Bishop Duca installed as new shepherd

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

The past year was momentous for the Diocese of Baton Rouge highlighted by a change in leadership. Bishop Michael G. Duca of the Diocese of Shreveport was installed as the sixth bishop for the Baton Rouge diocese on Aug. 24 at St. Joseph Cathedral, replacing Bishop Robert W. Muench.

Bishop Muench had submitted his letter of resignation to the Vatican, as required by canon law, on his 75th birthday on Dec. 28, 2017.

Prior to retirement, Bishop Muench continued a number of his initiatives including the Racial Harmony Commission co-chaired by Father Joshua Johnson, pastor at Holy Rosary Church in St. Amant, and Father Tom Clark SJ, pastor at Immaculate Conception Church in Baton Rouge. The goal of the commission was to play a part in the healing process of the capital city following racial strife stemming from the police shooting of Alton Sterling, an African-American.

Father Clark was hopeful the commission was the start of the community working together. He invited folks from throughout the diocese to engage in dialogue, to listen to each other and be changed by that dialogue.

“That kind of dialogue moves hearts, moves people to action,” said Father Clark.

New buildings, new construction and renovations greeted parishioners at several churches throughout the year.

Father Randy Cuevas, pastor at St. Aloysius Church in Baton Rouge, blessed the parish’s new Pastoral Services Center.

At St. Joseph Cathedral, work was completed shoring the basement and repairing the drop ceilings in the Blessed Sacrament chapel on the east side of the building and the Mary chapel on the west side.

Repairs included updating the electrical wiring, which had not been updated since the 1920s, the fabrication of corrective structural beams and additional beams to allow for lights to shine on the Blessed Virgin in the Mary chapel and on the sanctuary and tabernacle in the Blessed Sacrament chapel.

At Our Lady of Mercy Church in Baton Rouge, new construction and renovations changed the church and the school campus. A new 30,000 square-foot early childhood center was completed and existing classrooms were renovated to accommodate a special education program.

Also, a new gym is in the works. The improvements are part of the church’s Traditions for Tomorrow campaign.

Expansion is also underway for the St. Vincent de Paul Society, thanks to a $1 million grant from the city of Baton Rouge. According to executive director Michael Acaldo, the grant has helped fund a 36-bed expansion of the Bishop Ott Center and day room.

Community responds to Christmas donation program

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

On Dec. 14, the office of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge turned into the North Pole. With a giant inflatable Santa welcoming visitors, vehicles lined up along the driveway as volunteer elves loaded up cars with donated gifts for Christmas. Among those receiving gifts was Evelyn Johnson of Gonzales, who is still trying to recover from the flood of 2016.

Johnson, who has four children at home, has also been trying to help her mother recover from the flood.

“This is going to help tremendously because I didn’t...
Epiphany

With the final needles of the now parched Christmas tree ready to fall to their grave on the den floor, the liturgical season transitions from Christmas to Epiphany. Epiphany, celebrated Jan. 6, is the traditional day to once again haul out the boxes from the attic and refill them with the Christmas decorations and outdoor lightings that have been brightening the homestead since shortly after Santa paraded past Macy’s on Thanksgiving Day. Christmas is officially over, minus the less enjoyable tradition of opening the bills in January and learning just how much Santa cost.

The word “Epiphany” is Greek and means “manifestation.” As such the Epiphany celebrates the revelation of God in his son as human in Jesus Christ.

Early Christians began celebrating the feast of the Epiphany in the 4th century. According to St. Matthew’s Gospel, the three Wise Men followed the star of Bethlehem across the desert, eventually meeting the baby Jesus and the Holy Family.

The three men, named Melchior, Caspar and Balthazer, brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, all symbolic in their own right, with gold representing Jesus’ royal standing, frankincense his divine birth and myrrh his mortality.

Although the Epiphany is Jan. 6, some Catholic churches celebrate the day on the Sunday after Jan. 6, which is not an issue this year.

Orthodox Christians celebrate the feast day on Jan. 19.

Worldwide, festivities may include swimming in icy waters, exchanging presents and perhaps even a parade. Some countries even observe Epiphany as a national holiday.

Epiphany is known as Dia de los Reyes in the Hispanic community and in Mexico people gather to sample Rosca de Reyes (Kings bread), which is that culture’s version of a revered south Louisiana tradition. In some Hispanic cultures, a baby Jesus is hidden inside the cake and whoever finds it is obligated to host a party on the Feast of the Presentation, which is likely more costly than buying a cake for your office mates next Friday.

The Epiphany is often viewed as the official end of the festive season but, of course, we south Louisianaans know different. For us, Twelfth Night is the official start of perhaps the most festive, if not rowdiest, time of the year, that being Carnival. Mardi Gras balls are set to begin in earnest, all with the promise that parades cannot be far behind.

In the past, Twelfth Night was also the unofficial start of the King cake season but that has evolved during the past several years to the point where the delicacy has become a pre-Christmas favorite. But the linking of Epiphany and Carnival is another example of how our secular south Louisiana culture has strong ties to our religious beliefs.

Starlight shines bright

By Dina Dow

The universe is vast, precise and infinite. The more we seek to find the endpoint, the more we realize the magnitude of space and time is something to behold. We know who created the universe. As Catholic Christians, we begin the Creed with these words, “I believe in one God, the father almighty, maker of heaven and earth ...” Thus, it makes sense to look to the sky as a compass for travel and time. Therefore, we begin the new calendar year (the Gregorian calendar year, based on solar and lunar measurements) with a star and the opening of heaven. The Sunday Mass readings during the next two weeks illuminate the mysteries of Jesus’ infancy in the Epiphany of our Lord and the beginning of Jesus’ public life, his baptism.

Mystery of Jesus’ infancy: Star light

Approximately 2019 years have passed since the heavens opened to reveal the glory of God in the Incarnation: God becoming man. The seemingly quiet village of Bethlehem became the birthplace of the Christ, a place told by the prophets of old. “Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you” (Is 60:1). Hovering above “the city of David” was an extraordinary radiant star. St. Pope John Paul II writes, “In a certain sense, in pointing to the light the prophet is pointing to Christ. As it shone for the shepherds seeking the newborn Messiah, so this light shines today on the path of the Magi, come from the East to adore him who was born King of the Jews” (Homily, Monday, 6 January 1996). The star points to an intersection of heaven and earth: God and man.

The wise men represent the gathering of all humankind into the family of God. As the psalmist exclaims, “Lord, every nation on earth will adore you” (Ps 72). The Jewish people expected the Messiah to come. Even King Herod, the Roman appointed “King of the Jews” during this period, was aware of the prophecy. However, he had to consult with the experts of that day to help refresh his recollection of exactly where the new king would come from. “The wise men coming in order to pay homage to the king of the Jews shows that they seek in Israel, in the messianic light of the Star of David, the one who will be king of the nations” (The Catechism of the Catholic Church #528). Thus, Herod was “troubled” at the inquiry of the wise men, for instead of embracing his true kingship, he invested time and money in building projects and power. St. Paul reiterates the grace given by God through Jesus Christ as “the stewardship of God’s grace for all.” As faithful Christians, what are we to do with such grace? St. Pope John Paul II continues, “The apostle’s task is to spread the Gospel throughout the world, proclaiming to mankind the redemption wrought by Christ and to lead all humanity on the path of salvation, manifested by God on the night in Bethlehem. The church’s missionary activity, through its many stages down the centuries, finds its starting point and universal scope in the feast of Epiphany.” How do we begin this mission? We start with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Mystery of Jesus’ public life

Let us be buried with Christ by baptism to rise with him; let us go down with him to be raised with him; and let us rise with him to be glorified with him” (St. Gregory of Nazianzus.)

The prophet Isaiah speaks of the chosen one of God, “who will be filled with the Spirit, bring justice, be a light for all nations, open the eyes of the blind, release the imprisoned and pulled others out of the darkness of dungeons” (Is 42:1-7). Henceforth shall those who follow this Chosen One be blessed with peace (Ps 29). Jesus came because of mercy. From his ministry comes the power of the Holy Spirit to heal and expel evil, thus conquering sin and bringing salvation to all who accept his gift. So where is the beginning of our path to salvation?

Theophany & Epiphany

Upon insistence, Jesus allows St. John the Baptist to baptize him in the Jordan River, the very same river Joshua led the Israelites through as they reached the promised land (Jos 3:14-17). Jesus is far from need of baptism of repentance for he is free from sin. “The baptism of Jesus is on his part the acceptance and inauguration of his mission as God’s suffering
Bishop Michael Duca blesses the new Full of Grace Café as well as the people attending the ceremony. Photo by Debbie Shelley | The Catholic Commentator

Full of Grace Café offers coffee, hope

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

The newly opened Full of Grace Café at Holy Rosary Church in St. Amant is a collective dream of its parishioners and pastor Father Josh Johnson that is meeting the needs of the less fortunate and giving them hope for a better future.

The full name of the café is: “Full of Grace Café: Quenching God’s Thirst for Charity and Justice.” And the facility, indeed, is a story of grace for the church and community, according to Father Johnson.

When he was appointed in 2017 he came into a parish still reeling from the effects of the flood of 2016. Father Johnson slept in a room above the choir loft, as the parish rectory had been extensively damaged and was about to be torn down.

But soon the intercessory prayers of cloistered nuns for Holy Rosary parishioners and himself that Father Johnson requested before coming to the parish began their transformative work.

It started with an idea to move the parish’s food pantry, founded by Mrs. Ronie Tureau, closer to the church.

Father Johnson prayed and listened to parishioners’ stories as he visited them and blessed their homes. He heard many expressing a hunger to better know Jesus/God/Holy Spirit, so they could be in an intentional relationship with him.

Through a coordinated effort, small group Scripture studies were formed, said parish administrator Jennifer Morales.

“The fruits of our small group Scripture studies have been an awareness of our need to engage and serve the poor,” Morales said.

The brainstorming and offering of gifts and talents by parishioners snowballed into the idea of offering one-stop services and evangelization.

“The cool thing is that people are coming to the table collectively. Someone will say, ‘Hey I can do this,’ or ‘I can do that,’” said Father Johnson. “We came to the table so we can experience the gift of poverty.”

In the spring, the Holy Rosary Pastoral and Finance councils unanimously passed a proposal submitted by parishioners that the flooded and abandoned rectory be converted into The Full of Grace Café, said Morales.

The cost of the renovations was $196,000 and the expenses were paid through insurance funds, donations from other Catholic churches and a portion of the proceeds of the church’s La Fête des Bayous festival in 2017.

On Dec. 1, parishioners and people from the surrounding community packed the church for the vigil Mass, celebrated by Bishop Michael G. Duca, then walked next door for the bishop’s blessing of the facility. They also were able to tour the renovated building, which was chock full with homey features as well as supplies. There was a stocked food pantry and diaper pantry, soup kitchen, places for people to eat, a small group area where people could enjoy a cup of coffee and a pool table. There’s also an apartment for visiting religious and missionaries.

Karen Savoy, director of Full of Grace Café, said the parish was overwhelmed by donations.

“When God’s hands are in it, there’s nothing you can’t do,” said Savoy.

Joshua Lopez, who will direct the diaper pantry with his wife Suzanne, had recently moved to St. Amant from Kansas and found working with Full of Grace an opportunity to “plug in” to the community.

“Because of their poverty, the choice for parents is sometimes between buying food and diapers,” said Joshua Lopez.

Parents will sometimes wrap plastic grocery bags around papers,” said Joshua Lopez. “When people come in, we will not only feed them physically, but spiritually as well,” said Savoy. “People can come together and drink coffee, have fun and do life together. It doesn’t matter where you are in your finances or if you’re Catholic or not, it’s about coming together as community.”

“Everything about this is down to earth,” said Cathy St. Pierre of Paulina. “It’s going to bring people together for fellowship and faith.”

“People are coming out of the woodwork so they can connect with each other,” said Barbara Schexnayder, also of Paulina.

Parishioner Randy Tullier said, “Hopefully we will get people from the entire area. We don’t cater to Catholics only, we cater...”

See ROSARY PAGE 20
WASHINGTON (CNS) – 2018 will no doubt be remembered as a dark time for the U.S. Catholic Church.

Catholics felt betrayed by church leaders accused of sexual misconduct and cover-up revealed this summer and this cloud still hangs over the church at the year’s end.

In June, allegations were made against then-Catholic Theodore E. McCarrick, retired archbishop of Washington, accused of sexually abusing a minor almost 50 years ago and having sexual contact with seminarians while he was a bishop in New Jersey.

A month later, Pope Francis accepted Archbishop McCarrick’s resignation from the College of Cardinals and suspended him from public ministry, ordering him to a “life of prayer and penance” until the accusations against him were examined in a canonical trial.

The archbishop, who has denied the allegations, now lives in a Capuchin Franciscan friary in Victoria, Kansas.

Since these allegations came to light, Catholic laity and church leaders, including bishops, have been asking who knew about the archbishop’s alleged misconduct and how was it possible for him to move up the ranks in church leadership.

Open letters to the pope asked him to investigate what happened and a fury of speculation was fueled by unsubstantiated allegations made by Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano, former papal nuncio to the United States, who accused the Vatican hierarchy and Pope Francis, in particular, of being complicit in covering up accusations against Archbishop McCarrick.

Amid church turmoil over Archbishop McCarrick, the church was dealt another blow in mid-August with the release of a Pennsylvania grand jury report covering 70 years of abuse allegations in six of the state’s Catholic dioceses, starting in 1947. The report detailed allegations of abuse by 300 clergy and other church workers and involving 1,000 minors. It also claimed a church cover-up of abuse in some instances.

The report particularly shine a spotlight on Washington Cardinal Donald W. Wuerl in reporting a mixed picture of how he handled some abuse cases when he was Pittsburgh bishop from 1988 until 2006.

Amid renewed calls for the cardinal to resign, Cardinal Wuerl, who had submitted his resignation two years earlier after he turned 75, as required by canon law, met with the pope about stepping down. Pope Francis accepted his resignation in mid-October, while keeping the now-78-year-old prelate on as apostolic administrator for the Archdiocese of Washington until a successor archbishop is named.

Another result of the Pennsylvania grand jury report was that 13 states and the District of Columbia announced their own investigations into church records. Several dioceses, including the Archdiocese of New Orleans, also started publicly releasing names of priests credibly accused of child sexual abuse, with most allegations decades old.

Catholics across the country, many of whom thought the church dealt with abuse 16 years ago after the Boston Globe highlighted the issue, expressed raw frustration and anger at listening sessions throughout the summer and fall asking church leaders what went wrong and how the church could move forward.

Catholics also gathered in cathedrals and parishes across the country for healing Masses said by bishops who have often prostrated themselves before the altar in a posture of repentance. Several bishops individually issued statements on the crisis and many urged Catholics to pray and fast for the church to find healing and restoration.

In mid-September, Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, had a long-awaited private meeting with Pope Francis at the Vatican to discuss the growing sexual abuse crisis in the United States.

Between Aug. 1 and that Sept. 13 meeting, the cardinal issued five statements responding to various aspects of the sexual abuse crisis and called for greater transparency and accountability in the church, particularly on the part of the bishops. Abuse was a major focus of the bishops’ June meeting in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. The issue also was front and center at the bishops’ annual fall assembly in Baltimore Nov. 12-14 where protesters, including abuse victims, gathered outside.

The meeting, which many hoped would be a decisive response to the abuse crisis, began with an announcement by Cardinal DiNardo that the Vatican wanted the bishops to delay any vote on new procedures in response to clergy abuse until after a February meeting with the pope and presidents of the bishops’ conferences around the world focus on the issue.

The Congregation for Bishops, which made the request, also said the delay was needed to better evaluate the bishops’ proposals in light of canon law.

At the end of the meeting, Cardinal DiNardo said he was more hopeful than he was at the meeting’s start.

“We leave this place committed to taking the strongest possible actions at the earliest possible moment,” Cardinal DiNardo said. “We will do so in communion with the universal church.”

He said the discussion throughout the meeting provided direction and consensus and also would serve as a “springboard for action.”

Since the Baltimore gathering, more dioceses have publicized lists of priests accused of sexual abuse of minors. On Dec. 6, the Archdiocese of Los Angeles released an updated list that included two cases of alleged abuse of current minors in the archdiocese since 2008.

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- Rocky Mountaineer/Regent Cruise Lines
  - Luxury Rail/Alaska/Canada
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January 16, 2:00 p.m.

- Collette Vacations Escorted Tours
  - Alpine Lake & Scenic Train Aug. 19
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Cathedral music director dies

From staff reports

Robbie Giroir, 60, longtime musical director at St. Joseph Cathedral in Baton Rouge, died Dec. 23 after fighting an acute illness.

Giroir served for more than 30 years as the musical director at St. Joseph Cathedral and also taught at Baton Rouge Magnet High School for 35 years.

Besides being a musician and teacher, he was also a pilot and collector extraordinary, and his home, with an interesting mix of whimsical memorabilia and valuable, one-of-a-kind collectables, was a thumbprint of his life.

Giroir’s home was filled with musical instruments, clocks, vintage fans, motorbikes, model trains, toy fire trucks, bicycles, fire hats, luxury car grills and Christmas figurines.

The constant tickling of clocks filled the house, interrupted occasionally by chimes or the call of a cuckoo bird from Giroir’s collection of clocks from Austria. It makes the house “alive,” he once said during an interview with The Catholic Commentator in January 2014.

“You have to let your pulse be evident in your home. “The challenge is to make your life interesting. It’s just natural that I gravitate to interesting objects.”

Giroir is survived by his mother Myris Leblanc Giroir, sister and brother-in-law, Danette and Ronald Legendre and nephews with their wives and children, Ladd, Abby and Landon Legendre and Brant, Britney and Harper Jane Legendre. He is preceded in death by his father, Robert “Bobby” Anthony Giroir, Sr.

His musical studies began at an early age, and after earning a Bachelor of Music in Music Education Degree from LSU, he became the organist and the Director of Music at St. Joseph Cathedral, Baton Rouge as well as Director of Choral Studies at Baton Rouge Magnet High School. In the past 15 years, choirs under his direction have performed in England, Italy, Spain, Ireland, The Czech Republic, Vienna, Prague, Germany, Belgium, The Netherlands and France. In 2013, The Festival Singers of Baton Rouge Magnet High School performed in front of an invited audience at the Vatican for Pope Benedict XVI.

Former students have gone on to pursue
Immigration battles continue as 2018 comes to an end

By Rhina Guidos
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — The year may be coming to an end but the battles on the immigration front promise to continue well into 2019 and beyond.

"On immigration, there is no rest for the weary with this administration," said Kevin Appleby, senior director of international migration policy at the Center for Migration Studies in New York.

By far, the most dramatic immigration development of 2018 took place around summer when then-U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced a new policy that resulted in separating children from parents or other family members traveling with them and then placing the minors in detention centers.

But that policy was just one in a long list of what some see as attacks against refugees, asylum seekers and other immigrants looking to make the U.S. their home.

In 2018, the Trump administration announced that the country plans to allow no more than 30,000 refugees into the U.S. during fiscal year 2019 — a record low.

It also announced a new policy requiring people entering the country without documents to present themselves formally at official ports of entry as a condition to apply for asylum — a move that has triggered long waits, deterring most migrants from touching U.S. soil where they can file an asylum claim.

Most recently, the administration spoke of a proposal to deny permanent residency to legal immigrants who have used public assistance, often referred to as the "public charge" rule. And around Thanksgiving, it authorized the use of tear gas into a crowd that included children at the border near the U.S. and Mexico, near Tijuana.

"No doubt the president will send a tweet about (immigration) on Christmas, sort of like Scrooge before the ghosts appear," said Appleby. "There are a wide range of immigration battles raging, such as asylum-seekers at our border, funding for a border wall, and the issue of public charge, to name a few. Immigrant-rights advocates will have to remain alert through the holidays when the administration may announce more punitive policies when no one is paying attention."

Throughout the changes and announcements, the Catholic Church, its organizations and members have remained vigilant and active in denouncing some of the policies while also tending to those they have affected.

When the Trump administration separated approximately 2,300 children from their parents at the U.S.-Mexico border between May and June of 2018 as part of a new policy to deter border crossings and then rescinded the policy, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Migration and Refugee Services, Catholic Charities USA and a network of other Catholic agencies from around the country quickly mobilized to help reunite those who were separated.

They provided short-term care, such as food and shelter, transportation for some, and served as locales to bring the families together again.

With the influx of Central American migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border seeking to flee violence in countries such as Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador, places such as the Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley’s Humanitarian Respite Center in McAllen, Texas, Annunciation House in the El Paso/Juarez and border region, and other temporary shelters run by the Diocese of El Paso, have been on the front lines of providing the basics, from food to clothes and temporary shelter, to the incoming crowds of migrants.

Many of those places have seen Catholic volunteers such as Margie Legowski come through their doors to help.

Legowski, a parishioner from Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Washington’s Georgetown neighborhood, traveled to the McAllen, Texas, area during Thanksgiving, to help the migrants at the Humanitarian Respite Center.

The center had "a huge influx of people," she said, sick and exhausted from the trek, but also frustrated and sad at the rigorous process of asylum whose rules the Trump administration was seeking to change at the time.

"I saw such sadness, patience and almost giving up," she told Catholic News Service.

There is concern for the human toll of the policies, she said, especially because the U.S. government can use its great resources, including physicians and even the National Guard, to provide assistance to the migrants and not to use its resources to antagonize them.

"It’s in no one’s best interest" to do so, Legowski said.

At the national level, bishops have voiced their support for migrants and their right to seek refuge. In July, in a highly publicized visit, leadership from the USCCB traveled to the border region of McAllen and Brownsville in Texas to personally meet with some of them, mothers and fathers, at a Catholic-run temporary shelter. The visit also included a stop at a government detention center for minors who had been separated, a converted Wal-Mart, where the bishops celebrated Mass.

Bishop Michael G. Duca’s Sacrament of Confirmation 2019 WINTER SCHEDULE

Friday, Jan. 18 7:00 PM Immaculate Conception, Denham Springs
Monday, Jan. 21 7:00 PM St. Theresa of Avila, Gonzales
Tuesday, Jan. 22 7:00 PM St. Mark, Gonzales
Thursday, Jan. 24 7:00 PM St. John the Baptist, Brusly
Saturday, Jan. 26 4:00 PM Ascension/St. Francis/Our Lady of Prompt Succor, Ascension/Donaldsonville

Tuesday, Jan. 29 7:00 PM Most Blessed Sacrament, Baton Rouge
Thursday, Jan. 31 7:00 PM Our Lady of Mercy, Baton Rouge
Sunday, Feb. 3 6:00 PM St. Stephen/St. Joseph, Maurepas
Monday, Feb. 4 7:00 PM St. Mary of False River/St. Augustine, St. Mary, New Roads
Tuesday, Feb. 5 6:30 PM St. Joseph, Paulina
Wednesday, Feb. 6 6:30 PM St. Michael/Sacred Heart, Gramercy
Thursday, Feb. 7 7:00 PM Immaculate Conception, Lakeland
Tuesday, Feb. 12 7:00 PM St. James/St. Philip/Our Lady of Peace, St. Philip, Vacherie
Thursday, Feb. 14 7:00 PM St. John the Evangelist, Plaquemine
Saturday, Feb. 16 4:00 PM St. Patrick, Baton Rouge
Tuesday, Feb. 19 7:00 PM St. Joseph/Immaculate Heart/ St. Frances, Maringouin
Sunday, Feb. 24 11:00 AM Sacred Heart, Baton Rouge

Coming January 18, 2019

Catholic Schools

Catholic Schools Week 2019

Of special interest to parents, The Catholic Schools Week section will feature information about the Catholic schools in the Diocese of Baton Rouge, current registration for the next school year, distinguished graduates and more.

Deadline for this section is January 7, 2019.

Call Wanda Koch at 225-387-0983 or email wkoch@diobr.org.
**Become Catholic to marry?/ Luminous mysteries**

- **Q** I was browsing the internet today, ran across your column and have a question. I am in a long-term relationship with my partner, and we are planning on getting married next year. But we are having some conflict as to where (i.e., in what church) we are going to celebrate our wedding.

- **A** Your family are all born-again Christians and actively participate in many church activities and ministries. My partner, though, is a devout Roman Catholic and wants me to become a Catholic. I am having a hard time deciding and it is causing communications problems in our relationship. (My parents would never accept the fact that I could change my religion.) Please help me because I am confused. (City of origin withheld)

- **A** Your question presents several distinct issues, so I’ll take them one by one. On the location of the wedding ceremony, that’s the easy part. You can have the ceremony either in your own family’s church or in the groom’s Catholic parish. More often, marriages are celebrated in the church of the bride; if you decide on that option (the born-again Christian setting), you and your partner would simply have to meet with a priest prior to the wedding and fill out some short paperwork to have the marriage recognized by the Catholic Church.

- **A** The issue of joining the Catholic Church is more difficult. You should not become Catholic just because your spouse-to-be wants you to or simply “to make things nice” for the wedding. You should only become a Catholic if you believe in the fundamental truths taught by the Catholic Church. I choose to be a Catholic because I feel that the Catholic Church has a continuous and unbroken relationship with the faith community that Jesus established. I see the logic of a central authority on doctrinal matters and I prefer to be strengthened by the frequent celebration of the Eucharist and the availability of the sacrament of confession.

- **A** I have sometimes counseled couples to separate the decision to marry from a decision to change denominations or religions to make sure that these are independent choices.

- **A** Finally, though, your question makes me a little bit nervous. I don’t like that your husband-to-be seems to be pressuring you to become Catholic. I would recommend that, prior to any wedding, you sort out the “communications problems” with a marriage counselor preferably one who can appreciate the importance of religious values.

- **Q** I love meditating on the luminous mysteries when I pray the rosary, and I am thankful that Pope John Paul II established them. The joyful mysteries highlight Jesus’ early life, while the sorrowful mysteries focus on his suffering and death. The luminous mysteries highlight the “in-between time” Christ’s public ministry as an adult which I have always felt was missing in the rosary.

- **Q** My question is this: Would it not be more logical to pray the luminous mysteries on Tuesdays (in between the joyful and the sorrowful) instead of pushing them to Thursdays after the glorious mysteries?

- **A** The mysteries of light or the “luminous mysteries” were proposed by Pope John Paul II in 2002 in his apostolic letter “Rosarium Virginis Mariæ.” The reason these mysteries were added was exactly as you indicate: The rosary as it traditionally evolved with the joyful, sorrowful and glorious mysteries was silent about the public ministry of Jesus. The luminous mysteries are enumerated as follows: Christ’s baptism in the Jordan, the miracle at Cana, the proclamation of the kingdom of God, the transfiguration, the institution of the Eucharist. True, the pope did suggest that the faithful might use these new mysteries when praying the rosary on Thursdays. But if it seems more helpful to you, and more logical, to pray these mysteries instead on Tuesdays, by all means do that – and I believe that you would have John Paul II’s backing.

In proposing the new schedule, he said: “This indication is not intended to limit a rightful freedom in personal and community prayer, where account needs to be taken of spiritual and pastoral needs. ... What is really important is that the rosary should always be seen and experienced as a path of contemplation” (No. 38).

**Simplifying your Life with Heaven in Mind Seminar**

- **Given by Jeff Cavins** Catholic Evangelist, Author, Biblical Speaker, National and International Public Speaker, and founding member of EWTN, host and guide of international pilgrimages to holy sites.

**Saturday, February 9, 2019**

Finding the time to focus on eternal priorities is becoming increasingly more difficult. Life is getting busier, more complicated, and certainly more cluttered. In this seminar, Jeff Cavins will talk about the advantages of living a simpler life and how to address the real root problems that keep us busy but not eternally fruitful. Get ready to re-orient your life and simplify with heaven in mind. This seminar will be practical and liberating.

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**Seminar 8:45 a.m. – 3 p.m.**

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**GIROIR ▼**

From page 4

advanced degrees in every academic discipline. Some now hold prestigious positions as college professors, professional musicians and educators, and Broadway actors.

As Director of Music and the organist at St. Joseph Cathedral, he built a unique and hallowed brand of church music beloved by cathedral parishioners, visitors, and a vast number of viewers who tuned in via television. The cathedral organ, which was built in 1993, was a tremendous source of pride for him and a result of a tireless effort to see a dream come true. During his time there, the cathedral acquired two additional pipe organs. Music under his directorship has inspired and uplifted thousands of people who came to know the cathedral as a place of resplendent and majestic liturgical sound, unique to his style and artistic ministry.

A funeral Mass was held at St. Joseph Cathedral on Dec. 27. Pallbearers were Ronald Legendre, Ladd Legendre, Brant Legendre, Landon Legendre, Dr. Hypolite Landry, Keith Bonnette, and Ken Thevenet.

In lieu of flowers, please send donations to Baton Rouge Magnet High School Choral Department 2825 Government Street, Baton Rouge LA 70806 or St. Joseph Cathedral 412 North Street, Baton Rouge LA 70802.
Noted actor sees God’s hand in latest role

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Moments before taking the stage, a familiar feeling of nervousness that often morphed into anxiety engulfed Jim Coleman.

He immediately dialed in his checklist, including breathing exercises or in the most dire of circumstances, a call to his wife that would likely conclude with both engaged in prayer.

For a seasoned actor of three decades, such feelings are surprising. After all, this is a thespian with an extensive resume that includes live theatre, 50 television commercials, and several roles in major movies.

But Coleman understands his current role is beyond entertainment, beyond any script he has previously undertaken. For the past year, Coleman has been portraying Father John Tolton, a childhood slave who would go on to study in Rome and become the first African-American ordained priest.

Coleman recently brought the one-man play to the Catholic Life Center, shortly after performing in New Orleans and days before moving on to a pair of two-night engagements in Lafayette and Lake Charles.

“This is the most important role I’ve ever had,” said Coleman, the father of six grown children and grandfather of 10, and who lives with his wife in Orlando, Florida. “Even though I’ve done this since January, every time I get ready to walk out there, I’m nervous, worried. I want the story to be so clear that when people leave they can say ‘I saw it’.

“This is me, the audience will receive what I give them. There is no take two. It has to be right, and it has to be true.”

“I feel in telling this story, it’s not me telling it but it’s Father Tolton telling his story because it’s a story that needs to be told,” he added. “For me, an African-American and never hearing about this, I feel like it has to be told.”

Coleman, a devout Christian whose commitment to his faith flows through his words, says he prays before each show, not only to God but to Father Tolton. He says he asks Father Tolton to “take the wheel. Allow me just to be a vessel and paint the picture.”

Yet, Coleman’s success is a story that was never written. After deciding to retire from acting to spend more time with his family and to travel with his wife, Coleman received a phone call from a close friend and former producer. The friend told him, “God laid it on my heart to talk to you about this role. It’s Father Tolton. I think you would be perfect for the part.”

After Coleman dismissed the idea, his former producer simply asked him as a favor to audition. He did, via Skype, with Leonard and Patti DelFilippis, who are the founders of St. Luke Productions, a Catholic theater company that tours nationally.

Although they were looking for a Catholic, the couple told Coleman they were impressed with his work and his own Christian faith was not a deal breaker. But several months later, he received word that someone else would be playing the role.

In December 2017, he received a second call from the DelFilippis saying the original actor had backed out and asked if he would be interested. Coleman said his wife, after considerable prayer involving both of them, told him he should take the part.

The scenario, as it played out, came as no surprise to Coleman’s mother-in-law who predicted he would eventually decide to retire from acting to spend more time with his family.

After deciding to retire from acting to spend more time with his family and to travel with his wife, Coleman received a phone call from a close friend and former producer. The friend told him, “God laid it on my heart to talk to you about this role. It’s Father Tolton. I think you would be perfect for the part.”

And when he told her he got the part? “She said ‘I know you are doing the show. You didn’t have to tell me.’”

Coleman said he was unaware of the impact playing such an important role would have on his own spiritual life. His faith has deepened, he said, because he feels the presence of Father Tolton.

“I truly believe God’s hand led me to this,” he said.
Lighting the Way

Sacred Heart of Jesus School | Baton Rouge
Catholic Elementary of Pointe Coupee | New Roads
St. Alphonsus School | Greenwell Springs
St. Michael the Archangel High School | Baton Rouge
St. Joseph’s Academy/Catholic High School | Baton Rouge
Our Lady of Mercy School | Baton Rouge
Holy Family School | Port Allen
Holy Ghost School | Hammond
Mater Dei School | Independence
St. Aloisius School | Baton Rouge
St. Aloysius School | Baton Rouge
St. Alphonsus School | Greenwell Springs
MUSICAL NOTES – Three students in advanced band under the direction of Dr. Kevin Andry at St. Jean Vianney School in Baton Rouge were awarded seats in the All District Band held on Dec. 8. Callie Suadi, left, was awarded first alternate in the concert band. Ethan Johansen, center, was awarded 8th chair trumpet in the Symphonic Band. Antonio Barraza was awarded 2nd chair alto sax in the Symphonic Band. Photo provided by Abby King | St. Jean Vianney School

TIME FOR RECESS! – Father Reuben Dykes, pastor of Mater Dolorosa Church in Independence, gets to know students during his first weeks as pastor. Photo provided by Erin Mendez | Mater Dolorosa School

GREETINGS – Students at St. Aloysius School in Baton Rouge create cards for the American Red Cross’ ‘Holiday Mail for Heroes’ campaign. Students created more than 1,200 cards. Photo provided by Edie Boudreaux | St. Aloysius School

APP COMPETITION – Students from Catholic High School in Baton Rouge placed first, third and an honorable mention in the 2018 Congressional App Challenge competition. Mack Kemper, a senior, and Christian Thompson, a sophomore, placed first with a school safety application, UniteSMS, which could be used in an emergency to allow teachers and students to verify they are physically safe. Juniors Jeremy Worley and Mateo Rosas took third place, creating a charitable donation application to run on cell phone platforms. Receiving an honorable mention were juniors Josh Harold and Jefferson Koonce for their application that creates a secure password manager. CHS 1990 graduate Congressman Garret Graves (R-Baton Rouge) visited Catholic High on Dec. 3 to present the students with their awards. Photo provided by Richard Beaugh | Catholic High School

Learn More & Register here: https://goo.gl/AnrgbL

WORKSHOP FOR PARENTS & TEACHERS OF YOUTH GRADES 6 – 8
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Catholic Life Center
$45.00 includes Lunch
Brian Butler, Presenter
Aquaman
Warner Bros.

A sprawling, lush spectacle, this DC Comics adaptation is also overlong, overcomplicated and, at times, just plain dumb. After washing up on shore wounded, the queen of Atlantis (Nicole Kidman) is nursed back to health by a lighthouse keeper (Temuera Morrison) whom she weds and with whom she has a son before being forced to return underwater to the arranged marriage she was fleeing to flee in the first place. Once grown (Jason Momoa), the couple’s superhero offspring reluctantly gets mixed up in the politics of his mother’s kingdom where the realm’s vizier (Willem Dafoe) and a spunky princess (Amber Heard) are trying to stop its current sovereign (Patrick Wilson), the protagonist’s half-brother, from launching a war against the entire human race. While director James Wan’s film showcases long-term marital fidelity and elevates mercy over vengeance while also deploring the ravages of marine pollution, the dialogue in David Leslie Johnson-McGoldrick and Will Beall’s screenplay is sometimes so obvious viewers can finish characters’ sentences for them. Though some unnamed set of gods are fleetingly mentioned, it’s the occasional salty talk that may give the parents of teens pause. Possibly acceptable for older adolescents. Constant harsh but mostly bloodless violence, compelled bigamy, a couple of mild oaths, about a dozen crude and crass terms. A-III; PG-13

Mary Poppins Returns
Disney

Delightful sequel to the 1964 classic finds the omnificent nanny of the title (Emily Blunt) swooping into Depression-era London to help the now-grown brother (Ben Whishaw) and sister (Emily Mortimer) she tended as children. While directed by an uncredited Mary Poppins (Julie Walters) whose three children (Pixie Davies, Nathanael Saleh and Joel Dawson) need more methodical care than that provided by their well-meaning but overtaxed housekeeper (Julie Walters) while she will require a nudge to end up in the arms of the local lamplighter (Lin-Manuel Miranda), as she’s clearly destined to do. There’s also a financial threat looming over the household since a seemingly friendly banker (Colin Firth) is actually scheming to foreclose on the mortgage. Sprightly set-piece musical numbers, the main character’s engaging blend of common sense and whimsical magic, and brief but thoroughly entertaining turns by Meryl Streep, Angela Lansbury and Dick Van Dyke make director Rob Marshall’s loose adaptation of material from books by P.L. Travers a first-class treat for all but the youngest and most skittish members of the family. Characters in peril, brief, extremely mild risqué humor. A-I; PG

Second Act
STX

Appealing workplace comedy posits that street smarts should rate at least as highly as an educational pedigree. Director Peter Segal and screenwriters Justin Zackham and Elaine Goldsmith-Thomas have turned the plucky old formula sideways, with the result that their heroine (Jennifer Lopez) is not facing pretensions such as sexual harassment or a phalanx of poisonous, scheming co-workers, but rather dealing with crises rooted in self-confidence and her difficult past. After her social media-whiz godson (Dalton Harrod), unbeknownst to her, creates a largely imaginary new resume for her, including a Harvard degree and a stint in the Peace Corps, she’s hired by a Manhattan cosmetics firm (headed by Treat Williams) where she gets into a rivalry with a fellow executive (Vanessa Hudgens) who is also the boss’ daughter. Deceptions pile up, as the plot formula dictates, until everyone finds ways to reveal their own truths, gain emotional release and make their lives better. Possibly acceptable for mature adolescents. References to sexual activity and an out-of-wedlock birth, some crude language. A-III; PG-13

Bumblebee
Paramount

Above-average installment in the sci-fi action “Transformers” franchise, set in 1987, charts the friendship between the shape-shifting alien robot-auto of the title, a yellow Volkswagen Beetle when in car form, and a vulnerable but plucky teen (Hailee Steinfeld). Still mourning her deceased father, whose mechanical skills she inherited, she finds solace in her bond with her newfound amigo whom she protects from hostile humans (most prominently John Cena as a secret government agent), though she can’t shield him from the threat posed by visitors from outer space. Gadgets and the brawling of outsized extraterrestrials continue to be the hallmarks of the series, despite an overabundance of Eighties nostalgia and soft sentimenations, including an innocent romance between the heroine and her love-smitten next-door neighbor (Jorge Lendeborg Jr.). Working from a script by Christina Hudson, director Travis Knight revisits familiar themes of alienated, isolated youth and the tendency to fear what we fail to understand. Possibly acceptable for older teens. Much stylized violence with slight gore, at least one use of profanity, about a dozen milder oaths, a sexual reference, a couple of crude and a few crass terms. A-III; PG-13
The Gospel of St. Mark begins with Jesus being baptized by St. John the Baptist as a grown man who will soon begin his own ministry. St. John begins with Jesus as God’s divine word through whom he creates the universe. It is this word which becomes man and lives among us having the “glory of the Father’s only Son.” Again there is no description of Jesus’ birth or youth. Only St. Matthew and St. Luke begin their Gospels with infancy narratives. Their narratives, however, focus on different characters beyond Joseph, Mary and the baby Jesus. In St. Luke’s Gospel, it is shepherds, sent by angels, who find the Holy Family in a stable. Jesus has just been born and laid in a manger. This is the infancy story that we celebrate at Christmas. In St. Matthew’s Gospel, the visitors who come looking for the baby Jesus are Magi, astrologers from the East, possibly Iran or Iraq on today’s maps. St. Matthew doesn’t say exactly where they find the Holy Family, but he uses their story to make several important points about Jesus’ true identity and his mission as our Lord and savior. It is this Epiphany or manifestation of the baby Jesus that we celebrate at this time of the year.

St. Matthew begins his Gospel with the story of the Magi to give us a preview of God’s plan for our salvation through sending his son to save the lives of all humanity. The Holy Family with their baby are the fulfillment of promises made throughout the Old Testament from Genesis through the prophets, Isaiah, Micah, Hosea and Zechariah. For instance, Isaiah prophesies “Behold my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall proclaim justice to the gentiles ... he will call him Emmanuel,’ which means ‘God is with us’” (Mt 1: 21-23, Is 7:14).

The Magi story is what Scripture scholars call a midrash, a story often referring back to prophesies and helping to illustrate future biblical events. For instance, Psalm 72 speaks of a king’s son who will “defend the afflicted among the people, save the children of the poor ... The kings of Tarshish and the Isles shall offer gifts ... all nations shall serve him ... May he be given the gold of Arabia ... In him all the tribes of the earth be blessed.” Do you recognize this in St Matthew’s infancy story?

So, are the Magi just a story, or could they be an actual event that happened? Writing in 1968, a well-known biblical scholar, Jean Daniélou, argued that the Magi were an amplification of what was known to be historical fact. The amplification would be the importance given to St. Joseph’s dreams and the story of the star. However, he thought that the story of Herod was true. The historians of the time painted him as unusually cruel and totally paranoid. He had his wife and three sons executed. And all that Herod did in the Gospel story took place in the last year of his life. His mental condition could have been deteriorating rapidly. Therefore Daniélou concludes, “That Joseph fled from Bethlehem to escape Herod’s massacre is part of the original historical truth.” That he went to Egypt with his family is not so certain. St. Matthew could have been thinking of Hosea 11:1, “When Israel was a child I loved him, out of Egypt I called my son.” St. Matthew’s Gospel is aimed at the conversion of Jewish readers. They would have made the association. They were used to midrashic interpretations of Scripture. St. Matthew wanted his readers to see Jesus as the true Israel, the bearer of universal salvation.

Our more modern Scripture scholars have tended to be more skeptical than Daniélou. The most highly regarded of them, an American, Raymond Brown, did not accept the historical existence of the Magi. He noted in his famous 1977 work, “The Birth of the Messiah,” there is no indication of some kind of family tradition that came from Joseph and/or Mary. He points out that the two evangelists, St. Matthew and St. Luke, contradict each other in crucial points. At the annunciation scene, the angel in St. Matthew’s Gospel, speaks only to St. Joseph; in St. Luke he speaks only to Mary. The visitors in St. Matthew are Magi, while in St. Luke they are shepherds. Brown concluded that St. Matthew and St. Luke used different traditions but for the same purpose: “to make Jesus’ origins intelligible against the background of the fulfillment of OT expectations” (p. 37). They were trying to supply a transition from the Old Testament to the Gospel.

Historical or not in their origins, the Gospel Nativity stories have, through the centuries, moved the hearts, prayers and imaginations of Christian faithful. While they are unnamed in St. Matthew’s Gospel, the Magi have acquired names: Gaspar, Melchior and Balthasar. Although the Gospel does not tell us their mode of transportation, we have supplied them with ships of the desert camels. And on my mantelpiece above my fireplace I have a small chest brought by friends from Yemen containing gold, frankincense and myrrh.

May the gift of Christmas and its savior child be with you throughout the New Year.

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 johnnymcarville@gmail.com.
The double message of Christmas

I've never been happy with some of my activist friends who send out Christmas cards with messages like: “May the Peace of Christ Disturb You?” Can't we have one day a year to be happy and celebrate without having our already unhappy selves shaken with more guilt? Isn't Christmas a time when we can enjoy being children again? Moreover, as Karl Rahner once said, isn't Christmas a time when God gives us permission to be a happy? So why not?

Well, it's complex. Christmas is time when God gives us permission to be happy; when the message from God speaks through the voice of Isaiah and says: “Comfort my people. Speak words of comfort!” But Christmas is also a time that points out that when God was born 2,000 years ago there wasn't any room for him to be born in all the normal homes and places of the day. There was no room for him at the inn. People's busy lives and expectations kept them from offering him a place to be born. That hasn't changed.

But first, the comfort of his birth: A number of years ago, I participated in a large diocesan synod. At one point the animator in charge had us divide into small groups and each group was asked to answer the question: What's the single most important thing that the church should challenge the world with right now?

The groups reported back and each group named some important spiritual or moral challenge: “We need to challenge our society towards more justice!” “We need to challenge the world to have real faith.” “We've lost our way!” Wonderful, needed challenges, all of them. But no group came back and said: “We need to challenge the world to receive God's consolation!” Granted, there's a lot of injustice, violence, racism, sexism, greed, selfishness, sexual irresponsibility and self-serving faith around; but most of the adults in our world are also living in a lot pain, anxiety, disappointment, loss, depression and unresolved guilt. Everywhere you look, you see heavy hearts. Moreover, so many people living with hurt and disappointment do not see God and the church as an answer to their pain but rather as somehow part of its cause.

So our churches, in preaching God's word, need first of all to assure the world of God's love, God's concern and God's forgiveness. Before doing anything else, God's word is meant to comfort us; indeed, to be the ultimate source of all comfort. Only when the world knows God's consolation will it accept the concomitant challenge.

And that challenge, among others, is to then make room for Christ at the inn, that is, to open our hearts, our homes and our world as places were Christ can come and live. From the safe distance of 2,000 years we too easily make a scathing judgment on the people at the time of Jesus' birth for not knowing what Mary and Joseph were carrying, for not making a proper place for Jesus to be born and for not recognizing him as Messiah afterwards. How could they be so blind? But that same judgment is still being made of us. We aren't exactly making room in our own inns.

When a new person is born into this world, he or she takes a space where before there was no one. Sometimes that new person is warmly welcomed and a cozy, loving space is instantly created and everyone around is happy for this new invasion. But that isn't always the case; sometimes, as was the case with Jesus, there is no space created for the new person to enter the world and his or her presence is unwelcome.

We see this today (and this will constitute a judgment on our generation) in the reluctance, almost all over the world, to welcome new immigrants, to make room for them at the inn. The United Nations estimates that there are 95 million refugees in the world today, persons whom no one will welcome. Why not? We are not bad people and we are capable most times of being wonderfully generous. But letting this flood of immigrants enter our lives would disturb us. Our lives would have to change. We would lose some of our present comforts, many of our old familiarities and some of our securities.

We are not bad people, neither were those innkeepers 2,000 years ago who, not knowing what was unfolding, in inculpable ignorance, turned Mary and Joseph away. I've always nurtured a secret sympathy for them. Maybe because I am still, unknowingly, doing exactly what they did. A friend of mine is fond of saying: “I'm against more immigrants being allowed in ... now that we're in!”

The peace of Christ, the message inside of Christ's birth and the skewed circumstances of his birth, if understood, cannot but disturb. May they also bring deep consolation.
**COMING EVENTS**

**Diocesan Discalced Carmelites** – The Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites will meet on Sunday, Jan. 13, 1:30 p.m., at the Our Lady of Mercy Parish Activity Center in the St. Gabriel Room, 444 Marquette Ave., Baton Rouge. For details, call Ethlyn White at 225-343-3181 or 225-803-3391 or email robertwhite456@att.net.

**Martin Luther King Celebration** – Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, 1140 Hwy. 77, Maringouin, will host a Martin Luther King Day March on Saturday, Jan. 19. The march will begin at 10 a.m. and a program will start at 11 a.m. at the Immaculate Heart Church hall. Dr. Lisa Mims-Devezin, chancellor of Southern University in New Orleans, will be the guest speaker. Applications will be available for a scholarship sponsored by The Knights of Peter Claver Unit #119 Mary Immaculate Sunday St. Aubry Court. All are invited. For more information, call 225-439-4346.

**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 Thwvy., Baton Rouge. Engaged Encounter is an intensive weekend of work during which each couple is offered the time and opportunity to question, examine and deepen their relationship with each other and with God. For more information and to register, visit ccoofbr.org.

**St. Agnes Events** – St. Agnes Church, 715 East Blvd., Baton Rouge, will celebrate a Pro-Life Mass on Tuesday, Jan. 8, 5:30 p.m. On Tuesday, Jan. 22, 6 p.m., St. Agnes will also celebrate a St. Charbel healing Mass. For more information, call 225-338-1511.

**Women’s Morning of Reflection** – St. Jude Church, 9150 Highland Road, Baton Rouge, will host a Women’s Morning of Reflection, “Nourished and Cherished: Recognizing Your Dignity in a Culture of Compassion,” presented by Father Ryan Hallford, parochial vicar at St. Jude, on Saturday, Jan. 26. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. and the reflection will be from 9 a.m. – noon. There is no fee for attending; however please RSVP no later than Saturday, Jan. 19 by calling Anita Harper at 225-766-7988 or Joyce Eisenholt at 225-448-3209.

**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, at Our Lady of Mercy Church, 7808 St. George Dr., Baton Rouge. Families of the honored couples are also invited. A reception will follow in the Kleinpeter Activity Center. For more information and to register, contact your local church parish office before Wednesday, Jan. 30.

**St. Elizabeth School Clay Shoot** – St. Elizabeth in Paincourtville will host its 5th annual Clay Shoot on Saturday, Feb. 2, 7:30 a.m., at the Southern Shooting Center, 979 Hwy. 3185 in Thibodaux. All proceeds benefit St. Elizabeth School. For more information, call Allison Viator at 985-637-4068 or Robin Baye at 985-859-5037.

**Rosaryville Events** – A Murder Mystery Dinner, “Till Death Do Us Part: All Is Fair in Love and Murder,” will be held Tuesday, Feb 14, 7 p.m., at Rosaryville Spirit Life Center, 39003 Rosaryville Road, Ponchatoula. Rosaryville will also host a Men’s Road to Emmaus Retreat, based on Scripture passage of Jesus’ appearance to the disciples on the Road to Emmaus, Friday, Jan. 25 – Sunday, Jan. 27. For information and to register, visit catholicretreatcenter.org.

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“Those services are much needed and will make a tremendous difference in the lives of the homeless in our community,” Acaldo said. “This is a great partnership that will pay heavy dividends in the lives of the homeless.”

The Diocese of Baton Rouge stepped into the future to preserve the past with the dedication of a new archives building that will house records reaching back some 300 years.

Bishop Muench on July 26 blessed the 8,000-square foot building located on the rear of the Catholic Life Center campus.

Renovations were made at Mater Dolorosa School in Independence during the summer, featuring gorgeous murals of saints and the Blessed Mother on the walls and ceilings of each classroom. Artist R.C. Davis worked 12 hours a day for several weeks in order to complete the work for the start of the new school year.

Parishioners at a number of churches and one school in the diocese celebrated a century or more anniversaries. St. Francis Xavier Church in Baton Rouge commemorated its 100th anniversary with a year-long celebration themed “Through Trials and Tribulations, by God’s Grace We Triumph.”

Black Catholics founded St. Francis with the desire to worship with dignity and respect after years of facing discrimination and segregation in nearby downtown church parishes. Parishioners sat on borrowed chairs in their mostly completed church for their first Christmas Mass on Dec. 25, 1918.

In Plaquemine, an estimated 200 current and former parishioners at Assumption of the Blessed Mother Church gathered June 10 to celebrate the church’s 225th anniversary.

The large turnout came as little surprise to pastor Father Joseph Vu, who said it was reflective of the deep spirituality of the people along Bayou Lafourche.

Assumption was founded on April 1793, making it the oldest church along Bayou Lafourche and 11th oldest in Louisiana.

In October, parishioners of St. Theresa of Avila Church in Gonzales celebrated Mass to commemorate the church’s 100th anniversary. Father Eric Gyan, pastor at St. Theresa, said St. Theresa faithfully carries out the mission Christ conferred to his disciples.

St. Joseph’s Academy in Baton Rouge opened the 2018-19 school year with a year-long celebration of its 150th anniversary while the sisters of the Congregation of St. Joseph celebrated their 150th anniversary of coming to Baton Rouge to start a school and other community ministries.

On May 26, Deacon John Vu took the penultimate step to priesthood when he was ordained a transitional deacon by Bishop Muench at St. Joseph Cathedral. He is scheduled to be ordained to the priesthood in May.

Bishop Muench also appointed Father Matt Lorrain, pastor at St. John the Baptist Church in Brusly, as director of seminarians. Father Lorrain held that position from 2005-12.

On April 6, thousands of people venerated the relics of St. Pio of Pietrelcina OFMcap at Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Baton Rouge.

The Hispanic Apostolate put on a moving production of the Living Stations of the Cross on Good Friday at St. Pius X Church in Baton Rouge. In this scene Jesus, played by Aristides Alvarez, bows his head and dies after being crucified at Golgotha. Photo by Debbie Shelby | The Catholic Commentator

The relics included St. Pio’s glove; the cruts of his wounds; cotton-gauze with bloodstains; a lock of his hair; his mantle and his handkerchief soaked with blood just hours after he died.

Throughout 2018, Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge continued to be active in immigration, reuniting several families from around the world and helping immigrants resettle in the Diocese of Baton Rouge. A third special session of the Louisiana Legislature proved to be the charm in securing more than $15 million in state funding for nonpublic schools, which restored funding for child nutrition services.

In November, news broke that eight priests who have ministered at churches in the Diocese of Baton Rouge were among a list of 57 clergy members released by the Archdiocese of New Orleans who have been accused of sexually abusing a minor.
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DONATION ▼
From page 1

have anything to get the kids,” Johnson said. “It’s been difficult. It’s been a real test.”

Everything from bikes, games, toys, clothing and household items were donated for the Community Comes Together for Christmas program which matches individuals and families in need with people who want to provide Christmas for them.

Jeff Smith of Baton Rouge has volunteered with the drive for the past seven years and said he is astonished by the annual generosity of the community.

“It’s unbelievable,” said Smith. “We unload, sometimes truckloads and cars full of gifts. A lot of it comes from the high schools and the clubs within the schools. So, we’ll get four and five different donations from the high schools.”

At Most Blessed Sacrament Church in Baton Rouge, parishioners adopted 65 families for Christmas. Among the gifts were microwaves, bedding, toys and a total of 66 bicycles.

“Even though we are not supposed to celebrate Christmas too early, it was wonderful to see the generosity of so many families. And even though they won’t actually see the children, youth, and adults in the receiving end, the grace of being giving is a powerful reason to celebrate Christmas too early, it was wonderful to see the generosity of so many families. And even though they won’t actually see the children, youth, and adults in the receiving end, the grace of being giving is a powerful reason to celebrate. I and many were deeply inspired and humbled by the outpouring of love,” said David Aguillard.

Wrapped presents filled the conference room of the Catholic Charities office. Families, organizations, businesses, Catholic church parishes and Catholic schools sponsored 410 families for Christmas. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

Bikes donated to families sponsored through the Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge Christmas program are lined up outside of the Catholic Charities office, ready for pick up. Almost 900 bikes were donated. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

“Most of the time our donors say they get more in return than they give. So often, our clients just need to know that someone cares.”

ROSARY ▼
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to all people.”

“It was really heart ripping when we heard that the rectory was going to be torn down. But renovating it into a café has really breathed new life into the community,” said Joshua Lopez. The café is also serves a mission field as well.

“Our mission is to become intentional disciples of Jesus Christ so that we can become saints in our walk toward eternity. The café will give us an opportunity to live out the demands of discipleship for our sanctification and the sanctification of our entire community,” said Morales. People entering the building are accompanied by Scripture verses and paintings of saints to let them know they have a heavenly connection of people interceding for them. And as people receive services or come together for Bible studies or praise and worship nights that spill out in the courtyard, conversations about faith take place, said Father Johnson. He said the purpose of the café is not to convert people to Catholicism, but many people who have come in for services return to attend Mass.

He emphasized the café’s mission is centered around the Eucharist.

“My desire is that we all understand the direct connection between loving God in the Eucharist and loving God in the poorest of the poor,” said Father Johnson. “To emphasize that the poor is the body of Christ among us.”

In 2019, Give the Best Gift of All – Yourself!

Every day there are people who are praying for a miracle – just an everyday miracle – like a hot meal, a prescription filled, a warm bed or a decent pair of shoes. You can help.

Volunteer Opportunities:

- **Dining Room Volunteers** – Help with our meal service at the St. Vincent de Paul Dining Room.
- **Pharmacy Volunteers** – We have a volunteer job for you helping us with our Fill A Prescription for the Needy effort.
- **Manna Givers** - We need individuals or groups who can bring in a purchased or prepared supper once a month for our homeless guests.
- **Book and Collectible Volunteers** – Help us sort and organize donated books and antiques. In addition, we need help organizing clothing/shoe donations for needy families at St. Vincent de Paul Stores throughout our community!
- **Many Other Volunteer Opportunities** – Waiting Just for YOU - Visit us at svdpbr.org and sign-up for one of many heavenly volunteer experiences at St. Vincent de Paul. Visit us on Facebook at Society of St. Vincent de Paul of Greater Baton Rouge.

You can have a life with purpose by sharing the Gospel – Get involved with St. Vincent de Paul!