When Baton Rouge resident Linda Duscoe did not take her annual summer vacation this year, she decided to put the money to good use: she wrote a check to Joseph Homes in Baton Rouge that would cover the cost of six months for apartment No. 2 which is dedicated to the Louisiana Parole Project in honor of Tom Gess, who with his wife Kathy, was “instrumental” in getting Duscoe involved in criminal justice reform.

“I wasn’t going to California this past year and I thought, instead of going to California I could do something else nice,” said Duscoe. “And, it’s like one thing in life leads to something else and this couple has been so very dedicated to each other and then, of course, to the issue of criminal justice. It’s nice to advocate for people who have been advocates.”

Tom and Kathy Gess worked tirelessly for criminal justice reforms in the 1980s and 1990s, “when no one was doing it,” according to Kerry Myers, communications director for the Parole Project.

“They (Tom and Kathy) would try to talk to legislators about reforms,” said Myers. “They were advocating for changes a long time ago. They were the lone voices then for what people are doing today. There is now a groundswell of the same things they were saying then that it was a moral issue and good policy to help these people being sentenced to life as children, some of whom were first-time offenders.”

Tom and Kathy Gess helped revitalize the Louisiana chapter of CURE (Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants) and worked with other organizations to reduce crime through criminal justice reform. In 2003, the couple was named national Volunteers of the Year by Catholic Charities and in 2003, they received the David A. Hamilton Volunteer of the Year Award by Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge. In 2003, Tom was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease and Kathy became his full-time caregiver. He died in June of 2017 at age 83.

“I think Tom would really be proud,” said Kathy of the apartment’s dedication to Tom. “It’s nice to see things getting done that we worked on and seemed like nothing was going to happen and now things seem to be happening.”

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

Finding spiritual joy at work
By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

“IF Adam and Eve had never eaten that apple, I wouldn’t have to go to school,” a student at St. Elizabeth School in Paincourtville said at the beginning of the school year to Father Matthew Graham, pastor of St. Elizabeth Church and St. Jules Church in Belle Rose. He mused that the student grasped and expressed the “inward groaning” of what it takes to prepare for a future in the workplace, which is also the groaning from many adults who are already in the workplace.

Father Graham talked about the issue of “toil” during his presentation of living faith in the workplace at a Theology on Tap meeting at Tin Roof Brewery in Baton Rouge on Aug. 16.

While many people think of work as toil, Father Graham noted that God never intended work to be toilsome. He noted that in Genesis 2:15 it says, “The Lord God took that man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till and keep it.”

Work distinguishes people from all other creatures, Father Graham said.

“It not only transforms nature, but it transforms us. It helps us to be fulfilled, and that ties into our spirituality,” said Father Graham.

He said it is work that helps people to grow in virtue. He said St. John Paul II talked about the virtue of industriousness in his encyclical, “Laborem Exercens ("On Human Work").

Father Graham noted the encyclical highlights how people participate in the creative work of God through work.
Catechesis & the cross

By Dina Dow

“Last one out the door, please turn out the lights!”

This phase was common during the energy crisis of the 1970s. The awareness to conserve gas and electricity instilled a habit remaining with some today to turn out the lights each time one leaves the room. It is common in church parishes for a catechist, namely the Director of Religious Education (at schools and parish halls), to switch the lights on and off since they arrive early and leave late. It is their commitment to forming disciples, together with the sacrifice of extended hours, training and planning that we honor the important role of catechists.

The 24th and 25th Sundays in Ordinary Time fall within the celebration of Catechetical Sunday. The readings show forth the message of the cross. “The message is three-fold and similar to the message of faith formation called the kerygma: The subject of proclamation is Christ who was crucified, died and is risen: through him is accomplished our full and authentic liberation from evil, sin and death; through him God bestows ‘new life’ that is divine and eternal. This is the ‘Good News’ which changes man and his history, and when a person falls in love with his heart (Redemptor Missio 44, St. John Paul II, 1990).

Message of the cross

St. John Paul II continues, “The vital core of the new evangelization must be a clear and unequivocal proclamation of the person of Jesus Christ, that is, the preaching of his name, his teaching, his life, his promises and the kingdom through his suffering, death and resurrection. Thus, the task of catechesis is to lead others in faith to the message of the cross by promoting knowledge of the faith, participation in liturgical and sacramental life, moral formation, teaching to pray, preparation and participation in community and developing a missionary spirit. This begins in the family and further supported by the faith formation ministries of the church.”

Catechesis & suffering

Since we are baptized in the life of Jesus Christ, we are also baptized into a life, which includes suffering, death and new life, the resurrection. The prophet Isaiah tells of the suffering servant, persecuted by a steadfast commitment to God, who is the constant source of strength and help. Thus, “we walk before the Lord because he hears our cry and answers” (Ps(s) 116).

Faith & works

“Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me” (Mt 8:34). The Letter of St. James centers on the importance of faith and works. Believing without “doing” is fruitless. We are called to have a lived faith, whereby our actions one will know the faith in which we believe. The faith one must know is also one that continues to grow in order to become the very person we are called to imitate: Jesus Christ.

Father John Paul MFVA gave a recent homily in which he explained the power of God on the cross. He emphasized that the sign of Christianity is the crucifix. We begin and close prayers with the Sign of the Cross. We enter the church, dip our finger in holy water then make the Sign of the Cross. This action is one of faith. What does this mean? The cross to those without faith is a sign of contradiction. Yet, to those with faith, it is a sign of victory and love. Father John Paul recalls St. John Paul II’s message that by the cross Jesus strikes at the root of evil and accomplishes salvation. Life with Christ is eternity. The northern point of our faith compass is heaven.

God’s remedy of the effects of suffering is Jesus, as given in John 3:16. Jesus is the means to salvation. He is our teacher and our healer. He loves us beyond measure. He calls us to holiness and wants us to overcome sin, so much so, he took upon all the sufferings of our sins on the cross and saved us from ourselves. He did this for you. He did this for me. Father John Paul stated, “The beams of the cross are the intersection where heaven and earth meet. It is the crossroads of mankind, where Jesus us meets upon the cross and we meet him where his heart is. Only then will we find purpose and meaning in our struggles and pain.” Do I believe in his act of love? Do I walk away in resentment? Is my life conformed to the cross in love and sacrifice? Father John Paul continues, “Can I see myself on the cross? Is it an autobiography of our lives?”

SEE GOSPEL PAGE 14

Faith on the water

On an early spring day more than 80 years ago, a modest but unique boat first navigated the murky swamp waters of the Atchafalaya Basin.

Only this was no ordinary maiden voyage as on April 21, 1936, Mary, Star of the Sea brought faith to the water. For the next five years the chapel boat was a fixture in places such as Belle River and Bayou Pigeon, ultimately covering 3 square miles in areas such as Belle River, Pierre Part and Bayou Pigeon. The chapel boat operated for nearly five years. Photo provided by the Archives Department

Diocese of Baton Rouge

DID YOU KNOW

Students from St. Joseph the Worker Church in Pierre Part are shown on Mary, Star of the Sea chapel boat making their first Communion. The boat was piloted by Father Jules Toups in 1936 and navigated an area of nearly 900 square miles in areas such as Belle River, Pierre Part and Bayou Pigeon. The chapel boat operated for nearly five years.

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Piloted by Father Jules Toups, the chapel boat, which was considered a religious experiment at the time, brought Mass, holy Communion, other sacraments and rosaries to the poor along four mission posts. Father Toups would later say he recognized the urgency of having the boat to serve those who had been mostly neglected.

At Bayou Pigeon, which was west of Pierre Part where the parish church was located, nearly 300 individuals were served by Mary, Star of the Sea.

Southwest of Pierre Part in Belle River, 73 families totaling some 306 people were served and at 4-Mile Bayou on Lake Verret 33 families totaling 187 souls were able to receive the sacraments.

An original fourth mission merged with the Belle River post. But how times have changed. On the original sail date in 1936, a trek from Pierre Part for Bayou Pigeon, which covered 12 miles, took approximately four hours, hampered by a strong current in Bay Natchez and Lower Grand River.

When approaching a homestead or settlement, the ringing of a large bell alerted residents that Mary, Star of the Sea was near. Those residents would then line the levees or row their boats to get to the landing to get to the chapel boat.

When the gangplank was lowered, the faithful rushed onto the boat, rapidly occupying available seats and filling the entire boat.

Local catechists would present their prize students and by 8 p.m., families had returned home and all was quiet on board. However, by daybreak, the chapel was reopened and women and children would congregate for Mass.

Confessions were heard and baptisms were performed after the Mass. Father Toups would also visit the sick in the area, and later in the afternoon provided counseling for those in need.

Father Toups would then return to Pierre Part to celebrate Mass before casting off to another mission.

Through the chapel boat Mary, Star of the Sea Father Toups indeed lived out his mission as a “fisher of men.”
CuddleCots offer peace to grieving families

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Two women who have walked a broken road when it comes to childbirth are helping to give the gift of time and Christ’s healing presence to families who have lost a child at birth.

Candace Muller and Mandi Ducote founded the Ardent Foundation in 2017, as the fifth anniversary of the death of Ducote’s son, Cason, was approaching. To honor Cason, they searched for a way to reach out to families grieving the loss of a child. In her research, Muller discovered the CuddleCot.

The CuddleCot system cools deceased baby’s bodies, allowing families to stay with babies who were delivered either prematurely or full term before being moved to the morgue. Families and businesses that donate a CuddleCot through the Ardent Foundation of Baton Rouge can place a plaque on the equipment that includes the name of the deceased loved one they are honoring and a Scripture verse. Photo provided by Candace Muller

The CuddleCot system cools deceased baby’s bodies, allowing families to stay with babies who are delivered either prematurely or full term before being moved to the morgue. Families and businesses that donate a CuddleCot through the Ardent Foundation of Baton Rouge can place a plaque on the equipment that includes the name of the deceased loved one they are honoring and a Scripture verse. Photo provided by Candace Muller

The CuddleCot cooling pad is placed in any Moses basket, crib, bed or other receptacle. It is connected by a specially insulated hose and is quietly cooled using the CuddleCot cooling unit. The CuddleCot system comes in its own carry case with two sizes of cooling pads for premature and full term babies. The CuddleCot cools to an ideal temperature for preserving the baby without being too cold for the parents.

Mullers asked her mother, Marree Saltaformaggio, who was the director of women’s services at Oschner Health System in Baton Rouge, if she had heard of CuddleCot and a surprised Saltaformaggio said she had just discovered it herself that week and believed it was a “phenomenal piece of equipment.” Muller said attention was immediately placed on purchasing a unit.

Within a few weeks, Ducote and Muller came up with a misplaced idea to buy the first CuddleCot, which was given to Oschner on Cason’s fifth heavenly birthday, Dec. 19. Since then CuddleCots have been provided for all the birthing facilities in the Baton Rouge area with plans on expanding to New Orleans and beyond.

One strong advocate of the Ardent Foundation is Julie Bonaventure, a member of St. Gabriel Church in St. Gabriel. Bonaventure’s daughter-in-law and Muller are good friends, and when she heard about the CuddleCot, it hit home in her heart, because she suffered the loss of a child, Anna Leigh, 30 years ago.

“I had a baby who unexpectedly died 13 hours after she was born,” said Bonaventure. “And it was over and done. Woman’s Hospital did as much as they could. They let me hold her, they took pictures of her, and baptized her ... But it happened so fast we didn’t have time to think about it. If we had another day through CuddleCot we could have been with her longer, taken pictures, let the children and grandparents see her. For them it’s as if she is ‘not even real’ because they never saw her. All we have are these little grainy pictures. It would have been awesome to hold her. Even though she was deceased, she’s still our flesh and blood.”

She noted more time is important when a baby dies. She said many times, the thought is “remove the family from the tragic situation” when it can actually prolong the grief because the family does not get a chance to properly say goodbye.

Father Charlie Landry, pastor of St. Gabriel, whom Bonaventure introduced to the Ardent Foundation founders, expressed his agreement and support for the CuddleCot.

Father Landry, who has encountered many families who have experienced the death of a baby during his years as a priest, said, “I always wish I could do something more.”

Through the CuddleCot a family has more of an opportunity to “do something” to say goodbye, make memories and help ease the grieving process, according to Father Landry.

Every family whose child did not die at birth, but spent time in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) can appreciate CuddleCots and understand the grieving process that parents who lose a child must be going through.

Muller, who had a difficult pregnancy, remembers the thoughts and emotions she experienced when her daughter, Melody, spent time in the NICU Sea Horse Unit for babies requiring constant attention.

When a baby is struggling for or loses its life, people can walk away from their faith, said Muller, who was fortunate to receive strength through her faith and the support of other people in her time of need.

“Even before I went into the hospital I was on bed rest for two weeks,” said Muller tearfully. “I had a lot of time to sit by myself and ponder whether Melody was going to make it or not. People may think that I would have been paralyzed with fear, but it really was such a peaceful time. I had so many people praying for us – complete strangers and people that I had developed a relationship with that helped me through in seeing that people who had lost children had walked that road. So I felt an obligation to share their mission. Before you experience something like that you may not know what it means to rely on your faith.

“I was very thankful that they stepped up and ministered to me. I didn’t know what my future held, what to expect or why I had been dealt the hand that I had.”

Patting the leg of her daughter, who was nesting nearby in her grandmother’s lap, Muller said, “And this little angel – I felt I had been dealt the hand that I was Christian before, but she gave me a very different outlook on life.”

Which she said is the reason why she and Ducote are on a mission to share the love of Christ to families in their deepest moment of grief.

For more information about the CuddleCot, visit theardentfoundation.com.

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‘Full circle’ of life for friends

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

The floating sounds of piano and clarinet, medical information and words of inspiration synthesized into a concert-style presentation about music, healing and their doctor/patient relationship by Jan Grimes and Dr. Sarah Perez at the Women in Spirit meeting Aug. 27 at the St. Joseph Cathedral Parish Hall.

Grimes, organist for St. John the Evangelist Church in Plaquemine and member of St. Joseph Cathedral, and Perez, who graduated with a degree in clarinet performance from LSU, share a love of music. Grimes accompanied Perez during her senior recital. Their paths would seem to part, as Perez discovered during their performance from LSU.

A musical family, Bill and Jan Grimes met at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. They later joined the faculty at LSU, where Jan taught for 30 years. Their son, Jonathan, is a production coordinator for the Arts Council of Baton Rouge and son, Tim, is scheduled to be ordained as a priest in May.

After Jan Grimes was diagnosed with Parkinson’s Disease, her husband talked about the healing power of music at a music and words of inspiration presentation and their doctor/patient relationship and music and healing. The duo, which calls themselves “Full Circle,” plays at Parkinson’s symposia and support groups around the region.

At the Women in Spirit meeting Grimes played piano and Perez played clarinet, creating sweeping interludes between music and discussions.

Grimes, who has performed more than 650 recitals and developed the program in collaboration with Perez, said she has found the pianist,” said Grimes, who noted Parkinson’s helped her redefine who she was. She said she has had more time to get back to her old hobby of sewing, with samples of handbags she had made for women who support each other and speak about their latest symptoms. She and Perez said they try to time performances when Grimes can be at her peak.

Grimes’ talk, in fact, was upbeat about the things she has gained through Parkinson’s.

“I am off the stress track of Parkinson’s, according to Grimes. She keeps up with her daily chores around the house, exercise and piano practice and meets with a group of three women who support each other and talk about their latest symptoms. She and Perez said they try to time performances when Grimes can be at her peak.

Pastoral appointments

Staff Report
The Catholic Commentator

Bishop Michael G. Duca has appointed Father Pat Broussard pastor at St. Mary of False River Church in New Roads and Father Reuben Dykes pastor at Mater Dolorosa Church in Independence.

Both appointments are effective Sept. 14.

Father Broussard was ordained May 28, 2017 at St. Joseph Cathedral. He has served as parochial vicar at St. Thomas More Church in Baton Rouge and in August was appointed pastoral administrator at St. Mary by Bishop-Emeritus Robert W. Muench.

Father Dykes was ordained May 30, 2015 and has served as parochial vicar at Holy Family Church in Port Allen, St. James Church in St. James, St. Philip Church in Vacherie and Our Lady of Peace Church in Vacherie and Christ the King Parish and Catholic Center in Baton Rouge.

The pastoral appointments are the first since Bishop Duca was installed in Aug. 24.
OLOL’s ‘Stop the Bleed’ initiative can be life saving

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

In a world where terrorism and mass killings are a reality, emergency response personnel have added a new tool to the arsenal of first aid: stop the bleed. Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center in Baton Rouge has taken on the effort to educate the public about this important tool and is hosting free seminars. One such seminar was held recently at the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals where more than 50 employees learned how to apply tourniquets, apply pressure and pack a wound.

Paige Hargrove, executive director for the Louisiana Emergency Response Network (LERN), said that “Stop the Bleed” is a national initiative developed by a federal inter-agency group designed to educate lay people on how to stop the bleed.

“The initial work came after Sandy Hook and they found, looking at autopsies and how that event unfolded, that in that situation there were five children that could have survived but died of bleeding out,” said Hargrove.

Danielle Martrain, trauma program manager at OLOL, started the training session by explaining the importance of learning to stop the bleed, even beyond tragic events such as mass shootings.

“Unfortunately what we see in the hospitals is it might be a motor vehicle crash, it might be a motorcycle crash, it may be a pedestrian struck, it may be a boating accident,” many, many events that we see, a lot of them are hemorrhages, it’s loss of blood that takes lives,” said Martrain. “And so if they had a tourniquet, or if someone had just held pressure, then they wouldn’t have lost the volume of blood that they lost, we could have saved the life.”

Martrain also mentioned how accidents that occur in rural areas could mean longer response time by emergency crews.

“If they lie there and they just lose blood, there’s no way they can possibly survive by the time (emergency medical services) can get to them,” said Martrain.

“If we can just stop that bleeding, we can make a huge difference for that person.”

Martrain explained how a tourniquet can be made from anything including a belt or a shirt. However, if the wound is not in an area where a tourniquet can be applied, such as the abdomen or upper chest, a shirt can also be used to pack a wound, she said.

The formula to “stop the bleed” uses the acronym of ABC: (alert 9-1-1), bleed (find the source), compress. Tourniquets should be applied two inches above the wound, according to Martrain.

“When you apply the tourniquet, they’re going to tell you it hurts. A tourniquet does hurt, it’s supposed to hurt. It’s okay,” said Martrain. “Years ago they told us, don’t put a tourniquet on, they might lose their limb. Well, first of all, they’re not going to lose a limb in the short period of time that you put a tourniquet on, but a life over a limb is much better. So, in the big scheme of things, I’d much rather have my life than a limb. Secondly, don’t ever take a tourniquet off. If you put a tourniquet on and it continues to bleed, get something else and put another one on, or apply pressure, but don’t loosen it.”

“You never know when you might come across someone that told me I might need assistance,” said Cheryl Brown, a social worker for DHH who had signed up for the course. “I also work with individuals that work in the community so it’s information I could pass on as well.”

According to Hargrove, other lessons have come from studying mass tragedies including response time for emergency medical services, which can now go into a situation sooner to administer care to victims.

“There’s been a lot of education from first response, even through the police force, knowing what to do from that effort, but it really did spin off after Sandy Hook and so we feel like it’s part of our mission and our duty to help spread the word and provide education,” said Hargrove. “We’re doing this at workplaces and schools.

Aguillard receives high honor

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge Executive Director David Aguillard said he was humbled by his recent election to chair a committee that serves as liaison between executive directors of Catholic Charities agencies throughout the country and Catholic Charities USA.

Aguillard said it “was exciting and reaffirming” to be elected by his peers to chair the Executive Committee of the Council of Diocesan Directors.

“It’s a serious responsibility,” said Aguillard, who has served in that position at CCDBR for 10 years. “There’s a certain amount of humility that goes along with it because (the executive committee members) are really good, smart talented people. They tend to be very well educated, extremely experienced in not only non-profit work, but many of them come from business backgrounds.

“They are people of principle and commitment and you kind of wonder, ‘Gee am I one of those kind?’ I don’t think of myself that way.”

Aguillard said he will be serving as a key link between CCUSA, which is located in Washington, D.C., and his peers. The responsibilities of the committee include helping set agendas for two national meetings of executive directors as well as expressing the viewpoint of those directors to the national office.

“So the way that (CCUSA) learns of (the needs of executive directors) is through its members,” Aguillard said. “(CCUSA) is a membership organization that exists to support the membership with knowledge, expertise, resources and then helping us make our viewpoint and needs known in D.C.”

Aguillard said executive committee members participate in a monthly conference call to seek input and ideas for topics of interest, fun speakers and arrange and schedule the tracts for the two national meetings.

“That’s one of the beauties of CCUSA as a membership organization,” added Aguillard, who has been a member of the executive committee for one year. “At these annual gatherings there is always something to learn of substance to bring back to the agency that we can implement.”

He added that one of the advantages of chairing the executive committee is the fact he will be receiving input as to how other Catholic Charities agencies handle stress situations, such as immigration or natural disasters, because he will be in constant communication with those executive directors.

Aguillard was scheduled to be installed as chair of the executive committee the week of Sept. 10 during a national meeting in Baltimore.

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Dementia and the sacraments/Proper attire for eucharistic ministers

Question Corner
Father Kenneth Doyle

I bring holy Communion to a local nursing home. Of the 66 Catholics there, many of them have no visitors. Those with dementia are asked whether they would like to receive the Eucharist, and if they say yes, I give them the host.

It saddens me that Jesus suffered to give us his mercy in confession and in anointing, and yet I don’t feel that I can ask a priest to bring these sacraments because I don’t know whether the people were attending church prior to their dementia. Am I correct, and what can be done for these individuals other than praying for them to the Lord? (City of origin withheld)

Helpful guidance is available on these matters in “Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities” published by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and revised most recently in June 2017.

You are right to ask residents with dementia whether they would like to receive the Eucharist; according to the guidelines, all that is required is that they simply be able to distinguish holy Communion from ordinary food and sometimes that is shown not by words but by a gesture, even by reverential silence.

The guidelines note, too, that “cases of doubt should be resolved in favor of the right of the Catholic to receive the sacrament.”

As for confession and anointing of the sick, why would you demand as a prerequisite that the person had been attending church prior to the onset of the dementia? What’s essential, I would think, is not history, but the current state of the person’s soul and who are we to measure that?

I am a lifelong Catholic, and are these the changes I must accept as the new norm for the celebration of the Mass? (I have not spoken yet to our parish priest about this, because I wanted to see your answer first.) (Hawaii)

There is nothing in the church’s universal Code of Canon Law that regulates the specific apparel of ministers of the Eucharist wisely, I would think, since standards of dress differ somewhat throughout the world.

The website of the bishops of the United States says simply that “all ministers of holy Communion should show the greatest reverence for the most holy Eucharist by their demeanor, their attire and the manner in which they handle the consecrated bread or wine.”

Some Catholic parishes do publish their own guidelines with varying specificity. (One, from a Catholic parish in Texas, says: “MEN: First Choice: suit and tie; Second Choice: sports coat, dress slacks and tie; Least Choice: dress shirt, dress slacks and tie. WOMEN: First Choice: a dress, skirt/pleated dress, or dress pants suit; Second Choice: there is none.”)

I would suggest that you speak to your pastor about your own feelings. (You might mention the snare drummer, too.)

At my parish, the eucharistic ministers wear jeans and T-shirts with printed messages having nothing to do with religion. The lectors wear Bermuda shorts and casual shoes. (The priest and servers wear regular altar attire.) The snare drummer plays the cymbals so loud that the choir cannot be heard when they are singing.

By all means, try to line up a priest to come to offer these other sacraments. The priest will ask Catholics if they would like to go to confession, and, according to the guidelines, “as long as the individual is capable of having a sense of contrition for having committed sin, even if he or she cannot describe the sin precisely in words, the person may receive sacramental absolution.”

And finally, the anointing of the sick has, as one of its effects, “the forgiveness of sins, if the sick person was not able to obtain it through the sacrament of penance” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 1532).

Yes, I know that for forgiveness to take effect one must be properly disposed (i.e., sincerely contrite), but I would always give the person the benefit of the doubt and let God sort it out!
Living God’s will is the path to be ‘pure in heart’

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

When people give their undivided attention to God’s plan for their lives, they are the ones Jesus refers to when saying “blessed are the pure of heart” in the sixth beatitude, according to Father Frank Uter, pastor of Immaculate Conception Church in Denham Springs.

“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.”

allowed God’s will to be compromised,” said Father Uter. Pointing to the Gospels, Father Uter said people asked Jesus what the purpose of his life and mission was.

“He (Jesus) very simply said, ‘The will of my father,’” said Father Uter. “And he defined his life and mission in terms of the will of the father.

“Even as he was getting ready for his greatest redemptive act when he was in the Garden of Gethsemane he was focused on the will of the father … ‘Not my will but your will be done.’”

Following God’s will means not letting one’s own agenda and one’s own dreams, hopes and goals interfere with God’s plan for his or her life, according to Father Uter.

He acknowledged it can be challenging to know when one is following their own will or God’s.

“If you find yourself getting in a bad mood or grumbling about what others have said or done or feeling unappreciated you can ask yourself, ‘Am I living for my own building up or am I living to fulfill the will of God?’ When you find yourself ‘in your head’ getting off track, you can ask, ‘How is my doing this helping to accomplish God’s plan? Once you refocus on the will of God, all those grumbling thoughts go away.’

Taking part in the sacrament of reconciliation and going to a spiritual director, if able, is a good way for people to receive God’s healing when they have gone astray from his will and stay connected with him, according to Father Uter.

He said the pure of heart are peaceful because they are living according to God’s plan for their lives.

Bishop Stanley J. Ott was a good example of this because he “detailed” his own agenda into God’s, Father Uter said. He noted that even on his deathbed Bishop Ott was humble and joyful.

“I saw him three days before he died, and he was so cheerful,” Father Uter recalled. “I saw him Thanksgiving (Day) and he died on a Saturday. He grinned and said, ‘Isn’t Thanksgiving wonderful? He was so focused on God. It was never ‘Poor me’ or ‘Why me?’”

The flood of 2016 was both a time of great suffering and loss and a time when the parishioners of Immaculate Conception and other members of the community lived out the beatitude “blessed are the pure in heart,” according to Father Uter.

“You had a lot of people that in their midst of their own suffering were reaching out to others,” said Father Uter. “You know they were trying to take care of their homes and families and were still reaching out to others who had no one to help them. We saw this over and over again.”

He said you also see this in people who visit the sick, the homebound and those in nursing homes and are solely focused on the people they are visiting.

Parents who, in the midst of all the household distractions, are doing their best to raise their children are also living the beatitude of being pure of heart. On that note, he recommended when parents get frustrated they should “pull away” for a moment and spend time with God for strength and encouragement, because they know they are raising them because it’s God’s will for them to do so.

Some may think that to live the beatitude “blessed are the pure of heart,” means they must be a candidate to become a canonized saint. But Father Uter noted it’s people’s desire and efforts to do so that makes them pure of heart.

“I don’t think pure of heart means we do everything perfectly, but in our heart and will we wish to do God’s will,” said Father Uter.

Part 6 of 8
And this is the job of a catechist: constantly to go forth to others of love, to bear witness to Jesus and to talk about Jesus, to proclaim Jesus.  

– Pope Francis

We recognize with gratitude all Catechists in the Diocese of Baton Rouge this Catechetical Sunday. Below is a list of Catechists whose names were submitted to our Office as having served in Catechetical Ministry for their parish.
By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

In his first Mass since becoming bishop of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, Bishop Michael G. Duca appeared relaxed, jovial and calm. The celebration was the 4:30 p.m. Saturday Mass at St. John the Baptist Church in Brusly for the 20 seminarians studying for the diocese.

"Today, we welcome our seminarians...my seminarians now," said Bishop Duca. "I'm so proud to see a nice big group of them here and the vocations staff as well."

The Mass was on the calendar for Aug. 25 for Bishop Emeritus Robert W. Muench long before the appointment of Bishop Duca. But, when the new bishop learned the seminarian Mass was scheduled the day after his installation ceremony, he did not reschedule.

"So far, he seems like a great guy," said first-year seminarian Wesley Adolph. "We were just told the story that this is his first day after his installation, if he wanted to change the schedule that Bishop Muench had set of having this Mass here with us seminarians and without blinking an eye he said, 'No, I want to keep that.'"

Bishop Duca began his homily with a reminder of how new he is to the job.

"I've already learned something new today," Bishop Duca said. "You don't pronounce the 's' in Brusly. So, that's a nice thing to know so I won't sound so much like a stranger."

The bishop talked about Jesus' Eucharistic discourse, based on the Gospel reading in St. John, and how Jesus did not back down even when some of his disciples left because of the graphic nature of what Jesus was talking about.

"Jesus tells them you must eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood or you will not have life in you," said Bishop Duca. "You know he talks about chewing the flesh, and not the word for 'body,' but he used the word for 'flesh' and the idea that this is real, the language is real, to drive home the fact that this was his true body and blood."

The bishop said the "first generations of theologians in the church confirmed that they believed it as well," leading to our own faith in the true body and blood of Christ as coming from Scripture and tradition. According to the bishop, the disciples who left were Jesus' friends, "the ones that were with him up to this point."

Bishop Duca said Jesus then asked the 12 if they also wanted to go but "Peter, speaking for the 12, as Peter now continues to speak for the church, Peter being the office of the pope, (Pope Francis, 'Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We've come to believe that you are the Holy One of God.'"

"Now, I want to make a point that certainly most of us here would have no problem obviously, if Jesus were to say, 'Do you want to leave, too?' No, Lord – we believe in the Eucharist. We believe this is the body and blood of Christ," said the bishop.

"But also we're called to believe in Christ throughout our whole lives, to believe he has the words of everlasting life throughout every part of our lives. And so as Jesus said, as he has said, forgive your enemies. Forgive those who have hurt you. And, right now, you know there's someone in your heart you cannot forgive."

The bishop then talked about how difficult forgiveness can be even saying that some who cannot forgive will justify it by saying, "I can't forgive them and I'm okay because God understands," he added.


He then compared the unwillingness to forgive, addictions and other behaviors that are wrong to turning away from Jesus.

"Are we willing to walk away (from evil)? For we know it's the Lord's will to not do it; to turn away from evil, to turn away from sin and trust in Jesus, for I've convinced him he has the words of everlasting life, but for a few minutes, I'm going to go over here and do something else," said the bishop. "In those moments, are we choosing to walk with the Lord or are we the disciples who walked away?"

The bishop said someone once told him, "Father, if I have to forgive that person, it'll kill me." In the past, he would let it go, said Bishop Duca, but now he agrees.

"You're exactly right!" Bishop Duca said. "For you to forgive that person, you have to die to all of the things that are keeping you from forgiving them. You have to die to the things that you lost. You have to die to your crime." The bishop continued to talk about the difficulty of forgiveness because it's "uneven," with the person that was hurt having to let go of the pain. He also said that if you struggle with forgiveness, then to pray, "Lord, help me to forgive."

"Open yourself to it, really believe," said Bishop Duca. "Sometimes just saying that begins to melt away a little bit of resistance. Lord, I can't control this, it just consumes me all the time. Lord, help me. Send me your grace."

The bishop then recalled that at the time of Jesus' death, he accepted the will of the father and asked for forgiveness for those who condemned him to die and finally, commending his spirit, "that peace of giving all to the Father."

"And at this altar, we enjoin ourselves to that same sacrificial act of faithfulness to the Father, and when we do, let's bring to the altar these struggles, these things that we want to die to," said Bishop Duca. "We want to join Jesus on the cross to be faithful like he was."

Following the Mass, Bishop Duca had dinner with the seminarians, giving him and the seminarians a chance to get to know one another.

"The seminarians' are excited," said Father Matt Lorrain, pastor of St. John the Baptist and director of seminarians for the diocese. "They love Bishop Muench but they're already very enamored of Bishop Duca and looking forward to him being our shepherd and going forward.

Seminarian Joseph Bresowar reads from the Scriptures during the seminarians' Mass at St. John the Baptist Church in Brusly on Aug. 25. It was Bishop Duca's first Mass since his installation as the sixth bishop of the Diocese of Baton Rouge. Photo by Bonny Van / The Catholic Commentator

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Bishop Michael G. Duca, fresh off his installation as the sixth bishop of the Diocese of Baton Rouge 48 hours earlier, dipped into his own background to encourage numerous Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts and Girl Scouts gathered at the annual Catholic Committee on Scouting Religious Award Ceremony at Our Lady of Mercy Church in Baton Rouge on Aug. 26.

During the ceremony, which filled the church with parents, friends and relatives of the honorees, Bishop Duca handed out awards to not only the young scouts, but their adult leaders as well who earned the most prestigious honors available in the diocese scouting system.

Bishop Duca said he enjoyed “every minute” of his time as a Cub Scout, Boy Scout and Explorer. He shared how his scouting roots run deep in his own family, from his dad, who was involved in scouting in a variety of roles all the way through his retirement years, to his sisters, who were Girl Scouts.

“Scouting organizations are tremendous builders of character,” Bishop Duca said. They are a powerhouse for building citizens of the future and young men and women (who are) morally straight.”

He said his involvement in scouting taught him a love of the outdoors, camping and becoming self-sufficient.

“I hope we continue to grow as the scouts and keep it firmly faith based as well as based on the principles of scouting that keep it going,” he added.

During the ceremony, it was announced that Bishop Emeritus Robert W. Muench and Angela Poche were the recipients of the St. George Emblem, which is the highest award presented by National Catholic Committee on Scouting. The St. George Emblem recognizes an adult leader’s outstanding contribution to the spiritual development of Catholic youth in the program of the Boy Scouts of America.

Bishop Muench, who was a strong supporter of the scouts, served as the bishop of the Diocese of Baton Rouge from 2001 until June, when he became apostolic administrator when Bishop Duca was announced as his successor.

Poche, a member of St. Theresa of Avila Church in Gonzales, has served for 10 years as Religious Emblem counselor for Pack 65 and her many volunteer activities include serving as confirmation counselor at St. John the Evangelist Church in Prairieville.

Jackie Daniels, Angela Diffendal, Scott Harrington and Louis Hubbert were honored with the Bronze Palm Award, which recognizes adults for their efforts in contributing directly to the spiritual enrichment of Catholic youth involved in scouting. Daniels has been involved in scouting for 45 years and serves as the Region 9 representative to the National Catholic Committee for Girl Scouts.

Girl Scout Troop 10092 was honored with the Light in the Lord Bishop Stanley J. Ott Service Recognition Award. The award honors Bishop Ott and is awarded to scouting groups who demonstrate service to the community in keeping with the ideals as lived and preached by Bishop Ott.

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

“Scouting organizations are tremendous builders of character.”
Bishop Michael G. Duca

“Scouting, organizations are tremendous builders of character,” Bishop Duca said. "They are a powerhouse for building citizens of the future and young men and women (who are) morally straight."
### Scout Religious Award Winners from 2018

#### Girl Scouts

**GOD IS LOVE**

Troop 10411  
Counselor: Bonnie Kolb  
Caroline Marie Barber  
Kate Darcey Bonaventure  
Maggie Marie Brown  
Maria Cecille Couvillion  
Amelie Grace Dallimore  
Eille Catherine Dallimore  
Noelle Grace Guillot  
Lauren Michael Johnson  
Lilly Katherine Johnson  
Stella Ann Johnson  
Elle Alexandra Jones  
Elizabeth Frances Kolb  
Riley Ann Lundin  
Amelia Katherine Mouch  
Charley Reagan Sasser  
Camille Catherine Petree

Troop 10562  
Counselor: Barbara Sicard  
Nora Catherine Proctor

Troop 10584  
Counselor: Jillian O'Quin  
Taylor Marie Aguillard  
Annabel Renee Arceneaux  
Brooke Elizabeth Berry  
Kinslie Rae Bouquet  
Lily Katherine Dauzat  
Addyson Rose Moore

Troop 10760  
Counselor: Anamaria Cuadra  
Isabelle Margaret Camp  
Anne Claire Losavio  
Cecilia Marie McGuffey  
Zoe Elizabeth Nizzo  
Emilia Anne

Troop 10812  
Counselor: Elizabeth Matherne  
Hannah Anne McGovern

**FAMILY OF GOD**

Troop 10009  
Counselor: Michelle Thompson  
Neala Marie Thompson

Troop 10067  
Counselor: Elizabeth Matherne  
Peyton Jo Fasbender

**OUR LADY’S AWARD**

Troop 10355  
Counselors: Dee Ardonne & Shannon Hamilton  
Anna Kate Alexander

Troop 10437  
Counselors: Dee Ardonne & Shannon Hamilton  
Aubrey Marilyn Matherne

Troop 10591  
Counselor: Gina Wilson  
Madelyn Grace Wilson

Troop 10749  
Counselors: Dee Ardonne & Shannon Hamilton  
Chelsea Alex Alida  
Bellony-Ho-A-Sim  
Hannah Mae Hamilton

#### Cub Scouts

**LIGHT OF CHRIST**

Pack 7  
Counselor: Bonnie Kolb  
Jude Michael Bonaventure  
John Luke Bugea  
Jared Michael Gonthier

Pack 12  
Counselor: Scott Harrington  
Hayes Joseph Arable  
Jules Meyen Beauvais  
Alek Jon Biletnikoff  
Liam Patrick Clancy  
Charles Felix Lee  
Michael Lee Thornton

Pack 103  
Counselor: Michelle Thompson  
Jake Owen Friedland

Pack 490  
Counselor: Erin McLean  
Jacob Michael Farr  
Owen David Farr

#### Boy Scouts

**Ad Altare Dei**

Troop 322  
Counselor: Olga Johnson  
Seth Armand Cayer  
Matthew Alan Johnson  
Ethan Daniel Newman  
Evan Michael Newman  
Conner Jack Pike  
Tanner Blake Pike  
Benjamin Paul Chiasson  
Rex Parish May  
Timothy James Namikas  
Jonathan Morgan Thompson

Pack 165  
Counselor: Laurie Jernigan  
Jayden Anthony Bertreau  
Louis John Rodriguez V  
Jacob Roy Wempen

Pack 626  
Counselor: Laurie Jernigan  
William James Graham  
Angela Diffendal  
Gregory Kevin Diffendal  
Cole Andrew McLellan  
Maxwell Joseph Stevens  
Alexander Chad Templet  
Preston Daniel Vicknair

**PARVULI DEI**

Pack 77  
Counselor: Angela Diffendal  
Carson Joseph Englert  
Jonathan Michael Heintz  
James Talen Kolb  
Patrick James Ocmond  
Austin James Richardson  
Jayesh Shamin Shukla

Pack 65  
Counselor: Angela Poché  
Carter Joseph Englert  
Jonathan Michael Heintz  
James Talen Kolb  
Patrick James Ocmond  
Austin James Richardson  
Jayesh Shamin Shukla

Pack 66  
Counselor: Louis Hebert  
Cain Leonards  
Conner Jack Pike  
Tanner Blake Pike
SPECIAL BLESSING – Personal Bibles were distributed to sixth-graders at Catholic of Pointe Coupee Elementary School in New Roads during Mass at St. Mary of False River Church in New Roads on Aug. 21. Father Amrit Raj, parochial vicar at St. Joseph, Immaculate Heart of Mary and St. Francis churches in Maringouin, then blessed the Bibles. Deemed a rite of passage at CESPC, these students will begin learning the history of the Bible during this school year. Photo provided by Megan Gillinghouse | CESPC

STRIKE UP THE BAND! – The St. Michael Jazz Combo from St. Michael the Archangel High School in Baton Rouge performed at the public reception at the Catholic Life Center following the installation of Bishop Michael G. Duca on Aug. 24. Band members are Ben Messina, Steven Reed, Sam Richard, David Bauduin, Hector Barraza, CJ Gautreaux and Christopher Dugas. The band is under the direction of Dr. Kevin Andry. Photo provided by LeighAnn King | SMHS

WELCOME! – PreK students at St. Jude the Apostle School in Baton Rouge show off their impressions of the New Shepherd for the Diocese of Baton Rouge, Bishop Michael G. Duca. Pictured, from left, are Samantha Schexnayder, Jacob Schmeekle and Harper Blanchard. Photo provided by Starr Driesse | St. Jude School

GOAL! – Students in grades Pre-K through second grade at St. Alphonsus Ligouri School in Greenwell Springs learned soccer skills during a clinic hosted by Baton Rouge Soccer Club. The goal was to introduce the younger students to soccer and help them build interest in the sport. Photo provided by Cindy Ryals | St. Alphonsus School

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✔ Convenient unlimited check writing
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A.X.L.

Directed by Chris Weitz, this movie offers a Jewish perspective not often found in World War II films. It follows a group of Israeli Mossad agents 15 years after World War II as they covertly infiltrate Buenos Aires in order to capture a high-ranking Nazi (Ben Kingsley) who has thus far escaped justice. As they struggle to get him to sign written consent to be tried in Israel, the group's passionate leader (Oscar Isaac) strikes up a fondness for flamethrowers and feels an exhilaration of watching the protagonist pop wheelys and fly aloft on his bike while his sidekick keeps pace. Though the screenplay momentarily plays a dictatorship with property rights, other objectionable elements are few and the main relationship chaste. Some nonlethal violence, an incident of benignly viewed petty theft, an unfinished crude term, a few crass words. A-II; PG

BlackKklansman

Focus

After becoming the first African-American police officer in Colorado Springs, Colorado, in the early 1970s, a rookie cop (John David Washington) is first assigned to infiltrate a lecture by ex-Black Panther Kwame Ture born Stokely Carmichael (Corey Hawkins), then casually manages to contact the local Ku Klux Klan by phone, impersonating a potential member. As he falls for the militant head (Laura Harrier) of the student group that sponsored the Ture event, he and a Jewish fellow officer (Adam Driver) successfully carry on the masquerade with the Klan, even hoodwinking its then-leader, David Duke (Topher Grace). Director and co-writer Spike Lee has a field day with this richly ironic, fact-based mix of drama and comedy, adapted from the 2014 memoir “Black Klansman” by Ron Stallworth, though less self-indulgent editing and a subtler application of the film's lessons to the contemporary political situation would have helped. Still, this is an effective and often entertaining look at the vicious racism lurking at the fringes of American life and perpetually aspiring to enter its mainstream. Brief but sometimes disturbing scenes of violence, mature themes, including racial animus, about a dozen profanities and half as many milder oaths, pervasive rough and crude language, frequent crude slurs, fleeting sexual references, an obscene gesture. A-III; R

A.X.L.

Gentle but bland tale of a teen moto-cross racer (Alex Neustaedter) who happens upon, tames and bonds with an experimental robotic war dog. With the help of the girl (Becky G) he would like to make his own, the lad tries to protect his mechanical pet from being recaptured, either by the military or by the morally impoverished corporation that developed the high-tech creature. An overprivileged track competitor (Alex MacNicoll) with a sadistic streak and a fondness for flamethrowers poses yet another threat to the automated canine. Writer-director Oliver Daly’s feature debut, developed from his 2015 short “Miles,” offers viewers little more than the supposed exhilaration of watching the protagonist pop wheelys and fly aloft on his bike while his sidekick keeps pace. Though the screenplay momentarily plays a dictatorship with property rights, other objectionable elements are few and the main relationship chaste. Some nonlethal violence, an incident of benignly viewed petty theft, an unfinished crude term, a few crass words. A-II; PG

Legion

This gritty but somewhat intriguing crime thriller with an overlay of science fiction finds an ex-con (Jack Reynor) on the run from the half-crazed head (James Franco) of a protection racket with his 14-year-old African-American adopted brother (Myles Truitt) in tow. Unbeknownst to his sibling, the young star has accidentally acquired an alien firearm of tremendous destructive force, and the two are also being pursued by a pair of extraterrestrials who want the weapon back. In expanding their 2014 short “Bag Man” into their feature debut, brothers Jonathan and Josh Baker explore shades of right and wrong via a road trip through seamy swaths of Rust Belt and rural America. Grown viewers willing to tag along will find the innocence of Truitt’s character compared or contrasted with the ethical ambiguities that keep getting Reynor’s petty thief in trouble, the maternal instincts of a goodhearted stripper (Zoe Kravitz) they meet up with along the way and the certainties laid down for the lads by their strict working-class dad (Dennis Quaid) who serves as the film’s moral compass. Strong but bloodless violence, including gunplay and a beating, partial nudity in a strip club, at least one rough term, frequent crude and occasional crass language, an obscene gesture. L; PG-13

Bishop Michael Duca’s Rite of Installation Mass

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The faith we uphold and live begins in the home. Parents are the first to form and to witness to their children this life-giving faith. In turn, the family, as members of the community of believers in the church, led by the main catechist (the pastor), shares this mission of formation through the parish school of religion or the Catholic school. Within these ministries are dedicated witnesses enlisted to share the good news of Jesus Christ. We ask God to strengthen our families in their mission to hand on the faith as great witnesses of Jesus; to inspire our pastors to provide ample opportunities for formation; and to provide more catechists who are willing to serve and keep the light of Christ illuminating the halls until we meet in eternity. Amen.

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

GOSPEL ▼

From page 2 written, with Jesus’ body as the parchment and his blood as the ink.” By the very act of love and the heart of mercy, Jesus lifts up our dignity and value on the cross. We are worth THAT much to him.

Begin in the home

The faith we uphold and live begins in the home. Parents are the first to form and to witness to their children this life-giving faith. In turn, the family, as members of the community of believers in the church, led by the main catechist (the pastor), shares this mission of formation through the parish school of religion or the Catholic school. Within these ministries are dedicated witnesses enlisted to share the good news of Jesus Christ. We ask God to strengthen our families in their mission to hand on the faith as great witnesses of Jesus; to inspire our pastors to provide ample opportunities for formation; and to provide more catechists who are willing to serve and keep the light of Christ illuminating the halls until we meet in eternity. Amen.

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Dow is the director of Evangelization and Catechesis for the Diocese of Baton Rouge.
St. Padre Pio Mass Sept. 23

From staff reports
The Catholic Commentator

A special Mass commemorating the feast day of St. Padre Pio is scheduled Sunday, Sept. 23 at 3 p.m. at Our Lady of Mercy Church in Baton Rouge.

The Divine Mercy Chaplet will be sung beginning at 2:30 p.m.

Father Steve Rodrigues OFM Cap is scheduled to celebrate the Mass. Father Rodrigues annually visits the Diocese of Baton Rouge from the St. Anthony Capuchin Province in Goa, India to appeal for his mission works for the poor, orphans and the neglected, all following in the example of St. Padre Pio, a Franciscan Capuchin friar who is considered by some to be one of the church’s greatest saints.

“St. Padre Pio was blessed by God in many ways, the most dramatic and visible being the stigmata,” Father Rodrigues said. “Among his other gifts were biolocation, prophecy, reading of souls, levitation, apparition, conversion, odor of sanctity and miraculous cures.

“People are still being cured through his intercession in ways that cannot be explained by medicine or science.”

St. Padre Pio was born May 25, 1887 in Pietrelcina, a small town in southern Italy; and died Sept. 23, 1968. Though he suffered through intense, prolonged physical pain, he persevered and met with throngs of people who sought his blessing, healing and advice.

The core of his message to all, a message many associated with miraculous healing, was the simple command of “pray, hope and don’t worry.” Once you make known your needs, fears, hopes, concerns, doubts and struggles to God in prayer, and have asked for his help, you have to now trust the Lord to listen because of his great compassion,” St. Padre Pio once said.

“His motto is the synopsis of his application of theology in daily life. He preached that a Christian should recognize God in everything, offering everything to him saying, ‘Thy will be done.’” Father Rodrigues said. “He said all should aspire to heaven and put their trust in God and not worry about what one is doing, as long as it is done with a desire to please God.”

Regarding Mass, St. Padre Pio once said, “it is easier for the earth to exist without the sun than without the holy sacrifice of the Mass.”

St. Padre Pio was known for sitting in the confessional for up to 15 to 17 hours a day; the tireless confessor is said to have heard millions of confessions, giving hope to the desperate and distressed penitents. Despite his suffering, he was unfailingly compassionate and jovial and gave spiritual and physical assistance to families who came to him for advice.

One of the pilgrims that came to meet the mysterious monk, and who had great admiration, esteem and veneration, and who confessed with him, was St. John Paul II, who said: “I wish to thank the Lord for having given us dear Padre Pio, for having given him to our generation in this very tormented century. In his love for God and for his brothers and sisters, he is a sign of great hope.”

On June 16, 2002, St. John Paul II declared his spiritual friend, Padre Pio a saint. The rosary was important to St. Padre Pio because of his love for Mary. He called the rosary the “weapon against Satan for these times, a weapon of defense and salvation.” Above St. Padre Pio’s door were the words: “Mary is the reason of all my hope.”

This year marks the 50th anniversary of St. Padre Pio’s death and centennial since receiving the stigmata.

“God gave us (St.) Padre Pio to remind a skeptical world that God exists and that the intrigues and scandals are trivial compared to the great goal of heaven,” Father Rodrigues said.

“In everything, St. Pio counseled, pray, hope and don’t worry.”

“Once you make known your needs, fears, hopes, concerns, doubts and struggles to God in prayer, and have asked for his help, you have to now trust the Lord to listen because of his great compassion,” St. Padre Pio said.

A CENTURY OF SERVICE – The St. Joseph Rosary Altar Society celebrated its 100th anniversary with a celebration and Mass on Aug. 7 at St. Joseph Church in Ponchatoula. Established in 1918, the Altar Society has a devotion to Blessed Mother. Its mission is to support the church in various ways, including cleaning the sanctuary and purchasing clergy vestments and altar linens. Photo submitted by Fay Murray

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Solution on page 18

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Finding God

If you are a long-time fan of Colbert, you may remember Father James Martin SJ. He was Colbert’s chaplain on his former late-night show. Today Father Martin is editor at large of America, the national Jesuit review of faith and culture which recently won the 2018 Catholic Press Association Magazine of the Year award. Before joining the America staff, Father Martin was also chaplain to actors and actresses on Broadway and the author of 15 books, including “The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything: Spirituality for the Rest of Us.” The book was named “Jesuit Off-Broadway,” and “My Life with the Saints.” His first book was one he didn’t write, but edited: “How Can I Find God?” I just finished reading this book, which contains the answers to the question about finding God that Father Martin proposed to 68 of the “famous and not so famous” in 1997. They included people you may have heard of like Sister Helen Prejean CSJ, Corinne C. “Lindy” Boggs, Elle Wiesel, Mary Higgins Clark, Rev. Theodore Hesburgh CSC and people you never heard of like Anthony Scola, a volunteer teacher in Hindman, Kentucky; Rev. Holly Lyman Antolini, an Episcopal priest in Stonington, Maine; and Ron, a prison inmate in Boston.

What their answers had in common was that they found God in the experiences of their lives. Some, like Boggs who had always been Catholic, had grown up in a strong Catholic culture, taught by nuns, filled with the memory of “my husband ... and of many parents and grandparents and aunts and uncles and cousins, all swirled together in the communion of saints.” After serving in Congress for many years where she replaced her husband Hale, who was presumably killed in 1972 in a plane crash in Alaska, Lindy served as American Ambassador to the Vatican, then retired to her home in New Orleans. There she found God “in the old St. Louis Cathedral, my New Orleans parish church, an oasis of peace and tranquility in the noisy, sometimes raucous, neighborhood. I find God through the example of Mary, the mother of Jesus, who opens my mind and soul to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Most especially, I find God in the holy Eucharist, the ultimate act of unselfish love by his divine son.”

Others had very different experiences, but came to partially the same conclusion. Wiesel, the famous survivor of the Jewish Holocaust, who devoted his life to keeping the memory of that tragic event alive in our post World War II world and won the Nobel Prize in 1986, gave a two sentence answer. His culture had partially to the same conclusion. Wiesel, the famous survivor of the Jewish Holocaust, who devoted his life to keeping the memory of that tragic event alive in our post World War II world and won the Nobel Prize in 1986, gave a two sentence answer. His culture had

My favorite answer to “How can I find God?” came from a nun-writer who is quite popular still today, Sister Joan Chittister OSB. She began with a story that showed that God is always in our lives, and the spiritual task is simply to recognize that. We must want God more than anything else. But she warns that “God is not in the whirlwind, not in blustering and show” as Scripture teaches us. “God is in the breeze, in the very atmosphere around us, in the little things that shape our lives. God is in the contradictions that assail us, in the circumstances that challenge us, in the attitudes that impel us, in the motives that drive us, in the life goals that demonstrate our real aspirations, in the burdens that wear us down, in the actions that give witness to the values in our hearts. God is where we are, including in the very weaknesses that vie for our souls.”

Finding God, she says, depends on four things: “A conscious awareness of the presence of God, the sacralization of life, an attunement to the Holy Spirit, and a sense of place in the universe.” We have to remember that “the purpose of prayer is not to make God conscious of us; it is to make us conscious of God.” We have to take time daily to reflect on God’s presence. Next, as St. Benedict taught, we must “treat all things as vessels of the altar.” She means that everything is a spark of the divine God who created it. We must treat everything with the respect and tenderness it deserves. “We are part of a holy universe, not its creators and not its rulers.” That’s God’s role. Attunement to the Holy Spirit means realizing that everything that happens to us or around us is a call “to accept what we should not change or to change what we should not accept in order to make the presence of God flourish where we are.” A sense of our place in the universe means to be humble, “to tread lightly through the universe and to deal tenderly with both ourselves and others.”

If we cannot find God in our lives, it may be that we are imitating mayhem in the TV ads, rather than Jesus in the Gospels. 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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An ode to the church

Carlo Carretto was an Italian monk who died in 1988. For many years he lived as a hermit in the Sahara Desert, translated the Scriptures into the Tuareg language, and from the solitude of the desert wrote some extraordinary spiritual books. His writings and his faith were special in that they had a rare capacity to combine an almost childlike piety with (when needed) a blistering iconoclasm. He loved the church deeply, but he wasn’t blind to its faults and failures, and he wasn’t afraid to point out those shortcomings.

Late in life, when his health forced him to leave the desert he retired to a religious community in his native Italy. While there, late in life, he read a book by an atheist who took Jesus to task for a phrase in the Sermon on the Mount where he says: “Seek and you shall find,” meaning, of course, that if you seek God with an honest heart you will find God. The atheist had entitled his book, “I Sought and I Didn’t Find,” arguing from his own experience that an honest heart can seek God and come up empty.

Carretto wrote a book in reply called “I Sought and I Found.” For him, Jesus’ counsel rings true. In his own search, despite encountering many things that could indicate the absence of God, he found God. But he admits the difficulties, and one of those difficulties is, at times, the church. The church can, and sometimes does, through its sin, make it difficult for some to believe in God. Carretto admits this with a disarming honesty but argues that it’s not the whole picture.

Hence his book combines his deep love for his faith and his church with his refusal to not turn a blind eye to the very real faults of Christians and the churches. At one point in the book he gives voice to something which might be described as an “Ode to the Church.” It reads this way:

“How much I must criticize you, my church and yet how much I love you!
How you have made me suffer much and yet owe much to you.
I should like to see you destroyed and yet I need your presence.
You have given me much scandal and yet you alone have made me understand holiness.
Never in this world have I seen anything more obscurantist, more compromised, more false, and yet never in this world have I touched anything more pure, more generous and more beautiful.
Many times I have felt like slamming the door of my soul in your face – and yet how often I have prayed that I might die in your sure arms!
No, I cannot be free of you, for I am one with you, even though not completely you.
Then, too – where would I go? To build another church?
But I cannot build another without the same defects, for they are my own defects I bear within me.
And again, if I build one, it will be my church, and no longer Christ’s.
No, I am old enough to know that I am no better than others.
I shall not leave this church, founded on so frail a rock, because I should be founding another one on an even flatter rock: myself.
And then, what do rocks matter?
What matters is Christ’s promise, what matters is the cement that binds the rocks into one: the Holy Spirit.
The Holy Spirit alone can build the church with stones as ill-hewn as we.”

This is an expression of a mature faith; one which isn’t so romantic and idealistic that it needs to be shielded from the darker side of things and one which is real enough so as not to be so cynical that it blinds itself to the evident goodness that also emanates from the church. In truth, the church is both horribly compromised and wonderfully grace-filled. Honest eyes can see both. A mature heart can accept both. Children and novices need to be shielded from the dark underbelly of things; scandalized adults need to have their eyes opened to the evident goodness that’s also there.

Many people have left the church because it has scandalized them through its habitual sins, blind spots, defensiveness, self-serving nature and arrogance. The recent revelations (again) of sexual abuse by priests and the cover-up by church authorities have left many people wondering whether they can ever again trust the church’s structure, ministers and authorities. For many, this scandal seems too huge to digest.

Carlo Carretto’s Ode, I believe, can help us all, whether scandalized or pious. To the pious, it can show how one can accept the church despite its sin and how denial of that sin is not what’s called for by love and loyalty. To the scandalized, it can be a challenge to not miss the forest for the trees, to not miss seeing that, in the church, frailty and sin, while real, tragic and scandalous, never eclipse the superabundant, life-giving grace of God.

Faith at Home

Laura Fanucci

I wish we didn’t have to talk about this.

What parent hasn’t thought or uttered these words, taking a deep breath before jumping into a hard conversation with their child? Whether a crisis at home, a conflict at school or an atrocity in the news, tough subjects are unavoidable in families.

The recent sex abuse scandals that are rocking our church are no exception.

As youth grow, they will come to know these hard and horrible truths, too.

So how can we broach this topic faithfully at home? Here are three ways to start the hard conversations about what’s happening in our church.

First, talk with your spouse.

Today most of our news comes straight to the phones in our pockets. Instead of sharing the morning newspaper, couples are more likely to scroll through news headlines on their own computers or devices. We can quickly become isolated in our echo chambers of social media – even in our outrage.

But if you make a point to connect with your spouse regularly about your reactions to the news, you can talk together about how to respond.

This may be the time to commit ourselves to deeper prayer as couples, too. In marriage, asking how God calls us to act in the world involves the spouse to whom we have committed our lives.

St. Teresa of Avila wrote to her sisters with words that exhort us in our own callings: “This is your vocation; this must be your business; these must be your desires; these your tears; these your petitions. ... The world is on fire.”

If the world is burning, let the love of our marriages burn even stronger.

Second, talk with your children.

Tackling sensitive, scary subjects like sexual abuse must be done in age-appropriate ways. But we can start when children are small and continue as they grow, circling back to the most important topics over and over, in a thousand ordinary conversations.

When the daunting becomes daily, we grow into the truth that nothing lies beyond the scope of our concern as families and as followers of Christ.

Everything awful in the world is rotten to the core – not to hide but to act.

“We’ve had enough of exhortations to be silent! Cry out with a hundred thousand tongues. I see that the world is rotten because of silence,” wrote St. Catherine of Siena.

She refused to relent in calling the church to reform in her day. Her witness reminds us that part of our vocation as parents is to teach our children to speak up and not remain silent in the face of evil and injustice.

Third, keep talking.

Today’s 24/7 news cycle will soon forget and lunge after the next scandal. We who are left behind must continue to live with the aftermath.

But if we refuse to forget, if we keep praying for healing, if we keep fighting for justice, then our conversations at home can become part of wider conversations in the church for conversion and change.

“The power of evil men lives on in the cowardice of the good,” said St. John Bosco, who dedicated his life to caring for vulnerable children.

For children’s sake, for our church’s sake, for the sake of our own souls, we cannot choose the easy way out and avoid what is difficult to say or do.

Let us pray for the strength to speak with compassion and courage, at home and at church, today and always.

Fanucci 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.
Coming Events

Latin Festival – The Hispanic Apostolate of the Diocese of Baton Rouge will sponsor a Latin Festival on Sunday, Sept. 23, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m., at St. Pius X Church, 6980 Hopper Road, Baton Rouge. Admission is free. There will be food, music, and games. Admission is free.

Harvest Festival – St. Elizabeth Church, 119 Hwy 403, Paincourtville, will host its Harvest Festival on Sunday, Sept. 23, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. There will be food, entertainment, games, handmade items for sale and a silent auction and live auction, which begins at 1 p.m. Louisiana “chefs on the bayou” will gather to share their secret family recipes for lunch. For more information, call the St. Elizabeth Church office at 225-473-8569.

Healing Mass – A St. Charbel Healing Mass will be celebrated on Sunday, Sept. 22, 6 p.m., at St. Agnes Sunday, on Sept. 23, 6 p.m., at St. Agnes Church, 749 East Blvd., Baton Rouge. For more information, call the St. Agnes Church office at 225-383-4127.

St. John Homecoming – On Sunday, Sept. 23, St. John Interparochial School in Plaquemine will culminate its 165th anniversary with a Mass at 11 a.m. at St. John the Evangelist Church, 57805 Main St., Plaquemine. For more information, call the St. John Church office at 225-266-9479.

Women’s Vision Retreat – Rosaryville Spirit Life Center, 39003 Rosaryville Road, Ponchatoula, will host a Women’s Vision retreat Friday, Oct. 5 – Saturday, Oct. 6. The retreat will focus on designing the future of your dreams; discovering what is holding you back from happiness; and learning how to take empowered action for your best life. For cost information and to register, visit catholicretreatcenter.org or email scallais@opppeace.org.

Life Fest – Life Fest, sponsored by the Office of Marriage and Family and Respect Life Program of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, will be held Saturday, Oct. 6, 9 a.m. – noon, at the Catholic Life Center, 1800 S. Acadian Thwy., Baton Rouge. Keynote speaker will be Dr. Kathy Allen, director of Black Advocates for Life, and Rob Tasman, executive director of the Louisiana Conference of Catholic Bishops. Register at mfldiobr.org. For more information, call Danielle Van Haute at 225-242-0323 or email dvanhaute@diobr.org.

Women of the Well – Dina Dow, director of the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis for the Diocese of Baton Rouge, will speak at the meeting of Women at the Well, a ministry for Catholic women, at St. George Church, 7808 St. George Dr., Baton Rouge, on Tuesday, Sept. 25, 7–8:30 p.m, with a 6:45 p.m. social. The event is free. To register, visit womenofthewellbr.com.

Bioethics Lecture Series – Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University will host a bioethics lecture series. The first lecture, “Defending Adam After Darwin: The Origin of Sapiens as a Natural Kind,” will be held Thursday, Oct. 4, 5:30 p.m., at the FranU Biological Learning and Research Building, 5222 Brittany Dr., Suite B, Baton Rouge. A reception will follow. The second lecture, “Human Genome Editing with CRISPR: Ethical Considerations from a Catholic Perspective” will take place Friday, Oct. 5, 9:15 a.m., at the FranU administration building multipurpose room, 5414 Brittany Dr., Baton Rouge. A light breakfast will be served. For more information, call 225-768-1708.

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, 726 Colonial Drive, Baton Rouge. For information, visit godaysforlifebr.com or call Danielle Van Haute at 225-342-0164.

Day of Reflection – Sister Rochelle Perrier MSC will present a day of reflection, “Joy and Peace: Companions on the Spiritual Journey,” at the Archdiocese of New Orleans Retreat Center, 5500 St. Mary St., Metairie, Tuesday, Oct. 9, 9 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. Cost of the day is $85. Lunch and Mass are included. For more information and to register, visit retreats.archno.org, email retreats@arch-no.org or call Susan Halligan at 1-866-957-9170.

Immaculate Conception Fall Festival – Immaculate Conception Church, 865 HALTche Lane, Denham Springs, will host its Fall Festival Friday, Oct. 19 – Sunday, Oct. 21. There will be food, live entertainment, games, booths and raffles. For more information, call 225-665-5359.
“Not only is it natural, but it is a gift to the soul, so it’s supernatural,” said Father Graham.

And challenges are a part of work.

“Just as parents challenge their children to go beyond themselves, so too does work become redemptive because it challenges us to grow in holiness,” said Father Graham.

One of the biggest challenges of work is peer pressure, or worrying about what the boss or co-workers may think of us if we express our faith, according to Father Graham. This is particularly of concern in work places that are hostile to expressions of faith.

“We know the early Christians, even though they were persecuted, found ways to express their faith. And if living out one’s faith in the workplace is something new, it may be thought of as shoddy work,” said Father Graham.

Regardless of whether people work in a place that supports their faith or not, the best thing to do is provide a witness to a Christ-inspired faith or be “the light of Christ,” he said.

“We are to express our conviction with integrity, striving for excellence,” said Father Graham.

“We know Christ was a carpenter, do you think he did shoddy work?” asked Father Graham.

On this note, he urged people to take a “Catholic toolbox” to work, which includes prayers, attending daily Mass when able, praying devotions and receiving the sacraments.

He also encouraged people to live their faith by doing such things as living by the liturgical calendar to give them a deeper perspective and sacred rhythm to their life and work; finding out information about the patron saint of their occupation, or choosing St. Joseph the Worker; refraining from eating meat on Fridays; and celebrating their baptismal birthday. If one cannot openly express their faith, they can put a prayer card behind a picture on their desk or wear a sacred medal under their clothing. All of this points to being “authentically you,” noted Father Graham.

As one does an examination of consciousness at the end of the day, they should thank God for the day, but also look at where they failed – including where they may have not lived out their faith at work. And if needed, they should apologize to their boss or co-workers.

“And when we fail, that’s where the sacrament of reconciliation comes in,” said Father Graham.

Through the toil of work, one is uniting their toil with the redemptive work of Christ on the cross, emphasized Father Graham.

“Toil is something we go through, but there is something better we get out of it,” he said. “Something new can come out of it.”

Father Graham said the church teaches about the indispensability of the cross to one spiritual well-being. “We know there’s a cross, but as Catholics, we also know there is a resurrection,” said Father Graham.

He also suggested that people witness through a Christ-inspired joy, “What do people observe about us? Do we reflect the light of Christ? Are we the salt of the Earth?” asked Father Graham.

And by living joyfully at work as well as home, people are passing on the good work ethic to their children, he said. Living out one’s faith in the workplace may not solve all the problems there, but it can deepen his or her perspective on how to address them.

“If people can take this perspective to work, how it can change the world,” said Father Graham.

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The Catholic Commentator  September 14, 2018

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happening, you know? That was a good thing.”

“I’ve now been involved in CURE 18 years,” said Duscoe. “And so then I started doing volunteer work with Joseph Homes and so from there I’m very aware of the needs of criminal justice.”

Joseph Homes is a transitional shelter for homeless ex-offenders. There are 14 apartments including apartment No. 2. This is Duscoe’s second donation for the Parole Project’s apartment, which has a rent of $300 per month. Her first donation took care of the first part of year. The apartment is currently home to Steve Perkins, who was recently released from the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola. Perkins was sentenced to life in prison at the age of 17 but due to a 2012 Supreme Court ruling in Miller v. Alabama, the Court stated that mandatory sentences of life without the possibility of parole are unconstitutional for juvenile offenders.

“I had been at Angola 44 years,” said Perkins. “It’s a whole different world now. Cell phones run the world; there wasn’t even a cell phone when I left.”

Baton Rouge attorney Keith Nordyke, who is president of the Louisiana Parole Project, said a cell phone comes with the apartment in order to teach cell phone protocol and to provide assistance if necessary. “We’ve had guys that have been locked up for 40 years – they get lost, even around the corner, they get lost,” explained Nordyke. “All of our numbers are pre-programmed in and they can call one of us 24-hours-a-day and we’ll find them or be able to talk them back to Joseph Homes.”

“Well, not me,” laughed Perkins. “I’ve been pretty careful.”

Perkins does admit, however, that without the Parole Project and the apartment he is temporarily staying in, he “would be lost.”

“I’m from Baton Rouge and I don’t even recognize it no more,” he said.

“Many of the people just stay here a few weeks and many of them move on to Opelousas for long-term transition after 40 years of incarceration,” said Linda Fjeldsjo, coordinator of Joseph Homes. “This is just what I call an ‘exhale period,’ but also an opportunity to get some life skills, from technology, operating a cell phone to getting a driver’s license.”

“They’ve never pumped their own gas because that was done for you when you went to prison,” added Nordyke. “It’s a different world. If they came from New Orleans, for example, their home may not be there because of (Hurricane) Katrina, so we also spend a lot of time reintegrating them with a family member, so not only do we use this as a decompression period, their first two weeks, we get them a driver’s license, we sign them up for all the services, Medicaid and so forth.”

According to Nordyke, without the temporary residence that the apartment at Joseph Homes provides, there would be no way to teach the men how to survive and succeed. And, mentors who work with the Parole Project have spent time in prison, a teaching tool that can only be learned through experience.

“They’ve been there,” said Nordyke. “They’ve done re-entry and it’s reach back, learn one, teach one. That’s the way it works.”

For now, without the worry of room and board, Perkins is ready to start his new life. He said he wants to go to work and become a “tax-paying citizen.” So, what does it mean to be able to stay in this apartment for Perkins?

“Everything! I wouldn’t have a place to stay. They take me around, they teach me about finances, and they got so many great people,” said Perkins. “Since I’ve been here two weeks, everything is just lined up. They’re a blessing to me. Without them, I don’t know where I’d be.”

In today’s world, life can sometimes get pretty hectic, but none of us are too busy to live the Gospel. Make sure helping the poor and homeless is on your list!

List Of Things To Do

- Pick up groceries
- Mow the lawn
- Plan a vacation
- Take kids to a football game
- Weed the garden
- Wash clothes
- Walk the dog
- Pay the bills
- Clean the house
- Help the Poor and Homeless

In today’s world, life can sometimes get pretty hectic, but none of us are too busy to live the Gospel. Make sure helping the poor and homeless is on your list!

Live the Gospel today by volunteering with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. For a faith filled volunteer experience, sign-up to volunteer at svdpbr.org.

DONATIONS ▼
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Perkins does admit, however, that without the Parole Project and the apartment he is temporarily staying in, he “would be lost.”

“I’m from Baton Rouge and I don’t even recognize it no more,” he said.

“Many of the people just stay here a few weeks and many of them move on to Opelousas for long-term transition after 40 years of incarceration,” said Linda Fjeldsjo, coordinator of Joseph Homes. “This is just what I call an ‘exhale period,’ but also an opportunity to get some life skills, from technology, operating a cell phone to getting a driver’s license.”

“They’ve never pumped their own gas because that was done for you when you went to prison,” added Nordyke. “It’s a different world. If they came from New Orleans, for example, their home may not be there because of (Hurricane) Katrina, so we also spend a lot of time reintegrating them with a family member, so not only do we use this as a decompression period, their first two weeks, we get them a driver’s license, we sign them up for all the services, Medicaid and so forth.”

According to Nordyke, without the temporary residence that the apartment at Joseph Homes provides, there would be no way to teach the men how to survive and succeed. And, mentors who work with the Parole Project have spent time in prison, a teaching tool that can only be learned through experience.

“They’ve been there,” said Nordyke. “They’ve done re-entry and it’s reach back, learn one, teach one. That’s the way it works.”

For now, without the worry of room and board, Perkins is ready to start his new life. He said he wants to go to work and become a “tax-paying citizen.” So, what does it mean to be able to stay in this apartment for Perkins?

“Everything! I wouldn’t have a place to stay. They take me around, they teach me about finances, and they got so many great people,” said Perkins. “Since I’ve been here two weeks, everything is just lined up. They’re a blessing to me. Without them, I don’t know where I’d be.”

In today’s world, life can sometimes get pretty hectic, but none of us are too busy to live the Gospel. Make sure helping the poor and homeless is on your list!

List Of Things To Do

- Pick up groceries
- Mow the lawn
- Plan a vacation
- Take kids to a football game
- Weed the garden
- Wash clothes
- Walk the dog
- Pay the bills
- Clean the house
- Help the Poor and Homeless

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Live the Gospel today by volunteering with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. For a faith filled volunteer experience, sign-up to volunteer at svdpbr.org.