St. Francis celebrates centennial

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

A welcome mat of excitement and hospitality was rolled out to usher people into a Mass closing out a yearlong 100th anniversary celebration at St. Francis Xavier Church in Baton Rouge on Dec. 30.

Members of the Knights of Peter ladies auxiliary dressed elegantly in white smiled to passersby as they prepared to take group photos, with the Knights dressed in regalia standing nearby. Ushers greeted people and opened the door to a church brimming with people and a soulful Gospel prelude before the liturgy.

The theme of the centennial marker was “Through Trials and Tribulations, by God’s Grace We Triumph.”

“Today we celebrate 100 years – 100 years,” said Father Roderick Coates SSJ in his homily, and applause rolled across the church. Father Coates, a Baton Rouge native, has served as priest and Josephite leader for more than 25 years.

Connecting the centennial theme with the Feast of the Holy Family, Father Coates said, “We, too, are the family of God. We come together like the

Holiday joy can lead to the blues

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

The tree is down, those joyful memories of Christmas morning buried in the brown needles that seem to hang around seemingly until spring.

The Nativity has been stowed and the outdoor decorations shoved back into the cramped attic.

The Christmas season is over. For many, this is the time of year when the holiday blues take root, the euphoria of the holidays morphing into a slight depression of unmet expectations, dreary weather and the onslaught of January bills.

“I think the holiday blues are real,” said Paula Davis, a social worker and mental health professional with Catholic Charities Diocese of Baton Rouge. “I would say the majority of the blues are before and during the holidays. And I think the media feeds into that, such as the Christmas specials that you see or this idea that there has to be all of these presents under the tree.

“I think people lose focus about what the Christmas season is really about.”

Stephanie Sterling, director of the Maternity, Adoption and Behavioral Health Services Department of CCDBR, said social media is also a culprit, noting that people are posting “all kinds of perfect pictures, what their houses look like and how perfect and happy their children are with their brand new toys.”

“I think it just feeds into people’s thoughts that that may be failing at family or even at life. I think (social media) does a number on a lot of people.”

Davis agreed and warned that what people are posting is often “carefully curated to present a picture and it’s not necessarily a reflection of how it really is.

“People spent a lot of time making things look a certain way but it’s not their own reality.”

So how does one combat those pesky holiday blues, and nip it so it...
Can you hear the bells?

Bells will be ringing. Or maybe not.

Depending on the church one attends, altar servers might or might not ring the Sanctus bells during the consecration, trumpeting the turning of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ.

According to the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, the how to manual on celebrating the Mass, there are two occasions when bells might be used during the liturgy. Of course, the most common is during the consecration.

Bells may also be rung shortly before the consecration, according to the GIRM, when the priest is praying the Holy Spirit will come down upon the gifts so they will become the body and blood of our Lord.

So who decides? According to the rubrics of the church, the final decision lies with the pastor.

The Venerable Bede, an English saint of the eighth century, is credited with initiating the ringing of bells at requiem Masses.

During the 13th century outdoor bells began to be used as Sanctus bells during the Mass. Even today, the tower bells are used as Sanctus bells at the Basilica of St. Peter in the Vatican.

In 1570, The Missale Romanum of the old Tridentine Mass prescribed the ringing of the bells but that practice was made optional by Pope Paul VI during a revision of the Mass in the 1960s.

One of several misconceptions today is that the bells were silenced by Vatican II, which is not true. The church’s Sacred Congregation for Sacraments and Divine Worship reinforced the option documented in the GIRM with a response in 1972, stating the ringing of bells “depends on the different circumstances of places and people.”

The congregation went on to say the ringing depends on the local custom.

What is true is that under the promulgation of what many old-timers refer to as the “new Mass” during the late 1960s, many changes affected how the Mass would be celebrated. It was then that many Sanctus bells were silenced around the world.

Debate continues on their use but Sanctus bells are undergoing a renaissance. Increasingly, many Catholics are beginning to view the Sanctus bells as part of the church’s rich sacramental tradition, similar to the oils, vestments, bread and even incense.

Some insist the bells help them connect to God in a deeper and perhaps even more mysterious way.

Some insist the bells help them connect to God in a deeper and perhaps even more mysterious way.

So will bells be ringing? Listen closely.

Spirit and life

By Dina Dow

The joy of this past Christmas resonates as we begin in Ordinary Time of the liturgical season. Even though the decorations are stored away for another year consider finding a space to display at least one sign of Jesus’ Nativity as a reminder of the joy of His humble birth. The celebration of the Second and Third Sunday Masses of Ordinary Time empower us to recognize the joy of God, the movement of the Holy Spirit and the mission of Jesus Christ.

God rejoices in his people

The joy in a person is something to behold. Think of the times we see one who returns home from military service. Separation from family, friends and familiar faces dissolves and is filled with embraces, tears and comfort to welcome them home. Hearts move with joy and compassion. Perhaps you have witnessed a little child walking for the first time, parents cheering him or her as they attempt to take that first step. Everyone is cheering! What about a wedding day: man and woman deeply committed to one another, adorned in beautiful garments vowing to be a light of Christ through their love as families realize time really does go by swiftly. Take these moments and others similar then multiply the joy by infinity. This is how much God rejoices in you. Yes, you! This joy is unbreakable, inseparable, unstoppable and unfathomable. For this, we shout back to him in joy!

God also rejoices in the restoration of our “homeland.” The reading from the Book of Nehemiah is the tail end of the story of the Israelites’ return from exile. Faced with rebuilding Jerusalem after centuries of occupation, progress comes with the confidence and courage of one leader, Nehemiah, to restore the confidence and courage in the people. He surrounded himself with good people to help, dispelled the enemies who desired to sabotage the progress, and upon completion celebrated the restoration showing gratitude to God with joy and recommitment.

The same happens to us in a spiritual sense. The “homeland” of our very being is a residence for the Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Since sin is a deliberate offense against God, sinfulness creates an exile, a separation from God. Thus, our homeland is open to occupants not of God. It captures our being and casts us out. Eventually the dwelling will decline into ruins. Yet, in grace and mercy, God sends the one who is above sin, bestowed with confidence and leads with courage to restore our body and soul.

The joy of the restoration shines from the sacrament of reconciliation and a deeper strengthening through the Eucharist. Jesus invites sinners to the table of the kingdom: “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners” (Mt 9:13). He invites them to that conversion without which one cannot enter the kingdom, but shows them in word and deed his father’s boundless mercy for them and the vast “joy in heaven over one sinner who repents” (Lk 15:7). The supreme proof of his love will be the sacrifice of his own life “for the forgiveness of sins” (Catechism Para. 545).

Movement of the Holy Spirit

The First Letter to the Corinthians, Chapter 12, is widely recognized. St. Paul explains the gifts of the Holy Spirit, freely given to us in baptism, which enable us to move with God on our journey to eternity. Each individual has spiritual gifts: service, worship and tangible benefit for the kingdom of God.

Through baptism we are united in the mystical body of Jesus Christ. St. Paul gives a terrific “anatomy lesson” explaining particular functions of organs, each with a specific role, yet crucial to the entire body. Likewise, each of us has a pivotal role in the movement of the mystical body of Christ for the purpose of building God’s kingdom. Fortified by the Holy Spirit our role holds equal bearing to another’s. One role is not greater than that of another. Rather all roles are necessary for the entire body. We are called to function together without division and with the same concern. When one member suffers, all suffer. When one rejoices, all rejoice. We are made for community.

Being in the one body of Jesus allows for diversity. We have different gifts, yet share these for the good of the whole. We need each other. God has constructed this body, and in...
Public defenders underfunded

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

Money to pay for public defense attorneys in Louisiana is slowly drying up, according to Richard Pittman, deputy public defender with the Louisiana Public Defender Board. He said funding comes from a combination of state money and local revenue, “the primary driver of which is traffic tickets and the court costs that come with traffic tickets.”

“The number of traffic tickets filed into courts in Louisiana have declined literally nine consecutive years,” explained Pittman to the Louisiana Interchurch Conference Commission on Criminal Justice.

A shift in funding from the state helped shore up some of the expenses but it’s still not enough, he said.

“The number of criminal cases has declined but not at the rate of the decline of funding. That follows a national trend. There’s a national trend that police aren’t writing as many traffic tickets,” Pittman stated. “There are other factors at play there but the system of funding public defense isn’t working the way it was designed to work.

“As a result, the legislative fix that shifted more money towards public defense, it’s coming back to the system that we need more because of the fact that local funding is not reliable or stable or sufficient.”

Current issues, resources and ideas related to criminal justice in Louisiana is the purpose of the commission meeting, according to Linda Fjelldso, coordinator of prison ministry for Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

“When we get together and discuss our own challenges or issues, we’re able to share what’s worked in the past or how we can make it work for the future,” said Fjelldso.

Among those sharing ideas with Pittman was Cheko Yancy with Louisiana Prison Alternatives (LPA). He noted that LPA was aware of the challenges or issues, we’re able to share what’s worked in the past or how we can make it work for the future,” said Fjelldso.

MacKinnon asked that instead of a prayer, everyone look around the room and acknowledge and thank God for the presence of the others and their work toward prison ministry.

“What a fitting way to end this meeting!” said a delighted Fjelldso.
Vatican: Investigation underway of bishop accused of abuse, misconduct

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – A bishop from Argentina who had been working in the Vatican’s real estate administration office is the object of a preliminary diocesan investigation after accusations came to light of sexual abuse, abuse of power and mismanagement in his former Diocese of Oran.


“On the basis of these accusations and from news appearing recently in the media,” Bishop Luis Antonio Scozzina of Oran “has already begun to collect some testimony which still needs to get to the Congregation for Bishops” at the Vatican, Gisotti wrote.

The case will be handed over to a special commission for bishops if credible evidence is found, he added.

“During the preliminary investigation, (Bishop) Zanchetta will abstain from working” at the Vatican office, Gisotti wrote.

Born in the province of Santa Fe, Argentina, in 1964, Bishop Zanchetta was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Quilmes, near Buenos Aires, in 1991.

He was named by Pope Francis in July 2013 to lead the Diocese of Oran; however, he asked the pope to accept his resignation in 2017 for “reasons of health.”

Four months after his resignation, Bishop Zanchetta was named by Pope Francis to a newly created role of “assessor” at the Administration of the Patrimony of the Holy See, commonly referred to by its Italian acronym APSA. The office handles the Vatican’s investment portfolio and its real estate holdings.

According to Gisotti, “no accusation of sexual abuse had emerged at the time of the nomination to assessor,” specifying that those accusations had only come to light last fall.

He also underlined that the bishop had not been removed from the diocese in 2017, but that the bishop himself had requested to step down.

“The reason for him stepping down was tied to his difficulty in handling relationships with diocesan clergy and to very tense relationships with the priests of the diocese,” Gisotti wrote.

“At the time of his resignation, there had been accusations against him of authoritarianism, but there were not any accusations against him of sexual abuse,” he added. “The problem that emerged then was to an inability to govern the clergy.”

Bishop Zanchetta, Gisotti said, was appointed to his position at APSA because of “his administrative management abilities.”

According to reports in late December by the local Argentine media outlet, El Tribuno, three priests had gone to the papal nuncio, Congolese Archbishop Leon Kalenga Badikebele, with accusations against Bishop Zanchetta of sexual abuse.

Another 10 priests reported abuses of power and financial mismanagement by the bishop at a diocesan major seminary he opened in 2016.

Bishops attend Spirit-filled retreat

WASHINGTON (CNS) – Although the weeklong retreat for U.S. Catholic bishops emphasized quiet reflection, several bishops spoke out on social media during the retreat and after it wrapped up Jan. 8 with positive reaction about it and to give shoutouts to the retreat leader, Capuchin Father Raniero Cantalamessa, who has preached to popes and top officials of the Roman Curia for nearly 40 years.

One bishop said listening to Father Cantalamessa was akin to being in the presence of the early Christian theologians. “Clear, intensely filled with the Holy Spirit, and all for the Kingdom of God,” Auxiliary Bishop Michael J. Boulette of San Antonio said in a tweet. “Let us continue to pray for one another, our church and our world. A blessing to be here!”

Archbishop Paul D. Etienne of Anchorage, Alaska, tweeted that the retreat leader was a “true instrument of the Lord” and that the Holy Spirit was at work during the retreat.

Bishop Lawrence T. Persico of Erie, Pennsylvania, described Father Cantalamessa’s talks and homilies as “powerful and engaging.”

He tweeted that he was glad they had time to reflect and pray about their role as shepherds, stressing: “We must start there to be able to offer healing. I am taking this very seriously but feeling positive.”

Boston Auxiliary Bishop Mark W. O’Connell said it was a “truly blessed experience” to be on retreat with Father Cantalamessa and fellow U.S. bishops.

“The Holy Spirit was powerfully present, and I was quite moved,” he tweeted.

He also thanked the pope for giving the bishops this gift.

Pope Francis suggested the bishops hold the retreat and offered the services of the 84-year-old Father Cantalamessa, who has served as preacher of the papal household since 1980. The time of prayer Jan. 2-8 at Mundelein Seminary at the University of St. Mary of the Lake near Chicago was planned largely in response to last summer’s revelations of allegations of sex abuse that reached the highest levels of the U.S. church.

In a Jan. 8 column for Angelus News, the archdiocesan news outlet of Los Angeles, Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles said the bishops’ retreat leader focused “our attention on the vocation and responsibility of bishops in this moment in the church.”

“We are praying together as a visible sign of our unity as bishops and our communion with the Holy Father. There is a collegial spirit here and a firm commitment to address the causes of the abuse crisis we face and continue the work of renewing the church,” he added.

The archbishop said Father Cantalamessa asked them to “trust more in the Holy Spirit. We need to have confidence that we are always living in God’s loving presence.”

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano of Bridgeport, Connecticut, wrote a few blog posts about the retreat with some reflection about the retreat leader’s message.

He said they heard about the need to emphasize in their preaching the fundamental belief in Jesus before delving into his message and teachings.

He also said Father Cantalamessa emphasized the need to root out “love of money” and all that it implies, including material possessions, honor or power.

Reflections from the retreat do not seem to be about the crisis in particular, maybe for a reason.

In an email to Catholic News Service weeks before the retreat, Father Cantalamessa said he would “not talk about pedophilia and will not give advice about eventual solutions; that is not my task and I would not have the competence to do so.”
Pilgrims to spread message of life during annual march

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

January 18 is the peak of a journey to Washington, D.C., filled with “prayer and sacrifice” for hundreds of youth from the Diocese of Baton Rouge, who will march up to the U.S. Supreme Court and call for the end of legalized abortion at March for Life.

The theme of this year’s annual march is “Unique from Day One: Pro-Life is Pro-Science.”

“We have nine buses and 457 pilgrims this year from over 20 churches and schools throughout the diocese,” said Emily Froeba, pilgrimage director.

“St. Michael High School in Baton Rouge is honored to organize this trip for our diocese. It allows all who participate to grow more in love with life, our Catholic faith and our Lord. God has abundantly blessed the March for Life pilgrimage. It is an opportunity to build a culture of life, beginning with the personal conversion of each individual.”

The 24-hour bus ride to the nation’s capital is a memory maker for pilgrims.

“I always wanted to go to Washington, D.C.,” said Victoria Verberne, a member of St. Helena Church in Amite. “I am not only excited about the trip itself and the places I will go, but the things that I will learn from it as well. I look forward to learning more about my religion and my country.”

A stop on the way to the march was schedule to include the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia motherhouse in Nashville, Tennessee. Some of the sisters were scheduled to board the bus and accompany students for the rest of the march.

While in Washington, D.C., pilgrims planned to visit the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle, the St. John Paul II National Shrine, the Smithsonian Museums, the Museum of the Bible, Arlington National Cemetery and the National Mall.

Also on the itinerary for this year is a visit to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, which intrigues Verberne.

“I am excited about visiting this place because I have always enjoyed learning about history; especially about the Holocaust,” said Verberne. “I’ve read multiple books on this topic as well as seen many documentaries to learn more about this time in our history.”

There is a touch of home when the youth meet with their peers at the annual Louisiana Geaux Forth Rally.

A chance to encounter mothers considering abortion occurs during a rosary walk at Planned Parenthood and at the White House.

Going to March for Life is a way to join with thousands of other voices to amplify the pro-life message for Austin Bascom, a member of Ascension of Our Lord Church in Donaldsonville.

“We will meet people who have the same standards and beliefs and make a difference in our society,” said Bascom.

He is looking forward to learning more about respectfully talking with those who don’t share his pro-life values.

Chelsea Buckley, a member of St. Paul the Apostle Church in Baton Rouge and student at Cristo Rey Baton Rouge Francis can High School, and Joelle Benoit, a member of St. John the Baptist Church in Brusly, shared this hope for their first trip.

“I want to help people see how precious life is and understand why it should be protected,” said Buckley.

Benoit said, “I am looking forward to the experience of doing different things and learning more about how to talk about the dignity of life.”

Sara Lavastida, a senior at St. George Church in Baton Rouge, is a fourth-time pilgrimage veteran.

It was a bumpy ride the first trip, Lavastida acknowledged.

“My first trip was the year of the blizzard (2016) when we had to come back early. After that happened, I knew I was going to have to go again to get the full experience. My second year going was such a fun and amazing experience that I have continued to go for the rest of high school. I cannot imagine what high school would have been like without March for Life each year,” she said.

The opportunity to share her pro-life views is Lavastida’s passion.

But equally important is an opportunity to grow in faith and evangelize.

“While the March for Life is about learning to respect life and about the crimes that have been or are being committed against life, I hope more to be able to experience the celebration of life and light that Jesus has given us with several of my friends,” said Lavastida.

Stories from friends about the March prompted Kirstynn Bettencourt, a member of St. George, to go on the march in 2017.

“From the second I left, I knew this trip was something I would want to continue to go on for as long as I can,” said Bettencourt.

She still gets nervous that “something bad could happen,” but fully trusts God will accompany everyone.

And the mission to spread pro-life values keeps her focused.

“Many times, those who do not share my pro-life views are quick to jump to excuses on how it is a ‘woman’s choice’ or how ‘it is a fetus and not an actual baby’ or many other defenses. When people say things like this, it hurts my heart in ways I cannot put into words,” said Bettencourt.

“What I always say to these people is that no matter who you are or what you believe, as soon as a woman finds out she is pregnant, there is a baby growing inside. Whether that baby is wanted or not, they are here in this world for a reason. It doesn’t matter the amount of ‘what ifs’ or the ‘buts’ of the situation, the baby is alive and growing and all they are asking for is a chance,” she added.
Mary ever-virgin/Memorial Mass for Protestant?

Would you please explain the apparent contradiction in the verse in Matthew’s Gospel (1:25) that says, “He (Joseph) had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him Jesus?” The use of the word “until” would seem to indicate that conjugal relations may have occurred after the birth of Christ. This is confusing to those of us who have constantly heard Mary referred to as “ever-virgin.” (Freehold, New Jersey)

You are correct on the Catholic teaching: that Mary remained always a virgin before, during and after the birth of Jesus. The Catechism of the Catholic Church quotes St. Augustine, who said that Mary “remained a virgin in conceiving her son, a virgin in giving birth to him, a virgin in carrying him, a virgin in nursing him at the breast, always a virgin” (No. 510).

As regards the verse to which you refer (Mt 1:25), current usage of the word “until” often does imply that the action in question did happen later on, but that is not the meaning of the original language. The Greek word that is translated “until” in St. Matthew (“heos”) says nothing one way or the other about what happened afterward.

Note that it is the same word used in the Greek translation of 2 Samuel 6:23, where we read that “Michal, the daughter of Saul, had no children until the day of her death.” (We are not to assume, of course, that she had children after her death!)

But to avoid the understandable confusion that you point out, I myself prefer the translation in the New Jerusalem Bible: “When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do; he took his wife to his home; he had not had intercourse with her when she gave birth to a son; and he named him Jesus.”

A very dear friend of mine died recently. She was a Methodist, and I do not know whether they have services as we have Masses to mark the anniversary of someone’s death. If they do not, I was wondering if it would be appropriate for me to request that a Catholic Mass be celebrated for her on the anniversary of her passing. (Camp Hill, Pennsylvania)

The national website of the United Methodist Church notes that “recurring memorial acts and services are occasions both of healing and of celebration. Mourners are especially open to supportive ministries on such occasions as Christmas, holidays, birthdays and anniversaries of marriage or of death.” So you might want to inquire whether your deceased friend’s local church might be open to conducting a memorial service on her anniversary.

But your other option is to have a Catholic Mass celebrated for her intention, and that is certainly allowed by the Catholic Church. (In fact, under certain circumstances the church’s Code of Canon Law permits a Catholic funeral service to be conducted for a Protestant not infrequently, for the spouse of a Catholic.)

Some Catholics might worry about offending the Protestant family, since Protestants generally reject the notion of purgatory as a period of purification. But the United Methodist Church acknowledges that it has “no one clear teaching on what happens to the dead between their death and the resurrection and judgment at the last day.” I shouldn’t think anyone would mind your praying for your friend’s quick passage into heaven, and when I have sent Mass cards on such occasions, people have been universally grateful.

Over the years, I have noticed that the question of how long the Advent candle is displayed and lighted varies widely from parish to parish. When I was growing up, the practice seemed to be that it was lighted on the First Sunday of Advent and concluded with the feast of the Epiphany. But now, it seems, while virtually all parishes start on Advent’s first Sunday, the “end date” varies widely. What is the official church teaching on the matter? (State of Georgia)

I am not sure that there is a definitive answer to your question (or any “official” church teaching on it), so we may just have to deal with some ambiguity.

The devotional use of the Advent wreath has a long tradition; in pre-Christian times, people would gather evergreens and light candles to counteract the darkness of winter and to show that “greener times” were on the horizon. Germans of the 16th century seem to have “Christianized” that custom with the Advent wreath, and the practice gradually spread throughout the Christian world as Germans emigrated.

As you indicate, the manner of use varies somewhat. Universally, the first candle on the wreath is lighted on the first of the four Sundays of Advent, and then the other three on the three succeeding Sundays. Some parishes do cease using the wreath and remove it from the sanctuary when the first Mass of Christmas Eve is about to be celebrated.

In other parishes, though, a white candle is inserted in the center of the wreath the “Christmas candle”; that candle (larger than the others) is then lit at each liturgy throughout the Christmas season, which ends with the feast of the Baptism of Jesus, celebrated on the first Sunday after the Epiphany. Once Christmas has arrived, some parishes also replace the three purple and one rose candle with four white ones, symbolizing the church’s joy at the birth of the Christ Child.

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 50 Columbia Circle Dr., Albany, NY 12203.
Father Uter donates chalice to Deacon Vu

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

As Deacon John Vu prepares to be ordained a priest, he pondered about 50 years down the road and presenting to a seminarian a chalice given to him by a priest celebrating his 50th anniversary to the priesthood this year.

The gift of the chalice is what Deacon Vu and Father Frank Uter, pastor of Immaculate Conception Church in Denham Springs, call "providence."

In July 2009 Deacon Vu was discerning at St. Joseph's Seminary in St. Benedict whether he should leave or continue his journey to become a priest. He accepted an invitation by Father Paul Gros to attend a luncheon with him at Immaculate Conception Church that set him confidently on the path to the priesthood.

At the luncheon the ICC staff celebrated with Father Uter the fifth anniversary of their coming together as a staff and Father Gros' fifth anniversary ordination to the priesthood and first assignment at ICC as parochial vicar.

“We had a nice time; young John Vu didn't say much as he was a bit shy,” recalled Father Uter.

After thanking everyone at the end of the meal, Father Uter mentioned that in 2019 he would be ordained to the priesthood for 50 years.

“We all heard from John Vu, loud and clear. 'That's when I will be ordained,' ” said Father Uter.

“I told him I would have my name taken off it and have his placed there," said Father Uter. "He said, 'No, leave it, and one day I will be able to give it to someone, and all three names will be there.'"

After Communion at Deacon Vu's going away liturgy Oct. 13, Father Uter gave Deacon Vu his chalice, along with the papers and the design of the chalice.

Deacon Vu said the offering bolstered his commitment to pursue his vocation to the priesthood.

“When he offered me that chalice, he had the confidence that I would finish formation and I would become a priest. And I thought to myself ... You know if he had that confidence ... Then I told him if God calls me to the priesthood I would be glad to receive it from him," said Deacon Vu.

As he accompanied Father Uter during his daily life during his internship, Deacon Vu said he learned a lot about what it means to be a minister of God's word and sacraments.

“I would go with him on home visits and participate in many of the ministries," said Deacon Vu. "And he's always there, like for everything. He always makes the time to pop in and check on (parish ministry meetings and activities) and just begin prayer with them. He makes that effort and it's great for me to see that, yes, the pastor's presence is important. And even though as a pastor you'll be very busy you should still set up a couple of minutes to visit those meetings to tell them that you care – right? You care about their ministry."

Such lessons were among the nuggets of knowledge Deacon Vu gleaned from Father Uter.

“He's a great priest,” said Deacon Vu. “He’s been a priest for almost 50 years. So there's a lot to be learned from him. He has a lot of wisdom to give. So I was thrilled that he also has one of the biggest parishes in the Baton Rouge diocese. And that was the experience that I was missing being at smaller parishes (for summer seminarian assignments). So I was really happy that I was being assigned to a bigger parish with a priest that is very skilled, very prayerful and holy."

“He knows his way around; he's had experience with life.”

Deacon Vu said he is touched by Father Uter's gift and will remember him every time he raises the chalice, which has a handle encircled by an engraving of Jesus and the 12 Apostles.

“I was just blown away that he would be so generous to offer me that. Not only from the aspect of giving away something that you've used that you've held dear and valuable for 50 years, but giving it to someone that you barely know at that point (a young seminarian).”

To which Father Uter smiled and says, "You know it had all been planned.”

Deacon Vu is scheduled to be ordained to the priesthood along with Deacon Timothy Grimes on May 25 at St. Joseph Cathedral.

Deacon John Vu, left, raises the chalice that has been given to him by Father Frank Uter, pastor of Immaculate Conception Church in Denham Springs during Deacon Vu's going away liturgy after the transitional deacon served a five month internship at ICC. Photo provided by Julie Kennison

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Interactive canopy welcomes young patients

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

On a gray, cold, blustery day, Chris Janney, an architect and jazz musician, watched as construction crews and massive cranes worked to move 12 structural columns into place that would support 88 sheets of 6’ x 6’ thick, transparent colored glass to form a canopy over the entrance of the new Our Lady of the Lake Children’s Hospital.

“There will also be a series of interactive elements,” explained Janney. “When you touch the columns, you’ll trigger light and sound. The sound will be environmental sounds from the bayou and the Mississippi River.”

The 4,000 square-foot Harmonic Grove is intended to “create an environment as an entrance for children of all ages coming into the hospital that’s a bit relaxing, a bit soothing and a bit calming,” according to Janney. Janney said he does a lot of work with transparent colored glass and sound, especially in public environments. Kelly Furtado, executive director of the Our Lady of the Lake Foundation, said the Children’s Hospital committee learned about Janney through the Children’s Hospital Foundation, said the Children’s Hospital committee learned about Janney through Jones. Furtado, a resident of Boston, Massachusetts, said when he works on a project, he uses environmental sounds that are indigenous to the area that the artwork will be located. He also uses the resources from a number of universities throughout the country that have ‘ornithology departments and departments where they’ve gathered sounds from across the U.S.” For this project, which has been in the works for two years, Janney also recorded sounds from the Bluebonnet Swamp in Baton Rouge.

“I know exactly who to call or email and they send me sounds on a CD but then I actually begin to compose all the sounds in the music studio, and that’s still going on,” explained Janney. “Because the piece won’t open until November – and part of it is I needed to have the canopy up and the glass in so I can listen for the reverberation and the echo that’s in the space and that will help me also to design what sounds are going to be part of it.”

Janney will oversee the construction of the canopy for two weeks. Once each of the 500-pound panels are in place, crews will use special caulk to attach them. Then, the columns will be wired for sound. Anyone who presses a hand to one of the handprints on the columns will trigger colorful shadows and sounds from 24 speakers.

Janney said the musical instruments accompanying the environmental sounds will include flutes, acoustic guitars and mimrivas.

“Just things that are actually soothing and calming that mix together with the environmental sounds,” said Janney. “Yes, you’ll hear some Zydeco. I think the idea is to create an entrance to the hospital that is soothing and relaxing but yet creative and playful you know which will attract children.

GOSPEL ▼
From page 2

him we live and move and have our being. We live our life in Jesus Christ.

Life in Jesus Christ

We have the joy of knowing our mission. Unlike the apostles, we are able to come to know life in Jesus through the Bible and sacred tradition. “Sacred Scripture is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit. And (Holy) Tradition transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. It transmits it to the successors of the apostles so that, enlightened by the Spirit of truth, they may faithfully preserve, expound and spread it abroad by their preaching” (Catechism Para. 81-82).

The Gospel writers share accounts of the incredible life of Jesus. His public life begins at his baptism. Immediately following, St. John gives us the account of the wedding feast at Cana, Jesus’ first public miracle. We hear the significant words of the first disciple, our Blessed Mother. St. John Paul II writes, “Yet the role she (Mary) assumed at Cana in some way accompanies Christ throughout his ministry. The revelation made directly by the father at the baptism in the Jordan and echoed by John the Baptist is placed upon Mary’s lips at Cana, and it becomes the great maternal counsel which Mary addresses to the church of every age: “Do whatever he tells you” (Jn 2:5). (Para. 21, Rosarium Virginis Mariae, October 16, 2002)

St. Luke testifies to the life of Christ in his Gospel account and in the Acts of the Apostles. The Gospel reading from the Third Sunday on Ordinary Time depicts the days after Jesus experienced temptations in the desert, is now fully fortified by the Holy Spirit, preached in Galilee, then went home to Nazareth. There in the synagogue, he read a passage from the Book of Isaiah, which describes the prophecy of and the mission of the coming Messiah. The Messiah is anointed by God, brings joy, proclaims freedom in salvation from God, and recovers what was lost and frees the oppressed bound by sin. He said to them, “Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing” (Lk 4:21).

Jesus calls us each day to follow him, to walk with him, to fulfill our pivotal role as a member of his body. Before anything or anyone else, we must know our role. No one can define this for you except God. Specifics of our role are revealed over time. As we come to know Jesus, we grow in understanding our role. We are the body of Christ. What a powerful statement! Our relationship with him, our prayer, the sacraments, service of others and in times of quiet, will strengthen us as long as we remain in communion with him, who gives us his spirit and his life.

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

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Father Jerome LeDoux SVD, former columnist for The Catholic Commentator and who previously served as pastor at St. Paul the Apostle Church in Baton Rouge, died Jan. 7 in Lafayette following heart surgery. Father LeDoux was 88.

A native of Lake Charles, Father LeDoux entered the Divine Word High School Seminary in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi at the age of 13 and took first vows in 1949. He was ordained to the priesthood May 11, 1957 at St. Augustine Seminary Chapel.

Father LeDoux, born Feb. 26, 1930, studied in Rome and earned a doctor in canon law and a master’s degree in social theology. He taught moral theology and canon law at St. Augustine from 1961-67 and theology at Xavier University in New Orleans from 1969-80.

Father LeDoux served as pastor at St. Martin de Porres Church in Prairie View, Texas from 1981-84 and at St. Paul from 1984-88.

He also served as pastor at St. Augustine Church in New Orleans and Our Lady of Mercy Church in Fort Worth, Texas.

“The thing that strikes me about the kind of person he was, was that he just had a great heart for the elderly and for the poor,” said Father Rick Andrus SVD, who served with Father LeDoux from 1978-80 at St. Augustine.

Father Andrus fondly recalled how Father LeDoux would often be up in the middle of the night making pecan candy. Father Andrus said every flat surface of the kitchen would be covered with wax paper with individual candies on each one.

Father LeDoux would bring the candy the following day to the parish’s elderly members but always kept some spares in his pocket in case he would run into somebody on the street that he knew.

“He had a great impact on my priesthood,” Father Andrus said. “I consider him one of a handful of powerful mentors in my life, as a presider, preacher and pastor. He taught me an awful lot.”

His syndicated column “Reflections on Life,” which he began writing in 1966, was published in The Catholic Commentator, as well as several Catholic weeklies. Additionally, the column was published in Louisiana Weekly in New Orleans, the Sea Coast Echo in Bay St. Louis and several other secular publications.

“Just recently, when he had fallen and was in the hospital in Opolousas, his biggest concern while laying there in a hospital was how he was going to get to a computer to write his column,” Father Andrus said. “In all the years he had never missed a single column and he knew people would be looking forward to that column.”

Father Andrus said his mentor was also a man of deep faith, and that shone through during a recent Christmas gathering among his fellow Divine Word clergy members. Father LeDoux was asked if he was worried about his upcoming heart surgery.

According to Father Andrus, Father LeDoux said, “Worried? Yes, (but) not too concerned because I’m going to wake up. But where I’m going to wake up I’m not real sure.”

“I trust God and I have peace with my life.”

A Memorial Mass was celebrated Jan. 14 at Holy Ghost Church in Opolousas. His Funeral Mass was celebrated Jan. 16 at St. Augustine Seminary in Bay St. Louis. He was buried at St. Augustine Seminary Cemetery.

(The Clarion Herald in New Orleans contributed to this report.)

Interim principal named at Sacred Heart

Sacred Heart of Jesus School in Baton Rouge has appointed Carolyn Guidry as interim principal, succeeding principal C.J. Laird who announced his resignation from the school in December.

Guidry’s appointment was effective Jan. 7.

It was also announced that Cecilia Methvin, a former assistant principal at Sacred Heart, will be the new principal, starting in July.

The Catholic Commentator
On Christmas Day, 1918, parishioners sat on borrowed chairs to celebrate the first Mass in a mostly completed church, a little red brick building on the corner of Julia and South 11th streets. There was no heat and the windows were not firmly in place, according to records.

In 1920, under the guidance of then-parish Father Leo Murphy and Sisters of the Holy Family, St. Francis Xavier School was opened in Baton Rouge. In 1936, a newly built St. Francis Xavier High School was dedicated.

There was other growth of the church’s physical plant. The skilled craftsmen, called “mechanics” by then-parish Father Thomas McNamar, expanded the church in time for Christmas Mass in 1937. In 1938 the “mechanics” constructed the church’s auditorium, which was the largest facility for African American parishes in Baton Rouge, according to the church records.

St. Francis Xavier also expanded evangelical efforts in Scotlandville, opening the Josephite school at Louisiana State University. Then-parish Father Edward Ledoux opened a north Baton Rouge mission, called Mass in the Cook Theater for seven years. When Father Francis Carney became pastor, the St. Francis Xavier “mechanics” built a mission church. In 1969, the Scotlandville mission became Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the second Josephite church parish in Baton Rouge.

But further challenges threatened to tear St. Francis Xavier apart, according to church leaders. In 1960, interstate-10 carved a path straight through the high school building. The interstate construction forced many families to move, but they continued to attend St. Francis Xavier.

“Against the odds” the school prospered and then pastor Father George Wilson and the parish “mechanics” built a new school from proceeds of the settlement with the state over the high school and parish fundraisers.


More recently, parishioners collected $350,000 and new pews and flooring were installed and a handicapped-accessible bathroom constructed.

Father Coates said St. Francis Xavier has made it through the challenges of segregation, discrimination and integration with the support of the Josephite fathers, the Sisters of the Holy Family and determination of church founders to have a “home” to worship in that has been passed down to the current generation.

Parishioners, you have been a shining light in the Old Tenement Community.”

Stephanie Domingue noted despite St. Francis Xavier’s losses, it endures. “We’re still here, we’re still strong, and we still have a grade school,” said Domingue.

Singing with the Gospel Choir for the Mass brought fulfillment for Kenny Williams, who sings the alto/tenor solo, “God’s Grace.”

“My grandparents brought me up in the parish and it’s a special grace for me to help others experience the gifts this parish offers,” said Williams.

Gen. Russ Honore delivered a stern but inspiring message later that evening to nearly 400 patrons who gathered at the Atrium at the Belle Casino for a dinner buffet and a gala at Belle Casino in Baton Rouge.

“The pain of illness and sorrow, people have stepped forth to triumph, we will bless others through God’s grace,” Father Coates said.

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At his solemn Mass on Monday evening, Father Coates reflected on the 100-year history of the parish.

“The Catholic Commentator | January 18, 2019

ANNIVERSARY ▼

Through Trials and Tribulations, by God’s Grace We Triumph.

St. Francis Xavier Church

Celebrating 100 years

Holy Family, who knew trials and tribulations, yet by God’s grace, they endured. By God’s grace we have triumphed.”

Since its incorporation, St. Francis Xavier has experienced much suffering which has only made it stronger, Father Coates noted.

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Technology through robotics

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

With eager faces, members of the robotics team from Holy Family School in Port Allen grabbed base plates, iPads and bins of Lego pieces and started to work. They were building, creating and coding. However, these students aren’t just playing around, they really understand the challenges and how to execute the program.

So much so that the fourth-through eighth-grade robotics team qualified to attend the First Lego League state tournament at Jesuit High School in New Orleans on Dec. 15.

“Each time that they went to the field they increased their score,” said Annie Cagle, technology coordinator for Holy Family. “So although they might not have been in the top to receive a trophy each time they went, they increased and they were excited for that increase. So that was important to me.”

Twenty-five second- and third-grade members of the Holy Family robotics team also attended the First Lego League Junior Expo, held at Jesuit on the same day as the state tournament. Team members on the junior level were recognized in a number of categories including “Inquiring Minds,” “Show and Tell,” “Artistic Eye,” “Complexity and Decoration” and “Efficient Builders.” Students also received participation medals.

For seventh-grader Blake Weber, this was his second time to attend state competition. It’s something he never gets tired of.

“It’s fun seeing the other robots and trying to compete with what we have,” said Weber, a veteran robotics participant. “Our robot, we just wanted to keep it simple and we didn’t worry too much about the building, it was more about the programs.”

According to Cagle, robotics at Holy Family is increasing in popularity. She has seen the program grow steadily over the past four years but she said it really took off this school year with a total of 38 students in the fourth- through eighth-grade level participating. It’s especially impressive considering that the amount of time devoted to athletics increases with grade level, leaving less time available for other extracurricular activities.

“It’s something that’s fun and they’re interested in it and they know that it has real life applications,” explained Cagle. “I think our STEM night (activity) that we did last year helped them to see real life applications of how robotics can fit in. I mean we had a lot of drone companies and all the different things that they might not have realized they can do and they can see where this fits in. And I think that they just have that excitement and they just want to learn more about it.”

She also credits older siblings involved in robotics with influencing younger students. Weber’s younger brother, Mason, is in the second grade and is also involved with robotics. He attended the FLL Junior Expo while his older brother was competing in the state tournament.

“I like building and coding,” said Mason.

“So, I probably should tell you that the best part is the robotics skills but it’s not to me,” noted Cagle. “My favorite part about what they are getting is the teamwork, time management, problem solving, logic … you know, those forgotten skills that are necessary but are often overlooked.”

For the state tournament, teams were required to identify a physical or social problem “faced by humans during a long duration of space exploration.”

“My group did it about exercise and the lack of muscle when it comes to being in space and how gravity plays an effect,” explained Cagle. “Their solution was to create a specialized suit imbedded with patches that adhere to the body to provide electrical stimulation that astronauts could wear while inside the spaceship.”

According to Cagle, the students postulated that the astronauts could receive muscle stimulation, such as with a TENS (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation) unit, as they continued with their daily activities on the spaceship. For competition, the students had to research electrical stimulation.

“Mrs. Cagle has done an outstanding job of moving our kids forward as far as technology and STEM,” stated Holy Family principal Michael Comeau. “They’ve done a great job and they’ve lived up to her expectations. The program is extremely important – with the way technology is moving forward in this country – there are jobs that haven’t even been thought of yet that these kids will have opportunities with and we want to make sure they have a sound STEM background.”
EPIPHANY CONCERT – St. John School in Plaquemine held its annual Epiphany concert on Jan. 6 at St. John the Evangelist Church. The Epiphany concert featured songs of the Christmas season and other selections performed by vocalist Father Greg Daigle, pastor of St. John, accompanied by the Bill Grimes Orchestra. This year’s concert also featured a performance by the St. John Children’s Choir. Photo provided by April Hedges | St. John School

EPIPHANY JOURNEY – Pre-kindergartners at Sacred Heart School in Baton Rouge follow the journey of the wise men on their annual Epiphany Hunt. The hunt was led by teacher Kendra Charbonnet. Photo provided by Lisa Cosse | Sacred Heart School

STUDENT OF THE YEAR – St. Michael the Archangel High School in Baton Rouge has selected Judy Vu, a senior, the 2018-19 Student of the Year. Vu was chosen based on her academic excellence as well as her accomplishments outside the classroom. Vu has won several awards and scholarships for her musical talents and maintains an above 4.0 GPA while taking AP and honors courses. She enjoys playing piano for the St. Michael band, and is a member of several school clubs. Photo provided by Leighann King | St. Michael High School

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**Movie Reviews**

**The Mule**

Warner Bros.

This ambling, fact-based story of an octogenarian drug runner who becomes a success at it because no one, evidently, believes he's capable of such a dangerous task is more than a little morally tone deaf. Clint Eastwood, who directed from a script by Nick Schenk, plays an easygoing Illinois horticulturist who has neglected his estranged family for years while pattering around the country hawking prize-winning daylilies. He gets a second chance at life and sudden wealth when a young Latino man makes him an offer to be a drug mule, hauling cocaine from El Paso, Texas, back to the Midwest for astonishing and ever larger amounts of cash. The film doesn't address the question of doing an immoral job to achieve positive ends (the protagonist shows largesse toward his relatives and his local Veterans of Foreign Wars hall) and its willful ignorance of the downside of the narcotics trade makes it wholly unsuitable for young people. An implied non-marital sexual encounter, fleeting upper female nudity, some gore-free gunplay, frequent rough language. A-III; R

**They Shall Not Grow Old**

Warner Bros.

A four-year passion project for director Peter Jackson, this innovative documentary on the First World War establishes an immediacy and intimacy to the 1914-18 global conflict that cost 20 million lives. Archival black-and-white silent footage shot by British cameramen has been restored and colorized, with sound effects added and the oral histories of veterans used as narration. Emerging from the grainy, foggy images familiar from old newsreels are soldiers with ruddy-cheeked faces expressing a range of emotions, from patriotic pride to shell-shocked horror. Although not for the faint-of-heart, given the explicit sights of battlefield carnage, the film will offer older teens an unorthodox and engrossing history lesson and a powerful reminder of man's inhumanity to man. Graphic archival footage of war violence, corpses and gore. A-III; R

**Vice**

Annapurna

This biography of former Vice President Dick Cheney (Christian Bale) is a gleeful hatchet job in which he comes off as Machiavellian, black-hearted and more demonic than human. The only figure who emerges in even darker tones is his political mentor, former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld (Steve Carell), who schemes and cackles like Mephistopheles. Despite an impressive turn from Amy Adams as Cheney's forceful wife Lynne, writer-director Adam McKay's film is so lacking in balance or shading that its main appeal would appear to be the opportunity to hiss at a pair of villains. Considering the history-altering events in which the three main characters were involved, a more nuanced narrative would have served viewers far better. In addition to the atmosphere of inky-black cynicism that prevails, vulgar language throughout suggests a restrictive classification. Scenes of combat violence, gore and gruesome images, partial nudity, a lesbian theme, several uses of profanity, about a half-dozen milder oaths, frequent rough and crude language. I; R

**Welcome to Marwen**

Universal

A dedicated effort from Steve Carell fails to redeem this painfully unengaging fact-based tale in which he plays an illustrator left unable to draw after a near-fatal assault by a group of thugs who takes up photography instead, playing out his own psychodrama in a miniature Belgian village he constructs in his yard and populates with dolls. His figureine alter ego, a World War II fighter pilot, is surrounded, supported and protected by an ensemble of gun-toting tough girls, each based on a real lady in his life. The most prominent of these are a clerk (Merritt Wever) at the hobby store he patronizes and a new neighbor (Leslie Mann) for whom he swiftly falls. While the main character's plight is one that ought to elicit sympathy, and there are vague undertones of Catholicism in his life, his eccentricities, including a fondness for wearing women's shoes, are off-putting and his panic attacks are sometimes so over-the-top as to be unintentionally funny. Director and co-writer Robert Zemeckis ill-advisedly devotes whole sequences to life among the Barbies and Kens whose interactions may work in stills but fall flat in this motion picture. Glimpses of a violent, gory beating, brief rear and images of upper female nudity, a benign view of pornography, a couple of profanities, a few milder oaths, about a dozen crude or crass terms. A-III; PG-13

**Holmes & Watson**

Columbia

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's legendary detective and his doctor sidekick are given a comedic makeover in this mindless, raucous and exceedingly vulgar film, written and directed by Etan Cohen. Sherlock Holmes (Will Farrell) is feted on his birthday by Queen Victoria (Pam Ferris) at Buckingham Palace. A body tumbles out of the enormous cake, bearing an ominous note from Holmes' arch enemy, Professor James Moriarty (Ralph Fiennes), threatening the monarch's life. With his trusty sidekick, Dr. John Watson (John C. Reilly), at his side, Holmes begins the search for clues. Recurring crude sexual language and bathroom humor, including references to masturbation, drug references, comic violence, and occasional rough and crude language. I; PG-13

**On the Basis of Sex**

Focus

This legal drama proves that even though a tax case may be destined to serve as a landmark for equal treatment under the law as well as a breakthrough for future Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg (Felicity Jones) in the absence of compelling dialogue or performances, it's nearly impossible to keep stodginess at bay. Director Mimi Leder and screenwriter Daniel Stiepleman (Ginsburg's nephew) have ameliorated the deficiencies somewhat through discussions of legal morality and Ginsburg's record as a wife and mother, nursing her husband (Armie Hammer) through a cancer scare, attending his law school classes as well as her own and later raising a son and a daughter, is undeniably impressive. But the film is an unapologetically heroic narrative that lacks only a college fight song to pump up emotion at its conclusion. Possibly acceptable for mature adolescents, though they're likely to regard this profile more as a homework assignment than a piece of entertainment. A scene of marital sensuality, at least one use of profanity, a couple of milder oaths, a single rough and several crude terms. A-III; PG-13
La Mision y la Espiritualidad de los Laicos

Padre Donnell Kirchner, CSsR
Parroquia de San Gerardo

El Papa San Juan Pablo II escribió un documento muy importante para los laicos..."Christi Fideles Laici". Vanos a ver cómo él trato la dignidad y el valor de los fieles laicos en la Iglesia-Ministerio.

El Papa comienza usando la imagen de una viña donde los fieles son los sarmientos. Así se entiende la presencia y el sentido del Pueblo de Dios en la Iglesia.

¿Quiénes son los laicos? son las personas del Pueblo de Dios que no pertenecen a congregaciones religiosas o al clero mas buscan el Reino de Dios. Por el Bautismo tiene la función o el estatus Sacerdotal, Profético y Real, con una misión propia y específica dentro de la Iglesia. No es sólo ser consciente de pertenecer a la Iglesia, sino ser Iglesia.

Por medio de su vocación, los laicos son Criaturas Nuevas en Cristo (cf. Gal 6,15; 2Cor 5,17) purificados del pecado y llenos de vida por la Gracia.

Hay tres aspectos fundamentales en la figura del laico:

• En el bautismo son regenerados con la vida de Hijos de Dios.
• Son unidos con Jesús y con su cuerpo (que es la Iglesia)
• Son ungidos (i.e. consagrados) por el Espíritu Santo, tornándose Templos Espirituales.

Los laicos son hijos en el Hijo, llamados a vivir la misma vida que Jesús vivía. Como Jesucristo en el río Jordán (cf. Lc 3,22) los laicos se tornan también hijos predilectos del Padre. Bautizados en Cristo,se visten de las mismas actitudes y pensamientos de Cristo, con su misma forma de ser (cf. Gal 3,27) Se tornan otro Cristo.

La santidad de los laicos está radicada en el Sacramento del Bautismo y alimentada por la Eucaristía. Su vida según el espíritu, suscita en el laico una imitación y un seguimiento de la vida de Jesús; acoge y pone en práctica las Bienaventuranzas, cuca y medita la Palabra de Dios, tiene una participación activa y consciente en la Liturgia y en los Sacramentos, posee una vida de oración personal y familiar. Tiene hambre de Justicia, practica un amor universal en todas las circunstancias y presta servicio a los hermanos, especialmente a los más pequeños, pobres y sufridos.

O como dijo San Pablo, "Por lo demás, hermanos, todo lo que es verdadero, todo lo honesto, todo lo justo, todo lo puro, todo lo amable, todo lo que es de buen nombre; se hay virtud alguna, se alguna alabanza, en esto ejercitáos."

Un área fundamental para los laicos es santificar la Familia, utilizando bien el Sacramento del Matrimonio. Más tarde el Papa Francisco escribirá en su carta sobre el Amor los siguientes puntos:

"De ninguna manera la Iglesia, a través de los laicos, debe renunciar a proponer el ideal pleno del matrimonio, el proyecto de Dios en toda su grandeza: “ Es preciso alentar a los jóvenes bautizados a no... y así prevenir las rupturas.”

También, el dicho: “No podemos prometeremos tener los mismos sentimientos durante toda la vida. En cambio, si podemos tener un proyecto común estable, comprometernos a amarnos y a vivir unidos hasta que la muerte nos separe, y vivir siempre una rica intimidad. El amor que nos prometemos supera toda emoción, sentimiento o estado de ánimo, aunque pueda incluirnos...se mantiene viva cada día la decisión de amor, de pertenecerse, de compartir la vida entera y de permanecer amando y perdonando. Cada uno de los dos hace un camino de crecimiento y de cambio personal. En medio de ese camino, el amor celebra cada paso y cada nueva etapa...La familia es el ámbito no sólo de la generación sino de la acogida de la vida que llega como regalo de Dios”.

"Todo eso es posible porque el Espíritu Santo los santifica, dando el poder y la energía suficiente para alcanzar este fin. Todos son llamados a una “vocación universal a la santidad” (cf 1Pet 1/15) Más tarde, el Papa Francisco dirá que una “vocación universal a la santidad” (cf 1Pet 1/15) purificadas de pecado y llenas de vida por la Gracia.

"Si cada bautizado, si cada laico, fuera consciente de pertenecer a la Iglesia, si perteneciera, de compartir la vida entera y de pertenecerse, de compartir la vida entera y de pertenecer, de compartir la vida entera y de per- manecer amando y perdonando. Cada uno de los dos hace un camino de crecimiento y de cambio personal. En medio de ese camino, el amor celebra cada paso y cada nueva etapa...La familia es el ámbito no sólo de la generación sino de la acogida de la vida que llega como regalo de Dios”.

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"Si cada bautizado, si cada laico, fuera consciente de su dignidad, importancia y estatus dentro de la Iglesia - que no son sóloamente cristianos, sino que se tornan Cristo - como el Mundo sería diferente. Mejor todavía, si Jesús es la piedra angular, los laicos bautizados y ungidos por el Espíritu, son parte del Templo Espiritual.

El catecismo de la Iglesia Catolica enseña que “El hombre justo, evocado con frecuencia en las Sagradas Escrituras, se distingue por la rectitud de sus pensamientos y de su conducta con el prójimo.”

En hora buena señoras laicas y señores laicos, como dijo San Pablo, “Por lo demás, hermanos, todo lo que es verdadero, todo lo honesto, todo lo justo, todo lo puro, todo lo amable, todo lo que es de buen nombre; se hay virtud alguna, se alguna alabanza, en esto ejercitáos.”

PRINTING some 40,000 copies every other week for the Diocese of Baton Rouge
Blessings instead of New Year’s resolutions

Do you read the newspaper comics in your daily Advocate? I do, and have for just about all of my adult life. I like comedy. Besides enjoyment, there is another benefit from the comics. Dean Rusk, who was JFK’s Secretary of State, said that he always turned immediately to the comics and read them first, because they gave him balance and courage to then look at the front page. I suspect if he were living today, he would have even greater need to daily fortify those virtues. The Italians, with whom I had the good fortune to live with for four years in graduate school, have a one-word answer for times of malaise like these in which we find ourselves. They often end discussions of personal and public problems by wishing each other “coraggio!” (courage). It is almost like a blessing.

And that brings me back to a thought for now and the rest of the new year, a thought once again owed to the comics. On Jan. 5, in the comic strip “B.C.,” caveman Wiley consults to the comics. In touting O’Donohue’s book, Slattery says that “blessings are a way out of the barren landscape of bigotry and intolerance, of self-absorption and a ‘win/lose’ mindset that fixes us in place and will disallow change, much less conversation.” Divisiveness is the darkness of suspicion, the desire. In the evocation of our blessings here, the word ‘may’ is the spring through which the Holy Spirit is invoked to surge into presence and effect. The Holy Spirit is the subtle presence and secret energy behind every blessing here.”

Matins (A prayer of blessing for self, part 2)
I arise today/ In the name of Silence/ Womb of the Word./ In the name of Stillness/Home of Belonging./ I arise today/ Blessed by all things./ Wings of breath./ Delight of eyes./Wonder of whisper./ Intimacy of touch./ Eternity of soul./ Urgency of thought./ Miracle of health./ Embrace of God.

A Blessing for the New Year
(For Josie, his mother. Final two stanzas)
May the nourishment of the earth be yours./ May the clarity of light be yours./ May the fluency of the ocean be yours./ May the protection of the ancestors be yours./ And so may a slow/Wind work these words./ Of love around you./ An invisible cloak/to mind your life.

For a New Home (When invited for the first time to friends’ new home? Random stanzas)
May this house shelter your life./ When you come in home here./ May all the weight of the world/Fall from your shoulders./ May your heart be tranquil here./ Blessed by peace the world cannot give./ May this home be a lucky place./ Where the graces your life desires/ Always find the pathway to your door./ May nothing destructive ever cross your threshold./ May this be a safe place/Full of understanding and acceptance./ Where you can be as you are./ Without the need of any mask/ Or pretense or image./ May there be a great delight around this hearth/ May it be a house of welcome/ For the broken and diminished./ May you have the eyes to see/ That no visitor arrives without a gift/ And no guest leaves without a blessing.

The purpose of O’Donohue’s book is for us “to discover our power to bless one another.” And there is lagniappe for learning to do this, for “Whenever you give a blessing, a blessing returns to enfold you.” May your New Year be happy and one of blessing!

FATHER CARVILLE is a retired priest in the Diocese of Baton Rouge and writes on current topics for The Catholic Commentator. He can be reached at johnnycarville@gmail.com.

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

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

PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PRAY FOR US
Please pray for the priests, deacons and religious women and men in the Baton Rouge Diocese.

Jan. 24 Rev. Victor G. Messina
Dcn. Randall A. Clement
Br. James Burns SC
Jan. 25 Rev. Michael A. Miceli
Dcn. Samuel C. Collura
Sr. Mary Ann Diaz DM
Jan. 26 Rev. Cleo J. Milano
Dcn. William Corbett
Br. William Cawley SC
Jan. 27 Rev. Nutan S. Minj IMS
Dcn. David L. Dawson III
Sr. Therese Dinh Ich
Jan. 28 Rev. Michael J. Moroney
Dcn. Guy E. Decker
Br. Ramon Daunis SC
Jan. 29 Rev. Caye A. (Trey) Nelson III
Dcn. Benjamin J. Dunbar Jr.
Sr. M. Dominique MC
Jan. 30 Rev. Hung Viet Nguyen ICM
Dcn. Kirk Duplantis
Br. Alan Drain SC
Jan. 31 Rev. Tan Viet Nguyen ICM
Dcn. W. Brent Duplessis
Sr. M. Donald MC
Feb. 1 Rev. Nicholas J. (Jack) Nutter III
Dcn. Jeff R. Easley
Br. Clement Furno CSSR
Feb. 2 Rev. Michael J. O’Rourke OP
Dcn. John Ferguson
Sr. June Engelbrecht OP
Feb. 3 Rev. Jason P. Palermo
Dcn. Natale (Nat) Garofalo
Br. Harold Harris SC
Feb. 4 Rev. Amrit Raj IMS
Dcn. Edward J. Gauthreaux
Sr. Dianne Fanguy CSJ
Feb. 5 Rev. Thomas C. Ranzino
Dcn. Steven C. Gonzales
Br. Ronal Hingle
Feb. 6 Rev. Rubin Reynolds
Dcn. Richard H. Grant
Sr. Ileana Fernandez CSJ
Struggling for sustenance

We all struggle to not give in to coldness and hatred. This was even a struggle for Jesus. Like the rest of us he had to struggle, mightily at times, to remain warm and loving.

It’s interesting to trace this out in the Gospel of Luke. This is the gospel of prayer. St. Luke shows Jesus praying more than all the other Gospels combined. Moreover, in St. Luke’s Gospel, Jesus’ disciples were intrigued by his prayer. They sensed something extraordinary about Jesus, not because he could walk on water and do miracles, but because, unlike the rest of us, he could in fact turn the cheek. He was strong enough not to give into coldness in the face of hatred, so strong that it threatened his very life. In every situation, no matter how bitter, he could be understanding and forgiving and never doubt that love and grace are what’s most real.

His disciples sensed that he drew this strength from a hidden source, some deep well of sustenance which he called his Father and which he accessed through prayer. For this reason, in St. Luke’s Gospel, the disciples ask Jesus to teach them how to pray. They too wanted draw sustenance from this source.

But we see too in St. Luke’s Gospel that this doesn’t always come without struggle. Sometimes things seem easy for Jesus; he meets love and understanding, and his ministry is joyous and easy. But when things begin to collapse, when the forces of hatred begin to encircle him, when majority of his followers abandon and betray him, and when his own death becomes imminent, then like the rest of us, fear and paranoia threaten to overwhelm him.

This is in fact the essence of the struggle in the Garden of Gethsemane, his so-called “agonia.” Simply put, it’s easy enough to be understanding, loving and forgiving when you are bathed in them. It’s quite another thing when your very adherence to them is making you the object of misunderstanding, hatred and murder. And so, in Gethsemane, we see Jesus prostrate, humanity devastated, on the ground, struggling mightily to cling to a cord of sustenance that had always sustained him in trust, love and forgiveness and had kept paranoia, hatred and despair at bay. And the answer doesn’t come easy for him. He has to pray repeatedly and, in St. Luke’s words, “sweat blood” before he can regain his balance and root himself again in that grace that sustained him throughout his ministry. Love and forgiveness are not easy. Not giving into anger, bitterness, self-pity, hatred and the desire for vengeance didn’t come easy for Jesus either.

And that’s our ultimate moral struggle: to not give into our natural reaction whenever we are not respected, slighted, ignored, misunderstood, hated or in small or large ways victimized. In the face of these, paranoia automatically takes over and most everything inside us conspires to create an oppressive pressure towards giving back in kind, slight for slight, disrespect for disrespect, ugliness for ugliness, hatred for violence, hatred for violence.

But there’s another possibility: Like Jesus, who himself had to struggle mightily to not give in to coldness and hatred, we too can draw strength through the same umbilical cord that nurtured him. His father, God’s grace and strength, can nurture us too.

In his famous movie, “The Passion of the Christ,” Mel Gibson focuses on the physical suffering Jesus had to endure during his passion and death. Partly this has some merit since Jesus’ sufferings were in fact pretty horrific. But mostly it misses the point, as we see from the Gospels. They make it a point to minimize any focus on the physical sufferings of Jesus. For the Gospels, Jesus’ passion is not a physical drama but a moral one, indeed the ultimate moral drama. The real struggle for Jesus as he sweated blood in Gethsemane was not whether he would allow himself to die or invoke divine power and escape. The passion was only about how he was going to die: In bitterness or love? In hatred or forgiveness?

That’s also our ultimate moral struggle, one which won’t just confront us at the moment of death but one which confronts us daily, hourly. In every situation in our lives, small or large, where we are unfairly ignored, slighted, insulted, hated or victimized in any way, we face a choice of how to respond: Bitterness or understanding? Hatred or love? Vengeance or forgiveness?

And, like Jesus struggling in Gethsemane, we will have to struggle to continue to cling onto something beyond our natural instincts, beyond common sense, beyond our cultural dictates. Doing what comes naturally will not serve us well. Something beyond our DNA needs to be accessed.

The first word out of Jesus’ mouth in the Synoptic Gospels is the word metanoia. Among its other meanings, it’s the opposite of paranoia. It means to trust even in the face of distrust. Paranoia is natural to us, metanoia isn’t; it requires struggling to draw sustenance from a deeper source.

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

Ten pockets of prayer for the new year

January dawns, fresh and clean. The beginning of a new year.

Although Advent is technically our new year in the church, January offers another jump-start: a chance to change and a renewed resolve to eat better, exercise more or waste less time online.

Making time for prayer is a common resolution. We might try to read more Scripture, make a Holy Hour each week or start praying the rosary.

But what if we looked for small moments each day in the midst of what we’re already doing to turn to God?

Here are 10 pockets of prayer to dig into for the new year. Times and places where we can meet God between work and home, kids and commute, chores and rest.

Try one and see where it leads.

Pray when you wake up. Start each day with the sign of the cross, or pray the words of Psalm 118:24: “This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.” Rise 10 minutes before the kids get up and sit with a cup of coffee to center yourself in prayer. Let the word of God be the first thing your eyes see each morning.

Bless your spouse. Say a prayer together before you each begin your daily work. Or light two candles while you’re getting ready in the morning: one to remember your spouse’s callings and one to pray for your own. Recall your marriage vows as you say “I do” for a new day.

Pray while washing. Let the warm water of your shower (or the baby’s bath) remind you of baptism: your belovedness before God.

Pray before school. When you hug or kiss your kids goodbye, add a quick prayer to your morning routine. At the school door, bus stop, daycare drop-off or kitchen table, pray for each one of your children in turn. Give thanks for teachers, staff and coaches, too.

Pray while cleaning. While doing laundry, pray for each person in your family as you fold his or her clothes. While scrubbing dishes or sweeping floors, ask God to make clean what has been darkened by sin in your life. No task is too small to be made holy by prayer.

Recharge on your lunch break. Read the day’s Gospel while you eat. Try midday prayer from the monastic tradition (available online). Or simply pray the Our Father with your table grace, to give thanks for “daily bread” with your noon meal.

Maximize waiting. Time in the car need not be spent idling. While waiting to pick up kids, read or listen to the daily readings with an app on your phone. Remember you only need 10 fingers to pray a decade of the rosary. Let waiting become a spiritual practice.

Take a coffee break. Sit in silence for a few moments in the middle of your day. Turn off the radio and commute in quiet. Let five minutes refuel your relationship with God.

Give thanks while cooking. While grocery shopping or making dinner, pray for farm workers, truckers and all whose hands brought food to your table. Remember those who are often forgotten while you do work that is often overlooked.

End the day with God. Try a short Ignatian “examen” to reflect on your day through the lens of faith. Notice where you saw God, ask forgiveness for moments of sin and pray for the Holy Spirit to guide you tomorrow.

Let this new year bring small moments of powerful prayer.

FAUNCI is a mother, writer and director of a project on vocation at the Collegeville Institute in Collegeville, Minnesota. She is the author of several books, including “Everyday Sacrament: The Messy Grace of Parenting,” and blogs at www.motheringspirit.com.
**St. Charbel Healing Mass** – A St. Charbel Healing Mass will be celebrated Tuesday, Jan. 22, 6 p.m., at St. Agnes Church, 749 East Blvd., Baton Rouge. For more information, call 225-387-4147.

**St. George Mission** – Becky Eldredge, author of “Busy Lives and Restless Souls,” will present a mission Monday, Jan. 21 – Wednesday, Jan. 23, 7 p.m., at St. George Church, 7808 Saint George Dr., Baton Rouge. For more information, visit st-george.org or call 225-293-2212.

**Engaged Encounter** – A retreat for engaged couples will be held Friday Jan. 25 – Sunday, Jan. 27, at the Bishop Robert E. Tracy Center, 1800 S. Acadian Thwy., Baton Rouge. For more information and to register, visit cceofbr.org.

**Louisiana Life March South** – Louisiana Life March South will take place Saturday, Jan. 26, 10 a.m. – noon. Due to construction at the State Capitol, the march will begin in the grassy area in front of building at the corner of Fourth Street and Spanish Town Road and will end with a program at Galvez Plaza on North Boulevard. Speakers will include Dr. Alveda King, niece of Dr. Martin Luther King, and Bishop Michael G. Duca. For more information, visit profilinglouisiana.org.

**Healing Mass** – On Sunday, Jan. 27, Father Jason Palmero will celebrate a Mass with a healing service at St. Joseph Church, 15710 La Highway 16, French Settlement.

**Day of Reflection** – Noël Delery, spiritual director, will present a retreat, “Peace is My Gift to You,” Tuesday, Jan. 29, at the Archdiocese of New Orleans Retreat Center, 5500 St. Mary St., Metairie. Minimum offering is $35. To register and for more information, visit retreats.arch-no.org or call Susan Halligan at 504-267-9604.

**Women in Spirit Meeting** – Nancy Bourg will speak about life as a Buddhist woman at the meeting SEE EVENTS PAGE 19
of Women in Spirit Thursday, Jan. 31, noon, at St. Joseph Cathedral Hall, Fourth and Main streets, Baton Rouge. To RSVP, email wis@cathedralbr.org or call the cathedral office at 225-387-5928.

Wedding Anniversary Celebration – Bishop Michael G. Duca will celebrate a Mass honoring couples celebrating their 25th, 50th and 65th or greater anniversary on Sunday, Feb. 10, 2 p.m., at St. George Church, 7808 St. George Dr., Baton Rouge. For more information and to register, contact your local church parish office before Wednesday, Jan. 30.

WINE event – Women in the New Evangelization (WINE) will host their first Women, Wine and Wisdom event on Monday, February 11 at Drusilla Seafood, 3482 Drusilla Lane, Baton Rouge. For more information and to register, visit catholicvineyard.com or call 985-249-9258.

Entering Canaan Day of Healing – The Diocese of Baton Rouge Office of Marriage and Family life is sponsoring “Entering Canaan: Day of Prayer and Healing” for women and men who have experienced the loss of a child through abortion Saturday, Feb. 2, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. For information and a confidential registration, contact Elaine at 256-358-6004 or email EnteringCanaan@diobr.org.

St. Elizabeth School Clay Shoot – St. Elizabeth in Paincourtville will host its fifth annual Clay Shoot on Saturday, Feb. 2, 7:30 a.m., at the Southern Shooting Center, 17560 George O’Neal Road, Baton Rouge. Registration will take place from 7:30-8:30 a.m. The seminar will be from 8:45 a.m. – 3 p.m. For more information, visit cypressspringspraycenter.org or call 225-752-8480.

Jeff Cavins Going Deep South Tour – Jeff Cavins, evangelist, author and biblical scholar, on Saturday, Feb. 9 will present a seminar, “Simplifying Your Life With Heaven In Mind,” at the Cypress Springs Prayer Center, 17560 George O’Neal Road, Baton Rouge. Registration is required by calling 985-637-4068 or Robin Bayne at 985-859-5037.

Assistant Principal

St. Thomas More Catholic School is now accepting applications for the position of Assistant Principal. St. Thomas More seeks candidates that are joyful, faith-filled, and committed to excellence in all that they do. Qualified candidates must be practicing Catholics in good standing with the Church and must have earned an advanced degree. The new Assistant Principal will work with the Principal and Vice Principal to build upon the rich tradition at St. Thomas More.

The ideal candidate will be highly productive, detail-oriented, and collaborative. Excellent written and oral communication skills are essential. Primary duties include supervision of teachers, instructional coaching, curriculum development, scheduling, and student support. Middle School experience preferred.

St. Thomas More currently serves 620 students in grades K-8. STM is a warm and welcoming community, blending traditional Catholic values and best practices in education. Since 1960 St. Thomas More has been known throughout the community for its outstanding academic program, tremendous success in athletics, and strong Catholic identity. St. Thomas More was nationally recognized as a Blue Ribbon School of Excellence in 2016.

At St. Thomas More, our goal is to help each child entrusted to our care to reach his or her full potential. For many years the school has utilized ability grouping to meet students where they are in their development. STM teachers differentiate instruction and engage students’ multiple intelligences. The school has two school counselors and two resource teachers to provide support as we help our students become the men and women God calls them to be.

For more information about St. Thomas More, please visit the school’s website at www.stmbr.org.

Candidates interested in submitting an application for the role of Assistant Principal at St. Thomas More should send a letter of interest, resume’ (including at least three professional references), and philosophy of education to STM Principal Brian Moscona via email at mosconab@stmbr.org.
Houma-Thibodaux releases names of priests credibly accused of sexual abuse

By Richard Meek

The Catholic Commentator

The Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux released the names of priests who have admitted, were convicted or credibly accused of sexually abusing children on Jan. 11.

In a letter, Bishop Shelton J. Fabre said none of the priests on the list are currently active in the ministry. Bishop Fabre, who is originally from New Roads, apologized for the “egregious sins that have taken place.”

He called “abhorrent” the sexual abuse of a child by anyone and “even worse when perpetrated by the clergy that is vested with the sacred trust of the children of God.”

He added the attempt to cover up “these sins is even more disturbing.”

Priests admitted, convicted or who pleaded guilty included Lawrence Cavell, ordained in 1980; Alexander Francisco, ordained in 1979; Dale Guidry, ordained in 1982; Patrick Kujawa, ordained in 1996; Robert Melancon, ordained in 1962; and Carlos Melendez, priest of the Missionaries of Christ Crucified in El Savador.

Priests credibly accused and subject to civil litigation include Etienne LeBlanc, ordained in 1971; Gerald Pranz, ordained in 1968; Bernard Schmaltz, ordained in 1973; Claude Bouadreaux, ordained in 1955; Gerald Kinane, ordained in 1973; Ramon Luce, ordained in 1995; Dac Nguyen, ordained in 1988; and Daniel Poche, ordained in 1978.

BLUES ▼

From page 1

It does not become a greater problem? Simply put, exercise and diet.

“That’s the most effective treatment for depression,” Davis said.

“It’s self-care and having fuel in the tank,” Sterling said. “What does that mean? Well, making sure you’re taking care of yourself, eating healthy foods.”

She said people often splurge during the holidays and consume larger than usual amounts of sugary and high fat foods.

“A lot of times we get off track with (diet) during the holidays to have social connections, and that’s very important for people’s mental health,” she said.

“It’s not typically healthy food and that’s not necessarily good fuel for your body,” Davis said. “When you think about staying hydrated, are people drinking enough water?”

“People’s alcohol intake tends to increase during the holidays, and not only is that empty calories but impairs your sleep.”

Sterling said it’s also import to practice good sleep hygiene, such as using your bed for sleep only, and keeping the room temperature cool. Also, unplugging from all electronic devices at least two hours before going to bed is recommended, and she encouraged people not to sleep with the cell phone too close to the bed, noting that one’s phone can be a source of stress or anxiety.

If the blues or depression persists, counseling is the next step, which is where CCDBR steps in. The agency offers a counseling program at six locations with sliding scales, depending on one’s income.

Insurance is also accepted.

CCDBR’s nine counselors offer more than 100 combined years of professional experience. A Spanish-speaking counselor is also available.

“So you’ve tried all of these wellness tips and you’re not feeling better, then you want to reach out to a professional for help,” Davis said.

Carol Spruell, CCDBR director of communications, said the agency helps about 200 people annually.

“It’s high quality, affordable professional help with people that really care,” Sterling said.

“People don’t recognize that there is a connection between stress and how they feel physically,” she added. “That’s the reality. A lot of times stress shows up in physical symptoms.

“That’s like another level of good health.”


Anyone seeking assistance should call 225-336-8708 to set up an appointment. For the Hammond counseling center, people can call 985-542-5455.
Catholic schools are a gift to community

Catholic Schools Week at the end of January each year affords us the opportunity to reflect on the gift that Catholic schools are to our families, community, nation and church in Evangelizing Hearts, Educating Minds, Encouraging Talent and Embracing the Future for young people. Such a gift is truly significant, as expressed each year by distinguished graduates honored in the Diocese of Baton Rouge. Such a gift is generous, as evidenced by the skillful talent and countless hours of dedicated work by staff in their ministry. Such a gift is precious, as sacrifices are made by families to provide Catholic education for their children. For the significant, generous and precious gift of Catholic education, we are truly grateful.

As a ministry of the church, Catholic schools welcome families into a nurturing culture that goes far beyond academic excellence; it speaks to the heart of humans, providing a glimpse of our loving God who welcomes us to learn and grow. Clergy, religious and lay ministers who serve in Catholic schools are gifts to Catholic education in our diocese, and we are grateful for not only what they do, but for who they are in modeling Gospel values for students in their care. Catholic schools fulfill their vision of Evangelizing Hearts because of the formation students receive. Consistently, students in the diocese score above national average on the ACRE test for faith knowledge and log more than 200,000 hours annually in service to others. Catholic schools in the diocese are blessed with the gift of talented educators who fill classrooms with learning. With a focus on Educating Minds, educators strive each day to provide rigorous, relevant and engaged learning experiences for students. Standardized testing in grades three through 12 reflects above-norm scores, and the Class of 2018 mirrored the high level of accomplishment as previous graduating classes by realizing an average ACT score of 24, which is well-above both state and national averages.

Students in Catholic schools are given the enrichment opportunities through various programs such as music, drama, art, clubs and sports. Focused on Encouraging Talent, all schools in the diocese offer the gift of mentorship through extra- and co-curricular activities that expand and extend learning beyond the classroom and into specialty areas. Whether students are developing talent on the field of play or in a STEM robotics lab, they are blessed with generous faculty and volunteers who go above and beyond to provide experiences that develop the whole child.

Advisory boards at each school site help to fulfill the vision of Embracing the Future, as members work with clergy and school leadership to set direction for development and growth. In addition to the high expectations for the continuous improvement of school programs required by national accreditation, schools are currently working with local boards in a robust strategic planning process, which is being championed by the Diocesan School Board. Through reflection, prayer and action, board members help to ensure that the precious gift of Catholic schools continues to be strong in the future.

As we celebrate Catholic Schools Week 2019, we are especially grateful for the support of Bishop Michael G. Duca and for the active involvement of clergy, administrators, faculty, staff, parents, students and all partners in the work of the schools. With God’s blessing and strong stakeholder support, Catholic schools will continue to be gifts to coming generations within the Diocese of Baton Rouge! Information on Catholic Schools is located at csobr.org.

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RETREAT – The sixth–eighth grade boys from St. Francis Xavier School in Baton Rouge attend a retreat at Rosaryville. Photo provided by St. Francis Xavier School.
Teaching lessons for life

Lead. Learn. Proclaim.

Powerful words that stand alone to describe the attributes of a director, a manager, a “chief” of an organization. These three adjectives make up the motto of the National Catholic Educational Association and also sum up the characterization of Our Lady of Mercy Church in Baton Rouge’s beloved pastor, Fr. Cleo Milano, who has been selected Distinguished Clergy Member by the Catholic Schools Office in the Diocese of Baton Rouge and was recently recognized with the national honor as well, receiving the NCEA Lead. Learn. Proclaim. Award.

Some of the requirements the nominee for the NCEA award must demonstrate include responsible decision-making; implementation of the school’s mission and vision; working collaboratively toward continuous school improvement; modeling service to others within the community; motivating others to meet the needs of all students; embracing Catholic identity; and, demonstrating Gospel values. Father Milano embraces and promotes these criteria and then some, according to school officials.

Growing up in a “big devout extended Catholic family” in Donaldsonville, Father Milano noted his own personal history and formation are deeply rooted in his early Catholic education.

“Frankly, I feel that I owe all that I am today to what the church gave me in Catholic education,” said Father Milano. “My parents went to Catholic school and that tradition continued for me and my siblings.

“Growing up I was most impressed by the presence of the religious in our community and parish having been taught by the Daughters of Charity, the Brothers of the Sacred Heart and the Sisters of the Holy Family. The example of these committed religious men and women made a great impact on me as a young boy.”

Father Milano attended Ascension Catholic School in Donaldsonville from first through eighth grades. He explained that after eighth grade he felt God “might be calling me to be a priest.” Father Milano continued his high school education at Donaldsonville School from first through eighth grades.

“I’m going to be a priest. I was a young boy.”

Father Milano continued his high school education at St. Mary’s Seminary in Houston, Texas and was ordained July 30, 1983.

Father Milano said he has spent the majority of his priesthood in parishes with a Catholic school. Those assignments included St. Mary of False River Church and Catholic of Pointe Coupee in New Roads; St. John the Evangelist Church and school in Plaquemine; and, currently, OLM church and school. He credits the “role of the school” as having “a major impacting force in the life of the parish.”

“My experience has been that Catholic schools bring life and vitality to a parish while the parish offers its resources and stability in return,” said Father Milano.

Father Milano has revitalized and grown Our Lady of Mercy School by leading his professional staff and parish community through a three-year capital and building campaign titled, “Traditions For Tomorrow,” which included a master plan for future development of the church and school.

Plans include a new lower school campus for the pre-K 3-year-old program, named “Little Saints,” up to second grade.

This building campaign will add 30,000 square feet to the existing 18,000-square-foot Early Learning Center. OLM is also building a new gym, renovating the existing athletic field and repurposing the existing gym into a performing arts center. Father Milano’s leadership and collaboration with principal Chris Porche has catapulted the school’s enrollment in five years from 725 students to 985 students, an increase of more than 37 percent during that time.

Father Milano said he reminds parents and students “that Catholic education is not about information but transformation – transformation into the image and likeness of Jesus Christ.”

“In a nutshell, I would say the biggest value of Catholic education is that it truly teaches lessons for life – this life and the next.”

“Catholic education reminds us that it is not what we leave our children but more importantly what we leave and instill in our children,” he said. “These are the things that money cannot buy.”
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Catholic education specifically forms the person to enable them to live well now so as to dwell with God for all eternity. Catholic education is specifically that . . . addressing the development of the whole person in the light of the Gospel.

Father Jamin David
2018 Distinguished Graduate
Chance detour leads to new journey for St. George principal

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

Jack Nelson’s journey to the Capital City started off by chance. While he was a principal at a Catholic school in his native state of Washington Nelson attended the National Catholic Educators Association conference in New Orleans several years ago. Later, after helping move his oldest daughter to Nashville, he and his wife, Michelle, decided to take a detour and spend a couple of days New Orleans.

"On our trip back to Washington, we drove through Baton Rouge, and at the Siegen exit, we stopped to get gas," Nelson explains. "At the exit there I saw St. George School and just mentioned what an amazing place that was and went on our way and didn't really give it any thought. And, then the job became available at St. George and I was looking for a new challenge and I applied and here I am today."

Now in his seventh year at St. George, Nelson has been selected as the 2019 Distinguished Administrator by the Catholic Schools Office and a winner of the NCEA Lead. Learn. Proclaim. Award, which recognizes outstanding efforts, contributions and achievements on behalf of Catholic school education. Nelson, who has three children and one grandchild with another on the way, has been in education for 24 years. Five of those years were spent as a sixth-grade teacher and the rest of the time as principal. He received his undergraduate degree from Eastern Washington University and a master's in educational administration from City University in Seattle, Washington. Though he attended public school growing up, Nelson said he was drawn to Catholic education after his first child was born.

"We were a member of a Catholic parish in Tacoma, Washington and we actually started going to these school auctions even before our kids were eligible for school age and just got connected through our local parish and, of course our kids went on to go to Catholic school," Nelson explained.

"The draw of Catholic school to me is really that we have an opportunity to share our faith with our students and really educate the whole child."

At St. George School, according to Nelson, there is a sense of community with parents, students and grandparents through the school and through the church.

"We have kids here in St. George that are second and third generation students," he said. "And one of the things that I think that we do very well is we know we can follow our kids as they go beyond high school and college, and then they come back when they have children as adults as well. Honestly we have several graduates here that are teachers at St. George."

That connection between family, school and church parish has been a plus for Nelson and his family.

"And quite honestly, people here are so friendly and outgoing and welcoming. It's really a gift," he said.

Nelson said he was surprised and humbled to learn he had been selected as Distinguished Administrator for 2019.

"You know I have an opportunity to interact with many of my peers here in the Diocese of Baton Rouge," he said. "I see what intelligence and talent they have and so it's an honor just to be counted amongst them and then to be selected as administrator of the year was just a bonus on top of that. Again I'm grateful for the recognition and everything that I do here is for our kids. And I couldn't do without tremendous people around me."

As for NCEA award, Nelson said he was still trying to "wrap my arms around that one a little bit."

"You know I just go back to doing what's best for the kids," stated Nelson. "And, you know, we're building the kingdom of God right here at St. George. That's really what I think about all the time."
By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

Growing up attending Catholic schools, Marilyn Smith, selected the Distinguished Educator of the Year for the Catholic Schools Office, said Catholic education was “a state of mind.”

“It was just the accepted culture,” recalled Smith. “I was able to walk to school, two blocks away (from my home).”

The school, St. Catherine of Sienna in Metairie, was a mainstay in Smith's family, with her mother, her mother’s siblings, Smith's siblings, Smith's daughter and nephews all attending the school.

“At that time, in the late 50s and early 60s, St. Catherine's population came from that neighborhood and the streets were just full of all these little children being dismissed and walking home. It was almost like a parade of children because that was the culture back then,” said Smith.

Smith also remembered taking her tuition envelope to school, containing the $2.50 monthly tuition fee.

“(Catholic school) wasn’t a choice, it was a way of life for us,” she said.

After graduating from Archbishop Chapelle High School in Metairie, Smith continued on to college, graduating from the University of New Orleans in 1977 with a Bachelor of Arts degree. Smith taught for two years before taking a break while her three children were young. She returned to the classroom in 1987 in public education until 1989 when Dr. Gerard Toups, principal at St. Robert Bellarmine School in Arabi, recruited her.

Smith remained at St. Robert until Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans. After she and her husband, Mark, moved to Tickfaw, Toups, was hired as the new principal at St. Joseph School in Pontchatoula and once again, he recruited Smith. Since 2006, Smith has taught kindergarten at St. Joseph School.

With such strong ties to Catholic education during her formative years, Smith said it was a natural for her to end up teaching in Catholic schools, a career that has been going strong for 34 years.

“The clear and consistent focus of Catholic education is to value the dignity of each child in a faith-filled environment,” said Smith, who has eight grandchildren. “We are made in the image and likeness of God. This affects how we treat our students, other faculty members and our faith community. As Catholic educators, we lead our children to the truth through prayer, penance and service. It is the basis for all we do.

“I'm honored and grateful to be selected as the Distinguished Educator for 2019. To have been considered is indeed a privilege. I feel so blessed to be a part of the St Joseph School family and the Diocese of Baton Rouge. I have had the pleasure of working with two excellent principals: Dr. Toups (1989 - 2014) and Mrs. Danette Ragusa (2014 – present). Although they each lead with their own style, they both have been invaluable influences on me as an educator.”

Marilyn Smith

St. Jean Vianney student reenacted the Nativity for their Christmas program.
Photo provided by St. Jean Vianney
Sacred Heart of Jesus School steeped in traditions

From pre-kindergartners seeking the baby Jesus in the Epiphany hunt to eighth-graders never-ending quest to defeat the teachers in the annual teacher-eighth grade volleyball game, the 10 years students spend at Sacred Heart of Jesus School in Baton Rouge are full of traditions that alumni carry with them long after the promotion Mass.

Just ask any alumni since 1978 what was his or her fourth grade Mardi Gras float and most can tell you on the spot. What began by teacher Bonnie Morvant as a parade of shoebox floats eventually progressed to the “red wagon floats” that are created today. Four themes are rotated through the years: inventions, United States, Dinner, and countries. Fourth-graders typically dress in costume to accompany their floats.

Sacred Heart parent and 1995 alumna Christina DiVincenti O’Brien watched in 2017 as her then-fourth-grade daughter Mackenzie presented her float “Alice in Wonderland,” the very Walt Disney movie that Christine represented 26 years earlier. Mother and daughter both dressed as Alice for their respective parades. “It was so special to see Mackenzie’s version of Alice and how she chose to tell the story of ‘Alice in Wonderland’ on her float,” said O’Brien. “I am so blessed to be able to share that experience with Mackenzie.”

Mackenzie, now a sixth-grader, and sisters Lucy, fourth grade, and Ellie, kindergarten, are fourth generation Sacred Heart students.

The school’s third grade Christmas play can also be traced back to the mid-1970s. Two plays were rotated for years, traced back to the mid-1970s. One play is still performed through the years: in-lish. Students bring food to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Church Parish Pantry, which provides food to those in need who live within the geographic boundaries of Sacred Heart of Jesus Church Parish. Students bring food to the school-wide Masses each week, but like other food pantries, Sacred Heart’s is challenged by the high demand and need during the summer months.

Close to the end of the school year, teachers and eighth graders each perform for the student body, complete with costumes, dance moves, and props. Students and faculty then “vote” for their favorite performance by placing food pantry items in carts marked for teachers or eighth grade. The group that gathers the most food by weight is declared the winner.

Eighth-graders currently have the edge on the teachers, winning two of the three battles, including last year’s. Of all the Sacred Heart traditions, none is more special than those that focus on our Catholic faith,” said religion teacher Lisa Lively. “Beyond daily prayers and religion classes, weekly school-wide Mass, reconciliation, and class retreats, Sacred Heart has a number of religious traditions to deepen our faith and bring us closer to God.”

The living rosary is presented by middle school students in October, and eighth-graders present the living Way of the Cross before Easter break. Adding to the tradition is the cloth used by Veronica to wipe the face of Jesus. The cloth was painted by Dr. David Portier, a member of the Class of 1965, and has been used in every living Way of the Cross for the past 23 years.

Sacred Heart second-graders lead the school in the annual May Crowning, an event that closely follows the reception of First Communion.

“May Crowning is my favorite tradition and memory of Sacred Heart,” said 2009 alumna Amanda Moran, who serves as a first grade teaching assistant at the school. “My classmate Matthew Rhorer and I were selected to crown Mary. It brought me out of my comfort zone to walk in front of the whole school and do something that was so special for everyone,” said Moran.

“These traditions and many more have helped mold Sacred Heart students for decades, while instilling in them a sense of home and community that stays with them long after they leave us,” said Interim Principal Carolyn Guidry. “As we prepare for our fall celebration of the 90th anniversary of Sacred Heart of Jesus School, we look forward to sharing these traditions with students for years to come.”
Limited Openings for 2019-2020 School Year

Before and After Care Program
Exceptional Academics
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Welcoming Catholic Faith Community
Comprehensive Athletic Program

STM initiatives: Building on legacy of excellence

The new leadership team at St. Thomas More in Baton Rouge treasures the rich history of the school’s past, and what the school leaders see as a bright future.

Father Michael Alello has served as pastor at St. Thomas More for the past year, and this past summer he hired Brian Moscona to serve as principal of the school. In August, St. Thomas More hired Dr. Greg Brandao, former long-time principal at Catholic High in Baton Rouge, to serve as Director of Mission Integration and Advancement for the entire parish.

These three leaders, who were all at Catholic High of Baton Rouge at one time, are reunited in the common task of building upon St. Thomas More’s legacy of excellence.

While Brandao’s role serves the entire church parish, his office is located in the school. “Moscona and (Brandao) are an amazing team,” Father Alello said. The two of them, along with Vice Principal Ashley McDaniel, have already had a major impact on our parish school in the short time they’ve been here.”

One of Brandao’s first tasks was to lead STM through a strategic planning process, which began with forums and individual meetings with school parents, students, faculty, staff, and parishioners. The strategic plan being developed calls for several top priorities that will directly affect students’ learning and experience at STM.

Brandao said a key initiative in the strategic plan will be branding and marketing. “One of the first things we learned from the forums was that we need to tell the STM story,” he added. “There are so many amazing things happening in our school, and we just need to convey to the greater Baton Rouge community the good news about STM.”

St. Thomas More has hired MESH, a Baton Rouge area branding, marketing, and advertising agency to help capture the STM identity and to share that message creatively and effectively. In the coming months, STM will have a new visual identity, as well as a full marketing plan.

A second key initiative will focus on facilities. St. Thomas More owns more than an entire city block in the Sherwood Forest neighborhood and has a beautiful campus covered in mature live oaks. The school constructed a new playground this past fall and completed ren...
ovations during the summer to bathrooms and common spaces.

With Mass attendance rising and numerous school events occurring on a daily basis, additional parking is necessary. Also, many prospective families have been visiting the campus for tours as they explore school options, and the school’s enrollment has grown throughout the current school year.

In fact, so many new students enrolled that during Christmas break the school hired another fourth-grade teacher and transformed a storage space into a classroom to accommodate new students. Additionally, St. Thomas More welcomed the Diocese of Baton Rouge REACH Program for special needs students onto the STM campus.

This program has been such a success that administrators have requested a second classroom next year.

Father Alello and Moscona have discussed other possibilities like expanding the pre-school and/or Early Learning Center, enhancing the school’s performing arts program, and adding a variety of athletic offerings. They have also explored renovations of current classroom spaces to meet the needs of 21st Century teaching and learning best practices.

This past December, STM initiated a search for a firm to develop a Campus Master Plan for the St. Thomas More property. The facility improvements in the master plan will help the STM community meet some of the goals of the broader strategic plan.

In addition to planning for the physical plant and expansions, St. Thomas More is also seeking to build upon the school’s outstanding academic program. St. Thomas More School was recognized as a national Blue Ribbon School of Excellence in 2016, and administrators aim to apply again in 2021.

The school will need to demonstrate not only that they have maintained their academic success, but that they have taken it to the next level. As part of these efforts, STM has initiated a search to fill two key personnel roles for next school year.

The school is adding a second assistant principal and a second school counselor. “In order to continue the excellent academic program at STM, we need to have more individuals on our team who can provide support to students and teachers. I am thrilled that we are investing resources to recruit and hire two new team members. The primary beneficiaries will be our students,” Moscona said.

This year STM had six of its graduates recognized by the National Merit Scholarship Program (five as semi-finalists and one as a commended scholar), and two STM graduates earned perfect scores on the ACT. Father Alello and Moscona want to ensure that every student will reach his or her potential, and one of the primary ways to do that is to have more educators on board.

From facilities to personnel, from programs to communication, St. Thomas More is planning for the future. The current leadership is grateful for the rich history and the incredible legacy of STM, and they are working to ensure that the next 60 years are as bright as the first 60.

CHS Bruins Broadcast Network makes the leap to live television

“In 3, 2, 1 and we are on the air.”

One might expect to hear a countdown like that if you were sitting in the control room of a live television broadcast.

But what if one was sitting in a production trailer with a group of high school students outside a football stadium on a Friday night? Probably not, unless you were a member of Catholic High School’s Bruin Broadcast Network (BBN). BBN is a student-run media club that produces live event streaming for local broadcast for the Baton Rouge school.

One of more than 30 extracurricular offerings at CHS, BBN was started in 2011 by four ambitious CHS students who wanted to live stream a baseball game. With one camera, a couple of laptops, some luck and a lot of technical know-how, the students launched what is now known as the Bruin Broadcast Network.

In fall of 2013, BBN partnered with Wi-Fi Sports Network to host its live stream and began broadcasting football games on a regular basis. Today, the club has grown to more than 40 students and produces a wide variety of live streaming events including football games, basketball games, baseball games, and choir and band concerts.

The club’s efforts have not gone unnoticed. In April 2018, a discussion between two CHS alumni and former classmates, Dixon McMakin, and Michael Shingleton, both of whom graduated in 2005, hatched the idea of BBN’s football production being broadcast live on television in addition to being streamed online.

“Dixon, who is one of the announcers on BBN’s football radio broadcast, spoke with Michael, a WBRZ news anchor, about WBRZ broadcasting the live stream on its station,” said Ben DiPalma a 2000 Catholic graduate and the school’s assistant athletic director.

Station executives were a bit hesitant with the idea, since producing live sporting events is one of the hardest productions to broadcast with seasoned professionals, let alone high school students.

“For a while, it didn’t look like it was going to happen,” added DiPalma. “We showed them some of our archived productions, and they quickly realized the students’ skill sets were far beyond that of a high school club.”

By this past summer, WBRZ had agreed to broadcast BBN’s production of the Bears’ football season on its sister station WBR Channel 19.

The first broadcast went live on Aug. 30, with Catholic playing Parkview

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When you REACH out in love, you extend the hand of God.
Catholic schools in the Diocese of Baton Rouge select one of its alumni as its distinguished graduate. The 2019 honorees will be recognized at a dinner Monday Jan. 28 at the Renaissance Hotel in Baton Rouge.

Ascension Catholic

Former professional baseball player Todd Landry has spent the past 15 years sharing his intimate knowledge of the game he loves so much with students at Ascension Catholic High School in Donaldsonville. Landry, a Baton Rouge native and ACHS alum, was drafted in the 31st round of the 1993 Major League Baseball draft. He has served as a volunteer assistant baseball coach and is now the head coach. Ascension Catholic retired his No. 9 jersey in a ceremony April 16, 2015.

For his dedication to his alma mater, Landry was selected the school’s Distinguished Graduate.

“(Landry’s) love and service for Ascension Catholic for the past 16 years shows his commitment to the young athletes of...”
our community," Pizzolato said. "He dedicates his days to preparing these young men to be the best they can be on and off the playing field."

**Catholic of Pointe Coupee**

Major Thibaut Jr. made history this past fall when he was elected Pointe Coupee's Parish's inaugural president under the new council/president format. In May, the policy jury voted to transform the parish government and adopted eight single districts and a president.

Thibaut, who served for 10 years in the Louisiana House of Representatives, has been chosen as Catholic of Pointe Coupee's Distinguished Graduate.

"(Thibaut) has been involved in the school, church and our community for many years," principal Colleen Caillet said. "He strives to make our school the best it can be by volunteering much of his time to better our school programs."

Thibaut also served two years on the Point Coupée Parish School Board and is a past president of the New Roads Lions Club. He was selected to the Baton Rouge Business Report 40 under 40, has been awarded Legislator of the Year and received various business champion awards.

Thibaut has volunteered at the school as a coach, served on the capital campaign committee, worked for the advancement within the community and has been a leader in the civil parish.

"I believe that a Catholic education lays a foundation of discipline, character, strong morals and ethic behavior that helps to provide a framework for civic and community involvement," Thibaut said.

**Catholic High**

Catholic High of Baton Rouge fans might remember Perry Key for his late-game heroics on the hardwood. The 1978 graduate had a propensity of hitting key shots down the stretch, leading the Bears to several wins on last-second shots.

Key, a CHS Grizzly Greats Athletic Hall of Fame inductee and successful banker, is Catholic High's Distinguished Graduate.

"(Key) is a great model for young people and a living witness to the Catholic faith we share," principal Lisa Harvey said. "When speaking with him, almost everyone quickly gets the sense that he is really listening to them. He never seems preoccupied with other concerns or distracted by considering his own thoughts or comments."

Harvey, who praised Key for his humility, said he is also a leader, dedicated husband and father and a faith-filled Catholic.

"Catholic education provided me with a strong foundation for faith, character and academics," Key said. "I have a strong belief in all the gifts of Catholic education."

**Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University**

From 2004 to 2012, Dolores "Dee" LeJeune, was the president and CEO of St. Elizabeth Hospital in Gonzales. Under LeJeune's leadership, St. Elizabeth Hospital was transformed both physically and culturally, growing in reputation as one of the most respected hospitals in the state of Louisiana. A partnership she helped develop with Mary Bird Perkins brought cancer services to the Ascension Civil Parish area.

Although there are many significant contributions that LeJeune made during her career, the one that LeJeune, herself holds most dear is that of creating a culture of success wherever she has been. It follows her personal mission, which, she says is about respect – treating others the way they want to be treated. Her personal signature and trademark of over 30 years has been, “Thanks for all you do!”

According to one staff member, "Dee brought caring, compassion, dedication and integrity with her every day to work. She is a beautiful person inside and out. She is an inspiration to everyone she touches."

Dedicated to service, LeJeune has served on the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University Board of Trustees since 2013. She was an active participant in the Our Lady of the Lake School of Nursing Alumni Association where she took on leadership roles.
LeJeune has also been very active in the community and state. She is past president of the Rotary Club of East Ascension and has served on the Board of the Louisiana Hospital Association; Ascension Chamber of Commerce; the American Hospital Association Regional Policy Board; Volunteer Ascension; and, Career Builders of Louisiana among many others.

“Catholic education centers me on God and service,” said LeJeune. “From that flows a deepening of faith and love of family and community. It is truly a gift.”

Holy Family School

Allison Owens’ roots at Holy Family School in Port Allen were planted at an early age and years later she continues to nurture those early beginnings.

Owens, who serves as a guidance counselor at the school and also has a private practice, is Holy Family’s Distinguished Graduate. She said her early formation at Holy Family is the driving force in how she approaches every situation, whether it is personal or professional.

“Catholic education centers me on God and service,” said LeJeune. “From that flows a deepening of faith and love of family and community. It is truly a gift.”

Holy Ghost School

Hammond attorney Patrick Coudrain is 15 years removed from his days at Holy Ghost School in Hammond but remains close to his educational roots.

Coudrain, the school’s Distinguished Graduate winner, was a model student while attending Holy Ghost and was also a loyal friend and kind and loving individual, according to principal Donna Wallette.

He is the secretary/treasurer for Options, a nonprofit organization in Hammond providing services for disabilities; a member of the Hammond Kiwanis Club; St. Thomas Aquinas High School in Hammond alumni board; and, the Mary Perkins Cancer Center advisory board.

“(Coudrain) is very professional, has a kind spirit and a positive attitude,” Wallette said. “These traits can sometimes take years to acquire but Patrick consistently demonstrates them.”

He was a Kappa Alpha Order E. Fleming Mason Memorial Internship Selection, New Kiwanian of the Year and a Future 40 leaders as selected by the Hammond Daily Star.

“Teaching Catholic values is paramount specifically for the children of this generation because faith and morals are undervalued and under siege,” Coudrain said.

Mater Dolorosa

Tony Fagan’s commitment to the Blessed Virgin shines through his life.

He leads annual pilgrimages to Medjugorje and Poland as part of his role with the MIR Group and is open about his mission to bringing men to Christ, including his former classmates from Mater Dolorosa School in Independence and lost friends.

Fagan, who works as a director of an auto parts store chain, has been selected as Mater Dolorosa’s Distinguished Graduate.

“The sacrifices my parents made to send my sisters and me to Mater Dolorosa made us the Christians we are today,” said Fagan, who was chosen Director of the Year for O’Reilly Auto Parts in 2017 and serves on the MIR Board of Directors.

Cheryl Santangelo said shortly after she was hired as principal at Mater Dolorosa, Fagan contacted her to “let me know that he is available for anything we may need. He has helped with several major fundraisers, both physically and financially.”

“(Fagan) has long exemplified a level of...”

See GRADS page 13B

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Catholic Pride

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Steimel, the mother of two sons, said she believes Catholic education is an extension of the Catholic Church, and as a Catholic educator she teaches “the whole child about our faith and how to live as Jesus calls us to.”

**Our Lady of Mercy**

Renee Richard’s deep spirituality has inspired her throughout her many endeavors in life, including her roles as a registered nurse, television host, archivist, exhibit curator, editor, author, genealogist and volunteer on both the church and civil parish levels.

Richard, who is currently the assistant archivist for the Diocese of Baton Rouge, has been selected as Distinguished Graduate for Our Lady of Mercy School in Baton Rouge.

“I believe Catholic education provides quality education in a Catholic-Christian environment that instills in us that our faith is part of everything we do,” Richard said.

OLOM principal Chris Porche said Richard has utilized her talents to distinguish herself in the diocese and beyond.

He noted that Richard’s detailed study of the past has greatly assisted the diocese in learning of its historic journey that dates back more than 200 years.

“Richard has proved to be selfless as well as multi-talented,” Porche said. “Her attention to detail and passion for research is surpassed only by her enthusiasm in sharing her findings with the broader audience. She is a friend and naturally gifted story teller.”

Richard is the co-host of the Roots of Faith series on Catholic Life Television and co-authored “Roots of Faith: The History of the Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge.”

**Redemptorist High School**

Ledoux Chastant and Brian Fourroux have been chosen as co-Distinguished Graduates of Redemptorist High School by the Redemptorist Friends and Alumni organization.

Chastant, a 1974 graduate of RHS, is the chief executive officer of West Feliciana Hospital in St. Francisville and Fourroux, a 1979 graduate, is the owner of a furniture store in Port Allen.

“Catholic education has given me the foundation on which to build my life,” Chastant said. “My educational experience made such an impression that I also sent my three children to Catholic school so they could enjoy the same benefit.”

Matthew Zeringue, president of Redemptorist High School Family and Alumni, said Chastant has been able to serve by assisting in constructing a new hospital in a rural community and by serving various boards, including the State Arthritis Foundation, 911 Center and the United Way.

Chastant has also served on the Diocesan Principal Search Committee and in leadership roles with the Knights of Columbus and the RHS School Board.

“(Chastant) is a shining example of what Catholic education strives to produce,” Zeringue said. “He is a strong community and church supporter, dedicated to his family and leads others by a strong Christian example.

“From diocesan to parish to Boy Scouts he has left a positive mark in this community. His history of involvement with church and civic organizations is unparalleled.”

Chastant has received the Life Service Award from the Louisiana Medical Group Management Association, was selected as Knight of the Month, received the KC Council 7856 Outstanding Service Award and for 10 years served as the president of the LMGMA Legislative Committee.

“(Chastant) as chosen to take an active role in many community organizations and has volunteered countless hours to helping organizations in the community.

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spread wholesome Christian beliefs,” Zeringue said.

Fourroux’s has distinguished himself by his ability to raise money for church parishes, Zeringue said.

“He has a very unique talent and is always willing to volunteer causes,” he added. “Very few graduates have raised the amount of money that Brian has for organizations in our area.

“The successful business he has started allowed him the time and ability to use his hobby as a means to help others.”

Zeringue said Fourroux has given back to the community through his talent as a professional auctioneer.

“In today’s world, Catholic education is vital,” Fourroux said. “It is important for our youth to have the Catholic values instilled in them at a young age.”

Fourroux was selected the 1995 Louisiana Retailer of the Year for the furniture store he started in 1981.

Ronnie Collette graduated from Redemptorist St. Gerard more than 50 years ago but has remained active in the tradition-rich school. Collette volunteered at Redemptorist for more than 15 years and was a volunteer baseball coach for the same amount of time. Collette, a 1964 graduate and local gasoline distributor, was selected as the school’s Distinguished Graduate.

Collette credits his faith as the conversion of his life, and said his faith began with his Catholic education.

“He is an outstanding member of the community, involved in his church, parish and a good example for others,” Redemptorist St. Gerard principal Aimee Wiles said. “He gave back to Redemptorist High School and continues to support Catholic education.”

Collette also served as president of the ushers at St. Alphonsus Church in Greenwell Springs.

Sacred Heart of Jesus

Raymond Calandro has accomplished much since his days at Sacred Heart of Jesus School in Baton Rouge but has remained close to his multi-generational, educational foundation. Calandro is a second generation Sacred Heart alum and his three children are Sacred Heart graduates. His wife, Dorothy, is a 30-year educator at the school.

So it was only natural that he would select as the school’s Distinguished Graduate.

Calandro, a Baton Rouge carpenter specializing in home remodeling, has made a lifelong commitment to the school and parish he calls home, serving in the Men’s Club and Home and School Association.

He called his Sacred Heart education the “backbone” of his faith.

“We build our faith in God through learning, not only in school or church but through helping others,” said Calandro, who has been honored as the Men’s Club Outstanding Volunteer, the Home and School Association Outstanding Volunteer, the Knights of Columbus Rookie Knight of the Year and Grand Knight.

Sacred Heart principal C.J. Laird lauded Calandro for his strong Catholic faith and his lifelong commitment to the school and church.

“Whether donating Christmas trees, making jambalaya, leading the Knights of Columbus or decorating the church, (Calandro’s) love of Sacred Heart runs deep,” Laird said. “He is truly a man who supports our church and school with words and deeds and an unwavering commitment.”

Laird said Calandro has a “great respect” for the school’s history and traditions, and carries that respect with him “each and every time he answers the call to help Sacred Heart. He is living a legacy of love for Sacred Heart that he inherited.”

St. Aloysius

As director of the Crime Victims Service Division for the East Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff’s Office, Jane Wood is frequently called into difficult situations. But even in those darkest and most threatening of moments, she relies on her Catholic faith, which she learned as a student at St. Aloysius School in Baton Rouge, as her spiritual beacon.

“Catholic education has stayed with me,” Wood said, “and church.

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me my entire life,” said Wood, selected as St. Aloysius’ Distinguished Graduate. “It has not only helped me learn about my faith but has given me a moral compass to decide between right and wrong in a world that has many different opinions.

“Catholic education has also provided me an opportunity of how to live my life (in a Christ-like fashion).”

Not only has Wood dedicated her life to helping the community but has also served on many boards in the area, including the Lamar YMCA, Sexual Trauma Awareness and Response (STAR), Children Advocacy Center, Operation Club Drug and the Council on the Prevention of Child Abuse.

“(Wood) is a humble servant who has done an incredible amount of work to help the victims of crime,” St. Aloysius principal Erin Candilora said. “She has assessed the needs of victims and worked to ensure that those needs are met.”

Candilora added Wood has dedicated her life to helping victims of crime, as well as working to improve the system of reporting the collection of evidence and working to improve the system.

“I think the one thing that sets (Domino) apart is her stability and support of the church parish,” Johnson said.

Domino currenty serves as eucharistic minister at St. Francis Xavier Church and is also a member of the Holy Family Alumni Association.

“She is passionate about the works she does and lives her beliefs,” Herpich said. “She embraces God’s call to stewardship.”

Cheryl Domino has spent more than three decades serving in numerous roles at St. Francis Xavier School in Baton Rouge.

“(Domino) has been one of the constant supporters of the church and the school,” principal Paula Johnson said. “She has contributed numerous hours of support to both the church and the school during these last 30 plus years.”

Domino currently serves as eucharistic minister at St. Francis Xavier Church and is also a member of the Holy Family Alumni Association.

“I think the one thing that sets (Domino) apart is her stability and support of the church parish,” Johnson said.

Domino said Catholic education supports the development of the whole child and is important because it keeps “God in our hearts and minds.”

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“To me, it means I have the freedom to speak to God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and to say a ‘Hail Mary’ whenever I feel the need,” Domino said. “It’s a haven for me spiritually and emotionally.”

St. George

As an lifelong educator, Honey Lundin believes in educating the whole child and that all children have the right to learn.

It’s a philosophy that has guided her through her years as a teacher at St. George School in Baton Rouge and as assistant principal at Sorrento Primary School.

“(All children) have the right to be loved and to have a cheerleader,” said Lundin, a 1985 graduate and that school’s Distinguished Graduate. “I feel I have a moral responsibility to do everything I can to ensure that the children in our community have an opportunity.”

St. George principal Jack Nelson said Lundin has always shown a desire to be a strong servant and leader. He said she works tirelessly to help children less fortunate.

“She has written grants to help disadvantaged students and her commitment to all children is unwavering,” Nelson said. “She has continued to fulfill her mission as an educator by tutoring children with exceptional needs.”

Lundin has won the SJA Award at St. Joseph’s Academy in Baton Rouge, the Brotherhood/Sisterhood Award, Teacher of the Year Award and has also been awarded several grants to benefit struggling or disadvantaged students.

“(Lundin) has dedicated her life to education, both inside and outside of the classroom,” Nelson said. “She believes that education is the foundation of the future.”

“Guiding children through the sacramental preparation, tutoring children with exception abilities and serving as an educator at the elementary school exemplify her commitment to helping all children.”

Lundin has also served as a catechist at St. George.

“Catholic education, rooted from a moral compass, fosters a sense of community and an understanding of the importance of service to others,” Lundin said.

St. Jean Vianney

Daniel Wolf has already served as a king this past fall and soon will wear the crown of Distinguished Graduate for St. Jean Vianney School in Baton Rouge.

Wolf, a senior management major with a concentration in strategic leadership at the LSU E. J. Ourso College of Business, graduated from St. Jean in 2011. This past October he served as king of the LSU homecoming court.

Wolf is also a member of the LSU Greek Board of Directors.

“The Catholic school system has installed core Catholic values of respecting all lives, a call to family and community, and solidarity among all God’s children,” Wolf said.

St. Jean principal Wendy Ross praised Wolf as a “standout collegiate student who holds tight to his core Catholic values.

“He and his family continue involvement in the family life of (St. Jean Vianney). He continues his journey of faith among his fraternity brothers.”

St. John Interparochial School

A long and prestigious list of awards have been bestowed on Sue Turner, but perhaps she is best known for protecting the dignity of human life and seeing every person as a child of God.

Turner, a philanthropist and community activist, has been chosen as Distinguished Graduate for St. John Interparochial School in Plaquemine.

Principal Cherie Schlatre said Turner has devoted much of her life to philanthropy and volunteer activities.

“Her time and generosity have supported numerous organizations, and she has been recognized many times for her work in the community,” Schlatre said. “She has exhibited true discipleship and a strong faith throughout her life.

“She has made countless contributions to the community through her generosity, leadership and service.”

Turner, who retired after a career with Turner Industries, is a Margie Ourso College of Business Hall of Distinction inductee. She has also received the National Association of Country Parks and Recreation Outstanding Contributor Award, the Inter-Civic Council of Baton Rouge Golden Deeds Award and the National Conference of Christians and Jews Brotherhood Award.

“Being taught by my family and teachers at St. John School has given me a strong faith that has guided me throughout my life,” she said.

“(Turner) has touched the lives of countless people through her philanthropic work throughout her lifetime and...”

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St. Aloysius Catholic School

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continues to bless others with her generosity and knowledge in many ways,” Schlatre said. “St. John School is proud to recognize (Turner) as a member of our school family.”

St. Joseph’s Academy
Sister Helen Prejean CSJ first began prison ministry in 1981 when she became a pen pal and a spiritual adviser for a death row inmate at the Louisiana State Penitentiary.

Because of her dedication to her ministry and the inmates she has served, Sister Helen was chosen as the Distinguished Graduate for St. Joseph’s Academy in Baton Rouge.

“Sister Helen does fabulous work to help the community, specifically those who often get overlooked,” said Stacia Andricain, principle of SJA. “What better way to celebrate the 150th anniversary year of SJA than to honor a (Sister of St. Joseph) as our Distinguished Graduate.”

Andricain praised Sister Helen for her “ability to see the best qualities and the value of every human, no matter their mistakes of the past.”

St. Joseph Elementary School
Emily Boudreaux’s legacy at St. Joseph Elementary School in Ponchatoula continues to be carried on through her great-grandchildren.

A 1946 graduate of St. Joseph, Boudreaux remains active in several ministries at the church and school, and even in civic activities, having been selected to serve as the Co-Grand Marshal of the 2019 Strawberry Festival in Ponchatoula.

Boudreaux, 86, has been selected as the school Distinguished Graduate.

“(Boudreaux) is very active in our church community through many ministries such as the Rosary Altar Society, Knights of Columbus auxiliary, bereavement team, eucharistic minister and member of the finance committee,” St. Joseph principal Danette Ragusa said.

Boudreaux noted the church community has several older members who remain active in the parish, and selecting Boudreaux allowed the school showcase one of their graduates who has contributed much to the church and school throughout their lifetime.

“Catholic education has played a vital role in the formation of my Catholic faith,” Boudreaux said. “It kept me rooted in seeking God throughout my life.”

St. Jude the Apostle
As a teacher at St. Jude the Apostle School in Baton Rouge, Mandy Cushing’s dedication to her first-grade students is well known.

But her commitment extends well beyond the classroom, as Cushing spends much of her personal time helping advance the success of St. Jude by volunteering in fundraising activities. Her dedication to not only the school but the church parish has earned Cushing the title of Distinguished Graduate.

“Mandy is a dedicated teacher who gives her all to those in her classroom and all her peers,” St. Jude principal Michelle Gardner said, adding that Cushing serves as faculty representative to the St. Jude Parish Advisory Council and has been chosen as an alumni representative for St. Joseph’s Academy in Baton Rouge on its Career Day.

“(Cushing) is always ready to help a student, friend or parishioner with a Christ-like attitude,” Gardner added. “She exemplifies the school’s motto of Faith, Academy and Excellence.

“She has answered God’s call to educate young minds and hearts. She does so in her professional life and instilling a love for Jesus in her students. At home she acts as the primary catechist for her own children.”

Cushing, who has previously been

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chosen as Teacher of the Month by the parish’s Knights of Columbus Council, has also served as the decorations chair for the past three years for the school’s annual auction.

“Catholic education provides a foundation of faith which allows students to understand God’s grace and paves a successful Christ-centered path into adulthood,” Cushing said.

St. Michael High School
Allyson LeBorde has become an active leader in the Junior League of Baton Rouge, building upon the foundation she received at St. Michael the Archangel High School in Baton Rouge.

LeBorde, an assistant principal at Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School in Baton Rouge, has been selected as St. Michael’s Distinguished Graduate.

“Catholic education allows students to live their faith daily in their formative years,” said LeBorde, a 1999 graduate of St. Michael. “It provides academic opportunities while developing a deeper relationship with God.”

St. Michael principal Ellen Lee said the school recognizes LeBorde’s accomplishments as a Catholic educator through her commitment to helping young students develop a deeper relationship with God.

“She has been committed to the community through her volunteer efforts and continues to uphold her Catholic identity,” Lee said.

LeBorde, a member and advisor of Chi Omega Sorority, has volunteered for St. Michael Career Day and continues to invite current St. Michael students to showcase their talents at Our Lady of Mercy.

St. Peter Chanel
St. Peter Chanel Interparochial School in Paulina Distinguished Graduate Paige Faucheux is an advocate for Downs Syndrome and promotes her accomplishments through various media platforms. Faucheux, who graduated from St. Peter in 2012, has also appeared on Capitol Hill as an advocate for Downs Syndrome and has represented Louisiana in the Special Olympics, winning two bronze medals in tennis.

“Catholic education was a huge blessing in my life,” she said. “Even though I have special needs it didn’t matter to my classmates.

“We learned from each other and have friendships that will last a lifetime. As I continue my journey through life I will always cherish my memories at St. Peter Chanel.”

Principal Paula Poche called Faucheux a “very successful young lady,” noting that she is a college graduate and has become a spokesperson for Upside Down and Downs Syndrome.

“Faucheux has achieved so many things this past year we are very proud of her,” Poche said. “She sets herself apart by striving to achieve things and always sets a positive, loving example of what a St. Peter Chanel graduate should be. She has been very active these past few years and has met many goals she has set.”

Poche said Faucheux is known by the community and has a pleasant personality that radiates to everyone she meets.

St. Theresa Middle School/St. John Primary School
Commitment to youth has guided Duston Comett throughout his personal life and professional career.

Comett has served as a volunteer coach for the boys’ and girls’ basketball teams at St. Theresa/St. John Primary schools for the past 10 years and assists with activities for the youth group at St. John the Evangelist Church in Plaquemine. Comett, who is an operator at BASF, has been selected at the St. Theresa/St. John Primary Distinguished Graduate.

“I believe Catholic education allows our children to grow in the fullness of God’s love without external influences,” said Comett, who, along with his wife, Michelle, has put in countless volunteer hours at the school, working with the Home and School Association to provide fun and exciting experiences for students.

“(Comett) is ready and willing to serve at a moment’s notice,” said principal Chris Musso, who noted that Comett is also an active and productive member of the Ascension Parish community.

Comett has been recognized as a Rookie Firefighter of the Year, Fireman of the Year, and received a 20-year Service Recognition Award by the National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians. As a Boy Scout, he received the Arrow of Light Award and earned the rank of Eagle Scout. He also received a BSA Catholic religious emblem.

“Duston is always willing to lend a helping hand,” Musso said.

St. Thomas Aquinas High School
An entrance driveway dotted with trees provides a scenic approach to St. Thomas Aquinas Regional High School in Hammond.

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Those trees and their care are the reflection of the commitment of Hammond attorney Nicky Muscarello Jr., a 1992 alumnus of STA and a member of the Louisiana House of Representatives, has for his alma mater. His commitment not only to STA but to Catholic education has earned him the honor of Distinguished Graduate for St. Thomas Aquinas.

“Muscarello has been a generous donor and an excellent example of what it means to be a product of Catholic education,” STA principal Pat Sanguinetti said. “His dedication to public service as well as service to the school is an excellent example to all of our students and alumni.” Sanguinetti added that Muscarello continues to support Catholic education and morals even in the state Legislature. “A Catholic education has provided me the ability to make use of Scripture as a tool for guidance and inspiration,” Muscarello, who was elected to his seat in March, said.

St. Thomas More

Sherie Leblanc has transferred her commitment to Catholic education from the classroom to her role as admissions director and chairman of the Mathematics Department at Catholic High School in Baton Rouge.

A 1990 graduate of St. Thomas More School in Baton Rouge, Leblanc’s success promoting the mission of Catholic education led to her being chosen as STM’s Distinguished Graduate.

“I was given a foundation and formation for life,” Leblanc said. “I am the person I am today due to the holistic values received from Catholic schools.”

STM principal Brian Moscona said Leblanc has been committed to the mission of Catholic education for more than 20 years, serving in the classroom and in her administrative roles. He said her efforts have led to an increased enrollment at Catholic High.

“She is a wonderful ambassador for St. Thomas More and for Catholic education,” Moscona said. “She is highly respected and valued through the Catholic educational community and viewed as a wonderful ambassador for Catholic High School and an invaluable member of their administrative team. She is a wonderful teacher and someone who has helped Catholic High move forward.”

In 2015 Leblanc attended a three-week immersion program in Lyon, France focused on the founding, charism and mission of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart. She said being selected for the program strengthened her understanding of the holistic nature of Catholic education.

“(Leblanc) has worked to provide increased access to Catholic schools, and she has increased enrollment at Catholic High while also increasing diversity,” Moscona said.

Integrating hands-on learning and creative thinking with a 3-D printer

St. Aloysius School in Baton Rouge is focusing on preparing students for “a life of meaning and purpose.”

School leaders said they are striving to help each child achieve his or her maximum potential in spiritual, intellectual, social, artistic, and physical development. In attaining these goals, teachers emphasize the fact that each child is an individual with specific needs, interests, and abilities.

A focus on hands-on learning activities allows students to use their gifts and engage with each other in the learning process. Technology and 3D printers have helped attain those goals.

The school is the beneficiary of two new 3-D printers. One printer came in the form of a grant from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries written for a third-grade project. Third graders worked to create adapted animals that have lost their habitat because of coastal erosion.

The unique project was part of a unit they study on ecology. The students brainstormed ideas using critical thinking to create the types of adaptations animals would need to survive in their new environment. They then printed their adapted animals on the 3-D Printer.

A second printer was received from a grant written by the Catholic Schools Office for each school in the Diocese of Baton Rouge to obtain a 3-D printer. This new printer expands the opportunity for fostered possibilities for teachers and students to apply technology for hands-on learning in various ways. All grade levels have access to the printers and are able to utilize them.

Students are currently using a program called Tinkercad to create computer-generated designs for the 3-D printers. Many grade levels worked on teacher-generated projects. For example, eighth-grade students created and printed snowflakes while sixth graders created something that featured their name.

St. Aloysius educators are always working to find ways to challenge students and integrate subjects with technology. One instance is the eighth-grade students who are currently studying biomedical science.

A thought-provoking project that crossed from science class into the computer lab is one concentrated around medical equipment. The students are creating and printing a splint that could be used if a basketball player jammed a finger. Then using the engineering process, they took a typical medical device and improved it in some way. To complete the project, they created a prototype of their improved devices in Tinkercad and printed them on the 3-D printer.

Technology projects help students use their gifts and encourage working collaboratively to think creatively and solve problems. Designing and creating snowflakes, small air plant pots, boats and clumps for games are other applications experienced by students. The 3D printer takes their learning a step further by allowing them to see and evaluate the actual product of their research, creativity and design.

Plans are in the works for sixth- and seventh-grade students to create small air plant pots and boats. The primary purpose of St. Aloysius is to prepare students for life in a contemporary society.
Computer Science and an Hour of Code at Holy Family

Holy Family School in Port Allen recently participated in Computer Science Education Week. It was held the first week of December and Holy Family has been a part of it for the past five years. Like so many schools across West Baton Rouge Parish, the Diocese of Baton Rouge, the state of Louisiana and even the world, this is primarily done in celebration with Hour of Code Week.

Computer science is changing every industry on the planet, and it is important that every student is given an opportunity to not just use technology but learn how to create technology as well. With the school’s ever-changing industries, computing knowledge has become part of a well-rounded skill set. Computer science drives job growth and innovation throughout the economy and society.

Coding and other computer science concepts help nurture creativity and problem-solving skills to prepare students for any future career.

Through Hour of Code, all Holy Family students from pre-K through eighth grade work on critical thinking, problem solving, measurement, digital creativity, technology operations, logic and computational thinking. The Hour of Code is an introduction to computer science, designed to demystify code and show that anybody can learn the basics.

Hour of Code is fun and provides an inviting introduction to programming that can provide a myriad of benefits for kids. Everyone talks about the job market as the big reason to learn programming, but the benefits go far beyond potential career preparation.

For Holy Family students, programming is a great way to improve their thinking skills. Coding requires and instills discipline, attention to detail, patience, the ability to predict an outcome and many other valuable skills. These thinking skills can help Holy Family students in all aspects of life, not just programming. The job market is a pretty good reason to learn too.