Deacon Adams a trailblazer in Diocese in Baton Rouge

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

From humble beginnings rooted in the rich soil on both sides of the Mississippi River, Deacon Alfred Adams’ trailblazing life has become his ministry, a career of working toward racial equality using the Gospel as his vehicle.

Confronted by racism at an early age, when his mother moved him and his siblings from Vacherie to Lutcher, Deacon Adams has used life’s difficult experiences as guide posts along his journey of becoming the first African-American to be ordained a permanent deacon in the Diocese of Baton Rouge as well as a community leader in helping bring racial harmony to Baton Rouge.

Along the way, he has moved from sitting in the back of the church as a youngster to occupying the front row with his wife of 47 years, or even being on the altar assisting the celebrant during Mass.

“All of the stuff that happened to me, I thank God for it,” Deacon Adams said. “At the time I didn’t like it but now I look back, it formed me to the person that I am now. This is how you are supposed to behave, not to try to please anybody but just please the God that called me to do this. Thank God for giving me that grace.”

“I’m a part of history,” he added. “I can make this good or bad; that’s why I try to be more of a healer than always criticizing.”

As an African-American male, Deacon Adams is a living witness to some of the most turbulent and difficult times in this country’s history. He first encountered racism as a youth.

“Being the first African-American deacon in our diocese is something I will never forget,” said Deacon Adams, who is the director of the Office of Black Catholics. “Bishop (Stanley J.) Ott (who ordained Deacon Adams) pointed it out to me, I remember him saying, ‘Alfred, I appreciate you stepping forward.’

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“I came on (the east bank) of the river and I saw it totally different, not only color but even with your accent,” he recalled. “I knew we were a different color but that shouldn’t have been a crime.”

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Deacon Adams’ 1990 ordination was historic and nearly three decades later he continues to embrace his role as an inspiration for future men of color, living proof of what is possible when faith is one’s beacon.

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Jesus’ appearances

The joy of the Easter season is just beginning, as Jesus appeared after rising from the grave to prove there is resurrection of life after death for believers.

Three of the four Gospels give more than a half a dozen appearances of Jesus after his resurrection, according to Loyola Press.

In St. Mark’s Gospel, women came to anoint Jesus’ body and found the stone of the tomb rolled back. A young man clothed in white was there and told them, “Do not be amazed! You seek Jesus of Nazareth, the one who was crucified, he has been raised up; he is not here.” When he told them to tell St. Peter and the disciples that Jesus would be going before them to Galilee, just as he said, they fled in fear and said nothing. In the longer ending, Mary Magdalene told his followers, who did not believe her. Jesus then revealed himself to the 11 apostles and rebuked them for their unbelief.

In St. Matthew’s Gospel, Mary Magdalene and the women went to the tomb, there was an earthquake, and the angel of the Lord moved back the stone to the tomb. The guards nearby were “shaken with fear of him and became like dead men.”

The angel told the women not to be afraid. They were fearful but overjoyed and told five of the disciples, who met him in Galilee, embraced his feet and paid him homage.

The other disciples met Jesus on the mountain in Galilee. Some worshiped but doubted. Jesus affirmed his authority and told them, “Go make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

In St. Luke’s Gospel, the women went to the tomb and Jesus’ body was gone, and the angel told them he has risen. The women told the disciples, but they did not believe them. But St. Peter ran to the tomb, found nothing but a burial cloth and was amazed. Jesus later met two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

Chapter 20 of St. John’s Gospel contains Jesus’ encounter with Mary Magdalene. She was weeping outside Jesus empty tomb when Jesus approached her, but she thought he was a gardener until he said to her, “Mary!” After telling an astonished Mary not to cling to him because he had not yet ascended, he had her tell the disciples he is ascending to the father.

He appeared again to the disciples, who were hiding from the Jews, and showed them his hands and side and breathed the Holy Spirit into them. When an absent “doubting Thomas” returned and said he would not believe without probing the nail marks in Jesus’ hands and side, Jesus appeared again and invited him to do that.

Chapter 21 of St. John’s Gospel tells about Jesus’ third appearance to the disciples, who had been fishing all night and caught nothing. Jesus told them to recast and they had a net filled with sizeable fish. After they ate breakfast, Jesus asked St. Peter three times, “Do you love me?”

Perhaps Jesus appeared after his resurrection to satisfy human nature tendency to believe something by seeing it. But most importantly, before his ascended he told his disciples, and tells us today, “And I am with you always, until the end of the world.”

Christ is risen: believe it

By Dina Dow

Happy Easter!

It’s indeed the most wonderful time of the year and the holiest. The Second and Third Sunday Mass readings of the Easter Season invite us to revisit the earliest days of our faith, rooted in the resurrection of Jesus, the Christ.

Believing in the resurrection of Jesus is the same as breathing in air: both are necessary to live. Air is for life on earth. The resurrection is for life in eternity. For one to call oneself a Christian, one must believe Christ is, indeed, risen.

The movie, “The Case for Christ,” was recently on internet TV. I watched it twice. An investigative reporter set out to disprove the resurrection. Despite traveling from coast to coast (literally), the harder he worked to disprove it, the more he learned the truth. He actually made a strong case for Christ. What is my case for Christ?

Many signs and wonders

Divine Mercy Sunday, the Second Sunday in Easter, illuminates the power and effect of the resurrection. The reading from the Acts of the Apostles explains in detail the “sign and wonders done among the people at the hands of the apostles” (Acts 2:2). The crowds kept their distance but respected and admired the miracles performed in the name of Jesus. They brought the sick and the lame. Many were healed. Some were even healed by the passing shadow of St. Peter. They came to believe. What signs and wonders from God have I seen? Are these necessary for my belief?

My Lord, my God

The Gospel of St. John sheds a little light on seeing and believing. The appearance of Jesus to the disciples in the upper room is extraordinary. All were there except one. Just as God “blew into Adam’s nostrils the breath of life” (Gn 2:7), so too does Jesus breathe life into the disciples, as he exhales the Holy Spirit (Jn 20:22). Where was St. Thomas? Why was he missing? Can you imagine when he returned how the others explained what had happened? Yet, he needed physical evidence. He refused to believe (Jn 20:25).

An entire week passes. Same scene, yet this time, St. Thomas is present when Jesus appears with the words of peace. Can you imagine St. Thomas’ reaction? Jesus is so patient. He invites St. Thomas to touch the very wounds of salvation. God’s mercy is unfathomable. Once the magnitude of mercy is realized, we cry out, “My Lord, my God!” Tears of sorrow mixed with gratitude flow, filling the wounds of Jesus. Do I accept the gift of God’s mercy? Do I need to see in order to believe? Where is my faith in all of this?

The cost of discipleship

The early apostles’ proclamation of the resurrection came with strife. Jesus did not say it would be easy, but it would be life-giving. The Jewish court officials made repeated attempts to silence the apostles. Yet, knowing who Jesus is, they stood firm in the truth, adhering to God’s call despite the consequences. When have I been rejected by others who reject the truth in Jesus Christ? Family, friends, co-workers and strangers may work to silence the truth in Christ. Am I able to stand firm despite the conflict? Am I willing to accept the cost of discipleship knowing the truth in Jesus?

Breakfast of champions

The Third Sunday of Easter Gospel reading from St. John depicts the third appearance of the risen Lord to the disciples. This time they were not in the upper room. Rather, they were doing something practical and ordinary: night fishing. As their luck would have it, they caught nothing (Jn 21:3). But, as dawn broke and the sun rose creating greater visibility, everything changed. Unaware of his identity, Jesus calls them to the shore, directing where to cast the nets. They placed their faith in this man and pulled up the catch of the day: an overload of fish. Superabundance. Sound familiar? For St. Peter, this was all too familiar, so much so he did not even bother rowing back to the shore. He swam almost the length of a football field, for he knew the man was Jesus. And as real luck would have it, Jesus had made breakfast on the beach, truly a breakfast of champions!

Herein lies the heart of St. Peter’s mission. Three times he denied Jesus, now three times he is restored. Jesus asks St. Peter three times to declare his love and commitment to the flock. Three times St. Peter affirms to “feed, see GOSPEL PAGE 3

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Finding unexpected blessings through tragedy

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Mary Heffron de Brueys said prayer and humility prompted her to ask “Why not me?” after her son, James, was lost at sea in 2017 or the families who lost their loved ones in the terrorist attack on America in 2001. She had an opportunity to see the boat where James spent the last moments of his life. But as she tearfully looked at it, there was also a large rainbow that appeared in the sky around it, which gave her a sense of reassurance and peace.

De Brueys encouraged the women to trust God and surrender their grief to him. She quoted Marabai Starr, whom she said has become intimate with darkness through studying and translating the work of St. John of the Cross, as well as her own journey of losing her daughter: “Drowning, I surrendered ... and discovered I could breathe under water.”

Pictured in a 2010 family photo are, front row, from left, James de Brueys, Simone deBrueys Bajon, holding nephew, Blake McCrary, Michelle deBrueys McCrary, holding daughter Madison; back row, Steven deBrueys, Mary deBrueys, Patrick McCrary, John and Andre’ deBrueys Cardinale and Jim deBrueys. Photo provided by Mary Heffron deBrueys

GOSPEL ▼
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Someone very close to me says she grabs a cup of coffee, goes to chapel and sits in adoration of Jesus. This “coffee with Christ” is a time for her and others to sit face to face with the Lord, as did St. Peter, and dialogue. What a great way to continue Easter by sharing a java with Jesus. Sipping in silence with Jesus is indeed a moment of grace. What is even more graced is believing in his resurrection and his real presence in the Eucharist. “Jesus said to him, ‘Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed’” (Jn 20:29).

Dow is the Director of Evangelization and Catechesis for the Diocese of Baton Rouge.
Hope from the ashes: President, archbishop vow to rebuild Notre Dame

ROME (CNS) – The president of France and the archbishop of Paris have vowed to rebuild Notre Dame Cathedral after a devastating fire, continuing what a professor of architecture described as the natural lifecycle of a historic building.

Steven W. Semes, a professor and director of graduate studies in the Historic Preservation Program at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, said he was as shocked and pained as everyone watching on television as the building burned April 15.

“Like all historic monuments,” he said, Notre Dame Cathedral is “the result of hundreds and hundreds of years of development” with an initial idea, a long labor-intensive construction process, design changes, additions, demolitions and remodeling over and over again as fashions and usages change.

So, from the initial construction, which began in 1160, the cathedral “was transformed multiple times,” he told Catholic News Service in Rome, where he regularly teaches. When one looked at Notre Dame before the fire, “we weren’t seeing the cathedral as it was built, we were seeing it through layers of change.”

“Buildings and cities do change through time,” Semes said. “We wouldn’t go see a painting by Rembrandt that four people had painted over, but we look at almost any historic building and we see something that has been restored multiple times – sometimes restored in a way very faithful to an early state and sometimes not.”

“One thing about buildings and cities is that they are more like natural phenomena than other art works. Think of a forest. You can have a fire in a forest, but then it comes to life again,” he said. “Buildings are resilient.”

“Hope springs from seeing monuments that have endured,” even though they almost never remain unchanged, Semes said.

“A lot of people are feeling today, ‘We can’t do it again’ or ‘It can’t be restored,’” and while that would be true of a painting, the professor said, “we do have the skills to restore this building.”

“Obviously, a big fire has a big impact,” he said, but even for nonbelievers, there is a sensitivity to the fact that Notre Dame Cathedral was not just a treasure of Gothic architecture.

“Notre Dame was truly a work of devotion,” he said. “Think about it – how large the building was compared to everything else in the city, the attention, the loving care that went into making it, ornamenting it and maintaining it. This is truly an act of devotion; it is a kind of sacramental.

The building as a church “speaks to people,” whether they are believers, he said, pointing to similar reactions in 2015 when a massive earthquake in Nepal toppled Buddhist statues and monuments.

“We feel these things even if we are not people,” whether they are believers, he said, pointing to similar reactions in 2015 when a massive earthquake in Nepal toppled Buddhist statues and monuments.

“Heartbreaking, but the attention, the loving care that went into making it, ornamenting it and maintaining it. This is truly an act of devotion; it is a kind of sacramental.”

The key to understanding Notre Dame Cathedral was summarized by Paris Professor Pierre-André Tagliaventi, told CNS, “That this happened at the beginning of Holy Week makes it even more striking and calls us to Christian hope.”

Continuing Easter celebrations, pope again prays for Sri Lanka

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – On Easter Monday, Pope Francis led thousands of people in St. Peter’s Square in praying for the hundreds of people who died or were injured in bomb blasts the previous day in Sri Lanka.

Pope Francis had already condemned the bombings and offered prayers April 21 after celebrating Easter morning Mass.

The next day, after Sri Lankan officials reported 290 confirmed deaths from the eight blasts at churches and hotels in three cities, the pope told the crowd gathered in St. Peter’s Square for the “Regina Coeli” prayer, “I want to again express my spiritual and paternal closeness to the people of Sri Lanka.”

“I pray for the numerous victims and injured,” he said, “and ask everyone not to hesitate to offer this dear nation all the necessary help. I also hope that everyone will condemn these terrorist acts, inhuman acts, that are never justifiable.”

In his main talk, the pope said that, like the women who first told the disciples that Jesus had risen from the dead, all Christians are called to encounter the risen Lord and share the good news of his resurrection with the world.

The day’s Gospel reading, like other accounts of the resurrection, highlights the role of the women who followed Jesus, he said.

“All the Gospels stress the role of the women, Mary Magdalen and the others, as the first witnesses of the Resurrection,” the pope said. “The men, fearful, were closed in the Upper Room.”

The Gospel reading (Mt 28:8-15) recounts how “the women, full of fear and joy, were rushing to go bring the news to the disciples that the tomb was empty,” the pope said. “At that moment, Jesus presents himself to them. They approached, embraced his feet, and did him homage.”

“They touched him,” he said. “It was not a ghost. It was Jesus, alive, in the flesh. It was him. Jesus drives fear from their hearts and encourages them to proclaim to the brothers what happened.”

In Jesus, the pope said, all who have been baptized pass from death to life, “from slavery to sin to the freedom of love.”

The church celebrates Easter for an entire week, he said, because it is a time to allow oneself to be “touched by the consoling message of Easter and wrapped in its glorious light, which dissipates the darkness of fear and sadness.”

The risen Lord walks alongside all those who call upon him and love him, the pope said. He is present, “first of all in prayer, but also in simple joys lived with faith and gratitude” when people are enjoying friendships, welcoming others or contemplating nature.

“Christ’s resurrection was the most shocking event in human history,” the pope said. It attests to “the victory of God’s love over sin and death, and it gives our hope for life a foundation solid as a rock.”
HFI helps deepen couple’s faith

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Married couples in the Holy Family Institute focused on their roles as disciples, evangelizers and promoters of vocations at its Triduum Retreat March 22–24 at the St. Francis Chapel of Ollie Steele Manor Nursing Home.

Father Matthew Roehrig SSP, pastor of St. Paul Monastery in Canfield, Ohio, and Director of HFI, led the retreat, “Come to Me/Secret of Success.”

HFI is a Vatican-approved organization for people who feel called to consecrated married life, according to Boyd and Barbara Helm, a leading couple in HFI in Baton Rouge.

Following a formation process, couples make perpetual vows of conjugal chastity, in which the spouses seal their sacramental promise of fidelity to each other and to God so that their consecration reinforces their existing and primary vocation as husbands and wives.

They furthermore make a vow of poverty (detaching from material possessions) to keep in perspective the various resources needed to adequately fulfill their vocation as parents.

Members also make a vow of obedience to put God first in their lives, especially when it comes to daily and difficult decisions in their lives.

HFI is part of the worldwide Pauline Family, which includes the Society of St. Paul, for priests and brothers, and the Daughters of St. Paul, for nuns.

The Pauline family is dedicated to supporting family life and spreading the Gospel, especially through mass media, according to the Helms.

All that the members of HFI members do should “radiate” the love of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, said the Helms.

That love should also extend to the broken families, emphasized Boyd.

During his talks Father Roehrig urged the couples to talk about their vocations from the heart in the midst of a fallen world.

He noted that Jesus signed a promissory note that “all these things will be given to you” for those who seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

“We are to live that pact,” said Father Roehrig, who emphasized that God works by covenant rather than contract.

In the same way that Jesus prayed before calling his disciples, HFI members are to spend time in prayer to see what he is calling them to do in their vocation as married couples and how they can encourage others in their own vocation in life, according to Father Roehrig. He said the most important aspect about vocations is developing a relationship with the Lord.

“See where the Lord is calling us,” said Father Roehrig.

He further encouraged the HFI members to pray for people who never answered their call to their vocation in life or betrayed their vocation.

“Also, pray that all is for the glory of God and souls,” said Father Roehrig. Noting HFI’s mission to evangelize through all appropriate means, including modern means of social communication, Father Roehrig reminded the retreatants that they preach the Gospel through their actions, DVDs, downloads, Internet visits and other technology.

The Triduum attendees said they found the messages and time together inspirational.

Roselyn Curran, who attended the retreat with her husband, Gary, said she was drawn to HFI through her friendship with Barbara Helm.

“I look toward Barbara as a person of holiness. I said, ‘I’m not holy enough’ – I had a poor self image,” said Curran.

Through Helm’s encouragement she became a member of HFI.

Curran concedes that she had an “on and off” period during her time of discerning whether to join HFI.

But she says as she attended daily Mass at St. Francis Chapel, she found that the religious sisters and other people were very friendly. One woman gave Curran, who was pregnant at the time with her last child, a “motherhood manual.” It reassured her, because it was her fifth of five children born by caesarean section, Erin, whom she calls a gift.

The woman’s offering of the book moved Curran to give away books to other mothers. “The more I was giving out books the more I realized I was doing a lot of what the apostolate did,” said Curran, who recalled that her mother encouraged her to pray to the Holy Family during her difficult pregnancies.

Gary Curran said he enjoyed the extra prayer time with Roselyn at the retreat.

“I’m thankful for all we have. We compliment each other,” said Gary.

Curran, in turn, influenced Darlene Vidrine, of Palmetto, who was accompanied by her husband, Kirby, at the retreat.

Vidrine learned about HFI when she overheard a conversation by Curran.

“I thought she was becoming a nun,” Vidrine mused.

Vidrine said she was holding her daughter, Mary, now 25, in her arms and the two women connected through Mary.

She said HFI brought her and her husband graces that helped them raise their children, whom she homeschooled in a Catholic environment.

“I think it (HFI) brought Darlene and I together in our prayer life,” said Kirby Vidrine.

Laura Manderfield Kranske, who attended the retreat with her husband, Archie, said it was through the Pauline family and its emphasis on proclaiming the Gospel through mass media that she decided to open St. Mary’s Book Store in Baton Rouge, which Father Roehrig blessed during the retreat.

“Holy Family is a way of life,” said Laura. “In order to have holiness in your family you have to have a love of your faith and people.”

Those wanting to know more about HFI are invited to attend their meetings, which take place the second Sunday of the month, 3-4 p.m., at the St. Francis Chapel of Ollie Steele Burden Manor, 4200 Essen Lane, Baton Rouge.

Father Matthew Roehrig SSP, pastor of St. Paul Monastery in Canfield, Ohio, and Director of Holy Family Institute, blesses St. Mary’s Book Store during the HFI Triduum retreat. Photo by Debbie Shelley | The Catholic Commentator

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A Holy Family Institute Apostolate

Father Matthew Dupre appointed pastor

Bishop Michael G. Duca has appointed Father Matthew Dupre pastor of Ascension of Our Lord Church and St. Francis of Assisi Church, both of which are located in Donaldsonville.

Dupre graduated from Ascension Catholic High School in his native Donaldsonville and was ordained June 6, 1998 by then-Bishop Alfred C. Hughes.

Dupre has served as parochial vicar at St. Jean Vianney Church and Christ the King Church and Catholic Center in Baton Rouge and Holy Rosary Church in St. Amant, administrator of St. Joseph the Worker Church in Pierre Part and St. Theresa of Avila Church in Gonzales, and pastor of St. John the Baptist Church in Brusly and St. Patrick Church in Baton Rouge.

He has also served as Vocations Director, Director of Seminarians and as a member of the College of Consultants, the Presbyteral Council and the Deacon Advisory Board.

Father Dupre’s appointment is effective July 1.
Crying babies/ My daughter and holy Communion

Q I love children, and I know that babies will cry at inopportune times. That said, I am puzzled at the young parents in our parish who allow their children to cry loudly in church for extended periods of time.

Tend to believe that it might be part of our American culture of “freedom.” But freedom comes with responsibility; in our church of 700 congregants, those three or four babies are ruining the Mass experience for all the rest of us. (Baton Rouge, Louisiana)

A St. John Chrysostom, more than 1500 years ago, wrote this: “Nothing so becomes a church as silence and good order. Noise belongs to theaters, and baths, and public processions, and marketplaces; but where doctrines... are the subject of teaching, there should be stillness and quiet and calm reflection and a haven of much repose” (Homily 30 on the Acts of the Apostles).

On the other hand, Pope Francis, celebrating Mass in 2014 at a parish in Rome, said this: “Children cry, they are noisy, they don’t stop moving. But it really irritates me when I see a child crying in church and someone says they must go out. God’s voice is in a child’s tears.”

As in many things, the truth is probably somewhere in the middle. Congregations do have a special responsibility to welcome children, and parishioners need to be patient with small children’s occasional outbursts. (As one adage has it, “Your parish is dying if no baby is crying.”)

But crying that is constant and loud can hold a congregation hostage and, as the letter writer says, “ruin the Mass experience for the rest of us.” The answer lies in balance and discretion; parents need to be sensible and take their child for a “walk” when they recognize behavior that is seriously distracting.

Certainly no celebrant should go suddenly silent, focusing attention on a disruptive child and the offending family; but perhaps an occasional bulletin announcement, prudently stated and in a kindly fashion, can remind parents that the Mass should be, as far as possible, a positive experience of prayer.

Q My daughter went away to college last year and now chooses not to attend Mass although there is a Catholic parish just a couple of miles from her school. When she comes home (every few months), she attends church with me.

Should I tell her not to receive Communion since she has not been to confession and has been consciously neglecting her Sunday obligation? (I want to encourage her to stay with the church, so I am not sure how to proceed.) (Richmond, Virginia)

Your question, as I view it, is more one of strategy than of theology and reasonable minds could well differ as to how to respond. Everyone’s goal, of course, is the same: to get your daughter back to regular practice of the sacraments.

The teaching of the church is clear; the Catechism of the Catholic Church says this: “The Sunday Eucharist is the foundation and confirmation of all Christian practice. For this reason the faithful are obliged to participate in the Eucharist on days of obligation, unless excused for a serious reason (for example, illness, the care of infants).” Those who deliberately fail in this obligation commit a grave sin” (No. 2181).

Gravity of matter, though, is just one of three necessary conditions for a mortal sin the others being complete consent of the will and full knowledge of the sinful character of the act or omission. In that light, I would not be certain that your daughter has been committing mortal sin because I don’t presume to know the state of her mind (how fully she recognizes her duty to be at Sunday Mass).

So I don’t think that I would tell her directly that she can’t receive Communion. I would, though, find a way – in a low-key manner that is not confrontational to explain to her from time to time what the sacraments mean in your own life and to suggest that she might find a similar benefit in her own.

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Bishop Duca celebrates annual Chrism Mass

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

The oils that church parishes, hospitals, prisons and other agencies in the Diocese of Baton Rouge will use during the next year in their revitalizing work of the church were sent out with a blessing and the breath of the Holy Spirit at the annual Chrism Mass at St. Joseph Cathedral in Baton Rouge on April 17.

Bishop Michael G. Duca began his homily by pointing out that the most important foundation of the church is the people of God, the clergy and bishops gathered around the altar of God with his word and the Holy Spirit.

“Let us remember always that foundation … we can travel lightly that way,” said Bishop Duca.

He also reminded the congregation “to reflect upon the priesthood in our midst.”

All people share in the one priesthood of Jesus, said the bishop.

“A priest, we know, is one who sacrifices,” said Bishop Duca.

In the Old Testament times, the temple priests would offer sacrifices of bullocks, lambs and fruit of the vine as gifts to God, he said.

“But Jesus does not want those gifts. He wants a gift of a transformed heart,” said Bishop Duca. “He wants a heart that is pure serving the poor, welcoming the stranger, freeing the prisoner. He wants us to sacrifice our lives to being approachable … of being willing to get close to that which is most difficult and hard sometimes. To get close enough, to be vulnerable enough to love.”

He referred to the Gospel story of the wedding at Cana when Mary told Jesus the wedding party had run out of wine, and he replied that his hour had not yet come.

“I imagine their eyes must have locked,” mused Bishop Duca. He noted there was a silence, but as with any people who are close, there was no need for words. Mary then told the wedding attendants, “Do whatever he tells you to do.”

“We are called to that closeness … but to God first in prayer,” said Bishop Duca.

Even in the midst of tiring, frustrating days, he added.

The bishop also referred to Jesus’ conversation with St. Peter after the resurrection in which Jesus asked him “Do you love me” three times. The bishop said in his own personal reflection it was a three-time call to a deeper level of love, which enabled St. Peter to sacrifice his own life for Jesus.

Bishop Duca encouraged the priests to have that closeness with the Lord to help them die to self and find unity with their fellow brothers in ordination and God’s people.

Following the renewal of priestly promises by the priests, the oils of the sick, catechumens and chrism were brought forth to be blessed by the bishop.

At the conclusion of Mass, the oils were distributed to representatives from the church parishes, hospitals, prison ministry and other agencies.

As the recessional hymn “Church of God, Elect and Glorious” resounded throughout the cathedral and bells pealed, people poured out of the church and greeted each other with laughter and hugs.
ACTS retreat opportunity to experience love of Jesus

By Michael Thompson
Special to
The Catholic Commentator

David Fleshmen was initially skeptical, engaging reasoning such as a busy work schedule or not the right time as impulses to back out of an ACTS retreat he was scheduled to attend through St. Aloysius Church in Baton Rouge.

Fleshmen, who grew up attending Presbyterian and Episcopal churches with his parents, said he felt like an outsider in Catholic church pew while attending Mass before he made the retreat.

“When attending Mass, I wouldn’t participate in Communion, which only reinforced my feelings that I really didn’t belong,” he said.

Fleshman said attending the retreat “almost instantaneously transformed many of the strangers’ I’d seen at Mass or passed at the childcare center into some of my closest friends. I’d seen at Mass or passed at the childcare center into some of my closest friends. I’d seen at Mass or passed at the childcare center into some of my closest friends. I’d seen at Mass or passed at the childcare center into some of my closest friends. I’d seen at Mass or passed at the childcare center into some of my closest friends. It really transcends ages,” he said.

The powerful experience also inspired him to complete the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) and become a full member of the Catholic Church.

“This is a place where I see my faith growing and my relationship with Christ growing,” Fleshman said.

An ACTS retreat is a parish-based, parishioner-led weekend retreat that first originated in San Antonio, Texas in 1997. The term “ACTS” serves as an acronym, signifying the retreat’s themes of adoration, community, theology and service. According to the ACTS Missions website, the retreats offer an “opportunity to experience the love of Jesus Christ,” and to “build Christian community at a parish.”

ACTS retreats have been held in at least 27 states and six countries. In the Diocese of Baton Rouge, at least four parishes have hosted ACTS retreats.

“I’ve yet to meet anyone who didn’t take something positive away from the experience,” said St. Aloysius parishioner Dr. Ryan Boone. “It truly is a ‘come as you are’ experience and meets you wherever you are in your personal faith journey.”

Although each retreatant has their own experience, all agreed that ACTS helped to bring them closer to God, family and community, while increasing their participation in the sacraments and service throughout the diocese.

“Seeds are being planted, and roots are growing today that will bear fruit for our community for a long, long time,” said St. Aloysius pastor Father Randy Cuevas.

Ashley Pere said ACTS helped her cultivate a “daily relationship with Jesus” with a “trust that transcends all understanding.”

She said the retreat deepened her appreciation of the Eucharist. “Now Mass is no longer an obligation, but something I truly enjoy,” Pere said.

Brooke Reynolds said ACTS strengthened her “knowledge that I am deeply loved” and helped her place “complete faith and called it “awe inspiring” to see so many individuals receiving the sacrament of reconciliation.

Paul Coreil said he could count parishioners he knew by name “on one hand” after 20 years of Mass attendance at St. Aloysius. He said ACTS connected him to almost 100 men that he knew would support him in his journey and help in his day-to-day struggles and blessings as he works toward salvation.

Mary Bowen said she joined St. Aloysius in 1986 but knew few parishioners before her retreat in 2016.

“No, I know and feel I am part of the community, brothers and sisters in Christ who openly share my faith, challenge and support me,” she said.

“It really transcends ages,” Steven Brooksher, Jr. said, describing close bonds that ACTS has fostered among people with different backgrounds, including as many as 80 men who now attend 6 a.m. Mass and gather for fellowship on Wednesday mornings.

Michael Giorlando said ACTS participants joined many of the more than 100 parish ministry opportunities available through St. Aloysius.

“We can really change lives by humbly serving others. It has a way of spreading,” Fleshman said, discussing a group of men who recently started cooking and serving free meals to people in a low-income neighborhood near Owen’s Grocery, less than two miles from the church doors of St. Aloysius.

The grocery store’s owner, Cynthia Green, described a cold day when the men served hot gumbo to school-aged children, single moms and homeless people who sleep under a nearby interstate overpass, who were “able to be fed” and “left knowing that people did care.”

“When Bishop (Michael G.) Duca was installed last August, he spoke about our need to ‘pick up the mission of Jesus and go out into the world,’” Father Cuevas said. “Our parishioners are doing just that, investing their time and talents throughout our community, bringing new life to the parish and helping to grow God’s kingdom.”
OLOL honors volunteers

Special to The Catholic Commentator

As part of National Volunteer Week, Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center in Baton Rouge recognized 181 volunteers for their commitment to service. Volunteers from a variety of programs across the hospital served more than 10,000 hours in 2018 helping to provide care to OLOL patients and their families.

At a luncheon held April 10, awards were presented for Joyfulness of Spirit, Most Years of Service, Most Volunteer Hours in 2018, Most Volunteer Hours Overall and Presidential Volunteer Service.

“We are blessed to have volunteers doing incredible work for our patients, visitors and team members,” said Carletha Quincy, supervisor of Volunteer Services at OLOL. “It’s an inspiration to see their commitment, and we are grateful to have them as part of the Our Lady of the Lake team.”

Joyfulness of Spirit awards were presented to D’Autrey Ware and Jeff Darvill. Awards for five years of service were presented to Michael Cullen, June Crump, Melba Weiss, Patricia Taber and Elaine Simmons. Tonia Okpalobi was honored for 10 years of service and Claudia Arman was honored for her 24 years of volunteer work with the Most Years of Service award.

June Crump received the Most Volunteer Hours award for 2018 by logging more than 1,141 hours.

Our Lady of the Lake is in need of additional volunteers, especially Guest Services Volunteers who are responsible for greeting guests and assisting with wayfinding and the welcome desk. Visit ololrmc.com/volunteer to learn more about all of the volunteer opportunities at Our Lady of the Lake.

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RIGHT: Father Thomas Clark SJ, pastor of Immaculate Conception Church in Baton Rouge, lit the paschal candle from a bonfire to represent Christ bringing light and life to the world through his death and resurrection during the Easter Vigil Mass at Immaculate Conception on April 20. The church also welcomed five catechumens and candidates into the church during the Easter Vigil Mass. Photo by Debbie Shelley | The Catholic Commentator

BELOW: After the paschal candle was lit, attendees lit each other’s candles as symbols of Christ’s light bearers to the world. Photo by Debbie Shelley | The Catholic Commentator

ABOVE: The faithful followed along a downtown route marking the Stations of the Cross. Photo by Bonny Van | The Catholic Commentator

LEFT: Father Johnson prays with Deacon Eliazar Salinas Jr. and two altar servers before the Eucharist during eucharistic adoration following the Holy Thursday Mass. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

ABOVE: Father Josh Johnson, pastor at Holy Rosary Church in St. Amant, washes the feet of parishioners during the Holy Thursday Mass. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

RIGHT: The Stations of the Cross hosted by St. Joseph Cathedral in Baton Rouge, Catholic Charities Diocese of Baton Rouge and St. Vincent de Paul Society, took the crowd to Arsenal Park near the state capitol before returning back to the cathedral. Photo by Bonny Van | The Catholic Commentator

BELOW: Parishioners from Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Gramercy, St. Joseph Church in Paulina and St. Michael the Archangel Church in Convent participated in a Good Friday walk along the levee on the Mississippi River. The walk began at Sacred Heart and finished at St. Joseph, about a three-mile trek. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

Celebrating the Triduum

ABOVE: The faithful followed along a downtown route marking the Stations of the Cross. Photo by Bonny Van | The Catholic Commentator

LEFT: Father Johnson prays with Deacon Eliazar Salinas Jr. and two altar servers before the Eucharist during eucharistic adoration following the Holy Thursday Mass. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator
Class of 2019

A Special Section of The Catholic Commentator

A keepsake special section is designed to honor graduates from the Diocese of Baton Rouge naming each graduate from the Catholic high schools in the diocese with pictures of the valedictorians and salutatorians.

This is a great opportunity to say congratulations to the graduates and/or promote your school’s accomplishments, or promote your business to these young future leaders and their parents.

Issue date: May 24
Advertising deadline: May 15

Contact Wanda Koch
wkoch@diobr.org
phone 225-387-0983
fax 225-336-8710
SCHOOLS CELEBRATE THE PASSION

Catholic High School of Pointe Coupee in New Roads. Photo provided by Megan Gringhouse | CESPC

St. Aloysius Church Youth Group in Baton Rouge. Photo provided by Mary Dawson | St. Aloysius Church

LENTEN PLAY – The TriParishes of St. Joseph in Grosse Tete, Immaculate Heart of Mary in Maringouin and St. Frances Xavier Cabrini in Livonia staged a production of “The Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus.” The play was dedicated to the memory of Andrew Glaser, who wrote the play. Photo provided by Peggy Champagne | TriParishes

St. Jean Vianney School in Baton Rouge. Photo provided by Abby King | St. Jean Vianney School

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The Beach Bum

Neon

Relentlessly immoral and annoying comedy follows the exploits of a boorish hedonist (Matthew McConaughey) who is also, supposedly, a gifted writer as he pursues a Bohemian lifestyle in the Florida Keys. His rich wife (Isla Fisher) supports his antics even as she carries on an affair with one of his closest friends (Snoop Dogg), a high-profile rapper. His literary agent (Jonah Hill), exasperated by his failure to produce any new work, is less tolerant of his foibles as, too, is his somewhat straitlaced daughter (Stefania LaVie Owen). Drunk, stoned and on the run, he crosses paths with one of his closest friends (Zachary Levi), a 14-year-old foster child (Chase Sridhar) and the head of the local Ku Klux Klan (Sam Rockwell) are forced to give special guidance for attendance of the disabled. Some mistreatment by the main character's grown-up guise, however, makes this questionable fare even for older teens. Much stylized violence with a few gruesome sights, under-stage drinking, brief sexual humor, some of it involving a strip club, at least one use of profanity and a mild oath, about a dozen crude and crass terms. A-III; PG-13

The Best of Enemies

STX

Appealing fact-based drama, set in 1971 Durham, North Carolina, in which a no-nonsense civil rights activist (Taraji P. Henson) and the head of the local Ku Klux Klan (Sam Rockwell) are forced to work together as leading participants in an arbitration process (steered by Babou Ceesay) deciding the future of the city's still-segregated schools. As a result, each gains insight into the other's life and character with very positive ultimate consequences. In adapting Osha Gray Davidson's 1996 book, writer-director Robin Bissell evokes strong performances from a fine cast and promotes humane values in a film many parents may consider rewarding for older teens, especially given the role Christian faith plays in guiding the campaigner's actions. Some non-graphic violence, including gunplay and the threat of rape, an act of sexual aggression, a few uses of profanity and of crude and crass language, racial slurs. A-III; PG-13

Pet Sematary

Paramount

After relocating from Boston to rural Maine, a doctor (Jason Clarke), his wife (Amy Seimetz) and their 9-year-old daughter (Jete Laurence) find themselves living near the burial place of the title being. But even the dead emerge revivified. All this is explained to the physician by the family's kindly coot (Djimon Hounsou) with the ability to transform himself, by dint of the titular exclamation, into a superhero with the body of an adult (Zachary Levi), a 14-year-old foster child (Asher Angel) does battle with a formidable villain (Mark Strong) who wants the lad to surrender his newfound powers to him. Though it eventually becomes almost exclusively an action picture, director David F. Sandberg's DC Comics-based origin story begins with an enjoyable overlay of comedy as the protagonist and his physically challenged best friend (Jack Dylan Grazer) marvel at his ability to shoot electricity from his hands and perform similar nifty stunts. Family life is exalted over egotistical self-reliance as Angel's character learns to use his gifts responsibly, and viewers of faith will appreciate brief scenes of prayer and an implicitly pro-life message about the dignity of the disabled. Some mistreatment enabled by the main character's grown-up guise, however, makes this questionable fare even for older teens. Much stylized violence with a few gruesome sights, under-stage drinking, brief sexual humor, some of it involving a strip club, at least one use of profanity and a mild oath, about a dozen crude and crass terms. A-III; PG-13
El camino de la cruz
su historia y significado hoy

Padre: Donnell Kirchner, CSSR.

Casi todos los cristianos que han visitado Jerusalén caminaron por Vía DOLOROSA, el camino tradicional por el que Cristo viaja desde el Palacio de Pilato hasta el Monte Calvario. Los grupos organizados oran constantemente por este camino y se detienen en los lugares tradicionales que conforman la historia del viaje de Cristo a su muerte para salvarnos.

Pero como muchas personas nunca podrán viajar allí, e inclujo hubo un momento en que los gobernantes musulmanes no permitieron que los cristianos rezaran en las calles. Hace más de 500 años en diferentes lugares en Europa comenzaron a recrear este acto de piedad al crear las “Estaciones” en sus ciudades, para que pudieran revivir este evento, obteniendo así las gracias para comprender la sabiduría y el amor divino de lo que Jesús había hecho por nosotros.

En el siglo XVIII, San Alfonso Liguori escribió su famosa versión del Vía Crucis, que reino de manera suprema y se extendió por todo el mundo hasta que recientemente se inventaron muchas otras versiones. Hoy en día muchas casas de retiro y órdenes religiosas tienen un conjunto al aire libre de estaciones en sus terrenos para el peregrino moderno.

Así, en cada Iglesia católica del mundo, además de esa pequeña luz roja que significa la presencia de Jesús en el Tabernáculo, encontrará las 14 Estaciones habituales fijadas en las paredes. Durante la Cuaresma, las devo- ciones semanales al Camino de la Cruz son un elemento básico de la piedad católica. La 1ª Estación comienza con Pilato, en contra de su mejor juicio, enviando a Jesús a su muerte. Con qué frecuencia no tenemos el coraje de tomar la decisión correcta y rendirnos a lo que es más fácil o más conveniente.

No toma mucho tiempo para que un Jesús debilitado, torturado y azotado, caiga por primera vez después de abrazar su Cruz (2ª y 3ª estaciones). La vida está llena de muchas dificultades. Jesús nos pide que abracemos generosamente nuestras cruces y que caminemos con él.

Un evento muy triste ocurre cuando Jesús se encuentra con su Madre María en el camino (4ª Estación). Es la primera persona que vive el Vía Crucis. Su dolor y tristeza al ayudar a comprender nuestros problemas y dificultades. Y la valiente Verónica (5ª estación) que desfía la furia de los soldados y se apresura a limpiar la sangre y el sudor del rostro de Jesús. Muchos pintores famosos han capturado este momento que muestra al Jesús estacionado en un pedazo de tela. Jesús quiere borrar la vergüenza y la fealdad de nuestros pecados.

A estas alturas, Jesús se está volviendo incapaz de llevar su cruz. por lo que Simón de Cirene se ve obligado a ayudar. Al igual que nosotros, inicialmente se niega y trata de resistirse a llevar esa Cruz. Nos encontramos en situaciones que son difíciles de soportar. Pero ahora es Jesús quien nos ayuda a llevar nuestras Cruces (6ª Estación). Una vez más, abrumado por su creciente debilidad física y sufrientes, Jesús cae nuevamente (7ª Estación), un recordatorio de que nosotros también tenemos vivos a estos grupos.

Jesús conoce a una banda de soldados (8va Estación) que es tan llovido por él. Les recuerda la destrucción y la caída de Jerusalén. Como Jesús, con desmadiada frecuencia las mujeres son respuestas y abusadas también. Han sido creadas a la imagen y semejanza de Dios, y deben ser respuestas y honradas.

Después de una pequeña recuperación, Jesús llega a la Columna vertebral son todas las mujeres presentes que mantienen vivos a estos grupos. Jesús conoce a una banda de mujeres (9ª Estación) que están llorando por él. Les recuerda la destrucción y la caída de Jerusalén. Como Jesús, con desmaliada frecuencia las mujeres son respuestas y abusadas también. Han sido creadas a la imagen y semejanza de Dios, y deben ser respuestas y honradas.

Pero, por tercera vez (9ª Estación), Jesús cae incapaz de mantener el equilibrio. Jesús no se queda en el suelo, se levanta y continúa su viaje para salvar al mundo. Podemos tropezar y tropezar, pero debemos levantarnos y continuar con nuestros deberes. Al llegar al Calvario, se le quita la ropa (10ª Estación). A menudo saturamos nuestras vidas con muchas distracciones y necesitamos eliminarlas para nuestro crecimiento espiritual y santificación. Luego es clavado en la Cruz por 3 horas (11ª Estación); se nos obliga a “unir nuestros corazones a la cruz, para que podamos estar unidos con Él hasta que los entreguemos nuestras almas”.

La 12ª Estación es el acto final de Su vida, ya que abandona todo para completar el plan del Padre para nuestra Salvación. No le queda nada más que ofrecer. Él ha dado todo. Entonces, se nos pide que renunciamos a cualquier forma pecaminosa que nos impida estar unidos con Él.

Obviamente muerto, Él es bajado de la Cruz (13ª Estación) y puesto en los brazos de Su madre, comenzando la preparación para su entierro. María se convierte en la Redentora. Des de allí lo llevan a su sitio de entierro (14ª estación), un lugar en el que solo se quedará durante 3 días antes de comenzar su gloriosa resurrección de una nueva vida divina. La vida es corta y debemos usarla bien para seguir el plan de Dios.

Durante la Cuaresma, o en cualquier momento del año, participe con un grupo o haga el Camino de la Cruz en alguna Iglesia, reviviendo los momentos dolorosos que sufrió Jesús para que usted y yo podamos ser salvos y tener las puertas del cielo abiertas para nosotros.
The Catholic Commentator

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.

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PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PRAY FOR US

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

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Remember Jesus Christ risen from the dead

Several persons, including famous Hollywood movie star, Shirley McClain, have written of near death experiences. People literally have been brought back from what would have been death through the “miracle” of medical resuscitation. Their hearts have stopped, their electrical spark of life has gone from their bodies, the code is called, the hospital team or EMS crew roars into action, and the dead heart is shocked backed into life.

The almost dead and clinically dead have both lived to tell us what the experience of leaving this life is like. They speak of a sensation of floating, of being apart from their bodies, of seeing a bright light, of freedom and peace. But they are only modern day Lazarus’s, resuscitated and brought back from death only to die again.

Only one person, Jesus Christ, has ever been raised from the dead. As St. Paul says, “He is the first born of the new creation.” Jesus is different. He has been raised up by God, taken back to his side in heaven. His life is now eternally with God as both God and man, and he will never die again. What his life stood for will remain now and forever.

This is what we all hope for and pray for. When we bury our loved ones, our eulogies promise never to forget them. Their virtues, the meaning of their lives, the things they accomplished, we say will never perish. It is what we sincerely want, but archaeology attests not only to generations but also to civilizations that lie buried along with their fleeting human promises.

As individuals they are forgotten, particularly the good among them. The cruel and powerful remain as names from the past and dead civilizations: Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, Herod the Great, Attila, Genghis Khan. A thousand years from now Hitler and Stalin may be on the list. But the decent people, the millions who lived and died and were mourned, and whose memories their loved ones wanted so badly to preserve, where will they be? A few nitrates in the soil, a bone or two dug up by future archaeologists, a button or cuff link behind a glass case in the Second Millennium Museum of American Civilization?

No, they will be with God and his son, Jesus Christ, and we together with them. This is what the resurrection means. It is more than a human promise to a dead loved one, more than a memory, more than the life of a man or woman that inspires a generation and is remembered in a history book. Christ is risen, his existence has been permanently changed, made eternal. He has been received by God into eternal life, and he will never fade into the empty nothingness of the past.

The risen Jesus is our hope. We all want the meaning of our body. But we want our lives to have counted, we want their meaning to remain. We want to live on conscious of all that was good in our lives and of all that was lacking which we still want to see fulfilled. In our hope for ourselves, we look for a sign that authorizes us to hope, to hope for an existence with a totally human, totally eternal validity. We are aware of our weakness, our sinfulness, our corruptibility, so we look to God for our finality, indeed, for our acceptance and resurrection.

The risen Jesus’ resurrection is that sign. It is as St. Paul tells us in 2 Timothy, 2:8-11: “Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead.... If we have died with him, we shall also live with him.”

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.

Are screens becoming substitute parents?

Before we are born our nervous systems are receiving stimuli from our mothers. If our mom feels pain, we sense it too. If she is stressed out, we learn what that feels like by experiencing the same rush of stress hormones like cortisol. It’s all part of a complex and beautiful neurobiological process preparing us for life outside the womb. So what happens when the mother and baby’s touch, gaze and attention is diverted by digital distractions?

What starts in the womb continues as infants as we synchronize with our mother’s physiological rhythms. The heart rate and brain waves of mother and baby are often in perfect alignment, a critical process in the development of the child’s emotional life. Language skills, social skills and emotional regulation all begin taking shape in these critical early years.

Unfortunately, in many instances, the mother-child bond is interrupted when screens are used to placate a restless toddler.

Human cues like a caregiver’s touch and eye contact that help young children work through difficult emotions like feeling angry or sad are often ignored when a digital device becomes a pacifier for an upset child. Screens take on the role of surrogate parent in far too many situations, meaning that the young child’s cognitive and emotional capacities are being programmed by both mother and machine.

The church offers us an antidote in the person of Mary. Many parents worry about how to navigate this complex environment of digital distraction, and they would do well to turn to Mary, the mediatrix of grace. If mothers mediate the world to us from the time we are conceived, Mary mediates God to us in the Word made flesh.

The Angelus prayer provides a step-by-step guide for following Mary’s lead in the formation of a healthy interior life free of digital pollution.

“An angel of the Lord declared unto Mary, and she conceived of the Holy Spirit.” Mary was paying attention. How? By keeping herself in prayer whenever possible so that when the ultimate moment of grace arrived she had the capacity to utter the “fiat” that changed the world.

Cultivating attention by minimizing distraction and the things that get between us and our loved ones, especially mothers and children, is the first step toward a richer interior life where the word can take root and bear fruit.

“Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to your word.” Mary’s deep interior life where she frequently “pondered ... in her heart” gave her a clear view of her identity and vocation in God’s eyes.

She is open and receptive, the “holy soil” who receives the seed of God’s love and bears fruit a hundredfold. Mary had excellent reception. Not cellphone or Wi-Fi reception, but a connection to God that confirmed her identity and purpose.

“The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” The fruit of attention, a rich interior life and a sense of our God-given identity is a deep intimacy with Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. We are extensions of Christ in the world. This can be hard to remember when we are fixated on the technological extensions of ourselves.

Use this Easter Season as an opportunity to reconnect with Jesus through Mary by reflecting on her mediating role in our lives.

ROBINSON is director of communications and Catholic media studies at the University of Notre Dame McGrath Institute for Church Life.
MSC will host a day of reflection, “Like a Watered Garden: Gardening as a Spiritual Practice” Wednesday, May 1, 9:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. at The Archdiocese of New Orleans Retreat Center, 5500 St. Mary St., Metairie. Cost is $35. For more information, visit retreats.arch-no.org. 


St. Thomas More Festival – St. Thomas More Church, 11441 Goodwood Blvd., Baton Rouge, will hold its annual festival Friday, May 3 – Sunday May 5. For more information, visit sttmfestival.com, website; sttmchurch

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EVENTS ▼
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River Road, St. Benedict. Suggested donation is $275. For more information, visit faithandmarriage.org.

Immaculate Heart of Mary Festival – Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, 11140 Hwy. 77 in Maringouin, will host its Family Festival Sunday, May 5, beginning at 10:30 a.m., at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish Hall. For more information, call Immaculate Heart of Mary at 225-925-2438.

St. Mark Festival – St. Mark Church, 42021 Hwy. 621 in Gonzales, will hold its annual Light Lane Festival Friday, May 10 – Sunday, May 12. For more information, visit Light Lane Festival Facebook page or call St. Mark at 225-647-8461.

Rosaryville Nun Run – Rosaryville Spirit Life Center, 39003 Rosaryville Road, Ponchatoula, will host its Nun Run 1 Mile Fun Rule and 5K Trail Run and Anything Goes Cook Off on Saturday, May 11. For more information, visit catholicretreatcenter.org.

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Ringing in the Future – On the evening of April 17 the inaugural senior class of Cristo Rey Baton Rouge Franciscan High School took their first steps toward graduation, celebrating with a ring ceremony hosted at St. Paul the Apostle Church in Baton Rouge. Principal Eric Engemann is shown pinning Cedric Payne during the ceremony. Above is the Cristo Rey Class of 2020. Photos provide by Katie Tasmann | Cristo Rey Franciscan High School
Easter Sunday is Just the Beginning of the Easter Season

During the Easter Season, we are reminded of the sacrifice He made and of those who followed Him footsteps so long ago. For them, weakness and doubt became unshakeable faith. They went forward – even unto death – in their roles as disciples, continuing His ministry on earth.

As modern day disciples, our challenge is to transform God’s blessings into a visible sign of His presence in our world today. We are His physical body on earth, and everything we do can be a reflection of His love. Our journey through life is not always easy. Sometimes the road is steep, and there is no way of knowing what waits for us around the next corner. Regardless of the path we take, Jesus is always with us.

When He said, “For I was hungry and you gave me food...” He was speaking across time and space to all of us. At St. Vincent de Paul, we can see His face in every person who waits in line for our daily meal, in the faces of the homeless who come to us for shelter and those who hope that our pharmacy can ease their suffering. When we help someone in need, we are extending His hand to them.

This year, our goal is to serve over 280,000 meals, provide 35,000 guest nights of shelter and fill over $1 million worth of prescription medication. Please consider making a gift to Christ’s ministry to the poor. You can feed the hungry at our Dining Room, provide shelter to the homeless at the Bishop Ott Shelter, or fill prescriptions for the needy at our Community Pharmacy.

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April 26, 2019
Seek advice when transitioning to community living

Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

Americans are now living to the age of 78 according to 2016 data published by National Vital Statistics Reports and that means people 55 and up might start considering ways to downsize and take on less responsibilities in caring for a home or looking for assistance in their living arrangements. Either way, it means looking at a new way of life for those in their senior years.

Knowing what to look for and what questions to ask can help tremendously in making the transition from independent living, according to Tonia Griffin, marketing director of Williamsburg Senior Living Community in Baton Rouge.

“The first thing is to go and visit and just be open to the idea of assisted living or retirement communities,” said Griffin. “When someone enters the door, you have to have that feeling of comfort and how everyone handles themselves and how professional the staff is.”

Mark Calvit, executive director of Southside Gardens Retirement and Assisted Living Center in Baton Rouge, said it’s crucial that family members looking for a facility overlook “the fluff as far as the amenities go.”

“What they really should focus on is the cleanliness and appearance of the facility and the competency of the staff and what type of care they would provide and value – that can be very expensive,” said Calvit.

According to Calvit, senior living communities are private pay so it’s best to “shop around and make sure you’re getting the best value for the money because this can be very, very expensive.” Some of the things to look for, he said, are the ability to completely tour a facility and meet the staff.

“The person who is showing you around should be an expert,” Calvit advised. “Ask them lots of questions. It’s like buying a new car. They should be able to competently answer the questions and know exactly what they’re talking about.”

He also noted that family members often don’t understand the full scope of services and associated costs. He said a la carte services might include things like bathing and dressing which can cost $8 a day.

“This is one of those things that people think that Medicare pays for but Medicare pays for skilled care,” explained Calvit. “It does not provide for custodial care.

“It’s more likely that individuals will need assistance with what are called the activities of daily living and this is basically bathing and dressing assistance, toiletry assistance, those types of things, which is not covered by Medicare.”

Calvit advised people to do their research to understand the needs of the individual and the level of skilled care needed when touring facilities. He also warned people not to put off learning about what is out there.

“I think that for those of us who are years away from this type of care, once you do see what this costs, I think it’s worth looking at your financial planning from the start and talk to someone about long-term care insurance,” Calvit said.

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STAT Home Health offers aggressive, rehabilitative treatment and education to those recovering from illness, accident or surgery. STAT provides traditional healthcare services in the home including skilled nursing, certified nursing assistance, therapy services (physical, speech and occupational), medical social service and more. Through STAT’s AIM Palliative Home Health, patients diagnosed with a life-limiting illness can receive home care while they learn more about their treatment options (chemotherapy, radiation or dialysis).

St. Joseph Hospice provides pain and symptom management, as well as emotional and spiritual support, to patients and families facing a life-limiting illness who are no longer seeking curative treatment. Individualized patient care is provided by a team of Board Certified Hospice and Palliative Care physicians, hospice-trained registered and licensed practical nurses, certified nursing assistants, medical social workers, non-denominational chaplains and pastors, bereavement professionals and hospice-trained volunteers.

The Carpenter House serves as a place of peace for hospice patients whose symptoms are not well managed at home. Offering the confidence of a hospital, with the comforts of home, patients and family members can receive around the clock nursing, spiritual care, medical social services and more as they prepare for long-term arrangements at home.

TheCarpenterHealthNetwork.com
Pros and cons to early retirement

A lifetime of working compels many people to look forward to their retirement. Some people even work to retire early. But what are the advantages of early retirement beyond starting a life of leisure? And are there any detriments to this plan?

A 2014 survey by the financial services provider TIAA-CREF found that 37 percent of Americans plan to retire before age 65. However, many of them will not have control over the matter. Those who do may want to consider the pros and cons of early retirement.

Advantages
Many people seek early retirement so that they can live a life free of the constraints of schedules. In retirement, time becomes, more or less, a retiree's own.

Leaving a job can be a boon to a person's health as well. Relieving oneself of the pressures and stresses of professional life can free up the mind and body. Stress can affect mental and physical health, taxing the heart and contributing to conditions such as depression or anxiety. According to the Mayo Clinic, stress can cause headache, muscle and chest pain and contribute to trouble sleeping. The earlier the retirement, the more opportunity to travel before health issues begin to limit mobility. Early retirement also can be a way to volunteer more or even start a new job opportunity — one where workers have greater control over their schedules and careers.

Disadvantages
One of the disadvantages of early retirement is a loss of income. Contributions to retirement accounts also ceases at retirement. This can lead to financial setbacks if adequate savings were not allocated for retirement. According to the resource Wealth How, some people who retire early fear outliving their savings.

While retiring early may be good for health, it also can have negative consequences. An analysis from the National Bureau of Economic Research found that retirement can lead to declines in mental health and mobility as well as feelings of isolation. Retiring early may jump start these health implications.

Another consideration is that health insurance provided by an employer typically ends at retirement. That means having to pay out of pocket until a person ages into government-subsidized healthcare, such as Medicare in the United States, at age 65.

Retiring early is a complex issue that requires weighing the pros and cons.
Where people spend the most financially

Who hasn’t tallied up monthly bills or looked at a credit card statement and pondered if they’re spending a little too much? The average person also may wonder how their expenditures compare to other people around the country and what they need to do to enjoy financial freedom in retirement.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average American household spends just about $57,000 each year between necessities and luxuries. Canadians are spending even more than their neighbors to the south. Statistics Canada indicates that, in 2016, the average annual expenditure on goods and services per household totaled $62,183.

So how are people allocating their funds? The results may surprise you and indicate where it’s possible to trim some fat and save big bucks.

Across North America, housing is the largest line item in people’s budgets. Various sources suggest that housing and shelter needs account for anywhere from 30 to 40 percent of most household budgets. By making housing decisions based on areas with the most efficient cost of living, individuals can save considerably over the long run.

The second largest expenditure category is transportation. This accounts for the cost to finance or lease a vehicle and insure it, and it also includes urban dwellers who rely on public transportation or ride-share services to get around. Keeping transportation budgets in check can be great a way to save.

Food is the next largest expense. While everyone needs sustenance to stay alive, how that money is allocated can make a big difference in saving versus spending. The BLS says that food at home costs around $4,000 annually, while spending on dining out amounts to around $3,100, for a grand total of $7,100 each year. Statistics Canada notes that Canadian households spent an average of $8,784 in 2016 on food and that 26 percent of that spending was on dining out. Cutting back on dining out can be a great way to save money, as can becoming a more sale-conscious grocery shopper.

Healthcare, utilities and entertainment are the next most costly expenditures, respectively. But each of those items are considerably less expensive than the top three. Therefore, making changes to where one lives, how one gets around and how one eats can certainly add up to considerable savings.
How to finance long-term care needs

Failing to plan for long-term care expenses may leave aging men and women with little or no assets late in life. AARP says that the cost of long-term care continues to rise and the array of options can make it difficult for families to find the best, most affordable care.

The median monthly costs for a semi-private room in a U.S. nursing facility hovered around $6,800 in 2016, according to The Genworth Cost of Care Survey. That adds up to roughly $82,000 per year. Individuals who only anticipate hiring a home health aide should know that such options cost an average of $3,800 per month.

Retirement savings can quickly dry up when long-term care is required. Individuals need to keep in mind that, in 2014, the Social Security Administration said the average monthly retirement income from Social Security was $1,294. The National Care Planning Council says that at least 60 percent of all individuals will need extended help during their lifetimes.

Ongoing care can last for many months or years. Long-term care needs, including assisted living and nursing home stays beyond a few months, may not be covered by federal health insurance programs, such as Medicare. As a result, it is up to individuals to find ways to finance their care.

Long-term care insurance
Long-term care insurance is one of the ways to offset costs of care for later in life. But many people are unaware that this type of insurance exists. A survey conducted by Leger Marketing for the Canadian Life and Health Insurance Association found that 74 percent of respondents said they haven’t included provisions for long-term care in their retirement plans.

Long-term care insurance is a safety precaution that can be purchased early in life to plan to help pay for expenses aging men and women may incur in their golden years. New York Life Insurance says that policy holders will be reimbursed for qualified long-term care costs up to a maximum daily benefit amount. Coverage varies, but policy premiums generally increase with the age of applicant.

Government aid
Government aid is available for U.S. and Canadian residents but qualifications vary and it is usually limited to those with financial hardships. Medicaid pays for the largest share of long-term care services in the United States, according to the Administration on Aging. But to qualify, one’s income must be below a certain level and the person must meet minimum state eligibility requirements.

Canadian provinces will assess one’s ability to pay and may subsidize care costs. Also, there may only be a handful of facilities supported by the government, so applicants cannot be picky about accommodations.

Financing long-term care is something individuals must consider as they make their plans for the future. It is a large expense that cannot go unaddressed even though the need for care might be in the distant future.
Coping as a family caregiver

Individuals are born into the world requiring the care of their parents and other adult guardians to grow and thrive. These adult children, in turn, may end up providing care when their parents reach senior age or face an illness or disability.

Becoming a family caregiver frequently is a tough choice to make. It requires patience and time, and can be emotionally and physically taxing. An estimated 43.5 million adults in the United States have provided unpaid care to an adult or a child in the prior 12 months, according to the National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP Public Policy Institute.

It’s not uncommon for caregivers of any age to feel stressed and burned out by the demands of caregiving. The Mayo Clinic says people who experience caregiver stress can be vulnerable to changes in their own health. Some signs of caregiver stress include:

- Feeling overwhelmed or constantly worried
- Feeling tired most of the time
- Gaining or losing a lot of weight
- Becoming easily irritated or angry
- Losing interest in activities you used to enjoy
- Having frequent headaches, bodily pain or other physical problems

Some caregivers even resort to drugs and alcohol to self-medicate, which can lead to further issues. To avoid the potential pitfalls of caregiver stress, individuals should always put their needs first and find ways to alleviate the added stress of caring for a loved one. These suggestions are just a start.

Don’t strive for perfection

It isn’t possible to maintain a patient attitude and get everything done perfectly each and every day. People are not perfect and mistakes will be made. Do not punish yourself if you lash out or simply need a break.

Eat healthy

As anyone who has dealt with a hungry toddler can attest, failure to eat well and frequently can result in an emotional meltdown. Be sure to always make time for nutritious meals. This will help keep up energy stores and enable you to better cope with caregiver stress.

Pay attention to mood changes

Anxiety or depression can sneak up on you when you least expect it. Ask for help if you feel your tasks are becoming too overwhelming. Seek the help of a doctor if changes in mood, sleeping patterns, appetite and the like become noticeable.

Take frequent breaks

Getting a break from caregiving and setting aside time for yourself can increase patience levels and the ability to bounce back from stress. Whenever possible, have a friend or another relative step in for you so you get a break. Explore resources available for professional aides to come and take some of the responsibilities off of your shoulders.

Being a caregiver can be rewarding, but challenging role to play. Caregivers should keep their health a priority.
How to travel even if you have limited mobility

Many people dream of traveling the world in retirement. Such dreams come true every day. But many more retirees or people nearing retirement fear that their dreams of seeing the world won’t be possible due to mobility issues beyond their control. Thankfully, such fears are largely unwarranted.

Various conditions can affect men and women’s mobility. Many such issues tend to arise after age 50, prompting many people to believe their post-retirement travel plans will never come to fruition. Conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis; chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or COPD; and heart disease may make it hard for people to travel. But that difficulty doesn’t mean aging men and women should resign themselves to a sedentary lifestyle. Though they might require a little extra effort before boarding a plane for parts unknown, the following are a handful of ways that aging men and women with limited mobility can reap the rewards of traveling.

• Contact airlines or other transportation companies if you require special accommodations. The U.S. Department of Transportation notes that passengers are generally not required to provide advanced notice for disability-related accommodations. However, it makes sense to provide such notice anyway. By doing so, men and women with limited mobility can ensure they will have adequate assistance during their trips.

• Contact security agencies. Security is part of modern travel, so travelers, especially those traveling by air, should expect to go through security checkpoints during their trips. In addition, advance notice gives companies a chance to provide seating accommodations that can make for a more enjoyable trip.

• Contact hotels directly. Each country has its own laws regarding how to accommodate people with physical disabilities or mobility issues, so don’t leave things to chance. Before booking a hotel room abroad, travelers with limited mobility should contact the hotel directly to confirm that it can accommodate their needs.

Men and women with limited mobility can still enjoy the wonders of travel, even if it requires some extra effort before embarking on their trips.

With proper planning and diligent research, aging men and women can enjoy the rewards of traveling.
How empty-nesters can transform their homes

After bringing home a bubbly baby boy or girl, it can be hard for parents to imagine that a day will come when their kids are off to college and then onto their own apartment or house. After spending decades nurturing and caring for children, parents are then left with a suddenly quiet house and probably much more time to spare. If saying goodbye to the kids also means extra house, there’s the option to downsize or make that extra space more useful.

Homeowners who choose to stay put can renovate vacant rooms into spaces that meet their newfound needs.

- **Hobby haven:** If you’ve always meant to set up a crafting room, home-brewing station or an artist’s studio, now is an ideal time to do just that. Figure out which supplies you will need and begin reworking that former bedroom into a new sanctuary for leisure interests.
- **Guest suite:** If you’ve never had a spare bedroom to entertain guests, a child’s former bedroom can fit the bill. It may not be that difficult to transform such spaces into relaxing and inviting rooms for overnight guests. Be sure there is at least a queen-sized bed and a dresser or chest of drawers to stash belongings. Select paint colors and linens in neutral tones so the room will be inviting to guests.
- **Living room redo:** When there’s an entire soccer team coming over to hang out, that large sectional sofa or modular seating may be ideal. Now that the kids are out of the house and their friends are no longer coming over for movie night, living rooms can be made more intimate with small-scale seating. A small sofa and comfortable chairs may be a more fitting option.
- **At-home gym:** Save on gym membership fees by building a mini studio right at home. Choose one of the larger bedrooms and fill it with fitness equipment, such as an elliptical trainer, a bench press bench and free weights. Store rolled-up mats in the closet for yoga or Pilates.
- **Expanded bathroom:** If space has always been at a premium in the bathroom, borrow area from an empty bedroom and turn it into a spa. Install a soaking tub separate from the shower and fill the room with other amenities, such as a warming lamp or even a small sauna.
- **Home office:** Working from home a few days a week may be more plausible when nearing retirement, as it will be a smoother transition to spending more time at home. Turn a bedroom or den into an office space with a new desk and bookshelves.

An empty nest can be a bittersweet experience, but parents can make such situations work for them by transforming their homes to better reflect their current needs.

Comprehensive Resources for Seniors

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    (225) 926-0091
  - St. Clare Manor
    (225) 216-3604
- **Home Assistance/Adult Day Programs**
  - PACE Baton Rouge
    (225) 490-0604
  - Home Visits
    (225) 765-3076

* As a participant of PACE Baton Rouge, you have the right to receive competent, considerate, respectful care from staff and contractors without regard to race/ethnic origin, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, mental or physical ability, or source of payment for your healthcare.

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