Diocese to release names of priests ‘credibly accused’ of sexual abuse

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

The Diocese of Baton Rouge will join several other dioceses in the state of Louisiana and release names of clergy members credibly accused of sexually abusing minors.

In a statement released Oct. 16, the Diocese of Baton Rouge, which was formed in 1961, “will release the names of priests who have been credibly accused of sexual abuse of minors.

“This is of the highest priority to us. We’re working on a process to research our files so that when we do publish the list it will be accurate and complete. Part of this process is to establish a timeline for the release of the list. As Bishop (Michael G.) Duca said recently, we want to be ‘attentive to the issues of justice and show concern for victims in a way that is transparent, credible, honest and caring.’”

The statement came on the same day Archbishop Gregory M. Aymond of New Orleans said he will release the names of those clergy members “credibly accused” of abusing minors.

The dioceses of Lafayette, Alexandria, Houma-Thibodaux and Shreveport have also released statements they will reveal the names of priests who were credibly accused of abusing minors.

In a prepared statement, Archbishop Aymond said the clergy files are being “examined very carefully” and review of those files will go back at least 50 years to “ensure the list is accurate and complete. We will publish the list as soon as the work is finished. It will be sooner rather than later.”

WITNESS TO HISTORY

Sisters of St. Joseph celebrate milestone

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

A smile graced the face of Sister Kathleen Babin CSJ as she stopped to look at a picture that was more than a half century old.

In the middle of the photograph was a young woman dressed in a traditional habit, her gaze looked over the porch of a former classroom in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi.

“That’s me,” she grinned, pointing to herself in the photo.

Sister Kathleen is a living witness to the history of the Sisters of St. Joseph, having been around for 75 of the 150 years the order has been in the Baton Rouge area.

“I’m grateful, just so grateful that the sisters came and that they were the ones that were here,” said Sister Kathleen, who graduated from St. Joseph’s Academy in 1943 and immediately entered the Sisters of St. Joseph community.

The Sisters of St. Joseph are celebrating their 150th anniversary in Baton Rouge with a number of events, including a special Mass celebrated by Bishop Michael G. Duca on Oct. 21 at St. Joseph Cathedral.

The Sisters of St. Joseph originally landed in Bay St. Louis from France in 1855. Two years later, they expanded their ministry to the Archdiocese of New Orleans, and on Oct. 22, 1868, four sisters arrived in Baton Rouge, via steamboat, from the Crescent City.

Their mission was to take charge of an orphanage, a day school and boarding school, according to a copy of a letter found in the Archives Department of the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

“The sisters who are sent will have much work but they will be able to attain great success,” wrote New Orleans Archbishop Jean-Marie Odin in his request to Reverend Mother St. Claude, for women religious in Baton Rouge.

The original school was named St. Joseph’s Day School, coming from St. Joseph Church, now St. Joseph Cathedral. When the school, orphanage and convent moved in 1869 to a new, larger location on Fourth Street, it was renamed St. Joseph’s Academy.

Other ministries started by the sisters in those early days included prison ministry and outreach to the poor, which became the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. But education was their main focus and the Sisters of St. Joseph were called upon to help lead and teach in other schools in the Baton Rouge area, including Sacred Heart of Jesus School, St. Thomas More School and St. George School, and the high school in New Roads, which is now Catholic High of Pointe Coupee.

Sister Kathleen Babin CSJ looks up at a photograph of herself in the 1950s, wearing a traditional habit. She was pictured on the front porch of a former classroom used by the Sisters of St. Joseph in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi. Photo by Bonny Van | The Catholic Commentator

SEE SISTERS PAGE 24
Day of the Dead has various cultural traditions

Many Catholics in the Diocese of Baton Rouge are finalizing preparations to visit their departed loved ones at cemeteries through southeastern Louisiana. Visiting cemeteries on All Saints’ Day is a time-honored tradition that spans generations. Who among us could ever forget our mothers loading us into the family jalopy, the normal malodorous smell of melted candy and fast food wrappers graced by the fragrance of freshly cut flowers, and going to visit gravesites of distance relatives we never even knew?

Those customs differ worldwide. The Day of the Dead, or Dide los Muertos, is actually a series of commemorative days in the Hispanic community. Traditionally celebrated over three days beginning with Halloween, the days include All Saints’ Day (Nov. 1) and All Souls’ Day (Nov. 2).

In communities with large Mexican and Latin American populations, the Day of the Dead is divided into Día de los Inocentes, which is dedicated to the children, and celebrated on Nov. 1. The following day, Díe los Muertos, or Day of the Dead, is celebrated.

Families will often spend an entire year making preparations. Although never festive, people will visit and repair graves, light candles, leave offerings of prepared food, pray and perhaps play some music. It is also customary in the Hispanic community for parents of deceased children to place toys at their child’s graves on the Day of the Innocents. On Nov 2, small offerings of alcohol might even be brought to the adult graves.

In Mexico, there is always a concerted effort to ensure the United States’ tradition of Halloween is not celebrated over Día de los Muertos, which is Oct. 31. Some cities have even gone so far as to post signs with the word Halloween posted in a red circle with a slash through it.

In many European countries with large Catholic populations, All Saints’ Day and All Souls’ Day are celebrated in ways much similar to southeast Louisiana, where people take off work and go to cemeteries with candles and flowers. In some customs, it is tradition to give children sweets and toys, perhaps a custom some of us wish our mothers would have incorporated for us.

Spain even throws in a theatrical bend, with the play Don Juan Tenorio traditionally performed on Nov. 1. Although traditions might be more elaborate elsewhere, there are perhaps none as family-driven than those in our beloved region. It is a day of not only spending time with loved ones, but also honoring the special memories of those who have gone before us.

There is something about the work of restoration. Many times the term is used in reference to construction, as seen in the aftermath of storms and floods. People restore dwellings to an original state, perhaps with some updating or remodeling, accomplished through an enormous amount of sacrifice, persistence and love. The 30th and 31st Sunday Mass readings in Ordinary Time (Year B) give insight into God’s restorative love through Jesus Christ for humanity.

**Restoration**

The 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time readings begin with the prophet Jeremiah. He reassures the exiled Israelites to stand firm for the day will come when their lives will be restored. Although outcasts, God’s infinite love continues to guide them safely over the terrain until the time of the restoration. He promises an everlasting love which remains faithful despite their infidelity. When this day arrives there will be joyful dancing, praising and singing of the “great things God has done for us” (Ps 116:1) because of his great compassion and mercy.

The restoration of the people also welcomed the restoration of the temple, where high priests offered burnt sacrifices and other offerings for the atonement of sins. This priesthood was ultimately fulfilled by our eternal high priest, Jesus Christ, who offered the perfect sacrifice once and for all and still intercedes for us at the right hand of God. Thus, by his passion, death and resurrection we are set free from the bondage of sin and are restored by sacrificial love into unity with God where we belong.

The Gospel reading from St. Mark is powerful. The blind man, Bartimaeus, is begging on the roadside. He is a common sight to the huge crowd following Jesus and the disciples. Bartimaeus persistently shouts out to Jesus for mercy, despite the attempts to quiet him by the people. Jesus hears him, perhaps both times, and asks for him to approach. Bartimaeus throws off the only possession that keeps him warm, a cloak, and answers Jesus’ call. The people give him support. As Bartimaeus draws near Jesus simply asks, “What do you want me to do for you?”

Pause for a moment and ponder this “encounter.” If Jesus were sitting right in front of you and asked, “What do you want me to do for you,” how would you respond? When have I cried out to Jesus in hopes of being restored? When have I persistently cried out to him when others tell me to be quiet? Did I persist or stay within the boundary of silence? Is there something I need to ask Jesus? What is holding me back? What needs restoration in my life?

Bartimaeus pleads, “Master, I want to see!” He not only knows of Jesus’ healing ministry; he also BELIEVES Jesus WILL restore his sight. Jesus hears his prayer, recognizes his faith and restores his sight. Rather than returning home, Bartimaeus chooses the sure path and follows Jesus.

“I love you, Lord, my strength” (Ps 18).

As a child, the last words I spoke after my nightly prayers were, “I love you, God.” The simplicity of youth inspired me to say these just in case I died in my sleep, for I wanted these to be my last spoken words. Of course now my head hits the pillow and I am fortunate to even pray the Sign of the Cross. Seriously, though, what is the last thing we think about at the end of the day?

Many people pray an Examination of conscience to review how well they loved God that day. A simple examination is similar to what Moses is reminding the Israelites of in the first reading of the 31st Sunday in Ordinary Time. He has just passed on to them from God the Ten Commandments as the way of loving God and others. Ultimately, Moses emphasizes the call to love God alone with the totality of their being: heart, soul and strength. We are called to the same love through Jesus Christ. This love is to be rooted in our hearts in order to be able to love and live in the ways of God with Jesus as our guide.

This love is driven not by feelings or emotions but by our willingness to do what God has called us to: to love him and our neighbor completely. How? Perhaps we may need to smash the self-made idols which distract us from what is authentic and we choose to place God in the center of our worship. Perhaps we can commit to a more consistent prayer life.
**Net gain in 21st century evangelization**

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator


Her nimble fingers danced across her computer keyboard during a virtual tour of FORMED.org, an online digital library for accessing thousands of Catholic faith formation videos, audios and e-books. There is also content for the Hispanic population.

Dow said FORMED is part of a process of bringing evangelization and catechesis online in the diocese.

On the department’s website, evang catbh.org, there is a center for online formation and registration for online Ministry and Theology classes that are facilitated by local instructors who have a master’s degree in theology. The courses involve reading, listening to audio clips, responding to questions in the course forum, watching video clips and taking quizzes.

People can learn at their own pace that is realistic and participate in webinars, which includes “papers” and quizzes, according to Dow.

The Evangelization and Catechesis website also updates people through blogs on new online learning tools, such as #InsertLearning, in which catechists can make an article interactive so it can be more participatory and engaging.

FORMED.org is the latest tool the diocese is investing in and church parishes are embracing and flourishing in efforts to teach and evangelize its faithful, Dow said.

According to Jim Knowles, manager for diocesan partnerships at Augustine Institute, the institute launched the non-profit FORMED.org in July 2015. The program brings together Catholic content from St. Augustine, St. Paul Center, Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception, Lighthouse Catholic Media, Ignatius Press, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Knights of Columbus and others.

“It all started when St. John Paul II called for the new evangelization at World Youth Day in Denver, Colorado in the 1990s,” said Knowles, who works with faith formation, religious education and youth ministry diocesan offices.

He described FORMED as a “Catholic Netflix” with content that reaches the average Catholic in the pews. A parish can subscribe and give access to people in its parish boundaries, Catholic and non-Catholic, and people can share it with their neighbors.

The diocese has come onboard with FORMED and parishes have embraced the new tool as the diocese has helped subsidize their subscription price. And churches using it are experiencing growth in catechesis and evangelization.

“The parishes who are using this are on fire,” said Dow.

One of those parishes is St. George Church in Baton Rouge.

According to Father Paul Gros, parochial vicar at St. George, after a training session on the program for faith formation leaders in the diocese this past summer, the church got word out to its parishioners.

Beginning with the Bread of Life discussions, St. George introduced FORMED by drawing parishioners’ attention to the website’s featured videos on the Eucharist. They even had people sign up for FORMED during the Masses so they could receive the link for the program.

“I said, ‘You’re not going to hear this very often, but I want you to take out your cell phones’ (and sign up for FORMED),” said Father Gros with a broad smile.

Registrations spiked by 444 in one week, according to Lynn Schroeder, communications specialist at St. George. The church, which has its own FORMED website, currently has 957 people registered and registrants have spent a combined 152,223 minutes or 2,500 hours on FORMED.org since they first had the program.

Father Gros said the program has been a great asset to his ministry. When people come to him for confession and are struggling with an issue, he hands them a card with the website address and access code so they can further research the topic.

“I also had a woman who was going through the RCIA program and her siblings were not supportive and asked her about devotions to Mary, and I was able to say, ‘Here’ and I introduced her to FORMED,’ he said. “She was able to respond to their questions. It’s a great tool for people whether they are Catholic or not.”

Father Gros also encountered a person struggling with atheism, and he referred...
Pope canonizes new saints

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Carrying Pope Paul VI’s pastoral staff and wearing the blood-stained belt of Archbishop Oscar Romero of San Salvador, Pope Francis formally recognized them, and five others, as saints of the Catholic Church.

Thousands of pilgrims from the new saints’ home countries – Italy, El Salvador, Spain and Germany – were joined by tens of thousands of others Oct. 14 in St. Peter’s Square to celebrate the universal recognition of the holiness of men and women they already knew were saints.

Carolina Escamilla, who traveled from San Salvador for the canonization, said she was “super happy” to be in Rome. “I don’t think there are words to describe all that we feel after such a long-awaited and long-desired moment like the ‘official’ canonization, because Archbishop Romero was already a saint when he was alive.”

Each of the new saints lived lives marked by pain and criticism – including from within the church – but all of them dedicated themselves with passionate love to following Jesus and caring for the weak and the poor, Pope Francis said in his homily.

The new saints are: Paul VI, who led the last sessions of the Second Vatican Council and its initial implementation; Romero, who defended the poor, called for justice and was assassinated in 1980; Vincenzo Romano, an Italian priest who died in 1831; Nazaria Ignacia March Mesa, a Spanish nun who ministered in Mexico and Bolivia and died in 1943; Catherine Kasper, the 19th-century German founder of a religious order; Francesco Spinelli, a 19th-century priest and founder of a religious order; and Nunzio Sulprizio, a layman who died in Naples in 1836 at the age of 19.

“All these saints, in different contexts, put the Gospel into practice in their lives, without lukewarmness, without calculation, with the passion to risk everything and to leave it all behind,” Pope Francis said in his homily.

The pope, who has spoken often about being personally inspired by both St. Paul VI and St. Oscar Romero, prayed that every Christian would follow the new saints’ examples by shunning an attachment to money, wealth and power, and instead following Jesus and sharing his love with others.

And he prayed the new saints would inspire the whole church to set aside “structures that are no longer adequate for proclaiming the Gospel, those weights that slow down our mission, the strings that tie us to the world.”

Among those in St. Peter’s Square for the Mass was Rossi Bonilla, a Salvadoran now living in Barcelona. “I’m really emotional, also because I did my Communion with Monsignor Romero when I was eight years old,” she told Catholic News Service.

“He was so important for the neediest; he was really with the people and kept strong when the repression started,” Bonilla said. “The struggle continues for the people, and so here we are!”

In his homily, Pope Francis said that “Jesus is radical.”

“He gives all and he asks all; he gives a love that is total and asks for an undivided heart,” the pope said. “Even today he gives himself to us as the living bread; can we give him crumbs in exchange?”

New CFO appointed

Bishop Michael G. Duca has appointed Glenn Landry Jr., CPA, CDFM, CGMA as Chief Financial Officer for the Diocese of Baton Rouge, effective Dec. 3.

Landry is replacing Joe Ingraham, who is retiring after serving in the diocese for the past 15 years.

Landry has 23 years of accounting experience, serving the past 10 years as CFO for the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux. He has a Bachelor’s of Science in Accounting from Louisiana State University, is a Certified Public Accountant, Certified Diocesan Fiscal Manager and a Charter Global Management Accountant.

Landry is a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, Louisiana Certified Public Accountants and the Diocesan Fiscal Managers Conference. He also serves as Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion in his church parish.

Bishop Duca thanked Ingraham for his service to the diocese.
Reading connects inmates, children

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

From a large screen in the corner of a room, a woman, wearing make-up and neatly styled hair, sat in front of a blue paper backdrop and held up a book and read the title.”This is a book about dinosaurs and archeology, Josh,” she said to the camera. “I chose this book because I know you love dinosaurs.”

Holding the book next to her face while making sure the pages were clearly visible, the woman read each page to her young son, through the lens of a camera. Sometimes she would point out something of interest in the pictures or refer to Josh’s siblings. It was all very personal, very warm and very moving.

What was not visible on the screen was the woman’s prison garb or the cinder block wall hidden behind the blue paper. She was participating in the Reading Connection, a program that allows incarcerated women in Louisiana to read to their children on video. A copy of the DVD and the book that was read is then sent to the child. In this case, the packet was sent to the child in Mexico.

“We’re hearing that the children are playing the DVDs of them over and over and over,” said Sandra Kuykendall, one of the organizers of the Reading Connection. This was part of a recent presentation to Prison Ministry of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge. The Reading Connection connects incarcerated women with their children by recording the women reading. A copy of the DVD and the book is then sent to the child. Photo by Bonny Van | The Catholic Commentator

“A smock worn by volunteers and books used in the Reading Connection were displayed during a recent presentation of the program at Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge. The Reading Connection connects incarcerated women with their children by recording the women reading. A copy of the DVD and the book is then sent to the child.”

After thinking about the program, Kuykendall approached prison officials, who suggested video instead of audio recordings. The idea stalled until Kuykendall approached CCDBR about the program, which led to a connection with the Baton Rouge Diocesan Council of Catholic Women (DCCW).

“It was just a God thing,” said Kuykendall. “I mean I truly believe that he was in the mix of that because everything just started falling into place.”

With the help of donations from Prison Ministry and DCCW, Kuykendall, Howell and Adams were able to watch the seed they planted begin to bear fruit. DCCW, which encourages reading by providing books to children in need, found Reading Connection was the perfect fit for their own outreach efforts.

“We do things to benefit women and children, so this was a good project for us,” said DCCW president Cassandra Will. “It also might encourage some of the other mothers who maybe hadn’t finished high school to work on their GED and do more reading themselves. It also might encourage their children to read more if they see mom reading.”

DCCW member Smriti Bholner, a retired school librarian, did quite a bit of research to find books on a wide range of topics that were geared toward the three- to 10-year-old age group. She ordered 262 books for the initial start.

“I wanted to have enough books so the mothers could choose what books they wanted to read,” she stated. “If the selection is limited, the choices are as well.”

Reading Connection visits were held Sept. 14 and Sept. 21 at the former Jetson Center Youth and the Elayn Hunt Correction Center, where female offenders are being held following the 2016 flood that damaged the Louisiana Correction Institute for Women in St. Gabriel.

A total of 10 mothers read to 13 children, with each individual child receiving their own DVD and book. Volunteer Carol Bradley, who was initially hesitant to visit a prison, said being involved was rewarding, especially after seeing the transformation of the women after they read. She said in the beginning, the women kept their eyes downcast as they started picking out books, but after they made their selections it was like they were waking up.

“After they filmed (the video), they made eye contact, had a smile on their face,” she beamed. “It was like they thought they had accomplished something. You could feel the energy. You could feel the love. And, when I went in to look at some of the clips with them, the tears started falling and you knew it was sincere.”

“This is a great ministry to strengthen the bonds mothers have with their children while they’re incarcerated,” says Linda Fjeldsjo, coordinator of Prison Ministry of CCDBR.

According to Kuykendall, many of the women don’t have the opportunity to see their children because of the distance of the prisons, especially in the case of the woman on the video, whose children are in Mexico.

Kuykendall said quarterly visits are planned for the Reading Connection next year, with sessions slated for January, March, June and September. Until then, she and the other volunteers continue to seek donations for equipment, postage, packaging, DVDs and books. The group also hopes to build up a bank of volunteers to help out the cause.

“We had no idea it would turn into this,” she said.
Judas and his fate/ Divorce and friendship

Q

There’s a question that has occurred to me from time to time, and I would appreciate your answer. I was always led to believe that suicide is a mortal sin, so someone who takes his own life cannot go to heaven.

It makes me wonder what fate awaited Judas when he hanged himself after turning Jesus in. Is he condemned to hell, or would he be forgiven for the role that he played, since Jesus had to be betrayed to save mankind? (Indianapolis)

A

Objectively, of course, suicide is a mortal sin. The Catechism of the Catholic Church is quite clear: “Suicide contradicts the natural inclination of the human being to preserve and perpetuate his life. It is gravely contrary to the just love of self” (No. 2281). But among the requisites for mortal sin is also sufficient deliberation that would allow for full consent of the will. And on that, the catechism goes on to say: “Grave psychological disturbances ... can diminish the responsibility of the one committing suicide” (No. 2282).

Interestingly, the church’s former Code of Canon Law (published in 1917) included in the list of those who should not be given Christian burial persons who deliberately kill themselves. But that category is no longer included in the current code (published in 1983). The church now regularly celebrates funeral Masses for suicide victims, because the church gives the deceased the benefit of the doubt as to whether psychological factors may have impeded a full and deliberative act of the will.

As for Judas, the church has never definitively said that Judas or any individual, for that matter, is surely in hell. It’s conceivable, I suppose, that at the last moment Judas, filled with remorse, could have repented and sought the Lord’s forgiveness. But Jesus did say: “Woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would be better for that man if he had never been born” (Mt 26:24).

So as to the ultimate fate of Judas, I don’t really like his chances.

Q

I am a divorcee of five years and I am 66 years old. I have met a widower of 77 who was married for 59 years. Two of his daughters have told him that he cannot be with me at all because I am “spiritually” married in the eyes of the church. They say that we cannot even hold hands.

We are not interested in marriage but just want to be friends and companions. What does the church think about this? (I know that it cannot be a sexual relationship, as that would truly be a mortal sin.) Please answer quickly. This is dividing his family since four of his children don’t see a problem, but two of them do. (City of origin withheld)

A

Actually, I can see both sides of the argument. It’s fine for you to maintain a friendship with this man, and I’m sure that his companionship is comforting to you. But friendship can quickly blossom into romance, and that seems to be the concern of the “two daughters.”

Why not speak with a priest and look into the possibility of an annulment for your first marriage? (Sometimes even long-standing marriages can be annulled when there were danger signs from the start.) With an annulment, you’d be free with the church’s blessing for wherever life might take you.

FATHER DOYLE is a retired priest in the Diocese of Albany, New York. Questions may be sent to Father Kenneth Doyle at askfatherdoyle@gmail.com and 30 Columbia Circle Dr., Albany, NY 12203.
Flexibility necessary in catechesis

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

When students’ eyes light up or they raise their hands to answer questions, volunteer or plunge into an activity it means success in the frontline mission of evangelizing and catechizing the youth, say directors of religious education and catechists in the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

At St. Patrick Church in Baton Rouge, communication and flexibility help the religious education program thrive, according to Lisa Trahan, the program’s director.

St. Patrick’s religion school program differs from many others in the diocese. Rather than having a year-round parish school of religion, they have a concentrated, two-week PSR.

“What we faced is that we had some divorced families whose children were available every other week rather than every week,” said Trahan.

She said other children have extracurricular activities that conflict with the PSR schedule.

“We did a poll of families involved in religious education to see if there was an interest in a summer religious education program and 80 percent were in favor of making the change,” said Trahan, who had observed a successful summer PSR program in the Diocese of Lafayette.

The concentrated PSR helps students retain the lessons and develop stronger relationships with each other, Trahan said.

There is 90 percent parent participation in the summer program and if a family vacation is planned, Trahan is notified in advance and plans are made for the students to make up what they miss. Children from other parishes may also attend the summer session.

Providing options is also the key to succeeding at forming children’s faith, Trahan said. Parents who regularly practice their faith can follow a parent-led catechesis during the year, with the children taking a lesson review to assure they are retaining what they learned.

The St. Patrick confirmation program is unique in that it is based on the Dynamic Catholic’s confirmation program and encourages church ministry participation rather than doing service hours, said Trahan. This includes ushering, singing in the choir, ministering to peers in youth ministry, serving in seasonal ministries such as the Advent Giving Tree, serving gumbo after the Christmas concert or Vacation Bible school.

“We are a ministry-driven parish and we invite confirmation candidates to sign up for two ministries so they can find the best fit, and after confirmation, they will hopefully pick one,” said Trahan.

Because conversing with families is critical to religious education and sacramental preparation, Trahan sometimes meets with parents after hours.

“We all know that ministry in our church is not 9 to 5,” said Trahan. “If you are going to work with people it has to be on their timeframe.”

She added that timely communication is also critical to success.

“I’m a one-on-one person and I want to make sure you have gotten the information,” said Trahan.

She meets with catechists, confirmation and VBS leaders to “see how things are going” and evaluate how the program went after its completion.

“Over the years we have modified the different ministries preparation that we do. Each year we re-evaluate and see if there is something we should do differently to stay fresh,” said Trahan.

Being open to recommendations from the bishop, pastor, office staff and ministry leaders is vital to Trahan.

“I believe God gives us our gifts, and the gifts I have are not the only gifts we need to serve,” said Trahan, who has served under five pastors in her 23 years as DRE.

She and other DREs value the hard work of their catechists.

On a recent Tuesday night, sixth-grade PSR students at St. John the Evangelist Church in Prairieville warmly greeted Susan Livaudais as they entered the classroom and prepared to learn about the Passover supper.

“They don’t pay too much attention when you read from a book,” said Livaudais. “They’ve been in school all day. I learned that what works better is for me to put it in my own words and do some illustrations on the boards, and sometimes I bring props.”

She held up a sculpture of the Last Supper while talking to her class about Jesus’ last meal with his disciples and connecting it to the Passover supper.

The students are bright, inquisitive and ask good questions, said Livaudais.

“They’re curious and that curiosity comes out,” she said. “They will ask things such as, ‘Why are there bad angels?’ and ‘Why did Jesus have to die on the cross?’ Really good, deep insightful questions.”

One of Livaudais’ favorite times in class is students’ “aha” moments.

“The kids will have a look on their face when you’re teaching something and they get it,” she said.

That “aha” moment is something fellow St. John catechist Kirsten Collins treasures.

“You know when they get it,” said Collins, who teaches fifth- and sixth-grade catechism. “One of my favorite ‘aha’ moments is when they realize ‘Oh my gosh, I did know this or I do understand that.’ I think it’s the best moment because they are pulling it together for themselves. All I did was point it out to them.”

Collins spoke enthusiastically as she scrawled key words across the board for a lesson on praying the Our Father. Like Livaudais, she uses creativity in the classroom.

On a lesson about the importance of prayer partners the students made paper airplanes containing written prayer intentions and threw them across the room. The students picked up another student’s airplane and prayed for the intentions for a week.

She also sent them home with a Scripture cookie recipe for them to make with their families. They have also spent time praying doodling.

Through exchanging questions and faith stories with their students, the catechists said their own faith has grown.

“Every week I learn there is more growing I need to do, more researching and understanding, and what better way to do it than with these wonderful bright-eyed kids who come in with different perspectives,” said Collins.

The dedicated catechists who come each week with joy and enthusiasm to help children know that Jesus loves in- spirers, said Marlene Bruce, St. John DRE.

“There are around 1,300 students involved in formation from Sunday School through 11th grade. I cannot stress enough that without all of our faithful volunteers, there would be no way we could do this. We do our best to meet families where they are,” said Bruce.
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St. Theresa Avila celebrates centennial in Gonzales

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

The grounds of St. Theresa of Avila Church in Gonzales were a festive and colorful display of pop up tents and banners as the parish celebrated its history of being in the heart and heartbeat of the community for the past 100 years.

St. Theresa marked its centennial with a special celebration that included Mass on Oct. 14.

The roots of St. Theresa date to the mid-1800s, according to historical records.

For many years, settlers of the east bank of Ascension Civil Parish traveled across the Mississippi River to Donaldsonville or up the river to St. Gabriel Church in St. Gabriel. Because of the inconvenience of crossing the river, French and Spanish settlers built a chapel named St. Ann at Crevasse near Belle Helen in 1840. By the late 1840s another chapel was built at Cornerview.

In 1863, a larger church was procured in Cornerview and officially established as a parish under Our Lady's patronage about four miles from the present church. The church was renamed Sacred Heart at Cornerview.

For the next 50 years, priests from Cornerview served the people of Gonzales. As the town’s population grew as the railroad line from Baton Rouge to New Orleans expanded, and River Road and the new Airline Highway cut through Gonzales, a declaration was made to transfer the church from Cornerview to Gonzales. The Cornerview church parishioners signed a protest letter to Archbishop James H. Blenk SM of New Orleans, according to Colleen Lambert, who is researching the history of St. Theresa and Ascension Parish.

After Archbishop John W. Shaw was installed as archbishop of New Orleans in 1918, he authorized moving the church and the building of the new rectory and church in Gonzales. Upon the request of a benefactor, the church was named St. Theresa of Avila, the French spelling of the saint’s name rather than the Spanish spelling St. “Teresa.”

The original St. Theresa church, which was 40 feet away from the current church, was 116 feet long and 60 feet wide, and the steeple was 106 feet high, said Lambert.

According to Purvis Hebert, another long-time member and historian, the church was built by parishioners. The church was poorly built and after 20 years it became apparent a replacement building was necessary, as the steeple was about to fall down.

“It was the ugliest church in the world for about 15-20 years— not a pretty site,” said Hebert.

Even in the midst of World War II, money was saved to build a new church. In 1953, Archbishop Joseph F. Rummel dedicated the present church on the feast of Christ the King. The cost of the church, including furnishings, was $161,654.13, according to Lambert.

Hebert said St. Theresa is a special parish in the midst of a town with a heart of service.

“We have quite a community outreach,” he said.

Lambert said, “It’s neat to see that deep roots run in our community and our parish.”

This honoring of the past and building of its future perpetuated the church’s centennial celebration, which highlighted the intertwining and converging histories of the church, community and state.

The celebration kicked off with an outdoor Mass. In recognition of the contributions of the Hispanic community, the second reading and some of the prayers and music during Mass were in Spanish.

In his homily, pastor Father Eric Gyan said St. Theresa faithfully carries out the mission Christ conferred to his disciples.

There are those moments for people after experiencing a milestone in their lives, such as marrying or becoming parents for the first time, when they think “Oh my goodness” when they realize the responsibilities God has entrusted to them, he said.

For Father Gyan, this moment came after he was ordained a priest and realized this role was to help guide souls to heaven.

As he thought “how am I going to do this?” God reminded him that it is not being original or creative, but faithful, that is important.

He said being faithful is something St. Theresa parishioners have done for many years.

“The faith you have been blessed with, the faith that you are living, the faith that you have been handing on for generations, has been given to you by the Lord,” said Father Gyan.

He added, “Even though we are raw and broken human beings, the grace that flows through the Eucharist, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, flows through Gonzales.”

At the conclusion of Mass, Father Gyan was presented with proclamations declaring Oct. 14 as St. Theresa Church of Gonzales Day signed by Gonzales Mayor Barney Arceneaux and Ascension Civil Parish President Kenny Matassa as well as commendations signed by Gov. John Bel Edwards and leaders of the Louisiana House of Representatives.

Many of the event attendees expressed the close bond between their families and the church, which for some, go back generations.

“This has been home for us, this is our church family,” said Lessie Gautreau, who grew up in the parish, attended St. Theresa School and received all the sacraments along with her siblings there.

Her mother, Catherine Gautreau, 75, also received the sacraments at St. Theresa.

Gautreau remembers the old church did not have air conditioning and that it was made of wood. She said there was an atmosphere of dignity and respect when she attended Mass with her parents and grandparents.

“It was very Catholic and very simple in those days,” said Gautreau.

She recalled being part of the first confirmation class at the “new church.” She went on to work with the youth and RCIA programs.

Even as Gonzales expands, Gautreau said there are a group of people who still remember the small town feel of the community and the church.

“If you don’t look at the traffic you feel like it’s a small town,” said Gautreau.

Ruth Hanson said when the church was moved to Gonzales and Social Security came into existence many of the older people sold their homes and moved to Gonzales to live near the church.

“There was a big migration when the church came here,” said Hanson.

All of her mother’s family and most of her father’s family are buried at St. Theresa.

Olivia Navarro, a seventh-grader at St. Theresa Middle School, said she enjoys St. Theresa’s upbeat messages and music at the Masses.

“It keeps people more in tuned and focused on the Mass,” said Navarro, who sings at the Masses every other week.

Jessica Breaux said the St. Theresa community is important in keeping her children, LaNaih, a seventh-grader at St. Theresa Middle School, and Libby, 2, close to Christ.

“I want the church community to grow and prosper and stay close-knit. That’s what I love about St. Theresa,” said Breaux.

Among the attendees at the Mass was George Breaux, a parishioner who has been attending for 60 years.

“Baton Rouge is a lot further away,” he said.

He said he enjoys the Mass as he feels St. Theresa is the parish church.

“I’m a lifelong parishioner here,” said Breaux.

Attendees at an outdoor Mass at St. Theresa Church in Gonzales celebrating its 100th anniversary pray the Our Father.

Photo by Debbie Shelley | The Catholic Commentator

Photo courtesy of the Department of Archives | The Diocese of Baton Rouge
‘Life is sacred at every stage’

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Modern culture is one where innocent lives are extinguished daily, and where the elderly and those with disabilities are often overlooked and neglected.

Consequently, now more than ever, pro-life supporters must reach out to those who might not share one’s faith, or might even look different, to create a commonly held vision of what it means to respect life and the dignity of human life.

That was the message of Louisiana Black Catholics for Life director Dr. Kathy Allen, the keynote speaker at the Every Life: Cherished, Chosen, Sent conference on Oct. 6 at the Bishop Tracy Center in Baton Rouge. The conference was hosted by the Office of Marriage and Family Life of the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

“Life is a gift, it is never an accident or never a mistake,” said Allen. “Life is sacred at every stage.”

The morning conference also featured Louisiana Conference of Catholic Bishops executive director Rob Tasman speaking on faith and public policy and Danielle Van Haute, director of the diocese’s pro-life program, speaking on contraception.

Monice Oliphant, director of religious education at St. Isidore the Farmer Church in Baker, brought a group of more than 20 high school students to attend, partly to help them in their preparation for confirmation.

“It’s important (the students) get the information on what our Catholic Church teaches,” she said. “If they’re going to be confirmed and they are living life as a disciple of Christ they need to understand what that means.”

Allen, who admitted she had an abortion while she was a student at Michigan State University, said pro-life supporters must actively work for a greater commitment to justice and peace.

She said too often many are so wrapped up in their own lives, worried about their homes, their money or other exterior distractions, that they have little time to be concerned with the homeless or the less fortunate.

“But a eucharistic lifestyle is one of solidarity and rooted in grace.

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Kavanaugh’s confirmation energizes pro-life supporters

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Cautious optimism filtered through the ranks of pro-life supporters after the confirmation of new Supreme Court Associate Justice Brett Kavanaugh, following a months long, and often contentious process.

But supporters also understand that even if the majority conservative Supreme Court ultimately overturns Roe v. Wade, the battleground will simply shift to the states. Currently, 18 states provide women with a constitutional right to have an abortion.

“If (Roe v. Wade) is overturned all of a sudden abortions will not go away,” said Rob Tasman, executive director of Louisiana Conference of Catholic Bishops. “It will be deferred to the individual states and that is where the fight will be.”

Kavanaugh, who was confirmed by the Senate on Oct. 6, takes the seat of Justice Anthony Kennedy, who retired July 31.

Chief Justice John Roberts officially swore in Kavanaugh after the Senate’s 50-48 confirmation vote, which took place despite the interruptions of screaming protesters who had to be escorted from the gallery that oversees the Senate chamber.

The demonstrators were voicing their objection to the confirmation because Kavanaugh had been accused of sexual misconduct. The vote followed the conclusion of a weeklong FBI probe. The agency’s final report was not released to the public but made available to all the senators for their review; the agency found no corroborating evidence on the claims.

“We’re cautiously optimistic that Judge Kavanaugh will help bring this court to a position which they may be inclined to help protect unborn children and the health and safety of women in our country today,” said Louisiana Right to Life director Ben Clapper. “There are laws right now in the federal courts that are on their way through the appellate and to the Supreme Court that may be what is needed to test this new court and see to what extent they’re willing to challenge what Roe v. Wade said, and to change the law of our land of abortion on demand right now.”

Tasman said the Center for Reproductive Rights has a color-coded map of the country projecting the most likely states to allow abortion, those who will likely prohibit abortion and those that are uncertain. He said the entire southern portion of the United States and some states in the Midwest are solid red, meaning they would unlikely adopt abortion-friendly legislation.

He called Louisiana a “great” pro-life state and indeed it is regarded as perhaps the most pro-life state in the country. But he did say there is some concern that if the Supreme Court overturns Roe v. Wade, some legislators, who have been silent on the issue in the past, might feel emboldened or empowered to have a strong voice to overturn some of the anti-abortion legislation the Legislature has passed in recent years.

“I think we have very good leadership in the Catholic Church, in (other denominations), in Louisiana Right to Life,” Tasman said. “They have done so much good, constructive work.”

“I don’t think you can be elected to a statewide office in the state of Louisiana if you are anything but pro-life. I don’t think that’s possible. I think that’s a credit to all of the groups and the bright people who have been on the ground since Roe v. Wade.”

During an emotional swearing-in ceremony held in the East Room of the White House, Kavanaugh, who is Catholic, said the Supreme Court is an institution of law and not a political or partisan institution.

“The justices do not sit on opposite sides of an aisle. We do not caucus in separate rooms,” Kavanaugh said. “The Supreme Court is a team of nine, and I will always be a team player on the team of nine.”

In an Oct. 6 statement, Kavanaugh’s high school alma mater, Jesuit-run Georgetown Preparatory School in the Washington suburb of North Bethesda, Maryland, noted how when he first accepted Trump’s nomination, Kavanaugh stated that “one of the goals of Jesuit education is the aspiration to be a ‘man or woman for others.’ ”

“The call to public service is one of the highest manifestations of that ethic,” the school said. “Georgetown Prep congratulates Justice Kavanaugh on his confirmation and promises our prayers for him and his family as he strives to be that person for others in the service of our nation.”

Kavanaugh, 53, graduated from the school in 1983 and joins another alumnus of the school on the court, Associate Justice Neil Gorsuch, who graduated in 1985. Gorsuch, who also was nominated by Trump, was confirmed in April 2017.

CNS contributed to this report.

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Conference to explore Humanae Vitae

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Discovering a link between science and human morality will be the focus of an upcoming symposium at St. Agnes Church in Baton Rouge.

“Science Embraces Humanae Vitae: How Current Evidence Supports Restorative Reproductive Medicine,” which is free and open to the public, is scheduled Oct. 27 from 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

St. Agnes pastor Father Charbel Jamhoury said he organized the symposium because it coincides with the 50th anniversary of the release of Humanae Vitae and the canonization of St. Paul VI, who was canonized by Pope Francis Oct. 14.

Father Jamhoury also cited the fact that the encyclical created so much controversy, causing many Catholics to leave the church during that time.

“So my question, after 50 years and because it all started with doctors and nurses (from whom St. Paul VI sought input), is what a Catholic doctor would tell us,” Father Charbel said. “Is the church satisfied?”

“My biggest goal and hope is to find a link between science and morality, between medical issues and Humanae Vitae,” he added. “And what science can add to the pope’s teaching about birth control.”

Father Jamhoury has enlisted an impressive array of speakers, including Immaculate Conception Church in Lakeland pastor Father Todd Lloyd, who will speak on Humanae Vitae and St. Paul VI’s appeal to scientists, doctors and nurses.

Also speaking will be Dr. Rob Chasuk of Baton Rouge, talking about the evidence for the effectiveness of a restorative approach to infertility and other women’s health problems using the Creighton Model Fertility-Care System and NaPro Technology.

Sr. Vernola dies

Sr. Vernola Ann Lyons FMOL died Thursday, Oct. 11, at Our Lady of The Lake Regional Medical Center.

Sr. Vernola was born June 20, 1940 in Mire. She entered the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady order on Aug. 2, 1964 and made her Perpetual Profession on Feb. 10, 1973.

She obtained a bachelor’s degree in nursing from McNeese State University in May, 1964 and a master’s degree from the University of Santa Clara in June, 1984.

Sr. Vernola served at Our Lady of the Lake as a cardiology staff nurse, emergency room head nurse and in Pastoral Care at OLOL and the Tan Center.

At Our Lady of Lourdes Regional Medical Center in Lafayette, she served as supervisor of surgery and obstetrics, supervisor and instructor of nurses in ICU, Sister Visitor, guest relations, patient liaison in surgery, home health nurse and Catholic Service Center at St. Genevieve Church in Thibodaux.

At St. Elizabeth Hospital in Gonzales she served as a patient representative.

Sr. Vernola is survived by a sister-in-law, Shirley Ann Lyons, numerous nieces, nephews, family, friends and her own religious family, the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady. She is preceded in death by her parents, John Sidney and Bernadette Bearb Lyons, siblings, John, Aaron, Leo, Curney and Virginia Lyons.

Through the years she served on several of the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady boards and hospital committees. Her faith in God, Franciscan vocation, nursing background and her compassion to serve are just a few of the gifts she will be remembered by in her ministry in the church. A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated at the St. Francis Chapel at OLOL, with interment at Roselawn Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to Haiti Project, Cristo Rey Baton Rouge Franciscan High School or a charity of choice.
By Bonny Van

The men and women filling the pews at Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Baton Rouge bowed their heads in prayer, knelt during the Eucharistic prayer and held hands while praying the Our Father. It was a typical celebration of Mass except for the attire. These men and women wore uniforms, bulletproof vests and police duty belts that carried holstered firearms, ammunition, handcuffs, flashlights and radios.

Officers and first responders from throughout the Diocese of Baton Rouge attended the annual Blue Mass at Sacred Heart on Oct. 10. Bishop Michael G. Duca, the first bishop of the diocese to celebrate the Blue Mass, spoke during his homily about the difficulty of maintaining an emotional distance during certain situations, something that he himself has dealt with as a pastor.

“You can’t go in with strong emotions that affect you; you have to stand back so you can size up the situation,” Bishop Duca said.

“Days like this (celebrating the Blue Mass) are to remember that what you do as a functionary. And, believe me, you take away those higher values and you move away with a kind of empty heart. And, you fill the heart with cynicism, frustration, bitterness.”

He talked about Jesus being the salt of the earth and how salt brings food to life, comparing that to emergency personnel doing their job. The bishop said their work brings hope to everyone.

During a poignant moment, he told the officers the badge they wear over their heart is about protecting that engagement, that zeal, that appreciation that what they do is important.

“You’re on the front lines but we need you to be there with heart,” the bishop said.

“The other thing that badge protects is our way of life,” he added. “You’re protecting the rules and laws that establish justice and order. You’re protecting the life that all of us want to live, even the people you’re dealing with want to live that kind of life, that has been broken by violence or injustice.”

He said every time officers step into a dangerous situation they are beginning the process of restorating by diffusing it, separating it and pulling out the “bad actors.”

“This is important work; this is great work,” Bishop Duca said. “This is worthy of praise. It’s hard work. And, I really believe you have to have a calling for it. Part of having joy and fulfillment in your heart for what you do is to know you have support from those around you, citizens and government. Today, we want you to know you have our support, our prayers and we want you to know how much we appreciate what you do, that I appreciate what you do.

“I want you to know that we are behind you and that we pray daily for your protection.”

Bishop Michael G. Duca

The Catholic Commentator | October 26, 2018

2018 BLUE MASS CELEBRATION

By Bonny Van

The Catholic Commentator

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Bishop Michael G. Duca
Learning Spanish through art

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

In Tweety Bachemin’s upstairs classroom at Holy Ghost School in Hammond, you’ll find paint-splattered curtains, color charts, paints and brushes and model clay.

You’ll also find the alphabet letters, lined up along a wall, with the Spanish names next to them; colors identified in Spanish; and Spanish prayers posted on the wall. This is SpARTish, a class, or clash, of art and Spanish and the students seem to love it.

“I like how we get to do art but still we learn stuff, and we don’t have to take notes,” said sixth-grader Sophia Castillo.

“I really like it because we learn stuff,” said fellow sixth-grader Benjamin Smith. “It’s easier to learn things because we’re doing things like making stuff, and it helps us remember what the words mean. She gives us examples of how to remember things.”

Bachemin, a professional artist and art teacher, reluctantly learned Spanish growing up from her Puerto Rican mother, Juanita Young. Bachemin, embarrassed when her mother spoke in her native tongue, said her mother often chided her, saying, “You’re going to thank me when you’re older.”

That didn’t take long. During her high school years, Bachemin was working at a restaurant when a woman walked in crying and speaking only in Spanish. A co-worker knew Bachemin spoke Spanish and suggested she talk with the upset woman, a moment that still brings Bachemin to tears.

“She told me that her family hadn’t eaten in a week and she was begging for food to feed them, and I’ll never forget being so thankful that I could speak Spanish,” she said. “I tell the kids this story and they think I made it up. So, I try to explain to them that Spanish isn’t just another subject, like this is another way for us to be helpful to people who may really need us.”

With her mind focused on pursuing a fine arts degree, Bachemin chose Spanish as her minor. The two curriculums did not meet until this year when Holy Ghost School was searching for a Spanish teacher and an art teacher for fourth-eighth grades; thus, SpARTish. The name was the brainstorm of Bachemin’s 10-year-old daughter Ella Bachemin, who is in fifth grade at Holy Ghost.

“We didn’t expect it to be so catchy,” smiles Tweety Bachemin. “The kids that aren’t in my class yet are like, ‘Oh my gosh, I can’t wait to take SpARTish!’ It’s definitely SpARTish – not just Spanish or art.”

For this class, sixth-grade students are building models of monsters out of clay with at least 10 body parts labeled in Spanish and English. While learning the language, students are also learning “proper ceramic techniques of assembling and constructing their own designs.”

“I like it because we get to express our creativity and show how talented we are,” said Bryn Beard.

“I like that we don’t have to take notes and we can make sculptures to help us figure out how to say the words in Spanish,” said classmate Brennan Fugarino.

“This class helps us learn more and see art page 15.
VIRTUOUS – Faculty and staff at Catholic Elementary School of Pointe Coupee in New Roads recognize students each quarter for possessing the qualities of a variety of virtues. Students recognized Oct. 9 for the virtues of love and joy are Braden Labatut, Juliet Cotten, Addison Jones, Samuel Gradyney, Abigail Ortego, Andrew Jewell, Karlee Ledet, Mason Werchan, Katherine Fontaine, Jacques Lemoine, Jamei St. Cyr, Gunner Lejeune, Evan Leonards, Brant Lejeune, Olivia Cotten, Gemma Jones, Aubrey Devillier, Cooper Walker, Lily Bergeron, Amelia Chauvin, Cameren Chapman, Grant Coursey, Brooke Andre, Jordan Battley, Andrew Sevin, Lilli St. Germain, Rachael Bergeron and Gavin Leblanc. 

Photo provided by Megan Girlinghouse | CEPC 

GEAUX PINK! - Students at Holy Ghost School in Hammond used their October service project to raise money for “Geaux PINK – Join the Fight!” Students donned pink and donated nearly $1,600 to Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center while doing so. Pictured, from left, front, are Knox Peterman and Ryleigh Fugarino; center row, Collie Sledge, Gracelynn Canzoneri, Layla Hooks and Celia Adams; and, back row, Miley Smith, Konnor Burkes and Ryder Falcon. 

Photo provided by Cindy Wagner | Holy Ghost School 

MUSIC SCIENCE – Second-grade students at Mater Dolorosa School in Independence learned about vibrations and pitch in science class. Guest teacher Luke Williamson taught students about the different types of instruments and how they make sounds by using vibrations, and also how to change the pitch. Pictured are students Lauren Alford, Nicholas Amos, Noah Casey, Chase Cotton, Grace Finley, Grayson Gaudet, Ava Johnson, Katy Jo Johnson, Eryn Mackey, Daily Rushing and Williamson. 

Photo provided by Erin Mendez | Mater Dolorosa School 

STRIKE UP THE BAND! – St. Michael the Archangel High School in Baton Rouge sophomore Steven Reed recently earned a spot in the Louisiana Music Educators Association All-State Honor Band. Reed is the youngest St. Michael musician to earn a spot in the all-state honor band. He will join the top high school musicians from around the state in a concert during the annual LMEA state conference in November. 

Photo provided by Leighann King | St. Michael High School 

ART ▼

helps us understand how to do things because she explains it,” said sixth-grader Jade Thiel.

Bachemin said the class is also helping students bridge the communication gap with the Hispanic members of the community, with many using the Spanish they’ve already learned in class. Learning prayers in Spanish is also giving the children another way of talking to God, especially when the interpretations are “a little different and they’re like, ‘I never thought of it that way.’”

“I was walking by the prayer garden and I heard ‘Madre de Dios,’ which means Mother of God, and I looked up and there was the statue of Mary in front of me and I felt like God said, ‘Look up and honor my mother,’” recalled Bachemin. “And, I told the kids that you may hear from God in many languages because he created them all.”

It’s definitely a new way to look at language, in all shapes, colors and forms, and that is SpARTish.

CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

A Brothers of the Sacred Heart School Since 1894

OPEN HOUSE Thursday, Nov. 8, 2018 4:30 - 7 p.m.

Young men in grades 6-8 and their parents are invited to attend!

www.catholicichigh.org
Cristo Rey names Engemann president

Cristo Rey Baton Rouge Franciscan High School announced the appointment of Eric Engemann as president, replacing Brian Moscona, who left earlier this year to accept the principal position at St. Thomas More School in Baton Rouge.

Engemann has an extensive background in executive level, non-profit leadership, administration and development in Baton Rouge, having led SportsBR, Inc. as its president and CEO. Engemann also most recently served on the faculty of the School of Kinesiology at Louisiana State University.

“Eric’s leadership experience, community relationships, strong demonstration of the values of St. Francis and work ethic, and his commitment to the school’s mission position him well to be the next leader of Cristo Rey,” said board chairman Bryan Jones.

“I could not be more excited to begin my work with Cristo Rey Baton Rouge Franciscan High School,” said Engemann, who began his new position Oct. 15. “I am truly inspired by our students, faculty and staff, and am humbled to serve the students and families of this transformational school.

“It is that inspiration that motivates me to do everything I can to support our faculty and staff to adhere to the school’s mission to create and sustain a strong academic, professional and spiritual foundation for our students that will serve them well beyond their time at Cristo Rey.”

Engemann holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in history from LSU and a master’s degree in education from Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio. In 2011, he earned a Master of Business Administration from the Flores MBA Program at LSU.

A native of Pointe Coupee Parish, Engemann and his wife, Kacie, have three children and are parishioners at St. Aloysius Church in Baton Rouge.

Cristo Rey is a Catholic institution that educates young people of limited economic means to become men and women of faith, purpose and service. Through a rigorous college preparatory curriculum coupled with a corporate work study program that enhances the educational experience by placing each student in a professional work environment sponsored by business partners in the community, students graduate ready to succeed in college and life.
GOSPEL

From page 2

including Sunday Mass with the faith community. Perhaps we need to ask for a removal of blind spots to insure clarity, thus enabling us to see with eyes of faith, a clear 20/20 vision in what Jesus’ restorative love does for us. Perhaps we can sacrifice our time to help others. Perhaps we can just be still and know the love of God in our quiet thoughts. Perhaps we can remember to “take courage; get up, Jesus is calling you” (Mk 10:49), and simply ask Jesus, “Lord, what do you want me to do for you or them?” Or perhaps we can end our day with, “I love you, God.” Amen.

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

EVANGELIZATION

From page 3

him to the website’s content about science, theology and the universe.

FORMED has trusted materials by well-known theologians and can help people when he can’t be present, said Father Gros.

The content also encourages the formation of small group communities, as there is content for faith formation programs that include a leader and participant guide.

Other church parishes enrolled in FORMED are St. Patrick Church in Baton Rouge, which launched an informational campaign on the program the weekend of October 12.

Lisa Trahan, director of religious education at St. Patrick Church, said, “We are excited about having FORMED in our parish. I think it will benefit our catechesis and contribute to the faith life of our parishioners.”

She said the parish should be able to bring back some old programs in a new light.

Dow said while current evangelization and catechesis may involve modern means of technology, there are still the timeless core values of proclaiming Christ and supporting parish and family life. She noted the website includes cartoons that teach children about faith, as well as content that can be used for a family movie night.

“It’s for parents, teachers, directors of religious education, neighbors – everyone,” said Dow.

“The key component of evangelization is inviting people to know how much God loves and values them.”

For more information about FORMED, contact your local parish or Dow at Ddow@diobr.org.

CONFERENCE

From page 11

Dr. Kim Hardey of Lafayette will speak on the evidence for the effectiveness of fertility awareness based methods for the regulation of births and Dorinda Bordlee, vice president and senior counsel for the Bioethics Defense Fund, will address concrete law and policy to restore the dignity of the human person.

“To have all of these (speakers) is kind of wow,” Father Jamhoury said.

Released July 25, 1968, Humanae Vitae provides clear teaching about God’s plan for married love and the transmission of life. The encyclical was released at a time when hormonal contraception, notably the birth control pill, was gaining popularity. Pope John XXIII culled together a commission that St. Paul VI supported but also expanded it by calling in medical professionals and lay persons for consultation.

There was a call from many Catholics at the time for the church to reconsider its stance on contraception. St. Paul VI asked the doctors to discuss how to respect married life and to give more dignity to women.

“(The symposium) is not to talk about Humanae Vitae itself because it deals with moral teaching, what we should do or not do,” Father Jamhoury said. “I hope (the speakers) will find the link and tell us how the church can have more clarification, more light of this encyclical.”

For more information, call 225-387-4127, email saintagnes2@bellsouth.net or visit stagnesbr.com.

FURRY FRIEND – Skylar MacKenzie Spencer, 4, brought her dog, Sasha, a Chiweenie, to the blessings of the pets at Our Lady of Mercy Church in Baton Rouge on Oct. 7. The parking lot was filled with people seeking a special blessing for their pets. Photo by Debbie Shelley | The Catholic Commentator

TO SUBSCRIBE, CALL 225-387-0983.

October 26, 2018

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Smallfoot
Warner Bros.

Turning the legend of Bigfoot on its head, this animated musical comedy charts the quest of a young yeti (voice of Channing Tatum) to prove that so-called smallfeet, that is, humans, exist, despite the fact that the inscribed stones by which the life of his mountaintop community has traditionally been regulated (their current custodian voiced by Common) deny this. Journeying below the clouds to look for proof, he encounters the host (voice of James Corden) of a nature-themed television show and, by presenting him to his fellow yetis, throws their whole way of thinking into doubt. Adults will easily perceive the false opposition between revealed truth and those empirical facts that can be discovered through scientific investigation. Yet this can afford parents an opportunity to have an age-appropriate conversation about faith with their teens. A misguided portrayal of religion, some rude humor. A-II; PG

First Man
Universal

Splendid multidimensional profile of astronaut Neil Armstrong (Ryan Gosling) charting the events that led to his becoming the commander of the 1969 Apollo 11 space mission and the first human being to walk on the moon. In adapting James R. Hansen's 2005 official biography, director Damien Chazelle melds an intimate portrait of the emotionally buttoned-up ex-naval aviator and engineer's inner life, including his deep bond with his strong-willed wife, Janet (Claire Foy), with a look back at the sometimes tragic, ultimately triumphant race to reach the lunar surface. Despite the universally known outcome of the story, Chazelle and screenwriter Josh Singer successfully infuse their account with suspense by reminding viewers of the radical problems NASA had to overcome and the dangers Armstrong and his colleagues constantly had to face. Possibly acceptable for mature teens. Brief scatological material, a few profanities and milder oaths, a single rough and a handful of crude terms. A-II; PG-13

Hell Fest
CBS Films

Nasty gorefest in which a real-life serial killer (Stephen Conroy) stalks the traveling horror carnival of the title, eventually targeting a college student (Amy Forsyth) as she, her date (Roby Attal) and two other couples (Reign Edwards, Christian James, Bex Taylor-Klaus and Matt Mercurio) wander amongst the macabre attractions. Director Gregory Plotkin serves up a decidedly unoriginal film filled with screams, sickening gore and an ax-wielding maniac. It's an extreme parade of mayhem moving toward a perverse conclusion and, as such, unsuitable for viewers of any age. Graphic bloody violence with gore, images of nudity, sexual banter, two obscene gestures, pervasive profane and rough language. O; R

A Star Is Born
Warner Bros.

This third remake of a sturdy cinematic warhorse pays occasional homage to its forebearers, which only serves to indicate that its formulaic “stand by your man” story is somewhat tattered and dog-eared. The core narrative remains: In show business, for every fresh young talent’s (Lady Gaga) happy ascent to fame and fortune, there’s always someone older (Bradley Cooper, who also directed from a screenplay he co-wrote with Eric Roth and Will Fetters) on a rapid, embittered and usually alcoholic downward slide, and the pathos increases exponentially when this involves a couple in a romantic relationship. A suicide, implied premarital sexual activity, fleeting upper female nudity, occasional drug use, a couple of profanities, frequent rough language. A-III; R

Venom
Columbia

While investigating an evil billionaire (Riz Ahmed) who has been secretly experimenting with fusing human beings and aliens into a composite life form, a report-er (Tom Hardy) accidentally undergoes the transformation, which endows him with superpowers but also leaves him unable, at times, to control his own actions. He gets help from his sympathetic ex-live-in-girlfriend (Michelle Williams) and her new beau (Reid Scott), a physician. But the extraterrestrial of the title has a battle to fight with others of his kind here on Earth so expelling him from the journalist’s body proves challenging. This Marvel Comics-based bit of nonsense from director Ruben Fleischer has some amusing dialogue between Hardy’s character and the fearsome occupant of his body, and the mayhem the creatures wreak, though sometimes described in gruesomely, is virtually bloodless. That’s about all that can be said in the picture’s favor, though. Forgettable fare for the uninterested and, perhaps, Marvel movie completists. Much stylized violence with minimal gore, cohabitation, about a half-dozen uses of profanity, a mild oath, at least one rough term, frequent crude and occasional cuss wordplay. A-III; PG-13

Bad Times at the El Royale
Fox

Religion in general and Catholicism in particular are central to this intense, challenging drama from writer-director Drew Goddard. In 1969, a strange array of guests checks into the past-its-prime hotel of the title which straddles the Nevada-California state line. They include a mild-mannered priest (an enthralling Jeff Bridges), a hard-edged hippie (Dakota Johnson), a glib traveling salesman (Jon Hamm) and a reserved soul singer (Cynthia Erivo). Secrets, false identities and a trove of stolen cash are mixed into a complex story that eventually also involves the hostelry’s timid manager (Levis Pullman), a Charles Manson-like cult leader (Chris Hemsworth) and one of the latter’s young followers (Cailie Spaeny). Sophisticated but gritty, the film’s basic stance is humane and its attitude toward faith is serious and refreshingly respectful for a mainstream Hollywood production, albeit Goddard’s oblique approach to the subject may not be to every believer’s taste. Offbeat and ambitious fare for grown viewers willing to grapple with some exacting material. Considerable violence with gore, glimpses of distant full nudity, mature themes including the sexual abuse of a minor, a couple of blasphemous expressions, a few uses of profanity, much rough and crude language. L; R
Benefit raises more than $33,000

Special to The Commentator

Bishop Michael G. Duca joined members of Holy Family Church and School in Port Allen who had gathered for an annual fundraising event that has brought light from a moment of darkness.

The Ava and Jacob Saucier Memorial Benefit, now in its ninth year, raised more than $33,000 for scholarships for Holy Family School with a silent auction, raffle and jambalaya on Sept. 9.

On Aug. 6, 2010, Ava, 3, and Jacob, 2, along with their grandfather Mike Saucier, died in a house fire in Belle River. Grandmother Mitzi Saucier died later from injuries sustained from the tragedy.

Ava and Jacob’s parents, Blake and Kristen Saucier, Holy Family parishioners, turned their grief into something positive for their community by starting the memorial benefit in remembrance of their children to help others. The scholarship has raised almost $200,000 in the past eight years.

Holy Family pastor Father David Allen said Bishop Duca wanted to take part in the event after learning about its history.

“Part of the mission of the Office of Catholic Schools is to ‘Evangelize Hearts,’” Father Allen said. “This means to convert hearts to Christ and his Gospel to love. Families can ask is this really happening in our Catholic schools.

“It is a good question and must be answered with concrete and visible actions.”

After attending a standing room only Mass celebrated by Bishop Duca, hundreds flowed to the parish hall to honor Ava and Jacob Saucier.

Father Allen said that although the day brought back memories of tragic loss, the faith of the Saucier family and relatives, the commitment of countless volunteers and the excitement of children who attend Holy Family witnessed hearts that can be touched and motivated to actions of great compassion. He said such acts are evangelizing actions that spread the Gospel of Christ to love one another.

“As pastor, I am humbled by the loving sacrifice honoring Ava and Jacob, raising funds to assist families desiring a solid Catholic education for their children,” Father Allen said. “It is an event educating our minds to know God will never leave us in the darkness.

“The love of Christ shared, our minds discover the warmth of hope. I know no better witness to the value of Catholic education at Holy Family than this memorial scholarship and the lives that have been enriched by the sacrifice it represents.”

Bishop Duca, who visited the parish hall after the Mass, said in his time as bishop in the Diocese of Shreveport he had “never seen anything like it.”

Holy Family principal Mike Comeau said the Ava and Jacob Memorial Scholarship provides partial scholarships for Holy Family School students. He said many positive things have come out of a devastating tragedy and the “Holy Family School community will forever be indebted to the Saucier family for their gift of generosity each year.”

Photo provided by Annette Fitzgerald | Holy Family School

Alaina Saucier attended the annual scholarship fundraiser at Holy Family Church Sept. 9 in honor of her sister and brother, Ava and Jacob Saucier, who died in a house fire in 2010.

Alyse Saucier joined the community at Holy Family Church and School in Port Allen to remember the lives of her older siblings. The Ava and Jacob Scholarship Benefit raised more than $33,000 this year.
Archbishop Romero, a saint for El Salvador, Pope Francis and even LSU

By Father Gustavo Gutierrez

Bishop Romero was shot while celebrating Mass in a hospital. His final prayer was, “May God have mercy on the assassin.” It is ironic that St. John Paul II would later forgive his own would-be assassin who tried to kill him in 2005. In 1981 Archbishop Oscar Romero was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Preaching at the canonization ceremony for Archbishop Romero, Pope Francis said that the now saint “left the security of the world, even his own safety, in order to give his life according to the Gospel close to the poor and to his people.” Pope Francis got his wish to be able to declare Archbishop Oscar Romero a saint and martyr.

And what does St. Oscar Romero have to do with LSU? Well, in 1983 the Diocese of Baton Rouge received a new bishop, Bishop Stanley J. Ott. Bishop Ott had spent his happiest years as a priest serving a term as chaplain at LSU. When he came to Baton Rouge, Bishop Ott, somewhat like Pope Francis, wanted to make a statement in more than words. The LSU Catholic community was not happy. Under Bishop Joseph V. Sullivan, Ott’s predecessor, the LSU parish had lost the services of a religious order they really liked, the Claretians. Before he died, Bishop Sullivan ended up with a pastor from Lafayette, an associate pastor from New Orleans and two priests from the Philippines and one from El Salvador at LSU.

Bishop Ott wanted his own men there, as much as possible. He sent Father Donald Bandiward and me to LSU as co-pastors. We could use the services of only two associate pastors and there were four. We wanted to keep the New Orleans priest who was popular with the students. But there was really only room for one more, so we interviewed the three other priests. We did need one Spanish-speaking priest because the Hispanic student population was growing. We questioned the three about their work the previous years at the student center and chose Father Ramon Vega, the Salvadorian.

When I told him he was our pick, Father Vega seemed happy and also greatly relieved. I asked, “If we had not made you this offer, you could go back to El Salvador, couldn’t you?” “No,” he answered. “Why not?” I asked. He said, “Because I was Archbishop Romero’s secretary.”

I was flabbergasted. “Oh!” was all I remember saying, but thinking, “He knows who killed him!”

Father Vega was at LSU longer than I. I was at the student center only four years that time. I was also vice general and moved to residence at Our Lady of Mercy Church in Baton Rouge after some reorganization at the chancery. Father Vega eventually did leave, but I think he went back to Honduras, not El Salvador. I liked him, and having him at LSU was sort of like having a second-class relic of a saint in the house.

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.

PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PRAY FOR US

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

Nov. 2 Rev. Miles O. Walsh Dcn. J. Peter Walsh Sr. My-Dung Pham ICM
Nov. 3 Rev. Ju Hyung (Paul) Yi Dcn. James E. Wax Br. Alan Drain SC
Nov. 4 Rev. Gerard F. Young Dcn. P. Chauvin Wilkinson Jr. Sr. Thuy Anh Pham ICM
Nov. 5 Bishop Robert E. Tracy Dcn. Alfred Adams Sr. Br. Clement Furno CSSR
Nov. 6 Bishop Joseph V. Sullivan Dcn. Michael A. Agnello Sr. Theresa Pitruzzello CSJ
Nov. 7 Bishop Stanley J. Ott Dcn. Frank E. Bains Br. Harold Harris SC
Nov. 8 Most Rev. Robert W. Muench Dcn. Thomas D. Benoit Sr. Christine Pologa CSJ
Nov. 10 Rev. Howard R. Adkins Dcn. Willie M. Berthelot Sr. Sr. Penny Prophit FMOL
Nov. 12 Rev. Michael J. Aello Dcn. Daniel S. Borné Sr. Maria Rabalais CSJ

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.
Suicide and the soul

More than 50 years ago, James Hillman wrote a book entitled, “Suicide and the Soul.” The book was intended for therapists and he knew it wouldn’t receive an easy reception there or elsewhere. There were reasons. He frankly admitted that some of the things he proposed in the book would “go against all common sense, all medical practice, and rationality itself.” But, as the title makes clear, he was speaking about suicide and in trying to understand suicide, isn’t that exactly the case? Doesn’t it go against all common sense, all medical practice, and rationality itself? And that’s his point.

In some cases, suicide can be the result of a biochemical imbalance or some genetic predisposition that militates against life. That’s unfortunate and tragic, but it’s understandable enough. That kind of sickness goes against common sense, medical practice and rationality. Suicide can also result from a catastrophic emotional breakdown or from a trauma so powerful that it cannot be integrated and simply breaks apart a person’s psyche so that death, as sleep, as an escape, becomes an overwhelming temptation. Here too, even though common sense, medical practice and rationality are befuddled, we have some grasp of why this suicide happened.

But there are suicides that are not the result of a biochemical imbalance, a genetic predisposition, a catastrophic emotional distress or an overpowering trauma. How are these to be explained?

Hillman, whose writing through more than 50 years have been a public plea for the human soul, makes this claim: “The soul can make claims that go against the body and against our physical wellbeing, and suicide is often that, the soul making its own claims.” What a stunning insight! Our souls and our bodies do not always want the same things and are sometimes so much at odds with each other that death can be the result.

In the tension between soul and body, the body’s needs and impulses are more easily seen, understood, and attended to. The body normally gets what it wants or at least clearly knows what it wants and why it is frustrated. The soul? Well, its needs are so complex that they are hard to see and understand, not alone attended to. As Pascal so famously put it: “The heart has it reasons of which reason knows nothing.” That is virtually synonymous with what Hillman is saying. Our rational understanding often stands bewildered before some inchoate need inside us.

That inchoate need is in our soul speaking, but it is not easy to pick up exactly what it is asking of us. Mostly we feel our soul’s voice as a dis-ease, a restlessness, a distress we cannot sort out, and as an internal pressure that sometimes asks us something directly in conflict with what the rest of us wants. We are, in huge part, a mystery to ourselves.

Sometimes the claims of the soul that go against our physical well-being are not so dramatic as to demand suicide but in them, we can still clearly see what Hillman is asserting. We see this, for example, in the phenomenon where a person in severe emotional distress begins to cut herself on her arms or on other parts of her body. The cuts are not intended to end life; they are intended only to cause pain and blood. Why? The person cutting herself mostly cannot explain rationally why she is doing this (or, at least, she cannot explain how this pain and this blood-letting will in any way lessen or fix her emotional distress). All she knows is that she is hurting at a place she cannot get at and by hurting herself at a place she can get at, she can deal with a pain that she cannot get to. Hillman’s principle is on display here: The soul can, and does, make claims that can go against our physical well-being. It has its reasons.

For Hillman, this is the “root metaphor” for how a therapist should approach the understanding of suicide. It can also be a valuable metaphor for all us who are not therapists but who have to struggle to digest the death of a loved one who dies by suicide.

Moreover this is also a metaphor that can be helpful in understanding each other and understanding ourselves. The soul sometimes makes claims that go directly against our health and well-being. In my pastoral work and sometimes simply being with a friend who is hurting, I sometimes find myself standing helplessly before someone who is hell-bent on some behavior that goes against his or her own well-being and which makes no rational sense whatsoever. Rational argument and common sense are useless. He’s simply going to do this to his own destruction. Why? The soul has its reasons. All of us, perhaps in less dramatic ways, experience this in our own lives. Sometimes we do things that hurt our physical health and well-being and go against all common sense and rationality. Our souls too have their reasons. And suicide too has its reasons.

The heart has it reasons of which reason knows nothing.

Blaise Pascal
Catholic Theologian

Tablet

My early days as a priest

After serving as a priest for 58 years, I'm often by asked by people who knew that I was a native New Yorker, how I became a priest of the Diocese of Paterson, N.J.? I was born in Manhattan, raised in St. Joan of Arc Parish, Jackson Heights, Queens, and I graduated from Fordham University in 1953. The Korean War was still winding down and I was drafted into the U.S. Army, serving my first year as a military policeman, and my second year as a chaplain’s assistant. I knew that I wanted to be a priest, so after my discharge I immediately made an appointment with the Brooklyn diocesan chancellor, who told me that their seminary was at full capacity, and that I lacked any college credits in Greek. I was very disappointed. Not knowing what to do next, I went to the dean of Fordham, and asked him to help me get enough credits to make myself more acceptable. He told me that even if I took some courses, I’d have no guarantee that they would accept me because of the volume of candidates.

I still vividly remember his next few words, “Across the Hudson River in New Jersey, the Paterson diocese is desperately in need of vocations, why not apply there?” I decided instead to apply to the Archdiocese of New York. They told me the same thing, “no room at the inn.” I finally realized that this was divine providence at work and reconciled myself to the will of God. I applied for admission to Paterson and was immediately accepted. After my ordination in 1960, they sent me off to Catholic University in Washington, D.C. to get a doctorate in canon law.

When I returned with my JCD three years later, they made me the assistant pastor at St. Brendan’s parish in Clifton, New Jersey, and I was happy at last. As an afterthought, I was also told that I would oversee the diocesan marriage Tribunal, part-time. It was hard at first, but I gradually began to see it all as a blessing in disguise. I had been given the power to help many divorced people who were suffering severely, and I began to understand how the rigid application of canon law was denying them true justice. So, gradually, I began encouraging some of them to return to the sacraments based on their good conscience.

FYI, that’s the reason I’m a huge fan of Pope Francis. He has encouraged Catholics in certain circumstances to rely more on conscience than on the letter of the law, which always assumes that people are living in a state of mortal sin. The fact that we have annulments testifies to the fact that often these early presumptions turn out to be false. God knows that perfection in all circumstances is beyond heroic virtue, and he only calls us to make a reasonable effort to be good. Perfection is humanly impossible. The enemies of the pope are quick to condemn people, including the pope himself, and slow to “lift a finger to help them,” as Jesus put it so wisely centuries ago.

The Holy Spirit often leads us in directions that favors mercy over legalism. God bless you for your patience in these challenging times.
Holy Ghost Fall Fest – Holy Ghost Church, 507 N. Oak Street, Hammond, will hold its Fall Fest Fri., 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 hghchurch.org.

The 177 Project – St. Joseph Church, 255 N. 8th St., Ponchatoula, will present “The 177 Project: Adoration Across the Nation,” on Sunday, Oct. 28. The rosary will be prayed at 6:45 p.m., followed by eucharistic adoration at 7 p.m., and conclude with a concert at 8:15 p.m. Free tickets are available at the177project.org.

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, 7521 Monitor Ave., Baton Rouge. Tickets are $75 per person and $500 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 youthmarchforlife.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.

Veterans’ Mass – St. Alphonsus Liguori Church, 14040 Greenwell Springs Road, Greenwell Springs, will celebrate a Veterans’ Mass honoring all branches of the U.S. Military on Sunday, Nov. 11, 10 a.m. The Mass will include representation and special recognition of each military branch. For more information, call the St. Alphonsus church office at 225-261-4850.

Red Stick Catholic Fest – The Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry of the Diocese of Baton Rouge will host Red Stick Catholic Fest, a new high school youth event for the Diocese of Baton Rouge, on Saturday, Nov. 10, 10 a.m. – 8:30 p.m., at the Greater Baton Rouge State Fairgrounds, 16072 Airline Hwy., Baton Rouge. Check-in is from 8:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. The event will feature national speakers, including Mike Patin, Mass and eucharistic adoration with Bishop Michael G. Duca, music by Cor1g, the battle for the Red Stick and more. Registration and more information are available at redstickcatholics.com.

Born to Run – Woman’s New Life Center will host its Born to Run Baton Rouge on Saturday, Nov. 10 at North Blvd. Town Square. Runner sign-in will begin at 7:30 a.m. A 1-mile Fun Run/Walk begins at 8:30 a.m. and a 5k Run/Walk begins at 9 a.m. There will be a post “birth” day party with free food, music and fun for the family. Proceeds will benefit Woman’s New Life Center. To register, visit womensnewlife.com/borntolowern. The last day for online registration is Monday, Nov. 5.

Fran U Benefit – Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University will host their annual fundraiser, “Fête 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 fram.edu/fete or call Elaine Crowe at 225-490-1637.

Day of Healing – Dr. Carol Razza, psychotherapist and formation advisor at St. Vincent de Paul Seminary in Boynton Beach, Florida, will speak at a Marian Servants of the Eucharist Day of Healing, “Be Healed,” on Saturday, Nov. 10, 8 a.m. – 3 p.m., at St. George Church, 7808 St. George Dr., Baton Rouge. Mass and lunch are included in the day. Cost is $35. To register and for more information, visit marianservants.com or send a check made out to “Mary Mother of the Eucharist Community” to 7111 Village Maison Court, Unit 2, Baton Rouge, LA 70809.

Disccaled Carmelites – The Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites will meet on Sunday, Nov. 11, 1:30 p.m., at the Our Lady of Mercy Parish Activity Center in the St. Gabriel Room, 444 Marquette Ave., Baton Rouge. For details, call Ethlyn White 225-803-3391 or email robertwhite456.att.net.

Gentle Hands Memorial Service – A Gentle Hands Memorial Service will be held for families who have suffered the death of a child through miscarriage, stillbirth, early infant loss or other tragedies on Tuesday, Nov. 13, 6:30 p.m., at St. Aloysius Church, 2025 Stuart Ave., Baton Rouge. People of all faiths are welcome. For more information, call 337-728-8810.
being heard is astute politicians are understanding what issues they are going to be able line up with as they move on their political careers. They know you are on the cusp of new voters."

He also encouraged everyone to speak out for the needy, and for those who might not have a voice, especially the unborn. But when advocating for those who might not have a voice, especially the unborn. But when advocating on any issue, Tasman strongly urged individuals to be Catholic first.

"And then be a Democrat, or be a Republican," he said. "But be a Catholic first. If you are doing that, you will recognize the full breadth of (what) the church becomes involved in."

"It can be messy, it is a tough process," Tasman added. "But that is the challenge, for us to be involved in that process."

Van Haute discussed how when hormonal contraception was developed in the 1960s, it was going to change everything. She noted that at the time a fear of massive, worldwide famine existed because of the expanding world population, and that contraception would help curb that growth.

"What you have to remember is they were specifically talking about contraception for women," she said. "This does not sound very fair. This idea something chemical can make us more human doesn’t jive with me."

She said there are several methods, such as Natural Family Planning, that are as effective as hormonal contraception.

She also discredited the common perception that contraception helps reduce abortion rates.

"This is absolutely false," she emphatically stated. "Contraception does not only not lower the abortion rates but it fuels the demand for abortion."

Statistics show that 54 percent of women seeking abortions are using contraceptives. She also challenged the widespread belief that hormonal contraception addresses reproductive problems. She said the pill treats symptoms but the healthier process is to identify the health problem and treat it.

"I was already pro-life about everything but today really showed me how serious abortions were," said Kaylon Cornier, a member of St. Isidore and a junior at Central High School. "It helped me to better understand what I can do."

Dr. Kathy Allen
SISTERS ▼ From page 1

Sister Joan Laplace CSJ, associate director of Mission Advancement at St. Joseph’s Academy, credits the support of the Baton Rouge community for the longevity of the sisters being here. She said those initial weeks and months were near primitive, including living in one little house, taking care of themselves and of the students.

Sister Joan said the sisters received assistance from such diverse sectors as grocers, farmers and bankers.

“Our belief is that the Baton Rouge community at large helped us to get a foothold and for 150 years has stuck with us,” she said. “You can’t operate without help from everybody.”

“We’ve been able to not just survive but to thrive for 150 years, through lots of ups and downs, but every time we got down about something, it’s the community that came together and helped us pull it back together.”

Sister Kathleen has witnessed much of that growth, challenges and prosperity. She was a sophomore student at SJJA in 1941 when she helped the sisters move into the new school building at its current location on Broussard Street.

Sister Kathleen said the old school had fallen into disrepair and the new school was a vast improvement for both students and the sisters, who still lived at the Fourth Street location and had to ride the bus daily, wearing their habits.

“Broussard Street wasn’t even paved (at the time),” Sister Kathleen recalled. “People were asking why the sisters were moving out of town.”

She was only 17-years-old when she entered the order and by age 19 had taken first vows and was teaching at St. Joseph’s Parochial School. The memories of those first few years teaching are special to Sister Kathleen, who recently ran into one of her former first-grade students on a retreat. The two women have since become close friends.

Sister Kathleen also remembers the changes that have occurred through the years, including after Vatican II in 1968 when habits, with their wool skirts, heavy cotton tops and two-layered veils, were no longer required. As part of the administration for her community, it was Sister Kathleen’s job to inform Louisiana bishops, where the sisters had schools, that the sisters would no longer wear habits. She still laughs when she thinks about the reaction from then-Archbishop Philip M. Hannan of New Orleans, who made one request.

“He said, ‘That’s your decision what you wear, I don’t have any objection to that … but I’m going to ask you if the sisters could keep one veil.’ He said when we go to the hurricane shelters in Baton Rouge, ‘when they see that veil, it calms them down, so please save a veil,’” Sister Kathleen laughed.

Now wearing lay clothes, the Sisters of St. Joseph continue on with an incredible love for God and for their “dear neighbor.” And, as they celebrated their own community during the anniversary Mass at St. Joseph Cathedral, they also celebrated the community that has embraced them for so long.

Bishop Robert W. Muench delivers the homily during a special anniversary Mass Oct. 21 at St. Joseph Cathedral in Baton Rouge. Bishop Micheal G. Duca celebrated the Mass, which marked the 150th anniversary of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Baton Rouge. A large number of friends and supporters of the sisters as well as alumnae of St. Joseph’s Academy attended the Mass and the reception that followed. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

Help us to End the Nightmare of Homelessness for a Child

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.

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. We need your help more than ever.

Answer a Child’s Prayer! We need your prayers; we can’t do this work without them. Also, please consider making a gift that will help homeless children and families. □ I promise to remember the homeless in my prayers. □ Also, my check for $________ is enclosed.

Name: ___________________________ City: ___________________________ State: _________ Zip: _________

Mail to St. Vincent de Paul, P.O. Box 127, Baton Rouge, LA 70821 or give online at www.svdpbr.org

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 Ott 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?

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.

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LIVING with LOSS
For Catholics, cremation allowed with appropriate respect

ATLANTA (CNS) – In the Catholic Church cremation has become an accepted practice when “serious reasons” present a need for it and if the practice maintains respect for the sacredness of the body and belief in the resurrection of the dead.

The practice had previously been forbidden in the church, but a 1963 instruction by St. Paul VI explained that cremation is acceptable when practiced “not out of hatred of the church or Christian customs, but rather for reasons of health, economics or other reasons involving public or private order.”

An example of public order would be the lack of adequate space for cemeteries, as is the case in Japan and smaller countries in northern Europe, said Holy Cross Father Richard Rutherford, professor of theology and pastoral liturgy at the University of Portland in Oregon.

He then described a situation in which cremation might be pursued because of a private order that goes “beyond economics.” Perhaps an elderly parent dies in a Florida retirement home far away from the family home in Alaska where he or she wishes to be buried, he said. Family members may live in different parts of the country and plan to make the trip home for the funeral at some point.

“Cremation in Florida, perhaps following a funeral with the body present there, and transport of the cremated remains home to Alaska for a family funeral and committal in the family plot would be a reasonable request and not (done) out of hatred,” Father Rutherford explained. “In fact, the desire to have a Catholic funeral in the parish church where the deceased had belonged before the eventual move to retirement in Florida would be a praiseworthy decision (made) out of love of the church and Christian customs.”

Cost is often a reason for choosing cremation. However, Father Rutherford said that the cost discrepancy between burial and cremation has lessened as “mortuaries and cremation providers – often now the same entity – are in business to provide goods and services for a profit.”

Cremation illustrates the interplay between Christian beliefs and cultural influences. “Early Christians wouldn’t have conceived of it, but (cremation) is part of our world,” said Father Rutherford, who co-wrote “The Death of a Christian: The Order of Christian Funerals.”

Material from the Committee of Divine Worship of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops further explains the sacredness of the body even after death: “This is the body once washed in baptism, anointed with the oil of salvation, and fed with the bread of life. This is the body whose hands clothed the poor and embraced the sorrowing. The human body is a temple and the human person that it is hard to think of a human person apart from his or her body.”

For this reason, the church “earnestly recommends” burying the body of the deceased, according to the 1983 Code of Canon Law, but does not forbid cremation unless someone has chosen cremation to deny hope in the resurrection of the body.

When cremation is to be pursued there remains “the Catholic way” of putting to rest the cremated remains, according to Father Rutherford.

First, when possible, the preference is to hold the funeral Mass or liturgy with the body of the deceased present and at the person’s home parish as it is the place where he or she lived out the Christian life.

When the funeral liturgy or Mass is to be held in the presence of one’s cremated remains, certain practices have been adapted without losing their sense of respect for the person.

For instance, Father Rutherford explained, as with the funeral liturgy when a body is present, “some form of worthy vessel” containing the ashes is met at the church door or placed at the foot of the altar. Following the funeral rite, the commitment takes place where the cremated remains are entombed at a cemetery or mausoleum.

Certain cultural practices in regards to cremated remains are off limits to faithful Catholics. These include the desire of some to scatter a loved one’s ashes at certain locations or to distribute them to other family members. Again, the church invokes the importance of the integrity of one’s body and the hope of resurrection for the body.

According to the bishops’ statement, “the scattering of cremated remains is not a practice we believe is appropriate or honors a person, and is therefore not permitted.”

In either a traditional burial or cremation, the priest stressed that the important thing to always remember is the “integrity of the body.”

“The body is not simply the soul’s cage to throw away,” he said. “This was a person in relationship with God.”

Tips for writing an obituary

Coping with the death of a loved one is never easy. Even those comforted by the acknowledgment that a recently deceased friend or family member lived a full life may still struggle with the sense of loss that comes with the passing of a loved one.

Upon the passing of a loved one, an individual is often tasked with writing an obituary. Some people may find writing an obituary cathartic, providing an opportunity to tell a loved one’s life story and indicate how unique the deceased was. Because writing an obituary is not something people are asked to do every day, it’s understandable if many men and women don’t know where to begin. Obituaries do not necessarily have to follow a formula, but the following tips can help people compose an obituary that conveys who their deceased loved one was and how much this person meant to friends and family.

- Contact your local newspaper. Some newspapers may have obituary guidelines that govern things like writing style and obituary length. Before writing an obituary, contact your local newspaper to determine if they have any such rules in place. Some newspapers may only publish obituaries written by their own staff members.

- Do not feel obliged to include cause of death. While acquaintances who first learn of a person’s death via an obituary may be curious about cause of death, loved ones of the deceased do not have to include such information if they are uncomfortable doing so. Many obituaries never include such information, so readers likely won’t expect it. Those who are comfortable including such information in the obituary may find it helps them avoid having to answer numer-
### All Saints’ Day, Souls’ Day

#### EVENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Holy Rosary</td>
<td>Oct. 28, 11 a.m.</td>
<td>Holy Rosary Cemetery</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Amant</td>
<td>Nov. 2, 8 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Immaculate Conception</td>
<td>Oct. 31, 4 p.m.</td>
<td>Holy Rosary Cemetery</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Denham Springs</td>
<td>Nov. 1, 8:30 a.m., noon, 7 p.m.</td>
<td>Mass</td>
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<td>Blessings of the Graves:</td>
<td>Nov. 4, noon</td>
<td>Memorial Service for the deceased</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Nov. 3, 9 a.m.</td>
<td>Old/New Red Oak, Livingston</td>
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<td>Our Lady of Peace</td>
<td>Nov. 4, 11 a.m.</td>
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<td>Our Lady of Mt. Carmel</td>
<td>Oct. 28, 11:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Mount Carmel Cemetery</td>
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<td>Oct. 28, 3 p.m.</td>
<td>Lake Cemetery</td>
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<td>Morganza Sts. Anthony of Padua and Le Van Phung</td>
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<td>Nov. 1, 7 a.m., English, 7:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Vietnamese &amp; Vietnamese</td>
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<td>St. Augustine St. Augustine New Roads</td>
<td>Nov. 4, noon</td>
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<td>St. Benedict the Moor Napoleonville</td>
<td>Nov. 4, 11:30 a.m.</td>
<td>St. Benedict Cemetery</td>
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<td>St. Elizabeth Paincourtville St. John the Baptist Brusly</td>
<td>Oct. 28, 11:45 a.m.</td>
<td>approx.</td>
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<td>St. John the Evangelist Plaquemine</td>
<td>Nov. 4, noon</td>
<td>St. John Cemetery</td>
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<td>Nov. 1, 1 p.m.</td>
<td>Grace Memorial Park</td>
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<td>St. Joseph French Settlement approx.</td>
<td>Oct. 28, 10:15 a.m.</td>
<td>St. Joseph Church Cemetery</td>
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<td>Paulin St. Joseph</td>
<td>Oct. 28, 10 a.m.</td>
<td>St. Joseph Cemetery</td>
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<td>Oct. 28, 7 p.m.</td>
<td>Sacred Heart Cemetery</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belle Rose St. Jules</td>
<td>Oct. 28, 9:30</td>
<td>St. Joseph Cemetery</td>
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<td>St. Mark Oct. 28, 2 p.m.</td>
<td>All Saints Candlelight Mass</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Martin Chapel Belle Rose</td>
<td>Oct. 28, 8 a.m.</td>
<td>St. Martin Cemetery</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Mary Chapel Union St. Michael Convent</td>
<td>Oct. 28, 2 p.m.</td>
<td>St. Mary Cemetery</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baton Rouge St. Patrick Convent</td>
<td>Nov. 1, 10 a.m.</td>
<td>Mass Resthaven, Baton Rouge</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Stephen the Martyr Maurepas</td>
<td>Oct. 28, noon</td>
<td>LeBourgeois Cemetery</td>
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### The ultimate guide to writing a eulogy

**By Dignity Memorial**

Delivering a eulogy or funeral speech is an opportunity to share the things you cherished about someone, brag on their accomplishments, and tell friends and family about their unique charms and funny quirks.

Simply giving a kind and respectful speech will make a good eulogy. However, a little research can help you write and deliver a wonderfully meaningful tribute that goes beyond a list of accomplishments and virtues. But writing a eulogy can be a difficult task when time is limited and emotions are high. You may be tasked with writing a eulogy in addition to making funeral arrangements, supporting other family members and working through your own grief. To make it a bit easier, we've outlined a few things that can help you write a touching and memorable eulogy.

**Brainstorm and research**

Start by gathering all the biographical details about the person you are eulogizing, including when and where they were born, important jobs they held, how many children they had and more. These details are a starting point for sharing meaningful stories. After all, your dad was more than the job he worked. Your spouse had passions beyond his children.

So how do you capture the best parts of a life? Spend some time thinking about what was meaningful to your loved one and which memories celebrate their life. Most everyone has a pastime that feeds their soul and reflects a deep interest. Maybe your wife was known for her beautiful garden or your father had a famous barbecue sauce recipe. Maybe your sister rescued hundreds of animals in her lifetime, or perhaps your brother was a secret sculptor. Talk to other family members and friends about their favorite memories and stories of your loved one. Here are a few thought-starters:

- Ask your spouse’s siblings to share their favorite memories of your loved one.
- Ask your loved one’s best friends to tell you some of their favorite stories about them.
- Visit your loved one’s social media accounts to find some of their most meaningful posts.
- Look at the photos on your phone that you’ve saved of your loved one. (If you have a photo album, this can also be a great time to get all the photos together).
- If you have a family tree, take a look at it and find some amazing stories about the ancestors.

**Start by gathering all the biographical details about the person you are eulogizing, including when and where they were born, important jobs they held, how many children they had and more.**

**These details are a starting point for sharing meaningful stories.**
Catholic teaching, shows hope for those hurt by suicide

PHILADELPHIA (CNS) – On a November morning, Father Marc Capizzi had his rosary in hand when he left the rectory at St. Albert the Great Parish in the Philadelphia suburb of Huntington Valley.

Having received an anguished call from a parishioner, he set out to comfort a family that had just lost a son to suicide.

His heartbreaking mission was not out of the ordinary. “It’s probably more common than you would think,” Father Capizzi said. “A number of priests have had this experience.”

According to a recently released report from the Centers for Disease Control, that experience is becoming more common. From 1999 to 2016, suicide rates increased by more than 30 percent in half of the nation’s states. Almost 45,000 Americans die by suicide each year, making it the 10th leading cause of death in the U.S.

Recent celebrity suicides, such as those of fashion designer Kate Spade and celebrity chef Tyler Florence, have highlighted the issue.

Both the CDC and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention emphasize that suicide has no single cause. Mental and physical health, relationship issues, sexual and substance abuse – along with financial, employment, legal and housing difficulties – have all been shown to contribute to a person’s decision to end his or her life.

“The complexities of mental, emotional and physical health are recognized by the Catholic Church in its stance on suicide.”

“Suicide itself is a gravely disordered act, an evil one,” said Father Bernard Taglianetti, a professor of moral theology at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Wynnewood. “However, the church also recognizes that strong emotional experiences – deep suffering, deep depression – can diminish one’s culpability.”

Father Taglianetti noted that the church relies on the expertise of mental health professionals in evaluating and crafting a pastoral response to suicide.

Priests cannot be regarded as mental health counselors unless they have received training and licensure as such, he said. However, clergy should be able to refer parishioners to appropriate treatment, and above all, priests can pray with and provide spiritual support for those contemplating suicide.

“God is with you, and the church’s blessing is always available,” he told CatholicPhilly.com, the news outlet of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

In addition, the sacraments – particularly confession and the Eucharist – provide profound healing for those in despair. Through confession, an individual can be “relieved of spiritual anguish from bad decisions or thoughts,” said Father Taglianetti, while the holy Eucharist makes Christ’s love a tangible reality.

Although some Christian denominations maintain that suicide results in automatic eternal damnation, the Catholic faith does not despair of God’s mercy for those who take their own lives.

“The Catholic Church doesn’t ever decide or declare that someone is in hell,” said Father Taglianetti. “What’s important here is hope – hope in the love of God, and in his divine mercy.”

That mercy can save a soul even in its final moments on earth, he added.

“At the very last second of a person’s life, if they’ve done this terrible act to themselves, they can cry out to God, whose mercy is infinite,” said Father Taglianetti.

Those who commit suicide are no longer necessarily refused a Christian burial, said Father Dennis Gill, director of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia’s Office for Divine Worship.

Although suicide was once regarded as a denial of God’s
Parish cemeteries: A labor, but also a labor of love

WASHINGTON (CNS) – Often overlooked amid issues of grief and loss in Catholic families after the death of a loved one is that thousands of parishes across the United States have their own parish cemetery.

The Diocese of Madison, Wisconsin, alone has 125 parish cemeteries.

The majority of these cemeteries were established when the parish, then new, was founded in a rural area far from the closest neighboring parish in another village or the center of the diocese. The parish cemetery also was a welcoming presence for Catholics and made burying their loved ones easier in an era when there was still a great degree of suspicion and separation between Catholics and non-Catholics.

Those kinds of attitudes have largely dissipated, as have the distances between parishes as cities have grown and swallowed up farmland in their path.

One Wisconsin Catholic official who oversees parish cemeteries calls them “the perfect ministry, because it’s right there, it’s right in the middle of your parish.”

In Detroit, Assumption Grotto Parish on the city’s northeast side has its own cemetery. When the parish was founded in 1832, it was 11 miles from its “mother church,” Ste. Anne de Detroit, established in 1701 as the first French settlers set down roots in Detroit.

In the intervening 185 years since Assumption was established, Detroit grew up and shot past what had been known as “Greinerville,” named after an Assumption Grotto family of French descent that ran a post office and general store. Greiner Road starts across the street from the church and ends at a large Catholic cemetery in Detroit, Mount Olivet.

Suburban development has spread 18 miles northbound past the parish, and the neighborhood surrounding the church has seen better days. It is pockmarked with dilapidated houses and vacant lots where houses once stood.

Yet the parish goes on – and its cemetery, too.

Joe Fisher grew up in the parish, was an altar boy and choir boy, and delivered newspapers on the street behind the 3.5-acre cemetery, where his father is buried. Over the past seven years, he’s taken it upon himself to map out the cemetery, clean the grave markers, take photos of each of them and post them on a website called findagrave.com.

Of the 2,500 people buried there, “there’s just 200 people that I don’t know where they are,” Fisher said. “Before 1950, before vaccinations and stuff, the child mortality rate was pretty high. There are children who would have buried from the flu epidemic. Wooden crosses do not survive 100 years.” He’s also skeptical of a report of a burial at the cemetery in a year that predates the parish’s founding.

What Fisher likes is the grotto shrine built in 1881 inside the cemetery. “I go there because it makes me feel peaceful,” he said, even though he’ll spend two or three hours cleaning it.

There are still a few plots available, likely returned to the parish, according to Ellen Paluzzi, a parishioner and former parish secretary. “In fact, I’m going to be at the Reception Center. Stay afterwards for lunch and post them on a website called findagrave.com.

Emmel said some parishes have the opportunity to expand their cemeteries when adjacent farmers – who themselves could be parishioners – sell some acreage to the parish.

“The parish cemetery is like a business. You’ve got to approach it with that kind of mindset,” Emmel told Catholic News Service. “You’ve got inventory, you’re selling things, you’ve got customer service, a lot of record-keeping – more so than a general nonprofit might think about. Then you’ve got the whole ministry side... you start adding that in, there’s a lot to learn, but it’s not overwhelming.”

Emmel added, “People in the parishes, a lot of them have businesses. A lot of them know how to keep a cemetery in operation – or any business, really.”

He explained the dual nature of cemetery as business and ministry: “Like catechesis, like religious education, like the Catholic school, the cemetery is a ministry. In some situations, you say: ‘Listen, the cemetery has to be self-sustaining. It has to pay its own way.’ That’s not an unreasonable thing to say, but at some level, there’s going to be some lev... see CEMETERIES PAGE 7B.
OLOM planning

Garden of Peace

Our Lady of Mercy Church has completed a design phase of the planned Garden of Peace and is currently holding “Lunch and Learn” meetings with pastor Father Cleo Milano.

Those meetings are designed to educate the public to learn more about Catholic funeral rites with cremains.

The idea of a columbarium garden for the interment of cremains originated during Traditions for Tomorrow, which was a master planning period for Mercy.

“Our cremains garden will be a history of people, a perpetual record of yesterday, a sanctuary of peace today and a statement of care and belief in tomorrow,” Father Milano said. “Our beautiful Garden of Peace exists because every life is worth living and remembering always so that from the cradle to the grave, the church will be our true spiritual home.”

The Garden of Peace will be open and welcome to everyone, including Catholic and non-Catholics. Located in the heart of Baton Rouge, this place of burial is uniquely located in close proximity to the church’s Perpetual Adoration Chapel and main sanctuary.

The garden will feature mosaics, fountains and a central pavilion, providing an ideal and convenient location for the final resting place of loved ones.

Pre-construction sale of columbarium spaces is now in progress. Garden of Peace niches are available in two sizes, both of which can accommodate the cremains of two people. Beautiful renderings and additional information can be found by visiting Mercy’s Garden of Peace web page.

During meetings, Father Milano is reflecting reflect upon how in the early years of the church, during periods of persecutions, the bodies of Christians were burned as an insult to the Christian belief of the resurrection of the body. For this reason, the church for many centuries did not allow cremation since it was associated with disrespect and mockery of belief in the resurrection. Centuries later, this is no longer the case and people today no longer associate cremation with those ideas.

In May 1963, the Vatican Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith lifted the prohibition forbidding Catholics to choose cremation. This permission to be cremated was incorporated into the revised Code of Canon Law of 1983 (Canon No. 1176) as well as into the Order of Christian Funerals. The bishops of the United States and the Holy See have authorized the celebration of a Catholic funeral liturgy with the cremated remains present. The church no longer prohibits cremation.

Because of All Saints Day on Nov. 1 and All Souls Day the following day, the month is an ideal time to consider funeral planning. Proper planning for this eventual reality is considered one of the best gifts one can give to families members by taking the burden of these decisions off of them. In the deep Catholic tradition of South Louisiana, each year on the Feast of All Saints, an annual blessing of the columbarium Garden of Peace is planned. Families will be invited to participate in the prayer and blessing in remembrance of their beloved dead.

EULOGY ▼

From page 3B

their funniest childhood stories.

Have your children reflect on a time when their dad made them feel special.

Gather your mom’s grandchildren and ask them to share what they loved best about their grandmother.

Call up former teachers and classmates and get them to tell you about the special qualities and attributes that your brother possessed.

Once you gather all the information you can, start writing. If you’re having trouble getting going, pick a theme to help you organize your thoughts. If your dad spent most of his time outdoors, share stories related to his wild camping trips, mishaps at the lake or the ways he shared his love for nature with others. If your spouse’s greatest joy was her grandchildren, share their favorite memories of her and all the ways her legacy will live on through other family members. Describe how your mom devoted her extra time to the community by teaching classes, helping at a food bank or serving on the board of nonprofits. Each life is unique, and a well-written eulogy expresses a person’s unique personality, reminds people of the good times, and helps generate even more fond memories of a life well celebrated.

Edit and practice your delivery

Once you have a draft of the eulogy, start practicing your delivery well before the funeral service. As you practice your funeral speech, you’ll most likely pause and edit several times, adding details or reverting to your original outline. It can be helpful to practice with a sibling, child or parent who can give helpful feedback. Once you have a final draft, take the time to proofread the eulogy and double-check all the details.

Keep in mind that a eulogy isn’t an opportunity to air out a grievance or make sense of a loss. It’s an opportunity to tell the story of a remarkable life. As you complete your eulogy draft, add a final tribute to close your speech. This could be a simple statement that ties your thoughts together, a favorite Scripture or quote or a final heartfelt farewell.

Tips for delivering a eulogy

Before you take the podium at a funeral or memorial service, print out the eulogy with double line spacing so that you can easily read what you’ve prepared. Remember to speak slowly. Take deep breaths and make eye contact with family members and friends. Have a glass of water nearby in case you need to clear your throat.

If while you’re sharing your eulogy, you stumble over your words or become emotional, that’s OK! It’s perfectly natural. Allow yourself to pause, wipe your eyes with a tissue and then continue with your message of love, laughter, remembrance and gratitude.

HOPE ▼

From page 48

mercy and power in a person’s life, modern research affirms that “a person who takes his or her life most likely did not make a rational decision,” said Father Gill in an emailed statement.

“Therefore, there is all the more reason to entrust the soul to the Lord with a funeral Mass,” he wrote.

“Direct euthanasia, defined as “an action or omission which of itself or by intention causes death” to eliminate suffering, is “morally unacceptable,” according to a 1980 Vatican declaration and the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Physician-assisted suicide is considered a form of euthanasia.

In cases of terminal illness, the church distinguishes between ordinary and extraordinary means of care. While ordinary care offers a reasonable hope for improvement without overburdening the patient, extraordinary means excessively burdening the patient without benefit and can be refused.

Father Taglianetti observes that at whatever period it occurs in one’s life, suffering can be redemptive if viewed in the light of faith.

“If illness takes roots more deeply into your life,” he said, contrasting two high-profile cases of terminal brain cancer – that of Brittany Maynard, an outspoken physician-assisted suicide advocate who took her life in 2014; and Father Philip G. Johnson, a priest of the Diocese of Raleigh, North Carolina, priest who has fought his illness since being diagnosed in 2008 at age 24.

While still a seminarian, Father Johnson wrote an open letter to Maynard detailing his own medical struggles and urging her to remain alive as “an example and inspiration.”

“Suffering is not worthless, and our lives are not our own to take,” Father Johnson stated in his letter. “We do not seek pain for its own sake, but our suffering can have great meaning if we try to join it to the Passion of Christ and offer it for the conversion or intentions of others.”

Father Taglianetti observed that suffering can ultimately be a road to sainthood.

“It can be an act of prayer, an act of love,” he said. “And God’s love is not temporary, but eternal, which always give us hope.”
“It became my laboratory,” he recalled. Sankovich left the ordained priesthood as a new pastor finally arrived in 1975, “but he asked me to hang on to the cemetery,” he said.

As an ex-priest, Sankovich didn’t have an obvious career to fall back on – “my master’s (degree) was in New Testament,” he said – “but I was doing some counseling with a couple of guys that were based in New York City who had discemnent programs for resigned priests.

“It was their recommendation that I look to something in the area of grief and bereavement,” he added.

So he went off to California “to do a weeklong workshop with Elisabeth Kubler-Ross,” the Swiss psychiatrist who had established her “five stages of grief” concept in the 1960s, he told CNS.

“I became good friends with Elisabeth and started thinking about cemeteries. I was in the Catholic Cemetery Conference,” an association for diocesan cemetery directors, “and they were doing absolutely nothing for parish cemeteries” at the time, he added.

Long story short, Sankovich became an authority on parish cemeteries, working in New England, New Jersey, and in the Archdioceses of New York, Indianapolis, Milwaukee and Seattle.

It was in Seattle that Archbishop Raymond G. Hunthausen, then head of the archdiocese, challenged him on whether there was any longer a need for Catholic cemeteries. Working with a committee, Sankovich not only agreed that “the theology was bad,” but that it could be improved – and in the committee’s report, showed how.

Archbishop Hunthausen was so impressed with the report, Sankovich said, that he sent it to his fellow bishops.

Sankovich for some years has been a Catholic cemetery consultant, working out of Tucson, Arizona. He was traveling roughly every 10 out of 14 days, but is now semi-retired. He also has produced six manuals for parish cemeteries, some of which are over 150 pages.

Given his travels, where does Sankovich want to be buried?

“It’s going to be Central City (Pennsylvania), next to my sister, in my (childhood) parish, in that same place, close to the Flight 93 memorial,” he replied. “On the top of the hill there is a Polish cemetery. My grandparents are on one side are in the Polish cemetery, the grandparents on the other side are in the (adjacent) Slovenian cemetery.”

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