Early on the morning of Aug. 5, in some cases only hours before schools swung open their doors for the 2019-20 school year, more than 800 educators gathered at St. George Church in Baton Rouge for their own kick-off, the annual Catholic Educators Gathering.

On a sun-dappled campus, teachers and administrators greeted each other with smiles, hugs and small talk, a visible energy present that accompanies the beginning of every school year.

“We are very ready for this school year,” said Dr. Melanie Palmisano, superintendent of Catholic schools in the Diocese of Baton Rouge. “I think the teachers are reenergized. I know the principals have been doing a great job over the summer to prepare for another positive school year and there will be a lot of success.”

The event, hosted by CSO, opened with a prayer service led by Bishop Michael G. Duca. During his homily, the bishop noted that the Gospel reading from St. Matthew in which Jesus fed a crowd of 5,000 with just five loaves and two fish was the perfect Scripture for teachers.

“Many of us find ourselves in the same place as the disciples who said, ‘Let them go so they can get food. We only have five loaves and two fish. What are we going to do with that?’” said Bishop Duca. “It applies to us – anyone who runs a school: ‘We can’t do that, it’s too much. Go feed yourselves. Go teach them.’ But Jesus takes what little they have, says the blessing and feeds the crowd.

“Take what you have, give thanks to God for what you have and you begin. And, you teach the children. Once you begin the miracles will happen. When you give yourself to something completely, miracles will happen.”

The prayer service was followed by motivational speaker and former teacher Jonathan Doyle. Doyle told the packed church that growing up in his native Australia with a father “who hated what he did” inspired him to help others stay inspired.

Doyle, a Catholic, acknowledged...
As the new school year begins, students began to get back into their day-to-day routines. Pictured are students at St. Elizabeth Elementary School in Paincourtville attending Mass in 1978, which they did as an entire student body each Friday. Also shown is then principal Mark Bergeron. Photo provided by the Archives Department | Diocese of Baton Rouge

**DID YOU KNOW**

**Sign of Jesus**

You’ve seen it on cars, you’ve seen it on pendants or necklaces. But what exactly is that fish symbol, sometimes called the “Jesus Fish”? In Greek, it’s known as the Ichthys, or “fish,” according to aleteia.org, and its Greek letters, ΙχθΥς, “are the initials of the words in the Greek phrase that translates to “Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior.”

The origin of the symbol dates to the second century and “for Christians under persecution, the Ichthys became a covert sign to identify their beliefs,” according to aleteia.org. But the Ichthys was used as more than just a symbol or a sign of faith. It was also used as ornamentation on monuments, frescoes, catacombs, sculptured representations, rings and seals, according to niewadvent.org.

Fish are the highlight of many Scripture readings throughout the Gospels. In St. Mark’s Gospel, Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee when he saw two fishermen, Simon and his brother Andrew, casting their nets. “Jesus said to them, ‘Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men’” (Mt 4:19).

Jesus used the fish, in referencing Jonah “in the belly of the whale three days and three nights” (Mt 13:40), as a sign of his own resurrection after three days. Recorded in all four Gospels is the miracle of Jesus feeding a crowd of 5,000 with fish and loaves. In St. Matthew 18:27, Jesus tells Peter to pay the temple tax by “dropping in a hook” in the sea and taking the first fish, which would have a coin in its mouth “worth twice the temple tax.” John, Chapter 21, describes how the disciples fished all night but caught nothing until Jesus appeared, after his resurrection, and instructed them to “cast the net over right side of the boat” (Jn 21:6). The men then caught 153 large fish.

Though there might not be a sign for Ichthys as an emoji on our smart phones or tablets, there are plenty of fish emojis to add to our praying hands.

**All eyes on God**

By Dina Dow

Have you ever been walking and taken your eyes off the path because of some distraction, obstacle or detox? The 20th and 21st Sunday Mass readings in Ordinary Time (Cycle C) call to mind the importance of focusing our gaze on God in the midst of persecution, obstacles, and trials. As a result, we experience a sense of peace and endurance, as we strive for holiness each day.

**Sank into the mud (Jer 38:6)**

A major prophet of the Hebrew Scriptures with eyes fixed on God, Jeremiah experienced tremendous hardships as he persisted in proclaiming messages from God to the reigning king and princes of Judah. Rather than respond to his warning of the impending conquer of Judah by the Babylonians, the princes of that time had Jeremiah imprisoned and subsequently placed in the cistern below ground.

There, he literally sank in the mud. Imagine trying to warn people of life-threatening danger, only to be thrown in the mud pit? When have you warned another about impending danger only to be pushed away? Did you persist or give up? Jeremiah, fixed on God’s truth, endured. The king finally lifted him out of the mud hole and secretly listened. You are invited to read the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah in its entirety. There you will learn the rest of the story, which is a powerful inspiration of faith in God.

**Eyes fixed on Jesus (Heb 12:2)**

The author of the Book of Hebrews uses the analogy of a race, popular in early Christian times, to encourage perseverance among believers. This is only possible if we fix our eyes on Jesus. The author refers to a cloud of witnesses (Heb 12:1), a huge number filling the sky as clouds, near the sun, which signifies a closeness to God. They are active spectators, applauding, shouting, cheering for our endurance to remain steadfast during the trials of life. Who are the cloud of witnesses?

Noted is the foremost obstacle, which weighs us down: “sin that clings so closely” (Heb 12:2). The enemy prods, like a wild animal waiting to pounce. Sin surrounds us, taking a foothold. St. Thomas Aquinas writes, “The occasion of sin that is present all around us, that is in the work, in the flesh, in our neighbor and in the devil is like a weight hindering our movement, reducing our agility and being something to shed.”

We are to “run with perseverance” (Heb 12:1) the long race, which calls for endurance and ability to endure with pain and fatigue caused by sin. Just as in a race, we need to shed everything that cramps our movements, same as in struggles of life. If we want to run towards God, we need to shed all useless weight. The weight is the sin we have committed that pulls us downward and inclines us to sin again. St. Josemaria Escriva says, “Anything that does not lead to God is a hindrance. Root it out and throw it far from you.”

We fix our gaze on Jesus, in the same way a runner, once the race has begun, letting NOTHING distract us from reaching the final destination. St. Thomas Aquinas says, “If you want to be saved look at the face of your Christ.” Jesus runs ahead of us preaching, and performing miracles. By grace, he impresses upon our heart to perfect our faith. St. Thomas Aquinas continues, “Jesus is the pioneer/cause/initiator of our faith, as he marked out the path, to the lead, opened the way and set the pace. Everything Christ did in his life is a perfect example for us to follow, most particularly in his passion: he gave up joy; he suffered, endured the cross and merited salvation. How will we respond? What is my gaze fixed upon and how it is informing my thoughts, actions and decisions? When do I make the time to fix my gaze upon Jesus in adoration?”

The fire of his love

The Gospel readings from St. Luke turn our gaze on the fire of God’s love. Jesus illuminates this fire for us with the fervor of his love for humanity. He greatly desires us to know and receive his love, enough so that it is “sets the earth ablaze.” This fiery love may cause division, as Jesus’ teachings still do today. The contradictions are, in fact, an invitation to know and grow in trust of the truth that is from God alone. As disciples, we are to commit to the serious work of missionary
St. Philomena celebrates adoration anniversary

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Father Vincent Dufresne admitted to some trepidation when he was serving as pastor at St. Philomena church in Labadieville a decision was made to open a perpetual adoration chapel.

Such an ambitious undertaking would require at least the commitment of 400 volunteers and being a small parish his concerns were genuine.

The first few weeks attracted only about half of the needed volunteers but within a month 400 adorers were committed.

Twenty-five years later, what Father Dufresne called a “groundswell” of support remains alive in this small community perched on the banks of Bayou Lafourche on the southeastern fringe of the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

“The faith here is contagious,” Father Dufresne said, as he greeted former parishioners during a meal following a Mass celebrating the 25th anniversary of the chapel. “When one or a few (parishioners) started to talk about it, others realized that they were also interested and that is what started happening.

“A few people were unsure about it but the more individuals said, “If so and so is going to be doing it, then I can do it.’ And that is what led to a groundswell.”

The chapel opened at a time when Father Jeff Bayhi and Father Cleo Milano began asking parishioners around the diocese to consider establishing adoration chapels, with the goal if not every church, at least in every region of the diocese. Father Dufresne said one of the reasons he was asked is because he and Father Milano had served together as parochial vicars at St. Philomena early in their ministries, and the church was located on the edge of the diocese.

“I started thinking about it and realized because of the solid Catholic roots in this community, if there is any chance of an adoration chapel, it had to be here,” he said.

For Labadieville native Gail Ledet, a seed planted in Slidell when her husband of 55 years, have never left, initially each committing to two hours a week but now each is down to one. Gail is also in charge of coordinating the schedules, making sure each hour is covered, a task she imagined impossible years ago.

“It’s awesome, and we are so blessed,” she said. “God is talking to you every time you go, even if you actually fall asleep or just meditate. It just enriches you, and it has influenced my children.

“Only if you could get everybody to try it. It is so rewarding.”

“My husband and I are so close; God has blessed our marriage,” she added. “God gives you what you need, and I feel that is what God has done for us.”

Connie Naquin, another charter member, said she always experienced a sense of peace during her hour of adoration. For years her hour was on Thursday but switched to Sunday at the request of a fellow adorer.

During the past 25 years, she has only missed three of her scheduled hours, testimony to her dedication, a commitment shared by her fellow adorers.

“When I was in the chapel at least I knew I had the Lord’s full attention,” said Naquin. “But then I said maybe he has my full attention.”

Charter member Alice Blanchard finds solace in the silence and praying to God. She added she thanks the Lord for the day and for his presence.

“It gives you peace of mind,” she said “I have seen many blessings coming out of it.”

For 17 years, the chapel was perpetual, but a decline in parishioners has resulted in a reduction of hours. Currently, the chapel, which is located in the former sisters’ chapel when women religious were located in the parish, is open from 4 a.m.-11 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 4 a.m.-noon on Saturday. It is closed Sundays.

However, even with the reduced number of hours, more than 200 volunteers remain committed, an impressive number for such a small parish. Pastor Father Joseph Vu, who was installed a year ago, said the commitment to keep the chapel viable is a demonstration of the faith among parishioners.

“I think it’s also a collaborative effort, primarily the people of Labadieville but now the parish has clustered and has brought in people from our other two parishes (St. Elizabeth Church in Paincourtville and St. Anne Church in Napoleonville) and from (the nearby Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux),” Father Vu said. “I think they are dedicated to keeping up with something that is so important to them,”

“I would be incredibly lost,” he said of his commitment to adoration.

Naquin, who with many others believed the chapel has saved Labadieville from catastrophic events, especially hurricanes, offered words of encouragement to those who may be considering committing to an hour but are unsure.

“People are missing an excellent opportunity for peace and solitude and I think everybody needs that in the busy lives we lead today,” she said. “Sometimes you don’t have to pray. The Lord understands. You can just be there and he will talk to you.”

The adoration chapel at St. Philomena Church in Labadieville was perpetual for 17 years. The chapel is now open from 4 a.m.-11 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 4 a.m.-noon on Saturday. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator
WASHINGTON (CNS) – Pope Francis joined Catholic Church leaders expressing sorrow after back-to-back mass shootings in the United States left at least 31 dead and dozens injured in Texas and Ohio Aug. 3 and 4.

After the prayer called the Angelus in St. Peter’s Square on Aug. 4, the pope said he wanted to convey his spiritual closeness to the victims, wounded and the families affected by the attacks. He also included those who died a weekend earlier during a shooting at a festival in Gilroy, California.

“I am spiritually close to the victims of the episodes of violence that these days have bloodied Texas, California and Ohio, in the United States, affecting defenseless people,” he said.

He joined bishops in Texas as well as national Catholic organizations and leaders reacting to a bloody first weekend of August, which produced the eighth deadliest gun violence attack in the country after a gunman opened fire in the morning of Aug. 4. The suspected gunman was fatally wounded and police later identified him as 24-year-old Connor Betts, of Bellbrook, Ohio.

On Aug. 4, after the second shooting became public, the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and the chairman of the bishops’ domestic policy committee offered prayers, condolences and urged action.

“The lives lost this weekend confront us with a terrible truth. We can never again believe that mass shootings are an isolated exception. They are an epidemic against life that we must, in justice, face,” said Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, USCCB president, in a statement issued jointly with Bishop Frank J. Dewane of Venice, Florida, chairman of the USCCB’s Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development.

“God’s mercy and wisdom compel us to move toward preventative action. We encourage all Catholics to increased prayer and sacrifice for healing and the end of these shootings. We encourage Catholics to pray and raise their voices for needed changes to our national policy and national culture as well,” the statement continued.

Archbishop Dennis M. Schnurr, who heads the Cincinnati Archdiocese, which includes Dayton, said it was “with a heavy heart” Catholics turned to prayer this Sunday. “As tragic and violent shootings continue in our country,” in El Paso and now Dayton, “I ask for everyone of faith to join in prayer for the victims and their loved ones.”

Mourners take part in a vigil near the border fence between Mexico and the U.S. after a mass shooting at a Walmart store in El Paso, Texas, Aug. 3. Pope Francis joined other Catholic Church leaders expressing sorrow after back-to-back mass shootings in the United States left at least 31 dead and dozens injured in Texas and Ohio Aug. 3 and 4.

African-American Sainthood Day of Reflection set Aug. 17

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

A day of reflection titled “African-Americans on the Path to Sainthood” is scheduled Saturday, Aug. 17 at Holy Rosary Church in St. Amant beginning at 8 a.m.

The day will include prayers, presentations, lunch and a vigil Mass.

An impressive lineup of seven presenters are scheduled, including Holy Rosary pastor Father Joshua Johnson, Bishop Joseph N. Perry of Chicago, who is the Postulator of the Cause for Father Augustus Tolton of Chicago and Father Tony Ricard of the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

The event is to pray for the saint causes of the six African-American candidates already in progress as well as any future candidates. The six candidates include Mother Henriette De Lille of New Orleans, Pierre Toussaint of New York, Mary Elizabeth Lange of Baltimore, Father Tolton, Julie Greeley of Denver and Sister Thea Bowman of Canton, Mississippi.

In 2018 Xavier University of New Orleans announced the formation of the first Center for Saints, working in conjunction with the six established guilds for the six African-American sainthood causes.

In addition to housing materials and promoting the causes for the six candidates, the center will also incorporate the stories of St. Katherine Drexel and St. Kateri Tekawitha in its collection.

Currently, there are no African American saints from North America.

For more information, visit learn.evangcatbr.org/african-american-sainthood.
A fixture in the community for more than 35 years, the Hispanic Apostolate has witnessed significant growth in the past few years because of the rising number of immigrants entering the Baton Rouge area.

But even with the increase in activity, the role of the agency has never changed from its humble beginnings at a lone desk in the parish office building at St. George Church in Baton Rouge. The apostolate continues to provide spiritual guidance, help immigrants reettle into their community, provide educational and financial resources undocumented people have limited access to obtain and provide counsel or simply a person to talk to in order to help individuals and families grapple with the loneliness of being alone in an unfamiliar country and culture.

Perhaps most important, “they need a place to call home,” former apostolate executive director Maria Rosa Eads said.

And the Hispanic Apostolate is a story that needs to be told. Because of the constant influx of new members to the Hispanic community, many are unfamiliar with its history, so Eads and Dilla Martinez collaborated on a recently released book “Hispanic Memoir (1983-2018)” celebrating 35 years of serving others.

Eads said she and Martinez began discussing the idea of a book several years ago, although actual work did not begin until 2018 with the goal of having it completed in time for the apostolate’s 35th anniversary this past October. Challenges delayed publication, but the book was released during a recent ceremony at the apostolate office located at the site of the old St. Pius X Church in north Baton Rouge.

“There was no one to tell the story,” Eads said. “We decided it became a need for us, for the people to know what the apostolate is and how much the apostolate has grown and what it has done for the past 35 years.

“The community needs to know it.”

“We love the apostolate so much, and we always said you cannot love something you don’t know,” she added.

The book, which Eads calls “a labor of love,” recalls how Bish-

op Stanley J. Ott recognized the fledging apostolate as an institution of the Diocese of Baton Rouge on Oct 9, 1983. Father David Vavasseur, then pastor at St. George Church, was appointed part-time chaplain and provided a desk in the parish office.

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“We have a come a long way not just in facilities but having someone to tend to them,” Eads said, giving a nod to chaplain Father Robert Halter CsdR. “It keeps changing but always for the better, trying to help the community the best way we can. The community has a place it can call its own.”

She said the book, which is printed in English and Spanish, is important to help dispel many of the misconceptions about the apostolate’s mission and how it began. She explained Hispanic community members have made significant contributions to the faith life of the diocese in a number of ways, which are detailed in the book, and more globally to the community in general through time, talent and resources.

“The (book) accurately recounts the rapid numeric growth of the Spanish-speaking Catholic community members in and around Baton Rouge and points to how their faith has been cherished and nourished,” said Hispanic Apostolate executive director Julia Scarnato. “It also provides an overview of how the (apostolate) has taken into account the cultural diversity of the many Central and South American countries represented in its numbers.

“It has given witness to the universality of the Catholic Church professing one Lord, one faith and one baptism,” she said.

Scarnato said the fundamental value reflected in the book, which she called a gift of the apostolate’s mission and how it began. She explained Hispanic community members have made significant contributions to the faith life of the diocese in a number of ways, which are detailed in the book, and more globally to the community in general through time, talent and resources.

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“Some believed that the task could be carried to completion, whereas others doubted that it could ever come to be a reality,” she said. “It was once again discovered that with God all things are possible, in and with Jesus the Lord.”

Scarnato commended Eads and others who had the desire to leave behind a witness to future generations regarding what needed to be done to keep the Hispanic community alive and united in love supported by the bishops and priests.

“It shows us all that the task of the Gospel is not easy and never ends,” she said.

Eads also expressed her gratitude to the diocese.

“We have a bishop (Bishop Michael G. Duca) that is supportive of the Hispanic community and (Bishop Emeritus Robert W. Muench) was very, very open to us and very helpful,” she said. “They see the need and that the need keeps growing.”


**Book details history of Hispanic Apostolate**

By Richard Meek

The Catholic Commentator

Don and Carl of Mr. D’s say don’t wait for disaster to strike. Tree removal is a highly technical, yet a delicate task that requires qualified professionals. Call on us BEFORE the HURRICANE SEASON and we will give you a FREE quote on any tree removal or trimming. Mr. D’s also offers DEEP ROOT FERTILIZATION.

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Don and Carl say THANKS to their customers in the Baton Rouge area for over 40 years of service! Licensed and fully insured
Earlier this year, I saw a communicant take the host and proceed to dip it into the consecrated wine before consuming it. Is this acceptable? (I had never seen it before.)  

(Annandale, Virginia)

No. What you saw is not permissible unless the one receiving Communion happened to be a priest concelebrating the Mass. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal, the church’s “rulebook” on liturgy, does envision “intinction” but limits self-communicating to priest-concelebrants.

For others, the instruction indicates that “each communicant, holding a Communion plate under the mouth, approaches the priest. … The priest takes that “each communicant, holding a communicant’s mouth (No. 287).

A

Question Corner

Father Kenneth Doyle

What do persons who don’t normally eat meat do about the church’s rules on abstinence, such as on the Fridays during Lent? Nowadays, many Catholics are mainly fish eaters anyway, or they are vegans or vegetarians. What can they do to participate in the discipline of the church? (New Middletown, Indiana)

Your question prompts a question in my own mind: What’s the difference between a vegan and a vegetarian? On the off chance that any of our readers – like myself – might not have known this, here it is: Vegans eat no animal products at all, while vegetarians don’t eat animals but may eat animal products that come from them such as dairy and eggs. And yes, there are many of each: I’ve read that, at some point in their lives, more than 10 percent of Americans are vegans or vegetarians. So your question does have relevance, and the answer is simple: Pick your own pence.

In 1966, when the U.S. Catholic bishops lifted the rule of mandatory abstinence on Fridays throughout the year, this is what they said: “Since the spirit of penance primarily suggests that we discipline ourselves in that which we enjoy most, to many in our day abstinence from meat no longer implies penance, while renunciation of other things would be more penitential” (No. 20).

Vegans and vegetarians should choose their own sacrifice on the Fridays of Lent. How about refraining from your favorite meatless meal? And it doesn’t even have to be food-related: Since Fridays are set aside for grateful remembrance of the sacrifice of Jesus, how about taking an extra five minutes of prayer on Lenten Fridays to thank Jesus for dying on the cross?

We just learned that our daughter is engaged. Her fiancé is not a Catholic and probably not a member of any religion. We raised our kids in the church, and they always attended Sunday Mass. But our daughter has problems with some of the church’s teachings and has stopped going to Mass; now she is saying that she doesn’t want to be married in the church, particularly since she’s horrified by the recent scandals.

We plan on speaking to her again about the importance of being married in the church. We’re having Masses for that intention and have also asked some priest friends to pray for her. Should she persist, however, we do have some questions.

I feel that our not attending her wedding would rupture our relationship with her and probably sink any chances of her ever returning to the church. But would it be wrong to participate in any way – such as by her dad’s walking her down the aisle, or helping to pay for the wedding or giving her a gift?

She is our only daughter and this is heartbreaking for us, but we don’t want to offend the Lord, even for the sake of our daughter. Any insight you could give would be appreciated as would your prayers for her and for us. (Austin, Texas)

I am edified by your question – both by your clear love for your daughter and by your strong commitment to the church. I assure you that I will add my own prayers for her happiness in marriage and for her eventual return to Catholic practice. (As regards your daughter’s horror at recent scandals, would it help if you told her that you yourself are equally offended, and that you are not willing to let this criminal and sinful behavior do even more damage by depriving you of the support you experience from the sacraments?)

As to your participation in her wedding ceremony: You have explained to your daughter, and will again, your strong preference that she be married in the church and your disappointment should she not be. But I agree that your absence from the ceremony might well eliminate any chance of her ever coming back to the sacraments.

So long as she understands your feelings and your regard for the faith in which you raised your children, I think that you and your husband could participate in the wedding ceremony in the ways you mention.
WINE conference encourages women to be disciples

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

The national organization Women in the New Evangelization (WINE) branched forth into the Diocese of Baton Rouge with a sold-out first conference at Holy Rosary Church in St. Amant on July 27.

“WINE is about relationship and rooted in Scripture,” WINE founder Kelly Wahlquist of Plymouth, Minnesota told the 550 attendees.

She said WINE’s mission is modeled after the Blessed Mother, Jesus’ first disciple. Wahlquist noted when the wine ran out at the wedding feast at Cana, Mary told the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

Wahlquist said, “We have a mission to make disciples. It’s proclaiming beauty, beauty made simple. But first we have to be a disciple.”

To be a disciple, women must listen to and serve Jesus, she emphasized.

“Know where you are going and who you need to follow,” said Wahlquist.

Referring to the Blessed Mother, Martha and Mary and Mary Magdalene, Wahlquist said for more than 2,000 years women have faithfully served Christ and his church.

“Pray and go out with confidence because you have the best methods possible – relationship and reconciliation,” she said.

Syndicated Catholic talk show host and author Teresa Tomeo, who converted after her marriage relationship building, referred to the relationships between Mary and the saints.

She talked about the struggles in her marriage with (now Deacon) Dominick Pastore. At one point they invested more in their careers than their marriage.

“We tried it on our own and almost lost everything,” said Tomeo, who converted after her husband.

The couple participated in Routrouvaille and other Catholic marriage relationship building programs.

Even after their conversions, old habits were hard to overcome. That’s when surrendering to God was essential for Tomeo.

“When we surrender, we surrender to the king of the universe – surrender, surrender, surrender,” said Tomeo.

Discipleship includes suffering, which is the time to look to the crucified Christ, Olivia Gulino, a teacher at St. Joseph’s Academy in Baton Rouge, noted in her talk “Wisdom of the Cross.” Gulino was associate director of youth and young adult ministry for the Diocese of Baton Rouge before accepting a position to teach at the beginning of the school year.

She urged the women to be cognizant of God in the world and understand that God loves people collectively and individually.

“God has chosen you,” said Gulino.

Because relationships are based on love, there will be trials, sacrifices and a need for humble submission, she said.

While problems within the church receive a lot of attention, Gulino challenged the women to embrace the church’s holy moments.

In highlighting the beauty of the liturgy, she emphasized that the Eucharistic Prayer gives thanks to God for his faithful- ness throughout salvation history.

Just as God is faithful, she calls people to be faithful to his covenant with him, said Gulino.

She highlighted God’s testing of Abraham’s faithfulness by asking him to sacrifice his son Isaac before sending an angel to stop him as he was about to do so.

Jesus is the ultimate model of sacrifice, Gulino stressed.

“Look to the cross,” said Gulino. “You can see anguish, but it was also finished.”

Underscoring the importance of having courageous faith and being a bold witness, Gloria Purvis, host of EWTN’s “Morning Glory,” talked about her conversion to the Catholic faith and in the New Evangelization conference in Baton Rouge.

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Kelly Wahlquist, founder of WINE, talked about the beauty of women in discipleship. Photos by Debbie Shelley | The Catholic Commentator
Adult VBS includes prayer, personal reflection

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

Visit any Vacation Bible School in the Diocese of Baton Rouge and you’ll find a similar format of activities of the week-long event: gathering, singing, prayer, Scripture readings, sharing, games, snacks and arts and crafts. At the adult Vacation Bible School at St. Paul the Apostle Church in Baton Rouge, the format is almost the same.

“We don’t do arts and crafts,” said Barbara Haynes, the adult VBS leader for St. Paul. “We do adult things like our Bible lessons. And, June 26 we’re going to do something on discipleship and how you go about doing that.”

Wearing a red “Kingdom Crew” t-shirt, Haynes is enthusiastic about adult VBS. She said the leadership role was passed on to her four years ago by long-time St. Paul parishioner Eva Rodney, who also coordinated adult faith formation for the church. With a bubbly personality and a passion for “the word,” Haynes was the perfect choice to carry the torch.

She uses the children’s VBS program as a guide, building her lesson around each day’s “major theme.” But having to create a Bible study lesson for a week is no small feat. Haynes does her own Biblical research and creates numerous hand-outs with each day’s outline of Scriptures, prayer intentions, references and questionnaires. Each attendee receives a packet of this information for later reference.

“(Haynes) is really good with creating a plan and daily readings that follow you through,” said Makisha Anderson, a parishioner of St. Paul who attended the adult VBS while her two children were at regular VBS. “I have all of my packets from the past two Vacation Bible Schools because they’re that organized. And, it really helps feed you spiritually not only this week but throughout the year. It gives you a good foundation going to the next season.”

Attendance ranges from 20 to 25 people each night and, according to Haynes, the class draws more than just St. Paul parishioners, including one parishioner from St. Agnes Church in Baton Rouge. Haynes said people from the surrounding Eden Park community also attend, including a deacon from a nearby church.

The evenings kick off at 6 p.m. with children from VBS participating in an “opening” ceremony. Everyone is then dismissed to their groups, with the adults gathering in a portable classroom behind the parish hall.

Once everyone is settled, with their Bibles before them, Haynes starts off discussions. On this night, she encouraged everyone to think of three blessings, starting with “simple things instead of someone winning the lottery” and cited smelling flowers or enjoying a sunrise as examples. Dialogue among the group followed along those lines, with people sharing their own blessings or referring to the Scripture readings and parallel events in their own lives. The lesson wrapped up with a raffle and prizes, delighting everyone. Then, the classroom was filled with beautiful voices singing acapella, “Since I Lay My Burdens Down.”

“I love it,” said Janet Anthony. “It’s a continuation of what we do in regular Bible study on Wednesday nights so I love the fact that we’re able to get together and discuss topics in general from the Bible, and we can get together and interact.”

The adult VBS has become so popular that those who attend ask for a continuation of lessons, according to Haynes.

“Oh yeah they think we’re coming back (the next week),” stated Haynes enthusiastically. “I said, ‘No, we’re just doing it one week! That’s all!’ ”

And for those who want more, Haynes said some people join the weekly Wednesday night Bible study that she also leads. But for one week, every summer at St. Paul Church, adults can be part of something that remains very dear in both their hearts and their memories.

“It’s worth it for me,” said Sonja Bowers. “We came to Vacation Bible School as children and as an adult I learn a lot because I do attend the Bible study on Wednesday nights. (VBS) is an extension and the group is wonderful. I think it’s great.”

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- Your heirs blow their inheritance because they were not mature enough to handle it properly or your legacy to support charitable causes is not carried out as you wish;
- Your children have to split their inheritance with their ex-spouse when your children get divorced;
- You may unknowingly reveal your sensitive financial information to nosey neighbors and identity thieves;
- Your entire estate may be lost on long term care costs;
- Your children have to go to court to fight others to get their share of your estate;
- You experience catastrophic illness;
- Your heirs have to manage your affairs when you become incapacitated during life;
- Your executor must pay considerable attorney fees, court costs and death taxes you'd prefer be directed to your loved ones;
- They have to post a bond to become the executor of your estate and they have to get a judge's permission to sell your home, car, or other assets after you die.

Leaving assets to your loved ones can be complex. Whether your children are young or old, rich or poor, married or single, you need to be aware of some important legal concepts that could jeopardize your children's inheritance. If you can relate to one or more of the results above, you need an estate plan. Proper estate planning can avoid most, if not all, of these problems for your children, grand-children, or anyone else you intend to benefit.

If you can relate to one or more of the results above, you need to be aware of some important legal concepts that could jeopardize your children's inheritance. If you experience catastrophic illness, you may unknowingly reveal your sensitive financial information to nosey neighbors and identity thieves, or you could result in any of the following:

- The wrong people raise your children if you die before your children reach the age of majority or you have special needs children;
- You may unknowingly reveal your sensitive financial information to nosey neighbors and identity thieves;
- Your entire estate may be lost on long term care costs;
- Your heirs have to manage your affairs when you become incapacitated during life;
- Your executor must pay considerable attorney fees, court costs and death taxes you'd prefer be directed to your loved ones;
- They have to post a bond to become the executor of your estate and they have to get a judge's permission to sell your home, car, or other assets after you die.

Leaving assets to your loved ones can be complex. Whether your children are young or old, rich or poor, married or single, you need to be aware of some important legal concepts that could jeopardize your children’s inheritance. If you can relate to one or more of the results above, you need an estate plan. Proper estate planning can avoid most, if not all, of these problems for your children, grand-children, or anyone else you intend to benefit.

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At 66 years old, Immaculate Conception Church in Baton Rouge is undergoing a facelift, but it’s more than just a cosmetic procedure. The church is going through a massive renovation that will serve the parishioners in a way that has been, for lack of a better term, challenging.

“We need more room,” explained pastor Father Tom Clark SJ. “So we’re building a large foyer onto the front of the church and we’re opening up the sanctuary.”

According to Father Clark, the church, which has 755 families, was built in the 1950s according to liturgical norms of that time. Pews were built on either side of the altar, making for a “pretty small sanctuary.” Sacristies were built on either side of the altar, making for a “pretty small sanctu-

ary.”

According to Father Clark, renovation talks began in the 1990s, and plans were even drawn up. But the idea fell to the way-side until five years ago when the parish began “seriously talking about it.” However, another setback came with the 2016 flood which is housing a new sacristy. And, onto the back of the church we built an activity center.

The stained glass windows and the altar are covered with plywood for protection from the work as the sound of ban saws, hammers and the chatter of workmen echo throughout the cavernous church. Rows of scaffolding surround the outside of the brick building on Curtis Street. A large dumpster and other construction equipment occupy the majority of the parking lot. Small boards mark a pathway into the sanctuary; updating the infrastructure of the church as well.

Small boards mark a pathway into the building, where stalls, diet and more boards litter the floor while scaffolding takes up the majority of the space throughout. Gone are the original oak pews, donated to smaller area churches or purchased by some parishioners. Other interior furnishings were put in storage.

“We’re adding another 2,000 square feet – the original church was about 5,000 square feet,” said Lewis. “When (Father Clark) found I was an engineer he put me to work. I’ve been enjoying it because I built chemical plants all my life so I’m doing what he’s asked me to do. I’m his engineer!”

Since January, Mass at Immaculate Conception has been celebrated in the parish activity center. Other events have also been held there, including baptisms. The Parish School of Religion (PSR) classes are held in the classrooms just off the main hall.

Weddings and funerals have been held at other area churches including St. Paul the Apostle Church in Baton Rouge, Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Baton Rouge and St. Isidore the Farmer Church in Baker. Though the temporary accommodations have presented challenges, such as one group leaving Mass while another is arriving, it has also added a new dimension to the celebration of Mass, according to Father Clark.

“We’re creating a new space where you relate to one another in a different way, ex-plained Father Clark. “So, that’s been very, very positive. Everyone’s sitting in different seats and sitting closer together and maybe going to different Masses in order to spread the numbers out over three Masses so we fit in (the activity center).”

But while the change of scenery has been nice, Father Clark said the novelty has worn off and “we’re getting anxious to go back to church.” He added the recent framing of the large new foyer has also generated excitement among parishioners.

Father Clark said along with the financial advisory committee, there is also a renovation committee and there have been meetings with the parish along with focus groups “to get people’s input and make them feel part of the renovation process.”

He also noted that many parishioners have been volunteering, “so the burden of the (new) construction has really been shared by many people.”

The construction of the church it-self in 1953 has a similar history, according to Father Clark, with many members of the parish who were bricklayers, carpenters and electricians volunteering their Saturdays to build the church.

“It took a year to build, and it was a real community event,” explained Father Clark. “So the people in the church have always felt that this was their church – it was built by their fathers and their grandfa-thers. So there was a really strong sense that their ancestors had built this church, so I think we feel very much part of them. And now we are fixing up the church – as they hand-ed the church on to us, we are get-ting ready to hand the church on to a new generation.”

So, what we needed was more room,” explained pastor Father Tom Clark SJ. “So we’re building a large foyer onto the front of the church and we’re opening up the sanctuary.”

“People have made pledges and they’ve been extremely generous in fulfilling those pledges. The generosity of members of the parish and their dedication has been significant.”

Immaculate Conception Church

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

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[1] Father Tom Clark and Ron Lewis talk about the massive work being at Immaculate Conception Church in Baton Rouge. Lewis, a retired plant engineer, is overseeing the project which includes adding more space to the church and updating its infrastructure. Photos by Richard Meek

[2] A large new foyer is being added to the church for families to gather and visit before and after Mass.
Summer Angel Tree spreads Christmas joy in July

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

At a time of year far removed from the ringing of Christmas bells and “angels” showing up with much needed gifts and necessities and holiday cheer, many struggling to make ends meet look at the waves of summer heat and think, “I can sure use an angel now.”

With a bright, festively decorated tree topped with a smiling sun wearing sunglasses, St. Thomas More Church in Baton Rouge, through its Summer Angel Tree Project, showed angels are flying now.

In recent years, St. Thomas More added the Summer Angel Tree in addition to its Christmas Angel Tree as an ongoing effort to support those in need.

“The difference between our Summer and Christmas Angel trees is that our Summer Angel Tree focuses mainly on organizations (that assist the needy) and Christmas focuses on family and individual needs,” said Crystal Hebert, co-coordinator of the Summer Angel Tree Project.

This summer’s recipients were Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, the St. Vincent de Paul Society, St. Thomas More School in Baton Rouge, Broadmoor Elementary School in Baton Rouge, Maison Des Ami of Louisiana and the Baton Rouge General and Woman’s Hospital NICU units.

The organizations gave St. Thomas More a list of needed supplies, which were then listed on angel ornaments.

Especially since the flood of 2016, there are people who still struggle to meet their basic needs, according to Lisa Johnson, Summer Angel Tree co-coordinator. Add to that those who have lost their homes in a house fire, those who have lost the income of the primary breadwinner through death or illness, single-parent households and the stress of buying school supplies and uniforms while paying bills and there are a broad range of needs.

Jean Kay Brown, who serves with her husband, Charlie, on one of five teams on the STM’s Council of SVDP, said they received gift cards through the Summer Angel Tree.

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Jean Kay Brown, who serves with her husband, Charlie, on one of five teams on the STM’s Council of SVDP, said they received gift cards through the Summer Angel Tree.

“We try to help as much as we can to help fill a void,” said Brown, adding that the STM SVDP council receives 20-25 requests per week for financial assistance.

She said many families struggle this time of year because of the added expense of buying school supplies and uniforms. Even the cost of gas can present an additional financial burden for those with tight finances, she said.

With each card distributed STM lets the recipients know they care about them, according to Brown.

“We’ll say a prayer for their particular needs, and we always extend an invitation that they are welcome if they are looking for a church home,” said Brown.

STM averages about 450 angels on the tree per summer and parishioners respond generously, said Hebert and Johnson. Some are drawn to select angels requesting certain items.

Johnson noted an elderly couple, whose grown children are adopted, pick angels each year to help a baby boy and girl.

“They told me their adoption story and how they like to do that for summer and Christmas,” Johnson said.

Some contribute their talents to the Angel Tree Project. One woman told Johnson, “I used to make receiving blankets – I think I want to get back into it.”

Other parishioners were moved to participate in the Summer Angel Tree Project to give back to STM.

Natalia Ortiz said when her husband, Fernando, became ill with cancer about two years ago, STM supported her. She had always wanted to do something to help people in need but never joined a ministry.

“When my husband got cancer, the whole (STM) community surrounded us and embraced us while my husband was sick and receiving treatment,” said Ortiz. “They helped give Fernando the will to survive. They helped us all the way when I think about them I want to cry.”

She said “out of thanks for her husband being here on earth,” she volunteered for the Angel Tree Project and saw the suffering others were going through.

“I could see Jesus in the people they helped,” said Ortiz.

She said her encounters with the less fortunate taught her important life lessons.

“God loves you even though you are going through a tough time,” said Ortiz. “I don’t think cancer was a tragedy; it was a blessing because of all the graces we’ve received. We are from Columbia, so we don’t have (biological) family here. They (STM) have become our family – by embracing each other we are getting closer to God.”
Bible learning made fun

(In the Aug. 2 publication of The Catholic Commentator, a church holding a Vacation Bible School was misidentified. St. Paul the Apostle Church in Baton Rouge should have been the church identified rather than St. Francis Xavier Church in Baton Rouge. Below is the story reprinted in its entirety.)

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

Outside of the school gym at St. Alphonsus of Ligouri Church in Greenwell Springs, the sound of music and voices could be heard. The commotion inside was coming from 250 kids, ages four through 13, separated into groups identified as animals from safari: crocodiles, cheetahs, lions, elephants, etc. Among the deafening noises from this summer Vacation Bible School was a single message of knowing God’s love.

“The idea is that all of the kids have come to the African savannah and we’re showing them how they can find God there through different animal characters,” said Kaitlyn Johnson, director of VBS at St. Alphonsus.

At St. Paul the Apostle Church in Baton Rouge, all ages participate in Vacation Bible School in activities sorted by age group.

“High-schoolers help lead different activities and we have an adult bible study,” said Ladira Soulier. “I feel very passionately about being united in that vision,” Soulier said.

Soulier also stated that VBS leaders from St. Theresa join forces with those from St. John the Evangelist Church in Prairieville and St. Mark Church in Gonzales to share resources and manpower.

“We get together at the beginning of the summer and we make the decorations together and plan things together and we share the decorations at each others’ VBS,” said Soulier. “St. John is usually the first one to kick it off in our area. St. Mark’s is this week and at the end of this week, St. Theresa will go and help them take their stuff down so we can bring it over to our campus. It’s a blast, it really is.”

At St. Aloysius Church in Baton Rouge, an army of volunteers and organizers played host to more than 300 children during this summer’s VBS program. More than 100 adult volunteers and 50 junior volunteers stepped in to assist. The theme followed the travels of St. Paul and volunteers set up tents throughout the parish hall for the youth. Scripture readings and daily activities focused on that theme, according to Tricia Greely, director of Children Formation at St. Aloysius.

“Besides it being an important time for our children, it’s also a great opportunity for our volunteers to come in and share their gifts and talents with the children,” said Greely. “We are so blessed to have such wonderful volunteers. That’s what makes this program work.”

Besides the fun activities at VBS, the children involved in many of the programs are encouraged to participate in community projects whether through donations from the younger kids or service projects for the older ones.

“I think the children are happy to do this,” said Greely. “I think they feel like they’re doing something good for somebody else and I think it’s a good way to teach them how to share what they have with somebody else.”

“Vacation Bible School is important because it gives the youth of our parish an opportunity to be engaged while learning about Jesus Christ. VBS offers an avenue for children and teens to become immersed in the stories of the Bible while giving back to our church community of St. George,” said Catherine Alford, director of Child Faith Formation at St. George Church in Baton Rouge.

“The kids have been really engaged,” said Johnson. “A lot of them are just loving it. When we come together each morning our leader helps the kids remember those moments that they saw God. It’s been such an awesome response each morning to hear those stories.”

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Movie Reviews

USCCB Office for Film & Broadcasting classifications:
- A-I – General patronage
- A-II – Adults and adolescents
- A-III – Adults
- A-IV – Adults, with reservations
- L – Limited adult audience
- O – Morally offensive

Fast & Furious Presents: Hobbs & Shaw
Universal

Two longtime antagonists, a retired American law-enforcement official (Dwayne Johnson) and a British military veteran (Jason Statham), are forced to work together after the latter's estranged sister (Vanessa Kirby), an intelligence operative, is wrongly accused of stealing a bioweapon with the potential to wipe out a whole swath of the world's population. The virus was developed by a secretive organization intent on killing off the weak and enhancing survivors as they out a whole swath of the world's population.

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

The Art of Racing in the Rain
Fox 2000

This otherwise benign tale of a man and his dog, adapted from the novel by Garth Stein, is marred by a treatment of reincarnation that prevents endorsement for impressionable viewers. A wise old god (Michael York), acts as witness to a child's life and narrates part of the life story of the aspiring Formula One racecar driver (Milo Ventimiglia) who adopts him as a puppy. Though his devoted owner faces professional and financial challenges, he hits the jackpot personally when he falls for a gentle teacher (Amanda Seyfried) and their model marriage produces a daughter (Ryan Kiera Armstrong). But there are further difficulties ahead, beginning with the anti-pathy toward him of his wife's snooty rich parents (Kathy Baker and Martin Donovan). With its portrait of spouses who support each other admirably in good times and adversity alike, director Simon Curtis' film, written for the screen by Mark Bomback, would normally be a movie to celebrate. Yet the seriousness with which it takes the pooh's aspiration to return as a human being in his next life makes it problematic for youthful viewers. Their elders will note some clumsy storytelling and a high level of predictability. Probably acceptable for mature teens. Implied premarital sexual activity, a single use of profanity, brief but graphic scatological humor. A-III; PG

Dora and the Lost City of Gold
Paramount

This live-action adaptation of the popular Nickelodeon cartoon series “Dora the Explorer,” directed by James Bobin, is that Hollywood rarity: a sunny, fun-filled movie with valuable lessons about kindness, friendship and tolerance. Taking the place of the 7-year-old featured on the small screen, a teenage Dora (Isabela Moner) is sent to live with relatives in Los Angeles while her archeologist parents (Eva Longoria and Michael Pena) set off in search of the fabled Incan site of the title. Before long Dora, together with her cousin (Jude Wahlberg) and two classmates (Madeleine Madden and Nicholas Coombe), is kidnapped by bandits eager to locate Ma, Pa and the pre-Columbian treasure from which the location of their dig takes its name. Rescued by a family friend (Eugenio Derbez), the intrepid teens set out to find Dora's folks before the thieves, led by a crafty fox (voice of Benicio del Toro), can. The film's few rough edges are compensated for by its much-needed presentation of positive role models for young people. Unthreatening action sequences, a childish scatological reference, one mildly crass oath. A-II; PG

WINE ▼
From page 7

She graduated in 1990 from Cornell University, where she did not experience resistance to her faith. She married her college sweetheart and they moved to Washington, D.C. and attended St. Augustine Church. She was content with being a “pew Catholic” until she recited the words “the Lord the giver of life” during the Nicene Creed during Mass and God convinced her to act on her pro-life beliefs.

Since then Purvis has served on a number of respect life boards. She is also the chairperson for Black Catholics United for Life and serves on the National Black Catholic Congress’ Leadership Commission on Social Justice.

Purvis’ call to action embodies her to proclaim the church’s teachings on the dignity of human life, sexuality and marriage in the midst of secular culture resistance.

“We’re called to live in Jesus,” said Purvis. “We’re his children, and we have a purpose. It’s not our way, but it’s his way.”

Wahlquist concluded the conference by offering WINE’s support through small “cluster” groups and other resources.

“You are doing some wonderful things, come into a holy alliance,” said Wahlquist.

Conference attendees said the speakers' messages “fired them up” in their faith journeys.

“I was struck about how the speakers connected with our spiritual lives in their stories. They said what we needed to hear,” said Catherine Gautreau, of St. Theresa of Avila Church in Gonzales, who attended the conference with her daughters, Hope and Lexie Gautreau, St. Theresa parishioners.

Hope said, “It was a good day for women to reflect on their role in the church.”

Leslie agreed.

“I liked the message of empowering women and taking an active role in the church,” she said.

Sylvia Winder, of St. Joseph Cathedral in Baton Rouge, relished the chance to see her daughter, Tara Winder, and granddaughter, Naomi Winder, lead music at the conference.

“It was wonderful to see women lifting each other up in prayer,” said Winder.

For more information about WINE, visit CatholicVineyard.com, facebook.com/WomenIntheNewEvangelization, WINE_Ministry (Twitter) or email WINE@CatholicVineyard.com.
Libro sobre el Apostolado Hispano ‘obra de amor’

Escrito por Richard Meek
El Comentador Católico

El Apostolado Hispano ha sido parte de la comunidad durante más de 35 años y ha sido testigo de un crecimiento significativo en los últimos años debido al creciente número de inmigrantes que ingresan al área de Baton Rouge.

Pero incluso con el aumento de la actividad, el papel de la agencia nunca ha cambiado desde sus inicios como un escritorio solitario en el edificio de las oficinas de la parroquia de la Iglesia de San Jorge en Baton Rouge. El apostolado contó con la ayuda de inmigrantes a reestablecerse en sus comunidades, brindar recursos educativos y financieros a las personas indocumentadas que tienen acceso limitado para obtenerlos, y brindar asesoramiento o simplemente tener a una persona con quien hablar para ayudar a las personas y a las familias a lidiar con la soledad de estar solos en un país y cultura desconocidas para ellos.

Quizás lo más importante, “es que necesitan un lugar para llamarlo hogar,” dijo la ex directora ejecutiva del apostolado, María Rosa Eads.

Y el apostolado hispano es una historia que necesita ser contada. Debido a la constante llegada de nuevos miembros a la comunidad hispana, muchos no están familiarizados con su historia, por lo que Eads y Dilia Martínez colaboraron en un libro recientemente publicado “Memorias Hispanas (1983 – 2018)” celebrando 35 años de servicio a otros.

Eads dijo que ella y Martínez comenzaron a discutir la idea de un libro hace varios años, aunque el trabajo real no comenzó hasta el 2018 con el objetivo de completarlo a tiempo para el aniversario del apostolado en octubre del año pasado. Los desafíos retrasaron la publicación, pero el libro fue lanzado durante una ceremonia recientemente en la oficina del apostolado ubicada en el lugar de la antigua Iglesia de San Pío X en el norte de Baton Rouge.

“No hay nadie para narrar la historia,” dijo Eads. “Decidimos que era una necesidad para nosotros, que la gente supiera quién es el apostolado y cuánto ha crecido y qué ha hecho en los últimos 35 años.”

“La comunidad necesita saber esto.”

“Nos mantamos al apostolado, y siempre dijimos que no se puede amar algo que no se conoce,” dijo Eads, porque permite que el apostolado programe eventos sin tener que trabajar en eventos previamente programados en otra iglesia. En los eventos anuales celebrados en San Pío se incluye una impresionante recreación de la Pasión de Jesús el Viernes Santo y una procesión de la Santísima Virgen seguida de una misa y una cena para celebrar la fiesta de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe.

El Apostolado Hispano también patrocina el exitoso Festival Latino anual.

“Hemos recorrido un largo camino no solo en las instalaciones, sino también en tener a alguien que los atienda,” dijo Eads, señalando con la cabeza al capellán Padre Robert Halter CSJ. “Sigue cambiando pero siempre mejorando, tratando de ayudar a la comunidad de la mejor manera posible. La comunidad tiene un lugar que puede llamar suyo.”

Ella dijo que el libro, que está escrito en inglés y en español, es importante para ayudar a disipar muchos de los conceptos erróneos sobre la misión del apostolado y cómo comenzó. Explicó que los miembros de la comunidad hispana han hecho contribuciones significativas a la vida de la diócesis de varias maneras, que se detallan en el libro, y de manera más global a la comunidad en general a través del tiempo, el talento y los recursos.

“(El libro) relata con precisión el rápido crecimiento numérico de los miembros de la comunidad católica de habla hispana en Baton Rouge y sus alrededores y señala cómo su fe ha sido apreciada y nutritida,” dijo la directora ejecutiva del Apostolado Hispano, Julia Scarnato. “También proporciona una visión general de cómo el (apostolado) ha tenido en cuenta la diversidad cultural de los numerosos países de América Central y del Sur representados en sus números.

“Ha dado testimonio de la universalidad de la Iglesia Católica que profesa un solo Señor, una sola fe y un solo bautismo,” dijo.

Scarnato dijo que el valor fundamental reflejado en el libro, el cual para ella es un regalo del Señor, es la creencia básica en el valor de la vida humana. Señaló que se cuenta la historia de un grupo pequeño de personas que asumieron papeles de liderazgo para expresar su fe en su idioma nativo.

“Algunos creían que la tarea podría completarse, mientras que otros dudaban de que alguna vez se hiciera realidad,” dijo. “Una vez más se descubrió que con Dios todas las cosas son posibles, en y con Jesucristo el Señor.”

Scarnato encomendó a Eads y otros que tenían el deseo de dejar un testigo a las generaciones futuras sobre lo que había que hacer para mantener viva y unida a la comunidad hispana en el amor, apoyada por los obispos y sacerdotes.

“Nos muestran a todos que la tarea del Evangelio no es fácil y nunca termina,” dijo Eads también expresó su gratitud a la diócesis.

“Tenemos un obispo (Obispo Michael G. Duca) que apoya a la comunidad hispana y el Obispo Emeritó Robert W. Muench) fue muy, muy abierto a nosotros y nos ayudó mucho,” dijo. “Ven la necesidad y que la necesidad sigue creciendo.”

EDITORIAL

Turn to faith

Thirty innocent lives lost.
Numerous others injured.
Two mass shootings the weekend of Aug. 3-4 stunned a nation, a blood-stained trail of immense sorrow and bewilderment left in its wake.
Predictably, the call for greater gun control has been renewed by some, and perhaps the time is ripe to revisit the issue.
Equally as predictable, gun control opponents view such legislation as drastic and counter that any such measures could potentially be the first step toward abolishment of the Second Amendment, although the founding fathers could never have envisioned weapons firing off more than 30 rounds in 40 seconds.
Answers will not be found in statehouses, political shill, the lack of responsibility in accessing social media or even in censoring of video games.
It is irrefutable that each of those shoulder some responsibility but one must drill far beneath what has become a thinly-veiled culture of death that has permeated our society.
Quite simply, we have become a country minus a moral compass. And when morality becomes the exception rather than the standard, when abhorrent behavior becomes increasingly accepted, when societal norms that have survived centuries are suddenly attacked and appear on the verge of extinction, when murder is state sanctioned, when integrity is passé and those calling for higher ideals are labeled as extremists, a chaotic society drifting in uncertainty is an inevitable result.
As stunning as the shootings were, and let’s not forget seven people were killed in another bloody Chicago weekend, the events exposed a gaping void in our society: the absence of God. For the past several decades, a trend that has only heightened in recent years, God has been evicted from boardrooms, expelled from classrooms, pushed away from dinner tables and even demonized by many. So many even doubt the Lord’s existence.
Yet, we shed tears and ask why when the news of another mass shooting breaks.
Political claptrap aside, separation of church and state is admittedly essential in an effective democracy, but shouldn’t God at least have a seat at the table?
Are we becoming a country where God is becoming a lost ideal, gone the way of 8-tracks and dial-up modems? Has technology and its outgrowth, social media, become the new God, the moral beacon, societal behavior has no boundary.
As stunning as the shootings were, and let’s not forget seven people were killed in another bloody Chicago weekend, the events exposed a gaping void in our society: the absence of God.

I have been very fortunate for being invited by a group of parishioners from St. John the Evangelist Church in Prairieville to accompany them on a mission trip each summer for 10 or more years to Honduras. There, we work with poor people to help them provide for their elementary needs: safe drinking water, housing, simple school buildings, sewerage, clothing, dental hygiene and medicines. And to make sure they have a little fun in their lives, soccer balls, which in Latin countries are called “futbals.”

Somehow in mission countries the word of God in sacred Scripture comes alive in a way that is more powerful than in our highly technical and comfortable first world societies. St. Paul discovered this same thing in his own missionary work, especially with the unurly Corinthians. Theirs was a seaport city with the usual amount of disorder and sinfulness. There was some wealth but also a large amount of poverty. Even in their eucharistic celebrations there was a division between the rich and the poor. St. Paul criticized them for this, taking housing of the poor. He constantly called for unity and pointed out that God was present in the cries and needs of the poor. God was visible in their weakness and vulnerability as he shared it through his son, Jesus. St. Paul reminded the Corinthians that he, as Jesus’ apostle, likewise shared their condition of poverty. “I came to you in weakness and fear and much trembling … with a demonstration of spirit and power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God” (1 Cor 2:3-5). A few verses later, St. Paul wrote, “We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the things freely given by God.” He is saying that the Spirit of God teaches us to understand and judge things quite differently than does the spirit of the world we live in.

That certainly is part of the mission experience. We don’t just give things to the poor but more importantly work with them to obtain the bare necessities of life. Their hope is strengthened while, at the same time, our appreciation for life itself is increased. We live with so much abundance that we take our comfortable lives for granted. As St. Paul says, “Now the natural person does not accept what pertains to the Spirit of God, for to him it is foolishness, and he cannot understand it. The spiritual person, however, can judge everything. … For ‘who has known the mind of the Lord, so as to counsel him?’ But we have the mind of Christ.”

The mission experience has the power to free the participants from the idolatry of a gospel of prosperity. Many Christians believe they enjoy their wealth because they simply acknowledge that there is a God, and obviously he has favored them because of something they did to deserve such blessings. That wasn’t Jesus’ view nor St. Paul’s. The gospel of prosperity is about worldly competition in which the “winners” come out on top as is their rightful due. As for the poor, tough luck, they are the losers. Jesus’ Gospel is about sacrificing for others, putting others before self. The Catholic Church and its popes have called this “God’s preferential option for the poor.”

To watch this true Gospel view play out in mission work is very satisfying, eye-opening and sometimes amusing. This summer our mission was to help double the size of a two-classroom public school which served at least six grades. The existing two concrete block classrooms separated only by an interior wall had a concrete front porch covered by an extension of the tin roof. Three lower grades were taught in the morning, two in the classrooms and the third, in desks, on the porch. The younger students were sent home at lunch time, and after lunch three grades of older students arrived to be taught in the afternoon.
The school was on the top, right side of a hill. The two classrooms plus porch were to help build were to be constructed off the left side of the existing two classrooms and porch. A deep trench for the front of the porch was already begun. It had to be deep to anchor the building and prevent it from sliding down the hill during the rainy season. There were pickaxes and bladed picks to dig and then smooth the sides of the trench along with shovels to remove the dirt. Walls of cement blocks were already in place behind the porch area. A portable cement mixer arrived the second day after we had dug the trench and added pounded dirt to the floors of the classrooms and porch area the first day. Some of our crew of 20 men, women and a few high schoolers also had spent part of the first day tying rebars together to be inserted into the trench where the pillars for the porch would go. Three permanent workers at the mission under the supervision of a hired site manager did the technical work while we manned and womanned the shovels and picks and pushed the wheelbarrows. The real marvel was that school continued while all of this.

Another Perspective

Father John Carville

God is everywhere, if you can see him

PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PRAY FOR US

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

Sharpen your pencils for the school of love

Did you know the family is a school of love? The Second Vatican Council declared this teaching, St. John Paul II deepened it and Pope Francis affirmed it. Our Catechism of the Catholic Church spells it out clearly: The family is “a community of grace and prayer, a school of human virtues and of Christian charity” (No. 1666).

But after a long summer with kids crawling up the walls at home or a challenging season of family reunions or vacations, we might be doubting how well we care for those we’re called to love.

Take heart. A new school year is upon us – the perfect time to sharpen our pencils, roll up our sleeves and redouble our efforts to learn from this school of love.

No matter our vocation or stage of life, all of us are part of families – those we came from and those we choose to build. Family teaches, forms, tests and changes us. But the family is not a school of success. For better or for worse, there are no grades, no awards and no graduation. We’re in it for the long haul. (How many of us have laughed or groaned that we’d never pick our family, but we’re stuck with them?)

Yet we can still move together toward love, inching forward in fits and starts, trying to grow in wisdom even when we fall back.

This school is no summer vacation, full of ease and escape. We have to work hard. We fail sometimes. We get in trouble. But the beauty of this school of love is that we each get to specialize. We don’t have to be an expert in anyone else’s family problems or peccadillos. (What a relief!) We simply have to learn how to love the particular people God gives us to love – and keep relearning how to love them over time.

Want to grow in your school of love this year? Here are three ways:

– Pick your subject. Sometimes the people who seem hardest to love are precisely the ones God calls us to love. Rather than avoiding a particular relative you find repulsive, ask God for the strength and wisdom to meet them where they are – through conversation or prayer. You may never change their mind, opinion or behavior, but you can extend a glimmer of God’s mercy their way.

– Gather your supplies. This year, the average family is projected to spend over $5,000 on each school child. (Please don’t let my kids see this, since there’s no way we’re spending that much on them!) But what matters most in the school of love is free for all. Joy, Forgiveness. Patience. Encouragement. Peace. Pray for what you need most this year and keep your petition daily before your eyes.

– Ask questions. Jesus’ approach with difficult people or sticky situations was to ask questions. Rather than leaping to judgment or condemnation, choose curiosity first. Keep asking questions until you get to the heart of the matter. (Google “The 5 Whys” for a clever approach.)

In the school where I grew up, one sign caught my attention – and I notice every time. I’ve seen it in countless Catholic schools since: “Let it be known to all who enter here that Jesus Christ is the reason for this school, the unseen but ever-present teacher of all its classes, the model of its faculty, and the inspiration for its students.”

Could the same be said of my family? That Jesus Christ is the reason for our being? That God is our teacher and model? That the Spirit is our inspiration? No family is perfect. But we can keep trying with love. Sharpen your pencils. It’s back-to-school time, and all of us have plenty to learn.
Come Lord Jesus Anniversary Mass – To mark the 50th anniversary year of the “Come Lord Jesus” program, founder Father John 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 cindyristroph@outlook.com.

St. Charbel Healing Mass – St. Agnes Church, 749 East Blvd., will host a St. Charbel healing Mass on Thursday, Aug. 22, 6 p.m. For more information, call 225-383-4127.

Ignatian Retreat – Spiritual directors Becky Eldredge and Stephanie Cloutre Davis will lead a women’s silent Ignatian retreat Thursday, Aug. 22 – Sunday, Aug. 25 at Rosaryville Spirit Life Center, 39003 Rosaryville Road, Ponchatoula. For more information, visit catholicretreatcenter.org or call 225-294-5039.

Catechists Convocation – The Office of Evangelization and Catechesis of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, will hold a catechist convocation, “Enlisting Witnesses for Evangelization and Catechesis of the Diocese of Baton Rouge/Stay With Us,” Thursday, Aug. 29, 8:30 a.m. – 1 p.m., at the Catholic Life Center, 1800 S. Acadian Thwy., Baton Rouge. The event is open to all priests, deacons, religious, religious education directors, coordinators, youth ministers, parish and Catholic school religion teachers, home school parents and those who serve in various areas of faith formation and sacramental prep. For information, email Dina Dow at ddow@diobi.org.

Retrouvaille Weekend – Couples experiencing difficulties in their marriage are invited to attend a Retrouvaille weekend Friday, Sept. 6 – Sunday, Sept. 8, at the Bishop Robert E. Tracy Center, 1800 S. Acadian Thwy., Baton Rouge. For more information and to register, visit HelpOurMarriage.org or call 985-232-5963.

St. Isidore Fall Fest – St. Isidore Church, 6573 Thomas Road, Baton Rouge, will host its Fall Fest with a golf tournament on Saturday, Sept. 7 and Food Festival on Sunday, Sept. 8. For more information, call 225-775-8850.

Jambalaya Cook-off – St. Gabriel Church, 3425 Hwy. 75, St. Gabriel, will host its 13th annual PaPa George Fairchild Jambalaya Cook-Off benefiting St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital on Sunday, Sept. 8. For more information, visit papageorgefairchild.com or call 225-939-9369.

Eucumenical Prayer Breakfast – The Interfaith Federation of Greater Baton Rouge will host a CommUNITY Prayer Breakfast, “Healing: Naming Our Story,” Thursday, Sept. 12, 7 a.m., at the Ballroom of the Catholic Life Center, 1800 S. Acadian Thwy. Cost is $20. Tickets are available at the office at the Federation at 3112 Convention St., Baton Rouge. For more information, email info@fedgbr.com, visit fedgbr.com or call 225-267-5600.

Divorce Recovery – A nine-week program for the separated and divorced will begin Thursday, Sept. 12, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m., in the St. John the Evangelist Church Activity Center’s St. Francis Room, 15208 Hwy. 73, Prairieville. For more information, visit Deacon Randy Clement at 225-673-8807 or email deaconrandy@stjohnchurch.org.

Theology on Tap – Scott Smith, assistant attorney general at the Louisiana Attorney General’s Office, will speak about religious freedom at a Theology on Tap meeting for young adult Catholics on Thursday, Sept. 12, 7 – 9 p.m., at the Tin Roof Brewery, 1624 Wyoming St., Baton Rouge. For more information, visit redstickcatholics.com or email wgiffin@diobi.org.

Evening of Prayer – Sister Rochelle Perrier MSC will present an evening of prayer, “Welcoming the God Within.” Thursday, Sept. 12, 6 – 8 p.m., at the Archdiocese of New Orleans Retreat Center, 5500 St. Mary St., Metairie. For more information and to register, visit neworleansretreats.com or call 1-866-937-9170.

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### Cards of Thanks

Holy Spirit, you who solves all problems, who lights all roads, so that I can attain my goal. You who give me the divine gift to forgive and to forget all evil against me and that in all instances of my things and to confirm once again that I wish to be with you in Eternal Glory. Thank you for your mercy towards me and mine. MB

May the Savior Heart of Jesus be adored, glorified, loved and preserved through out the world now and forever. Sacred Heart of Jesus, pray for us. St. Jude, Worker of Miracles, pray for us. St. Jude, Helper of the Hopeless, pray for us. MB

### Legal Notices

Anyone with knowledge of the whereabouts of Geraldine Marie Pickrell is asked to contact the Diocesan Tribunal at 225-336-8755. Anyone with knowledge of the whereabouts of Michael Ulger Morgan is asked to contact the Diocesan Tribunal at 225-336-8755.

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Bishop Michael G. Duca holds a commissioning ceremony at the annual Catholic Educators Gathering on Aug. 5 at St. George Church in Baton Rouge. Photos by Bonny Van | The Catholic Commentator

EDUCATORS ▼

From page 1

the “challenging time in the life of the church in the past year” and noted how difficult it might be for Catholic teachers. He also noted pressures on Catholic educators from the government, administrators and parents as teachers deal with “pastoral” issues among students such as depression, low self-esteem, eating disorders and family dysfunction.

“We live in a culture of increased expectations but finite time and resources,” Doyle stated. “People get stretched and when they get stretched they break. I observed in my own country where teachers breaking, and if they didn’t break, they quit.”

Doyle added that he saw teachers become “hard and cynical” and bitter after several years in the profession. But he emphatically said “it doesn’t have to be that way.”

“What happens when things get tough?” Doyle asked.

“Here’s a beautiful line from St. Teresa of Calcutta: ‘It is in the times of greatest aridity and disenchantment that God’s true lovers are born.’”

He reminded teachers of the excitement of starting their careers, saying, “Every single teacher has a first day … is it possible to maintain that?

“If God has called you into this work, he will sustain you in it.”

“It’s what we need to hear because we always have a little anxiety about a start of a new year and just how we’re going to get it all done,” said Michele Nett, a physical education teacher at St. George School since 1985. “We worry about what our principal wants. We worry about what the parents want. We worry about how the kids are going to react and respond to us even after all these years. So it’s nice to have a reminder that the Holy Spirit is with us and to ask the Holy Spirit to be with us.”

“Teacher burnout, it’s a real thing – even for some of the younger teachers,” said Ryan Hergert who is starting his first year as an English and history teacher at Ascension Catholic School in Donaldsonville. “I have to meet everybody and I have to meet all the kids, and I have to figure out how the kids work. It’s scary but I’m excited.”

“It’s pretty impactful because it’s basically giving you a concept of how to approach the new school year and giving you a different mechanism on ways you can go into your classroom and be affective and have a positive mindset,” said Ashley Nivens, a science and social studies teacher at Redemptorist St. Gerard School in Baton Rouge.

Mary Elizabeth Carruth, the librarian at Our Lady of Mercy School in Baton Rouge, said during her 20-year career, which has included a number of schools, she has “seen the teachers that (Doyle) is talking about.”

“I think that his message that God has given us what we need, we just have to stay quiet and listen and hear his message and use the tools he’s given us to do his will and to teach these children in a positive way,” said Carruth.

Following a break, Doyle wrapped up his message and Bishop Duca commissioned the teachers by affirming their commitment to fulfill the vision of Catholic education to evangelize hearts, educate minds, encourage talent and embrace the future.

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Education is the key that can open the door to a new way of life, and the two uniforms we give to each needy child cost only $24.00 - a small price to pay for a child’s self-esteem. With your support we can continue our work and reach children in need so they can go to school properly dressed, without fear of bullying or embarrassment. Our Uniforms for Kids effort continues to help needy and homeless children, so St. Vincent de Paul asks you to consider giving hope to the most vulnerable children in our community.

Join us in helping needy children like Kaylee and Frankie by sending in your gift or by giving online at svdpr.org.

Yes, I would like to help clothe needy school children. Please find enclosed my gift of $__________

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Address: __________________________________________

Please mail to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, P.O. Box 127, Baton Rouge, LA 70821 or give online at svdpr.org.

Kaylee

Frankie

Gospel 

From page 2

activity, proclaiming truth, goodness, conversion and reconciliation, not just when it is convenient, or without pushback, but all the time. Obstacles and naysayers, even among family and friends, are to be expected. Am I willing to persevere in the truth, despite all obstacles? Have I set any goal of eternity, as I run on the path of faith? Am I open to accompanying others on the same journey who may have strayed off the path?

Jesus prepares us for entry into the "gate" stating, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I tell you, will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough" (Lk 13:24). What will give us the grace to persevere in the truth, to be expected. Am I willing among family and friends, are you to consider giving hope to the most vulnerable children in our community.

YOUTH 

From page 1

Spending time before the Blessed Sacrament is also popular with youth. Eighteen-year-old Kirstynn Battencourt, an active member at St. George Church in Baton Rouge and St. Gabriel Church in St. Gabriel, said her favorite church tradition is eucharistic adoration.

"Being able to sit either in silent prayer or listening to worship music while in Jesus’ presence offers an indescribable feeling of overwhelming peace only Jesus can bring us," said Battencourt.

Sarah Degeyter, 16, also a member of St. George Church, said she enjoys the "plain silence" of adoration.

"I was just a mess and they said, 'Hey just reach out to God and let him know that you're listening and give it five minutes of silence and if he says anything he's reaching out to you,'" Degeyter said. "I (did that) and toward the end God said, 'Be different.'"

The youth urged the church to continue the fun youth activities, but it should also realize teens are ready for a mature relationship with God and to explore deep faith issues.

Degeyter said the church does a good job of recognizing the innocence of children and youth but can sometimes seem surprised that some young people have developed a personal relationship with God.

"I might say I'm Catholic, but to have a personal relationship with God is completely different," Degeyter said. "When I tell people I talk to God and have heard from him, people usually think I'm not ready for that."

While the church works hard to connect with youth, Degeyter said because of generational gaps it's often hard for it to "get on our level."

From a teenager's perspective, you have (older adults) who look at youth who are 16-17. They grew up in a different world than us," said Degeyter.

She pointed out that while many previous generations grew up in households with parents and siblings and a stable environment, many of her peers have not.

"Now it's different," said Degeyter. "There are people and families torn apart."

Should Pope Francis ask for recommendations on how the church can better meet their needs, the post-millennial Catholics said young Catholics need to know they are loved before they can be catechized and evangelized.

"The word 'love' is thrown around a lot. But I would want to make sure that people know 'You have a reason to be here on earth, and it's good that you are here and that's because God has this compassion,'" Degeyter said.

She said while it's not bad that the church is focusing on current issues, it should not get distracted from its mission of authentically sending out messages of love and acceptance.

Degeyter used the example that when the church deals with issues such as the gay, transgender, LGBTQ population, the church must not think "it has it all figured out" on its approach, which can result in a whiff of criticism rather than love.

"We're trying to change their minds first and then tell them they are loved," said Degeyter. "You have to let them know first that they are called to a place of true joy and acceptance."

In order to get a clear understanding of youth's needs, the post-millennials urged church leaders to have meetings where youth who have questions about Catholicism or even drifted away from the church can freely express their opinions.

"For those who classify themselves as having no religious affiliation, I think it is important to show them that there is more to Catholicism than just sitting in a church one-hour a week," said Battencourt. "Advertise youth events to bring people of any faith to come and explore what the church has to offer. Maybe have a question and answer night so that those who are questioning can turn somewhere they feel comfortable voicing those concerns but not be judged for having doubts."

"I'm open to youth who have trouble in their faith facing issues from that and allowing them to express their thoughts."

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