Eight priests with ties to Baton Rouge accused of sexually abusing minors

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Eight priests who have ministered at churches located in the Diocese of Baton Rouge were among a list of 57 clergy members released by the Archdiocese of New Orleans who have been accused of sexually abusing a minor, which led to their removal from ministry.

Several of the eight priests named served when what is now the Diocese of Baton Rouge was still part of the archdiocese. The diocese was formed in 1961.

The priests and the churches they served in that are now part of the Diocese of Baton Rouge:
- Father Ralph Lawrence, St. Anthony in Baton Rouge;
- Father Lawrence Hecker, St. Mary of False River Church in New Roads;
- Father Gerard Howell, St. Pius X Church in Baton Rouge;
- Father Pierre Cambiairie, St. George Church in Baton Rouge;
- Father John Franklin, Ascension of Our Lord Church in Donaldsonville;
- Father Malcolm Strassel, Holy Rosary Church in St. Amant and St. Agnes Church in Baton Rouge;
- Father Michael Hurley, Mt. Agnes Church in Baton Rouge.

On seeing the names Bishop Duca explained, “I expected that there would be some cross over in the lists of the Archdiocese of New Orleans and Baton Rouge because of the way clergy files are divided when a new diocese is formed. When the Diocese of Baton Rouge was formed a portion of the clergy of the Archdiocese of New Orleans became clergy of the new Diocese of Baton Rouge under the leadership of the new bishop. Their personnel files followed them to the new diocese. If a member of the clergy served in this area but remained in the Archdiocese of New Orleans after the split, the files remained in New Orleans. In spite of these administrative divisions, our list will contain all the evidence we find in a systematic review of all our clerical personnel files and will mention those listed on the New Orleans list who served within our geographic area. This will

A BRIDGE TOO FAR

Accident creates hardships for families

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

A crane that slammed into the Sunshine Bridge has not only disabled the critical traffic artery but has disrupted the lives of thousands of people.

Besides the loss of revenue for nearby businesses, students and faculty are having to grapple with commutes that are normally 15 to 20 minutes each way but are now lasting up to one hour per trip, forcing, in some cases, life-altering changes.

Jacob Dunn, a 15-year-old sophomore at Ascension Catholic High School in Donaldsonville, said he is “making the best of the situation,” including living with his grandmother in Donaldsonville during the week.

“That Monday after the barge hit the bridge I moved in with my grandmother,” said Dunn. “I go home on the weekends.”

Dunn, a member of the Bulldogs football team, said practice doesn’t end until past 5:30 p.m., “so, I wouldn’t be home until 7:30 p.m. or 8 p.m. with traffic.” Add in homework and an hour earlier wake-up time for the trek back to school in the mornings, and Dunn would have had little time left just to be off the road.

“We have about 79 students that are affected and 12 staff members, 10 teachers and two secretaries,” explained Ascension Catholic principal Sandy Pizzolato. “I think it’s a daily struggle for our students and our families to get here.”

Without the bridge, commuters from the east bank of Ascension Civil Parish are traveling via the Veterans Memorial Bridge in Gramercy and along LA Highway 3127, a long stretch of two-lane roadway through acres and acres of sugarcane. According to Pizzolato, the commute is a major concern for parents with students who drive and are required to stay for after school activities.

“Once you hit the Gramercy bridge, there’s no gas station, there’s nowhere to stop and use the
An angel in the trenches

As Veterans Day approaches, our country, cities and even churches honor those who have gone into harm’s way or paid the ultimate price to defend our freedom.

Perhaps we should also include St. Therese of Lisieux during our Veterans Day celebration. St. Therese, also known as “The Little Flower of Jesus,” is believed to have played significant roles in protecting soldiers on both sides during World War I and World War II.

When World War I broke out on July 28, 1914, when Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, devotion to St. Therese were already popular. In fact, shortly before the war commenced, Pope Pius X, in one of his last official acts of his papacy, had signed the introduction of her cause to sainthood.

But why was St. Therese so popular among the civilians at that time? During World War II, the town of Lisieux, located in the Normandy region, experienced its first bomb attack on the evening of June 6, 1944 during the D-Day invasion. During the bombing, displaced residents prayed for the spiritual protection of St. Therese. Among the civilian victims were 21 Benedictine monks.

At one point, the Carmelites nuns left the convent to go to the Basilica of St. Theresa. Eventually, the roof of the tower house of the Carmel convent was burned and the chapel containing the reliquary of St. Therese threatened. But a sudden change in wind direction, which some attribute to St. Therese, spared the chapel.

Once again, her prayer cards were popular among the soldiers.

On July 12, 1944, after three-quarters of the buildings of Lisieux had been destroyed, the priests and religious began a nine-day novena to St. Therese. On the novena’s last day, refugees crowded the basilica and vowed to St. Therese that if they were spared, each year they would process from St. Peter’s Cathedral to the Basilica. That tradition continues today.

St. Therese felt an early call to religious life and in 1888 entered the Carmelite community of Lisieux. Only nine years later, after serving in a number of offices and spending her last 18 months in Carmel.

Her feast day is Oct. 1.

Movements of grace

By Dina Dow

The 32nd and 33rd Sundays in Ordinary Time draw us near the close of the liturgical year. We hear in the Mass readings the meaning of sacrifice, the call to watchfulness and the path to heaven.

Sacrifice from the heart: A tale of two widows

Two widows act on faith, live in trust and move by the grace of God. God sends Elijah to the city of Zarephath with an assurance he will meet a widow who is to provide food for his journey. Upon entering the city, Elijah encounters the widow gathering sticks to make a final meal for she and her son using the tiny bit of flour and oil remaining. They are facing death. Despite her apparent fate, her trust in God is so great that she responds to the request from Elijah and makes a cake for him. He underscores the request with hope, assuring her, “For the Lord, the God of Israel, says: The jar of flour shall not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry, until the day when the Lord sends rain upon the earth.” [1 Kings 17:14]

The widow acted on faith, which enabled her to experience the movement of grace, as God fulfilled his promise through Elijah. God multiplied the seemingly impoverished sacrificial offering into life-giving food since “there was enough to eat for a long time” (1Kgs 17:15).

The Jerusalem Temple Treasury in Jesus’ time was located just past the Gate, in the Court of Women, so named because this is as far as women were allowed to enter the temple courts. Bronze funnels guided the coins into wooden boxes collecting the temple tax. The more coins placed in the funnels the louder the sound. Imagine Jesus sitting across with his disciples and commenting how the widow gave more from her poverty than those who gave more coins from their surplus. The giving of her two coins resonated like clashing cymbals because she gave of what little she had with great love and commitment. Her generosity was abundant, as her intentions were faith-filled.

These two widows offer inspiration for us today. When have I given because I had extra money or time? When have I had little time or money yet decided to give because someone made a request? Do I hold back generosity until I have enough time or money? If so, when do I have enough of either? Do I trust God to provide as I labor through the day? Are my sacrifices movements of the heart or other intentions motivating my actions?

“Lord, increase my poverty and secure my trust that you will provide all I need. Help me to be more generous.”

The End Times

“But of that day or hour, no one knows…” (Mt 24:36). Do you remember the turn of the millennium? As the year 2000 was approaching, I recall many believing the world was going to end, partying because it was “like 999,” and technology engineers scrambling because of the Y2K-bug. All were watchful and anticipating something. Well, what happened? We woke up Jan. 1, 2000 with functioning computers, a bit of a headache for some and a big inhale/exhale as the world was still turning.

We profess in the Apostles’ Creed, “He [Jesus] will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.” Jesus assures us he will come. He just does not tell us when. This is a gift. Would it make a difference in our lives today if we knew he would come in glory tomorrow? Ought we live each day as if he is coming in the next minute?

Reflecting on the “End Times” is a positive response to the promises of Christ. Death, judgement, purgatory, heaven and hell are realities. Being aware of these will reduce fear and redirect us toward life-giving faith. Because Jesus’ perfect sacrifice is “once and for all” [Heb 9:26], he atones for our sins, thus giving us access to heaven by the power of his forgiveness and mercy. He is constantly interceding for us before God. “Just as death is the unrepeatable act that ends a person’s life, so Christ’s offering of himself for all is the unrepeatable sacrifice that has once for all achieved redemption” (USCCB.org commentary).

The moment of grace will come when those who are faithful will enter eternal life, as opposed to the unholy, who will not. The promise of resurrection is real. God, the
Praying over Kathleen Beckman, co-founder of the international organization Foundation of Prayer for Priests, center, before she speaks at an Oct. 27 Magnificat meeting are, from left, Father Andrew Merrick, director of the Office of Vocations of the Diocese of Baton Rouge; Father Al Davidson, pastor of St. Joseph the Worker Church in Pierre Part and spiritual advisor for Magnificat; and Gwen Gillis, Magnificat service team coordinator. Photo by Debbie Shelley | The Catholic Commentator

Pray for priests through Mary

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

The current clerical sex abuse scandal is a sign of how the body of Christ has been wounded in the ongoing cosmic spiritual battle, according to Kathleen Beckman, co-founder of the international association Foundation of Prayer for Priests.

She urged people to “pick up their weapon” and follow the example of Mary to bring victory and healing through intercessory prayer.

At a meeting of Magnificat on Oct. 27, Beckman spoke passionately about her faith journey, through her own ministry with Magnificat in Orange County, California and Prayer for Priests, and how Mary calls people to become spiritual mothers and fathers for priests and priestly vocations.

During a trip to the Holy Land with priest friends in 2015, Beckman shivered in the damp cold as she toured the church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, which is identified as the site of Calvary, where Jesus died. As she placed her hand on the cold, hard rock upon which his cross was placed, she pondered if she would have remained at the foot of the cross or run away with fear. But her attention was drawn a few feet to the right to an icon portraying Mary’s pierced heart. As she looked into the Blessed Mother’s eyes, she knew she wouldn’t because of Mary’s maternal solitude.

“While I was praying and interceding for my family, I felt like Mary was inviting me,” said Beckman. “Mary was putting on my heart something inspiring: her love and care for priests; the sense she wants her priests to thrive, to be holy as her son Jesus is holy; and a sense that she knows that many priests are languishing and they need our prayers and support.”

As Beckman walked in Jesus’ footsteps during her pilgrimage, she said Mary also walked her through the founding of Prayer for Priests, a Marian apostolate of lay faithful dedicated to advancing and protecting the holiness and fruitfulness of the priesthood through prayer, sacrifice, service and study.

In 2007 Beckman received the booklet “Eucharistic Adoration for the Sanctification of Priests and Spiritual Maternity” by the Vatican’s Congregation for the Clergy. Hundreds of people have been signing up to become spiritual mothers and fathers for priests; the sense she wants these priests to thrive, to be holy as her son Jesus is holy; and a sense that she knows that many priests are languishing and they need our prayers and support.

Returning home with her faith rekindled and the support of priests, Beckman wrote a letter to the congregation proposing a team of priests and laity form an apostolate to promote the congregation’s teachings in the “Eucharistic Adoration for the Sanctification of Priests and Spiritual Maternity.”

On the feast of Magnificat in 2013, Beckman received a letter from the congregation expressing enthusiastic support. A website was developed, with the help of a seminarian, a media campaign started and Beckman wrote a book “Praying for Priests: A Mission for the New Evangelization.”

The movement now has thousands of members in more than 20 countries.

Beckman noted there are many priests who come from non-Catholic backgrounds or broken homes and are in need of spiritual mothers and fathers.

She said with the present clergy abuse scandal, which she referred to as “the summer of scandal,” hundreds of people have been signing up to become part of Prayer for Priests.

“We can hardly keep up,” see PRAY PAGE 24.
Shooting victims mourned; faith, civic leaders vow to fight hate, violence

PITTSBURGH — Thousands of people gathered outside and inside the Sailor’s and Soldiers Memorial Hall of the University of Pittsburgh Oct. 28 at an interfaith service to mourn the victims of the horrific shooting a day earlier at the Tree of Life synagogue.

A Baptist gospel choir opened the service, which was organized under the banner “Stronger Together.” Christian and Muslim clergy were among those who made remarks, but the leaders of the service were rabbis representing the three Jewish congregations who used the synagogue. Rabbi Jeffrey Myers called on political leaders, starting with “those in the room,” to help put an end to hate speech.

Rabbi Jonathan Perlman, described as choking back tears, said: “What happened yesterday will not break us. It will not ruin us. We will continue to thrive and sing and worship and learn together and continue our historic legacy in the city with the friendliest people that I know.”

That same day and in the days that have followed a cascade of interfaith services have been held in cities large and small around the country to mourn the loss of life in what is being called the worst attack on a synagogue in U.S. history.

“All of Pennsylvania stands with the victims and their families,” Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf tweeted Oct. 29 as the state capitol was lit in tribute to the victims. “We join the Pittsburgh Jewish community and Jewish Americans across our nation in mourning.”

Reuters reported that nearly 2,000 mourners from across the United States came Oct. 30 to offer condolences to relatives of David Rosenthal, 54, and Cecil Rosenthal, 59, at the Rodef Shalom synagogue in Pittsburgh as police officers stood outside.

Besides the Rosenthals, who were brothers, those who died were: a husband and wife, Sylvan and Bernice Simon, ages 86 and 84; Joyce Fienberg, 75; Richard Gottfried, 65; Rose Mallinger, 97; Jerry Rabinowitz, 66; Daniel Stein, 71; Melvin Wax, 88; and Irving Younger, 69. Six others were injured, including four police officers.

Outside the synagogue hundreds have paid their respects to the dead at a makeshift memorial made with stars of David, each bearing the name of a victim.

A 46-year-old Pittsburgh man, Robert Bowers, is accused of the shooting. He allegedly shouted that “all Jews must die” before entering the synagogue in the Squirrel Hill section of the city and opening fire. Police said he was armed with three handguns and an AR-15 “style” weapon. He is believed to have acted alone.

Bowers was apprehended after a shootout with police. He was hospitalized and treated for his injuries. The night of Oct. 27, he was formally taken into federal custody. He has been charged with 44 separate federal crimes, including hate crimes and weapons offenses.

Catholic leaders were quick to condemn the shooting massacre, offer prayers and condolences for the victims and call for efforts to end this wave of gun violence. Statements came from among others Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, president of the U.S. bishops’ conference, and Pittsburgh Bishop David A. Zubik.

Boston Cardinal Sean P. O’Malley said that Catholics joined with the Jewish people in a commitment “to building a civilization of love to combat the hatred, violence and anti-Semitism in our world.”

The Pittsburgh tragedy “will not defeat us in pursuing this commitment, it will not defeat people of goodwill and it will not defeat the Jewish people,” he said in an Oct. 27 statement.
By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

Pulling a red wagon packed with gift baskets and toys, Kelly Orgeron and her husband, LSU head football coach Ed Orgeron, walked slowly through the halls of Our Lady of the Lake Children’s Hospital in Baton Rouge. The couple made stops at young patient’s rooms, bringing smiles, laughter and Baskets of Hope.

“Go, Tigers!” said a smiling 3-year-old Claire Little from her hospital bed after the coach and his wife walked into the room.

Kelly then handed over a basket and she and her husband, along with Claire’s parents, Trish and Lance Little, helped the young patient check out the new books and toys.

“They are age-specific baskets and items for siblings and Hope totes for families,” explained Kelly. “We try to put things in there that will stimulate movement, little toys, stuffed bears, precious beanies, rattles and all kinds of cute coloring books and books.”

Basket of Hope is a national nonprofit group that provides baskets filled with gifts for children undergoing medical treatment. The cause was picked up eight years ago by Ann Ollendike of Mandeville, who later shared the idea with Kelly.

“The idea is to bring joy and hope to these children and their families and to take their pain away,” said Ollendike, whose own special needs daughter has had lengthy hospital stays.

With a background in the medical field and her own journey with serious health issues, Kelly was familiar with the stress, anxiety and fears for families dealing with health problems, especially when the patient is so young.

“The kids have always touched my heart,” Kelly said. “So since this journey of Ed being named LSU head coach, I’ve just kind of let my spirit (guide me) to see where I wanted to give back in this community, and this is the perfect way.”

According to Kelly, she and the other LSU coaches’ wives, along with Ollendike, gathered at her house and created an assembly line to stuff 50 baskets plus extra totes for parents. The baskets are age-specific, ranging from infants to teens.

“The more I’ve been around it, the more my heart has been drawn to it,” stated Kelly, “So, I brought the big guy (Ed) today to see what it’s all about.”

“What I like most about this is giving back to the state of Louisiana,” said Ed Orgeron. “I’m glad Kelly got involved in it, just to give back. I know how much these children mean to these families and (we) want to give them as much support as we can.”

Father Vavasseur dies at age 85


Father Vavasseur was born in Port Allen and attended Catholic High School in Baton Rouge; St. Joseph Seminary in St. Benedict; Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans; and, Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

He was ordained a priest in June 1958. His pastoral assignments included Holy Family Church in Port Allen; St. John the Baptist Church in Zachary; Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Baton Rouge; St. Joseph the Worker Church in Pierre Part; St. Joseph Church in Grosse Tete; and, St. Pius X Church in Baton Rouge. He was also parochial vicar at St. Joseph Cathedral in Baton Rouge; Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church in Lake- land; Sts. Anthony of Padua and Le Van Phung Church in Baton Rouge; and, St. Agnes Church in Baton Rouge. He was also the director of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul for three years while he was assistant superintendent in the Catholic Schools Office.

His last assignment was pastor at Holy Family. He was there from 1995 until his retirement in June 2009.

Bishop Michael G. Duca celebrated a funeral Mass at Holy Family Church in Port Allen on Oct. 31. Burial was at Roselawn Cemetery in Baton Rouge.
Where do ‘single Catholics’ fit?/ Donations to Doctors Without Borders

Question Corner

Father Kenneth Doyle

A Doctors Without Borders, also known by its French name Medecins Sans Frontieres, has, since its founding in 1971, brought lifesaving care to many sick and wounded people caught in war, epidemics and other disasters. Sadly, though, I do not believe that faithful Catholics should donate to this organization.

On its own website, Medecins Sans Frontieres concedes that since 2004, it has been offering abortions on request at some of its field sites and that its responsibility is to “respect the reason the woman or young girl gives for wanting to have an abortion.”

As to whether Catholics may assist Medecins Sans Frontieres financially, one might turn to “Guidelines on Giving to Charitable Organizations,” published by the National Catholic Bioethics Center. Asked whether a Catholic may donate to an organization that supports research that destroys human embryos to procure stem cells, the center said, “The answer is no. By donating to a research institute or drug manufacturer that funds research that destroys human beings, one would be cooperating immorally in the act of destroying young human life. Cooperating in an intrinsic evil is itself an intrinsic evil and should be avoided in all circumstances.”

Some might argue, I suppose, that Catholic donors to Medecins Sans Frontieres could specify that their own contributions be used only for medical care and not for abortions; but that, I feel, is an artificial distinction since it would simply free up other donations to be used for immoral purposes.

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.

Now Accepting Orders For The 2018-19 Baton Rouge Diocese Directory

Order your copy of the 2018-19 Baton Rouge Diocese Directory with all of the current listings and information on churches, clergy, schools, diocesan departments and personnel, religious, retreat centers, deaneries, institutions and organizations.

To place your order, fill out the form below and mail it to The Catholic Commentator, P. O. Box 3316, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-3316 with a check or money order for $9.50 for each directory ordered.

Number of Directories Ordered

Name ____________________________

Address ____________________________

City ____________________________ State _______ Zip ________

Phone including area code ____________________
Church’s teaching on contraception ‘ahead of the world’

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

The Catholic Church has always been a leader in family planning and its teachings are not dated, as some critics suggest.

In fact, “legitimate sciences” of the world are finally catching up thanks to St. Paul VI’s call to science in his groundbreaking encyclical “Humanae Vitae,” explained Father Todd Lloyd, pastor at Immaculate Conception Church in Lakeland, during his presentation at the Oct. 27 symposium “Science Embraces Humanae Vitae” at St. Agnes Church in Baton Rouge.

The conference, which also featured two doctors and an attorney, attempted to link morality and science through “Humanae Vitae,” which was released 50 years ago.

Father Lloyd said a common perception is the church is “behind the times, old fashioned, out of touch,” regarding moral teaching about contraception, especially artificial birth control.

But Father Lloyd countered, saying “the church has been ahead of the world for a long time,” adding that to understand the church’s teaching one must first understand the history of contraception, which dates to ancient times. He said contraception was first introduced in 1850 BC and that various methods evolved through the years, though many were based on superstition and unreliable.

“It is safe to say that human beings have been wanting to find ways to contracept long before the church said not to, and that is the point,” he said. “The church is not the older of the two ideas but the newer.

“Where people of the world have and everywhere wanted to have sex without the risk of pregnancy, the church is proposing a new and different idea, one that asks a real progressive question: Where there is a legitimate reason why you might want to regulate birth, why not do so according to nature? Rather than trying to subvert our nature, why not collaborate with nature?”

St. Paul VI used the church’s teaching as his platform for “Humanae Vitae,” which Father Lloyd said is important to understand because the encyclical was not the opinion of one man.

He said humanity’s desire for reliable contraception reached a crescendo during the middle of the 20th century, when the birth control pill was introduced. With the sexual revolution gaining popularity at the time, proponents said the pill was a means to liberate sex “from the shackles of procreation,” Father Lloyd said.

The fundamental question for the church at the time was whether or not to use the new medical technology to intentionally avoid pregnancy was a violation of the Gospels and nature. St. Paul VI said it is never licit to intentionally impede the procreative element of conjugal love. He noted that conjugal love as designed by God, is intended for procreation.

Regulating procreation is contrary to God’s design and “can never directly intend to do a moral wrong, not even as a means to an end that we perceive to be good.”

Father Lloyd said advances in science have allowed society to better understand the reproductive cycles, which couples are able to take advantage of in family planning.

The Holy Father’s encyclical, Father Lloyd said, called on science and medical professionals to use science and medicine in service of God’s plan for the good of his people, calling it the Catholic approach to science.

He said “authentic Christianity” is a pro-science religion because “we believe that the God who created the universe did so in an ordered way, fashioned on laws, and that he even entered that universe” through the incarnation of his son, Jesus Christ.

The pope, according to Father Lloyd, specifically called on Christian health care professionals to first fulfill their obligations as Christians to be morally upright people before appeasing the expectations of those around them.

“We are, as the church, in the position to say to the world, to the scientific and medical communities, ‘it is time for you to catch up with us,’” Father Lloyd said.

Dr. Rob Chasuk of Baton Rouge and Dr. Kim Hardy of Lafayette spoke about natural methods for the regulation of birth, including Natural Family Planning, the Creighton Method FertilityCare System and NaPro Technology. The doctors each explored in great detail how nature provides its own method of birth control without having to use artificial contraception.

Hardy admitted Natural Family Planning can be difficult, especially in a culture that makes artificial contraception so tempting. But he repeatedly stressed the effectiveness of NFP and said accepting it is accepting fertility as a natural gift from God.

He said NFP can actually strengthen a marriage, as it allows the opportunity for couples to discover other ways of intimacy.

“It requires one thing – faith,” he said. Attorney Dorinda Bordlee of New Orleans, who spoke on the law and policy to restore the dignity of the human person, said the Supreme Court will eventually reverse Roe v. Wade, sending the abortion debate to the states.

We make it personal.

RESTHAVEN
GARDENS OF MEMORY & FUNERAL HOME
11817 Jefferson Highway
225-753-1440
WWW.RESTHAVENBATONROUGE.COM

Tree Care By...
Free Estimates

with Stephen J. Binz & Fr. Charles Landry
† Begin the month of Mary in Lourdes, France
† Journey to Segovia and Avila, dedicated to St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa
† Explore the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Spain and tomb of St. James
† End your pilgrimage in Fatima, Portugal, with the vigil procession and Mass on the Feast of Our Lady of Fatima, May 13, 2019.

For brochure and details, see www.Bridge-B.com or call 800-842-4842
Author inspires SJA students to help needy

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

Just before the start of a guest speaker assembly Oct. 8 at St. Joseph’s Academy in Baton Rouge, hundreds of students scurried into the Student Activity Center to place their tattered, well-worn copies of a book on top of a table.

The book was titled “An Invisible Thread: The True Story of an 11-Year-Old Panhandler, a Busy Sales Executive, and an Unlikely Meeting with Destiny,” and its author, Laura Schroff, was the guest speaker. Within minutes, hundreds of books were stacked on the table.

“They’re bringing their copies for Laury,” explained Mindy Averitt, SJA communications director. “When the tone sounded for the beginning of the assembly, the packed auditorium was silent as Schroff took the stage,” he added.

Schroff’s visit to the school, her second assignment for SJA students five years ago. The book inspired students, faculty and staff at SJA to start their own brown bag lunch program for those in need. Every Tuesday during the school year, hundreds of Sticker Sacks are sent to St. Vincent de Paul of Baton Rouge. In conjunction with Schroff’s visit to the school, her second since 2013, 477 Sticker Sacks were delivered to SVDP.

“I loved the book, it taught me so much about life,” said SJA senior Dmyry Williams. “Laura Schroff and her story, it was really great. I read the book my freshman year. I really love doing the Sticker Sacks.”

“May I enjoyed the book, I liked hearing about her story,” said sophomore Madelyn Pakouri. “I thought it was really (nice) how her life changed because of one little thing she did that changed life and somebody else’s life and somebody else’s family. I really enjoyed it.”

Schroff told students the title of her book came from a Chinese proverb, “An invisible thread connects those destined to meet, regardless of time, place and circumstance. The thread may stretch or tangle but it will never break.” She then encouraged students to think about their own “invisible thread connections.”

“Most often, the unexpected blessings are when we go beyond ourselves and our own familiar world and reach out to another person,” Schroff told the students. “Most often, the unexpected blessings are when we go beyond ourselves and our own familiar world and reach out to another person.”

“Some of the greatest blessings in our lives come in the simplest forms,” Schroff told the students. “Most often, the unexpected blessings are when we go beyond ourselves and our own familiar world and reach out to another person.”

“Some of the greatest blessings in our lives come in the simplest forms,” Schroff told the students. “Most often, the unexpected blessings are when we go beyond ourselves and our own familiar world and reach out to another person.”

“Some of the greatest blessings in our lives come in the simplest forms,” Schroff told the students. “Most often, the unexpected blessings are when we go beyond ourselves and our own familiar world and reach out to another person.”

“Some of the greatest blessings in our lives come in the simplest forms,” Schroff told the students. “Most often, the unexpected blessings are when we go beyond ourselves and our own familiar world and reach out to another person.”

“Some of the greatest blessings in our lives come in the simplest forms,” Schroff told the students. “Most often, the unexpected blessings are when we go beyond ourselves and our own familiar world and reach out to another person.”

“Some of the greatest blessings in our lives come in the simplest forms,” Schroff told the students. “Most often, the unexpected blessings are when we go beyond ourselves and our own familiar world and reach out to another person.”

“Some of the greatest blessings in our lives come in the simplest forms,” Schroff told the students. “Most often, the unexpected blessings are when we go beyond ourselves and our own familiar world and reach out to another person.”

“Some of the greatest blessings in our lives come in the simplest forms,” Schroff told the students. “Most often, the unexpected blessings are when we go beyond ourselves and our own familiar world and reach out to another person.”

“Some of the greatest blessings in our lives come in the simplest forms,” Schroff told the students. “Most often, the unexpected blessings are when we go beyond ourselves and our own familiar world and reach out to another person.”

“Some of the greatest blessings in our lives come in the simplest forms,” Schroff told the students. “Most often, the unexpected blessings are when we go beyond ourselves and our own familiar world and reach out to another person.”

“Some of the greatest blessings in our lives come in the simplest forms,” Schroff told the students. “Most often, the unexpected blessings are when we go beyond ourselves and our own familiar world and reach out to another person.”

“Some of the greatest blessings in our lives come in the simplest forms,” Schroff told the students. “Most often, the unexpected blessings are when we go beyond ourselves and our own familiar world and reach out to another person.”

“Some of the greatest blessings in our lives come in the simplest forms,” Schroff told the students. “Most often, the unexpected blessings are when we go beyond ourselves and our own familiar world and reach out to another person.”

“Some of the greatest blessings in our lives come in the simplest forms,” Schroff told the students. “Most often, the unexpected blessings are when we go beyond ourselves and our own familiar world and reach out to another person.”

“Some of the greatest blessings in our lives come in the simplest forms,” Schroff told the students. “Most often, the unexpected blessings are when we go beyond ourselves and our own familiar world and reach out to another person.”

“Some of the greatest blessings in our lives come in the simplest forms,” Schroff told the students. “Most often, the unexpected blessings are when we go beyond ourselves and our own familiar world and reach out to another person.”

“Some of the greatest blessings in our lives come in the simplest forms,” Schroff told the students. “Most often, the unexpected blessings are when we go beyond ourselves and our own familiar world and reach out to another person.”

“The book inspired students, faculty and staff at SJA to start their own brown bag lunch program for those in need. Every Tuesday during the school year, hundreds of Sticker Sacks are sent to St. Vincent de Paul of Baton Rouge. In conjunction with Schroff’s visit to the school, her second since 2013, 477 Sticker Sacks were delivered to SVDP.

“I loved the book, it taught me so much about life,” said SJA senior Dmyry Williams. “Laura Schroff and her story, it was really great. I read the book my freshman year. I really love doing the Sticker Sacks.”

“May I enjoyed the book, I liked hearing about her story,” said sophomore Madelyn Pakouri. “I thought it was really (nice) how her life changed because of one little thing she did that changed life and somebody else’s life and somebody else’s family. I really enjoyed it.”

Schroff told students the title of her book came from a Chinese proverb, “An invisible thread connects those destined to meet, regardless of time, place and circumstance. The thread may stretch or tangle but it will never break.” She then encouraged students to think about their own “invisible thread connections.”

“Some of the greatest blessings in our lives come in the simplest forms,” Schroff told the students. “Most often, the unexpected blessings are when we go beyond ourselves and our own familiar world and reach out to another person.”

“The book inspired students, faculty and staff at SJA to start their own brown bag lunch program for those in need. Every Tuesday during the school year, hundreds of Sticker Sacks are sent to St. Vincent de Paul of Baton Rouge. In conjunction with Schroff’s visit to the school, her second since 2013, 477 Sticker Sacks were delivered to SVDP.

“I loved the book, it taught me so much about life,” said SJA senior Dmyry Williams. “Laura Schroff and her story, it was really great. I read the book my freshman year. I really love doing the Sticker Sacks.”

“May I enjoyed the book, I liked hearing about her story,” said sophomore Madelyn Pakouri. “I thought it was really (nice) how her life changed because of one little thing she did that changed life and somebody else’s life and somebody else’s family. I really enjoyed it.”

Schroff told students the title of her book came from a Chinese proverb, “An invisible thread connects those destined to meet, regardless of time, place and circumstance. The thread may stretch or tangle but it will never break.” She then encouraged students to think about their own “invisible thread connections.”

“When I met Maurice over 32 years ago, we never could have imagined it was an invisible thread that connected us,” Schroff said.

“It was very inspiring,” said Emma Shannon, a sophomore. “It inspired me to help other people and not be afraid to actually go and help others out there.”
Evergreen focused on faith building

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Randall Waguespack and John Acosta grinned and ribbed each other as they talked about sweating and bonding with 300 fellow volunteers on a blistering hot day Sept. 23 at St. Margaret Queen of Scotland Church in Albany.

They helped strip the church of its contents and created a temporary place of worship in the parish hall to prepare for the building’s renovation and expansion.

“We did it in about two hours,” Waguespack proudly announced.

Waguespack and Acosta struck up their friendship through Evergreen Life Services in Ponchatoula, which has a mission of serving, providing for and championing people with disabilities.

Evergreen recently received a $3,000 grant from the Bishop Stanley J. Ott Works of Mercy Trust Fund of the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

Waguespack, executive director of Evergreen, St. Margaret parishioner and candidate in the permanent diaconate program, noted the Works of Mercy grant will help Evergreen, which started in north Louisiana as a Presbyterian mission, to better serve its people, especially when it comes to providing religious educational opportunities for people of all faiths.

“We want to help them get in touch with their religion and faith, to help them have a more fulfilled faith life. I think the everyday stress and anxiety comes as well to the people we support. I think you can get a lot of grace and a lot of enrichment just by participating in your faith,” said Waguespack.

Evergreen focuses on developing one-on-one and family relationships with the people they serve. In Waguespack’s case, he invited Acosta to attend Mass with him and his family at St. Margaret.

Acosta said he had stopped attending Mass about five years ago when his father died. Waguespack’s invitation prompted Acosta to think about becoming involved in church again. He plans to register at St. Margaret and become involved in parish ministries.

“He’s met a lot of people there. A bunch of people already know him by name. More people seem to know him than me,” Waguespack said, exchanging grins with his friend.

Evergreen is helping Acosta transition from a group home to independent living. Acosta lives in a group home in Independence, but Evergreen helped him land a job at a department store in Mandeville and provides him with transportation and job coaching. He is hoping to move into an apartment in the next few months.

Acosta is one of two siblings living in a group home, according to his mother, Sharon. His brother, Joey, has been in a group home for the past 25 years. Sharon said with the death of her husband, she made the difficult decision to move them into independent living. Acosta transitioned from a group home to a family gathering once a month in Thibodaux.

Among the friendships formed through Evergreen Life Services are, from left, Randall Waguespack, executive director of Evergreen; Beryl Hebert, who will be working with people with disabilities in the catechetical and RCIA programs at St. Patrick Church in Baton Rouge; and John Acosta, who is currently working toward living independently with Evergreen’s assistance. Photo by Debbie Shelley | The Catholic Commentator

Are you called to serve others?

We invite all women who feel called to religious life to contact us. We will help you with your spiritual journey.

4200 Essen Lane, Baton Rouge, LA 70809
Call (225) 922-7443
fmolsisters.com
Cristo Rey president embraces school’s unique mission

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Eric Engemann nestled into his new chair, still acclimating to his new digs. Teenage voices, bursting with a hope for the future perhaps for the first time in their young lives, filtered through the window of his modest office housed in a modular building.

Six days into his new job as president of Cristo Rey Baton Rouge Franciscan High School, Engemann was comfortable, any lingering doubts he might have had regarding leaving his previous position as executive director as SportsBR erased by the warmth and acceptance he has received from the school’s nearly 180 students.

“I would not have taken another education job; I didn’t have an interest in being a traditional principal somewhere,” said Engemann. “The model here and what we are trying to accomplish it is really the most interesting thing to me.

“This is really more about finding ways to help these students not only get a traditional education but to build the rest of their resume and the rest of their skill set so they can excel once they leave here.”

But Engemann, a graduate of Catholic of Pointe Coupee High School, understands the job presents unique challenges. First up is stability. After all, he is the third person to occupy the president’s chair in the school’s two-plus year history.

Two weeks after opening in August 2016, historic flooding forced students to attend classes in a technology center for 18 months.

For the foreseeable future and likely beyond, classes will be held in modular buildings at the now cleared site of the former Redemptorist High School, where, eventually, a new school will be constructed.

“We have to find ways to make this model work financially,” Engemann said. “That’s where the corporate (work study) model is so important; that’s where the fundraising is so important”

He embraces those challenges, focused on bringing stability to the school as well as ensuring some of the neediest young people in the area receive the benefits of a high quality Catholic education.

“I think (stability) is important,” he admitted. “I talked to our board about getting the school to a point of maturity. I guess it’s still a little in a kind of startup mode.

“So (the priority) is really getting us a mature model where we start to reflect some of the same gains that some of our other (Cristo Rey) network schools have achieved.”

Engemann said the school has a “great faculty, great staff” who, because of the instability, has “done a lot of the heavy lifting over the past few years.”

He said his role is to develop the most effective and efficient ways to move forward and to stay on track. He would like to take some of the burden off of the staff and “let them do what they are really good at.”

“It’s a role that he did not initially accept. He admitted to being a bit hesitant when first approached about the position because he happy with his role at SportsBR, but added that the more he researched the Cristo Rey network and understood the job presents unique challenges. First up is stability. After all, he is the third person to occupy the president’s chair in the school’s two-plus year history.

Two weeks after opening in August 2016, historic flooding forced students to attend classes in a technology center for 18 months.

For the foreseeable future and likely beyond, classes will be held in modular buildings at the now cleared site of the former Redemptorist High School, where, eventually, a new school will be constructed.

“We have to find ways to make this model work financially,” Engemann said. “That’s where the corporate (work study) model is so important; that’s where the fundraising is so important”

He embraces those challenges, focused on bringing stability to the school as well as ensuring some of the neediest young people in the area receive the benefits of a high quality Catholic education.

“I think (stability) is important,” he admitted. “I talked to our board about getting the school to a point of maturity. I guess it’s still a little in a kind of startup mode.

“So (the priority) is really getting us a mature model where we start to reflect some of the same gains that some of our other (Cristo Rey) network schools have achieved.”

Engemann said the school has a “great faculty, great staff” who, because of the instability, has “done a lot of the heavy lifting over the past few years.”

He said his role is to develop the most effective and efficient ways to move forward and to stay on track. He would like to take some of the burden off of the staff and “let them do what they are really good at.”

“It’s a role that he did not initially accept. He admitted to being a bit hesitant when first approached about the position because he happy with his role at SportsBR, but added that the more he researched the Cristo Rey network and learned about the mission, the more appealing the job appeared.

Engemann realized his position at SportsBR was similar to what he would be asked to do at Cristo Rey in that it involved working in the community, uniting the community and bringing people together. Rather than a sports platform, he would be using education, specifically the educating of underprivileged children, as his pulpit.

“If (uniting the community) was something that I feel like was kind of a calling, what better way to do that than through education and the Cristo Rey model, where many of the same elements are brought together,” he said.

He heralded Cristo Rey’s corporate work-study program, where students spend one day a week working in professional office environments, is the foundation for the young people. Before going to their jobs, students are instructed in such areas as making eye contact when talking to someone else, being courteous and even the proper way to shake hands.

“When you take (Cristo Rey) kids and put them in (professional environments), those employees get a little taste of what their lives are like, what they have had to deal with as young students,” he said. “I think it creates a bit more awareness.”

Together with communications director Carissa Graves, Engemann hopes to become the public face of Cristo Rey, an ambassador, an advocate to those most in need.
CATHOLIC CAMPAIGN FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

WORKING ON THE MARGINS

Please give generously the weekend of Nov. 17th & 18th.

www.usccb.org/cchd

Copyright © 2017, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, DC. All rights reserved. Photo: Getty Images.
St. Faustina, who inspired the devotion to the Divine Mercy, is also depicted with softer, rounder features.

By Bonny Van

From Mary Queen of Peace to St. Padre Pio, St. Mother Teresa and St. Michael the Archangel, those favorite saints are keeping a close watch over students at Mater Dolorosa School in Independence, teaching their hearts and souls. The images and their words adorn the back wall of every classroom. It’s part of a multi-phase revitalization plan by principal Cheryl Santangelo, who is in her second year at the school.

“When I got here last year, the building was drabsville,” said Santangelo. “The carpet was here when my daughter went to school here (35 years ago).”

Reaching out to friends and church members, Santangelo raised $3,300 in two weeks. An anonymous donor also contacted her about renovating one of the classrooms. Santangelo said she chose the computer room because it was “the room that all students touch.” The room was in “deplorable” condition, according to Santangelo, who described filthy flooring and old, faded curtains hung on shower curtains rods in the windows. She also said that room had to be wired differently because the computers, but everything was done through donations.

“Here when my daughter went to school here (35 years ago),” Santangelo said she was inspired to “put religious feelings back in the school” after a discussion with a local priest. Also, the death of her son, Johnny Santangelo, who has been painting for 40 years, said he studied each of his subjects before beginning his work so that he could incorporate that into their likeness.

“I worked down here seven days a week, at least 12 hours a day since mid-June,” said Davis. “I lost a son to a brain tumor a couple of years ago, so this is a mission for me, it’s not supposed to touch it. They’re very protective of it.”

The amazing artwork was painted by R.C. Davis, a popular Louisiana artist from Amite. Though his specialty is painting landscapes, Davis has also completed work at St. Helena Church in Amite, was all in when he was called for the job. It took the artist 75 hours, lying on his back to paint the image.

“The murals are terrific,” said eighth-grade student Josh Thiel. “I’m very impressed to see all this that has happened. I love it.”

“I think it’s awesome,” said Anthony Vosea, another eighth-grade student.

“Another painting, one depicting Jesus’ death on the cross, with Mary standing next to the cross with her arms outstretched to her son, adorns a narrow room that will soon be transformed into a chapel. Already, students are requesting prayer time in the chapel, said Santangelo. Future plans include hallway murals of the apostles and a painting of Jesus, surrounded by current students of Mater Dolorosa School, in the foyer, welcoming everyone.

Santangelo said she was inspired to “put religious feelings back in the school” after a discussion with a local priest. Also, the death of her son, Johnny Santangelo, who was inspired to “put religious feelings back in the school” after a discussion with a local priest. Also, the death of her son, Johnny Santangelo, who also has two daughters, Julie and Jennifer and triplet granddaughters. “It’s all about God and giving our faith to the Lord. And, I wanted to bring the Catholicism back into the school.”

The artist said he painted the face of St. Therese of Lisieux a little rounder to depict the visage of a child, like those she is watching over in the younger grades.

“The paintings are featured in a gold frame and take up an entire wall. According to Davis, the images in the lower grades have softer features with childlike eyes, while those in the upper grades are more realistic. Davis, who has been painting for 40 years, said he studied each of his subjects before beginning his work so that he could incorporate that into their likeness.

“It reminds you why we’re here. It’s a good reminder and it’s a great art,” said Lisa Brash, a substitute teacher for eighth grade in the St. Padre Pio classroom. “Students are really impressed by it and they’re very careful with it. If I walk too close to it, they’re like, Don’t get too close to the trim. You’re not supposed to touch it. They’re very protective of it.”

“I worked down here seven days a week, at least 12 hours a day since mid-June,” said Davis. “Before I started this job I... generally don’t ask for help... (but) I took a knee and said, ‘This needs to be done and it would really be good if we could get this done.’ And, 545 hours later... that’s exactly how long it took... nine paintings.”

“New paint and trim work in each classroom highlight the museum quality artwork. The paintings are featured in a gold frame and take up an entire wall. According to Davis, the images in the lower grades have softer features with childlike eyes, while those in the upper grades are more realistic. Davis, who has been painting for 40 years, said he studied each of his subjects before beginning his work so that he could incorporate that into their likeness.

“The artist said he painted the face of St. Therese of Lisieux a little rounder to depict the visage of a child, like those she is watching over in the younger grades.

“This is our Mother,” said Santangelo. “She has that peace about her. Our Lady of Peace, and you can see how the kids react and respond. I haven’t had any discipline problems since school started.”

“Another painting, one depicting Jesus’ death on the cross, with Mary standing next to the cross with her arms outstretched to her son, adorns a narrow room that will soon be transformed into a chapel. Already, students are requesting prayer time in the chapel, said Santangelo. Future plans include hallway murals of the apostles and a painting of Jesus, surrounded by current students of Mater Dolorosa School, in the foyer, welcoming everyone.

Santangelo said she was inspired to “put religious feelings back in the school” after a discussion with a local priest. Also, the death of her son, Johnny Santangelo, who is in her second year at the school.

When I got here last year, the building was drabsville,” said Santangelo. “The carpet was here when my daughter went to school here (35 years ago).”

“Another painting, one depicting Jesus’ death on the cross, with Mary standing next to the cross with her arms outstretched to her son, adorns a narrow room that will soon be transformed into a chapel. Already, students are requesting prayer time in the chapel, said Santangelo. Future plans include hallway murals of the apostles and a painting of Jesus, surrounded by current students of Mater Dolorosa School, in the foyer, welcoming everyone.

The artist, R.C. Davis, who has been painting for 40 years, said he studied each of his subjects before beginning his work so that he could incorporate that into their likeness.

The artist said he painted the face of St. Therese of Lisieux a little rounder to depict the visage of a child, like those she is watching over in the younger grades.

The artist, R.C. Davis, who has been painting for 40 years, said he studied each of his subjects before beginning his work so that he could incorporate that into their likeness.

The artist said he painted the face of St. Therese of Lisieux a little rounder to depict the visage of a child, like those she is watching over in the younger grades.
Youth invited to serve on parish council

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

In sync with Pope Francis’ call for the church to listen and walk with young people, three youth have been invited to serve on the parish advisory council for St. Anne Church in Napoleonville, Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church in Plattenville and St. Philomena Church in Labadieville.

According to Father Joseph Vu, pastor of St. Anne, Assumption and St. Philomena, having young people serve on the parish advisory council helps give them a stronger connection to the church and their faith before they go to college, because all too often young adults will lose their Catholic connection after college.

And with the average age of the council members being 50-55, the adults get a “fresh perspective” on what can be done to improve the parish and its community life.

“It’s also a way for both the youth and adults to grow in their faith as they have conversations,” said Father Vu.

“I find it to be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity,” said Reece Shelby, a sophomore at ED White School in Thibodaux and life-long member of St. Philomena, who received an invitation to join the council from Father Vu. “I jumped on it when I heard about it.”

“I love my community. St. Philomena has become such a big part of me. It’s my whole life.”

He said former St. Philomena pastor Father Michael Alello peaked his interest in parish life through his inspiring homilies at early morning Mass and invitations to participate in Blessings on the Bayou, and his love continued to grow through former pastor Father Paul Gros and now Father Vu.

Shelby also helps with the auction at the parish festival and with other parish activities.

“That was so entertaining for me. Hanging out with friends at the petting zoo,” said Shelby, who has also attended Steubenville on the Bayou and other youth events.

Shelby said the parish advisory council has been addressing such things as budget issues, Mass schedules, confirmation, youth volunteer opportunities and funeral arrangements among the parishes.

He said issues which are a priority in serving on the council is to “get more guys my age involved in the Catholic faith” and getting men to be spiritual leaders in the home.

“Many of the families who don’t go to church don’t have a father who attends Mass,” said Shelby, an altar server. “I want to bring those numbers back up.”

Serving on the council has also prompted him to try to be more organized and to “step up” when needed.

Shelby plans to attend law school and become a prosecutor.

“I want to help people who had something done to them by someone or something,” said Shelby. “I want to fight for them.”

He conceded that at first he felt “a little timid” to speak before the council, but they quickly made him feel welcomed and appreciate his input.

Unfortunately, there are many youth who are apathetic and lack motivation to become involved in the parish or any other volunteer or community-related opportunities, according to Shelby.

“Some don’t want to be outcast by their friends,” said Shelby. “Just getting involved in the faith can seem odd or uncool.”

But he finds serving on the parish council and getting “into the heart” of what his faith community is about is very fulfilling. The friends he plays basketball with and hangs out with are like-minded in faith and supportive, and he encourages other teens to do the same.

Payten Bergeron, a junior at Assumption High School in Napoleonville who was baptized at St. Anne and is a lifelong member, said being a youth on the council gives the adults an opportunity to get the input of a “young mind” to see what can be done to help improve and involve more youth in the life of the church. It also helps her to see what goes into the overall operation of the church and has inspired her to become more active.

Bergeron plans to attend college at Nicholls State University and plans to pursue a medical career.

She said serving on the advisory council has helped her with her future plans by teaching her to be patient and considerate.

“It’s teaching me to try to be a better me,” said Bergeron.

Noah Broussard a junior at Assumption High School will also join the council at their next meeting.

BISHOP’S BLESSING – Bishop Michael G. Duca and Bishop Emeritus Robert W. Muench, along with Archbishop Gregory M. Aymond of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, blessed the new St. John Paul II House on the LSU campus Oct. 24. Three of the nine residents briefly discussed the impact the house, which opened in August, has made in their lives, both personally and spiritually. Father Andrew Merrick, pastor of Christ the King Church and Catholic Center in Baton Rouge, gave a brief history of the St. John Paul II House. Also, Bishop Duca blessed those in attendance with a relic from St. John Paul II. The relic has a drop of blood from the saint. This relic was at CTK as part of The John Paul II Project, which was making a stop in Baton Rouge for two days. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator
TRUNK OR TREAT – Jamison Traigle, left, and Tre’Von Weber, both seniors at St. John High School in Plaquemine, watch as first graders select treats during Trunk or Treat Oct. 26. Seniors decorate the trunks of their vehicles and pass out goodies to first graders for the annual event. Photo provided by April Hedges | St. John High School

COMMUNITY SERVICE – Students in grades fifth through eighth at St. Francis Xavier School in Baton Rouge helped clean up Lutheran Cemetery in Baton Rouge on Saturday, Oct. 27. Pictured, Breanna Auguster helps rake the grounds around gravesites. Photo provided by Paula Johnson | St. Francis Xavier School

TEAM SUCCESS – The cross country team at St. Michael the Archangel High School in Baton Rouge is reaping success both on and off the trails. The SMHS team was tops at the Battlefield Cross Country Festival with the girls’ team taking first place while the boys’ team placed second. Also, the team has an overall GPA average of 3.45. Pictured, from left, are Parker Devries, Betsy Adams, Emma Miller and Michael Martin. Photo provided by LeighAnn King | St. Michael High School

CELEBRATING SAINTS – Fifth- and sixth-grade students at Holy Ghost School in Hammond dressed as saints for assembly in celebration of All Saints’ Day. Students researched their selected saint and created a poster of information on him or her. Some of the saints chosen were St. Michael the Archangel, St. Nicholas, St. Teresa of Avila, St. Catherine of Alexandria, St. Isabel and more. Pictured, front row, from left, are Cody Bates, Maddie Aldridge, Stamm Adams, Ella Bachemin, Braiden Bates, Carmen Brownlow and Brennan Bankston; back row, are Kady Cormier, Isabella Abdalla, Aaron Alston, Nicholas Alfonso, Paisley Collett, Olivia Abadie and Konnor Burkes. Photo provided by Cindy Wagner | Holy Ghost School

Exceptional Academics
Welcoming Catholic Faith Community
Full Day Pre K / Before & After Care
Comprehensive Athletic Program
Chromebook Technology

Join us for
OPEN HOUSE
NOV. 28TH 8am - 12pm
New Student Registration Nov 28 - Dec 18
MBS does not discriminate on the basis of race, color or national origin.
Ingraham to retire as diocesan CFO

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Joe Ingraham’s 35-year financial career spanning archbishops, bishops, one archdiocese, two dioceses is taking a curtain call.

Ingraham, who for the past 15 years has served as the chief financial officer for the Diocese of Baton Rouge, will retire effective Nov. 30.

Ingraham first began working for the Catholic Church in 1983 when he was hired as CFO for the Archdiocese of New Orleans under Archbishop Philip M. Hannan. He was the first layperson in the archdiocese with any significant financial authority, and ironically, succeeded Bishop Stanley J. Ott, who had been appointed bishop for the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

On that archdiocesan search committee was then-Msgr. Robert W. Muench, laying the foundation of what would become not only a long-standing professional relationship but a special friendship as well. Ingraham said it was Bishop Muench who called to offer him the job.

“(Bishop Muench) was a pleasure to work with,” said Ingraham, adding that the bishop performed the wedding ceremony for one of his daughters. “I regard him as a personal friend.”

Ingraham served in New Orleans until 2000, which included serving under Archbishop Francis B. Schulte, before moving to a similar position in Amarillo, Texas. His role in Amarillo was unique, focused on getting the mission diocese “up and running.”

Once that was accomplished, Ingraham began to apply to other dioceses, including Baton Rouge, where he knew former was retiring.

Ingraham was called for an interview and unani mously approved by the search committee, beginning work July 1, 2003, at a little more than a year after Bishop Muench was installed.

“It was wonderful to work with him again,” Ingraham said. “(The bishop) and I were careful not to try to influence the hiring process.”

“As we have seen with the hiring of (New CFO Glenn Landry, who is coming from a similar position in the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux), having somebody that’s already worked in the church (is advantageous).”

Ingraham noted his training with Gautreau lasted approximately three hours, testimony to Ingraham’s previous working experience in the church.

He cited that one of the first challenges to be addressed was the defined benefit plan the diocese offered to employees at the time. He acknowledged it was grossly underfunded, and if “left unchecked, it would have bankrupted the diocese. That was the most pressing issue.”

Ingraham said he and the bishop worked in tandem to modernize Catholic Life Television, allowing the station to broadcast live Masses from St. Joseph Chapel at the Bishop Robert E. Tracy Center as well as from St. Joseph Cathedral.

He also switched the station’s broadcast to a cable network, rather than a costly over-the-air broadcast.

“I feel like Bishop Muench and I have positioned the diocese well to move forward,” Ingraham said. “We got rid of properties we did not really need and were able to use the money to do things like (build the) (recently completed) archives building.”

“(Bishop Muench) and I are both proud of the fact that everything we have done we did without having a diocesan-wide campaign.”

Joe Ingraham
Diocese of Baton Rouge

“I loved it. They ministered to me,” said Hebert, her face aglow.

She acknowledges there is a cross to bear for families with members with disabilities, but she believes people with special needs bring many gifts.

Hebert’s role model is St. Teresa of Calcutta.

“Mother Teresa and her sisters reached out to the poor and educated them and taught them about the love and mercy of Jesus,” Hebert said.

When it comes to people with disabilities, Hebert said there is a lot they have to teach the general public about Jesus.

“As the years went on, they have the grace to help us see the world through God’s eyes,” said Hebert. “There’s no pretense. They are who God called them to be.”

For more information about volunteer opportunities and services visit evergreens.org.

Hospice is About Living

We rely upon the intercession of our Blessed Mother to assist us in imitating the healing ministry of Jesus Christ as we care for terminally ill patients and their families.

We call forth the compassion and kindness of our staff, who serve in this health care ministry, to respond to the physical, spiritual and emotional needs of our patients and their families.

We believe in the sacredness of life from conception to natural death, and we devote ourselves to supporting patients and families through the dying process at the end of life’s journey on this earth and new life in eternity.
maker of all things, visible and invisible, became man, the person of Jesus, who shows us the way, by truth and life. His life, passion, death and resurrection is the path to heaven. He is the beginning and the end, our origin and our destiny. We belong with him. Thus, we patiently and joyfully "wait for the coming of our savior, Jesus Christ" for on that day “He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain, [for] the old order has passed away” (Rev 21:4). Then we will see the face of God and rejoice by the words of the psalmist, “Praise the Lord, my soul! You are my inheritance, O Lord!” (Ps 146, 16) Come, Lord Jesus, Come.

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

BLESSING OF THE GRAVES – Father Vincent Dufresne, pastor of St. Joseph Church in Paulina; Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Gramercy; and St. Michael the Archangel in Convent, blesses the graves at St. Mary Chapel in Union on Oct. 28. Photo by Bonny Van | The Catholic Commentator

GRAVESIDE PRAYERS – Father Paul Counce, pastor of St. Joseph Cathedral Church in Baton Rouge, leads a blessing of the graves ceremony at St. Joseph Cemetery in Baton Rouge on All Saints Day Nov 1. The ceremony included introductory rites, liturgy of the word, litany of saints for the dead, the blessing of graves with holy water, concluding prayers and final blessing. Father Counce conducted a similar ceremony that evening at Highland Cemetery in Baton Rouge. Photo by Debbie Shelley | The Catholic Commentator

BLUE JAYS’ NEST RIBBON CUTTING – Bishop Michael G. Duca, center, and Father Cleo Milano, pastor of Our Lady of Mercy Church in Baton Rouge, right, cut the ribbon for the Our Lady of Mercy Lower Elementary School as Father Nutan Minj, parochial vicar looks on. Photo by Debbie Shelley | The Catholic Commentator

GOSPEL ▼

From page 2

The Catholic Commentator
MOVIE REVIEWS

USCCB Office for Film & Broadcasting classifcations:
A-I – General patronage
A-II – Adults and adolescents
A-III – Adults
A-IV – Adults, with reservations
L – Limited adult audience
O – Morally offensive

Motion Picture Association of America ratings:
G – General audiences; all ages admitted
PG – Parental guidance suggested; some material may not be suitable for children
PG-13 – Parents are strongly cautioned to give special guidance for attendance of children under 13; some material may be inappropriate for young children
R – Restricted; under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian
NC-17 – No one under 17 admitted

Goosebumps 2: Haunted Halloween

Columbia

Weak follow-up to the 2015 original revolves around two boys (Jeremy Ray Taylor and Caleel Harris) who fi nd an old manuscript by R.L. Stein (Jack Black) the real-life author of the “Goosebumps” books and, by opening it, unleash an evil ventriloquist’s dummy (voice of Mick Wingert) who proceeds to cause Halloween chaos by bringing to life all the macabre holiday decorations in the small town where the lads live. As a headless horseman, a trio of witches and a mummy among many others run amok, screenwriter Rob Lieber and director Ari Sandel mostly spin their wheels. Too frightening for the youngest, the film includes a few touches even the parents of teens may not especially appreciate along the way to a wrap-up that unconvincingly promotes family solidarity. Occult themes, some peril amid thoroughly stylized violence, brief scatological humor, a mild oath, a bit of mature wordplay. A-II; PG

Gosnell: The Trial of America’s Biggest Serial Killer

O

Powerful dramatization of the Philadelphia police investigation (led by Dean Cain) and state prosecution (headed by Sarah Jane Morris) that finally ended the infamous, decades-long career of abortionist Kermit Gosnell (Earl Billings) who, besides legally slaughtering the unborn, frequently perpetrated infanticide and endangered his adult clients with fi lthy conditions. Screenwriters Phelim McAleer, Ann McElhinney and Andrew Klawan, adapting McAleer and McElhinney’s 2017 bestseller, keep the focus on the deceptively avuncular and weirdly unflappable Gosnell’s breaches of current statutes, though they do inflect the political bias that shielded and enabled him. As directed by Nick Searcy, who also plays Gosnell’s hard-driving defense attorney, their script mostly leaves it to viewers to recognize the wholly arbitrary distinction between extinguishing life within the womb and doing so, perhaps only moments later, outside it. Some parents may see in this sobering and informative film too good an opportunity for reinforcing pro-life values in older teens to let the relatively few objectionable elements it includes stand in the way. Mature themes, images of body parts and medical gore, a couple of mild oaths, about a half-dozen crude terms. A-III; PG-13

The Hate U Give

Fox

Real-life issues of racial justice are explored in this compelling drama, adapted from Angie Thomas’ novel for young adults by screenwriter Audrey Wells and director George Tillman Jr. An African-American teen (Amandla Stenberg) divides her time between her mostly black working-class neighborhood and the predominantly white private school she attends, adjusting her personality and behavior to suit each environment. But her uneasy equilibrium is thrown off balance when she witnesses the shooting of a childhood friend (Algee Smith) by a white police offi cer (Drew Starkey), an event that affects her relationship with one of her two best pals (Sabrina Carpenter) and with her boyfriend (K.J. Apa), both of them white. As an activist (Issa Rae) urges her to go public, a move that would put her at odds with the local drug kingpin (Anthony Mackie), for whom the dead lad was working, she looks to her wise parents (Russell Hornsby and Regina Hall) for guidance. Although passionate in tone, the film maintains credibility by its evenhandedness and ultimately points toward a solution to the problems it portrays that viewers committed to Gospel morality will easily endorse. Brief graphic violence with some gore, nonlethal clashes, a narcotics theme, a scene of urination, numerous mild oaths, at least one use of the F-word, pervasive crude and crass language. A-III; PG-13

Halloween

Universal

Some interesting exposition exploring the long-term psychological effects on the heroine (Jamie Lee Curtis) of the eponymous 1978 slasher classic of her near-fatel encounter with masked madman Michael Myers (Robbie Kiger). Castle sets, including the fi rst of his many blood-soaked rampages soon gives way to an orgy of gruesome and, in at least one instance, nauseating mayhem in this direct sequel to the long-ago kick off. What might have been a thoughtful study of the impact of evil across time and generations both the original victim’s grown daughter (Judy Greer) and teen granddaughter (Andi Matichak) have had their relationships with her strained by her fears and apparent paranoia, while the psychiatrist (Haluk Bilgimer) who has had charge of the captive killer for decades has become obsessed with him instead reverts to the franchise’s default mode of reveling in wanton murder. The result, as directed and co-written by David Gordon Green, is a nasty bit of nostalgia patrons of taste will sensibly shun. Excessive gore violence, drug use, brief upper female and partial nudity, a few uses of profanity, frequent rough and occasional crude and crass language. O; R

Hunter Killer

Summit

Far-fetched but reasonably entertaining military potboiler puts scowling macho man Gerard Butler at the helm of a U.S. submarine during a potentially war-triggering crisis in relations with Russia. To avert a nuclear holocaust, he must not only do some fancy maneuvering but gain the cooperation of a Russian counterpart (Michael Nyqvist), despite the numerous objections to this apparently collaborationist plan of his conventionally minded executive offi cer (Carter MacIntyre). Back on land, the skipper gets support from a level-headed admiral (Common) and an equally sensible presidential security adviser (Linda Cardellini) who together also dispatch a team of Navy SEALs (led by Toby Stephens) to the Kola Peninsula to see what’s going on at Russia’s naval headquarters. Director Donovan Marsh’s screen version of George Wallace and Don Keith’s 2012 novel “Firing Point,” which also features Gary Oldman chewing the scenery as the fuming, trigger-happy chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is crowded, somewhat laborsome and hard to swallow. But, while it includes too much bloodletting and sailor slang for youngsters, the film ultimately promotes the need to take chances for peace. Much violence with considerable gore, several uses of profanity, a few rough terms, frequent crude and crass language, a couple of vulgar sexual references. A-III; R

The Old Man & the Gun

Fox Searchlight

Writer-director David Lowery’s adaptation of David Grann’s New Yorker magazine profile of bank robber Forrest Tucker, who died in prison in 2004, is driven by the conceit of a career criminal as a jaunty old coot. During a wide-ranging spree of heists in 1981, Tucker (Robert Redford) works with two partners (Danny Glover and Tom Waits), and their modus operandi is always nonviolent. He also fi nds time to woo a widow (vousa Forrest) who’s struggling to hold on to her horse ranch. But a police detective (Casey Affleck) is doggedly on the thief’s trail. Viewers hoping to identify a point or moral to the story won’t locate one, but some may enjoy the loping drive around the American Southwest. Others will fi nd it soporific. Benignly viewed larceny, fleeting rough language. A-III; PG-13
Ocho sacerdotes vinculados a Baton Rouge. acusado de abusar sexualmente de menores

Por Richard Meek
El Comentarista Católico

Ocho sacerdotes que han ministrado en iglesias ubicadas en la Diócesis de Baton Rouge se encuentran entre una lista de 57 miembros del clero liberados por la Arquidiócesis de Nueva Orleans que han sido acusados de abusar sexualmente de un menor, lo que llevó a su expulsión del ministerio.

Varios de los ocho sacerdotes nombrados sirvieron cuando lo que ahora es la Diócesis de Baton Rouge todavía era parte de la arquidiócesis. La Diócesis se formó en 1966.

Los sacerdotes y las Iglesias en las que servían ahora forman parte de la Diócesis de Baton Rouge:
- Padre Ralph Lawrence, San Antonio, Baton Rouge;
- Padre Lawrence Hecker, Iglesia de Santa María del Falso Río en New Roads;
- Padre Gerard Howell, Iglesia de San Pío X en la Baton Rouge;
- Padre Pierre Cambiairíe, Iglesia de San Jorge en Baton Rouge;
- Padre John Franklin, Iglesia de la Ascensión de Nuestro Señor en Donaldsonville;
- Padre Malcolm Strassel, Iglesia del Santo Rosario en St. Amant y la Iglesia de Santa Inés en Baton Rouge;
- Padre John Weber, Iglesia de la Asunción en Plattenville y la Iglesia de Santa Ana en Morganza;
- Padre Michael Hurley, Iglesia de Santa Inés en Baton Rouge.

Al ver los nombres, el Obispo Duca explicó: “Esperaba que hubiera un cierto cambio en las listas de la Diócesis de Nueva Orleans y Baton Rouge debido a la forma en que se dividen los archivos del clero cuando se forma una nueva Diócesis. Cuando la Diócesis de Baton Rouge se formó, una parte del clero que antes formaba parte de la Arquidiócesis de Nueva Orleans se convirtió en clero de la nueva Diócesis de Baton Rouge bajo el liderazgo del nuevo obispo. Sus archivos personales los siguieron a la nueva diócesis. Si un miembro del clero sirvió en esta área, pero permaneció en la Arquidiócesis de Nueva Orleans después de la separación, los archivos permanecieron en Nueva Orleans. A pesar de estas divisiones administrativas, nuestra lista contendrá toda la evidencia que encontraremos en una revisión sistemática de todos nuestros archivos de personal administrativo y mencionará las que figuran en la lista de Nueva Orleans que prestaron servicios en nuestra área geográfica. “Esto asegurará que la lista que publicaremos sea precisa y completa cuando se publique e incluirá los nombres de todos los archivos personales que han servido en la Diócesis que ha sido acusada creíblemente de abuso sexual de menores.”

“Sé que puede haber alguna pregunta sobre por qué nuestra lista no salió al mismo tiempo que Nueva Orleans”, agregó el Obispo Duca. “Cada una de las diócesis de Luisiana está decidiendo cuál es la mejor manera de responder a la necesidad de claridad y transparencia al desnudar el abuso sexual en su Diócesis, y cada una trabaja de manera independiente para crear sus respuestas. “Cada Diócesis tiene su propio conjunto único de circunstancias y desafíos que afectan el tiempo de la lista y su contenido. Nuestro objetivo desde la primera semana de mi instalación como Obispo de Baton Rouge fue abrir todos nuestros archivos para una revisión completa y sin restricciones y divulgar los nombres de miembros del clero que han sido acusados de abuso sexual infantil en la Diócesis de Baton Rouge. No hemos sido tan rápidos para comenzar nuestro proceso, principalmente porque acabo de llegar a la Diócesis y el requisito de que nos movamos de manera deliberada y respetuosa en este proceso debido a la importancia de nuestro trabajo. “Estamos llegando rápidamente al final de nuestra planificación y pronto podremos anunciar nuestro proceso para una revisión creíble de nuestros archivos y un calendario de cuándo esperar que se publique nuestra lista”, dijo el Obispo Duca. “Me estoy acercando a esto como una empresa y responsabilidad espiritual que debe tener en cuenta en que las víctimas de estas han sido violadas y heridas por obispos, sacerdotes y diáconos, no deben olvidarse en el proceso. Con este fin, pido la guía del Espíritu Santo en mi oración personal, busco el consejo de muchos y siempre tengo ante mí la voz de las víctimas, para que nuestras acciones sean una ayuda para su curación, una afirmación de la validez de su clamor de justicia y el llamado al arrepentimiento y la renovación. Estos principios me están guiando para trabajar en este asunto con determinación para asegurar un proceso y un resultado respetuosos. Les pido sus oraciones mientras este proceso continúa.”

Las víctimas de abuso sexual por parte de miembros del clero que no se han presentado pueden comunicarse con el Centro de Asistencia a Víctimas utilizando la línea directa confidencial de abuso diocesano al 225-242-0250.

OBISPO DUCA CELEBRA MASA – Como lo prometió en sus primeras palabras con los feligreses de Baton Rouge durante su instalación y con respecto a buscar un acercamiento con los hispanos, el domingo 28 de Octubre, el Obispo Michael Duca celebró la misa en la Iglesia San Pío X con el Rev. Robert Halter, C.S.S.R., Capellán del Apostolado Hispano. El Obispo Duca se reunió con los líderes de los diferentes ministerios y otros miembros de esta multicultural comunidad.
Bishop Duca asks for prayers during difficult times

I t has been just ten weeks since I was received at St. Joseph Cathedral as the sixth bishop of Baton Rouge. As bishop, I would have liked my first column in The Catholic Commentator to be on a less serious subject but this moment in our lives as Catholics demands a different kind of reflection.

On August 14, the “Grand Jury Report on the Sexual Abuse of Children in Six Dioceses in Pennsylvania” was published and once again cast worldwide attention on the Sexual Abuse of Children in Six Dioceses in Pennsylvania. This report revealed blind spots in the church’s response to this crisis that need to be acknowledged and acted upon now. The first surprising revelation from the report for many was the intimate and graphic testimony describing some of the acts of abuse inflicted on children by priests. These personal and graphic testimonies revealed a truth that is often hidden from sight and simply described as abuse. These descriptive accounts gave us a window into the horrifying reality of sexual abuse and caused true, righteous anger throughout the church. This genuine outcry caused by the grand jury report, I believe, truly challenges the church, in particular the bishops, to review our responses to the sinful and violent acts of abuse on children by deacons, priests and even bishops. I use the word violent because that is what sexual abuse of a child really is, a violation, a violence that assaults the innocence of youth and wounds the sacred foundation on which a young heart at a time when they are forming the spiritual and human foundations upon which all loving relationships depend. A heart wounded at this young age is often a heart wounded for life. Keeping an awareness of the true and horrific nature of child abuse always front and center will keep the needs of the victims of sexual abuse in the church at the center of our concern and will keep us alert and vigilant to keep a firm resolve to protect our children going forward.

A second surprise in the report was the listing of names of accused priests not previously known to the public. This revelation shocked and caused some to wonder what other secrets dioceses were hiding in their chancery files. In response to the demand for an even deeper transparency, many dioceses have decided to release a complete list of clergy of any rank who have been credibly accused of the sexual abuse of minors within their diocese. As bishop, I have decided that this is the required action needed in our diocese as well. My plan is to publish a list within the next few months of any credibly accused deacon, priest or bishop who has served in our diocese. I hope first of all that this will affirm and give credibility to the voice of the victims of this tragedy. Also, it is my hope that this accounting will be an important help to build a deepening trust between you and myself as your bishop, and you with my diocesan staff.

The Cardinal McCarrick scandal revealed a different kind of wound in the church that needs to be straightforwardly addressed. At the 2002 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops meeting in Dallas, Texas, the bishops of the United States created “The Charter for the Protection of Children,” which created a series of strict guidelines which required bishops to immediately remove any cleric from ministry if he was credibly accused of sexual abuse of a minor and only returned to ministry if the accusation was proven false. While this was an exceedingly strong response to this crisis in the church, the bishops did not create a similar method of accountability for themselves if accused. The Cardinal McCarrick case clearly revealed this critical weakness in the Charter. In light of this scandal the bishops have committed themselves to addressing and correcting this weakness. Next week beginning Monday, Nov. 12, the bishops of the United States (USCCB) will gather in Baltimore, Maryland for their annual meeting and will consider concrete ways to investigate accusations against bishops, such as through an independent review board, holding a bishop accountable for his actions and/or to prove an accusation true or false. This is a measure that I will wholeheartedly support at our bishops’ meeting next week. This will hopefully be another crucial step taken to reduce the damage which has been lost within the church community.

I truly hope you realize how the events of August have created some movement for change and conversion within the church. Please pray for all the bishops and me as we meet in Baltimore next week.

Do not lose heart because in reality this is deeply spiritual work. For the faithful Catholic the way the Gospel always seeks to bring what is in darkness out into the light. Even at times while doing this hard work it can feel like we are dying, we are always hopeful of resurrection. What is in the darkness enslaves us to the power of sin and will always cause disunity in the body of Christ. What is brought from the darkness into the Light of Christ frees us to love and thus frees the church to be a true witness of Christ.

Pray with me please, that our decisions and actions during these difficult times may make us credible witnesses to the healing love of Christ in this world.
Father Ranzino’s eulogy for Father Vavasseur

Henry.

Those who do not believe in a Higher Harmony will balk when told an accident crunched in the parking lot at the very moment the altar boy’s nose began to bleed. He bled on the surplice, the cassock, the candle, the other altar boy, and the priest’s unlaiced shoe which bunglingly carried an Ace-bandaged ankle. The priest was stung a purifying up the boy’s nose, damming the blood into his eyeballs, when the Lector asked “how do you pronounce E-L-I-S-H-A?” and the organist pounded the entrance “Praise to the Lord…” They processed, the bleeding, the halt, and the mute unto the altar of God.

Saturday was late and liquored and delivered God’s people, sun-glassed and slumping, to the epilogue of weekend life, the Gothic Church. They were not the community of liberal theology nor the scrubbed inhabitants of filmstrips. They were one endless face—and that face was asleep.

“May the grace of our Lord…” A hungry pause for repentance. A quick feast of sins.

The Lector murdered the prophets once again and bypassed a section where a certain E-L-I-S-H-A was having prophetic truck with a widow. The homily parlayed a fairly clear gospel (you are either with me or against me) into sentences of vaticination and paragraphs of double think. The priest ran to the Creed for refuge only to find a special Creed had been prepared for this mornings’ liturgy by Mrs. Zardek “I believe in butterflies and the breath of…”

The courage of faith, the faith of the liturgical assembly drilled into the bolt holes of communion — rail days.

The aftertory gifts never made it. They were dropped by an elderly couple (“We never liked the new Mass anyway.”) who collided with a small but speedy child by an elderly couple (“We never liked the new Mass…” who recoiled at a nickname like “Old Mud Face,” admitting, “slammie,” that his frown often did look frozen. His humor was strange; his mind keen; his was a life that hummed along within the familiar pace of a parish; and Henry was a pastor thru and thru. He also was a man haunted by sorrow, unsteady on his emotional feet and wounded by defects which he had difficulty hiding. Like most all of us, Henry wore his self sometimes tightly wound; sometimes he wore his self as if he wanted to shed his skin. And then again, he was not like most of us in his multi-color clergy shirts, his LSU paraphernalia displays and his vestments that could and did make a liturgist blanch. I loved Henry — as did you in your own ways — and you well know Henry did not always make loving him easy.

The readings for this Mass were chosen by Henry and give us some insight into his mind about all this. I’m sure he preached on them many times over his 60 years as a priest.

The prophet Isaiah speaks from a mountain, a place of vision above it all. It is here that God dwells. The Holy One who is beyond us, yet the Holy One here among us. One who is beyond us, yet the Holy One here among us. It is here that God dwells. The prophet Isaiah speaks from a mountain, a place of vision above it all. It is here that God dwells. The Holy One who is beyond us, yet the Holy One here among us. One who is beyond us, yet the Holy One here among us.

For 60 years Henry Clay Vavasseur was a priest of God. He knew lectors who murdered the prophets, he knew such spontaneous goofs and glory. He was aware wanted to be — in a parish, with people with whom he could form relationships, people for whom he could help save and with whom he could genuinely love. He led the liturgy of the Eucharist, he reconciled, he preached, he baptized, he anointed, he counselled, he challenged, he worked with, he administered — he did all sorts of things a priest did and does. Many of you are here today to remember that moment with Hank which either delighted you or infuriated you. He was a complex man. He could be comforting as a “paw paw” — and cutting as a razor. He delighted in the turn of a phrase or an exasperating prank or joke; and yet, I don’t think Hank was to be termed impudent. He best used his ability to see deeply into things and people. He both laughed and recoiled at a nickname like “Old Mud Face,” admitting, “slammie,” that his frown often did look frozen. His humor was strange; his mind keen; his was a life that hummed along within the familiar pace of a parish; and Henry was a pastor thru and thru. He also was a man haunted by sorrow, unsteady on his emotional feet and wounded by defects which he had difficulty hiding. Like most all of us, Henry wore his self sometimes tightly wound; sometimes he wore his self as if he wanted to shed his skin. And then again, he was not like most of us in his multi-color clergy shirts, his LSU paraphernalia displays and his vestments that could and did make a liturgist blanch. I loved Henry — as did you in your own ways — and you well know Henry did not always make loving him easy.

The readings for this Mass were chosen by Henry and give us some insight into his mind about all this. I’m sure he preached on them many times over his 60 years as a priest.

If you do not eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood you do not have life within you. This life is not dependent on the breath of the lungs but on the breath of Christ’s Spirit. Eating and drinking the body and blood of the Lord is our entrance into this great mystery of faith, so that we can live forever. Nothing prepares us for this mystery except as gift from God. Here we are caught up in the secret of life, in the ever deepening experiences of the dying and rising of Jesus Christ so that when it comes time to die to this world, we would have already known the pattern. In this mystery of faith Henry cultivated his own dying and rising experiences; with each liturgy of the Eucharist he rehearsed his own entrance into that Mystery which is the fusion of all our incompleteness, and in the single eye of God, tomorrows march toward the breaking brilliance of light.

There is a saying in the spiritual life: Always we begin as we do in the beginning. Always we begin as we do in the beginning. Always we begin as we do in the beginning. We do this today. We do this today. We do this today. 

That we cannot control most anything and that life is more dynamic than we thought. We run into the reality of sin and its blood — child, death, which always intrudes and finds its way to infect.

In many ways Henry had to maneuver with deaths unexpected impact in and on his own life. I don’t think Henry ever really recovered from his brother Stormy’s death. There’s the sin that Henry was to be living with; a plan which would not unfold. So Henry marched on, without his brother priest and blood brother, marched on not as jauntily or carefully, carrying a wound that hurt and haunted him.

These last years were hard on Hank as he retired from active ministry. He struggled to keep his balance emotionally and physically, he was away and gradually lost his awareness of the present time to the recesses of his faulty memory so that one could find him on one particular day a man alert and in the moment, and then discover later that same day, all the while he was somewhere else in his mind. During this time, catching glimpses of what Henry was — an insightful pastor — a generous teacher, a leader among our priests, made us more aware of the gifts Henry displayed when he was at his best and which were now locked away from us. And while we noticed his wounds, we were not able to ever soothe them for him. So what does this mean? What do we do when we cannot fix what is not in our power this? What do we do when someone we cannot make well what is unwell? What do we do when someone we love is receding away from us and for whom we cannot make feel safe?

This is not a question to be solved, rather it is a condition of the spiritual life. What we are to do is go back to that mystery that masks itself as mistake and the power that reveals itself in weakness. That great Paschal Mystery which is the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to whom Henry dedicated his life and of which we participate in every Eucharist. The Gospel of John 6 situates us in the heart of this Mystery: If you do not eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood you do not have life within you. This life is not dependent on the breath of the lungs but on the breath of Christ’s Spirit. Eating and drinking the body and blood of the Lord is our entrance into this great mystery of faith, so that we can live forever. Nothing prepares us for this mystery except as gift from God. Here we are caught up in the secret of life, in the ever deepening experiences of the dying and rising of Jesus Christ so that when it comes time to die to this world, we would have already known the pattern. In this mystery of faith Henry cultivated his own dying and rising experiences; with each liturgy of the Eucharist he rehearsed his own entrance into that Mystery which is the fusion of all our incompleteness, and in the single eye of God, tomorrows march toward the breaking brilliance of light.

There is a saying in the spiritual life: Always we begin again. Always we begin again. Always we begin again. It means there is always a beginning, even at endings. We trust that this is a beginning again for Hank, for him to become like God no longer encumbered by uncertainty or doubt that God truly does love him.

What can we say? You are OK Henry. Well done, good and faithful servant, adopted son of our father, ordained son of the church, big brother to your family, pastor of many, lover of the church. We could not wish more for our brother than to send him forth to the edge of his season of fairest reaching communion with God.

Henry deserves no less.
COMING EVENTS

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.

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

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 Cor13, the battle for the Red Stick and more. Registration and more information are available at redstickcatholicfest.com.

Discailed Carmelites – The Secular Order of Discailed 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 robertheight456att.net.

Book Signing and Benefit – Major Reginald R. Brown Sr. will have a book signing on his book, “My Bicycle Journey,” on Sunday, Nov. 11, 4 p.m. – 6 p.m. at the St. Joseph Parish Hall, Fourth and Main streets, Baton Rouge. Major Brown has served on the board of directors and has been a long-time volunteer for the St. Vincent de Paul Society and all proceeds will benefit SVPD.

St. Agnes Masses – St. Agnes Church, 749 East Blvd., Baton Rouge, will celebrate two special Masses. On Tuesday, Nov. 13, the church will host a pro-life Mass at 5:30 p.m. On Friday, Nov. 23 there will be a St. Charbel Healing Mass at 6 p.m. For more information, call 225-383-4127.

Gentle Hands Service – St. Aloysius Church, 2025 Stuart Ave., Baton Rouge, will hold a Gentle Hands memorial service on Tuesday, Nov. 13, 6:30 p.m. Gentle Hands is a ministry of St. Aloysius and supports families that have suffered the death of a child through miscarriage, stillbirth, early infants loss and other tragedies. For more information, call 337-728-8810 or email emilymiranda@gmail.com.

Day of Reflection – Sister Janet Franklin CSJ is presenting a day of reflection, “Seasons of the Spirit,” Tuesday, Nov. 13 at the Archdiocese of New Orleans Retreat Center, 5500 St. Mary St., Metairie. The day includes Scriptures, poetry, art, music and silent times for contemplation. Minimum offering is $55. For more information and to register, visit retreats.arch-no.org or call Susan Halligan at 1-866-937-9770.

Food Drive – Catholic Arts and Gifts, 6184 Florida Blvd., Baton Rouge, will hold a food drive, “Let’s Can Hunger,” on Saturday, Nov. 17, 9:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Bring a canned item and get a free rosary. There will be giveaways, snacks, sales and fun for the family. All donations benefit the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

Drama on First African American Priest – Jim Coleman will portray Father Augustus Tolton, the first African-American priest, in a one-man drama “Tolton: From Slave to Priest” on Tuesday, Dec. 4, 7 p.m., at the Catholic Life Center, 1800 S. Acadian Thwy., Baton Rouge. Admission will be $35 for adults, $10 for youth, $50 for VIP and $80 for families of four or more. For more information, call Deacon Alfred Adams, director of the Office of Black Catholics, at 225-562-3555.

St. Alphonsus Mission – Mike Patin will present a mission, “We Wait in Joyful Hope,” Sunday, Dec. 2 – Tuesday Dec. 4, 7 p.m., at St. Alphonsus Church, 14040 Greenwell Springs Road, Greenwell Springs. For more information, call 225-261-4650.
Parents and some staff begin arriving at 6:30 a.m. at the pickup point to wait for the bus, which leaves promptly at 6:50 a.m. After school drop-off is 3:45 p.m. at the side of the river and rides the bus to school to help with the three- and four-year-old students.

“We get to the school by 8 a.m.,” explained Gros. “We line up at 2:30 (p.m.) and leave at 2:40. It’s not all that bad. The (little kids) have iPads. They do okay.”

“We are very lucky to have her ride the bus to help with the little ones,” said Pizzolato.

While school administrators are doing all they can to accommodate students, families continue to struggle with the two-hour daily commute and the toll it is taking on their children.

“It’s affecting her because we have to wake up an hour earlier and by the end of the day she’s done,” emphatically stated Richelle Mitchell of Sorrento, whose daughter Rylee, 7, rides the bus.

“It makes coordinating the pickups a little more difficult,” said Andre Belanger of Gonzales, who drives his sons Luc, 6, and Mathieu, 4, to the bus stop. He and his wife Ashley both work in Baton Rouge.

“Now, one of us has to leave work earlier or we have to rely on a grandparent to come and get them, and so we have to leave work earlier to pick them up at their house,” Belanger explained. He said their sons used to stay in aftercare until 5:30 p.m. but that is no longer an option.

Pizzolato said she has set up a satellite location at St. Anne’s Church in Sorrento for two days a week on the east side of the Mississippi River in order to give students, parents and teachers a break from the long commute. Thanks to technology, she said, learning remotely is a feasible option, with students live-streaming classroom instructions. She said there will be three certified instructors along with two qualified parent volunteers on site to help coordinate the effort and students will bring their own lunch.

“The parents are just so grateful that we are doing something for them,” Pizzolato stated. “There are concerns that maybe kids might fall behind. You know, I don’t see that as being a concern. I’m going to go there for the first couple of weeks to monitor, and I’m going to make sure everything is in line and schedules are set.”

As for Dunn and his family, they’ll continue to arrange their schedules to get together when they can on weekends. Jacob said his dad, Chad, commutes from Gonzales to the west bank for his job and brings 5-year-old Emma to school on those days. Jacob’s younger brother, sixth-grader Peyton, rides the bus from the bus stop and Jacob’s mom, Amy, works in Gonzales.

In the meantime, Jacob catches rides from football practice with a student who lives next door to his grandmother’s house. And, living with his grandmother Monday through Thursday does come with some perks.

“The first night she made hamburger steaks, then chicken stew,” he grinned. “She’s been cooking pretty good.”
ensure that the list we publish will be accurate and complete when released and include the names of every member of the clergy who has served in the diocese who has been credibly accused of sexual abuse of minors.

“I know there may be some question about why our list did not come out at the same time as New Orleans,” Bishop Duca added. “The dioceses of Louisiana each are deciding how best to respond to the need for clarity and transparency in reporting sexual abuse in their diocese, and each is working independent of one another in the creation of their responses.

“Every diocese has its own unique set of circumstances and challenges which will affect the timing of the list and its contents. It has been our goal from the first week of my installation as bishop of Baton Rouge to open all our files to a complete and unrestricted review and release the names of clergy who have been credibly accused of child sexual abuse within the Diocese of Baton Rouge. We have not been as quick to begin our process mainly because of my just arriving in the diocese and the requirement that we move deliberately and respectfully in this process because of the importance of our work.”

“We are quickly coming to the end of our planning and will soon be able to announce our process for a credible review of our files and a timetable for when to expect our list to be published,” Bishop Duca said. “I am approaching this as a spiritual undertaking and responsibility that must keep in mind that the lives of the victims who have been violated and wounded by bishops, priests and deacons, not be forgotten in this process. To this end I ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in my personal prayer, I seek the counsel of many and always have before me the voice of the victims so that our actions will hopefully be a help in their healing, an affirmation of the validity of their cry for justice and a call for repentance and renewal. These principles are guiding me to work on this matter with determination to insure a respectful process and outcome. I ask for your prayers as this process continues.”

Victims of sexual abuse by clergy members who have not come forward can contact the Victims Assistance Office using the confidential diocesan abuse hotline at 225-242-0950.

PRAY

Beckman said. “We have people saying, ‘We want to lift up the priests right now because they are in crisis.’ People must be recognizing their need for prayer and sacrifice.”

She addresses the current scandal in her newly released book, “When Women Pray.”

Beckman told the Magnificat meeting attendees, “Pray for priests, because of the spiritual battle in our midst. Because of the secularization of the culture the church is attacked all the more, and the priests are in the forefront. So this is very timely.

“Priests are taking it in stride, but there has been a wound in the body of Christ. I believe that God intends the light to shine in the darkness because the Holy Spirit has everything to do with the sanctification and healing of the body of Christ.”

Beckman acknowledged that a “sacred trust” has been broken by a small percentage of clergy. Prayer for Priests also prays for the victims, bishops and cardinals.

When Beckman read the Pennsylvania grand jury report, followed by the Archbishop Theodore E. McCarrick scandal, memories surfaced of a brutal murder of a family member, when she lost trust in everyone and even God for a time.

However, God brought her to the point of forgiving the murderer and praying for his salvation. She said the whole church is suffering. Beckman said there has been a deconstruction of religion, church, marriage and family life that allows evil to enter.

“We see that right now, it’s the new cosmic battle,” Beckman said.

But far from retreating, Beckman, who serves as the coordinator of exorcism and deliverance ministry in her diocese, urged people to pray and trust God’s divine mercy will heal a broken world.

“I have been at many exorcisms, and I can assure you that God always wins,” said Beckman.

She added, “We have the authority of the entire praying church. Whether you realize it not, you are in the ministry of healing and deliverance.

The current sexual abuse crisis means intercessory prayers, sacrifice, service and study are needed more than ever, Beckman said. She referred to Esther 4:14, where Mordecai reassured Esther when asking her to plead to the king for Israel’s deliverance even though her request could result in her death: “Who knows – perhaps it was for a time like this that you became queen?”

For more information, visit the foundation’s site at foundationforpriests.org.

Share Your Blessings This Thanksgiving

In our nation, Thanksgiving originated as a harvest festival, a time of gratitude, and an opportunity to share nature’s bounty with family and friends. On this day, no one went hungry. So much has changed since that first Thanksgiving that our country would now be unrecognizable to those early settlers.

One thing that hasn’t changed is the need to share God’s blessings with the less fortunate. On this special holiday, as we gather around tables filled with turkey and dressing, our favorite casseroles, and mouth-watering desserts, most of us will begin the meal with a blessing. In that prayer, we hope you will remember the poor and homeless men, women, and children who will be coming to St. Vincent de Paul for their Thanksgiving meal.

On November 22nd, our volunteers will serve turkey with all the trimmings to hundreds of people who, unfortunately, have little to celebrate. Many of them are living in homes where people have to skip meals or eat less to make ends meet. Some of them have no homes. But on this day, they will all have a warm place to go and plenty to eat.

This year, our volunteers will be serving up a Thanksgiving meal at our Dining Room and will continue the Holiday Helpers’ tradition at the Raising Cane’s River Center. We will come together to ensure everyone in our community has a place to turn to on Thanksgiving Day, as well as everyday of the year.

Sometimes, we are overwhelmed by the number of people who turn to St. Vincent de Paul for the nourishment they need. But these people are not numbers – they are real people in desperate need. We see their faces; we hear their stories. They are struggling to survive and must rely on the kindness of others to help them through this difficult time in their lives.

During the upcoming holiday season, there are many people who are wondering where their next meal is coming from. St. Vincent de Paul is the only community kitchen that is open every day of the year, providing a hot lunch and a brown bag supper daily. This year, we will serve over 270,000 meals. The lines at our dining room are long, and we can only meet the need with the help of generous people like you.

See the enclosed envelope to see how you can help the needy, or give online at svdpbr.org.