OPEN WIDE YOUR HEARTS

Listening session on racism
‘first step’ to healing

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Catherine Moore vividly remembers the first Mass she attended in an all-white church.

A native of Bertrandville who was raised at St. Benedict the Moor Church, Moore admitted she was a bit reluctant when she initially walked over one of the concrete walls when they were forced to attend an all-white parish before St. Benedict, the oldest African-American church in the Diocese of Baton Rouge, opened in 1911.

“They might not be changing fast enough because that’s a lot of years we are talking about,” Moore was one of nearly a dozen people who shared their experiences of racism in the church during a listening session on the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Pastoral Letter Against Racism. The letter, titled “Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call To Love, A Pastoral Letter Against Racism,” was approved by the USCCB in November 2018. The listening session, presented by the Office of Black Catholics, attracted an estimated 150 people of many ethnicities to the Catholic Life Center on June 29 at the Catholic Life Center in Baton Rouge. Photos by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

"Times, they are a changing,” said Moore, who also recalls hearing stories from older ancestors about being spit upon, targets of vile comments or having their heads knocked against a concrete wall when they were forced to attend an all-white parish before St. Benedict, the oldest African-American church in the Diocese of Baton Rouge, opened in 1911.

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Moore was one of nearly a dozen people who shared their experiences of racism in the church during a listening session on the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Pastoral Letter Against Racism. The letter, titled “Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call To Love, A Pastoral Letter Against Racism,” was approved by the USCCB in November 2018. The listening session, presented by the Office of Black Catholics, attracted an estimated 150 people of many ethnicities to the Catholic Life Center on June 29. Bishop Shelton J. Fabre, a New Roads native and chairman of the USCCB Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism, delivered a thoughtful perspective on the pastoral letter he helped co-author. Bishop Michael G. Duca delivered opening and closing remarks, as well as the opening and closing prayers.

“Today we are going to do the most difficult thing there is: listen,” Bishop Duca said. “Unity in the neighborhood will happen if just one person goes next.”

Fostering hope

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

In an all too familiar scene, foster parents may only get a moment’s notice they will be receiving a foster child, who when they arrive may be traumatized from neglect or abuse. Foster parents and children often need support materially, emotionally or spiritually.

The Foster Village was the dream of Amy LaJeune, foster mom, and Shayna Landry, kinship foster parent and adoptive mom. They saw the great need in Region 3 of Louisiana, which includes Livingston Civil Parish and at present has the largest number of children in foster care within the state.

They were going through similar life experiences so they talked on the phone and brainstormed on how they could establish a one-stop for foster families to receive assistance they need.

Landry posted on Facebook they were looking for a storage space where they could collect and distribute items that families to receive assistance they need.

Volunteers accompanied by family members sort through items to distribute at the Foster Village in Walker. Photo provided by Shayna Landry

Commentator takes top honors

The Catholic Commentator won 10 awards in Division 5 in the Louisiana Press Association 2019 Better Newspaper contest, including first place in General Excellence for the July 6, 2018 edition.

Overall, the Commentator won six first place awards and two second and third place awards.

“I could not be more proud of our staff,” editor Richard Meek said. “All of the awards are amazing, but the one that stands out for me is the General Excellence award.

“To win such a prestigious honor is a real honor.”
St. Bridget

As debates over the role of women in the Catholic Church continue, St. Bridget of Sweden, as Pope Benedict XVI said, is "one of those women who, despite having lived several centuries ago, still has much to teach the Church and the world."

St. Bridget, whose feast day is July 23, came from Uppland, Sweden. She obeyed the wishes of her pious parents, who were known for helping people, and married a Swedish prince at 14. They had a happy marriage and raised eight children, including the virgin St. Catherine of Sweden.

St. Bridget and her husband followed her parent’s example of caring for people in need, and it is said that St. Bridget arranged to have a hospital built on their estate that was open to all.

After her husband died, St. Bridget gave up her rights as princess and pursued a life of prayer, penance and charitable works. She wrote about her mystical graces and founded the Order of the Most Holy Savior, or Bridgittines, for both men and women. St. Bridget was not afraid to take him who had hurt him. He replied, "My love for them." She obeyed the wishes of her forefathers of the church were struck by her holiness. Right before the Great Year of Jubilee in 2000, St. John Paul II named St. Bridget the co-patroness of Europe. She shares the patronage with St. Catherine of Siena and St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross.

Many are also intrigued with Jesus’ divine revelations to St. Bridget. At the age of seven she saw an image of a wounded Christ. These visions increased after the death of her husband and they were never in the same style nor did they have the same message. Standing in front of a crucifix inside the Church of St. Paul while on a trip to Rome, she had a vision of Christ. In this divine revelation, Jesus asked her to pray 15 specific prayers per day for a year in honor of the 5,840 wounds he received during this Passion. During one of the visions, she asked him who had hurt him. He replied, "Those who despise me and refuse my love for them."

The opportunity to listen to God is ever-present in prayer. This is key to embracing the "tranquility of order" of Jesus. Moses reminds the Israelites, "it is something very near to you, already in your mouths and in your hearts; you have only to carry it out" (Dt 30:14). God places in all the desire to know truth, to know him. Therefore, as we turn to his will and send the 72 in pairs to proclaim the good news, so also we witness the same. We take nothing but what has already been given to us through grace and faith. We trust that God will provide all we need. We surrender to his will. Will everyone listen? Probably not.

Yet, those who do, we offer them the peace of Christ.

What must I do?

We have the blessing of hearing the story of the Good Samaritan on the 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time. The parable begins with the question from a lawyer, "What must I do to have eternal life?" (Lk 10:25). This question holds infinite realities for all. First, it is good to acknowledge the fact that heaven exists. "Heaven is the ultimate end and fulfillment of the deepest human longings, the state of supreme, definitive happiness" (Catechism of the Catholic Church 260, 326; 2794, 1718).

Secondly, what do I need to do to get to heaven? Jesus, the ultimate teacher, answers with a question, (paraphrasing) "What have you been taught by the law?" Out pours from the young lawyer the summary of the law given to Moses, rooted in natural law. With our whole being, we love God and neighbor. Jesus acknowledges this as truth. Yet, the youth pursues and asks, "Who is my neighbor?" (Lk 10:29).

Knowing our neighbor

Is our neighbor limited to those who exclusively live next door to our home? Who is your neighbor? Some know their neighbor, while others simply pass and wave. Some stand in the checkout lane and talk to others, while some simply stay in the lane. Some acknowledge this is true.

With all your heart

By Dina Dow

The joy of Ordinary Time continues as we celebrate the 14th and 15th Sundays. The Gospel Acclamation grasps the themes for both liturgies, "Let the peace of Christ control your hearts; let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Col 3:15-16).

Control the heart

What controls your heart? Uniquely, our bodily heart contains a natural pacemaker, which controls the sparks of wave-like impulses causing contraction resulting in a heart rate and life-giving movement of blood. St. Paul suggests allowing the "peace of Christ to control our hearts" (Col 3:15). This "cardiac" theology gives analogy to our lives. Most think of the heart as a source of emotion. Certain aspects verify such a statement. Yet, as the peace of Christ controls the heart we are open to what St. Augustine deems "tranquility of order" (City of God, Book 19, Chapter 23), this being the cause of rest among humanity. When have I been a cause of rest or peace for another? How does this peace come to me?

Cry out with joy

Isaiah and Moses respectively express the fullness of joy in the Lord. Each reiterate God’s commanded provisions including comfort, safe passage, care, healing, mercy, compassion and peace. Even the psalmist exclaims, "We cry out to God with joy, and turn to him with all our needs" (Ps 66, 69).

We place all of our needs prayerfully before the Lord in humility and trust. Further, St. Paul says to "only boast in the cross of Jesus Christ," (Gal 6:14) as it is Jesus’ ultimate sacrifice of himself on the cross where all of our needs are met with mercy and peace. The more we trust in God’s provisions for us, the greater the peace in our heart. Fortification comes in superabundant graces flowing from his pierced heart as we receive his very life into our body through joy-filled reception of the Holy Eucharist. Christ lives in us, hence firmly rooting his peace.

Go on your way

The opportunity to listen to God is ever-present in prayer. This is key to embracing the "tranquility of order" of Jesus. Moses reminds the Israelites, "it is something very near to you, already in your mouths and in your hearts; you have only to carry it out" (Dt 30:14). God places in all the desire to know truth, to know him. Therefore, as we turn to him our needs, we come face-to-face with Jesus. St. Paul writes, "Christ Jesus is the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:13). When we see Jesus, we see God. It is in this reality we know truth. Not only is Christ within us, he truly is peace.

How do I share peace? Freed by truth, God sends us "on our way to share this peace with all we encounter. Just as Jesus appointed and sent the 72 in pairs to proclaim the good news, so also we witness the same. We take nothing but what has already been given to us through grace and faith. We trust that God will provide all we need. We surrender to his will. Will everyone listen? Probably not. Yet, those who do, we offer them the peace of Christ.

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By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

As the transport bus pulled up to the church, the 12 passengers on board readied themselves to disembark, tightening their grips on purses, canes and rosaries. The ladies, all residents of Williamsburg Senior Living Community in Baton Rouge, gingerly made their way down the steps and walked right into church. Beautifully dressed with smiles and bright eyes, the women, supporting each other both physically and spiritually, made their way to their usual spots, the front two pews. They were attending their 22nd consecutive First Friday Mass at Our Lady of Mercy Church in Baton Rouge.

“I think we’re so lucky to be taken over to Our Lady of Mercy and it’s so nice to be able to go,” said Katherine Barron, 92. “I appreciate it very much. It uplifts your soul and makes you feel wonderful. I mean it just makes you feel at peace to go and do that.”

Residents of Williamsburg Senior Living Community pray the rosary before Mass on June 7 at Our Lady of Mercy Church.

Attending First Friday Mass dates to early 2017 when the group occasionally attended St. George Church in Baton Rouge and other area churches. But consistent transportation issues presented a logistical challenge, so the practice was more sporadic. Once more reliable transportation was secured, the decision was made to attend the mid-city church, which is just a few blocks from the facility.

“We go early and there’s a couple of ladies that want to say the rosary before Mass, so we sit in there, quietly and we say the rosary before Mass if we can,” said Mo Hebert, 88. “I enjoy the Mass over there. It’s beautiful. We need to say prayers for a lot of people.”

Monthly participation in the group averages from 10 to as many as 14 residents, depending on many variables. It’s not even unusual to see a resident’s family member or friend join them in the pew, adding an unexpected blessing to an already joyful celebration.

“It means a great deal because you know as we get older and closer to going up, I’m counting on the Blessed Mother,” said Leea Pittenger.

Residents admit they enjoy attending Mass at the assisted living facility but miss the sacredness of being in a church. For many, attending a parish church is no longer an option because of mobility challenges or they are no longer able to drive.

“It is very stimulating to go to church and they have a wonderful organist and Father Cleo (Milano) is very inspirational. He always recognizes us on First Fridays which is a very nice tribute.”

“Well that Williamsburg community is simply awesome,” said Father Cleo Milano, pastor of Our Lady of Mercy Church in Baton Rouge. “And you know, they just bring sunshine and you can feel the faith and the love in all their hearts for the Lord. So they bless the whole community when everybody sees them at noon Mass on First Friday. They just bring a bright light to everybody.”

Barring no complications, by early July the group sitting in the front row will have attended their 22nd consecutive First Mass at Mercy, living proof that indeed faith knows no age.
U.S. bishops join pope reacting to photos of drowned migrant father, child

WASHINGTON (CNS) – U.S. bishops joined Pope Francis in expressing sadness after seeing photos of the lifeless bodies of a migrant father and his daughter who drowned near the U.S. border with Mexico.

“Preparo esta imagen en el cielo para la justicia. Esta imagen niega a los políticos. ¿Quién puede mirar esta imagen y decir que realmente quiere resguardar a los niños migrantes?” the bishops said in a June 26 statement.

“Sadly, this picture shows the dai 

The Catholic Commentator July 5, 2019

The Back to School special section will be in the July 19 issue of The Catholic Commentator. Find out what will be happening in the Diocese of Baton Rouge Catholic Schools for the 2018-2019 school year.

To inquire about advertising your products and services to this specialized market or space reservation contact Wanda Koch at 225-387-0983 or email wkoch@diobr.org.

The Catholic Commentator

SERVING THE NEEDY – Baton Rouge area members of Knights of Peter Claver, Ladies of Grace, Constance Butler Chapter 9 recently provided and served the evening meal for 37 diners at the St. Vincent de Paul Society dining hall. Pictured from left are Mary Murray, Carla Lewis, Velita Benjamin, Lorena Williams, Debbie Fines-James, Delores Price and Janet St. Cyr Moore. Photo provided by Carla Lewis | Knights of Peter Claver
Lawmakers adopt ‘strong’ pro-life legislation

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Although disappointed by the failure to abolish capital punishment, the recently completed session of the Louisiana Legislature was buoyed by “strong pieces of pro-life legislation,” according to Danielle Van Haute, respect life coordinator for the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

Van Haute said she was encouraged by the passage of several pro-life bills, including legislation that makes abortion clinic employees mandatory reporters of human trafficking and other sexual based crimes. She said the bill also mandates the posting of human trafficking hotline numbers in those same facilities.

Passage of the so called “Love Life” amendment also made headlines, even though a last-minute delay will send the proposal to voters in the fall of 2020 instead of later this year, as was originally passed. Van Haute said her understanding of the delay was that organizers believed there will be a stronger voter turnout in 2020, which is a presidential election year.

“It seemed that it was all set to happen for this fall and then it was a very last minute decision (to delay),” she said.

Additionally, legislators adopted the heartbeat bill but that will not go into effect until a final court ruling is made on a similar Mississippi law that is making its way through the federal court system and could ultimately be decided by the U.S. Supreme Court. If enacted, the law would prevent abortions being performed on unborn babies when a fetal heartbeat is detected.

Van Haute said she was disappointed in the failure to push through a bill that would end capital punishment in Louisiana. At least two pieces of legislation were floated, including allowing voters to voice their opinion through a proposed constitutional amendment but neither gained adequate traction to go before a full vote in either house.

“I think with each session we continue to make a little more progress in terms of getting (eliminating the death penalty) on peoples’ minds and hopefully helping them to think more and pray more about it,” Van Haute said.

She said one lesson she learned is that more dialogue is needed on the national and local levels regarding pro-life issues. She mentioned just having reasonabe discussions, understanding the concerns of opponents, finding common ground and articulating the pro-life position is becoming increasingly difficult.

Van Haute believes the passage of the Reproductive Health Act in New York, where the law states that a baby can be killed even after birth in the event of a botched abortion attempt, has dramatically altered the landscape. She said since New York Governor Andrew Cuomo signed the bill into law, several states, especially those in the South, have passed more stringent anti-abortion laws, while other states have passed laws “enshrining laws that don’t exist, such as a right to an abortion.”

“New York was a landmark case,” she said. “In that decision some of what people believed would never happen has happened.”

Fear is increasingly playing a role, Van Haute added, a fear from some who believe that stronger laws protecting the rights of the unborn are taking away the rights of a woman, and that women are moving backward to a time when they were not seen as equals.

“I think it’s important to recognize that fear but also be able to articulate how the right to abortion doesn’t make us more womanly,” she said. “It’s actually pitting us against our nature as women. To choose between a mother and her child is completely against nature.”

She said it’s also an illusion to believe women need to protect the ability to have an abortion to give woman equality. “That does not give us equality,” she said. “It makes us more like men, which is not empowering.”

Van Haute said lawmakers must continue to expand public policies and laws upholding the dignity of all human, including continuing to fight against capital punishment.

That doesn’t mean we stop fighting for the rights of the unborn and it doesn’t mean we are saying that all pro-life issues are equal,” she said. “That is not what we are saying but we are called to uphold the dignity of all human life.”

The Legislature adjourned June 6. All legislative seats will be up for grabs during the Oct. 12 election. Some legislators are being term-limited but could run for election in the opposing body.

CHS Coach Boudreaux honored

Longtime CHS faculty member and coaching legend Pete Boudreaux, a 1959 graduate of Catholic High, was honored during the NHSACA’s national convention and awards banquet at the Ramkota Hotel in Bismarck, North Dakota on June 26.

Boudreaux was nominated by the Louisiana High School Coaches Association. His selection was based on longevity, service to high school athletics, honors, championship years and winning percentage. Nominees and finalists are evaluated by experts in the field of coaching, using a sport-specific rubric to assign points in each category.

The NHSACA has been recognizing national coaches of the year since 1978.

During his 51-year career at CHS, Boudreaux has led his teams to 18 state cross country championships, 14 state indoor track titles and 17 state outdoor track championships – a total of 49 state championships. In addition, his teams have finished second 22 times in the three combined sports – cross country, indoor track and field, and outdoor track.

Boudreaux has coached 13 individual state champions in cross country and his 1975 team compiled a perfect score (15), the first of only two ever recorded in state history. In track, 136 CHS athletes have won 176 events in the state championships, with 23 CHS athletes setting state records under Boudreaux’s guidance.

In 2016, Boudreaux was inducted into the National High School Hall of Fame and was selected by the U.S. Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association as the Boy’s Coach of the Year for the state of Louisiana. He is also a member of the Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame.

In 2017, Catholic High School honored Boudreaux’s legacy and success by dedicating the newly renovated track and field facility in his honor – The Pete Boudreaux ’59 Track.
Existence of purgatory / Seeking correction on Virgin Mary

Q

I am a cradle Catholic and have always believed in purgatory. Now I am hearing from some people (including from some priests) who deny its existence. Can you clarify this for me? (City and state of origin withheld)

The Catholic Church does indeed believe in the existence of purgatory. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says this:

“All who die in God’s grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed as one of the half-brothers of Jesus. It is a sign of sorrow for sin, that is, of its separation from God, that those who die with the intention of sinning again or with some remaining affection for sin shall be purified after death by purgation of the temporal punishment for sin, so that they may be admitted to glory, where none is inflamed by sin. It is above all an indication of God’s mercy that he has instituted this final purification for souls that may occur after death.”

Personally, I find comfort in the church’s teaching on purgatory. It is not a final destination; everyone there will wind up in heaven eventually. Nor do we know how our concept of time relates to eternity, the purification that takes place in purgatory could even be instantaneous.

I think that the confusion you speak of regarding the Catholic belief in purgatory may stem in part from the conflation in some people’s minds of purgatory and limbo and on limbo, the church no longer holds fast to its existence.

In years past, it was the common belief of Catholics (although never defined dogmatically) that children who died without being baptized went, not to purgatory to this final purification after death.

As one of the half-brothers of Jesus, we are told that Joseph “did not know her until she had brought forth her firstborn Son.” Other passages reveal that Jesus had other siblings, born to Joseph and Mary after the birth of Jesus. (James is named as one of the half-brothers of Jesus). It would be helpful if you were to make this correction in a future column. (La Belle, Missouri)

A

Several weeks ago in your column, you stated that Mary remained a virgin after Jesus’ birth and for the rest of her life. The Bible states otherwise. Matthew 1:24-25 says that Joseph “did not know her until she had brought forth her firstborn Son.”

In years past, it was the common belief of Catholics (although never defined dogmatically) that children who died without being baptized went, not to be with God in heaven, but to a state of natural happiness called limbo.

But that was theological speculation, not doctrine; and in 2007, the church’s International Theological Commission, with the authorization of Pope Benedict XVI, published a document that concluded that “there are theological and liturgical reasons to hope that infants who die without baptism may be saved ... even if there is not an explicit teaching on this question found in revelation.”

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- Winn Dixie in Hammond, New Roads

as well as your local church parish.

Father Kenneth Doyle

Question Corner

As part of our ongoing commitment to transparency, the following individuals have been added to the Diocese of Baton Rouge’s Clergy Abuse List as having served in the diocese without any credible accusations having been made against them.

Father Joseph Israel Guidry, SVD, was reported on the Diocese of Jackson abuse list. Fr. Robert Limoges was reported on the Diocese of Lafayette abuse list. Report known or suspected child abuse immediately to law enforcement or to the Department of Children and Family Services at 855-452-5437. All allegations of sexual abuse regarding children or vulnerable adults involving clergy or representatives of the church should then be reported to Amy Cordon, the Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator, at 225-242-0250.

The updated list can be accessed on the diocesan website at http://diobr.org/about-our-diocese/accused-clergy-list.
By Debbie Shelley  
The Catholic Commentator

Women in the New Evangelization (WINE) are working with women and women's organizations across the country to bring “feminine genius” to churches and communities. They will host their inaugural conference Saturday, July 27 at Holy Rosary Church in St. Amant.

“The inspiration for WINE came from a lot of prayer,” said founder Kelly Wahlquist. “And I had called together a group of women because Pope Francis had given an interview and said he wanted a deeper, more profound theology of women. And, intrigued, I wanted to know more about what that meant.”

She and 17 other women, all leaders of ministries and apostolates across the country, gathered for a weekend of prayer. Wahlquist said, similar to the way the Lord told St. Francis of Assisi, “Rebuild my church,” she felt the Lord say to her spirit, “Heal my body. The body of Christ is battered, bruised and broken and I need you and the women working in the beautiful gifts I have given to you – the gifts St. John Paul II called ‘the feminine genius’ to be receptive, generous and maternal and heal the wounds that are out there.”

While the acronym WINE may sound fun, it is not about alcohol, Wahlquist said, but is based on John 2:5, Mary’s last words recorded in Scriptures when she tells the servants at the wedding feast at Cana: “Do whatever he (Jesus) tells you.”

“So WINE is about doing the will of God. But we contend that as women we are radically relational. And so it’s easier to do that well when you’re surrounded by your sisters in Christ who are supporting you, nurturing you, encouraging you, praying for you. They’re lifting you up when you are feeling down and rejoicing with you when you are elevated, when good things are happening in your life,” she said.

Wahlquist, Teresa Tomoe, syndicated talk show host, and Gloria Purvis, member of the National Black Congress’ Leadership Commission on Social Justice, will be the featured speakers at the event.

Karen Seehy, Louisiana’s WINE “specialist,” said, “Wine takes on the shape of the container. You can add WINE to whatever it is you are doing and it will enhance your Bible study, your women’s group, etc.” Seehy specializes in events, membership, volunteer outreach and publication of the quarterly “WINE cluster” newsletter.

Wahlquist and Seehy said WINE reaches its peak “flavor” when the women of all stages of life who participate in the ministry, from young mothers to the divorced to seniors who have never been married.

Having a big gathering of women at conferences with the support of the bishop, such as the one that will take place at Holy Rosary, is a “mountaintop experience,” according to Seehy.

“It’s something powerful to have your transfiguration moments and have all these groups of women and give it all to Christ,” said Seehy. “And I think that’s what (the Diocese of) Baton Rouge has been hungering for.”

But between the big events, there are book clubs, Bible studies and small groups, or “WINE clusters” to keep women engaged and the grapevine thriving, according to Letitia Peyton, leader of a Cajun WINE group.

And these small communities help build the bond among women so they can use their gifts to help build better families, churches and societies, Peyton said.

“Something can happen that is beautiful here, and there is new life that comes out” Peyton said. “With our families under attack, and families going through so much difficulty at this moment and what the culture is doing to our families, we build up women and families with WINE.”

Noting the success of the Men of the Immaculata in the Diocese of Baton Rouge, Wahlquist, Seehy and Peyton emphasized WINE is complementary to Men of the Immaculata and they support their work.

Mark Hermann, chairman of the Men of the Immaculata, said, “Men of the Immaculata and WINE both provide that personal encounter with Jesus and Mary by experiencing the sacraments, together with other men and women respectively. The brotherhood and sisterhood at these complementary events build a community of witnesses to strengthen and support us in our walk.

“The Men of the Immaculata are excited to be praying for and helping support the women of WINE this coming July, just as the women have been praying for the Men of the Immaculata through intercessory prayer. Men and women joined together in communion with Jesus Christ and our Blessed Mother is God’s call for the Catholic family.”

To register for the conference and for more information about WINE, visit catholicvineyard.com.

Sister Maria Rabalais dies

Sister Maria Rabalais CSJ, a Sister of St. Joseph for 77 years, passed away at Mount St. Mary Convent in Wichita, Kansas, on Saturday, June 22 at the age of 94.

Sister Maria, born in Simmesport, one of nine children of the late Blanche Guilbeau and Joseph Rabalais, was baptized Catherine Anne. Her brother Harold (Yvonne) lives in Houston. She was preceded by four brothers: James, Durwood, Anthony and Sims and three sisters: Ane- lia Rabalais Gros, Mae Rabalais and Wilma Rabalais McLaughlin. She is also survived by numerous nieces and nephews.

Sister Maria graduated from St. Joseph’s Academy in Baton Rouge and entered the Sisters of St. Joseph in New Orleans in 1942, professing perpetual vows in 1948. She attended Loyola University in New Orleans and earned a B.S. in Elementary Education and a Masters in Theology from Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans.

Sister Maria began as a primary teacher at St. Joseph Academy in New Roads in 1944 and taught elementary school for the next 30 years in New Roads, Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, New Orleans, Harahan, Baton Rouge and Morgan City. She then ministered for 19 years as religious education coordinator and/or pastoral minister in the parishes of St. Patrick, St. Pius X and St. Jean Vianney, all in Baton Rouge, Our Lady of Prompt Succor Church in White Castle and St. John the Baptist Church in Zachary.

After a sabbatical year, Sister Maria devoted herself to pastoral ministry at Sacred Heart Parish in Baton Rouge for 15 years. She retired to the Congregation of St. Joseph Center in Baton Rouge, maintaining strong connections with family, friends and colleagues. Health issues necessitated her move to Mount St. Mary Convent in December 2018.

A funeral Mass was celebrated June 28 at Mount St. Mary and burial followed immediately in the convent cemetery. A memorial Mass will be held in Baton Rouge at a later date.

Memorial donations may be made to the Sisters of St. Joseph at 3134 Hundred Oaks Avenue, Baton Rouge, LA. 70808.
A day of welcoming, gratitude

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Visitors to the Baton Rouge Goodwood Library on June 23 were greeted with the tantalizing aromas from specialty dishes being prepared from around the world.

Nearby, dancers stepping out to their endemic melodies created a festive atmosphere in the library’s large conference room.

However, lying just below the surface of the merriment for the more than 350 people gathered to celebrate World Refugee Day was the soberness of being a stranger in a foreign land as well as remembering families left behind in abhorrent conditions.

World Refugee Day was celebrated nationwide on and surrounding June 20, under the 2019 theme “Unity is strength.”

“I think (World Refugee Day) is critical to our community, especially as Catholics in a Christian nation at a time when the refugee crisis globally is worse than it has ever been in history,” said David Aguilard, executive director of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, one of the event’s sponsors.

“It’s critical that we stop and pause and recognize the shared humanity, divinity and love of people from all around the world, regardless of where they came from, regardless of their ethnicity, their religion. It’s an essential part of who we are as a Gospel people.”

The four-hour celebration included native dance groups from such places as Sierra Leone, Kenya, Africa and the Hispanic Apostolate’s youth choir. Interspersed between the performances were refugees recounting their stories of how they escaped the horrors of their homeland and have found a new home in Baton Rouge.

Also speaking were city leaders, including Baton Rouge Mayor President Sharon Broome.

Bishop Michael G. Duca also offered a prayer for refugees and world peace.

“Guess what makes a gumbo strong and so tasty?” she said, adding it’s not because the ingredients melt into one taste but all of the ingredients have their unique flavor and “they all add to a delicious dish.”

“I see diversity in this room,” Broome said. “Today is a celebration of cultures, of countries, of nations who make up the fabric of our community, who are part of the gumbo of Baton Rouge.

“You are certainly welcomed and celebrated in the city of Baton Rouge. You are loved, you are ap-
REFUGEE
From page 8
precipitated.”

Organizer Dauda Sesay, a native of Sierra Leone who eventually relocated to Baton Rouge with the assistance of CCDBR, said the number of refugees fleeing their homelands for safety and numerous other reasons continues to increase. He noted that during the four-hour celebration in Baton Rouge this past Sunday, an estimated 140,000 people will have left their homes in search of better opportunities or simply a place to live without the fear of death or violence. He said there an estimated 70 million refugees worldwide.

Sesay, who was reunited with his two sons after a 16-year absence, also with the assistance of CCDBR, said only one percent of those refugees are resettled.

“I (appreciate) the generosity of the people of Louisiana, of the people of Baton Rouge for letting us into the community,” he said. “The Baton Rouge community has chosen to welcome us.”

Sesay said refugees like himself and millions of others are forced to flee their “cherished homes” to escape unspeakable horrors and eventually land in a refugee camp facing uncertain futures.

“We did not choose to become refugees,” he said, and added the current national policies regarding immigration do not reflect the country’s commitment for refugee resettlement.

“(The United States) is no longer a leader in the global effort to settle the refugee crisis,” he said. “Many refugees are placed in eages and their families separated.”

He also acknowledged a tension between immigrants, refugees and law enforcement agencies, “demanding” elected officials to “show compassion” for those misplaced from their home countries.

“Baton Rouge will prosper,” he said.

Aguillard said CCDBR was previously the primary organizer for WRD but several years ago Sesay approached the agency for counsel about forming a non-profit refugee organization, which became the impetus of the Louisiana Organization for Refugees & Immigrants. Aguillard said CCDBR helped Sesay navigate the process and the red tape of establishing LORI, and giving direction on how to help the organization grow.

CCDBR eventually turned World Refugee Day over to LORI but remains a significant sponsor.

“It’s all part of our mission to help refugees become our new neighbors and fully included and part of the fabric of our community,” he said.
Youth have the opportunity to see saints’ relics at the Love and Mercy Academy.

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Holy Rosary Church in St. Amant’s Love and Mercy Academy on June 3-14 was an intense immersion of middle school youth in the love, knowledge and service of Jesus. When Holy Rosary pastor Father Joshua Johnson was parochial vicar at St. Alphonsus Church in Baton Rouge, he had many opportunities to connect with children through St. Alphonsus School.

“I noticed the kids were telling their parents what they were learning and they were bringing the parents back to Mass,” said Father Johnson.

When he became pastor at Holy Rosary, the parish school of religion (PSR) classes were scheduled during the week and didn’t seem to be working. Father Johnson’s schedule was also “swamped” during these times and he could not spend much time with the children.

“I didn’t like that,” said Father Johnson.

He talked with Father Mark Beard, pastor at St. Helene Church in Baton Rouge, who has a successful summer PSR program. Father Johnson also remembered how successful the summer PSR program was at St. Patrick Church in Baton Rouge when he served as a transitional deacon there. By having the classes during the summer morning hours, Father Johnson was able to spend more time with the youth, including celebrating Mass at the beginning of each day and leading eucharistic adoration at the end.

Father Johnson and the Holy Rosary staff met with Stephanie Clouatre-Davis, spiritual director, who has experience in working with youth ministry, and she wrote the program. According to Davis, the framework of the Love and Mercy Academy was interactive and focused on catechesis and encountering Jesus.

“We not only gave them important information about their faith, but let them experience Jesus Christ and not just talk about him,” said Davis.

She said the curriculum was “simple and comprehensive.”

“The brains of this age group can hold on to information in a unique way and they are much more open,” said Davis.

Her favorite topic, as well as for many of the youth, was the foundations and history of the church, which included stories from the Bible and of the prophets.

“One of the students said, ‘I finally understood it.’” beamed Davis.

She said the academy showed that youth are capable of praying in deeper ways as they embraced lectio divina, inclusion of saints in their lives.

Along with Mass and adoration there were informational classes and service projects based out of the Holy Rosary’s Full of Grace Café.

The social service emphasis was a favorite part of the academy for Davis’ nephew Abram Clouatre.

Father Josh talked about how each of us brings gifts to the community, said Clouatre as he straightened a small American flag next to a grave at the Holy Rosary Cemetery.

“I like taking care of the saints in our cemetery,”

There were also fun activities such as scavenger hunts and a snow cone social. There were also religious education, said the children’s enthusiasm about how each of us brings gifts to the community, transforming both young and older.

One day was focused on the saints. Using the wall of saints in the church as an illustration, Father Johnson emphasized in one of his Mass homilies that even though they are not able to physically see the saints, they remain present and interceding for them in heaven.

In the classroom the students also had a chance to learns about and see some relics of the saints and played “saints Bingo.”

“I didn’t know about the saints and that God works through saints among us.”

Youth were also given the opportunity to learn about the history of the parish as they prayed in deeper ways as they embraced lectio divina, inclusion of saints in their lives.

Likewise, participants Ethan Oubre also enjoyed hearing about the relics of the saints and how some saints have incorruptible bodies.

Morales said as the youth were having first time experiences and learning new things they were telling their parents about “the cool things” they were doing.

Morales and Jessica Lambert, assistant director of religious education, said the children’s enthusiasm “rubbed off” on the adult volunteers.

“I had a lot of positive comments from the parents and the adult volunteers. They said they were learning as much as the kids,” said Lambert.

Father Johnson also said, once again, the children evangelizing their parents and bringing them back to the church, transforming both young and older.

“I believe supernatural fruit,” said Father Johnson.

Youth leave Holy Rosary church after a day of catechesis and fun. (Photo provided by Jenny Morales | Holy Rosary Church)
Band camp helps get summer off on the right note

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

With his left hand in the air, snapping his fingers for a beat, Dr. Kevin Andry, known as “Doc Andry,” counts the musical notes for a song from the popular movie “Moana.”

“One, two, three, and two and three, four,” Andry sings to his charges. For the second consecutive week, Andry, the band director at St. Michael the Archangel High School in Baton Rouge, led 37 elementary and middle school students through musical numbers for band camp. Jazz camp was held the week before at the high school with the same number of students.

“When you put your horn down in May after your spring concert ... most of them don’t pick it up again until you start back in August,” explained Andry. “In a perfect world, yes, they would go home and practice. So by having band camp, it gets them to get the horn out again.”

Andry admits June is a bit early to reinforce those lessons learned but he said “this will hold until they get back” to school. He said band camp also allows students from other schools to meet each other. Another advantage, he said, was the opportunity for the campers to play with a big band.

“They normally have 18 kids in a band program so you have a bigger band, you have bigger instrumentation and we spend a lot of time on pieces,” he noted. “I throw a lot of stuff at them. I know they’re never going to remember it all, but they remember a lot of it; you’d be surprised.”

“It’s pretty fun,” said saxophonist Joshua Huff, an eighth-grader at Most Blessed Sacrament School in Baton Rouge, who attended the jazz and band camps. “And, you learn a lot of new stuff.”

“I tell them a lot of little ‘Doc’ things, too, like ‘don’t ever sell yourself short, you can do this’,” said Andry. “There are kids who were in beginner band this past May and they’re looking at the music going, ‘Oh, I can’t do this.’ And, I say, ‘You can!’ And then after two days, they can and they’re getting it and we’ll do a concert for the parents on Friday and their parents will be blown away at what they learn in one week.”

Clarinet player Audrey Tullier said her favorite part of band camp is learning to play a variety of fun songs. Jazz camp included music from Duke Ellington, Santana and Booker T. and the MG’s with each student playing a solo and improvisation. Songs for band camp include several selections from “Moana” and the pop song “Havana.”

And, while the music might be new and fresh for the band students, there are some familiar names among the group for Andry, who has been a part of the music community in Baton Rouge and the Diocese of Baton Rouge for almost 35 years. At least three campers are children of Andry’s former band students.

“Like the first day, (Doc) is like, ‘What’s your last name?’ I told him Tullier and he’s like, ‘Wait, is your dad Jody?’ and I’m like, ‘Yeah,’ and he’s like, ‘I think I taught him,’” said Tullier, a rising fifth-grader at St. Alphonsus Liguori School in Greenwell Springs.

Nicholas Velasquez, a rising fifth-grader at St. Jean Vianney School in Baton Rouge, said band camp has helped him try new things.

“My favorite part is learning all of the stuff that you didn’t know you could do, like solos,” said the percussionist. “I wasn’t going to band camp but I was in jazz camp and we learned a lot of fun stuff.”

“(Band camp) gets them engaged with their instrument,” said Andry. “It teaches them some new things. Because I teach high school I teach at a faster pace, and I learned a long time ago don’t treat a young student like he’s young. In other words, keep the expectations high for them.

“I don’t want to make them all band directors or professional musicians but they will be the doctors and the lawyers, the CEOs and entrepreneurs of our future because we teach them how to think. We teach them to take risks and to step out of their comfort zones and take solos and improvise.”

Photo by Bonny Van | The Catholic Commentator

Band director “Doc” Andry leads students during a session of band camp at St. Michael the Archangel High School in Baton Rouge.

Students practice pieces from the movie “Moana” during summer band camp at St. Michael High School.
St. George principal chosen Distinguished Principal

Special to The Catholic Commentator

The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) has selected Jack Nelson as one of the 2019 NAESP National Distinguished Principals. NAESP honors outstanding administrators for setting high standards for instruction, student achievement, character and climate for the students, families and staffs in their learning communities. Nelson will be recognized at the 2019 program and awards ceremony in Washington, D.C. in October.

BOOK CLUB – Fourth-graders at St. Thomas More School in Baton Rouge created book trailers using iMovie for their favorite books they read in library class during the school year. The trailers will be used to promote those books to other students.

AWARD WINNERS – Students at St. Aloysius School in Baton Rouge participated in the national education contest sponsored by the Catholic Daughters of America. Eighth-grader Abigail Duplessis placed first in the essay competition while eighth-grader Corinne Claire Ellis placed first in poetry competition while...

CLOSING CEREMONY – Holy Ghost School in Hammond held its kindergarten closing ceremony with the theme “What a Wonderful World.” Students sang songs and received awards that recognized their hard work and talents during the school year, including Logan Griffin who was presented with the “Awesome Author” award.

AWARD WINNERS – Students at St. Aloysius School in Baton Rouge participated in the national education contest sponsored by the Catholic Daughters of America. Eighth-grader Abigail Duplessis placed first in the essay competition while eighth-grader Corinne Claire Ellis placed first in poetry competition while...

SPECIAL VISIT – Bishop Michael G. Duca celebrated the May Crowning Mass with Catholic Elementary School of Pointe Coupee. Bishop Duca also visited the classrooms and spoke with students.

SUBMIT YOUR SCHOOL NEWS TO BONNY VAN AT BVAN@DIOBR.ORG
The Catholic Commentator
July 5, 2019

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

Chronicling the events of June 17, 2015, when a gunman opened fire during a Bible study being conducted at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, this moving documentary celebrates the lives of the victims as well as the love and forgiveness demonstrated by the survivors and family members toward the perpetrator. Filmmaker Brian Ivie focuses not on the racial hatred that motivated the shootings, but on the faith-filled response of the people most affected by the tragedy. The movie gives hope that acts of love and forgiveness can pave the way for peace and justice.

Emanuel
Arbella

Decidedly improbable and scattershot comedic elements give this film the look of something that had its dents hammered out in the editing room. Even so, it’s still an uplifting story, scripted by Mindy Kaling, briskly directed by Nasha Ganatra and partly based on Kaling’s own experiences as a TV scribe trying to get her voice heard in an all-white, all-male writers’ room. Facing cancellation (by network head Amy Ryan) and replacement (by potty-mouthed comedian Ike Barinholtz), the veteran host (Emma Thompson) of the titular show takes Kaling’s character on as the single “diversity hire” in a cynical scheme to create a veneer of multiculturalism. The workplace in which the newcomer finds herself is not so much hostile as clueless, an old-boy network made up of figures beset by anxious tics and neuroses. She strives to freshen the program’s presentation, which works well until a sex scandal threatens to derail everyone’s career. The gags are uneven, but there’s a sentimental, heartfelt moral lesson: TV, that most democratic and far-reaching of mediums, is better when a broad range of perspectives and experiences are included as input. The film contains sexual and scatological references, occasional profanities, some rough and crude language. A-III; R

Late Night
Amazon

Amusing and stylish sci-fi comedy teams an avid rookie (Tessa Thompson) and an experienced agent (Chris Hemsworth) on the titular secret force dedicated to regulating human interactions with aliens as they hunt down the extraterrestrials who assassinated a royal visitor from a distant planet. Director F. Gary Gray’s globetrotting reboot of a franchise that kicked off in 1997, which also features Liam Neeson as the head of the agency’s London office, is a pleasant, lightweight diversion bristling with fun gadgetry and populated by off-beat creatures, including a pawn from a chess set (voice of Kumail Nanjiani) who aids the main duo. The combat is thoroughly stylized and the mutual attraction between the leads never even reaches the hand-holding stage, though Hemsworth’s character has a bizarre encounter with an alien offscreen. While that, together with the sometimes-dicey dialogue, indicates this is best for mature audiences, it’s possibly acceptable for older adolescents. Much bloodless violence, a couple of gruesome images, implied nonmarital sexual activity, a few mild oaths, occasional crude and profane language. A-II; PG-13

Men in Black: International
Columbia

This remake of the 1988 film about a toy doll (voice of Mark Hamill) run amok is a black comedy awash in satirical violence and gore, directed Lars Klevberg. A single mother (Aubrey Plaza) gives her lonely son (Gabriel Bateman) an artificial-intelligence doll as a companion. Unbeknownst to her, this doll was sabotaged in the factory, and responds to negative energy when its owner is upset or threatened. A murderous rampage ensues, starting with the family cat. Gratuitous bloody violence and gore, sexual banter, partial nudity, frequent crude and profane language, and one obscene gesture. O; R

AWARDS ▼
From page 1

exemplary of the dedication, commitment and hard work of the entire staff.”

Other awards include:
BEST SPECIAL SECTION
1st Place - Staff
Bishop Robert W. Muench
“The Happy Bishop”
2nd Place - Staff
Bishop Michael G. Duca
“Hope in the Lord”
BEST FEATURE STORY
1st Place - Richard Meek
“Faith cornerstone for couple married 67 years”

BEST REGULAR COLUMN
Sam Hanna Award
1st Place - Richard Meek
“A season of mixed emotion”
BEST LAYOUT AND DESIGN
Gary Hebert Award
1st Place - Nicole Latiolais
“Stem Night”
BEST NEWS PHOTO
1st Place - Richard Meek
“Reunited”
3rd Place - Bonny Van
“A final goodbye”
BEST FEATURE PHOTO
2nd Place - Richard Meek
“Honor Scouting”
3rd Place - Debbie Shelley
“Holiday Scribe.”
July 5, 2019

GOSPEL ▼

From page 2

edge those asking for provisions on the street corner, while others try not to make eye contact. Some see an accident and stop to help, while others drive by grateful they were not involved. When is the appropriate time to connect, to become involved, to render support, to care, to simply say, “Hello, how is your day?” and listen to the response?

Since we have the capacity to receive God’s love, we reciprocate the same love and share it with our neighbor. Love is willing the good for the other without condition. The story of the Good Samaritan manifests God’s compassionate mercy for us. We journey each day to eternity. Sin, by either our choice or another’s decision, interrupts the pathway. The robbery of sin strikes, humiliates then betrays, leaving us for death along the journey. We need help since we are unable to help ourselves. Some pass by, unaware of the depths of our needs or not wanting to become involved. Yet, Jesus, the one who is “good,” lifts us up, tends our wounds and makes sure we are cared for to point of sacrifice, his on the cross. He anointed our wounds by his passion and death. “And with His stripes we are healed” (Is 53:5). Ultimately, he lifts us to new life in the resurrection.

Herein our call to discipleship is to lift our neighbor, known and stranger alike, in compassion, care, and comfort, safe passage, kindness, concern with immeasurable love based on God’s love. However, this extends beyond the works of mercy. We are called to radical love and it is in the very gift of knowing Jesus where we take action with ALL OUR HEART controlled by his peace. God’s love transforms and moves us to reach outside of our comfort zone for the good of another. We become what we know in his “word (Jesus Christ) which gives Spirit and life.” (Ps 19).

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen” (Gal 6:18).

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

CENTER CLOSING – Members of the community gathered June 20 at the St. Joseph’s Academy chapel for a prayer service to celebrate the ministry seeds planted in the community by the St. Joseph Spirituality Center before the center closed June 30. Photos by Debbie Shelley | The Catholic Commentator

Pictured left, Paulett Pourciau, who served as a board member of the St. Joseph Spirituality Center, accompanied by Deacon Randy Clement, who was also on the board, sprinkles the prayer service attendees with water. The sprinkling rite was a reminder to the people to “allow God to water our seeds so that God will bring new fruit from our love and action.”
The barber's ministry

During Lent I started a series on prayer, writing about prayer in the lives of saints, prayer in Jesus’ life and teachings, and prayer in the liturgy of the Mass, especially in Lent and the sacred tridium of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday. I would like now to finish that series with a story about devotional prayer. Catholics have a rich tradition of devotional prayers. We were taught our prayers in Catholic schools and parish schools of religion (formerly CCD classes). We learned the Apostles’ Creed, Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be to the Trinity by reciting the rosary. In addition, the nuns taught us the Hail Holy Queen, Act of Contrition (when making our first confession) and seasonal prayers to honor Jesus in the Eucharist and his mother, Mary, in the month of May.

We sort of take these prayers for granted, but I think they help to remind us often of God's daily presence in our lives. The following story is a true example of this in our Catholic heritage. I wrote about it first for our parish bulletin, which actually was a small newspaper called the Tower, when I was pastor of St. Thomas More Church in Baton Rouge in the 1990s. It happened years before that in the ‘70s when I was stationed in St. John the Baptist Parish in Brusly, long before we, even in country parishes, got our local news from the internet and Facebook.

The term “ministry” is being expanded. That’s all I was doing in Brusly. There was only one barber shop in town, Dupuy’s, and one barber, Eddie, of the same family name, which was also shared by the one bar down the street on the corner of Main Street. The barber shop, the post office and the bar along with one bar down the street on the corner of Main Street.

Thanks to the ministry of Eddie-the barber, people who count collections and serve as eucharistic ministers and lectors are contributing valuable service to everyone in the parish. Service is the basic dynamic of Christian life: God’s initiative, the graced response, the enfranchisement of God’s love and mercy, the participation in the Paschal Mystery. When prayed from the heart and with reverence, the soul ‘keeps in touch’ with a divine rhythm that issues in the doing of God’s will.”

A less expected commentator regarding the Angelsus, the American poet Edgar Allen Poe, once lived near Fordham University in New York. Inspired by the university bells ringing for the Angelus he wrote:

“At morn-at noon-at twilight dim/ Marial! Thou hast heard my hymn/ In joy and woe — in good and ill-/Mother of God, be with me still! / When the Hours flew brightly by:/ And not a cloud obscured the sky,/ My soul, lest it should truant be,/ Thy grace did guide to thine and thee;/ Now, when storms of Fate o’ercast,/ Darly my Present and my Past./ Let my Future radiant shine/ With sweet hopes of thee and thine.”

As Bishop Morneau pointed out, the Angelus is a practice of devotional prayer that holds the soul and community together. And it was part of “what was happening” in Brusly each day, thanks to the ministry of Eddie-the barber.

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.

July 11
Rev. Gilbert A. Enderle CSsR  
Dcn. Leon Roy Murphy Jr.  
Br. James Burns SC

July 12
Dcn. Donald J. Musso  
Sr. Janet Franklin CSJ

July 13
Dcn. Michael French SJ  
Dcn. Roger Navarra  
Br. William Cawley SC

July 14
Dcn. Michael A. Galea  
Dcn. Angelo S. Nola

July 15
Sr. Carol Gonsoulin CSJ  
Dcn. Ricky P. Oubre  
Br. Ramon Daunis SC  
Rev. Matthew J. Graham  
Dcn. Stephen Paul Oursso  
Sr. Mildred Guillot CSJ  
Rev. Paul A. Gros  
Dcn. Ricky A. Patterson  
Br. Alan Drain SC  
Rev. Eric V. Gyan

July 16
Dcn. Minos J. Ponville Jr.  
Sr. Joan Hartauba CSJ

July 17
Dcn. Ryan Halford  
Dcn. Curles P. Reesom Jr.  
Br. Clement Furno CSsR

July 18
Dcn. Alfred J. Ricard Jr.  
Sr. Mary Ann Hebert  
Rev. Patrick Healy SJ  
Dcn. Thomas M. Robinson  
Br. Harold Harris SC

July 19
Dcn. Anna Hoang ICM

July 20
Dcn. Elisesus Ibeh MSP

July 21
Dcn. Marko (Sam) Sammartino  
Sr. Esther Hulin CSJ

July 22
Rev. Ray Hebert SC  
Dcn. Mauricio Salazar OP

July 23
Sr. Anna Hoang ICM

July 24
Rev. J. Clifton Hill CSSp  
Dcn. Eliazar Salinas Jr.  
Br. Ronald Hingle SC

Dcn. Elisesus Ibeh MSP
The loss of heaven and the fear of hell

Growing up as a Roman Catholic, like the rest of my generation, I was taught a prayer called, The Act of Contrition. Every Catholic back then had to memorize it and say it during or after going to confession. The prayer started this way: Oh, my God, I am truly sorry for having offended thee. I hope you have forgiven all of my sins because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell.

To dread the loss of heaven and fear the pains of hell can seem like one and the same thing. They’re not. There’s a huge moral distance between dreadling the loss of heaven and fearing the pains of hell. The prayer wisely separates them. Fear of hell is based upon a fear of punishment, dreadling the loss of heaven is based upon a fear of not being a good, loving person. There’s a huge difference between living in fear of punishment and living in fear of not being a good person. We’re more mature, humanly and as Christians, when we’re fearful that we may not be a very loving person who would miss out on love and community. And so I worried about not being bad rather than about being good. I worried that I would do something that was mortally sinful, that would send me to hell; but I didn’t worry as much about having a heart big enough to love as God loves.

I didn’t worry as much about forgiving others, about letting go of hurts, about loving those who are different from me, about being judgmental or about being so tribal, racist, sexist, nationalistic or narrow in my religious views that I would be uncomfortable sitting down with certain others at the God’s banquet table.

The heavenly table is open to all who are willing to sit down with all. That’s a line from a John Shea poem and it spells out succinctly, I believe, a non-negotiable condition for going to heaven, namely, the willingness and capacity to love everyone and to sit down with everyone. It’s non-negotiable for this reason: How can we be at the heavenly table with everyone if for some reason of pride, wound, temperament, bitterness, bigotry, politics, nationalism, color, race, religion or history, we aren’t open to sit down with everyone?

Jesus teaches this too, just in a different way. After giving us the Lord’s Prayer which ends with the words, “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,” he adds this: “If you forgive others when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, your Father will not forgive you.” Why can’t God forgive us if we don’t forgive others? Has God arbitrarily singled out this one condition as his pet criterion for going to heaven? No.

We cannot sit at the heavenly banquet table if we are still selective as to whom we can sit down with. If, in the next life, like here in this life, we are selective as to whom we love and embrace, then heaven would be the same as earth, with factions, bitterness, grudges, hurt and every kind of racism, sexism, nationalism and religious fundamentalism keeping us all in our separate silos. We can only sit at the heavenly banquet when are hearts are wide enough to embrace everyone else at the table. Heaven demands a heart open to universal embrace.

And so, as I get older, approach the end of my life, I accept that I will soon face my Maker, I worry less and less about going to hell and worry more about the bitterness, anger, ingratitude and non-forgiveness that still remains in me. I worry less about committing a mortal sin and more about whether I’m gracious, respectful and forgiving towards others. I worry more about the loss of heaven than the pains of hell, that is, I worry that I could end up like the older brother of the prodigal son, standing outside the Father’s house, excluded by anger rather than by sin.

Still, I’m grateful for the Act of Contrition of my youth. Fear of hell isn’t a bad place from which to start.

In praise of dad jokes and divine humor

My husband is down in the kitchen, cooking eggs for our four boys. From upstairs, I hear him serve up a little extra on the side: a classic dad joke about “makin’ bacon.” As I smirk to myself, I can practically hear our sons roll their eyes.

But having been raised by a dad who puns with the best of them, my husband is also secretly smiling. Dad jokes are goofy and lovable. A genre all their own.

The man I married didn’t used to crack corny jokes. One of the charms that won me to him right away was his razor-sharp wit. At our wedding, the best man described watching the two of us at dinner, volleying quips back and forth “with that bizarre sense of humor they share.” We like our sarcasm dry.

But as he has grown into fatherhood, his cheesy dad jokes have grown alongside him. Now I find myself groaning with the kids as he delights in his newfound comedy. Where on earth is he getting this stuff? Does he swap jokes with fellow dads? Did the nurses at the hospital pass out some manual I missed?

Years ago, while meditating on the mystery of God, I was delighted by a surprising idea: God must have the best sense of humor. Not only in the cutest way we describe our plans in relation to God’s providence — “God must have a great sense of humor; look at how this turned out!” Not just in the childish assigning of quirky parts of creation (like the platypus) to a chuckling Creator.

But as centuries of theologians and philosophers have claimed that God is by definition the perfection of any positive characteristic we can conjure — all-merciful, all-loving, all-knowing — then by extension, couldn’t we conceive that God’s sense of humor would be the greatest, beyond all imagining?

Think about the power and possibility of pure humor. Not snarky asides or cruel jokes at another’s expense, but the delight of sharing true laughter over a hilarious joke or a well-placed pun.

Most of us love to be in the company of someone with a great sense of humor: a clever observer of human behavior or a warm personality who draws people together with funny stories and fresh laughter. What might have made Jesus laugh, fully human as he was, sharing in our delight? What parts of creation might have made God laugh out loud, chuckling with sheer pleasure?

The Psalms describe how “the one enthroned in heaven laughs” (Ps 2:4) sometimes at human folly, but also because humor must be a divine attribute. Just as our compassion, kindness and forgiveness can aspire to reflect God’s nature — as we ourselves are “image Dei,” made in the image and likeness of God our sense of humor hope to embody God’s loving laughter, too?

My husband’s goofy dad jokes are more than sheer silliness. At their heart, his puns are one of the many small ways he shows love to his children. To invite them into delight. To build a home where laughter is welcomed. To form them into men who bring wit and wisdom into a world that needs more of both. To model fatherhood that is caring and compassionate, slow to anger and quick to smile.

Let us sing the praises of dad jokes. Let us give thanks for a God of love and laughter. And let us never forget the power of humor to make us more human, as we reflect the divine.

Fanucci is a writer, editor and director of a project on vocation at the Collegeville Institute in Collegeville, Minnesota. She is the author of several books, including “Everyday Sacrament: The Messy Grace of Parenting,” and blogs at motheringspirit.com.
Blessed Mother Feast – Our Lady of Pompeii Church, 14450 Hwy. 442, Tickfaw, will host its annual Blessed Mother Feast Saturday, July 6 – Sunday, July 7. Activities include a novena, procession with the statue of the Blessed Mother and the blessing of the graves. For more information, call 985-345-9597.

St. Agnes Events – St. Agnes Church, 749 East Blvd., Baton Rouge, will host the following events: Tuesday, July 9, 5:30 p.m., pro-life Mass; and Saturday, July 20, 2 p.m., showing of the movie, “Gosnell: The Trial of America’s Biggest Serial Killer,” at the St. Agnes parish school of religion building. For more information, call 225-383-4127.

Bobby Schindler Presentation – Bobby Schindler, brother of Terry Schiavo, who was involved in a nationally followed right-to-die case, will speak about “Why Terry’s Life Still Matters” Wednesday, July 10, 6:30 p.m., at Our Lady of Mercy Church, 445 Marquette St., Baton Rouge. For more information, call Jason Romero at 225-926-1893 or email jason.romero@olcm.com.

Discalced Carmelites – The Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites will meet Sunday, July 14, 1:30 p.m., at the Our Lady of Mercy Parish Activity Center in the St. Gabriel Room, 444 Marquette Ave., Baton Rouge. For details, call Ethlyn White at 225-803-3391 or email robertwhite456@att.net.

Marriage Encounter Weekend – Married couples looking to strengthen their relationship are invited to a Marriage Encounter Weekend, Friday, July 19 – Sunday, July 21, at the Bishop Robert E. Tracy Center, 1800 S. Acadian Thwy., Baton Rouge. For information and to register, visit LAMS-wwme.org or call Matt and Gail Quinn at 813-548-1655.

Secular Franciscans – The monthly meeting of the Secular Franciscan Order will be held Sunday, July 28, in the Chapel of St. Francis of Assisi at Maryville Convent, 4200 Essen Lane, Baton Rouge, beginning at 1:10 p.m. with the recitation of the Franciscan Crown. For further information, email Patsy T. Burgess OFS at pthibodeauxofsf@gmail.com or call 225-907-8248.

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

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Foster parents and children receive comfort items and support at the Foster Village. Photo provided by Shayna Landry

would help foster parents who may not have everything they need to adequately meet the child’s needs. An area church offered the women a room in a building the church owned, but the organization quickly grew and the church offered them the whole building.

“Our mission is to be able to have a place where children in foster care and foster parents can come and get things for free,” said LeJeune a member of Our Lady of Mercy Church in Baton Rouge.

Speaking from experience, LeJeune said people may be excited at the thought they will be taking in a foster infant or child and don’t think about all the everyday items and necessities the child is going to need. And while they may receive a stipend, the cost per month of raising the child can be twice as much as they receive for raising the child. Some foster parents may go from having zero to three within a couple of weeks, according to LeJeune.

In addition to providing those “comfort” items, the Foster Village also provides a support group for the parents where they talk about their experiences, exchange ideas and can put together scrap books about their foster children.

Social events are also held for the children. They can do such things as see fire trucks and police cars or do crafts together. This provides a sense of safety and security as they meet other children who have been through similar experiences.

“We’ve had children that were taken away from their parents and brought to the house of a stranger, and they want to run and fight because they don’t see your home as a safe home,” said LeJeune.

The Foster Village helps in the processes that are in the best interest of the child, whether it’s reunification with the biological parents whose circumstances have improved so they can care for them again or helping the child to be adopted.

During these times of change, Foster Village helps the child to find comfort.
RACISM

From page 1

...door and talks to their neighbor. Listen and be those instruments as we go forward but also take what we hear today to building policies and actions we need to do to make that a reality.”

Bishop Fabre, shepherd of the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux, said the listening sessions he has been attending around the country are necessary first steps. He said during the past several years, citing incidents in several cities including Baton Rouge, the USCCB witnessed the country’s racial tension growing at an alarming rate.

In August 2017, USCCB president Cardinal Daniel DiNardo called for the establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism.

Bishop Fabre was appointed chair of the committee in May 2018.

“The events around the country have revealed and sparked racial tensions, and this is something that very much is in the hearts and minds of our country, in the hearts and minds of the bishops and in the hearts and minds of the church,” he said. “We know that a pastoral letter, or even a prophetic voice, will not turn back the hands of time, nor will it undo the trauma communities across our nation have had to survive. Nor will it stop the stray bullets that have shattered lives. Nor will it stop the trauma communities across our nation have had to survive. Nor will it stop the trauma communities across our nation have had to survive. Nor will it stop...”

Written in the style of the letters of St. Paul, Bishop Fabre said the letter conveys the bishops’ grave concerns about the rise in racism expressions in society, in public discourse and on social media. He said the letter not only condemns racism but encourages honest self-reflection, both by individuals and by the church.

“It focuses on fraternal charity and highlights the Catholic teaching on the human person and that each and everyone one has been created in the image and likeness of God,” said Bishop Fabre. He said the letter is firmly structured, from inspiration to action, and the hope is the bishops can grow in the ongoing understanding of the pain of the communities affected by racism.

“It is our prayer the church will not listen without being changed, and we will no longer see without being called to action,” he said. “Through your stories, we hope to call the church to a renewed reflection on these harms, reflection that will lead to forgiveness and ultimately reconciliation; a rejoicing of the body of Christ within the church so that we may function together in the way the Lord has always intended.”

Holy Rosary Church in St. Amant parishioner Jennifer Monette Greenup, in her testimony, recalled difficulties she encountered as a creole.

“Learn from each other while striving to find a common good,” she encouraged the crowd.

Holy Rosary pastor Father Joshua Johnson, the lone African-American priest in the diocese and a native of Baton Rouge, recalled how even today he is often followed in a grocery store or other establishments when not wearing his collar.

“Racial discrimination still happens,” Father Johnson said. “We must make distinctions between racial prejudices and discrimination behavior, which are not good and are sins, and the policies and written rules that still accommodate one person because of the color of their skin (but) discriminate and oppress other people because of the color of their skin.”

He said those practices must be reformed and transformed “in our own hearts so that we can be disciples of Jesus Christ. Let’s be real disciples of Jesus and make justice happen.”

Following the talks, Bishop Fabre thanked those who “were courageous” to share their stories.

“I think the Holy Spirit speaks to us through experiences, and I know that the Holy Spirit is speaking to us today very loudly that we must do something to address racism in our church, racism in our country. This is what dialogue does, it brings about change.”

Bishop Duca closed the gathering by asking those in attendance to reflect on their experiences.

“If anybody was up there today and you were forming opinions about whether you agree or disagree, then you stopped listening,” he said. “Every point of view is a piece of the puzzle, a piece of the message.”

Those in attendance were able to fill out a form detailing their experiences of racism in the church. The forms were collected at the end of session and presented to Bishop Fabre and Bishop Duca, each of whom promised those who participated that their voices will be heard.

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