second of the Faith Acts Institute which is funded from a Lily Foundation grant.
Cristo Rey seeking corporate partners

Staff report

Cristo Rey Baton Rouge Franciscan High School is still seeking 18 jobs to allow students to report to work in September in conjunction with the school’s unique corporate work program.

The money earned by the students pays their tuition. Through the corporate work program, students rotate their schedule with each of them working five full days a month.

“There is little variance or gap in what is delivered each day, despite rotating students, which we all find amazing,” said Stephen Waguespack, CEO and president of the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry.

According to school officials, Cristo Rey students and its job partners share a mission to advance both the quality of the workforce in the area and education landscape.

“The school’s mission is a great opportunity for both to work in harmony,” said Carissa Graves, vice president of community engagement at Cristo Rey.

The school opened at the site of the former Redemptorist High School in August 2016, but was forced to relocate after flood waters deposited up to four feet of water in the buildings. Students returned to the original campus earlier this year, attending class in modular buildings.

For more information, call 225-615-7479 or visit cristorey-br.org.

Back to School

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Back-to-school time means making sure your kids are up to date with immunizations, screenings and sports physicals. Get ahead this year by scheduling an appointment online with our pediatricians.

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BISHOP MICHAEL G. DUCA SPECIAL SECTION COMING AUGUST 31ST
Skyscraper
Universal
An American security expert (Dwayne Johnson) gets more than he bargained for when he agrees to review the safeguards at the world’s tallest building in Hong Kong whose owner (Chin Han) puts him and his family up there during their visit. A plot to destroy the structure leaves his young daughter (Amanda Seyfried) and, briefly, here and the present-day era of Heights. Unfortunately, the sexual morals on display are as tacky as the score. The film shuttles between the 1979 adventures of a youthful version (Lily James) of the much-mourned matriarch played by Meryl Streep in the original and, briefly, here and the present-day efforts of her daughter (Amanda Seyfried) to open a hotel honoring her memory on the Greek isle she loved. As it does so, we discover why mom could never say for certain which of three men (in the disco era, Hugh Skinner, Jeremy Irvine and Josh Dylan, nowadays, Colin Firth, Pierce Brosnan and Stellan Skarsgard) was her daughter’s dad. Beyond the bedroom, the ensemble of characters, rounded out by, among others, ma’s best friends and bandmates (once Jessica Keenan Wynn and Alexa Davies, now Christine Baran and Alexa Davies, now Christine Baran and Alexa Davies) beloves very nicely, for the most part. And writer-director Ol Parker includes both a prayer-like opening number and a sequence leading up to an Orthodox baptism. But, although it’s referenced rather than portrayed, the belief acceptance of casual sex taking place within hours of people meeting each other is obviously not in keeping either with scriptural values or with human dignity. Benignly viewed promiscuity, a nonmari- mental bedroom scene becomes sexual humor, a single profanity. L; PG-13

Mamma Mia: Here We Go Again
Universal
The exuberant kitsch that was the trade-mark of the Swedish band Abba lives on in this musical romance built around their songs that serves as both a prequel and a sequel to the 2008 adaptation of the Broadway hit “Mamma Mia.” Unfortunately, the sexual morals on display are as tacky as the score. The film shuttles between the 1979 adventures of a youthful version (Lily James) of the much-mourned matriarch played by Meryl Streep in the original and, briefly, here and the present-day efforts of her daughter (Amanda Seyfried) to open a hotel honoring her memory on the Greek isle she loved. As it does so, we discover why mom could never say for certain which of three men (in the disco era, Hugh Skinner, Jeremy Irvine and Josh Dylan, nowadays, Colin Firth, Pierce Brosnan and Stellan Skarsgard) was her daughter’s dad. Beyond the bedroom, the ensemble of characters, rounded out by, among others, ma’s best friends and bandmates (once Jessica Keenan Wynn and Alexa Davies, now Christine Baran and Alexa Davies) beloves very nicely, for the most part. And writer-director Ol Parker includes both a prayer-like opening number and a sequence leading up to an Orthodox baptism. But, although it’s referenced rather than portrayed, the belief acceptance of casual sex taking place within hours of people meeting each other is obviously not in keeping either with scriptural values or with human dignity. Benignly viewed promiscuity, a nonmari- mental bedroom scene becomes sexual humor, a single profanity. L; PG-13

Mission: Impossible – Fallout
Paramount
Engrossing espionage sequel in which Tom Cruise’s by-now iconic American agent Ethan Hunt and his team (Ving Rhames and Simon Pegg) battle not only the maniacal anarchist (Sean Harris) they tangled with in the last outing but a glamorous criminal himself, gently help the businesswoman to see the error of his materialist ways. Director Marc Forster and screenwriters Alex Ross Perry, Tom McCarthy and Allison Schroeder make deft use of the figures created by A.A. Milne and E.H. Shepard in the 1920s, marshaling droll humor to convey the message that there are better goals to be pursued than merely getting on. Though problematic ele- ments are entirely absent, the film is too sophisticated for tots, who might also be disturbed by its scenes of mild peril. A mature story line, nonviolent action. A-II; PG

The Darkest Minds
Fox
Derivative dystopian thriller about superhumanly gifted teens running for their lives, based on Alexandra Bracken’s best-selling novel and directed by Jenni- fer Yuh Nelson. Sometime in the future a pandemic has devastated society, killing 98 percent of the children. The few who survive have a variety of paranormal powers and are considered a threat by the adult world. With the help of a kindly doctor (Mandy Moore), a telepath (Alyson Stoner) escapes from one of the intern- ment camps to which the kids have been sent. She meets up with fellow fugitives (Harris Dickinson, Miya Cech, Skylar Brooks) and together they hope to make it to a teen-run safe haven. Despite a posi- tive message about tolerance, the dark and ultraviolent tone places this film firmly out of reach for younger viewers. Intense scenes of bloodless violence, including torture, several crude and a couple of crass terms. A-III; PG-13

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 accom- panying parent or adult guardian
NC-17 – No one under 17 admitted

August 23, 7p
Evening Prayer
Watch Via YouTube & Facebook

August 24, 2p
Rite of Installation of Bishop Michael Duca
Watch Via Catholiclife Television YouTube & Facebook

Witty animated comedy in which a youthful version of Batman’s sidekick Robin (voice of Scott Menville) and the ensemble of crime fighters (voices of Greg Ci- pes, Khary Payton, Strong and Hy- den Walsh) he leads sets out to join other superheroes who have had movies made about them. They acquire the evil nemesis (voice of Will Arnett) considered essential to this quest and convince a Hollywood director (voice of Kristen Bell) to feature them. But Robin’s ego and the silliness of his pals get in the way, leading to a breakup of the group. This big-screen adaptation of the Cartoon Network TV series hilariously harpoons a wide range of pop-culture tar- gets in a manner that will amuse grown-ups, while kids will be diverted by its vivid imagery. As helmed by Aaron Horvath and Peter Rida Michail, and scripted by Horvath and Michael Jelenic, the snappy proceedings carry good messages about friendship, teamwork and the dangers of selfishness. But some parents may not ap- preciate the potty jokes or a final line of dialogue encouraging youngsters to ask about the birds and bees. Occasional scat- ological and anatomical humor, a single vague reference to reproduction. A-II; PG

Christopher Robin
Disney
Enchanting fantasy in which, having grown into a harried middle-aged efficiency expert (Ewan McGregor), the formerly free-spirited title character pri- oritizes work over family life, provoking a crisis in his relationship with his devoted wife (Hayley Atwell) and loving daughter (Bronte Carmichael). To his rescue comes his iconic childhood teddy bear, Winnie the Pooh (voice of Jim Cummings). A re- turn to Winnie’s realm, the Hundred Acre Wood, ensues, as does a reunion with its other immortal inhabitants, most promi- nently Tigger (also voiced by Cummings), Eeyore (voice of Brad Garrett) and Piglet (voice of Nick Mohammed) all of whom, like Winnie’s, have a story to tell. Before the bear arrives, Christopher Robin incorporates various A-III; PG-13

The Catholic Commentator August 17, 2018

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Entertainment August 17, 2018

Special section on entertainment
Pope revises catechism to say death penalty is ‘inadmissible’

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Building on the development of Catholic Church teaching against capital punishment, Pope Francis has ordered a revision of the Catechism of the Catholic Church to assert “the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person” and to commit the church to working toward its abolition worldwide.

The catechism’s paragraph on capital punishment, 2267, already had been updated by St. John Paul II in 1997 to strengthen its skepticism about the need to use the death penalty in the modern world and, particularly, to affirm the importance of protecting all human life.

Announcing the change Aug. 2, Cardinal Luis Ladaria, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, said, “The new text, following in the footsteps of the teaching of John Paul II in ‘Evangelium Vitae,’ affirms that ending the life of a criminal as punishment for a crime is inadmissible because it attacks the dignity of the person, a dignity that is not lost even after having committed the most serious crimes.”

“Evangelium Vitae” (“The Gospel of Life”) was St. John Paul’s 1995 encyclical on the dignity and sacredness of all human life. The encyclical led to an updating of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, which he originally promulgated in 1992 and which recognized “the right and duty of legitimate public authority to punish malefactors by means of penalties commensurate with the gravity of the crime, not excluding, in cases of extreme gravity, the death penalty.”

At the same time, the original version of the catechism still urged the use of “bloodless means” when possible to punish criminals and protect citizens.

“The catechism now will read: ‘Recourse to the death penalty on the part of legitimate authority, following a fair trial, was long considered an appropriate response to the gravity of certain crimes and an acceptable, albeit extreme, means of safeguarding the common good.

“Today, however, there is an increasing awareness that the dignity of the person is not lost even after the commission of very serious crimes. In addition, a new understanding has emerged of the significance of penal sanctions imposed by the state. Lastly, more effective systems of detention have been developed, which ensure the due protection of citizens but, at the same time, do not definitively deprive the guilty of the possibility of redemption,’” the new section continues.

Pope Francis’ change to the text concludes: “Consequently, the church teaches, in the light of the Gospel, that ‘the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person,’ and she works with determination for its abolition worldwide.”

The development of church doctrine away from seeing the death penalty as a possibly legitimate punishment for the most serious crimes, the cardinal said, “centers principally on the clearer awareness of the church for the respect due to every human life.”

Pope Francis said “human justice is imperfect” and said the death penalty loses all legitimacy in penal systems where judicial error is possible.

GOSPEL ▼

From page 2

“Will you also go away?” the Lord’s question echoes through the ages, as a loving invitation to discover that only he has “the words of eternal life” and that to receive in faith the gift of his Eucharist is to receive the Lord himself.”

Do I believe this? Do I doubt? Is Jesus speaking symbolically? Is this truly Jesus’ body and blood, food for eternal life? If so, where can I receive this priceless, eternal gift that will give life everlasting?

Faith seeks understanding. Recall, Jesus changed water into wine, multiplied the fish caught by the apostles, multiplied the loaves and the fish by means of penalties commensurate with the gravity of the crime, not excluding, in cases of extreme gravity, the death penalty.”

The development of church doctrine away from seeing the death penalty as a possibly legitimate punishment for the most serious crimes, the cardinal said, “centers principally on the clearer awareness of the church for the respect due to every human life.”

Pope Francis said “human justice is imperfect” and said the death penalty loses all legitimacy in penal systems where judicial error is possible.

by Jesus, himself, THE Word of God, and by the power of the Holy Spirit transforms the substance into the REAL body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ?

Jesus’ invitation to faith is now accompanied with the necessity to eat his flesh and drink his blood. “Thus, in the episcopate, the church asks the father to send his Holy Spirit on the bread and wine, so that by his power they may become the body and blood of Jesus Christ and so that those who take part in the Eucharist may be one body and one spirit. In the institution narrative, the power of the words and the action of Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit, make sacramentally present under the species of bread and wine Christ’s body and blood, his sacrifice offered on the cross once for all” (Catechism 1353).

Jesus then said to the Twelve, “Do you also want to leave?” Simon Peter answered him, “Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God” (Jn 6:67-69).

Lord, increase my faith that I may grow in understanding, join in the faithful community at Mass and come to “taste and see” YOU in the Eucharist. Amen.

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

Protecting all life

Capital punishment has once again intersected at the crossroads of politics and the respect for human life.

Separated by thousands of miles, and even further by ideologies, Louisiana Attorney General Jeff Landry and Pope Francis have recently spoken out on the death penalty, and the chasm could not be wider.

Landry, a staunch proponent of capital punishment, has publicly called out Gov. John Bel Edwards, claiming the governor is stalling the process of carrying out executions in Louisiana. The most recent execution in the state was in 2016.

Although the generally accepted method of lethal injection is shelved, at least temporarily, Landry, dipping into the annals of history, has suggested the return of the hangman. He has even floated the unseemly idea of employing a guillotine, although that was more likely for shock value than intelligent dialogue.

Pope Francis stunned many observers, Catholic and otherwise, when he recently rewrote one provision of The Catechism of the Catholic Church and said the death penalty is inadmissible under all circumstances, correctly stating it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person. Previously, the Catechism contained one provision of The Catechism of the Catholic Church and said the death penalty is inadmissible under all circumstances, correctly stating it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person. Previously, the Catechism contained a caveat allowing the death penalty when it was the “only practicable way” to secure the safety and defend lives in a community, although even that was updated by St. John Paul II in 1997 to strengthen its skepticism about the need for capital punishment in the modern world, one where guillotines are considered passé.

Call it what you may, but that particular technicality has previously provided an aperture for Catholic politicians to stray from their faith and endorse the death penalty. The pope’s decision will undoubtedly challenge many of those same politicians, from state and local office holders to governors and even Supreme Court justices.

Most striking is that while Landry’s comments are politically based, the pontiff’s statements are deeply rooted in the seeds of his own faith. He understands that as human beings, and that as Catholics, the dignity of life must always be respected, even under the most difficult of circumstances.

Opposing the death penalty, which has never been proven to be a deterrent to crime, is not an endorsement of the heinous behavior of a murderer but protection of the sanctity of life, whether it is the life of an unborn child or a person on death row. God guarantees the personal dignity of every person, even that of a murderer, which, admittedly, can tug at one’s emotions.

Landry will likely continue his public assault on Edwards, which seems to be politically motivated.

Pope Francis, meanwhile, will continue to follow Christ in his own life and use Christ to guide him in his decisions and his writings. As Catholics, we should be proud and thankful for his courage, even in the face of detractors in his own church.

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Gratitude is the key to a personal relationship with God

Before taking a two-month July through August break in his usual schedule, Pope Francis gave some spiritual tips to those attending his final general audience on June 27. He said that if you want to have a personal relationship with God, even, and maybe especially on vacation, ask yourselves in the silence of your hearts, “How much has God done for me? How many beautiful things has God done for me?”

Gratitude for God’s saving love has to come first. We don’t follow God’s commandments, his way of life, by the strength of our own willpower. It is the remembrance of all the ways he has loved us and blessed us that keeps us close to God. “That is what Scripture shows us: “first the Red Sea, then Mount Sinai” (and the commandments). The same pattern holds true in everyone’s life. “To obey God,” Pope Francis said, “we must first remember his benefits.”

We have to remember this when teaching our children the Christian life. If all our children hear is obligations, commitments and consistency, they won’t remain faithful long to what is really a beautiful way of life. When God first spoke to Moses, the pope pointed out, he said, “I am the Lord your God.” God wanted Moses to know that he was his loving father. He was not a stranger. He is our father also, as Jesus taught his disciples to address God in prayer. Like Jesus, we have to begin there: “As the father has loved me, so I have loved you.”

Gratitude has been the key virtue for another well-known spiritual guide, Father Ronald Rolheiser (Yes, the priest on the next page of The Catholic Commentator). While Pope Francis urged us to take advantage of vacation time to increase our personal relationship with God by reflecting on God’s blessings given to us, Father Rolheiser found the importance of gratitude through illness. In 2011 he was diagnosed with colon cancer. After six months of chemotherapy treatment he was pronounced cancer free in January of 2012. He had planned what he would do when finally free from all of the pain of treatment and the anxiety of waiting to see if it would work and free him of the disease. When it did work, he was surprised in an unexpected way.

“But life is what happens to you while you are planning your life … While undergoing cancer treatments I learned something. When I first started treatments I began marking a calendar … putting my life on hold, putting myself into a posture of waiting, marking away the days until, in my fantasy, the treatments ended and I could live life again. But, strangely, as the days unfolded, to my own surprise, I found that I was living through one of the richer and happier periods in my life. Inside of the tiredness, nausea and neuropathy, I was finding a rich enjoyment in friendships, colleagues, work and (on days when I could actually taste them) food and drink. The six months within which I was undergoing cancer treatment turned out to be, to my own surprise, six happy and deeply meaningful months.”

Father Rolheiser concludes his column of Feb. 22, 2012 remembering a saying of John Shea: “Life includes suffering. When you are spending all your energies to only rejoice in that part of life that does not include suffering, you will not enter into life because you will be dominated by fear and exclusion and not faith. Cancer taught me this lesson and, for that and your prayers, I am most grateful.”

God’s love comes to us so often through others. That is one thing that those of us who have lived long become more and more aware of as the years role by. We are blessed by the mercy of God bestowed upon us through the love of another, of others.

Suffering too has its own role to play in the mercy of God’s divine providence. In that same column entitled “In Gratitude,” Father Rolheiser included a poem of one of America’s most famous writers, John Updike. From Moses to Updike, our most important response to God’s mercy must be gratitude. The poem is entitled, “Fever.”

“I have brought back a good message from the land of 102 degrees; God exists. I had seriously doubted it before; but the bedposts spoke of it with utmost confidence, the threads in my blanket took it for granted, the tree outside my window dismissed all complaints, and I have not slept so justly for years.

It is hard, now to convey how emblematically appearances sat upon the membranes of my consciousness; but it is truth long known, that some secrets are hidden from health.”

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.

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PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PRAY FOR US

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

I believe in God

Some of my favorite authors are agnostics, men and women who face life honestly and courageously without faith in a personal God. They're stoics mostly, persons who have made peace with the fact that God may not exist and that perhaps death ends everything for us. I see this, for example, in the late James Hillman, a man whom I greatly admire and who has much to teach believers about what it means to listen to and honor the human soul. But here's something I don't admire in these agnostics: While they face with courage what it should mean for us if God doesn't exist and death ends our personal existence, they don't, with the same courage, ask the question of what it should mean for us if God does exist and death does not end our personal existence. What if God does exist and what if the tenets of our faith are true? They need too, to face that question.

I believe that God exists, not because I have never had doubts, or because I was raised in the faith by persons whose lives gave deep witness to its truth, or because perennially the vast majority of people on this planet believe in God. I believe that a personal God exists for more reasons than I can name: the goodness of saints; the hook in my own heart that has never let me go; the interface of faith with my own lives given deep witness to its truth, or perhaps the fact that God may not exist and that perhaps death ends everything for us. If we believe God is omni-present, there is no place where God is not. The Holy Spirit hovers over the minivan's chaos, too.

**Why I believe in God**

Christ can come to each of us on the road. Perhaps he shows up on our daily commute, inviting us to choose compassion over aggression. Maybe he squeezes in during the latest pickup from sports practice, nudging us to welcome the sweaty teammates piling in the back as Christ himself. But there's not a single rush hour or road traveled where God does not go with us.

St. Frances of Rome – wife, mother and servant of Rome’s sick and poor – is the patron saint of motorists. Legend holds that her guardian angel carried a lantern before her whenever she traveled to light the road and keep her safe.

St. Frances is also famous for saying, “Sometimes a wife must leave God at the altar to find him in her household management.”

Sometimes, then, a mom must dig through the clutter to find God in her car.

Our van is an Odyssey. (When we bought it, I begged my husband to rename his car the Fiia so we could have a matching pair.)

But the name rings true. Within the Odyssey’s walls, our family is traveling together on a long journey over years and years. Our house-on-wheels is full in this stage of life, ringing with laughter, fighting, music and even prayer.

Inside our car, we’ve offered morning blessings on every drive to school. We’ve said Hail Mary for racing ambushes with sirens screaming. We’ve tackled big life questions from kids in the backseat. We’ve navigated hard-but-good conversations between spouses in the front.

When I stop to see, I realize that it’s in our van (as in our home) that we are becoming the people and the family that God is calling us to be.

Just as we gather around our kitchen table – which I’m quick to claim as holy space in the domestic church – we spend time together in our car each day. We share conversation, questions and the occasional snack en route to the places we are called: home, school, office, church and every stop along the way.

Sometimes on a solo drive to a meeting for work, I notice the silence: sweet, rare, fleeting. As an introvert, I secretly savor the quiet without kids in the backseat: no screaming, no squabbling over songs on the radio.

When the car is bursting with noise again, I’m better able to give thanks for the life I’ve been given – because I’ve felt the contrast between full and empty.

The Catholic “Book of Blessings” offers a prayer for blessing a vehicle. It includes the line, “Whether they travel for business or pleasure, let them always find Christ to be the companion of their journey.”

May the same be said of our families – and our cars, too.

**Keep holy the commute and the car pool**

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In Exile

Father Ron Rolheiser

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Mothering Spirit

FANUCI is a mother, writer and director of a project on vocation at the Collegeville Institute in Collegeville, Minnesota. She is the author of several books, including “Everyday Sacrament: The Messy Grace of Parenting,” and blogs at motheringspirit.com.
Sacred Heart Movie Night – Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, 2250 Main St., Baton Rouge, will host a movie night, “Hand of the Maestro: The Art and Life of Dom Gregory De Wit,” Saturday, Aug. 18, 5:30 p.m. The artwork of Sacred Heart will be featured in the film. For more information, call 225-387-6671.

Prayer Service for New Bishop – The Diocese of Baton Rouge will host a prayer service for Bishop-designate Michael G. Duca on the evening before his installation as the sixth bishop of Baton Rouge Thursday, Aug. 23, 7 p.m., at St. George Church, 7808 St. George St., Baton Rouge. The event will also be simulcast online at facebook.com/catholiclifeTV. All are welcome.

Rosaryville Retreats – Rosaryville Spirit Life Center, 39003 Rosaryville Road, Road, Ponchatoula will host two upcoming retreats. Becky Eldredge and Stephanie Clouter Davis will present a preached silent Ignatian Retreat Thursday, Aug. 23 – Sunday, Aug. 26. The retreat will focus on the Ignatian exercises. Writer and playwright Paula Darey will present a silent retreat Thursday of Sept. 6 – Sunday, Sept. 9. To register and for costs of these events, call 225-294-5039, email scallais@oppeace.org or catholicretreatcenter.org.

Catholic Charismatic Mass – Father Jason Palermo, pastor of St. Joseph Church, 5710 St. Thomas, Baton Rouge, will host a Charismatic Mass and healing service Sunday, Aug. 26, at St. Joseph. Mercy Beaucage will provide the music. Praise and worship begin at 1:30 p.m. and the Mass will begin at 2 p.m. Individual prayer will be offered after Mass. For more information, call 225-658-3110.

Theology in a Bottle – Father Jamin David, pastor of St. Margaret Church, 30300 Catholic Hall Road, Albany, will talk about, “A Recipe for the Next Elixir: The Mechanics of Episcopal Succession,” on Sunday, Aug. 26, 6:45 p.m., at the St. Margaret Room of the Hall of Saints. For more information, call 225-567-3573.

Metanoia Benefit Concert – “Metanoia Live,” a concert benefitting Metanoia Manor, a home for sex trafficking victims, will take place Sunday, Aug. 26, 7 – 7 p.m., at Varsity Theater, 3353 Highland Road, Baton Rouge. Tickets are $15 each and can be purchased online at varistytheater.com or at the door of the concert.

Women in Spirit – Jan Grimes and Sarah Perez will tell their story of how music and medicine brought them together, “Full Circle: Music, Struggle, Reunion, and Inspiration,” at the Women in Spirit meeting on Monday, Aug. 27, 12 p.m., at St. Joseph Cathedral, Fourth and Main streets, Baton Rouge. Women in Spirit is an interfaith gathering for women seeking spiritual growth and a chance to network. A complimentary lunch will be served. To RSVP, email wism@cathedralbr.org or call the cathedral office at 225-387-5928.

Marriage Help – A Retreats weekend will begin to help couples with troubled marriages Friday, Sept. 7 – Sunday, Sept. 9. For confidential information and to register, call 225-993-2443, email retreatrbrcomico@gmail.com or visit helpourmarriage.com.

Archdiocese of New Orleans Retreat Center – Sister Noel Toomey OP will present a day of reflection, “Have That Mind in You Which was in Jesus Christ,” Friday, Sept. 7, 9 a.m. – 2:30 p.m., with a noon Mass. The retreat will feature practices of imaginative prayer as a way of taking on the mind of Jesus. Father Donald Blanchard will present a silent retreat Friday, Sept. 14 – Sunday, Sept. 16. To register and for cost information on these events, visit retreats.arch-no.org/re-treats or call Susan Halligan at 504-267-9604.

Faith Formation Program – Author Kathryn Clarke, who writes under the pseudonym, “Anne, the lay apostle,” will present a faith formation program, “Becoming Thoughtful Men and Women of God,” Friday, Sept. 14, 6 p.m. – 9 p.m., and Saturday, Sept. 15, 8 a.m. – 4 p.m., at Most Blessed Sacrament Church, 15615 Jefferson Hwy., Baton Rouge. Cost is $25 and lunch will be provided. Registration is required. For information, call 225-362-4508.

40 Days for Life – Baton Rouge’s 40 Days for Life, a time of prayer, fasting and community outreach to help end abortion, will take place Wednesday, Sept. 26 – Sunday, Nov. 4. Participants will pray peacefully outside of Delta Clinic of Baton Rouge abortion facility, 756 Colonial Drive, Baton Rouge. For information, visit 40daysforlifebr.com or call Danielle Van Haute at 225-242-0164.
From page 1

school for 22 years. “We have outgrown our old activity center for Mass, so you can see the beauty of it and multipurpose use for the whole school.”

“This new facility is fabulous and just to celebrate our history with the sisters and what they’ve done and going back to them, relating what their mission was and always keeping the mission here ... it’s going to be an exciting year,” said assistant athletic director Nan Murtagh, who has worked at the school for 35 years, including 25 as coach of the swim team.

The ceremony included a parade of students representing the different groups that will be using the activity center. Last in the line-up were two students hoisting the giant trophy from the 2018 National High School Championship, won by SJA cheerleaders in February in Orlando, Florida.

“None of us anticipated for this senior year to be so special, but we’re glad it is,” said Grace Wisdom.

“These students and alumni that come back, they know that they’re not forgotten and this place is still standing because of people like them and that’s what I want the girls to remember and carry out ... and continue to serve their dear neighbor,” said former principal Stacia Andrasic, who has been with the school 23 years. “You’ve got to carry it out and know that they are a part of something so wonderful in this Baton Rouge community.”

In his remarks, Bishop Muench noted the amount of people, time, effort and money invested in the new facility but also mentioned there was a deeper meaning to that investment.

“It’s never the buildings that are the most important,” said the bishop. “It is the people, individually and collectively, working together for the good of you current students, future students and past students ... because graduation is not the end of the journey, but the continuing of the journey in cooperation with this great place, for your well-being and for you to help others.”

And, still the school thrived, growing and outgrowing classrooms, facilities and buildings.

For more information on the year-long celebration, visit St. Joseph’s Academy website at sjabr.org
of priests, deacons, ministers, servers, bishops and archbishops, with the congregation singing “Lift High the Cross.”

Also preceeding Bishop-designate Duca’s knocking on the door is a second procession that will include Bishop Robert W. Muench, Archbishop Gregory M. Aymond of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, Msgr. Walter Erbi, Chargé d’Affaires at the Apostolic Nunciature in the United States, Deacon Ed Gauthreaux, Deacon Tim Grimes, as well as individuals carrying a crucifix, an empty water bowl and two servers holding candles.

Those in the second procession will gather at the rear of the church, at which time the music will stop and Bishop-designate Duca, using a rubber-headed mallet, will knock at the door of the cathedrall. Two hospitality ministers will open the doors and Bishop-designate Duca will walk in, wearing his mitre but not carrying the crosier, which, at that point, will be carried by Archbishop Aymond.

Father Ranzino said the knock is the bishop-designate saying “I’m here. I’d like to come in.” It’s a way of literally saying we welcome you who are at the door.

“In a beautiful way he comes to us knocking at the door. And there to greet him at the door will be all of us.”

After entering but before processing to the altar, Bishop-designate Duca kisses the crucifix. He will also sign himself with water taken from the baptismal font that is the original crosier used by Bishop Robert E. Tracy during his installation as the founding bishop of the diocese in 1961. Once seated in the chair and presented the crosier, Bishop-designate Duca will officially be the new bishop.

Archbishop Aymond and Msgr. Erbi will then usher Bishop-designate Duca to the presider’s chair, and Archbishop Aymond will present the bishop-designate with the crosier, which is the original crosier used by Bishop Robert E. Tracy during his installation as the founding bishop of the diocese in 1961. Once seated in the chair and presented the crosier, Bishop-designate Duca will officially be the new bishop.

Archbishop Aymond and Msgr. Erbi will then join Bishop Muench on the altar where Bishop-designate Duca was previously seated, where they will remain for the remainder of the celebration.

Once seated, representatives of the priests, deacons and several ministries will come to the altar and briefly greet the new bishop.

At that point, Father Ranzino said the ceremony continues as the Liturgy of the Eucharist is celebrated by who will then officially be Bishop Duca.

“I find (the ceremony) a really nice balance of strategic symbol making,” Father Ranzino said. “I really love the fact this is the crosier (Bishop Tracy) used when (he) was installed (as the first bishop of the diocese).”

The first reading, which is from Revelation, will be read in Spanish, and the second, which comes from St. Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians, will be read in French. The Gospel reading, which will be from St. John’s Gospel, will be read in English. The universal prayers response will be in English, French and Vietnamese.

“Our attempt is to make this as inclusive as we can because the church itself is a variety of people,” Father Ranzino said. Plenary indulgences will be granted to those who have confessed their sins and received Communion, Father Ranzino said.

“By the doing of these ritual acts we are speaking loudly something in many ways is deeper than words,” he added. “We are a worldwide church yet we are directly connected to Francis our pope. We are a church rooted in our baptism. And in that baptism we are all one.

“If somebody comes and they are not Catholic and they are just looking, they’re going to be surprised how the music comments on what we’re doing, how visually we will participate with your eyes, our ears. There will be a lot of movement and probably some surprises.”