**REUNITED**

Sesay family together again after 16 years

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Amid the chaotic setting of Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport on a busy Thursday night, Dauda Sesay was encased in his own emotional cocoon.

While taxi drivers were picking up fares, and passengers were scrambling to make flights, Sesay was silent among the flurry of activity, corralling a preponderance of emotion that was 16 years in the making. Eventually, the gates opened and tears of joy flowed as he embraced his children, not wanting to release them from his grasp ever again.

The roots of this family reunion go back 16 years, when Sesay was forced to leave his native Sierra Leone, which was in the midst of what would be a decades-long civil war, after witnessing the brutal murder of his father.

He would embark on a long journey that would eventually land Sesay and his wife, Alima, with the assistance of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge through its resettlement program, in Baton Rouge. But there was no way of knowing the length of such an anguishing separation, and for a long time he was even unaware of their whereabouts.

“Seeing them for the first time was tough; it was a mixed emotion,” said Sesay, who works at Dow Chemical. “I shed tears, but this time the tears I shed were not the same as the ones I did 16 years ago.

“These were tears of joy.”

“I was very happy to see him,” said Bai Sesay, Dauda’s 17-year-old soft-spoken son whom he had never met.

Nearby, 20-year-old Mariama could not stop smiling, barely leaving his side as if to reassure herself this was no dream and that indeed she was home for good.

**Well formed conscience should guide vote**

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Mid-term elections on Nov. 6 can be the time to “throw the rascals out” and send a message to the nation’s leaders on how they are doing as Republicans and Democrats battle for control of the U.S. Congress. By researching candidates and issues, educating themselves on Catholic social teachings and praying, people can be sure they are voting with a well-formed conscience, according to clergy and lay leaders of the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

A resource Catholics can use when deciding how to cast their ballot is “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility,” by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said Rob Tasman, executive director of the Louisiana Conference of Catholic Bishops.

“I think it’s important for all Catholics to keep in mind that as the document from the bishops states, participating in the political process is not just a responsibility but it is an obligation,” said Tasman. “And I find that to be a very strong statement.

“I think it’s critical because I think it’s reflective of the fact that we are blessed enough to live in a democracy where our voice and our vote matters. And so we as a people of faith need to be able to take that seriously and act out our faith even in the voting booth, even in the political world where many times it’s messy, it’s confusing and it’s certainly not clear in terms of candidates reflecting their own faith with in the way that they pursue issues.”

Tasman reminded people to refer to the seven principles of Catholic social teaching when deciding which candidates and issues to support: life and dignity of the human person; the call to family, community and participation; rights and responsibilities; option for the poor and vulnerable; the dignity of work and the rights of see VOTING PAGE 23
Prudence & wisdom

By Dina Dow

“Indeed the word of God is living and effective” (Heb 4:12). We begin the 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time with an awakening. The author of the Book of Wisdom, through prayer and pleading, receives prudence and wisdom, resulting in a preference for these rather than earthly riches. “Prudence guides the other virtues by setting rule and measure. It is prudence that immediately guides the judgment of conscience” (The Catechism of the Catholic Church #1806). This is the first of the cardinal virtues, that which instills shrewdness so we can see or anticipate difficulties and thus be enabled to choose good as opposed to evil. Wisdom follows predominately as “a spiritual gift which enables a person to know the purpose and plan of God” (CCC #120). Thus prudence sets our compass as wisdom aligns us to do God’s will. Prayer fortifies both.

With this in mind we turn to the Gospel, where a man runs up to Jesus as he is leaving town and asks, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus’ response seems obvious, as he recalls the Ten Commandments, to which the man responds, “I obey those!” He knows he is doing what God has commanded.

Yet, Jesus calls this man (and us) into the deep mystery of the life and effectiveness of his word. “You are lacking in one thing. Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” First, do we ask the same question of our Lord? Are we ready for his response? Are we willing to abandon self, serve others and follow Jesus? What riches (material and spiritual) are we holding on to that will better serve others who are without? Are we aware of the poverty around us, both material and physical? Are we investing “goods” for the good of others, and following Jesus? Do we walk away from the demands of discipleship?

The apostles expand the question to “who can be saved.” Through Jesus, we have hope. Jesus looked at them and said, “For human beings it is impossible, but not for God. All things are possible for God.” We alone cannot save ourselves, but for God ALL things are possible. We have a choice to make. Relying upon the virtue of prudence and the gift of wisdom, we have the ability to obey, serve and follow Jesus each day as we journey to eternity.

Servants of mercy

The 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time calls to mind the power of being a servant. As disciples of Jesus, we are called to serve others, even when it is most inconvenient. Our capacity to love expands as we respond to the call of service. The more we serve, the greater we love. The greater we love, the more we serve. Our model of service comes directly from Jesus. His three-fold mission as priest, prophet and king is a roadmap for our life. We serve with our hands, our voice and our heart.

The Letter to the Hebrews explains Jesus’ role as “high priest,” that being the one and only one who sacrificed all he had for all of us. He was tempted, tested and tormented, yet he NEVER abandoned his mission of his role in our redemption. His mercy and “timely grace” saves us from ourselves. Jesus’ entire body was for the service of others to the point of death. The same hands which served to heal were the same hands pierced on the cross. The same feet, which walked for hundreds of miles to reach the many, were the same feet pierced on the cross. He served with mercy, died with mercy and rose with mercy. How far are we willing to serve with love and sacrifice for the good of another?

Jesus’ piercing word resounds through prophets of old. Yet from Christ, those ancient words become lifesaving. Do our words serve as powerfully as our actions?

Finally, Jesus’ preaching, teachings and miracles provide a clear reality of his kingly reign. We are called to a share in this kingship as we follow the way of Jesus. We share with others the joy of the Gospel amidst the struggles in life to provide hope to the hopeless, freedom to the imprisoned, rest to the weary and consolation to the despairing. If Jesus came to serve, then we are here to serve through faith, sacraments, prudent choices and persistent prayer. Calling upon these foundations by the power of the Holy Spirit, may we serve others in as great of love and mercy as Jesus has done for us.
Hope for harmony lies in prayer

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

The Catholic Church has erred in the past in effectively addressing racism in the United States, but there are signs of progress and hope for the future, according to Bishop Edward K. Braxton, bishop of the Diocese of Belleville, Illinois.

Bishop Braxton, speaking to a packed house at the Westerfield Center on the campus of the Catholic Life Center in Baton Rouge at a forum hosted by the Racial Harmony Commission of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, cited past examples of the racial divide with segregated churches; not allowing “people of color” to join religious communities; and how the Jesuit order sold almost 300 “enslaved free human beings” to construct buildings at Georgetown University.

“Georgetown continues an ongoing aggressive program to acknowledge the fact that while this horrible past cannot be undone, the present and the future can be better,” said Bishop Braxton, who previously served as bishop in the Diocese of Lake Charles.

During his one-hour talk titled “Listen! Learn! Think! Pray! Act! The Catholic Church and the Racial Divide in the United States,” the bishop said there is hope for the future and that hope lies in prayer.

Adhering to the teachings of Jesus and listening to the word of God during Mass are the first steps to achieving racial harmony, Braxton said.

SEE HARMONY PAGE 19

Bishop Muench issues statement on health

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

In a statement released Sept. 25, Bishop Emeritus Robert W. Muench said he has been diagnosed with bladder cancer but emphasized the outlook is positive.

“Two weeks ago Bishop (Michael G.) Duca graciously administered the sacrament of the anointing of the sick to me before an out-patient surgery I had to remove a growth in my bladder,” Bishop Muench said in the statement. “After laboratory analysis, I was diagnosed with cancer of the bladder. This meant the cancer was discovered in an early stage, was only topical in depth, had not spread to any other part of the body, was diagnosed in an early stage, was only topical in depth, had not spread to any other part of the body, and can be treated locally. In late October I will be...”

Bishop Duca, in a statement released shortly after Bishop Muench’s statement, asked the people of the Diocese of Baton Rouge to join him in prayer.

“I know the faithful of the Diocese of Baton Rouge and Bishop Muench’s many friends join me in praying for his speedy and complete recovery,” Bishop Duca said. “We also extend our thoughts and prayers to his dear sister during her illness.”

A native of Louisville, Kentucky, Bishop Muench, 75, was raised in New Orleans and served for 28 years as a priest and bishop in the Archdiocese of New Orleans. He was ordained to the priesthood May 18, 1968 and to the episcopacy as auxiliary bishop in the archdiocese June 29, 1990.

He was installed as bishop of Covington, Kentucky on March 19, 1996 and installed as bishop in the Diocese of Baton Rouge on March 14, 2002.

He served as bishop in the diocese until June, when Bishop Duca was appointed his successor.

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U.S. bishops find ‘honest, hopeful’ young adults at V Encuentro

GRAPEVINE, Texas (CNS) – When Sister Lucero Espitia looked around the ballroom, she saw other people like herself. While the Disciple of Jesus sister from Aguascalientes, Mexico, didn’t see many other habituated consecrated women religious like herself, she did see some 750 other Catholic young adults like herself buzzing with excitement as they sat down for dinner with a cross section of the 150 bishops attending the V Encuentro, or National Fifth Encuentro, in Grapevine.

Sharing her perspective as a religious sister, she said she felt encouraged and happy to see the bishops meeting with the young people.

“It has been enriching to me,” she said, “to see the many realities of the young people living in the each of these (bishops’) dioceses. The young people need to be taken into account. They have very important ideas, very bright ideas. Their concerns are good, you have to guide them, but they are good.”

The current papal nuncio to the U.S., Archbishop Christophe Pierre, joined Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, current president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and Archbishop Jose Gomez of Los Angeles, USCCB vice president, at the special invite-only event, which featured a panel discussion about the Hispanic and Latino young adult church.

The panel included Bishop Jaime Soto of Sacramento, California; Bishop Alberto Rojas of Chicago; Bishop Edward J. Burns of Dallas; and several young adults from across the country involved in campus and youth ministry.

“These bishops have been entrusted a very strong and important mission,” Sister Espitia told the Texas Catholic Herald, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston. “The bishops need to know their young people because they closely share the needs and thoughts of all those who are in their diocese and are sometimes not as visible as the older people, however, they have strong concerns and important needs to address.”

Bishop Michael G. Duca of the Baton Rouge Diocese, found the young adults at his table to be “honest, hopeful.”

He acknowledged the slight awkwardness at the beginning of the conversation, even the panel noted that many Catholic young adults only meet bishops at their confirmation. Still, conversation eventually flowed freely at every dinner table, with at least a dozen tables sharing two bishops in the dialogue.

Various conversations at each table could be heard, with some asking how a bishop was appointed, or how parish pastors were chosen, while others brought up the current sexual abuse crisis and asked how they were handling the issues.

Despite the geographic distances from the young adults’ homes, Bishop Duca found “Surprisingly similar concerns and needs and desires and hopes.”

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See ENCUENTRO PAGE 16
Father Johnson issues invitation to all Catholics

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Father Joshua Johnson admitted to never having written, not as a high school student, nor as a seminarian.

As someone who once shuddered at the thought of even writing a term paper, the idea of becoming a best-selling author appeared ludicrous. Yet, Father Johnson, pastor at Holy Rosary Church in St. Amant, recently reached the pinnacle of Amazon’s best selling list with the release of “Broken + Blessed, An Invitation to My Generation.”

The book rapidly rose to the top spot on Amazon's Christian book list.

“I never thought there would be a day when I would write a book until it started coming up in prayer,” he said. “It gives me joy to know that God can use me.”

Using personal experiences as the foundation, Father Johnson said the book is an invitation for Catholics who are struggling with their faith or perhaps have left the church. He noted that people are “broken and blessed,” hence the title.

“We’re all imperfect, we’re all sinners, hopefully striving to be saints,” he said. “If you and I can receive the love of Jesus, then when we receive the gift, the proper thing is to share that gift with other people as well.”

The book offers practical tips on how to love the church the same way “Christ loves us in the midst of all of the mess.”

“The Lord invites us to the messiness of the cross, and he enters into the messiness of our lives, and that’s where intimacy happens,” said Father Johnson, who was ordained to the priesthood in 2014. “And whenever we can have that kind of intimacy with God, we can have that kind of intimacy with our brothers and sisters. We’re going to see the church is not a museum for saints but recognize it as a hospital for sinners like you and I and that we’re broken. We’re all there for the same reason, to be healed over time. And that healing happens.”

Father Johnson said the Holy Spirit initially invited him to write a book several years ago, so he began to pray about the possibility. But he also added the caveat with the Lord that “I’m not going to approach anybody about writing a book, so if you want me to write a book, I want a publishing company to reach out to me and ask me.”

He soon had an answer. When praying before celebrating a wedding in Lake Charles, he received an email that Ascension Press was interested in him writing a book.

“And so that’s when I first started the conversation,” Father Jonson said. “I put it on the backburner and worked on some other projects in the meantime.”

During this past fall, dialogue with Ascension Press spawned the idea of writing a book for reaching Catholics who were feeling marginalized by the church. In February, Father Johnson begin writing and the ideas immediately began to tumble onto the page.

He altered his morning schedule, awakening at 4:30 a.m. to pray and work out, and then write. By 7:30 he was in the confessional at Holy Rosary administering the sacrament of reconciliation.

“I didn’t want to do any writing during hours of operating here at Holy Rosary,” he said.

By April the book was at the publisher, an amazingly short time for an author to complete a work, especially a novice.

Father Johnson said writing helped him recall his own experiences in the church, significant events that he had forgotten. He said when he was writing “things would just come out, and I was able to process them and bring the spiritual direction. And some of the connections I was able to make have been really helpful.”

Through writing, he came to realize Jesus is enough, recalling many experiences in his rather short ministerial life when he was able to witness Jesus working in the lives of others. He was also able to meet with people who were struggling with their faith on their own levels, recalling a time when he was distant from his faith.

During his ministerial life Father Johnson continues to direct people to Jesus for guidance, whether it is to resolve a personal conflict or a doctrinal or moral issue.

“They would eventually come around and say ‘I get it now because Jesus helped me,’” he said.

“That has inspired me to continue to do my ministry that way and to remember when I meet people who are in difficult situations in their faith to trust that if I pointed them to Christ that he would do the work because he’s a living God. He will bring them to where they need to be.

“Give it to Jesus over time and he will work it out.”

Although the book was written before the most recent revelations of clergy abuse, Father Johnson calls his work “prophetic” because he addresses “the scandals of the church, including the abuse scandal, racism and slavery.”

“I had no idea that the scandals were going to come to the surface again but this book is a perfect response to help people right now,” he said.

The book is currently available on Amazon and Ascension Press.com but should also be available in bookstores in the near future.

Bitten by the writing bug, Father Johnson said he is planning a second book, although the exact topic remains under discernment.

Deacon Thomas Labat dies

Deacon Thomas Edward Labat, Sr., 80, of Gonzales, passed away Sept. 22.

Deacon Thomas was ordained a deacon in May of 1996 and was the former director of the Permanent Diaconate of the Diocese of Baton Rouge. He served as a deacon at St. Theresa of Avila Church in Gonzales from 1999 to 2010 and as a deacon at St. Gabriel Church in St. Gabriel from 2011 to 2017.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated at St. Theresa Church by Bishop Michael G. Duca and con-celebrated by St. Gabriel pastor Father Charlie Landry.

Deacon Thomas is survived by his wife of 60 years, Mary Ann Schexnayder Labat, daughter Ann Marie Labat of Ft. Collins, Colorado and son Thomas Labat Jr. and wife Melanie Simon Labat of Gonzales. Deacon Thomas is also survived by three grandchildren. He was preceded in death by daughter Jacinta Cecile Labat. Thomas was a member of the Knights of Columbus Council #2657 in Gonzales.

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Thoughts while praying the rosary/ Should Sunday Mass be obligatory

I would appreciate your help with a question I’ve had for a long time. When I am saying the rosary, should I be thinking of the words to the Hail Mary or about the particular mystery I am then on? (Morrilton, Arkansas)

I think it’s a matter of personal choice. Whatever best helps to make these moments a time of prayer and of peace, whatever makes you more aware of the presence of God and his love, that is the way to go. I myself like to change it around.

Sometimes I fashion a mental picture of the mystery I’m on – with the resurrection, for example, I imagine the women arriving at the tomb early on Easter morning, their confusion on finding it empty and their excitement, later in the day, as the realization sets on Easter morning, their confusion on finding it empty and their excitement, later in the day, as the realization sets. Eucharist mandatory because there didn’t need to be. Of the church, there was no stated rule making Sunday Mass attendance has fallen sharply. But it seems unlikely to me that church leaders would cede to this trend by lifting the obligation – especially since the original reason for the rule was that some had fallen away from regular practice.

To your belief that more Catholics would come to Mass if the obligation were lifted, I have not seen any studies that would document this or refute it.

I would hope, though, that Catholics who do attend now are motivated not as much by a mandate but more by the good things that happen at Mass: They can be instructed by the word of God, inspired by the presence of other Catholic Christians at prayer and – most of all – strengthened by receiving the Lord in the Eucharist.

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Persecution for Christ a blessing

By Debbie Shelley

The Catholic Commentator

Catholics may consider Jesus’ final beatitude, “blessed are those persecuted for righteousness’ sake,” to also be the final challenge. But the glory of heaven waits on the other side of it, according to Father Charbel Jamhoury, pastor of St. Agnes Church in Baton Rouge.

“The beatitudes are revolutionary,” said Father Jamhoury “...as he (Jesus) is as a person. He presents a model of happiness completely contrary to the world, to what is usually communicated to us. He challenges us to follow him and travel with him the path that leads us to his kingdom to eternal life.”

The beatitude concerning persecution is not an appendix to the others and is as positive as any one that precedes it, though it may be indirect, Father Jamhoury said. But it is one of the most searching tests Christians will ever face.

“He (Jesus) was not afraid to ask the disciples and us today if we wanted to follow him and be persecuted and killed as he was persecuted and killed or if we prefer another path,” he said.

Father Jamhoury emphasized Jesus said, “Blessed are you ‘when’, not ‘if’, they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me.”

Some would say there is more persecution of Christians today than there has been since the first centuries of the Christian era, according to Father Jamhoury.

“I think a good case can be made for that statement,” said Father Jamhoury. “There have been grievous periods of persecution at various epochs in the long history of the church, but they have generally been more or less localized. Now, however, persecution has been spread throughout the world.”

There are roughly 100 million Christians living in nations with persecution, such as China, Nigeria, India, North Korea, Indonesia, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Somalia. And more than 170,000 Christians are put to death each year for their faith, according to The Catholic Source Book.

The different kinds of persecution include verbal mockery, public shaming, discrimination, shunning, loss of property, loss of basic human rights, physical beatings, torture and death.

Father Jamhoury noted that the beatitude does not say, “Blessed are they that are persecuted for being good, or noble, or even self-sacrificing.

“What then does this beatitude mean?” asked Father Jamhoury. “Being righteous, practicing righteousness, really means being like the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore they are blessed who are persecuted for being like him. What’s more, those who are like him will always be persecuted.

“To become like him we have to become light. Light always exposes darkness, and the darkness therefore always hates the light.

“We are not to be offensive; we are not to be foolish; we are not to be unwise; we are not even to parade the Christian faith. We do not do anything that calls for persecution. But by just being like Christ, persecution becomes available.”

On an encouraging note, Father Jamhoury said, “But that is a glorious thing. ‘Rejoice in this’ say St. Peter and St. James. And our Lord himself says, ‘Blessed are you, happy are you’ if you are like that. Because if you ever find yourself persecuted for Christ and for righteousness’ sake, you have, in a sense, got the final proof of that fact that you are a Christian, that you are a citizen of the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus also tells us to rejoice over rejection, said Father Jamhoury.

“Rejection is a mark of blessing only when it is for the sake of righteousness,” said Father Jamhoury. “When does Jesus say that insults, persecutions and slander are a reason to rejoice? When it’s for his sake. This is a very important point of clarification. There is a danger that we will misapply Jesus’ words. Without this clarification we might be tempted to think that it is a blessing anytime someone insults us.”

“If we fail to listen carefully to this beatitude, we may draw the false conclusion that every nasty thing someone says about us is a blessing,” said Father Jamhoury.

“Sometimes things people say about us aren’t a blessing at all — they’re just the truth. What’s more, (what we sometimes call persecution) is just a natural reasonable reaction to our bad behavior. In such instances people reject us for good reasons. They don’t reject us because we are followers of Christ – they reject us because we are surly; they reject us because we are petulant; they reject us because we are hyper sensitive and hard to get along with.”

Jesus uses the language of grace, stressed Father Jamhoury. Those persecuted are not paid for their troubles, they are blessed.

From the time St. Stephen became the first martyr for speaking the truth of Christ, people have died for proclaiming God’s kingdom, said Father Jamhoury.

In most recent times, on the night of Jan. 7, 2010, a group of eight Egyptian Christians were killed as they left their church after celebrating a Christmas Mass in Nag Hammadi, Egypt.

“The motive behind the massacre is disputed, but it was carried out by militant Islamic believers,” said Father Jamhoury. “It may have been done in retaliation for an alleged crime against a Muslim girl by a Christian man. If that was the reason, the retaliation was not targeted at the man who committed the crime but at Christians because of their association through religion.”

Father Jamhoury also signaled out Dutch Jesuit Father Frans van der Lugt as living out this beatitude. Father van der Lugt considered himself Syrian and refused to leave the Syrian city of Homs during the more than three years he worked there during the Syrian War. In 2017 he was beaten and then shot to death at a masked gunman in his monastery.

Father van der Lugt’s life mission spread the message to “Go forth by coming back home,” emphasized to Father Jamhoury. It also shows God’s mission is unstoppable.

Father Jamhoury, a native of Beruit, Lebanon, witnessed persecution’s aftermath of death and destruction during his ministry in that country. He said people living out the challenging beatitude are willing to suffer or die so God’s mission can “go forward.”

“No one wishes to be persecuted or to be killed. But if my mission is for the sake of God’s kingdom...Yes, in this case, I prefer to be persecuted, rejected and even killed, but not my mission... because it’s sacred,” said Father Jamhoury. “It’s God’s mission to love and serve his people and not mine.”

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.
Federal court upholds state law regarding admitting privileges

A federal appeals court ruling upholding a 2014 Louisiana law requiring abortion providers to have admitting privileges at a nearby hospital was praised by pro-life officials.

The U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals three-judge panel recognized a similar law struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2016, but by a 2-1 decision they said the Louisiana Unsafe Abortion Protection Act (Act 620) does not impose the same “substantial burden” on women as the Texas law.

Judge Jerry Smith and Judge Edith Clement analyzed the law’s impact on Louisiana, separating it from the Texas-based facts presented in the Supreme Court’s 2016 Whole Woman’s Health v. Hellerstedt decision.

The ruling reverses the 2017 ruling of federal district court Judge John deGravelles, who blocked the law. “Louisiana Right to Life celebrates today’s 5th Circuit decision upholding Louisiana’s Unsafe Abortion Protection Act as a victory for women’s health and safety,” said Benjamin Clapper, executive director of Louisiana Right to Life. “Ever since we began working with State Rep. Katrina Jackson to introduce HB 388 in 2014, the goal of requiring abortion providers to have admitting privileges at local hospitals was always about protecting women by ensuring the continuity of care in cases of emergency. Our law should never create special loopholes so that abortion facilities can operate in a sub-standard manner. These facilities and their physicians should be held to the same standard as all outpatient surgical facilities.

“Louisiana Right to Life commends Louisiana Attorney General Jeff Landry and Solicitor General Elizabeth Murrill for their persistent leadership in defending Louisiana’s bipartisan 2014 law, especially in the face of other states choosing to dismiss their defense of similar admitting privileges laws.” Dorinda Bordlee, senior counsel of Bioethics Defense Fund, added, “In light of a U.S. Supreme Court opinion that unjustly struck down a similar Texas admitting privileges law, today’s 5th Circuit ruling is a huge win. The abortion industry has failed in its attempt to use the federal courts to undermine customary health standards for women who are physically injured by the known medical risks of abortion, such as uterine puncture or cervical tearing. This pro-woman, pro-life legislation recognizes the reality that abortion endangers the lives of both women and children.”

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Benjamin Clapper
Executive Director, Louisiana Right to Life

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**Staff Report**

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A federal appeals court ruling upholding a 2014 Louisiana law requiring abortion providers to have admitting privileges at a nearby hospital was praised by pro-life officials.

The U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals three-judge panel recognized a similar law struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2016, but by a 2-1 decision they said the Louisiana Unsafe Abortion Protection Act (Act 620) does not impose the same “substantial burden” on women as the Texas law.

Judge Jerry Smith and Judge Edith Clement analyzed the law’s impact on Louisiana, separating it from the Texas-based facts presented in the Supreme Court’s 2016 Whole Woman’s Health v. Hellerstedt decision.

The ruling reverses the 2017 ruling of federal district court Judge John deGravelles, who blocked the law. “Louisiana Right to Life celebrates today’s 5th Circuit decision upholding Louisiana’s Unsafe Abortion Protection Act as a victory for women’s health and safety,” said Benjamin Clapper, executive director of Louisiana Right to Life. “Ever since we began working with State Rep. Katrina Jackson to introduce HB 388 in 2014, the goal of requiring abortion providers to have admitting privileges at local hospitals was always about protecting women by ensuring the continuity of care in cases of emergency. Our law should never create special loopholes so that abortion facilities can operate in a sub-standard manner. These facilities and their physicians should be held to the same standard as all outpatient surgical facilities.

“Louisiana Right to Life commends Louisiana Attorney General Jeff Landry and Solicitor General Elizabeth Murrill for their persistent leadership in defending Louisiana’s bipartisan 2014 law, especially in the face of other states choosing to dismiss their defense of similar admitting privileges laws.” Dorinda Bordlee, senior counsel of Bioethics Defense Fund, added, “In light of a U.S. Supreme Court opinion that unjustly struck down a similar Texas admitting privileges law, today’s 5th Circuit ruling is a huge win. The abortion industry has failed in its attempt to use the federal courts to undermine customary health standards for women who are physically injured by the known medical risks of abortion, such as uterine puncture or cervical tearing. This pro-woman, pro-life legislation recognizes the reality that abortion endangers the lives of both women and children.”

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**Living with Loss**

A special section of The Catholic Commentator, Living with Loss will present end-of-life topics that can help our readers prepare for their own mortality. Also included in this section will be a list of All Saints’ Day/All Souls’ Day blessings.

Publication date: October 26, 2018
Deadline: Monday, October 15

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**HIGHEST HONOR** – Father Tom Ranzino, vicar general for the Diocese of Baton Rouge and pastor at St. Jean Vianney church in Baton Rouge, was presented the prestigious Alleluia Award during the annual Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions 2018 Banquet Awards and Recognition Program in Atlanta. Father Ranzino, who was elected chairman of the FDLC board in 2014, was praised for his strong but gentle voice and his clear vision of the role of the board and the mission of the federation. “I love being a part of this great federation,” Father Ranzino said.

Submitted photo
Spreading Christmas joy to inmates

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

It’s almost that time of year, the time for reaching out to friends and relatives during the Christmas season. For more than 500 inmates in the Tangipahoa Parish Jail in Amite, making those connections is especially important. Deacon Nat Garofola, who visits those incarcerated at the jail regularly, began distributing the Christmas cards 11 years ago.

“The inmates asked me for toiletries stuff, like soap, which I can’t give them because the jail has a commissary,” said Deacon Garofola of Mater Dolorosa Church in Independence. “So, I came up with the idea for the Christmas cards because it’s something that, think about it, if you’re an inmate and you want to send out five Christmas cards, you’re not going to have the money to buy stamps. And where are you going to get the cards? So, they don’t have to worry about it.”

According to Deacon Garofola, the Christmas card collection has grown to include all of the Catholic churches in Tangipahoa Parish and some in Livingston Parish: St. Helena Church in Amite; Mater Dolorosa; St. Dominic Church in Husser; Our Lady of Pompeii Church in Tickfaw; St. Albert the Great Chapel and Catholic Student Center in Hammond; Holy Ghost Church in Hammond; St. Joseph Church in Pontchatoula; St. Margaret Queen of Scotland Church in Albany; and St. Thomas Church in Springfield.

“The church will decorate a nice little box with Christmas wrap and I’ll put a sign on it that says, ‘cards and stamps for inmates,’ ” explained Deacon Garofola. “Last year, I collected like 6,500 cards and right at 2,000 had stamps on them, so that’s a lot.”

Deacon Garofola said the collection runs from late October to early December. Then, he and his wife, Jeanette, spend hours each night sorting the cards and preparing them in packs of 50 to distribute. At times, the work has been overwhelming and the couple has enlisted the help of students from St. Thomas Aquinas High School in Hammond.

“But, it’s a labor of love for the Garofolas.

“Those inmates and their response is incredible and they’re waiting on the cards,” said Deacon Garofola. “Word gets out, ‘Man, this guy’s got Christmas cards so don’t worry about it.’ So, it’s a good deal. It makes everybody happy.”

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Giffin’s call to youth ministry came at an early age

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

West Giffin, the new project coordinator for the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, is utilizing his administration skills honed by working with athletic organizations and experiences as a youth participant and director of parish youth ministry to help young Catholics encounter and serve Christ.

Giffin, who was raised in the Shenandoah area of Baton Rouge, graduated from LSU in 2012 with a bachelor’s degree in administration.

“I really had a fun job in college,” said Giffin. “I worked with the LSU football department. I worked for Coach Les Miles quite a bit as one of his student workers. It was very eye opening.”

Giffin had many game-day responsibilities, which “didn’t leave much time for tailgating.”

From there, Giffin went on to serve a six-month internship with the New Orleans Saints corporate sponsorship department.

Through his experiences in athletic administration, Giffin said he learned a lot about what it takes to plan an event.

“I was completely blown away with the amount of manpower (staff and volunteers), effort, time and resources to make one football game operate,” said Giffin.

“It was a very educational experience – how to operate at a professional and fast pace,” added Giffin, who said he “learned how to roll with the punches.”

After graduating, Giffin entered the working world and volunteered in different ministries. In 2014, he learned about the need to create a youth ministry at Most Blessed Sacrament Church in Baton Rouge and was part of a volunteer team establishing a youth ministry program at MBS.

At first he worked part-time as the youth ministry director and part-time assistant athletic director for MBS School. He later became full-time director of youth ministry.

Giffin said his call to youth ministry began in the summer of his eighth-grade year at St. George Church in Baton Rouge. He attended youth conferences, retreats and other events.

Alongside that, as a youth he enjoyed camping and going hiking.

“That kind of events developed in me a certain level of openness to God in the beauty and serenity of nature,” said Giffin.

“Even before I served at Most Blessed Sacrament I was called to come back and to share,” said Giffin. “That developed a passion of what I do in serving in youth ministry.”

His service at MBS inspired him to serve at the diocesan level. Giffin said his call to deepen his involvement in youth ministry also deepened his call to continue his education. He is pursuing a master’s degree in pastoral leadership at Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans.

He likewise encourages youth to have a lifelong love of learning about their faith.

Giffin finds that the youth he has been working with are intuitive, perceptive and intelligent.

“I’ve seen them rise to the occasion any time they get that opportunity,” said Giffin.

He noted during the flood of 2016 youth responded to the call to gut houses and other types of volunteer relief efforts.

Concerning the troubling question about how to reach out to young Catholics who are leaving the faith or classifying themselves as “none” in regards to their religious affiliation, Giffin and Olivia Gulino, associate director for youth and young adult ministry of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, are working to encounter them, listen to them, pray with them and help meet their needs to bring them home to the faith.

“You have to focus on relationships and building relationships with young people,” said Giffin.

He added, “With young adults, especially ‘the nones,’ meeting them where they are is very important. You have to assess where they are in today’s culture.”

Giffin and wife, Lauren, have a son, Mason, 6 months old. Being a father has crystalized his view of the type of youth ministry that he would like his son to be involved in one day that would encourage, support and challenge him to live to his fullest potential.

“The world I would like to see for Mason is one that, first, is a place where inclusive relationships are developed with other people in a positive community and, second, a place where he can have an encounter and become a disciple of Christ,” said Giffin.

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You are none
Workers took down the covered walkway, helping restore the original architectural integrity to the church.

Father David said the church will also receive some artistic upgrades, with the highlight being new stations of the cross. Father David said the custom made scenes will be unique to St. Margaret and will also feature Louisiana scenes, a piazza is being added that will feature a statue of St. Margaret, a multigenerational volunteer corps that totaled nearly 300 men, women and children will staff the Queen of Scotland in Albany on a recent fall morning.

More than 300 volunteers pitched in to help remove pews, hymnals, the altar, tabernacle and other items from the church, paving the way for the renovations.

The church was a flurry of activity following a Sunday groundbreaking Mass. While some volunteers took down the old furniture and other staged furniture on the grounds for it to be moved to the parish hall, the first step of what is a major renovation and expansion of the building originally completed in 1910.

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

An unusual late September calescent sun blistered the heavens over St. Margaret, Queen of Scotland in Albany on a recent early fall morning.

But complaints were scarce, for the volunteers knew each drop of sweat represented preservation of the rich history of their ancestors while planning for the future.

The volunteers gathered to strip the church of its contents and create a temporary place of worship in the parish hall, the first step in what is a major renovation and expansion of the building originally completed in 1910.

The name of each station will be painted in Hungarian, in keeping with the church’s Hungarian heritage. The custom made scenes will be unique to St. Margaret and will also feature Louisiana scenes.

Perhaps equally as important as the interior renovation, at least from a practical standpoint, is the parking lot will be paved and striped. Parking is currently scattered across two gravel lots and not particularly structured.

Father David said the idea for the volunteer Sunday came from conversations with parishioners, as well as to save a few dollars. He noted that many parishioners have a personal attachment to the church because it was hand built by many of their ancestors.

“We’re overdue by about 60 years,” said Father David, adding that 95 percent of the funding has come from parishioners and no outside sources.

Father David said construction is expected to take about one year.

Workers took down the covered walkway, helping restore the original architectural integrity to the church.

Father David said he was impressed by the number of young people that pitched in to help clean out the church.

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Mentoring among students

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

Early on the morning of Sept. 19, the campus of St. John School in Plaquemine was just beginning to buzz with activity from cars filled with teens pulling up to park on one side of campus, to carpool lines of parents dropping off younger students in another area.

A special Mass to celebrate homecoming week was being held in St. Clement Chapel, which is also on the massive campus of St. John School. First-graders were the first to arrive in the chapel and were seated in several front row pews, spaced out to make room for others. Just before 8 a.m., students began pouring into the chapel, quickly filling up the pews, but the oldest students headed straight for the front rows.

One first-grade boy, sitting near the aisle, looked up and smiled when he saw a senior boy walk up and hold out a hand for a hand slap. When the older boy sat down, the younger one beamed. The scenario played out over and over, older students finding their spots among the younger children and greeting their young buddies with smiles, hugs and more hand slaps.

It was only the second meeting of the seniors and first-graders but there would be many more to come.

“The senior-first-grade program has been going for years,” said coordinator and teacher Susie Murray. “Each year, a senior is paired up with a first-grader. Sometimes the first-grader has two seniors depending on the classes. The kids love it. They love spending time with their seniors.”

Students were paired up at the beginning of the school year and since then relationships have been flourishing. According to Murray, some of the seniors will visit their younger buddy’s classroom or see them at recess and say “hi” or even give the little ones a hug in the hallway.

Tonya Orcino, St. John librarian and senior class adviser, said her own kids were part of the senior-first grade program when they were students at the school more than 15 years ago. She said they remember their own first-graders and seniors from that time, “so it’s kind of a fun thing to remember your days here at school.”

“The seniors love it,” stated Orcino. “Sometimes they come up with little projects, like a pumpkin project for Halloween, where they (seniors and first-graders) get to work together as a team. They work with each other and they with others at their table, so it’s kind of a team-building thing and a friendship-building thing.”

Another positive, according to Murray, is the way it helps the younger students overcome their shyness around older students.

“Sometimes little kids are shy and they don’t want to come out of their shells,” said Murray. “And, also for the big kids, it’s good for them to be positive role models. They know that they’re going to have someone looking up to them so they’re going to do what’s right.”

“It creates the opportunity for the first-graders to thrive to want to be in school and to be like the seniors,” said senior Gracie Romero.

Father Gregory Daigle, pastor of St. John the Evangelist Church in Plaquemine, gives blessings to St. John School first-grader Reid Migliacico and his buddy, high school senior Peter Anderson, after they brought up the gifts during a special homecoming week Mass at St. Clement Chapel. The two students are participating in the senior-first-grade buddy program at the school. Photo by Bonny Van | The Catholic Commentator

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JOSEPH HOSPICE

From page 14

“The allows us to teach the values and traditions of St. John,” said student Clay LeBlanc. “So, when they’re in our spot they know all the things about St. John and they can pass it on to their first-graders one day.”

“It gives the kids someone to look up to,” said senior football player Adam Blanchard, who gave a smaller version of his No. 4 jersey to his buddy Ladd Miller to wear to the upcoming homecoming game.

“We get a chance to tell them about all the great stuff they can look forward to,” said Devin Romig.

It’s what St. John is all about, carrying on traditions from the young to the old,” said principal Cherie Schlatre. “There is a legacy here and many of these kids’ parents have had first-graders, so it’s a big deal.”

“It helps the future of the school,” said senior Justin Rivet, whose mother, Debbie Rivet, also participated in the program as a student at St. John and remembers her first-grade buddy.

“It’s just a great opportunity for your kid to be a role model for somebody else,” said Debbie Rivet. “Everybody wants that for their children.”

HIGHEST HONOR – St. Michael the Archangel High School in Baton Rouge students Tanner Pike, 10th-grade and Conner Pike, ninth grade, received the Ad Altere De, one of the highest religious emblems awards a Boy Scout can earn. Pictured with Bishop Michael G. Duca are Pike, left, Matthew Johnson and Pike, with their sponsor, Olga Johnson. Photo provided by Leighann King | SMHS

TOP TALENT – Several seventh-grade students at St. Jean Vianney School in Baton Rouge qualified to participate in the highly selective Duke Talent Identification Program (TIP). The students scored at the 95th national percentile or higher on their standardized testing and can take the ACT or SAT as a seventh-grader. Those students who qualified, from left, are Cole Mogharrebi, Kaylen Teno, Elise Cormier, Jeanne Warren, Lily Zeringue, Audrey Hair, Henry Breeden and Lizzy Brumfield. Photo provided by Eliska Dumas | St. Jean Vianney School

EXCLAMATION! – Sacred Heart of Jesus School in Baton Rouge first-grade teacher Amy Pickenheim gets assistance from her puppet, Ms. J. Kelly, to explain the importance of punctuation to first-graders William Boudreaux and Madison Johnson, while classmate Addison Massey looks on. Photo provided by Lisa Cossè | Sacred Heart School

MENTOR

From page 14

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Father Clair Cazayoux dies

Father Clair M. Cazayoux SJ, a native of Baton Rouge, died Sunday, Sept. 30 in Grand Coteau. He was 88 years old, a Jesuit for 69 years and a priest for 56 years.

A scientist by training but a pastor by nature, he was remembered in a Mass of Christian Burial on Oct. 6, at St. Charles College Chapel in Grand Coteau.

Clair M. Cazayoux was born to James Numa Cazayoux and Mable Inez Decuir Cazayoux, on Jan. 5, 1930, in Baton Rouge. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his brothers James Numa Jr. and Joseph Eugene (Brother Cosmas SC) and his sisters, Vivian Blanche Cazayoux, Olivia H. O’Connor and Clara Adelaide Bondy. He is survived by his brothers, Francis Trudeau and Robert Vincent Cazayoux.

After graduation from Catholic High School in Baton Rouge, he attended Louisiana State University for two years before entering the Society of Jesus on July 30, 1949 at St. Charles College. Following first vows he studied humanities in Grand Coteau, then attended Spring Hill College in Mobile, Alabama, earning a B.S. in chemistry and completing the philosophy courses required by the Jesuits. He then volunteered for the former New Orleans Province Mission in what is today Sri Lanka. He completed a master’s degree in chemistry in 1970 at LSU.

He was ordained to the priesthood March 25, 1962, at St. Michael’s College in Battaicaloa, Sri Lanka.

His assignments included teaching at Jesuit High School in New Orleans, chaplain at Southeast Louisiana State Hospital in Mandeville and serving at Holy Name of Jesus Parish in New Orleans.

Memorial gifts may be made to the USA Central and Southern Province of the Society of Jesus at 4511 W. Pine Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63108 or online at jesuitscentralsouthern.org.

“For He is our God, we are the people He shepherds, the sheep in His hands.”

Psalms 95:7
**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

**The House With a Clock in Its Walls**

Universal

After his parents are killed in an accident, a 10-year-old boy (Owen Vaccaro) goes to live with his eccentric uncle (Jack Black), who turns out to be a warlock. Having mastered some of the rudiments of his new guardian’s craft, the lad assists him and his best friend (Cate Blanchett), a nice witch, in trying to locate and stop the timepiece of the title, a doomsday device with the capacity to turn the calendar back before the advent of humanity. For all its spells and incantations, director Eli Roth’s adaptation of the first in a series of books by John Bellairs lacks magic, perishable young widow (Anna Kendrick) discovers just how little she really knew when her new pal mysteriously disappears and she tries to track her down, she discovers just how little she really knew about her. Director Paul Feig’s glossy screen version of Darcey Bell’s 2017 novel, which also features Henry Golding as the missing woman’s husband, is undeniably ingenious. Yet the dark doings, both past and present, that drive the plot involve sophisticated, hard-bitten mother (Blake Lively) of one of her son’s classmates. But when her new pal mysteriously disappears and she tries to track her down, she discovers just how little she really knew about her. Director Paul Feig’s glossy screen version of Darcey Bell’s 2017 novel, which also features Henry Golding as the missing woman’s husband, is undeniably ingenious. Yet the dark doings, both past and present, that drive the plot involve repellent behavior that, while not exactly endorsed by Jessica Sharzer’s script, is not condemned either. Instead, the taboo-breaking is treated as spice to lure jaded viewers. Gunplay and other violence with little gore, drug use, strong sexual content, including a semi-graphic scene of incest and an off-screen aberrant act, brief rear female and partial nudity, about a half dozen uses of profanity, pervasive rough and frequent crude language. O; R

**A Simple Favor**

Liongate

Lurid thriller in which a mild-mannered young widow (Anna Kendrick) strikes up an unlikely friendship with the sophisticated, hard-bitten mother (Blake Lively) of one of her son’s classmates. But when her new pal mysteriously disappears and she tries to track her down, she discovers just how little she really knew about her. Director Paul Feig’s glossy screen version of Darcey Bell’s 2017 novel, which also features Henry Golding as the missing woman’s husband, is undeniably ingenious. Yet the dark doings, both past and present, that drive the plot involve repellent behavior that, while not exactly endorsed by Jessica Sharzer’s script, is not condemned either. Instead, the taboo-breaking is treated as spice to lure jaded viewers. Gunplay and other violence with little gore, drug use, strong sexual content, including a semi-graphic scene of incest and an off-screen aberrant act, brief rear female and partial nudity, about a half dozen uses of profanity, pervasive rough and frequent crude language. O; R

**Assassination Nation**

Lionsgate

Writer-director Sam Levinson’s messy teen-age satire devolves into a heavy-handed morality tale about our online lives, dark sexual secrets, scapegoating, public shaming and mass mayhem. The film, which evokes the witch trials in 17th-century Massachusetts, stops short of being exploitative, but not by much. The leader (Odessa Young) of a jaded group of teen girls (Hari Nef, Suki Waterhouse and Abra) is blamed for a series of hackings that expose her town’s seamy side and becomes the target of mob rage. Considerable violence with some gore, involving gunplay, torture and suicide, drug use, strong sexual content, including two implied nonmarital encounters, aberrant behavior and an adulterous theme, a pornographic image, explicit dialogue, frequent rough language. L; R

**Life Itself**

Amazon/Stage 6

Pretentiousness and sentimentality weigh down this drama from writer-director Dan Fogelman. It’s a collection of interlocking, intergenerational stories that begins with a couple (Oscar Isaac and Olivia Wilde) happily expecting the arrival of a daughter, then follows the baby’s life as both a child (Kya Kruse) and a grown-up (Olivia Cooke) and links her destiny to that of a Spanish family (parents Sergio Peris-Mencheta and Laia Costa and son Alex Monner) through a fatefull visit they pay to her native New York. Instead of allowing the sometimes-melodramatic events, in which Antonio Banderas also figures in the guise of a wealthy gentleman farmer, to speak for themselves, Fogelman heavy-handedly tries to drive home a message about what they mean. Along the way, he includes a few plot developments with which even some adult viewers may be uncomfortable. Brief scenes of suicide and accidental death with gore, mature themes including abortion, drug use, a promatual situation, an ambivalent treatment of marriage, a few uses of profanity, a couple of milder oaths, pervasive rough and much crude language. A-III; R

**Night School**

Universal

The purpose of this fitfully funny comedy from director Malcolm D. Lee is to allow Kevin Hart, playing a high school dropout seeking to pass the GED exam to secure a promising job, to trade barbs with Tiffany Haddish in the role of his feisty teacher. A few of their exchanges work. But when attention shifts to his predictably eccentric classmates (Rob Riggle, Romany Malco, Al Madrigal and Mary Lynn Rajskub among them), his ongoing rivalry with an old high school adversary (Taran Killam) or his romance with his fiancee (Meghyn Echikunwoke) laughs and interest both lag. Given the unpleasant nature of some of the gags and the abundance of vulgar talk in the script, which Hart co-wrote with five others, viewers may want to play hooky instead. Much sexual and some scatological humor, partial nudity, about a dozen profanities, several milder oaths, pervasive crude and crass language, mature references, including to homosexuality. L; PG-13

**Catholic Life**

Deacon Jodi Moscona talks with people of our area about their extraordinary faith in God. Hear the testimonies of personal journeys that have deepened their faith and commitment to Jesus and the life of the church. Sun. 12p, Mon. 8p   Tue. 7a, Wed. 11p, Fri. 8:30p

Cox Communications Channel 15 in Baton Rouge Spectrum Cable Channel 19 in Hammond Spectrum Cable Channel 10 in St. James Civic Parish Fidelity Cable Channel 14 in New Roads.

Watch it on our Roku and YouTube channel

PET BLESSINGS – Deacon Minos Ponville Jr., deacon assistant at Holy Family Church in Port Allen, blesses pets during the annual Blessing of the Pets on Sept. 27 at the school. Many parishes and schools hold a blessing of the pets ceremony to coincide with the Oct. 4 feast day of St. Francis. Photo provided by Annette Fitzgerald | Holy Family School
October 12, 2018  The Catholic Commentator 19

LADIES OF GRACE LUNCHEON – The second Annual Ladies of Grace luncheon by Knights of Peter Claver, Meritorious Ladies of the fourth Degree, Constance Butler Chapter 9 was held recently. The guest speaker was Dr. Tiffany Postell, pastor of Camphor Memorial United Methodist Church. Attendees gathered for spirit-filled words of wisdom and harmonious fellowship. They were served a meal and numerous door prizes were awarded. Pictured, from left are, Faithful Navigator Janet St. Cyr Moore and Dr. Tiffany Postell.

Below, also pictured during the luncheon, from left, are St. Cyr Moore, Postell, Niloufer Mohamed and Yasmeen Khan. Photos provided by Carla Lewis | Ladies of Grace

Dr. David Widden III, assistant professor of theology at Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University, which sponsored Bishop Braxton’s visit, said it’s important for FrancU to be a part of the dialogue on racial harmony.

“Our goal as an institution is to be the center of Catholic intellectual life of the Baton Rouge area which means we’ve got to be willing to talk about everything; the things that are good news, the bad news, difficult and so on. And, so we thought this was just the kind of thing the university should be participating in. We want our students to think about these issues, and we want to think about these issues as a university as well. This is the kind of dialogue we want to support,” said Widden.

Bishop Michael G. Duca said Bishop Braxton’s talk was powerful and provided concrete ways to approach every issue.

“He laid a pallet out of very diverse ideas all meant to try to dispel this kind of barrier we have within our culture between blacks and whites, of course, but Hispanics, blacks and whites; Asians, blacks and whites; and, all these ways in which we tend to separate ourselves and so I thought his model of approaching the issue in a way that moved toward action was good,” said Bishop Duca.

“My takeaway was the realization of how language does make a difference, what we say and how we say it, the meaning behind it. That was an eye-opener for me,” said Betty Bickham, a parishioner of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Catholic Church. Attendees gathered for spirit-filled words of wisdom and harmonious fellowship. They were served a meal and numerous door prizes were awarded. Pictured, from left are, Faithful Navigator Janet St. Cyr Moore and Dr. Tiffany Postell.

“Ask yourself, ‘How does this apply in my daily life, especially the challenges of the racial divide here in Baton Rouge ... and even all through Louisiana?’ ” he said.

The bishop also encouraged listening to holy men and women, family members, community leaders, church teachings, Pope Francis and “the voice of conscious deep with you, nudging you to do what is right.”

“When you listen, you learn at the deepest level possible,” he said. “Listen; learn; then, think critically.”

He told those in attendance they must pray, including alone and with others and to meditate on the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. After listening, learning, thinking and praying, according to the bishop, then one is ready to act “by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

“Only then are you able to discern what you can and cannot do and what you should and should not do as a transformative agent here in the Diocese of Baton Rouge,” said Bishop Braxton.

The bishop mentioned the “great effort on the part of the Catholic Church, priests, sisters and lay people, working and marching for racial integration in the north and in the south.” He also noted the “tremendous” impact of Catholic schools in urban communities to contribute to the “intellectual and moral formation of African-American youth.”

He credited the Catholic Church for being at the “forefront of programs to confront the sources of poverty” and for providing health care, through hospitals, to serve “the poorest.”

“In conclusion, everybody can do something,” said Bishop Braxton. “You choose to do nothing is to maintain the racial divide and to not cooperate with the vision of the Commission on Racial Harmony.”

HARMONY ▼

From page 3

“Ages and ages
4 Explosive stuff
5 Hungered
6 A member of the clergy
7 An evangelist
8 601, to Julius Caesar
9 St. Patrick’s symbol
10 Catholic actor of gangster movie fame
11 Alpha and ___
12 Sauce for the Eucharist
13 Nicholas and Peter, for example
14 Witty remark
15 Apiece
16 Catholic actor Connery
17 The Maid of ___
18 Biblical food
19 Nonentity
20 “…on this ___ I will build my church…” (Mt 16:18)
21 Crib for Baby Jesus
22 ‘___ job!’
23 12-point type
24 Evade
25 Amplifies
26 Tie, as a score
27 Off-broadway theater award
28 Golden Rule preposition
29 Wind dir.
30 Catholic Surrealist painter
31 Frayed
32 “___ of our Lady”
33 Center starter
34 Father-in-law of Caiaphas (Jn 18:13)
35 Undercover
36 An eye-opener for me,” said Betty Bickham, a parishioner of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Catholic Church. Attendees gathered for spirit-filled words of wisdom and harmonious fellowship. They were served a meal and numerous door prizes were awarded. Pictured, from left are, Faithful Navigator Janet St. Cyr Moore and Dr. Tiffany Postell.

37 Highway ___
38 Diverse
39 ___ of Columbus
40 ___ key
41 Catholic actor Connery
42 ___ of community
43 Bible ___
44 ___ of our Lady
45 ___ of our Lady
46 ___ of ___
47 Frayed
48 ___ of ___
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Solution on page 22
Life to the Editor

Time to be brave

I appreciate that you do not believe that children should not be used as political pawns and I do agree with you. However, please get your facts straight. The children who were taken away from their parents number closer to 4,000. They were not housed with foster families, they were housed in office buildings without showers, in tents without air conditioning. They were molested.

They were subjected to racial slurs and ridicule. Many were seeking asylum from gang violence and horrible situations at home. This is all the result of a policy instituted by one man, Donald Trump. Instead of calling out Democrats for shouting the truth, you seem to be sugar coating this atrocity.

We should be guardians not exploiters of children. But when they have been traumatized and abused, this should be shouted out from the mountain tops and not be called exploitation. I quote for you from a flyer that was in the church bulletin at St. Jean Vianney, my parish. "Tell the truth with love. What is right and wrong is not decided by popular vote." This editorial has told half truths and I was taught that a half truth is a lie. We are part of a church, the Catholic Church that has caused half truths.

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Finding Jesus in the breaking of the bread

A mother sent her two sons to college, and as sometimes happens, she discovered a few years later that they were no longer going to church. To her questions they only answered, “We don’t get anything out of it; it is not important in our lives now.” She prayed and prayed, and one Sunday, without warning, they sat down next to her at Mass. “What made you come back?” she asked later that evening. They told her the story.

A few weeks before, they had planned to go hiking on a Sunday morning. As they drove along a country road to the hiking path, clouds built up, and they were soon caught in a downpour. Cursing their bad luck, they saw an old man limping along in the rain alongside the road. They offered him a ride, and he said that he was going to church about two miles further on. They took him to a little Catholic church and decided to wait and take him home, since the rain increased and there would be no hiking that day.

The boys waited in the back of church and heard the reading of the Scriptures and the homily. Tired of standing, they sat through the eucharistic prayer and the breaking of the bread. Something moved them deeply. The only way they could later explain it was: “You know, Mom, it felt so right. Like getting home after a long trip.”

That story reminded me of St. Luke’s Gospel story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. They had once found meaning and joy in following Jesus. We may recall another traveler on another road, the road to Damascus.

We may recall another traveler on another road, the road to Damascus. That Gospel passage has a lot to tell us, just as it did to the two boys who picked up the old man. Sometimes we too feel like people who say, “I believe in God, in Jesus too, but I don’t need the church. Especially now when our church, the Catholic Church, looks so bad in the news. It’s now an embarrassment, added to the fact that it has too many rules that don’t make sense to me, and in today’s world it just doesn’t fit into my schedule.” Yes, the church is a human institution trying to convey a divine message, a message that even Jesus’ disciples did not always understand. But the church is more than just programs and rules. We may recall another traveler on another road, the road to Damascus. The Acts of the Apostles says, “Suddenly a light from the sky flashed around Paul. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul! Why do you persecute me?’ ‘Who are you, Lord?’ he asked. ‘I am Jesus whom you persecute,’ the voice said.”

We cannot separate Jesus from the church, which is the community of his followers. It would be, as St. Paul says to the Colossians (1:18), like separating the head from the body. The church is the presence of Christ in his people as they worship, celebrate his sacraments and care for each other in his name. It is the home to which we must return from all our journeys to find God. He is as close to us as the person next to you at Sunday Mass. “Then they recounted what had happened on the road and how they had come to know him in the breaking of the bread.” The church is, in the words of Vatican II, “The people of God” with all our failings and with all our forgiveness and love. Don’t leave it, especially now, when Jesus needs you to be his body in a world that is wounded.

Father John Carville

Another Perspective

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 johnny.carville@gmail.com.

Mission Statement

The mission of The Catholic Commentator is to provide news, information and commentary to the people of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, Catholics and their neighbors alike. In doing so, The Catholic Commentator strives to further the wider mission of the Church: to evangelize, to communicate, to educate and to give the Catholic viewpoint on important issues of the present day.

Letters to the Editor

Letters to the Editor should be typed and limited to 350 words and should contain the name and address of the writer, though the address will not be printed. We reserve the right to edit all letters. Send to: Letters to the Editor, The Catholic Commentator, P.O. Box 3316, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-3316, or to tcc@diobr.org.

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

| Oct. 17 | Rev. Jason P. Palermo  
Dcn. Ricky P. Oubre  
Br. Roger LeMoyne SC  
Rev. Anuraj Raj IMS  
Dcn. Stephen Paul Ourso  
Sr. Ann Catherine Nguyen FMOL |
| Oct. 18 | Rev. Amrit Raj IMS  
Dcn. Ruben Reynolds  
Dcn. Minos J. Ponville Jr.  
Sr. Huang Nguyen ICM  
Rev. Anthony J. Russo  
Dcn. Curles P. Reeson Jr.  
Br. Paul Montero SC  
Rev. Ajmal Raj Savarimuthu IMS  
Dcn. Alfred J. Ricard Jr.  
Sr. The Thi Nguyen ICM  
Rev. Michael J. Schatzle  
Dcn. Thomas M. Robinson  
Br. Marcus Turcotte SC |
| Oct. 20 | Rev. Joseph A. Sheldon  
Dcn. Mauricio Salazar OP  
Sr. Norma Nunez SOM  
Rev. Philip F. Spano  
Dcn. Elizar Salinas Jr.  
Br. James Burns SC  
Rev. Robert F. Stine  
Dcn. Mario (Sam) Sammartino  
Sr. Ruth Nwokike SOM  
Rev. Martin N. Thanh ICM  
Dcn. Joseph M. Scimeca  
Br. William Casley SC  
Rev. Frank M. Utter  
Dcn. Rudolph W. Stahl  
Sr. Johanne Pedersen CSJ  
Rev. Henry C. Vavasseur  
Dcn. Michael F. Thompson  
Br. Eldon Cifras SC  
Rev. John the Baptist Do Minh Vu ICM  
Dcn. J. Thomas Traylor  
Sr. Cielo Pesigan DM  
Rev. J. Thomas Traylor  
Sr. Cielo Pesigan DM |
LCCB issues letter supporting unanimous juries

The Louisiana Conference of Catholic Bishops strongly affirms the Nov. 6th ballot initiative to return Louisiana to a state possessing unanimous juries, and therefore enabling its legal practices to become more truly reflective of justice. Louisiana must return to the wisdom of its origins within this matter and bring its practice in line with the 48 states that require unanimous jury verdicts for all felony convictions. During her founding in 1803, Louisiana required unanimous juries. However, unanimity was abandoned in 1880, and this abandonment was subsequently codified in 1898 by way of Article 116 of her Constitution. The opportunity and time are ripe for Louisiana to move beyond such abandonment, and fully embrace the justice of unanimity. “There is an appointed time for everything, and a time for every affair under the heavens. A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to be silent, and a time to speak” (Eccl 3: 1, 7).

In our Catholic faith, prudence is the first of the cardinal virtues and is naturally concerned with the intellect. Prudence allows us to judge what is right and what is wrong in any given situation. Justice is the second of such virtues and concerns the will. Most simply stated justice is, “giving God and neighbor their due.” The responsibility of a jury is to be an impartial body of peers that acts prudently to ensure justice to all parties involved. The unani-

mity of a jury does not simply ensure that the legal standard of “beyond a reasonable doubt” has been met, but it also brings our legal system into much closer accord with the cardinal virtues of prudence and justice. Unanimity does so by providing the jury with the ability to decide what is right and what is wrong as a unified and empowered whole – without division, reaching a conclusion that then provides their neighbor with his due. The case for non-unanimous juries has been expressed in the false and even erroneous expression of the “effi-

ciency” of justice. Neither prudence nor justice favors efficiency over their foundation of love, mercy, soli-

darity, and forgiveness. As we are all too aware, efficiency can lead to haste and haste can lead to wrongful con-

victions in the case of decisions by non-unanimous juries. The effects of such error are only ex-

acerbated by the seriousness of the crimes that non-unanimous juries currently apply to within Louisiana, such as non-capital first degree murder and second-

degree murder. The punishment for such crimes is life without parole. Acknowledging that humanity itself is flawed, should Louisiana not have unanim-

ity among those juries that decide whether or not an individual will spend the rest of his life in prison? Additionally, given that non-unanimous juries make felony con-

victions easier to obtain by requiring less than total agreement, this practice also calls into ques-

tion the impact a ruling has on an individual’s right to vote. We hold the right to vote to be reflec-
tive of our call to commu-

nity and participation as well as the rights and responsibilities articulated with the themes of Catholic Social Teaching.

The inability to do so, therefore stands as a barrier to our obligation to participate in the democratic process. Currently, a non-unanimous jury could stand in the way of this obligation.

It is for the reasons articulated above – striving for a purer sense of justice where prudence is present, deferring to careful deliberation and discernment as opposed to efficiency, and protecting our obligation to participate in our great democ-

racy – that we as the Catholic bishops of Louisiana support the return of Louisiana’s criminal justice system to one requiring unanimous juries for all felony convictions. Justice must always dictate a true legal construct and as St. Augustine has pro-

claimed, “an unjust law is no law at all.” The time is indeed ripe to right Louisiana’s history on this issue and to re-institute unani-

mous juries on Nov. 6th.

The search for an indubitable truth

In n a book, “12 Rules for Life – An Antidote to Chaos,” that’s justifiably making waves in many circles today, Jordan Peterson shares about his own journey towards truth and meaning. Here’s that story:

At one point in his life, while still young and finding his own path, he reached a stage where he felt agnostic, not just about the shallow Christianity he’d been raised on, but also about most everything else in terms of truth and trust. What really can we believe in? What’s ultimately to be trusted?

Too humble to confront himself to one of the great minds in history, Rene Descartes, who, 500 years ago, struggled with a similar agnosticism, Peterson nonetheless could not help but employ Descartes’ approach in trying to find a truth that you could not doubt. So, like Descartes, he set off in search off an “indubi-

table” (Descartes’ term), that is, to find a premise that absolutely cannot be doubted. Descartes, as we know, found his “indubitable” in his famous dictum: “I think, therefore, I am!” Nobody can be deceived in believing that since even to be deceived would be indisputable proof that you exist. The philosophy that Descartes then built upon the indubitable premise is left for history to judge. But history doesn’t dispute the truth of his dictum.

So Peterson sets out with the same essential question: What single thing cannot be doubted? Is there something so evidently true that nobody can doubt it? For Peterson, it’s not the fact that we think which is indisputable, it’s the fact that we, all of us, suffer. That’s his indubitable truth, suffering is real. That cannot be doubted:

“Nihilists cannot undermine it with skepti-

cism. Totalitarians cannot banish it. Cynics cannot escape its reality.” Suffering is real beyond all doubt.

Moreover, in Peterson’s understanding, the only kind of suffering that isn’t which is inflicted upon us by the innate contingen-
cies of our being and our mortality, nor by the sometimes blind brutality of nature. The worst kind of suffering is the kind that one person inflicts upon another, the kind that one part of humankind inflicts upon an-

other part, the kind we see in the atrocities of the 20th century Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot and countless others responsible for the torture, rape, suffering and death of millions.

From this indubitable premise he submits something else that too cannot be disputed: This kind of suffering isn’t just real, it’s also wrong! We can all agree that this kind of suffering is not good and that there is something that is (beyond dispute) not good. And if there’s something that is not good, then there’s something that is good. His logic: “If the worst sin is the torment of others, merely for the sake of the suffering produced then the good is whatever is diametrically opposed to that.”

What flows from this is clear: The good is whatever stops such things from happening. If this is true, and it is, then it is also clear as to what is good, and what is a good way of living: If the most terrible forms of suffering are produced by egotism, selfishness, untruthfulness, arrogance, greed, lust for power, willful cruelty and insensitivity to others, then we are evidently called to the opposite: selflessness, altruism, humility, truth-telling, tenderness and sacrificing for others.

Not incidentally, Peterson affirms all of this inside a chapter within which he highlights the importance of sacrifice, of delaying private gratification for a greater good long-range. His insight here parallels those of Rene Girard and other anthropologists who point out that the only way of stopping unconscious sacrifice to blind gods is that what is suffered (that which happens in our own bitter slandering of others) is through self-sacrifice. Only when we accept at the cost of personal suffering our own contingencies, sin and mortality will we stop projecting these on to others so to make them suffer in order to feel better about ourselves.

Peterson writes as an agnostic or perhaps, more accurately, as an honest analyst, an observer of humanity, who for purposes of this book prefers to keep his faith private. Fair enough. Probably wise too. No reason to impute motives. It’s where he lands that’s important, and where he lands is on very solid ground. It’s where Jesus lands in the Sermon on the Mount, it’s where the Chris-

tian churches land when they’re at their best, it’s where the great religions of the world land when they’re at their best, and it’s where humanity lands when it’s at its best.

The medieval mystic, St. Theresa of Avila, wrote with great depth and challenge. Her treatise on the spiritual life is now a classic and forms part of the very canon of Christian spiritual writings. In the end, she submits that during our generative years the most important ques-
tion we need to challenge ourselves with is: How can I be more helpful? Peterson, with a logic and language that can be understood by everyone today, offers the same challenge.

OBLATE FATHER RON ROLHEISER, theologian, teacher and award-winning author, is president of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas. He can be contacted through his website ronrolheiser.com and facebook. com/ronrolheiser.

In Exile

Father Ron Rolheiser

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COMING EVENTS

October 12, 2018

St. Jude Mission – Father Simeon Gallagher OFM Cap will present a parish mission Monday, Oct. 15 – Thursday, Oct. 18. The evening presentations will start with an 8:15 Mass followed by a talk in the parish hall, and the evening presentations will include prayer at 7 p.m. followed by a talk in the church. For more information, call 225-766-2431.

Men’s Retreat – A men’s retreat, “Five Hour Spiritual Energy Boost for Men,” will be held on Saturday, Oct. 20 at Columbus Club Hall, 230 S. Irma St., Gonzales. Registration will be from 8 a.m. – 9 a.m. and the presentation, featuring Deacon Jodi Moscona, deacon assistant at St. Therese of Avila Church in Gonzales, will take place from 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. Donations will be accepted. Required registration must be made by email st.theresake2657@eatel.net.

Women in Spirit – Desireé Honore Thomas, assistant commissioner of the Louisiana Division of Administration, will present “Make Me an Instrument of Your Peace” at the meeting of Women in Spirit on Thursday, Oct. 25, noon, at St. Joseph Cathedral, Fourth and Main streets, Baton Rouge. Women in Spirit is an opportunity for women to grow in their faith and fellowship. The meeting will include a complimentary lunch. To RSVP email vis@cathedralbr.org or call the cathedral office at 225-387-5928.

Holy Ghost Fall Fest – Holy Ghost Church, 507 N. Oak Street, Hammond, will hold its Fall Fest Festival, Friday, Oct. 26 – Sunday, Oct. 28. There will be food, entertainment and a trick-or-treat village from 5 – 6:30 p.m on Saturday. For more information, visit hgchurch.org.

Magnificat Breakfast – Kathleen Beckman, president and co-founder of the Foundation of Prayer for Priests, an international apostolate for prayer and catechesis for the holiness of priests, will speak at the breakfast meeting of Magnificat on Saturday, Oct. 27, 9 a.m. – noon, at the Oak Lodge Reception Center, 2834 S. Sherwood Forest Blvd., Baton Rouge. Tickets are $22 each and must be purchased before Wednesday, Oct. 24 by mailing a check to Kathy Simoneaux, Magnificat, 9650 Victory Lane, Denham Springs, LA 70726-5858.

Women’s Retreat – Jean Gatz, author and parishioner of St. Jude Church in Baton Rouge, 9100 Highland Road, Baton Rouge, will present “Focusing God to Survive the Stress of the Holidays and the Stress of Life” on Saturday, Oct. 27 at St. Jude. Registration will take place from 8 a.m. – 9 a.m. at the parish hall, and the retreat will take place from 9 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. in the church. There will be a $20 registration fee at the door. RSVP Charmaine Bissat at 225-766-2431 or email charmaineb@stjudecatholic.org by Monday, Oct. 22.

Grand Day – St. Joseph Cathedral, Fourth and Main streets, Baton Rouge, will host a Grand Day celebration on Sunday, Oct. 28 after the 10:30 a.m. Mass. There will be food, music, face painting, caricatures, ice balloons, a petting zoo, pony rides, a “round the block train” and more. For more information, call 225-387-5928.

Pro-Vita Dinner – Dr. Tom Neal, academic dean and director of intellectual formation at Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans, will speak at the Pro-Vita benefit dinner and silent auction, “Let There Be Light” on Thursday, Nov. 8, 6:30 p.m., at the St. Michael High School gym, 17521 Monitor Ave., Baton Rouge. Tickets are $75 per person and $50 for a table of eight. Proceeds will provide scholarships for seminarians, religious and youth to attend the March for Life Pilgrimage in January. Register by visiting youthmarchoflife.org or mail registration to St. Michael High School, P.O. Box 86110, Baton Rouge LA, 70879. For more information, call 225-620-5291 or email youthmarchforlife@gmail.com.

FranU Benefit – Franciscan Missionaries of our Lady University will host their annual fundraiser, “Fete des Fideles,” on Saturday, Nov. 10, noon, at L’Auberge Casino and Hotel, 777 L’Auberge Ave., Baton Rouge. Social hour and raffle will begin at 11 a.m. Tickets are $50 each or $500 for a table of ten. For more information, visit franu.edu/fete or call Elaine Crowe at 225-490-1637.

Humanae Vitae Symposium – A symposium, “Science Embraces Humanae Vitae: How Current Evidence Supports Restorative Reproductive Medicine,” will be held Saturday, Oct. 27, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m., at St. Agnes Church, 749 East Blvd., Baton Rouge. Speakers will include Father Todd Lloyd, pastor of Immaculate Conception Church in Lakefield, Dr. Rob Chasuk, Dr. Kim Hardey and Dordina Bordlee Esq. Admission is free. For more information, call 225-383-4154, email saintagnes2@bellsouth.net or visit stagnesbr.com.
workers; and solidarity for God's creation.

“When individuals look at these different political issues I think it's very important that they view those through the lens of the principles of Catholic teaching as opposed to partisan politics,” said Tasman.

It’s easy to get caught with various media coverage and the constant coverage of politics to say “I’m a Republican,” “I’m a Democrat,” “I’m a conservative,” or “I’m progressive,” according to Tasman.

“And I like to remind folks that from a faith perspective we’re really called to be Catholics first,” Tasman said.

“What that might mean is that it doesn’t really fit very neatly into either political party at times. But we do need to be able to pursue these issues from a faith perspective.

“Going back to the notion of forming consciences, it does take a pretty fair amount of work for the well informed voter to be able to look at a candidate and know whether he or she supports certain issues and what those issues might be, whether they be pro-life, whether they be a fair and living wage for individuals, whether it be their policy on things like immigration. All of the issues that the church covers are very broad and they’re varied. And for that reason it does take some work on the part of the Catholic voter to be able to understand.”

One place people can go to for information includes the candidates’ websites, which Tasman conceded people have to put a level of trust into each candidate that he or she is being honest with how he or she represents him or herself.

If a candidate is an elected official, people can consult their voting record on issues. They can also look at outside sources. When looking for a person’s stance on pro-life issues, for example, one can visit Louisiana Right to Life’s website prolifelouisiana.org.

Unfortunately, recent elections have involved a lot of negativity and conflict rather than compromise and collegiality, according to Tasman.

“But I wouldn’t want folks to be able to lose the sense of their own responsibility and the value of their own voice in the process. And I think that it’s important to remember we are a nation in which we are truly blessed to have the ability to go to the polls, to participate in the political process that we have and truly feel it in the knowledge that our vote counts,” said Tasman.

With problems plaguing the world, the church and so many issues weighing on people’s minds as they prepare to go to the polls, Father Jeff Bayhi, pastor of St. John the Baptist Church in Zachary, recalled the prophetic words St. John Paul II, then Cardinal Karol Wojtyla, spoke in an address during the 1976 Eucharistic Congress in Philadelphia:

“We are now standing in the face of the greatest historical confrontation humanity has ever experienced. I do not think that the wide circle of the American society, or the whole wide circle of the Christian community realize this fully. We are now facing the final confrontation between the church and the anti-church, between the Gospel and the anti-gospel, between Christ and the antichrist. The confrontation lies within the plans of divine providence. It is, therefore, in God’s plan, and it must be a trial which the church must take up, and face courageously.”

With so much Internet and media saturation, as one tries to discover what “the truth” is, there can be five different versions of “the truth,” especially when it comes to politics, according to Father Bayhi. People's values, therefore, may be based on things other than the Gospel and Catholic Christian values.

“I think one of the problems is people have voted with their wallets,” said Father Bayhi. “If finances are the basis of our decisions then we run the risk of being prosperous in a world that is completely devoid of morals or justice.”

He also urged voters to not base their vote on a candidate’s personality.

“The sanctity of life should be the top concern of voters, said Father Bayhi.

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Justice includes having fair immigration laws that do not ignore justice for tax-paying people already living in this country, according to Father Bayhi.

People may be disgusted with the states of politics, but Father Bayhi stressed the power of casting the vote in making changes.

“In a democracy we change things one vote at a time. Rather than being quiet, make your voice known,” said Father Bayhi.
DAUDA ▼
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“I was so happy; I feel like crying and shouting,” she said of seeing her dad for the first since she was four years old. “I was missing my dad so much. I am happy to be united with my family again.”

Dauda recalled those painful memories of separation. After escaping his native country he was sent to a refugee camp, and it was not until several years later he learned of his children’s whereabouts.

In 2015 the decision was made to bring Bai and Mariama, who had been living with Dauda’s mother in Sierra Leone, to the United States. Because navigating the often perilous waters of bureaucracy, a process that was originally scheduled to be completed in one year, stretched into two.

“Right now, it’s not how long have we been separated but how to build our lives together,” Dauda added.

Although separated in miles, the distance between hearts was simply a phone call away, and so Dauda was able to keep up, although on a limited basis, with his children. Calls averaged about $10 for 20 minutes.

“I have all of those bills,” Dauda said with a smile. “We talked sometimes once a week. And they sent photos.”

Fitting into a new society will be quite the adjustment for the Sesay children, beginning such basics of how to access email, as modern technology is limited in Sierra Leone. But the transition does bring certain advantages, topping off with, of all things, ice cream.

The dreamy dessert is cost prohibitive in Sierra Leone, costing about $1 in a country where most families are forced to survive on $2 per day. Neither of the young people have ever had a malt or milkshake, and the same was true for Dauda when he first arrived in the United States.

He recalls he and Alima filling the basket with candy bars and ice cream, as well as chips on their early visits to the grocery store.

“I’m looking forward to ice cream,” said Mariama with a broad smile, adding her favorite flavor is strawberry.

The challenges obviously extend far beyond ice cream and social media and includes such fundamentals as learning to drive, the appropriate way to interact with others and the proper respect to be shown to law enforcement officials.

Dauda said the first priority is getting them settled in school, with Bai enrolling in a local junior high. He will be enrolled in the eighth grade.

Although he played soccer in his home country, Bai is hoping to be able to run cross country or track, and perhaps learn “American football.”

Mariama hopes to enroll in LSU and eventually study law so she can help her native homeland.

“I want to bring justice to my country, to my society,” she said “I believe if I become a lawyer, I can bring justice. So many people are being denied of so many things. That is my goal (in becoming a lawyer). It’s not about money.”

Despite the changes, Mariama said the transition will be easy.

“With love anything is possible,” she said. “I love them so much and they love me so much.”

Homelessness is a Nightmare for a Child

and fluffy blankets, where there are three good meals a day and no one goes hungry? Or would they dream of scary things that lurk in the dark just outside the windows? We know what homeless parents dream about: a better future, a safe place to stay until they can find a job, save money, and start over. At St. Vincent de Paul, our Sweet Dreams Shelter is making dreams come true every day: big dreams, little dreams, and everything in between. We provide the cozy home, the nourishing meals, and the soft beds that homeless children dream about. But just as important, we provide the safe haven and the time parents need to get back on their feet, so they can take care of themselves and their families.

Our shelter is more than just a home. It is also the first step toward a brighter future. Children like those in the photos – Sarah, Audrey, Meg, Chris, Jackie, Sianne and Tina – have had difficult lives, and their needs are very simple: love and security. Their mothers give them plenty of love, and we give them security.

In 2001, a St. Vincent de Paul dream came true when we opened our Sweet Dreams Shelter for women and children. That dream grew over the past year as we expanded this facility, increasing our bed capacity from 36 to 82. In addition to homeless women and children, we can now accept intact families and single-parent families headed by fathers.

This expanded facility is proof that, when people work together, dreams can come true. Thousands of prayers laid the foundation for this effort before the first concrete was poured. So, please keep praying! We need your prayers and financial support, so we can say “yes” to so many more who are facing the nightmare of homelessness. See the enclosed envelope insert to see how you can help or visit us online at www.svdpbr.org.

We need your help more than ever. Every year, through our Sweet Dreams effort, we ask people to pray for those we serve. Please save this Sweet Dreams Prayer and make it a regular part of your spiritual life. Pray for all those we serve!

Sweet Dreams Prayer

Lord God, Giver of Life,
Fill us with your Spirit.
Use our hands to shelter the homeless;
Use our hearts to enable sweet dreams;
Use our voices to end homelessness.
May our actions improve life for others;
And reflect your abundant love.
Through Christ our Lord, AMEN.

Society of St. Vincent de Paul
Bishop Of Sweet Dreams Shelter
www.svdpbr.org

Can you imagine what a homeless child would dream about if they had to sleep in a car tonight? Would they dream of a cozy place with soft beds and fluffy blankets, where there are three good meals a day and no one goes hungry? Or would they dream of scary things that lurk in the dark just outside the windows? We know what homeless parents dream about: a better future, a safe place to stay until they can find a job, save money, and start over. At St. Vincent de Paul, our Sweet Dreams Shelter is making dreams come true every day: big dreams, little dreams, and everything in between. We provide the cozy home, the nourishing meals, and the soft beds that homeless children dream about. But just as important, we provide the safe haven and the time parents need to get back on their feet, so they can take care of themselves and their families.

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