Superior general drawn to St. Teresa

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Sister Mary Prema MC, Superior General of the Missionaries of Charity, continued the work of the congregation’s founder, St. Teresa of Kolkata, in helping people look to the crucified Christ and hear his words, “I thirst,” when she came to Baton Rouge in July.

Sister Prema, the third sister to lead the Missionaries of Charity, was born in Reken, Germany. She read the biography of St. Teresa in 1980 and went to meet St. Teresa in Berlin.

“I was drawn to their mission and Jesus made it very clear to me that he wanted me to join the Missionaries of Charity and join Mother Teresa and serve the poor. I came to realize I have a vocation,” Sister Prema said in an interview with The Catholic Commentator.

Sister Prema went to India to join the order. After serving as regional superior of the order in Europe, she returned to India. After St. Teresa’s first successor, Sister Nirmala Joshi died from heart failure, Sister Prema was elected Superior General in March 2009.

There are currently 4,500 Missionaries of Charity sisters actively working in more than 600 missions across 133 countries.

With a thoughtful gaze of undivided attention and graceful, unhurried manner, Sister Prema said what she enjoys most about her vocation and work is “belonging to Jesus.”

“There is this experience of belonging to community and getting to know the sisters from very different backgrounds, which enlarges my heart. In our work with the poor we see our own frailty in them,” she said. “And that makes me understand how we are dependent on God. And how many gifts God has given to me.”

Sister Prema, who ministered alongside St. Teresa, said the quality of St. Teresa that stands out to her most was her determination and that’s what she strives to carry forth in her work.

OLOL links saintly legacies

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

In a twist of faith, divine inspiration and a bit of business acumen, the legacies of two famous Catholic friends, St. Dominic and St. Francis, have joined forces to continue to provide Catholic health care for the Jackson, Mississippi area. On July 1, the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady completed a transition of sponsorship from the Dominican Sisters for Dominican Health Services in Jackson, Mississippi area. On July 1, the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady completed a transition of sponsorship from the Dominican Sisters for Dominican Health Services in Jackson.

According to Dr. Richard Vath, president and CEO of the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System, talks began 10 months ago when the Dominican Sisters of Springfield, Illinois “sent out requests” to Catholic health care systems nationwide seeking sponsorship to take over the Mississippi operations. The Dominican Sisters had been supporting the ministry for more than seven decades.

“This is the Dominican Sisters only health care ministry,” explained Vath. “They are primarily in secondary education. And, they were having fewer and fewer (sisters) who were both interested and experienced in health care. So they decided rather than sell their facility, what they really wanted to do is to maintain a Catholic identity in Mississippi and...”
Holy hospitality, hope & prayer

By Dina Dow

Simple life lessons arise from the 16th and 17th Weeks in Ordinary Time Mass readings. These lessons are tangible for us. They serve as foundations for a life filled by Christ within; a life filled with hope that not only glorifies the Lord but also shares the hope of the glory of God.

Hospitality 101

Think of a time you had an unexpected company. Recently at home my husband and I were startled by a knock on the door. It was well after 9 p.m. A friend was walking his dog and wanted to visit. What would you say or do? The readings remind us of the goodness of hospitality.

Abraham is sitting in the opening of his tent in the heat of day, as three men approach. Before being asked, Abraham is fetching them water and food, while providing shade and comfort. He even washes their feet. He knows the weary road of a sojourner. Thus, he goes out of his way and out of his nature to make these three feel welcome. He realizes only later they are messengers from God, sent to reveal great news. Sarah, his wife, would have a child within a year.

Our nighttime visitor was not an angel from God, but actually a saddened friend seeking comfort with the passing of a mutual friend. We invited him in, sat on the patio, shared memories but passed on washing his feet. Two more friends also unexpectedly visited that same evening. Needless to say, it was a long but inspiring night.

The hospitality of discipleship

St. Paul’s Letter to the Colossians acknowledges the suffering which accompanies such hospitality. This is joined to the role of being a disciple of Jesus. For the sake of the body of Christ, St. Paul, like Abraham, offers his entire self in order to fulfill the mission God has given him, which is to “bring to completion for you the word of God” (Col 1:25). In order for followers to know Jesus, St. Paul continues to teach so as to increase awareness of what separates humanity from God and one another, with the hope of their ultimate conformity to Christ. He spares no expense, including suffering, when it comes to the hospitality of the Word of God and the hope of salvation.

Hospitality

Within the act of hospitality there exists moments of encounter where relationships form. From the Gospel of Luke, we hear the well-known story of two sisters, Martha and Mary. Their unique personalities are apparent from the beginning. As you read the passage, try to empathize with both points of view. Martha, the well-intentioned yet “burdened” hostess, is focused on the act of service rather than their guest. Her priority of giving, although done in good measure, increases her aggravation and impatience with her sister, who has chosen to receive and sit beside the Lord, literally at his feet and listen to him. Martha’s and Mary’s choices have conflicting priorities. One’s choice creates stress and anxiety, while the other’s choice is filled with peace. Whose priority results in a greater perfection? The one who serves to the point of stress or the one who sits with God? True hospitality is important as long it is tempered with holy hospitality, sitting beside the Lord and receiving his words. Here we shift our focus entirely on him. Further, we are called to sit with others, sharing holy hospitality rather that the hurry-up-and-get-it-done mindset. When have I chosen the “better part?”

Hope of mercy

With holy hospitality comes mercy. The Book of Genesis continues with the experience of Abraham and the men sent by God, who leave the tent and head to Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham knows, as God sees, the sinful actions of the people in these cities. Yet, Abraham also knows some of those who live there are innocent. As God reveals the origin of the holy water font or stoup, as so many other traditions in the Catholic Church, can be traced to ancient times, according to newadvent.org. Known as “the fountain for ablutions (washing a part of the body),” a large fountain, located in the center of the atrium of a basilica, was used by the faithful to wash their hands and feet, a rite that was most likely associated with Judaism. The website also states that as the proportions of Christian basilicas were reduced, so did the size of the holy water font.

In the early days of the church, materials used for stationary holy water fonts included bronze, marble, granite, terra cotta or solid stone. While some are rather nondescript basins, others, especially during the Middle Ages were quite ornate including the large one surrounded by cherubs at St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), Article 1, No. 118 states, “The gathering of the People of God begins with baptism: a church must have a place for the celebration of baptism (baptistry) and for fostering remembrance of the baptismal promises (holy water font).”

So the next time you reach for the font, remember there is more than just a blessing awaiting. There is a reminder that we have received the sacrament of baptism, “we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in his mission...” (CCC, Part Two, Article 1, No. 1215).

And say a prayer of thanksgiving for modern transportation and paved roads in keeping dusty feet away from the holy water.

The nave of St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome contains this holy water font surrounded by cherubs. The font was created by Gian Lorenzo Bernini, who was commissioned by Pope Innocent X in 1645 to complete the decoration of the pilasters and chapels. © Jorge Royan / http://www.royan.com.ar/CC BY-SA 3.0
Principals strategically planning for the future

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

As teachers, staff and students prepare to go back to school, principals are preparing for the future with a three- to five-year strategic plan.

“You need to know, ‘Who is your target market and who is it not,’” explained Scott Baron, CEO and founder of School Growth LLC, during a strategic planning workshop at the Catholic Life Center in Baton Rouge earlier this summer.

“Right now the education market in the greater Baton Rouge area is more competitive than it’s ever been in the history of the area,” noted Baron. “So, our challenge here is to create meaningful school improvement plans that connect with families, that enable us to really distinguish our schools from the others that are in the market.”

Principals, assistant principals and other administration members from the 31 Catholic schools in the Diocese of Baton Rouge filled the conference room to learn how to get started with a long-term strategic plan.

“We were doing an annual plan, so now we’ll be stretching it out for a five-year plan for the future,” said Paula Poché, principal at St. Peter Chanel School in Paulina. “We’ve been doing it every year, so we kind of said, ‘What do we want to see for the future?’ It expanded our thinking in a way.”

“All of our schools complete an annual improvement plan for accreditation that has to do with teaching and learning, but most of that has to do with the educational part,” explained Dr. Melanie Palmisano, superintendent of Catholic schools in the Baton Rouge Diocese. “The strategic plan that the diocesan school board has asked the schools to do is look at ‘Where do you want to be in three years and five years?’ I call it a ‘balcony view’ of the direction we want to go in as a school.”

Among the items that fall under strategic planning, according Palmisano, are an increase in enrollment, new buildings on campus and financial viability. She said the process “raises the level of engagement” between the schools’ advisory boards and faculty for “future visioning.” She also said that on the diocesan level, the long-term strategic plan includes three areas: mission and ministry; financial vitality; and advancement.

“There is nothing broken in Catholic schools right now. They’re doing very, very well,” said Palmisano. “Our schools are happy and we have lovely communities. I just love visiting the schools because you feel that sense of belonging and that sense of love that I think our church has called us to in Catholic education.”

“I’m learning how to do strategic planning; all the steps. (The workshop) has been very helpful,” said Cheryl Domino, incoming principal at Redemptorist St. Gerard School in Baton Rouge, who hopes to get her school working on a long-term strategic plan in August.

“The biggest thing that we’re helping the schools do is to tell a story that invites faculties and families into a journey together. Schools that are growing the best are learning to do that,” stated Baron. “They’re not pitching the school in the same old way. So when (schools) begin to discover their story, you’re going to see a level of energy that they’ve never had before.”

“We really are grateful to our volunteer advisory board members, on the diocesan school board as well as on local school boards throughout the diocese,” said Palmisano. “They really have taken leadership of this process and worked very well with the pastors and principals to focus on the future.

“What we want to do is continue to be relevant, continue to be viable and continue to serve to the best of our ability,” she said.

**GOSPEL ▼**

From page 2

his plan of destruction, Abraham persistently intercedes for the righteous, asking God to spare the good. God answers “yes” to Abraham’s plea, by showing mercy.

St. Paul explains that despite our sinful acts, God continues to pursue us, drawing all nearer to him and restoring us to new life after forgiveness. Such is possible by faith given in baptism as we “go down” into the waters made holy by Jesus and rise up to new life through his resurrection. As we die to ourselves we become alive in Christ. It is by this faith we are saved.

Prayer

And so we pray, as Jesus taught us to pray, using the words of Scripture, the Our Father. He teaches us to give glory to God, and petition for food (physical and spiritual), forgiveness and protection. The parable in Luke 11:1-13 manifests the reality that God answers prayers and provides what is good for us. Are all prayers answered in the way we ask? No. But God ALWAYS answers. We must believe.

“And I tell you, ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened” (Lk 11:9-10). As we ask, God gives. As we seek through him, we find. As we knock, God answers the door. Paragraph 2610 in the Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us, “Such is the power of prayer and of faith that does not doubt: “all things are possible to him who believes.”

Dow is the Director of Evangelization and Catechesis for the Diocese of Baton Rouge.
Smithsonian inquiring about drawings made by children at Catholic center

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The Smithsonian Museum of American History is looking at the possibility of acquiring for its collection drawings made by children ages 10 and 11 at a Catholic Charities center in Texas, which may depict their stay at federal detention centers for immigrants near the border.

In early July, news outlets circulated three drawings of stick figures the children made at a Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley “respite center,” which seem as if they’re depicting their lives in immigration detention inside cages or fenced spaces. The drawings were made public by the American Academy of Pediatrics after the group toured a U.S. Customs and Border Protection center and other facilities in and around McAllen, Texas, near the border.

In a statement sent to Catholic News Service July 9, the museum said it “does not publicize nor speculate on potential collecting” prior to acquiring artifacts, but it confirms that on July 4, a curator reached out to the pediatric organization about the children’s drawings “as part of an exploratory process.”

One of the three drawings in question shows small stick figures behind bars, and taller figures outside of the bars. Another shows a group of smaller figures in a row underneath blankets, as if sleeping, also behind bars, and a taller figure nearby looking over them. The third drawing shows the bars with no figures inside, only toilets and a thick black door.

Sister Norma Pimentel, a member of the Missionaries of Jesus and the center’s executive director, told The New York Times that the Catholic Charities center in McAllen has the drawings. The center, which has moved to a variety of locations in the McAllen area since it opened in 2014, provides food, shelter, clothing and travel orientation for migrants recently released by federal immigration officials near the Brownsville-McAllen area.

The story said a member of the pediatric organization took the photos of the drawings during the June visit, but the names of the children who drew them are unknown.

“The museum has a long commitment to telling the complex and complicated history of the United States and to documenting that history as it unfolds, such as it did following 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina, and as it does with political campaigns,” said the statement from the museum.

In July 2018, top leaders of the U.S. Conference Catholic Bishops toured a federal detention facility in the area and celebrated Mass with unaccompanied children detained there. They also visited the Catholic Charities respite center and served a meal for incoming immigrant parents and children who had recently been released by immigration officials.

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PEORIA, Ill. (CNS) — With “overwhelming joy,” Bishop Daniel R. Jenky of Peoria announced July 6 that Pope Francis had approved a miracle attributed to the intercession of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen.

“Now that the miracle has been confirmed by Pope Francis, the Diocese of Peoria can formally begin planning for the beatification of Archbishop Sheen, which will take place in Peoria,” according to a news release issued by the Diocese of Peoria early Saturday morning.

The pope authorized the Congregation for Saints’ Causes to promulgate the decree at an audience on July 5. In addition to affirming the miracle for Archbishop Sheen, Pope Francis recognized the heroic virtues of one woman and six men, and enrolled Blessed Bartholomew of the Martyrs in the catalog of saints, which is equivalent to canonization.

The miracle concerns the healing of James Fulton Engstrom of Washington, Illinois, who was considered stillborn when he was delivered during a planned home birth Sept. 16, 2010. His parents, Bonnie and Travis Engstrom, immediately invoked the prayers of Archbishop Sheen and encouraged others to seek his intercession after the baby was taken to OSF Healthcare St. Francis Medical Center in Peoria for emergency treatment.

Just as doctors were preparing to declare that he was dead, James Fulton’s tiny heart started to beat at a normal rate for a healthy newborn. He had been without a pulse for 61 minutes.

Despite dire prognoses for his future, including that he would probably be blind and never walk, talk or be able to feed himself, the child has thrived. Now a healthy 8-year-old, he likes chicken nuggets, “Star Wars” and riding his bicycle.

“It is truly amazing how God continues to work miracles,” Bishop Jenky said in the statement released by the Diocese of Peoria. “I am so grateful that the Vatican acted so quickly after last week’s transfer of Sheen’s remains from New York to the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception in Peoria.”

Archbishop Sheen’s body had been placed in a crypt below the main altar of St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York after his death Dec. 9, 1979. After protracted legal proceedings, his remains were brought to Peoria June 27 at the request of his niece, Joan Sheen Cunningham, and now rest in a new marble tomb in the Peoria cathedral.

In a recent interview with The Catholic Post, Peoria’s diocesan newspaper, Bonnie Engstrom said God had allowed the miracle to happen for his honor and glory.

“I really don’t think it was given to us, for us,” she said. “I think it was given to the church, for the church.”

Although the date of beatification is not known at this time, Bishop Jenky “hopes and prays” that it will be announced soon. The statement said he continues to be hopeful that it will take place during the 100th anniversary year of Archbishop Sheen’s ordination to the priesthood.

The El Paso, Illinois, native was ordained Sept. 20, 1919, at St. Mary’s Cathedral in Peoria, and would go on to teach at The Catholic University of America in Washington and lead the Society of the Propagation of the Faith. Perhaps he is best remembered for his popular television show, “Life Is Worth Living.”

He died in 1979 at age 84. His sainthood cause was officially opened in 2003. The church declared his heroic virtues and he was given the title “Venerable” in 2012 by Pope Benedict XVI.

In general, two miracles must be accepted by the church as having occurred through the intercession of a prospective saint, one before beatification and the other before canonization.
Holy days of obligation/ Flowers near monstrance

I am puzzled that the Ascension is no longer observed on Thursday (40 days after Easter) as a holy day of obligation, while the feasts of the Assumption and of the Immaculate Conception are considered to be obligatory.

The Ascension surely has a scriptural basis, while there are no direct scriptural references to the Assumption or the Immaculate Conception. In fact, to me the Annunciation seems more significant than these other two Marian feasts (since there is a scriptural basis), and yet on the Annunciation (March 25) Catholics are not obliged to attend Mass.

Canon 1246 of the Church’s Code of Canon Law allows national conferences of bishops to determine the number of holy days of obligation, as well as to transfer the observance to a Sunday. As a result, there is considerable variation from country to country: Vatican City has 10 obligatory holy days, for example, while Canada has two.

Regarding the feast of the Ascension, in most of the United States that celebration has been transferred to the following Sunday. In the ecclesiastical provinces of Boston, Hartford, New York, Newark, Omaha and Philadelphia, the Ascension is still marked on the Thursday itself, with obligatory Mass attendance.

To your point about the Assumption and the Immaculate Conception, the papal decrees proclaiming those teachings simply affirmed what had been the historical and consistent belief of the church. (Both doctrines have their root, in part, in the archangel Gabriel’s proclamation in Luke 1:28 of Mary as God’s “favored one,” sometimes translated “full of grace.”)

The Immaculate Conception (Dec. 8) is the patronal feast of the United States and, as in Ireland on the feast of St. Patrick, Catholics are required to participate at the Eucharist. By the way, I like your argument in favor of the Annunciation and if I were in charge, I would add Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, too!

Our parish is blessed to have a small but extremely popular perpetual adoration chapel. Because so many who came for adoration were bringing lavish flower arrangements, our sacristan, with the pastor’s permission, forbade all plants, and there are now two signs declaring this ban on either side of the monstrance.

I find these signs to be distracting and rather disrespectful of the Blessed Sacrament, especially since the prohibition of flowers has already been posted at the chapel’s entrance. Am I overreacting, or are there valid reasons for requesting the removal of the signs from the monstrance altar? (City of origin withheld)

No, I don’t think you are overreacting. You should speak with your pastor and simply explain your feeling that the presence of the signs right next to the monstrance takes the focus away from the Blessed Sacrament.

I am not aware of any specific church regulations with regard to this, but I would think you could back up your argument by quoting from the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, the church’s official liturgical guidebook. There it states, “Floral decorations should always show moderation and be arranged around the altar table rather than on the altar table” (No. 905).

It seems to me that if flowers are not to be permitted right next to the Eucharist, then – even more – those distracting signs should be moved away.

The U. S. Conference of Catholic Bishops does have on its website a document called “Perpetual Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament” that, although it does not speak directly to your question, addresses the reverent attention with which such adoration should take place.

Quoting the Vatican’s Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments, it notes that “every effort should be made to ensure that there be at least two people present. There must absolutely never be periods when the Blessed Sacrament is exposed and there is no one present for adoration.”

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Through horrific pain comes spiritual strength

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Becky Wilson, a member of St. Patrick Church in Baton Rouge, speaks in a matter-of-fact way when giving the details of an accident that nearly took her life 29 years ago. But when enumerating the blessings of her spiritual journey that occurred during that trying time she is swept away with emotions.

Wilson recently shared her story with her parish as it, along with other churches in the diocese, have been hosting drives to help replenish the dwindling blood supplies at local blood banks during the summer.

“When I was young, I was giving blood. I never dreamed that my life would depend on the generosity of others or that I was going to need someone else’s blood. I never thought that I would ever have to take advantage of the good that others offer,” said Wilson.

She was accompanying someone on a business visit at a construction site in Alexandria when two thousand pounds of wood fell on her from 15 feet. One of her legs was almost severed, and the other leg and both arms, hip and pelvic bone were badly damaged.

“I was laying there for what seemed for eternity,” said Wilson.

Emergency responders put a tourniquet around her knee, and a helicopter picked her up to bring her to the hospital. “And that’s when the battle begun,” said Wilson.

She underwent a 10-hour surgery to stop the bleeding and stabilize her. Her five children were notified that she probably would not survive.

When the doctor unwrapped it several weeks later, he said, “My God, it’s a miracle,” said Wilson. Her hand only required one surgery. Surgeons performed the extensive repairs that helped save her hand and life.

“God was already at work because the hospital (Rapides Medical Center in Alexandria) was within my vision,” said Wilson.

She was “ready for the Lord to take her” if it was his will.

Wilson said another miracle occurred when a new orthopedic surgeon did some critical procedures that helped save her hand and life.

“He told me later that he looked at me and he said ‘God guide me because I don’t even know where to start,’ ” Wilson said.

After they stabilized Wilson, a doctor, who is originally from Turkey and one of two doctors in the United States with enough experience to do the extensive repairs needed to reattach a finger that was severed from Wilson’s hand, was in Alexandria.

In her initial recovery, doctors told Wilson she would likely lose her hand, and if she didn’t, it would take many surgeries to make it look like a hand again.

“For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control,” she also receives confirmations that the Blessed Mother is by her side.

Wilson estimates that she received 20 pints of blood as a result of her accident and she went through 18 surgeries in 10 years and she has pain that “comes and goes.” But Wilson, who has been involved in different ministries, particularly lecturing, during the years, said her faith and continual miracles let her know even the worse of pain is “worth it” for the spiritual strength she gains.

“When you think about what they did to Jesus, the agony that he went through, my pain is nothing. Easter is my favorite time because it makes me realize that what I suffer every day is nothing compared to what he suffered. And he rose from it,” she said.

**DOYLE ▼**

From page 6

**Q**

My fiance is Jewish, and I am Catholic. We are hoping to get married in a neutral place, such as a hotel, and would like to incorporate elements from both religions into the ceremony. Is it possible to have such a wedding ceremony recognized by the Catholic Church, and who from the church would be willing to perform the wedding in a venue such as a hotel? (We will be raising our future children in the Catholic Church.)

(Baltimore)

**A**

Yes. With the proper permissions, it is certainly possible for a wedding ceremony such as you describe to be recognized as valid by the Catholic Church. I have, in fact, participated in a number of such rituals sometimes by myself, sometimes with a rabbi sharing some of the prayers, often in Hebrew.

A ceremony like this highlights the strong faith in the divine shared by both religions.

Either the priest or the rabbi may be selected to receive the couple’s wedding vows — again with the proper permission and be the “officiant” to sign the civil marriage license.

The setting for the ceremony can be as simple or as elaborate as you desire; one particular one that I recall took place in a “neutral” reception hall but underneath a “chuppah,” the traditional Jewish wedding canopy, with both sets of parents standing next to the bride and groom.

Your first move should be to speak with a local priest and complete the necessary paperwork.

**FATHER DOYLE** is a retired priest in the Diocese of Albany, New York. Questions may be sent to Father Kenneth Doyle at askfatherdoyle@gmail.com and 30 Columbia Circle Dr., Albany, NY 12203.
Youth prepare and served food at the soup kitchen run by the Missionaries of Charity at St. Agnes Church in Baton Rouge

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

“We are made for greatness” was the mantra of youth who worked, played, prayed and evangelized in the Inspirational Service Camp June 25 – 29.

Youth from the cluster parishes of Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Manringston, St. Frances Xavier Cabrini in Livonia and St. Joseph Church in Grosse Tete spent time ministering to the people in the Greater Baton Rouge area during the service camp.

To help the youth better relate to the circumstances of the people they served and to bond with each other, they went without luxuries, said Peggy Champagne, youth director of the cluster parishes.

“Food was limited, they slept on the hard floors, there were no electronics and they bathed out of a bucket with cold water,” said Champagne. “Just a small touch of what the homeless deal with on a daily basis.”

Food was limited, they slept on the hard floors, there were no electronics and they bathed out of a bucket with cold water,” said Champagne. “Just a small touch of what the homeless deal with on a daily basis.”

“The biggest challenge of the camp is getting a small group of youth to go to an area they might have never been before and understand the conditions they are going to see,” said LeBlanc. “What we did is nothing compared to what the homeless deal with on a daily basis.”

LeBlanc’s sister, Emily, agreed.

“It’s an inspiration to see the young kids say, ‘What else can I do?’” said Marshure, who works in the yard, cleaned and painted around her home.

Amelia Crockett, who talked to the youth about their goals in life and beliefs.

“The youth also visited Magnolia Community Services in New Orleans, and talked with, worked alongside and some of the workers there. Because of this camp, I am thinking of applying at the St. Louis House this August.”

“Some people have never been around this population working hands on. They were able to see that they are not that much different than anyone else,” said Mary McDowell, activity director and volunteer coordinator at Magnolia Community Services.

Additionally, the youth heard about opportunities to learn skills that can help them save lives during medical emergencies, such as providing CPR, “stopping the bleed” or as a volunteer emergency responder. During their visit to the fire station on Lobdell Avenue in Baton Rouge, youth spent an afternoon learning to handle a fire hose, wearing fire fighter outfits and gear and riding in a fire truck. What was originally scheduled as a one-hour visit turned into three, said fire chief Tim Crockett.

“They were inquisitive, nice and strong in their faith,” said Crockett, who talked to the youth about their goals in life and beliefs.

“We worked bingo with the residents there and I had so much fun interacting with them and some of the workers there. Because of this camp, I am thinking of applying at the St. Louis House this August.”

“Some people have never been around this population working hands on. They were able to see that they are not that much different than anyone else,” said Mary McDowell, activity director and volunteer coordinator at Magnolia Community Services.

Additionally, the youth heard about opportunities to learn skills that can help them save lives during medical emergencies, such as providing CPR, “stopping the bleed” or as a volunteer emergency responder. During their visit to the fire station on Lobdell Avenue in Baton Rouge, youth spent an afternoon learning to handle a fire hose, wearing fire fighter outfits and gear and riding in a fire truck. What was originally scheduled as a one-hour visit turned into three, said fire chief Tim Crockett.

“They were inquisitive, nice and strong in their faith,” said Crockett, who talked to the youth about their goals in life and beliefs.

“The youth also visited Magnolia Community Services in New Orleans, and talked with, worked alongside and some of the workers there. Because of this camp, I am thinking of applying at the St. Louis House this August.”

“A visit to St. Joseph Abbey in St. Benedict (Trappist) inspired youth in their project.”

Putting on a fresh coat of paint by youth service camp participants gave the homes of those in need a new look.

Youth worked in the yard to help the elderly and homebound.

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SUMMIT

Anna

This stylish, seat-of-your-pants thriller, written and directed by Luc Besson, reinvigorates the spy drama with more twists and turns than a roller coaster. In 1985 Russia, a young woman (Sacha Lass) is recruited by a KGB agent (Luke Evans) to join the ranks under the tutelage of a crusty former agent (Cillian Murphy). Working undercover as a fashion model in Paris, she meets a CIA operative (Cillian Murphy) who convinces her to turn double agent for discerning adult viewers, given its highly entertaining, the film is strictly adults, with reservations.

MCROW

Toy Story 4

Delightful addition to the animated franchise in which the cowboy leader (voice of Tom Hanks) of the familiar gang of toys who come to life when humans aren’t looking becomes the mentor of a homemade doll (voice of Tony Hale) his kid owner (voice of Madeleine McGraw) fashioned primarily out of a plastic spork. As he and the group including the astronaut (voice of Tim Allen) with whom he used to carry on a rivalry are brought along on a family vacation, the cowboy himself finds traces of a long-lost buddy, a shepherd figurine (voice of Annie Potts) from whom he has been separated for nearly a decade. Director Jon Cooley and screenwriters Andrew Stanton and Stephany Folsom deftly juggle humor, sentiment and even clever gothic material by way of the creepy ventrilquist dummies who populate an antique store. They also introduce a memorable new character, a 1970s Canadian stuntman toy (voice of Keanu Reeves). Characters in peril, some potentially frightening scenes. A-I; G

Yesterday

True to its title, this snappy follow-up to 2017’s “Spider-Man: Homecoming” finds the eponymous superhero (Tom Holland) traveling across Europe on a summer trip organized for the students of his alter ego Peter Parker’s high school. He wants to spend the journey courting his classmate with whom he’s smitten (Zendaya). But a hard-driving crime fighter (Samuel L. Jackson) forcefully recruits him to join the battle against the sole survivor of a quartet of monsters known as Elementals. So he teams with an alien (Jake Gyllenhaal) whose world was destroyed by the creatures and is so impressed with his new comrade that he gives him the vastly powerful technological system he inherited from his late mentor (Robert Downey Jr., seen only in images). He soon discovers however, that his trust may have been misplaced. Screenwriters Chris McKenna and Erik Sommers continue to explore the franchise’s recurring theme about the responsibilities that come with power, in this case as Peter worries about his ability to step into the shoes of Downey’s character. And director Jon Watts delivers with an adventure full of bloodless derring-do and gentle, innocent romance. Probably acceptable for older teens. Frequent stylized combat, mature references, including to pornography and prostitution, at least one mild oath, a couple of crude and a few crass terms. A-III; PG-13

MOVIE REVIEWS

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

Motion Picture Association of America ratings:
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nudity, a suicide attempt and occasion-

ALASDAR

Yesterday

A British-Indian shelf stocker (Himesh Patel) whose side career as a musician and singer is going nowhere finds his life transformed when a brief but global blackout somehow retroactively removes the Beatles from history and from everyone’s memory except his. That leaves him free to become the world’s most famous performer by recording the Fab Four’s songs as his own. On his ascent to universal celebrity, which is aided by pop star Ed Sheeran, playing himself, his devoted manager and would-be girlfriend (Lily James) willingly steps aside in favor of a harshly cynical industry insider (Kate McKinnon) while a slacker (Joel Fry) from his small home town in Suffolk becomes his less-than-reliable roadie. More charming than logical, director Danny Boyle’s comic counterpoint is punctuated with appealing characters and, as scripted by Richard Curtis, puts its protagonist through some amusing situations. The romance at the heart of it all reaches a moral wrap-up but not before initial restraint gives way to premature passion. Together with the violations of the Second Commandment with which the screenplay is littered, that lapse suggests this otherwise amiable fantasy is best for grown viewers. Implied premarital sexual activity, mature references, including drug use and sexual activity, numerous profanities, at least one rough term, occasional crude and crass language. A-III; PG-13

Midsummer

A24)

All dressed up as slow-moving psychological horror, writer-director Ari Aster’s film is, in fact, an exercise in crude exploitation. Perpetually on the verge of breaking up, a couple of university students (Florence Pugh and Jack Reynor) seek to ease the tension by joining his graduate-school friends (William Jackson Harper, Will Poulter and Vilhelm Blomgren) on a visit to a Swedish commune that practices an ancient folk religion. Terror, sex and gore ensue, though they carry lead-footed values given the predictability of it all. The result is just another sensationalist trip into the realm of savagery, with no redeeming features. Warpéd moral values, bloody violence, human sacrifice, strong sexual content, including aberrant behavior, an explicit encounter and full male and female nudity, drug use, a few profanities, pervasive rough language. O; R

Spider-Man: Far From Home

Columbia

A British-Indian shelf stocker (Himesh Patel) whose side career as a musician and singer is going nowhere finds his life transformed when a brief but global blackout somehow retroactively removes the Beatles from history and from everyone’s memory except his. That leaves him free to become the world’s most famous performer by recording the Fab Four’s songs as his own. On his ascent to universal celebrity, which is aided by pop star Ed Sheeran, playing himself, his devoted manager and would-be girlfriend (Lily James) willingly steps aside in favor of a harshly cynical industry insider (Kate McKinnon) while a slacker (Joel Fry) from his small home town in Suffolk becomes his less-than-reliable roadie. More charming than logical, director Danny Boyle’s comic counterpoint is punctuated with appealing characters and, as scripted by Richard Curtis, puts its protagonist through some amusing situations. The romance at the heart of it all reaches a moral wrap-up but not before initial restraint gives way to premature passion. Together with the violations of the Second Commandment with which the screenplay is littered, that lapse suggests this otherwise amiable fantasy is best for grown viewers. Implied premarital sexual activity, mature references, including drug use and sexual activity, numerous profanities, at least one rough term, occasional crude and crass language. A-III; PG-13
‘Dangerous’ bill on seal of confession withdrawn before key hearing

LOS ANGELES (CNS) — In a last-minute twist, a California bill that would have required priests to break the sacramental seal of confession was shelved by its sponsor amid a remarkable grass-roots campaign mounted by the state’s Catholics, members of other faith groups, and religious liberty advocates from across the country.

S.B. Bill 360 was withdrawn the day before a scheduled July 9 hearing in the California Assembly Public Safety Committee, effectively removing it from any further consideration this year.

“S.B. 360 was a dangerous piece of legislation,” said Los Angeles Archbishop Jose H. Gomez, who had led the California bishops in opposing the bill.

“If any legislature can force believers to reveal their innermost thoughts and feelings shared with God in confession, then truly there is no area of human life that is free or safe from government,” he added.

The bill’s author, state Democratic Sen. Jerry Hill of San Mateo decided to shelve his bill after learning that it did not have enough votes to pass out of the committee.

Hill’s decision came on the same day that the Public Safety Committee released a staff report raising serious First Amendment and enforceability concerns about the proposed law, while noting that no other state had taken such an approach to the sacrament.

In its original form, S.B. 360 would have ordered priests to disclose any information they might hear in confession concerning the sexual abuse of minors.

An amended version of the bill which would deny confidential confessions to priests and church personnel who work with priests passed the California Senate in a 30-2 vote May 24.

Archbishop Gomez had previously called the proposed legislation “a mortal threat to the religious freedom of every Catholic” in a May 17 column for Angelus, and was joined by the rest of the state’s Catholic bishops in asking faithful to urge their state representatives to oppose the bill.

“The safety committee analysis noted that more than 125,000 people had expressed their opposition to the bill to lawmakers. But Catholic analysts called that number low. The #KeepTheSeal campaign launched in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles resulted in the delivery of more than 140,000 letters to the State Capitol building in Sacramento as of July 8, the day before the committee vote. Another 16,700 emails were sent to representatives from concerned Catholics in Los Angeles.

Archbishop Gomez had asked that a letter be read in all parishes at every Mass over the June 15-16 weekend.

“We cannot allow the government to enter into our confessional rights to dictate the terms of our personal relationship with Jesus,” the archbishop said in his letter, calling on Catholics to speak out against the bill.

The archdiocese also set up a website, KeepTheSeal.com, as a hub for faithful to write to their representatives and learn more about the sacrament of reconciliation.

Critics pointed out that no evidence was presented in the legislature that would suggest confession is being used to conceal the sexual abuse of minors. At the same time, growing concerns about the legislation were voiced from many Catholics around the country, and from other faith leaders.

The steady drumroll of coverage from national and Catholic media on the debate prompted reactions from Catholic voices ranging from veteran Vatican journalist John L. Allen Jr. (president of Crux, a partner of Angelus) to the Catholic League’s Bill Donahue. The publicity culminated July 1, when the Vatican weighed in by issuing a document from the head of the Holy See’s highest court reaffirming the importance and inviolability of the confessional seal.

In the days leading up to the committee vote, opposition to the bill intensified as hundreds of Catholics around the state made plans to travel to Sacramento to attend the July 9 committee hearing.

On July 2, James Sonne, director of Stanford University’s Religious Liberty Clinic, wrote to Public Safety Committee Chairman Reginald Hill’s decision came on July 2, James Sonne, director of Stanford University’s Religious Liberty Clinic, wrote to Public Safety Committee Chairman Reginald Byron Jones-Sawyer in opposition to the bill, which he called “constitutionally problematic because it singles out religious exercise for disfavorable treatment.”

On July 8, a statement signed by Muslim, Orthodox, Lutheran, Anglican, and Baptist faith leaders, as well as representatives from Eastern Catholic Rites and historic Black churches was delivered to committee members declaring that “we are all one with American Roman Catholics in condemning the attack on religious freedom that the current version of California Senate Bill 360 represents.”

Andrew Rivas, executive director of the California Catholic Conference, expressed his thanks to the Californians who reached out to their legislators to oppose S.B. 360.

“An amazing number of people spoke to their legislators to explain the sacred nature of the sacrament of reconciliation,” said Rivas. “It is important to our spirituality and our relation to God and to others. Our thanks go to all who played a part.”
Controlling your thoughts

Do you suffer from disturbing or obsessive thoughts? If so, relief is available. It will be an uphill battle but with perseverance and the help of God, it’s a battle that’s worthwhile because it can be won. The worst attacks come during the night when you’re trying to go to sleep. Some cases are worse than others. The trick is to divert the troubling thoughts by replacing them with something else. Even if the thought persists, perseverance will one day win the war.

Here is how to begin. When you’re trying to go to sleep, and a troubling thought invades your mind, deflect your attention from it by concentrating on your own breathing. Repeat one word: ‘inhale’. Don’t force feelings of any kind, and stay relaxed.

As long as your will is occupied on another task the obsessive thoughts will be held at bay. Choose a sweet thought or beautiful picture to replace it.

There are also other more important remedies you may need in order to deal with the root cause of a problem. If you suffer from envy, which is sadness or anger over the good fortune of another, you will need to repent, otherwise the attacks will increase. It’s a matter of breaking a bad habit.

Any vice, like anger, that has become a habit will make your life a needless ordeal. Put on the will to break the habit. It can and must be done. Your weakness is making your life a needless ordeal. The same is true if you are a vindictive person, when anger begins to seek revenge.

Pray for the spirit of forgiveness. Call on God to do the heavy lifting, because his grace is necessary to reduce and eventually destroy this passion of anger. You can see that a careful analysis of the cause of any problem is also necessary if you hope to rid yourself of it. Like any form of weakness, there’s a need to persevere in the healing process.

Morality should be an essential part of everyone’s education. The church is often criticized for insisting on this discipline by always stressing the danger of sin, but secular society claims the right to punish criminals, thieves and those who do harm to others. To neglect a child’s moral training can lead to all kinds of trouble.

Wiseparentsrealizethatneedthelpinthemoral education of their children, and the Catholic school system wants to help them. It’s a win-win situation.

May the Lord be your strength and your joy as you carry out the responsibility.

Are you on familiar terms with God?

One of my favorite characters in books and in movies was Don Camillo. That’s going back all the way to the 1960s when communists were still major players in Italian politics. I was treasurer of the student body organization at the Gregorian University in Rome. To get the yearbook printed I had to deal with a communist printer.

We had great conversations, from the injustice of capitalism (his view) to his little girl’s first Communion. Italian communists were almost all Catholic and practiced their faith, well, modo Italiano. I once watched the communist mayor of Florence, LaPira, distribute bread to the poor after attending Sunday Mass. He was called by his fellow citizens “Il Sindaco Santo.” (the Mayor Saint).

Don Camillo was definitely not communist. His archenemy was the communist mayor of his little village. The two schemed against each other all the time, with Don Camillo, the village priest, often losing. On such occasions he would stomp into church, plop down on his knees at the communion rail, glare at the altar and say, “Whose side are you on anyway?”

Like Don Camillo, it is alright to nag God, alright to complain and get testy when God seems slow to answer, just so long as we trust that his love never falters, that he is true to the central promise of the Gospel, “to be with us” in good times and in bad. We pray to change our attitude, not God’s, to remind ourselves of his loving support, not to remind him that we exist.

Luke’s Gospel is full of examples of God’s presence to us. Mary is greeted by the angel of God who proclaims, “The Lord is with you.” St. John the Baptist is described as blessed because “the hand of the Lord was with him.” Jesus is the one who is called “Emmanuel, which means God is with us.” We can rest secure in his parting promise, “Behold, I am with you always, even until the end of the world.”

Ministry of prayer is important for ourselves, our parish, our diocese, our nation and the world. We have so many things to pray for: our loved ones, our sick and shut-ins, ourselves, nuns, brothers, priests and deacons, our nation and sanity in its political life, victims of molestation and healing in our church, lessening violence in our city and peace in the world. You surely can add to this list. It is good to pray for others because it increases our capacity for love and also takes our minds off our own problems.

But when those problems mount up, and, like Don Camillo, we wonder whose side God is on, then it is good to have a commitment to prayer. Try an hour of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament and see if you are still feeling alone and abandoned at the end of it. Pray for others and see if your own problems don’t seem less. Remember Jesus’ promise to be with us always.

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.

**PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PRAY FOR US**

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

**Letters to the Editor**

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

omeone Weil once commented that it’s not enough today to be merely a saint; rather “we must have the saintliness demanded by the present moment.”

She’s surely right on that second premise; we need saints whose virtues speak to the times.

What kind of saints is needed today? Someone who can show us how we can actually forgive an enemy? Someone who can help us come together across the bitter divide within our communities and churches? Someone who can show us how to reach out to the poor? Someone who can show us how to find “Sabbath” inside the bombardment of 10 thousand television channels, a million blogs, and a billion tweets? Someone who can show us how to sustain our childhood faith amidst the sophistication, even as he or she is, by faith, set apart?

No one who radiates a full-bodied humanity, into singles’ bars and not sin? Someone who can show us how to speak to the times.

We need saints who can honor the goodness of the world, even as they honor God. We need women and men who can show us how to walk with a living faith inside a culture which believes that world here is enough and that the issues of God and the next life are peripheral. We need saints who can walk with a steady, adult faith in the face of the world’s sophistication, its pathological restlessness, its over-stimulated grandiosity, its numbing distractions, and its overpowering temptations. We need saints who can empathize with those who have drifted away from the church, even as they themselves, without compromise, hold their own moral and religious ground. We need young saints who can romantically re-enflame the religious imagination of the world, as once did Francis and Clare. And we need old saints, who have walked the gamut and can show us how to meet all the challenges of today and yet retain our childhood faith.

As well, we need what Sarah Coakley calls “erotic saints,” women and men who can bring chastity and eros together in a way that speaks of the importance of both. We need saints who can model for us the goodness of sexuality, who can delight in its human joys and honor its God-given place within the spiritual journey, even as they never denigrate it by setting it against spirituality or cheapen it by making it simply another form of recreation.

Then too we need saints today who can, with compassion, help us to see our blind complicity with systems of all kinds which victimize the vulnerable in order to safeguard our own comfort, security, and historical privilege. We need saints who can speak prophetically for the poor, for the environment, for women, for refugees, for those with inadequate access to medical care and education, and for all who are stigmatized because of race, color or creed. We need saints, lonely prophets, who can stand as unanimity-minus one, and who can wage peace and who can point our eyes to a reality beyond our own shortsightedness.

And these saints need not be formally canonized; their lives need simply be lumps for our eyes and leave for our lives. I don’t know who your present-day saints are, but I find have found none among a very wide range of persons, old, young, Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical, liberal, conservative, religious, lay, clerical, secular, faith-filled and agnostic. Full disclosure, the names I mention here are not persons whose lives I know in any detail. Mostly, I know what they’ve written, but their writings are a lamp which lights my path.


Among the younger voices whose lives and writings speak as well to a generation younger than mine, I would mention Shane Claisborne, Rachel Held Evans, James Martin, Kerry Weber, Trevor Herriot, Macy Halford, Robert Barron, Bryan Stevenson, Robert Ellsberg, Biike Vandekerckhove, and Annie Riggs.

Maybe these aren’t your saints, fair enough. So lean on those who help light your path.

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

B

“Behold” is my favorite word in Scripture. Every time it shows up, we’re summoned to snap to attention and take notice. God is about to do something new. Let’s not miss it.

But how can we behold what God is doing when we’re caught in a culture of constant distraction at our fingertips?

I could cite statistics for you; we’ve all read them. If you’re like me, your stomach sinks whenever you hear how much time we now spend on screens.

I could draw from neuroscience or psychology, the latest findings on how our closest relationships and basic interactions are being reshaped by our technology habits.

But instead I will tell you a story.

While I was trying to finish this column on a steamy summer afternoon with a house full of children, I was interrupted every three-to-five minutes to witness their latest elaborate domino race.

“You have to see this!” a messenger would insist at my office door. “It’s so much better than the last one.”

So I’d smile, leave my work, follow them and witness what they needed to see.

The first few rounds were delightful. But after an hour of interruption after interruption, I started to get annoyed. Agitation crept into my voice: “Guys, I have to finish this. Can I work for 10 minutes and then take a break to see what you’ve made?”

Blank stares, as if I were speaking a foreign language.

All they wanted was my attention in the present moment. If I couldn’t give it then, did it matter?

So I sighed and left my computer to watch the same line of dominos knock down neatly one by one as kids cheered. Right then it clicked in my mind, too: Why not ask the ones who wanted my attention what it meant to them?

“Use an example from a baseball game,” suggested my oldest son. “You have to pay attention or you might get hit in the face by a foul ball.”

Fair enough.

But then his younger brother knocked it out of the park: “You just have to look at someone and stay focused on them.”

Beholding is holy looking, the spiritual practice of paying attention. Trying to glimpse with God’s eyes. Seeking the goodness in each other and the sacredness of the present moment.

You can start small. Simply stop once a day and notice those around you as they are. Not as you hope they will be in the future or as you wish they were in the past. But beholding them fully in the present and noticing God alive in them today.

Beholding is one of the most profound gifts we can offer to each other – in our marriages, families and friendships. The simple act of seeing with love softens our gaze, smoothing the rough edges of our imperfections.

We notice something new about our spouse or we see how our children are changing and growing. We discover the difference it makes when we offer uninterrupted attention to a friend.

Our screens are slick and clear. No wonder they are dangerously alluring, when humans are difficult and sinful, muddled and messy in words and actions. We have to pay attention to understand people, not just scroll by with the flick of a finger.

But if we try to behold, if we look up and set down our screens, if we let ourselves gaze upon those we love even for a few meaningful moments each day, our eyes can start to adjust to God’s light – a new way of seeing.

Our attention is a holy gift. Where do we let it land?
Vatican discovers empty tombs as it searches for missing woman

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Opening the Vatican tombs of a princess and a duchess July 11 in a search for the remains of a young Italian woman missing for more than 30 years, the Vatican found no human remains at all.

“The search had a negative result,” said Alessandro Gisotti, interim director of the Vatican press office. “No human remains or funeral urns were found.”

Now, Gisotti said, Vatican officials will go into the archives to study documents dealing with “structural interventions carried out in the area” of the Teutonic Cemetery at the end of the 1800s and again in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The cemetery, existing since the Middle Ages, is now reserved mainly for German-speaking priests and members of religious orders.

The side-by-side tombs had been marked as the final resting places of Princess Sophie von Hohenlohe, who died in 1836, and Duchess Charlotte Frederica of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, the mother of King Frederick VII of Denmark, who died in 1840. A Vatican City State court had ordered the opening of the tombs at the request of the family of Emanuela Orlandi who disappeared in Rome in 1983.

Movie Showing — The movie, “Gosnell: The Trial of America’s Biggest Serial Killer,” will be shown Saturday, July 20, 2 p.m., at the parish school of religious education of St. Agnes Church, 749 East Blvd., Baton Rouge. For more information, call 225-383-4127.

St. James Church — St. James Church, 6613 Hwy. 18, St. James, will host its Feast Day of St. James Sunday, July 28, beginning with an 8 a.m. Mass. For more information, call 225-265-4210.

Adoration Chapel Anniversary — St. Philomena Church, 108 Brule Road, Labadieville, will celebrate the 25th anniversary of its adoration chapel Tuesday, July 30, 6-30 p.m. The celebration will begin with Mass at 6 p.m. For more information, call 985-526-4247.

Rosaryville Retreat — Worship leader Cindy Scardina will present a retreat, “Healing the Heart Through Scripture and Song.” Friday, Aug. 2 – Sunday, Aug. 4 at Rosaryville Spirit Life Center, 39003 Rosaryville Road, Ponchatoula. For more information, call 225-294-5039 or email scallais@oppeace.org.

Day of Renewal — Catholic Charismatic Renewal of the Diocese of Baton Rouge will hold a day of healing prayer Saturday, Aug. 10, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m., at the Our Lady of Mercy Parish Activity Center, 445 Marquette Ave., Baton Rouge. Call 225-636-2464.

Men’s Conference — The Men of the Cross of Holy Rosary Church, 44450 Hwy. 429, St. Amant, will present a men’s conference Saturday, Aug. 10. Doors open at 7 a.m. and concludes with a banquet at 5:30 p.m. Speakers will be Father Joshua Johnson, pastor of Holy Rosary, and Father Mark Beard, pastor of St. Helena Church in Amite. Registration is required and can be done by visiting olhrh.com/man-of-the-cross.

Magnificat Breakfast — Bishop Michael G. Duca will speak at a breakfast meeting of Magnificat on Saturday, Aug. 17, 9 a.m. – noon, at the Oak Lodge Reception Center, 2834 S. Sherwood Forest Blvd., Baton Rouge. Tickets are $22 each and can be purchased online by visiting bit.ly/MagBRAugust2019 or mail a check payable to Magnificat to Kathy Simon, 9650 Victory Lane, Denham Springs, LA 70726-5859.

Come Lord Jesus Anniversary Mass — To mark the 50th anniversary year of the “Come Lord Jesus” program, founder Father Conley Bertrand of the Diocese of Lafayette will celebrate a Mass for the Baton Rouge area on Wednesday, Aug. 21, 8:30 a.m., at St. Aloysius Church, 2025 Stuart Ave., Baton Rouge. Email mary_carlin_1@hotmail.com or cindy.ristroph@outlook.com.

New Orleans Retreat — Father Paul Hart, director of retreats at St. Joseph Abbey in St. Benedict, will lead a preached silent retreat Friday, Aug. 2 – Sunday, Aug. 4 at the Archdiocese of New Orleans Retreat Center, 550 St. Mary St., Metairie. Visit neworleans retreats.org or call Susan Halligan at 504-267-9604.

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Companions on a Journey

Lord God, we come before you in thanksgiving for the living legacy of the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Sisters and the Dominican Sisters of Springfield. Their dedication to bring the healing of Christ to those in need inspires us now to journey together as St. Dominic’s becomes part of the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System ministry.

As we join hands, nurture in us a culture of mutual respect, humility, patience, creativity and transparency.

Like St. Francis and St. Dominic, show us how to work together for the common good. Allow nothing to stand in our way.

Bless this journey and guide our course.
We ask these things through Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

According to Vath, the melding of the two hospital systems was a natural fit, with a collective prayer referencing St. Dominic and St. Francis leading off integration meetings.

The traditional story of the strong friendship between the saints begins in 1216, when St. Dominic saw St. Francis in a vision the night before the two met at a church in Rome. According to dominicanfriars.org, St. Dominic recognized St. Francis and hastened to greet him and thus began a friendship that still inspires the orders each of the men founded. The website states “this to day Dominicans and Franciscans exchange visits on each other’s founder’s feast days as a sign of unity towards a common goal.”

“We had 35 integration teams working together over the last six months and it was like watching a family reunion, watching the sisters greet each other and sort of matching everyone who has grown to know each other over a short period of time,” Vath recalled. “Sister Dorothea came up to me and said, ‘You know, Richard, when I looked around the room I knew we had made the right decision,’ and that’s really kind of how we all felt. It was just a wonderful feeling.”

Hospice is not about giving up ... it’s about taking control

- We rely upon the intercession of our Blessed Mother to assist us in imitating the healing ministry of Jesus Christ as we care for terminally ill patients and their families.
- We call forth the compassion and kindness of our staff, who serve in this health care ministry, to respond to the physical, spiritual and emotional needs of our patients and their families.
- We believe in the sacredness of life from conception to natural death, and we devolve ourselves to supporting patients and families through the dying process at the end of a life’s journey on this earth and into new life in eternity.
thank God for you because you serve the people of the Diocese of Baton Rouge and are meeting the human and natural needs as well as spiritual needs.”

Following the Mass, a statue of St. Teresa was unveiled and blessed by Bishop Emeritus Robert W. Muench in the St. Teresa courtyard next to the church. The statue, which comes from Italy, is currently in the sisters’ chapel, but will return to the courtyard after preparations, including a protective glass casing, are made to return it to the courtyard.

Following the celebration, Sister Prema spent time in community praying with and talking with the sisters and the Missionaries of Charity lay missionaries, greeting the poor coming to St. Agnes Church. “I remember I was standing in a crowd of people,” Huxen said. “She (St. Teresa) walked up to me, took my hands in hers and put her hand on top of my head. It was like a jolt of electricity going through my body. Then she said ‘Whatever you do for my sisters do well.’” said Huxen.

She also met Nirmala Joshi and spending time with the two superior generals “was like meeting St. Teresa.”

“There’s always something they say that touches my heart,” said Huxen.

Diane Ragusa, a Missionaries of Charities lay minister served the sisters at St. Agnes from 2002 to 2015, her home state of Florida, set up the Thursday schedule for volunteers so that the sisters could spend the day praying. That scheduling format is still used.

“When I received the message that Sister Prema was coming, I said ‘I have to meet her,’” said Ragusa, who now lives in Florida.

Ragusa, who also met St. Teresa and her two predecessors said, “When I met her it was very peaceful, like I have known her all my life, which pretty well speaks of all the sisters — their charism of genuine hospitality and that special love they give out to each of us,” said Ragusa.

“All the sisters never take credit for what they have done. They give the credit to God,” Ragusa said.

Sister Prema said she is grateful to St. Agnes for supporting the sisters’ ministry and the hard work of the sisters and volunteers.

“I pray for this community, that they have one heart in truth and love for the poor,” Sister Prema said.
Summer a busy time for Catholic educators

Although summer is a time for vacation, educators know that summer months can be busy for Catholic schools. In the Diocese of Baton Rouge, educators have been working this summer on various projects on their individual campuses and in conjunction with the Catholic Schools Office. Included in our “What We Did This Summer” essay would be data analysis, professional development and preparation for the new school year.

During the summer, data on student growth are analyzed by administrators and teachers. Faith knowledge continues to be strong in the Diocese of Baton Rouge Catholic schools, as measured through the Assessment of Catechesis and Religious Education (ACRE). Likewise, ACT Aspire results for grades 3 - 8 indicate strong academic programs in elementary and middle schools. Although ACT results for this year’s seniors will not be received until mid-August, the Class of 2018 was consistent with past years’ graduates, who scored above both state and national averages. The results of all of these assessments are reviewed by schools to inform continuous improvement as part of the national accreditation process for the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

Professional development for teachers included a week-long workshop on how to maximize learning, going from good to great in the classroom. In addition, grade-level writing workshops were held for all teachers to foster the development of higher order thinking skills through the practice of writing in all subject areas. Principals and assistant principals participated in the 2019 Summer Leadership Summit in mid-June to learn about resilient leadership and building faculty for improvement. Additionally, the Leadership Cohort of principals met during July to review and reflect on spiritual, instructional, administrative and communicative leadership practices.

Besides coordination of these initiatives, the Catholic Schools Office has been busy this summer preparing for the annual Educators Gathering held the first Monday in August. Marking the end of summer, the gathering of approximately 1,000 educators provides a venue for professionals to come together to recommit themselves to the ministry of Catholic education in the Diocese of Baton Rouge. Following a keynote by Australia’s Jonathan Doyle, educators will participate in the Commissioning Ceremony led by Bishop Michael G. Duca.

Diocesan and local school board members have also been busy this summer, also. Working to complete the strategic plan for Catholic schools throughout the diocese, board members display tremendous dedication for the purpose and mission of Catholic education. What a gift! The annual board member retreat in August will provide an opportunity to receive feedback and complete strategic plans just as the 2019-20 school year gets underway.

Such commitment to improvement on the part of all stakeholders is what makes our Catholic schools consistently excellent, as they fulfill the vision of Evangelizing Hearts, Educating Minds and Embracing the Future.

We do hope that everyone has time to relax and rejuvenate during the summer, especially the educators and volunteers who do incredible work in service to young people in our schools. We are grateful for the leadership of Bishop Duca, who supports and celebrates the work of the schools, and to clergy in our diocese, who nurture the ministry of education within their parishes. With our reliance on the Holy Spirit, great things will continue in the ministry, giving us cause to reflect and refresh as we prepare for another outstanding year for Catholic schools!
Polishing a gem

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

The jewels of traditions in the treasure chest of Sacred Heart School in Baton Rouge shimmered as the school’s new principal, Celia Methvin, discussed carrying forth the best of the school’s traditions while guiding it to new levels of excellence in learning and faith development.

Methvin, who has been in education for 24 years, has been part of the Sacred Heart School community for more than 20 years, 17 years as a science teacher and three years as assistant principal. Her children are alumni of Sacred Heart.

Methvin graduated with a bachelor’s degree in physical education, teaching and coaching.

“That’s what I knew. I was a high school athlete and continued in college (volleyball, her primary sport, as well as basketball and softball), so that’s what I thought I would be doing,” said Methvin. When she and her husband moved back to the Baton Rouge area, she was hired as a physical science/biology teacher at Catholic High School of Pointe Coupee in 1996. Then principal Kirk Guidry told her to work on her certification on teaching sciences, which she completed at LSU.

“And I ended up loving it,” said Methvin, who graduated with a masters of education in 2013. “I never thought I’d be outside of a gym and in a classroom.”

As a mom and educator, Methvin said it’s important to reach students “where they are” and teaching them to be more conscientious of what’s happening in the world.

“You have to teach the child and not just the subject,” said Methvin.

As she reflects on her career, education and personal life, Methvin sees how important it is for her students to follow God’s plan for their lives and see how he opens doors for them in a way they may not anticipate.

“I’ve told my students you never really know what God’s plan is for you,” said Methvin. “You can be is an instrument and listen to trusted people, pray for guidance and make decisions based on that. And you’ll be in the right place.”

Helping students, teachers, faculty and staff reach their potential at Sacred Heart is the right place for her, said Methvin.

She decided to become an administrator because she believes she has the skills that will allow her to help the school.

Because Methvin’s experience is mainly in working with junior high school and high school students, including teaching at St. Michael the Archangel High School in Baton Rouge, learning to work with and younger children was something new at Sacred Heart.

“I’ve really enjoyed getting to know the younger students and their families before they got to middle school. I think that’s been my favorite part,” said Methvin.

Turning her attention to the teachers, Methvin said she is working with new assistant principal Langley McClay to develop a mentor program in which veteran teachers help the new teachers acclimate to the school and teach them about Sacred Heart’s cultures and traditions.

“One of the great things about Sacred Heart is that it’s a very traditional school, and we have a lot of really beautiful traditions,” said Methvin. “And it’s important for our students to realize those differences and appreciate those differences and not to shy away from them – to learn about them.”

Anticipating a time of celebration as Sacred Heart School marks its 90th anniversary this year, Methvin said her mission is to use the year as a launching pad to an even better future.

“I truly feel like I am God’s instrument. It’s not about me as much as taking care of the place and people I love very much. I tell my self every day it’s about Sacred Heart,” Methvin said.

Strong faith guides LeBlanc

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

For many people, 41 years in education might be the perfect segue into retirement but not for Joe LeBlanc. The St. Gabriel native is just getting started on a new career as principal of Catholic High School of Pointe Coupee in New Roads.

During a telephone interview from his beach vacation, LeBlanc sounded both relaxed and excited about his next step, which takes him out of the Zachary Community School District, where he has spent the past nine years, and puts him back into a Catholic school.

“I’m really excited about that,” he said. “I think Sacred Heart looks more like the real world probably than any other place,” said Methvin. “And it’s important for our students to realize those differences and not to shy away from them – to learn about them.”

“I’m excited enough to continue working,” said LeBlanc. “I really want to get back to working with kids instead of sitting in an office.”

LeBlanc stated he’s “coached pretty much everything” including baseball and basketball but the majority of his coaching career has been in football and track. However, he did make a short stop in the wrestling world.

“I was a wrestling moderator at one time at Catholic High because way back when you went to a wrestling tournament, somebody on the faculty had to be there. We had some college kids coaching the team, but I volunteered to go to the wrestling match, too,” he chuckled.

LeBlanc has two sons and five grandsons and while he’s been making the daily commute from his home in Prairieville to New Roads, he plans to put down roots in his new hometown.

“In New Roads, you know St. Mary (of False River Church) is right there, and it’s a smaller community,” he explained. “It’s just very, very enticing to know that I’ll be part of that little community and part of the church and part of the school. That’s something that at this particular point in my career, I’m really looking forward to.”

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Domino taking next step at Redemptorist St. Gerard

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

After serving as an educator and assistant principal for more than four decades, Cheryl Domino is preparing for the most important step in her professional career.

Domino, who has spent the past 35 years as a teacher and the past 20 as an assistant principal at St. Francis Xavier School in Baton Rouge, was recently hired as principal at Redemptorist St. Gerard School in Baton Rouge.

“[Changes] can be a downer; it affects the kids," said Domino, who noted she weathered several administration changes while at St. Francis. “You need to bring structure. The students have to know where you are coming from in order to follow whatever you are asking them to do.

Structure and stability make a difference. Hopefully, I will be here to guide them in the right way.”

Cheryl Domino

Domino said she expects her managerial style to be firm but fair and admitted the “disciplinary part is me,” crediting the Sisters of the Holy Family who taught her at St. Francis.

“They put it in me; I can’t get it out, so I have to live by it,” she said. “Discipline is important," Domino added. "You have to know the rules, follow the rules in order to clear your mind and understand whatever is being presented to you. If it’s a problem we have to work with it.”

“She said students crave discipline and will adhere to it if they are treated fairly and with respect.

“Demand respect and they will give it to you,” Domino said.

Elevating the students academically is the goal and the process must be data driven, Domino said. Finding out where the students are is the first step before being able to take them to where they need to be, she added.

“We have to look at the data and find different ways and use different approaches to help (students) where they are weak,” she said. “You have to be data driven; that’s what it is all about.”

Domino said she will be visible among the students, taking the time to get to know each of them. Her plan is to attend the daily morning assembly as often as feasible and to visit classrooms.

“That’s how you get to know the students and how they get to know you," she said. “That’s highly important.”

Public relations via selling the school will also be a part of her administrative goal. Her goal is to eventually invite outsiders, such as business leaders, to Redemptorist so they can be a witness to the school’s progress.

“Build self-esteem, not just with the students but with teachers as well," she said. “We can be on the map and let (the public) know where we are and what we are doing.”

Domino, a Baton Rouge native, graduated from McKinley High School in 1974 after completing her junior year. She taught in the East Baton Rouge School System until accepting a job teaching fifth-grade math at St Francis in 1984.
Enriching the lives of Mercy students

Our Lady of Mercy School in Baton Rouge offers a unique approach to enrichment classes by allowing students to meet during the day in classrooms dedicated to art education. The commitment to the arts has created a community of young and developing musicians, vocalists and actors. More than half of the fifth- through eight-grade students have chosen to study either band, choir, art or theater.

Band director Duane LeBlanc says that art requires a growth mindset.

“Nobody picks up an instrument or a paintbrush and just does it. It requires work. In this ‘give it to me now’ world, the arts teach us that the ability to commit to something, to persevere and be dedicated can better oneself in the long term,” LeBlanc said.

Annually, Our Lady of Mercy’s enrichment programs presents concerts, art shows and theater productions showcasing the talents of these young budding artists. The band takes annual trips and has traveled to Orlando, Florida; Atlanta; San Antonio, Texas; and Memphis with a return trip to Orlando scheduled for 2020. The school choir has received the sweepstakes trophy at district choir festivals numerous times during the past decade and theater productions have included musicals and plays familiar to younger and more seasoned audiences. In 2018-19, the program increased to nearly 80 students.

The benefit of the program is that busy parents don’t have to drive their children to another location. The lessons are taught while the children are at school by high quality, degree-holding, professional musicians.

The program began with 30 students in the 2017-18 school year; in 2018-19 the program increased to nearly 80 students.

The quality of the program and the partnership is something parents might expect if they were living in a larger city like Houston or New York, but now have the opportunity to enrich their child’s education in Baton Rouge.

“While all studies show that music education improves academic performance, it also adds beauty and quality of life,” Iltcheva said. “When a child learns to play an instrument well, it gives them a strong sense of self and a confidence that pervades in all other aspects of their lives. This is not an easy task. Students who achieve a high level of knowledge and musical ability also gain a mature grasp of responsibility and an enviable work ethic.”

The success of Mercy’s art programs and the maturity of the work created by students is rooted in the fact that students are able to study their preferred discipline during the school day. When a Mercy student reaches middle school they are allowed to select the enrichment program of their choice to study for the entire year rather than rotating through the arts in a quarterly system.

Mercy is excited to offer enrichment classes throughout the day which allows for student participation in other extracurricular activities after school; therefore, creating well-rounded individuals.
Diocese of Baton Rouge
2019 – 2020 Catholic School
Instructional Leaders

Sandy Pizzolato
Ascension Catholic

Jason Chauvin
Catholic Elementary of Pointe Coupée

Lisa Harvey
Catholic High

Joe LeBlanc
Catholic High of Pointe Coupée

Claire Willis
Cristo Rey Baton Rouge Franciscan High

Alise Ashford
Holy Family

Donna Wallette
Holy Ghost

Cheryl Santangelo
Most Blessed Sacrament

Cheri Goe
Our Lady of Mercy

Chris Porche
Redemptorist St. Gerard

Cecilia Methvin
Sacred Heart of Jesus

Erin Candilora
St. Aloysius

Dr. Cindy Ryals
St. Alphonsus

Dr. Kathleen Herpich
St. Elizabeth

Paula Johnson
St. Francis Xavier

Jack Nelson
St. George

Wendy Ross
St. Jean Vianney

Cherie Schlatre
St. John Interparochial

Kim Naquin
St. John Primary

Danette Ragusa
St. Joseph

Stacia Andricain
St. Joseph’s Academy

Michelle Gardiner
St. Jude the Apostle

Ellen Lee
St. Michael the Archangel High

Paula Poche
St. Peter Chanel

Chris Musso
St. Theresa Middle

Charles (Pat) Sanguinetti
St. Thomas Aquinas High

Brian Moscona
St. Thomas More

Bethany Robicheaux
Blessed Margaret of Castello
REACH Program

The Gift of Leadership

Catholic Schools
A GIFT FOR LIFE
St. George educators gain insight at conference

What better way to teach educators how to equip students to be independent learners than in the nation’s capital?

St. George School in Baton Rouge teachers and other educators across the Diocese of Baton Rouge traveled to Washington, D.C., to attend the Model Schools Conference. This year’s theme was Act to Impact.

Teachers were able to learn from educational professionals and authors from across the nation who focused on the importance of implementing rigor and relevance, building relationships and maintaining a growth mindset.

Through break-out sessions focused on student-centered learning, teachers deepened their understanding of the Rigor and Relevance model and learned strategies to achieve higher order thinking. The experts provided resources, strategies and tools which they can bring back to their classrooms.

In other “How-to” sessions, they participated in a variety of interactive tasks and activities that modeled the strategies and tools that will engage students and help them take ownership of their learning. In other featured sessions, model schools showcased how these methods were used to transform schools in their own communities.

Along with student-centered learning, Social Emotional Learning (SEL) was a major topic. Professional learning consultants, such as Erica Battle, taught the importance of fostering relationships both among students and among students and teachers. She stressed that “no significant learning can occur without a significant relationship.”

These relationships along with practiced strategies and tools will create a learning environment for all students to achieve their goals.

In this environment, teachers must maintain and foster a growth mindset that allows students to practice perseverance in their learning. Teachers must be vulnerable in modeling their own perseverance in growth in order to maintain that their classroom is mistake tolerant.

Educators may also do this by giving growth-minded feedback to their students. With this freedom in learning, students will achieve confidence and ownership of their learning and be able to approach and conquer challenges both in the classroom and in their lives.

The significance of being in Washington was not lost on St. George teachers as they were learning how to help their students become more independent.

An additional highlight of their trip was for St. George teachers to meet Congressman Garrett Graves and be guided by Graves on a tour of the United States Capitol.

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St. Jean Vianney Catholic Schools
Sacred Heart of Jesus School readies for milestone year

The 2019-2020 school year will be a milestone for Sacred Heart of Jesus School in Baton Rouge as it welcomes a new administrative team, introduces a 1:1 technology initiative for third- through eighth-grade students and celebrates its 90th anniversary.

St. Catherine of Siena’s inspiring quote, “Be who God meant you to be and you’ll set the world on fire,” will serve as the theme and set the tone for the school year.

“This is the perfect theme for the upcoming school year,” said incoming principal Cecilia Methvin, “including the 90th anniversary celebration.”

Education has been a priority at Sacred Heart since the parish was established in 1928 and the school, which opened in 1929, has a long list of distinguished graduates. Founding pastor Msgr. Dominic Blasco insisted a new school be built before a new church and invited the Sisters of St. Joseph to run the school.

Second, third, and even fourth generation families are still being educated at Sacred Heart, with four alumni currently serving on the school advisory board.

While Sacred Heart has evolved through the years, the standards established by Msgr. Blasco and the Sisters of St. Joseph remain intact and will continue with the new administrative team of Methvin and assistant principal Langley McClay. Methvin previously served the school as assistant principal for three years and junior high science teacher for 17 years.

“It is such an honor to be the principal at Sacred Heart,” said Methvin. “This school has been an integral part of my life for over 20 years. I came here as a novice teacher and was quickly embraced by an amazing faculty and student body that became family. I was mentored by an incredible group of women, including four Sisters of St. Joseph, and grew as an educator as I gained confidence in the classroom. In addition to my own personal and professional growth here, my two children literally grew up here and are both alumni.”

McClay, currently completing coursework toward a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership and Research from LSU, comes to Sacred Heart from Catholic High in Baton Rouge where she taught English for five years. McCray’s interaction with the Sacred Heart students she taught at Catholic High only reinforced her desire to be a part of the unique Sacred Heart community.

“My husband Jordan (a Sacred Heart graduate) had such a positive experience here and the Sacred Heart boys that I taught at Catholic were always so well-mannered and conscientious,” said McClay.

“We’ve got an excellent group of educators preparing for the 2019-20 school year,” continued Langley, noting the return of two former faculty members and the addition of two former students to the staff. Former guidance counselor Anne Dardis and middle school social studies and religion teacher Michelle Heine bring 72 combined years of experience to the faculty. Dardis will be teaching sixth-grade English and literature and Heine will resume duties as middle school religion teacher.

Former student Andrew Stephens will serve as athletic director and Maggie Calandro, also a Sacred Heart graduate, will be a second-grade assistant. Another alumna, Amanda Moran, is a first-grade assistant.

“I’m very excited to join and begin working with the Sacred Heart of Jesus faculty and staff this school year,” said McClay. “Given the wide range of grade levels and skill sets from both new and veteran faculty, I plan to implement a one-on-one mentor teacher program, which will provide professional support and guidance to new teachers joining the Sacred Heart community.”

Faculty members in third through eighth grade are preparing for the 1:1 technology initiative being introduced. Students will be using Chromebooks purchased through grant funding and support through the Home & School Association auction and Sacred Heart Men’s Club. Middle school teacher and technology coordinator Kelly Broussard is working with teachers on integrating the devices into their classrooms.

Broussard will be assisted by junior high English and literature teacher Nicole Salassi. Third- through eighth-grade teachers are working on Google classroom certifications as well.

“We’re thrilled to be taking this step at Sacred Heart,” said Salassi. “All faculty received new laptops and classroom projectors last year, and the Chromebooks and tablets will complete the technology upgrades in upper elementary and middle school. Pre-kindergarten through second-grade teachers will continue to use iPads to enhance classroom instruction, along with interactive white boards.”

“It’s important to integrate technology into the classroom rather than making technology become the classroom,” said Broussard. “There is still the need for a variety of learning methods including individual work, group work and hands-on activities. Technology should enhance these learning methods and activities, not replace them.”

Ninety years have passed since Sacred Heart of Jesus School principal Cecilia Methvin, right, and assistant principal Langley McClay peruse old yearbooks in preparation for the school’s 90th anniversary celebration. Photo provided by Lisa Cosse | Sacred Heart School.
Each summer, St. Joseph’s Academy in Baton Rouge students are able to participate in a variety of mission trips. As an expression of the charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph, the SJA educational experience emphasizes the importance of relationships with those who are less fortunate.

The summer of 2019 saw SJA students immersed in volunteer work as they brought to life the charism theme which will guide the school community during the 2019-2020 school year: Great-Hearted Love: Serving the Dear Neighbor.

Beginning at the end of May and continuing through mid-July, SJA students answered the call to service in Klagetoh, Arizona; LaGrange Park, Illinois; San Isidro, Costa Rica; Santurce, Puerto Rico; Louisville, Kentucky; Houston and Dallas; New Orleans; and Baton Rouge.

Students served the local community through two separate, weeklong mission trips. Participants worked at a variety of venues, including St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store, the Knock Knock Children’s Museum and St. Lilian’s. They helped facilitate an art camp for differently abled children and spent time with children and their mothers from the St. Vincent de Paul homeless shelter.

Debra Blacher, director of Shelter and Residential Services at the St. Vincent de Paul, said the children of the shelter had a wonderful experience interacting with the SJA girls.

“They laughed and talked as if they were old friends,” she said. “Watching them playing together was heartwarming. Of course, when the day ended, they did not want to leave. One of children actually cried. Since then, several children have asked, ‘When are we going back?’”

Working with Father Michael Aletto, pastor at St. Thomas More Catholic Church in Baton Rouge, another group of students helped Red Cross install smoke detectors in homes, painted and did beautification projects at St. Francis Xavier Catholic School in Baton Rouge, helped paint homes that remain impacted by the 2016 flood and visited residents of several nursing homes.

Sophomore Lindsey Landry said the Blessings Mission Trip helped her grow in her faith as she worked to serve those in need.

“I felt like I got much closer to God,” she said. “Watching them playing together was heartwarming. Of course, when the day ended, they did not want to leave. One of children actually cried. Since then, several children have asked, ‘When are we going back?’”

Senior Mary Catherine Daniels said she particularly enjoyed getting to know the children she worked with.

“While they were shy at first, it didn’t take long before they were asking us all for piggyback rides and playing little pranks on us,” she said. “What I found to be most memorable was how easily the community welcomed us. Without hesitation, they invited us to join in (and lose to them) in their nightly volleyball games, run alongside them in their community 5K and experience their unique culture. This openness allowed us to have such a great connection to the Klagetoh community and to build true relationships with those we served.”

A group of students volunteered their time at the Costa Rica Mission Project camp in the mountains of San Isidro. They enjoyed playing and dancing with the children at the daycare center; painting, cleaning and hanging sheetrock at Iglesia Evangelica Metodista Peniel; prayer services; and reflection time each evening.

Senior parish vercher said she especially enjoyed the sense of community she experienced.

“Everyone left their doors and windows open because of no air conditioning, so it was almost like people were free to walk past and have conversations with anyone and everyone they saw,” she said. “No barriers disconnected these people from one another as shown through their simple lives, and I loved seeing how that fellowship positively impacted their community.”

SJA students partnered with students from sister school St. Joseph Academy in Cleveland, Ohio, for a mission-trip experience in New Orleans. The group served at Love in Action Outreach, a New Orleans food bank; ArcGNO, a Mardi Gras bead recycling center; and Akili Academy, an elementary school located in the Upper 9th Ward.

Among the service work done this summer by SJA students was painting several Houston-area homes impacted by Hurricane Harvey. Photo provided by Mindy Averti (St. Joseph’s Academy)

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Most Blessed Sacrament shining the light of Christ for 40 Years

Most Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church was organized as a parish of the Diocese of Baton Rouge in 1979, with founding pastor Msgr. Lester Lacassagne laying the cornerstone in December of that year. As part of the parish, Most Blessed Sacrament School was also established to provide Catholic education for children in grades kindergarten through eighth grade.

Currently, MBS is a youthful, growing parish with more than 2,800 families and approximately 9,000 parishioners. MBS provides more than 30 ministries and organizations that provide spiritual, social and material outreach to MBS parishioners and the community.

This year, Most Blessed Sacrament will celebrate its 40th anniversary. The theme for this year is “Let Your Light Shine – Sharing the Light of Christ for 40 years!” As part of this year-long celebration, the parish will be called to be “light makers” for the church and greater Baton Rouge community.

A celebration honoring the rich history of the MBS community will be led by the school children when we celebrate the feast day of MBS, the feast of Corpus Christi. Though the official feast of Corpus Christi is in June, the school celebrates this special day in September.

Also planned for this year is a dedication of our courtyard and Stations of the Cross, a special service project, and a $40 for 40 giving campaign.

The school and parish are excited to celebrate 40 years and looking forward to the 40 that lie ahead.

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STM Eagles soar in high school

Five graduates of St. Thomas More School in Baton Rouge continued to soar after their elementary school years, earning valedictorian or salutatorian honors at their respective Catholic high schools.

“We congratulate these STM alumni for achieving such tremendous success,” said St. Thomas More principal Brian Moscona. “I am excited to see what the Lord does in and with their lives in the future as they strive to reach their potential in college and beyond. The STM community is extremely proud of them already, and we will be praying for them as they continue their educational journeys.”

The five STM grads are:

Grant Alumbaugh, salutatorian at Catholic High School in Baton Rouge. Alumbaugh will attend the University of Alabama to study aerospace engineering. In addition to earning National Merit Finalist honors, he also scored a perfect 36 on the ACT. According to Alumbaugh, “My STM math classes, Math Club, Math Counts, the research paper we wrote in eighth grade, and my fellow STM eighth-grade graduates who attended Catholic High were among the reasons for my continued success in high school.”

Madison Boudreaux, co-valedictorian at St. Thomas More High School in Baton Rouge. Boudreaux will study psychology in a pre-medicine program at the University of Alabama. At SJA, she was an AP scholar, graduated with highest grades in her four years of French, participated in a special research program at LSU and attended several mission trips. “My honors classes at STM really prepared me well for the rigor of high school courses, and the sense of faith community I established at St. Thomas More encouraged me to look for similar experiences in a larger school at SJA,” Boudreaux said.

Anna Crifasi, co-valedictorian at St. Michael the Archangel High School in Baton Rouge. Crifasi will attend LSU. She was recognized in high school with the rare combination of Best in Mathematics and Best in Fine Arts (Crifasi played saxophone in the band). “I had great teachers at St. Thomas More who challenged me to think and to go beyond simple memorization of facts and details. That prepared me for successful academic course work at St. Michael,” according to Crifasi.

Anna LeJeune, co-valedictorian at St. Joseph’s Academy at SJA. LeJeune will study biomedical engineering at Tulane University. She was a National Merit Finalist and enjoyed her participation in Youth Legislature, Model U.N. and science fairs. Anna noted, “My writing experiences at STM and my participation in Math Counts provided me with a great foundation for my courses at SJA,” LeJeune said.

Judy Vu, co-valedictorian at St. Michael. Vu will attend LSU to major in pre-medicine and minor in music. During her high school years, she was selected as St. Michael’s Student of the Year, won district rally first place awards twice for piano, and she was a piano concerto competition winner that allowed her to play with the Louisiana Youth Orchestra. “The rigorous academic program, particularly the honors courses, at STM prepared me well for success in high school and encouraged me to push myself to work harder,” Vu said.

“We are so proud of these five alumni for their amazing work in high school. We are honored to have been part of their educational journey, laying a strong foundation for lifelong learning in partnership with their families. Their hard work and determination have certainly paid off,” STM vice principal Ashley McDaniel said.
Holy Ghost School strives to educate the whole child

Students at Holy Ghost Catholic School in Hammond will be welcomed back on Aug. 7 for another school year of loving, learning, and living in Christ.

Living through their school’s motto, students are focused on: God – first; Family – second; and All else – third.

Teachers strive daily to fill the students’ days in each capacity. Beginning with prayer in morning assembly, to Catholic traditional activities and service projects, students are aware of our ever-present Lord.

Engaging parents as an integral part of their child’s education through Masses, field trips and special occasions reminds students that we are all in this together.

Offering an abundance of enrichment programs, along with a curriculum filled with rigor and relevance, the school keeps a strong educational influence while touting the talents that each child possesses. From PreK-2 through eighth grade, Holy Ghost provides a way to educate the whole child, keeping in mind that each student is a gift from God.

Catholic schools foster self-discipline, says study

WASHINGTON (CNS) – A new study conducted by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute found that children in Catholic schools are less disruptive and have more self-control than their peers in non-Catholic or public schools.

The authors of the study said they believe that examining students’ self-discipline is particularly important in light of the ongoing debate about externally imposed discipline, such as detention and suspension, and methods of punishment used in public schools.

“Clearly, an approach that fosters self-discipline is preferable to one that relies on externally imposed discipline. So if Catholic schools have succeeded in developing such an approach, we ought to pay more attention to what they are doing and how they are doing it,” said the report.

A lack of research into this aspect of Catholic schooling also motivated the authors of the study. Many studies have been conducted to investigate the academic effects of Catholic schools – according to the report, their general conclusion is that “students in Catholic schools achieve at higher levels” – but little research has been done into other aspects of student development at Catholic schools.

Since Catholic schools generally try to both educate their stu-
Learn, Invent, Observe, Navigate, Synthesize

In order to meet the ever-increasing expectations of a 21st century learning environment, St. Aloysius School in Baton Rouge announced plans to expand the science lab into a LIONS’ STREAM LAB. The new lab will be housed in a renovated space that currently houses a computer lab and the media center.

After 18 months of research sparked by the increasing demand from teachers requesting to use the current science lab, the administration and science lab facilitator, Carolyn Murphy, have reimagined the space to better fit the needs of our school community.

A donation and grant funding enabled the purchase of additional laptops, iPads and other technology related equipment enabling the technology to be brought into the classroom rather than isolated to the computer lab. Teachers in grades sixth through eighth will have access to check out laptops and iPads for their entire class of students and utilize them in their classrooms.

After receiving the blessing of pastor Father Randy Cuevas and the parish finance committee, Ritter Maher Architects was enlisted to help redesign the current space into an innovative area that will house a maker space and a science lab. The new LIONS’ LAB utilizing the idea of STREAM fosters the school’s mission, “Educating the whole child in the Catholic tradition for a life of meaning and purpose.”

This new area will allow students to work on collaborative and innovative projects to prepare them for careers in science, technology, engineering, art and math with faith and religion at the heart of it all. It will consist of two spaces that can be used independently or in combination to provide a variety of hands-on learning opportunities for all of the students.

The science lab side of the space will contain lab tables and science equipment where students can explore scientific concepts and carry out lab experiments. The design lab side will be a creative space with flexible seating to foster creativity and allow students to work collaboratively. In addition to this “think space,” the design lab will also have computers, tools and materials for students to design, build and evaluate projects.

Because students drive the learning in the STREAM lab, Murphy will serve as the facilitator, not the teacher, in this space. Students in all grades and all subject areas will be able to use this space for hands-on learning.
St. Michael renovates band room into IDEA Lab

St. Michael High School in Baton Rouge will open a new innovation, design, experience and application classroom for the 2019-20 school year. This new addition provides an exciting new space for teachers and students to expand their learning in an environment designed for hands-on work in all curriculum areas.

The concept brings together STEM, Makerspace, virtual and augmented reality, as well as design and innovation. Students will have an opportunity to explore and work in the lab during their lunch periods, as well as class periods when teachers bring students in as a group. Teachers will also have an opportunity to learn through professional development sessions held throughout the year.

SMHS technology coordinator Abby Tate is looking forward to this new addition. “I am excited to have the opportunity to work with students again,” she said. “I was in the classroom for 12 years and moved into my current position as technology integration specialist when St. Michael began a 1:1 program.”

For the past six years Tate has worked with teachers weekly conducting professional development sessions on a variety of technology topics. While she will continue working with teachers, students will now be involved.

“I am excited to work with our students once again and help them transform their learning through new experiences. It’s a great opportunity for students and teachers to learn together,” she said.

Upon completion of the new multipurpose building, the St. Michael band program will move into a new classroom space, freeing up the previous area it has been using since 2000. The IDEA Lab will be built in the once occupied band room, creating a large multifunctional space for students and teachers. The room will be equipped with 3D printers, robots used for coding projects, work stations for hands-on STEM and design challenges, and virtual reality headsets.

SMHS band director Kevin “Doc” Andry now has access to a new state-of-the-art band room. His new space includes soundproof practice rooms, a surround sound system and recording equipment, plus a large updated storage space.

As growth continues, these new additions give way to learning opportunities for both teachers and students that not only expand curriculum, but also build excitement for the future of St. Michael.
St. Theresa’s robotics team competes in Lego League Robotics

During the 2018-2019 school year the St. Theresa Middle School in Gonzales senior robotics team competed in the First Lego League (FLL) Robotics Competition in Carlsbad, California.

The competition was divided into three areas: Robot Design, Core Values and a project component. Teams were given a real world topic and were asked to develop a clear problem and solution as support.

The teams were judged on their problem, solution and how well they worked together to solve problems, plan and execute ideas. The senior robotics team members earned the right to attend as alternates by meeting all the qualifiers at the Southern Regional Lego League competition in New Orleans this past spring.

This is the first time in the history of St. John Primary/St. Theresa Middle that a robotics team had been considered for international competition.

Upon learning of their qualification, the team held two fundraisers and received multiple donations from businesses and families.

During the competition, the students were urged to use core values such as working together, being respectful and not talking over one another. The team met other students from Australia, Japan, and Mexico.

They finished 20th out of the 68 teams in the robot challenge. The senior Robotics team is excited to use the feedback they received and apply their new knowledge to the upcoming school year.

LESSONS ▼

from page 12B

Students on an intellectual level and try to form their students so that they will be pious, disciplined, and have good character, the authors of the study believe that understanding the effects and possible benefits of a Catholic education requires understanding both the intellectual education and personal formation Catholic schools set out to provide.

The study drew three conclusions:

- Students in Catholic schools are less likely to be disruptive than those in other private schools or public schools.
- Students in Catholic schools exhibit more self-control than those in other private schools or public schools. “Specifically, they were more likely to control their temper, respect others’ property, accept their fellow students’ ideas and handle peer pressure,” it said.
- Students in Catholic schools exhibit more self-discipline than those in other public schools. “There is at least some evidence that attending Catholic school may benefit all sorts of children,” it said.

In many cases the gap between the frequencies with which students at Catholic schools and students at other schools either behaved well or avoided behaving poorly increased over time, hinting that the continued focus and value Catholic schools place on self-discipline continually reinforces its importance and helps foster it in students.

The report also concludes that, if the findings reflect a “Catholic schools effect” of some kind, non-Catholic schools would benefit from placing explicit value on self-discipline, as Catholic schools do, and implicitly trying to promote it.

The authors also speculate that Catholic schools benefit from the power of religion to affect people’s behavior, although they admit that the exact means by which this happens is unclear.

They added, “We should not underestimate the power of religion to positively influence a child’s behavior – and shouldn’t restrict families’ choices on the basis of religion.”

St. Theresa Middle School in Gonzales senior robotics team. Photo provided by St. Theresa Middle School

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Schools look ahead with innovation but also focus on tradition

WASHINGTON (CNS) — If anyone could rest on their laurels, it's Catholic schools for all they have accomplished in their U.S. history, educating in the faith and teaching children of all backgrounds in cities and rural areas across the country.

Acknowledging these past achievements alone might not be enough to propel these schools into the future, but it's an important first step because it recognizes the need to tap into — and promote and market — the spirit of the early Catholic schools and their founders and to adapt that creativity and innovation to today's world.

“The future of Catholic education: It’s bright. It’s bright as long as our Catholic educators, our church, our leaders, have an open mind” and make sure what they do, how they teach and interact with young people is relevant, said Barbara McGraw Edmondson, chief leadership and program officer at the National Catholic Educational Association.

She said it’s also crucial for Catholic schools' future that educators and church leaders understand and not shy away from the culture young people live in today. “We need to step right in ... and show them the way to navigate a very complex world,” she added.

Edmondson said school leaders want Catholic schools to be what Pope Francis has asked of the church: to be “disciple-making places.” And she hoped they would evangelize in such a way that Catholics and non-Catholics would say: “I want that for my child. I want to be part of that community because I feel a goodness about it.”

No doubt that was part of the intention of the early Catholic schools, to educate, but also educate in the faith, in mission territories and then in cities after the huge influx of Catholic immigrants in the late 19th century.

Catholic schools had plenty of support too. The First Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1852 specifically urged every Catholic parish in the country to establish its own school and these schools, primarily led by women religious, flourished. By 1920, there were 6,551 Catholic elementary schools teaching 1.8 million students and by the mid-1960s — the height of Catholic school enrollment — 4.5 million students attended more than 13,000 schools.

The NCEA figures for 2017-2018 show Catholic school enrollment at 1.8 million students in 6,352 Catholic schools.

In 2017-2018, 16 new schools opened and 110 consolidated or closed, but those that closed include some that consolidated and re-opened as new entities. NCEA breaks down the closures to a net loss of 66 elementary schools and 11 secondary schools. The report also notes that 1,872 schools have a waiting list for admission.

“The trend line does not look good, but recently it’s balanced out,” said Peter Litchka, associate education professor and director of the educational leadership program at Loyola University Maryland.

He noted the shift in demographics in recent years, causing Catholic schools to close as families have moved out of cities. But he also pointed out, as many have said before, that at the height of Catholic school enrollment, it didn’t cost as much to attend these schools, because faculty and staff members were often women religious who worked for low salaries.

“Now, most, if not all, are lay teachers,” he said, noting that tuition reflects current wages and health benefits.

And that, for many, is the bottom line because for many families, it’s just too expensive to send their children to Catholic school.

Litchka told Catholic News Service that most Catholic schools now have enrollment managers who help families tap into available resources to help with tuition.

He also said schools are focusing on promoting what they do day in and day out - being Catholic which is a drawing point regardless of where people are from and can attract new students.

In response to rising costs, Catholic school leaders emphasize that 20 states and the District of Columbia have some sort of school scholarship program in place — meaning vouchers, tax credits or education savings accounts.

In addition to looking to cut costs, schools are also looking to promote themselves better and to focus on their foundational roots.

Edmondson said every year during the NCEA convention, speakers emphasize: “We stand on shoulders of giants,” referring to the women religious who founded so many Catholic schools.

“And we really do,” she added, noting that it’s crucial for schools to keep the orders’ charisms alive, something many schools are working hard to do from stressing the school’s history to including those from the order, even aging religious, in school-sponsored events.

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Preserving Catholic schools' charism ‘has to be intentional’

OLDENBURG, Ind. (CNS) — Although women religious once synonymous with Catholic education have been disappearing from U.S. classrooms in recent decades, many Catholic schools are taking extra steps to make sure that even as these sisters age or their numbers decrease, the charisms that infused the schools they founded will not be lost.

This was the challenge faced by the Oldenburg Academy of the Immaculate Conception in Oldenburg, Indiana. The school, founded by the Sisters of St. Francis of Oldenburg in 1852, came under laity supervision in 1994 and no longer has any women religious on staff.

Yet their spirit still lives within the walls they established 166 years ago.

“The Franciscan values have helped me to understand my role in this world,” said outgoing senior Rachel Stoll, one of the 200 plus students at the academy. She readily reeled off three of the values held dear to the Oldenburg Franciscans: care of creation, prayer and dignity of the human person.

“Of the unique values that the religious men and women brought to their Catholic schools was a distinct charism in addition to their catechetical formation,” said John Schoenig, senior director of trustee retreats, said Liz Currans, senior director of Ursuline Spirit Initiatives. Hers is a full-time staff position entirely dedicated to preserving the school’s charism. A small on-site museum contains the history and some memorabilia of the Ursuline Sisters of Cincinnati as well as the story of the order’s founder, Italian St. Angela Merici. The school’s motto is that each student will be a “thinker, leader, nurturer and prophet” just like the saint.

The order’s founder challenged herself to be the best she could be; she definitely committed to building a better world,” explained St. Ursula Academy president and alumna Lelia Keefe Kramer.

“St. Angela’s life is very relevant to what we’re asking of the girls today,” Kramer told Catholic News Service.

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The schools of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, admit students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at its schools. They do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school administered programs.

Additionally, in compliance with Title IX of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, no person in the schools of the Diocese shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, or be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity except as permitted under said Title IX.

Finally, the schools of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, have adopted and will implement the imperatives of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act as amended, and will inform parents and students of their rights under this amendment to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The above stated policy applies to the following schools and institutions of the Diocese:
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Catholic Elementary of Pointe Coupee
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St. Joseph’s Academy
St. Jude the Apostle School
St. Michael the Archangel Diocesan Regional High School
St. Peter Chanel Interparochial School
St. Thomas Aquinas Diocesan Regional High School
St. Thomas More School

Superintendent
WASHINGTON (CNS) — At many Catholic schools, social justice might not be an assigned class, but it is part of the fabric of what they do throughout the school year from helping those in need to speaking up on social issues.

And in the past few years during various protests around the country, Catholic school students have raised their voices or called attention to issues of racism, gun violence, care for refugees or the unborn.

In 2018, after the school shooting Feb. 14 at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, several Catholic schools across the country sponsored awareness programs for students or provided time for prayer, reflection and action to curb gun violence during the nationwide student-sponsored event called National School Walkout. And weeks after that, Catholic school students also participated in the March for Our Lives event protesting gun violence in Washington and other locations.

Mercy High School in San Francisco observed 17 minutes of silence a month after the Florida school shooting and the student body president, Mogan Hildula, said she was confident her generation could make a difference to stop the violence.

“Despite urgent cries spanning the nation, our schools and greater communities continue to be threatened by senseless and preventable gun violence,” she said, adding that she views what is happening as a call to action.

“I believe our generation will be the ones to actually effect change in our nation’s policies regarding firearms, and I can’t wait to see what we can accomplish,” she said.

For some Catholic school students, the lack of action on the part of the nation’s leaders has been distressing.

“Gun violence is unnecessary and can be prevented,” said Sydneey Meyer, a senior at Assumption High School in Louisville, Kentucky. “The fact that we haven’t acted on it is ridiculous.”

Meyer and 30 of her schoolmates spent 32 hours traveling, marching and rallying for gun control with hundreds of thousands of others who gathered in Washington for the March for Our Lives, which called for stricter gun control, including a ban on assault weapons and universal background checks.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious also have called for these measures. Students from Assumption said they have felt supported by the Sisters of Mercy, who sponsor their school.

Although Catholic school students spoke out en masse this year against gun violence, they typically participate each year in the March for Life in January in Washington or in Los Angeles, Atlanta, San Francisco, Las Vegas, Chicago and Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Catholic school students also frequently embark on international and domestic service work, often squeezing service projects in during spring break or in the summer.

Catholic educators find mission work to be essential in hands-on lessons for students in Catholic social teaching and these trips take them to Africa, Haiti, Central America and other parts of the world where they help the poor and vulnerable.

Some mission trips don’t require passports, since participants simply cross state lines. Last summer, for example, about 30 teenagers from St. Pius X Parish in Broomall, Pennsylvania, grew food for the needy in the gardens at Annunciation School in Columbus and St. Anthony School in Madison.

Even though the students learned about agriculture and responsible environmental stewardship, they were also absorbing Catholic values, said Tricia Holder, a teacher at St. Anthony.

She said she thought the gardens “would be a great project to undertake during Lent for students to show love for others.”

Barbara McGraw Edmondson, chief leadership and program officer at the National Catholic Educational Association, describes Catholic social teaching as the “hallmark of Catholic education.”

She said students are often so willing to do service but they need to know the “why of what they do” and recognize the divine in who they serve.

She said parents of Catholic school students want their children to do well academically in order to be successful, but from her own experience she said a more important trait of Catholic school students is that when they see someone in need or something that isn’t right, “they have the conviction and the courage not just to speak out but to do something.”

— Tricia Holder
Catholic schools get creative in how they use, fund technology

PORTLAND, Ore. (CNS) – When Rosali Patterson picks up the blue, plastic prosthetic hand that she and some fellow students made at St. John Fisher Catholic School in Portland, the rising eighth-grader marvels at what this object will mean for some underprivileged child one day.

“Some kid is going to use this to pick something up,” Patterson said as she gazed at the outstretched fingers of the prosthetic. “This could really change someone’s life. It’s a hand they didn’t have before.”

Patterson and her classmates joined an after-school program at the school last year where they used a 3-D printer to create prosthetics for children whose families cannot afford to provide them with an artificial limb.

The school’s librarian, Sundi Pierce, and principal, Merrit Holub, joined forces with E-NABLE, a global network of volunteers who use their 3-D printers and design skills to create free prosthetic hands for people in need. The students use a computer program to design the hands and then print out the parts using the school’s 3-D printer, Pierce told Catholic News Service.

Then, the students painstakingly assemble the hands, making them fully functional for someone’s use, Pierce said.

“I guess you could say we are using technology to help provide our students with important lessons in Catholic social teaching,” she said.

State-of-the-art technology has given students tremendous academic tools but it isn’t cheap and Catholic schools have had to be creative in raising money to get their schools up to speed with modern equipment.

Barbara McGraw Edmondson, chief leadership and program officer at the National Catholic Educational Association, said many Catholic schools serving underserved populations can qualify for federal funding for some technology and well-resourced schools can more easily afford it. “It is our middle-class schools that suffer most,” she said, noting that they are “doing creative fund-raising” to generate funds.

She noted that technology has revolutionized how classrooms operate. They no longer learn about a country in a textbook, for example, but instead can talk to students in other parts of the world from their classroom.

In order to fund items like Chromebooks, iPads, 3-D printers and fiber optic cables, the Archdiocese of Omaha, Nebraska, implemented a multiyear, archdiocesan capital campaign titled “Ignite the Faith” six years ago.

Established in 2013, the drive has $33 million in pledges, surpassing its $40 million goal, and it continues to distribute funds. More than half of the money raised is going to the archdiocese’s 70 elementary and high schools in grants, teacher scholarships, targeted aid to rural and urban schools, and marketing.

And about $3 million in grants already has gone into technology in schools, said Shannan Brommer, director of the Office of Stewardship and Development.

That has included students using technology in religion class at St. Bernardette School in Bellevue, Nebraska. In one project, students helped the parish’s religious education program fill boxes with gifts for needy children around the world. Then, they watched an online video of children receiving and opening the project’s boxes on Apple TVs and projectors provided by the campaign’s funds.

“It made it a little more real for them to see kids who were far away and didn’t have as much as they do” open gifts that provided things they need and toys they could enjoy, said Lynn Schultz, principal at St. Bernardette.

Even indirectly, the campaign’s funds have helped with technology needs.

Holy Family High School in Lindsay, Nebraska, has a Chromebook for every seventh- through 12th-grader at the school, thanks in part to a new fiber-optic cable that makes it possible to have many hookups to the internet, said Andy Bishop, principal of the school.

Michael Rockers, superintendent of Hawaii Catholic Schools, said local Catholic schools use technology differently depending on students’ ages.

In elementary schools it is used to “enrich learning, help students master basic skills and provide individualized learning through a diagnostic-prescriptive learning approach.” In high school, technology use is meant to “support academic achievement and the growth in life skills, career skills and skills related to life-long learning.”

He also noted that Catholic high schools are educating students on “important issues related to our technology-based society and the call as
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SHJ ▼
From page 88

since Sacred Heart of Jesus School first opened its doors, and many pastors, administrators, faculty and students have walked its halls. But one thing remains constant: Sacred Heart of Jesus School continues to provide a unique and nurturing learning environment for all students.

“We know our students and our families so well. When we look at a Sacred Heart student, we see the whole child, we see the siblings, we see the parents,” said Methvin, “and that is a blessing and gift to all of us.”

The school anticipates hundreds of graduates will celebrate the school and the important role it has played in their lives at a celebration Mass on Sunday, November 3, 11 a.m., at the church. A reception and school tours will follow the Mass.

Alumni and friends are encouraged to “like” the school’s Facebook page (facebook.com/sacredheartschoolbatonrouge) and join the 90th anniversary group (Sacred Heart of Jesus School 90th Anniversary) to stay informed of anniversary activities and share their special memories of Sacred Heart.

SJA ▼
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Junior Celia Dooley said the group’s work at all three venues was eye-opening and helped her realize how fortunate she and her classmates are. She said the time spent with her Cleveland counterparts was memorable.

Another group joined students from SJA-Cleveland as well as Nazareth Academy, a Congregation of St. Joseph school in LaGrange Park, Illinois, for the annual CSJ/SSJ Student Leadership Conference.

A group of students and recent graduates spent a week in San Juan, Puerto Rico, helping run a summer camp at Colegio María Auxiliadora (CMA) in Santurce, an elementary school operated by the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. The school, which serves an under-resourced community, hosts the summer camp for pre-K through sixth graders each year. SJA has partnered with CMA every summer since 2015.

Another group teamed with students from SJA-Cleveland to serve marginalized members of the Louisville, Kentucky, community. The students spent their time at a number of service venues and also visited Healing Place for Women, an addiction treatment facility; Louisville’s Catholic Worker House, soup kitchens around the city and the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth.

Senior Autumn Leon said she was moved by the opportunity to walk in the footsteps of those she served. She especially enjoyed teaching English-as-a-Second-Language classes to adult refugees at Catholic Charities.

“Whenever they pronounced something correctly, it really warmed my heart,” she said. “It amazed me how hardworking they were and how much work they put into everything. They wanted to be here, and they wanted to learn. It was so moving for me to be a steppingstone in these people’s lives in their process of making it in this new world.”

In Houston, students participated in the SHINE Catholic Work Camp, helping to provide relief to residents still impacted by Hurricane Harvey. Their service work entailed repainting the exteriors of three homes.

TECHNOLOGY ▼
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Christians to exhibit ethical behavior while using their cell phones and other technologies.”

Some schools are also using technology for academic competition.

Third-grade students at St. Elizabeth School in Pittsburgh recently placed 10th worldwide in the World Maths Day competition.

St. Elizabeth principal Linda Bechtol credited the students’ impressive finish with online math testing and a program called “Reflex Math” on Google Chromebook computers at school.

The students are not only learning math skills but also honing these skills in online competitions in school, nationwide or even around the world. For example, the third-graders played against students in Canada, Turkey, the United Kingdom, Mexico, Egypt, Germany, Australia and the Dominican Republic.

Some Catholic schools use technology to zero in on a specialty subject, like Mater Dei Catholic High School in Chula Vista, California, which has a program called the Mater Dei Academy of Science.

“Science is a big deal here,” said Suzanne Till, director of the program, who said more than a quarter of the student body participates and that “science kids here are treated the same way other schools treat their star athletes.”

When Till was hired in 2012, the program had 30 students. Today, it has 220 and is climbing. Participating students don’t just learn from textbooks and labs but also from projects outside the classroom.

“Students study biomedical science, environmental chemistry, big data science, nanotechnology and other disciplines by working with our partners in San Diego’s STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) community and experiencing science in action,” Till said.

She said she likes to remind students “they could be the generation that explores Mars, so they need to be physically ready to handle the rigors of space travel.”