Honoring Loved Ones

November, a Month of Remembrance

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

November is a time for Catholics to remember their loved ones, tending to their graves, looking into flickering candle flames at vigil memorial services and writing their names in books of remembrances at their church parishes. Memories of the deceased flow out in the forms of love stories, victories over challenges, bravery in serving their country and sadness over ones gone too soon.

And many will express excitement, and even hope, about the time they will meet their loved ones again in heaven.

Parents who lose a child can be swallowed up with grief and the question ‘Why?’ But Mary Acosta, whose son, William Matthew Acosta died in 2015, and is buried at St. John the Baptist Cemetery in Brusly, holds on to the good memories of him and gives thanks for the time she had with him.

William was a gentle soul who loved animals, especially his beagle “Charger,” according to his mother. He graduated from Redemptorist in 2012. He loved music, snowboarding and international travel. William was a third-year student at LSU, studying history and education when he died in 2015.

Acosta is confident William is at peace in the loving arms of Jesus. “Matthew means ‘gift of God,’ and we gave him that middle name because that is truly what he was,” said Acosta.

While she had a short time on earth

Sr. Trône finds joy in monastic life

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

An extraordinary joy is evident in the voice of Sister Marie Trône du Roi SSVN, even from a distance spanning more than 1,000 miles.

Equally discernable, however, is her powerful faith, one that has taken Brooke Bethea from the halls of St. Michael High School in Baton Rouge, to her life as Sister Trône, living a monastic lifestyle in Brooklyn, New York.

Sister Trône, a Baton Rouge native, professed her final vows Aug. 28 in Brooklyn as a Contemplative House of Formation nun, completing a seven-year formation traversing from Italy to Brooklyn, with stops in Maryland and Washington, D.C. She’s living a life she has dreamed about since she was in seventh grade when she first met several consecrated virgins while attending Cypress Heights Academy in Baton Rouge.

“I saw that they were super happy even though they had given up everything for God,” said Sister Trône, who attended St. George School in Baton Rouge from pre-K through fifth grade. “I thought ‘I want that happiness.’ ”

Sister Trône’s calling continued to blossom at St. Michael, where she was involved in campus ministry as well as planning the annual summer mission at Our Lady of Peace Church in Vacherie.

Father Brent Maher, who has been a positive influence in Sister Trône’s life, said Sister Trône’s intensity in her love for Jesus and a desire to dedicate herself to him was obvious at an early age.

“In youth group events, at Mass and in our meetings together there radiated from her a
HONORARY TEAMMATE - Bishop Stanley Ott stands by his own personalized LSU football jersey in 1988. Bishop Ott served as assistant chaplain at the Catholic Student Center of LSU from 1957 – 1961 and was an avid LSU football fan. He served as bishop of the Diocese of Baton Rouge from 1983 – 1991. Photo provided by the Archives Department of the Diocese of Baton Rouge

DID YOU KNOW

New liturgical year

From August through December, Louisianians can be extremely busy. Fall, y’all, means back to school shopping and early morning carpools.

There are also Saturday football tailgating from Baton Rouge to Hammond, soccer tournaments and church parish festivals. Sunday means Mass, jambalaya cook-offs and, of course, the New Orleans Saints. And sprinkled among that crowded schedule are a number of holidays – BIG ONES: Labor Day, Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s.

And, for Catholics, there is also an extremely busy liturgical calendar. From Aug. 1 through Dec. 31, there are a total of 49 solemnities, feasts and memorials, and one Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (All Souls’ Day), according to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops calendar (usccb.org).

According to catholicandcultures.org, the Catholic Church bases its liturgical year around “feasts and remembrances…to regularly call to mind the life of Jesus and the witness of Mary and the saints.”

The most important of the feast days are solemnities, which mark the most significant events in Jesus’ life, his mother and “those most closely united to him in the work of salvation, such as St. Joseph, St. John the Baptist and Sts. Peter and Paul,” states aletheia.org.

These days are similar to Sundays though they are not always holy days of obligation. Next in the hierarchy are the feast days, which mark events of lesser significance in the life of Jesus such as the Transfiguration. Feast days also celebrate significant events in the life of Mary and “key figures of the early church,” according to aletheia.org.

At the bottom of the feast day celebrations are memorials, the most prevalent way of remembering saints and events during Mass.

“When the Church keeps the memorials of martyrs and other saints during the annual cycle, she proclaims the paschal mystery in those who have suffered and have been glorified with Christ. She proposed them to the faithful as examples who draw all men to the Father through Christ, and through their merits she begs for God’s favors,” according to Canon 1173 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

While some feast days may vary by country, all Catholics celebrate the Solemnity of the Nativity (Christmas), Lent, Holy Week and Easter, also called the “Feasts of feasts” and the “Solemnity of solemnities,” (CCC 1169). And, just like preparing for college football bowl games at the end of the year, Catholics can also go for the pinnacle and celebrate five consecutive feast days at the end of December: Christmas (25); the Feast of St. Stephen (26); Feast of St. John the Apostle (27); Feast of the Holy Innocents (28); and Feast of the Holy Family (29).

Spirit & witness

By Dina Dow

The end of the liturgical year draws near with three weeks remaining in Cycle C. There is a peeked urgency in the message of perseverance, endurance and hope. The Sunday Mass Readings are quite clear during the 32nd and 33rd Sundays in Ordinary Time regarding perseverance as a reality for those who choose to follow God. Yet, as God loves, so also do those, persecuted for their beliefs, love and glorify God through suffering and by faith in Christ Jesus.

Challenged

The Book of Maccabbees in the Old Testament is not for the faint-hearted. It describes the extreme persecutions of Jewish people at the hands of corrupt leaders. Many fled from the heinous torture inflicted on believers who were being asked to give up their faith and turn to pagan worship or face death.

One of the seven sons in the Old Testament reading, as he was facing torment and near death, said, “It is my choice to die at the hands of mortals with the hope that God will restore me to life; but for you, there will be no resurrection to life” (2 Mc 7:14). This man, by the power of the Spirit of God, persevered the torture, endured the pain and witnessed his hope in God to provide new life after death.

The month of November is dedicated to those who have gone before us in faith: All Saints Day and All Souls Day are celebrated during this month. Many of the canonized saints experienced martyrdom and persevered in their faith despite terrible persecution.

Among these are St. Maximilian Kolbe, St. Theresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein), Blessed Miguel Agustin Pro, to name a few. Their choice to love God and neighbor was made possible by grace. The Holy Spirit strengthened their firm, fearless commitment to witness the faith in spite of the danger. They were deeply rooted in trust and hope in the Lord that, as St. Paul writes, “anxiety, distress, persecution…or the sword will not separate us from the love of God” (Rom 8:31-39).

It is difficult for one to grasp the realities of persecution. Yet such acts have and will continue to occur globally. Similarly, there also exist non-physical challenges of faith, actions that cause us to hold back on proclaiming the message of Christianity.

What are the subliminal or obvious actions challenging faith in God? Can one display a religious article in one’s workspace or is against “company policy.” Can one publically pray without repercussion? Can one display Christmas decorations, or statues of saints without possible destruction to those symbols? How far will I go to witness hope and faith in God by charity and humility? Is my faith in God veiled out of fear of ridicule or mockery or am I proclaiming God’s message on word and deed?

#Fearnot

St. John Paul II’s last words from his inaugural address on Sunday, Oct. 22, 1978, hold true today. He said, “Brothers and sisters, do not be afraid to welcome Christ and accept his power. Help the pope and all those who wish to serve Christ and with Christ’s power to serve the human person and the whole of mankind. Be not afraid. Open wide the doors for Christ.”

Jesus Christ intervenes on our behalf in times of crisis. He instructs the faithful to be in a state of preparedness “rather than fear, waiting of false prophets, rising nations” (Lk 21:3-9).

Our Lord is the ultimate example of accepting persecution without fear for the glory of God and the salvation of all. He also sends models of faith in each generation for us to learn from, follow and imitate. Who are the models of faith and perseverance in my life?

I am with you always…

Jesus promised he will be with us “always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28:20). The 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time points to the end of the age, when Jesus discusses the eschaton, also referred to as the Parousia, meaning presence or arrival.

The Gospel of Luke in Chapter 21 gives Jesus’ guidance on preparing for the end of the age. First noted is the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, which occurs some 40 years after Jesus’ death. Then there is to be a long gap until the end of the world, where Jesus cautions the faithful to stay away from...
By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

As Adele Breazeale’s tiny fingers offer a cookie up into the air, soft, furry lips meet the treat halfway and gently pull it away. That’s what happened, over and over, until two boxes of vanilla wafers disappeared and Bubbles took a break during her visit to St. Joseph Cathedral in Baton Rouge on Oct. 20 for “Grand Day.”

Bubbles, a dromedary camel, lives with her family on a farm in Walker and is quite busy. And, like most humans, her busiest time is during the Advent season through the Epiphany (think Christmas through Twelfth Night) and again during Lent.

For an event, especially one living in south Louisiana, there are many opportunities for show business. And for Bubbles, who was born in 2011 in Texas, her journey began when another camel that was part of an annual live Passion Play passed away.

Pam Cowart said she and her husband, Tommy, along with their children Jacob, Jessica and Tommy Jr., attended the play at a church in Amite when Bubbles was with me,” said Cowart, who already had horses and cows on the family farm.

The family bottle-fed Bubbles for four months, once with help from Father Frank Uter, pastor of Immaculate Conception, and Father Paul Yi, current pastor of St. George Church in Baton Rouge. And according to Cowart, Bubbles’ calendar quickly began to fill up.

“She started doing events right away,” she said. “We do live nativities, we do Vacation Bible School, we occasionally do a school event or any type of charity event – we don’t do anything for profit.”

Bubbles’ diet consists mostly of horse feed but she does enjoy treats such as vanilla wafers and graham crackers. But that’s not all. Cowart said Bubbles is “just like a goat,” munching on trees, brush or even paper if offered to her.

“She loves the attention,” explained Cowart. “When we’re in the yard, she follows us like a dog. My parents live across the street and sometimes they’ll take her walking down the street. Bubbles likes to go to their house and get cookies.”

In the eight years Bubbles has lived in Walker, numerous “camel sightings” have created quite a bit of excitement. One incident occurred when Bubbles escaped her pen. Cowart said a passing motorist videoed Bubbles, and it went viral.

“She’s very friendly,” said Tommy. “We have a lot of fun with her. People will pull up in the yard (at our house) and say, ‘Did you know you have a camel in your yard?’ ”

For Epiphany, Pam Cowart said Father Uter places a sign in the parking lot that says, “Wise Men Parking.”

“So people will see the sign when they go into Mass and when they come out, Bubbles is there. Father Uter allows them to feed her donuts and pet her and it helps them understand a little bit about what was going on during the Epiphany. I’ve dressed up as a Wise Man before,” Cowart added.

Now that their children are adults and with one getting married this month, the Cowarts decided this was a good year to clear their calendar of all but two events and take a rest.

“We usually book up between Thanksgiving weekend through Epiphany but we’re taking the season off to rest and let Bubbles rest,” stated Cowart. “It gets a little crazy.”

Bubbles, who was blessed as a young calf by Father Uter, continues to bring joy to her family and new friends.

“It allows us to get out in the community, meet people, just engage with other communities that we don’t see so it’s been a blessing for us,” Cowart said.

Cowart said everyone who sees her is enthralled in being able to touch and feed her, noting she has never “had anyone walk away without smiling.”

To read more about Bubbles’ adventure, visit her Facebook page at Bubbles-the-Camel.
Synod document: New ministries can serve evangelization in Amazon

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – To proclaim the Gospel message of hope, the Catholic Church in the Amazon must open new paths of evangelization in the region, including by instituting new ministries for lay men and women, the Synod of Bishops said.

The final document of the Synod of Bishops for the Amazon looked at ways the church can increase its ministry in the region, including by ordaining married men. But at the heart of the document was the need to bring the good news to the Amazon, a mission that includes safeguarding the indigenous people, cultures and land that are under constant threat of annihilation.

“The Amazon rainforest is a ‘biological heart’ for the increasingly threatened earth,” said the final document, released Oct. 26 after synod members voted on it. The Amazon, members said, is on “a rampant race to death. It is scientifically proven that the disappearance of the Amazon biome will have a catastrophic impact on the planet as a whole!”

The synod brought together 185 voting members – cardinals, bishops, 20 priests and one religious brother – and 80 experts and observers to discuss “new paths for the church and for an integral ecology.”

All 120 paragraphs in the final document garnered the necessary two-thirds approval needed for passage. The Vatican said 181 synod members were present, so each paragraph needed 120 votes to pass.

The focus of the synod’s final document was the call for the church to further its mission in proclaiming the Good News by uniting itself more to the people of the Amazon who, for decades, have suffered the consequences of humankind’s greed.

The document underscores the crucial role of Amazonian ecosystems in regulating the global climate and as an important source of fresh water that “connects ecosystems, cultures and the development of the territory.”

The Amazon faces environmental threats that make it “a wounded and deformed beauty, a place of suffering and violence,” the bishops wrote. Violence against nature, in the form of rampant extraction of resources, unsustainable development and climate change, also have “serious social consequences.”

“Too bring greater awareness and responsibility to the universal church, the synod document proposed a definition of ecological sin as an act of commission or omission against God, against one’s neighbor, the community and the environment.”

The document also proposed the creation of “special ministries for the care of our ‘common home’” that would promote ways of caring for the environment “at the parish level.”

The synod called on all Christians to show their awareness of the value of God’s creation by countering the current “culture of excessive consumption” through recycling, reducing their use of fossil fuels and plastic, as well as by reducing their consumption of meat and fish.

The discussions that took place in the synod, the document said, also offered bishops an opportunity to reflect “on how to structure the local churches” in order to address the needs of a “church with an Amazonian face.”

Among those ways are new ministries and roles for the laity, including “in consultation or decision-making in the life and mission of the church.”

To increase the church’s presence in areas that lack priests, the document proposed that bishops entrust “the exercise of the pastoral care of the communities to a person not invested” with the priesthood for “a specific period of time.”

Synod members asked for further discussion on the idea of women deacons, but approved several paragraphs in the document insisting that their role in leading Catholic communities be recognized and that “the voice of women can be heard, they are consulted and participate in decision-making” in the church.

The final document also emphasized the importance of the Eucharist as “the source and summit of all Christian life.” However, it acknowledged that a lack of priests means Catholics in the Amazon have only sporadic access to the Eucharist, reconciliation and anointing of the sick.

While highlighting the gift of celibacy in the Catholic Church and the need for celibate priests in the region, the document proposed the ordination of “suitable and esteemed men of the community, who have had a fruitful permanent diaconate and receive an adequate formation for the priesthood, having a legitimately constituted and stable family.”

Pope Francis told synod participants that he hoped to publish a post-synodal exhortation “before the end of the year so that not too much time has passed.”
Bishop Roger Morin dies at the age of 78

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Bishop Emeritus Robert W. Muench said the death of Bishop Roger P. Morin brought an instant sense of “loss to me of someone who had been a co-worker, friend and colleague for many years.”

He added that sense of loss was immediately followed by a “deep sense of peace from the words of Sacred Scripture: ‘Blessed are those who have died in the Lord; let them rest from their labors for their good deeds go with them’ (Rev 14:13).”

Bishop Morin, who served in the Archdiocese of New Orleans before being appointed the third bishop of Biloxi, Mississippi, died Oct. 31 at the age of 78. He was returning to Biloxi after vacationing with his family in Massachusetts and died during his flight from Boston to Atlanta, according to a diocesan news release.

“This is a sad day for our diocese. I was shocked to hear the news,” Biloxi Bishop Louis F. Kihneman III said in a statement.

Bishop Muench said Bishop Morin, as a seminarian from Massachusetts, volunteered for several summers for the highly successful inner-city Witness program, launched by Archbishop Philip M. Hannan. Bishop Muench said those several years of volunteer service in New Orleans led Bishop Morin to enter the seminary for the archdiocese.

“He was a man of exceptional faith, spirituality, intelligence, organizational ability, humility, wit and humor (sometimes wry) alongside a soft-spoken manner, with a special charisma for the underprivileged, seminarian Roger became Deacon Roger, then Father Roger, then Msgr. Roger, and finally Bishop Roger Morin,” Bishop Muench said. “He will always be remembered for so successfully help plan the visit of Pope John Paul II to New Orleans (Sept. 11-13, 1987). He will be sorely missed, but always remembered with great respect and fondness. May he rest in peace.”

Bishop Morin was appointed to head the Diocese of Biloxi by Pope Benedict XVI March 2, 2009 and was installed in April at the Cathedral of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary by the late Archbishop Pietro Sambi, apostolic nuncio to the United States, and Archbishop Thomas J. Rodi of Mobile, Alabama.

His episcopal motto was “Walk Humbly and Act Justly.” He retired in 2016 at age 75.

“Bishop Morin was a kind and gentle man who truly embodied his episcopal motto as one who walked humbly and acted justly,” he said. “When I was named bishop of Biloxi in 2016, Bishop Morin was most gracious and accommodating. I am forever grateful for his support, wise counsel and, most of all, his friendship. He will be sorely missed.”

A native of Dracut, Massachusetts, he was born March 7, 1941, the son of Germain J. and Lilian E. Morin. He has one brother, Paul, and three sisters, Lilian “Pat” Johnson, Elaine (Ray) Joncas and Susan Spellissy. His parents and his brother James are deceased.

After high school and college studies, he earned a bachelor’s degree in philosophy in 1966 from St. John’s University in Brighton, Massachusetts, and continued theology studies at St. John’s for two years of graduate school. In 1967 he went to New Orleans to work in its new summer Witness program, conducted by the archdiocesan Social Apostolate.

He was ordained to the priesthood by Archbishop Hannan April 15, 1971, in his home parish of St. Therese of the Child Jesus Roman Catholic Parish Church in Dracut, Massachusetts.

His first parish assignment was at St. Henry Church in New Orleans. In 1973, he was appointed associate director of the Social Apostolate and in 1975 became the director, responsible for the operation of nine year-round social service centers sponsored by the archdiocese.

Bishop Morin had a master of science degree in urban studies from Tulane University and in 1974 completed a program as a community economic developer. Bishop Morin was the founding president of Second Harvest Food Bank.

In 1978, he was a volunteer member of Mayor Ernest “Dutch” Morial’s transition team dealing with federal programs and then accepted a $1 a year position as deputy special assistant to the mayor for federal programs and projects. Morial was the first African American to be elected mayor of New Orleans.

Then-Father Morin served the city of New Orleans until 1981, when he was appointed New Orleans archdiocesan vicar for community affairs, with responsibility over nine agencies: Catholic Charities, Social Apostolate, human relations, alcoholics’ ministry, Apostleship of the Sea, cemeteries, disaster relief, hospitals and prisons. He was named a monsignor by St. John Paul II in 1985.

He was in residence at Incarnate Word Parish beginning in 1981 and served as pastor there from 1988 through April 2002.

One of the highlights of his priesthood came in 1987 when he directed the New Orleans Archdiocese’s preparations for St. John Paul’s historic visit to New Orleans. The visit involved thousands of community volunteers and coordination among national, state and local religious and political leaders.

He also coordinated the events of the bicentennial of the archdiocese in 1993. In 1995, Bishop Morin received the Weiss Brotherhood Award presented by the National Conference of Christians and Jews for his service in the field of human relations.

St. John Paul named him an auxiliary bishop of New Orleans Feb. 11, 2003; his episcopal ordination was April 22 of that year. He was vicar general and moderator of the curia for the archdiocese 2001-2009.

Bishop Morin was a member of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Subcommittee on the Catholic Campaign for Human Development 2005-2013, and served as chairman 2008-2010. During that time, he also was a member of the Domestic Justice and Human Development and the National Collections committees.

Catholic News Services contributed to this report.

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January 3, 2020

2020 Mass Schedule

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At the Second Vatican Council, Catholics were told that we should accept non-Catholics as our “separated brethren” and that we shouldn’t be overly concerned if they don’t want to join the Catholic Church. But I was taught since childhood that the only way to salvation was through the Catholic Church. Why the change? (Texarkana, Texas)

It would be a misreading to think that Vatican II does not encourage bringing people to the Catholic faith. The church still honors Christ’s Great Commission (Mt 28:19): to make disciples of all nations and baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

One need only look at the council’s Decree on Ecumenism, which states that “our separated brethren ... are not blessed with that unity which Jesus Christ wished to bestow on all those who through him were born again into one body. ... For it is only through Christ’s Catholic Church, which is ‘the all-embracing means of salvation,’ that they can benefit fully from the means of salvation’ (No. 3).

But that leaves the question as to how the church should go about bringing those people into the church. In March, speaking in predominantly Muslim Morocco, Pope Francis rejected proselytism, which I would take to mean forced or pressured conversion, coupled with a lack of respect for the religious faith of others. In Morocco, Pope Francis quoted from a 2007 homily in which Pope Benedict XVI had said, “The church grows not through proselytism, but through attraction, through witness.”

As for those who believe that only Catholics can be saved, that is not the church’s teaching. True, all salvation does come through the death and resurrection of Jesus, but the Catechism of the Catholic Church clearly says, quoting Vatican II’s Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: “Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience — those too may achieve eternal salvation” (No. 847).

When I attended parochial school, we were taught that a priest could not say Mass by himself and needed at least one other person as his “congregation.” But lately I have been told that priests are required to celebrate Mass every day, even if there are no other people present. Which is correct? (Milladore, Wisconsin)

Actually, neither statement is completely correct. Let me explain. As to whether a priest can celebrate Mass without a congregation, the church’s Code of Canon Law, reflecting the fact that the Eucharist is primarily an act of public worship rather than a private devotion, says, “Except for a just and reasonable cause, a priest is not to celebrate the eucharistic sacrifice without the participation of at least some member of the faithful” (Canon 906).

The code leaves it to the priest to measure the “just and reasonable cause,” and I will tell you what I do. Most days, even as a retired priest, I have Mass obligations at one or another parish. But let’s say that it’s a day when I’m not obligated, and it happens to be the anniversary of the death of one of my parents. I would consider that a “just and reasonable cause,” and I would celebrate Mass all by myself at the desk in my apartment. I would feel completely comfortable doing so particularly since, in answer to your second question, a priest is encouraged to celebrate Mass every day even though he is not required to do so.

Here’s what the code says about that: “Remembering always that in the mystery of the eucharistic sacrifice the work of redemption is exercised continually, priests are to celebrate frequently, indeed, daily celebration is recommended earnestly since, even if the faithful cannot be present, it is the act of Christ and the church in which priests fulfill their principal function” (Canon 904).

FATHER DOYLE is a retired priest in the Diocese of Albany, New York. Questions may be sent to Father Kenneth Doyle at askfatherdoyleg@gmail.com and 30 Columbia Circle Dr., Albany, NY 12203.
By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

A little more than three years ago, God kept waking Elizabeth Schroeder up at night, calling her to start a ministry to help couples strengthen their marriage at her parish, St. George Church in Baton Rouge. She thought about the families she knew who were impacted by divorce and separation.

“I started looking around and families that I thought were doing well were falling apart,” said Schroeder.

Initially reluctant to answer God’s invitation to start a ministry, after a year of “wake-up calls” to do so, she approached then pastor Father Mike Schatzle with the idea and he embraced it.

The focal point of the ministry is to educate couples that marriage is a sacrament and what a sacramental marriage looks like. Marriage educational and spiritual formation opportunities at St. George are explored.

“When people are engaged, they have time to spend together. But after they get married, they have less time together and more stress,” said Schroeder.

Couples can find resources through the ministry and enjoy evenings out with Catholic couples at social events, such as Supper and Substance, which includes presentations on faith and marriage issues and games. Babysitting is provided.

Amy and Jeff Echols, who serve on the Marriage Enrichment Committee and help organize the Supper and Substance events, said it’s important for couples to focus on making their relationship better by focusing on each other.

“So many times couples are busy during the week and they say, ‘What are we going to do on Saturday night?’ ” said Amy.

Games during the dinner include the “Not So Newlywed Game” and “Battle of the Sexes” trivia games.

“It’s a fun faith-based event with other Catholic couples, some who have never met before,” said Jeff, who explained couples who meet through the events may run into each other in places outside of the church setting and get to know each other further.

The ministry also brings in special speakers, such as Dr. Allen Hunt of Dynamic Catholic, who will present “Passion and Purpose for Marriage” in March.

Couples wanting to take their relationship “to the next level” can also attend a retreat, according to Dr. Gretchen Schneider Burton, who helps with counseling couples for the ministry. The next retreat will be Friday, Nov. 15, 1:30 – 6:30 p.m., and Saturday, Nov. 16, 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., at the Kleinpeter Center at St. George.

When husbands and wives dialogue with each other after a presentation, counselors walk around to help those who are “stuck” on a point or need clarification.

“The retreats provide an opportunity for couples to revitalize their marriage. When they leave they feel like they have a fresh start,” said Burton. “They take away from the retreat a new perspective.”

Bridget Wendell, who participated with her husband, Sean, at last year’s retreat, said the retreats draw couples of different stages in life and backgrounds and “meet you where you are at.”

“They leave you with a plan for your marriage. It helps you understand where each other is coming from,” said Wendell.

She said because marriage is the cornerstone of society, it requires attention.

“You need to work on your marriage,” said Wendell. “Just like you work out in the gym to improve your health, you have to work at your marriage and spiritual life if you want it to get better.”

Schroeder echoed her thoughts, “If you want to be an Olympian, you have to have Olympic goals.”

For more information, call Schroeder at 225-287-5153 or email elizschro5@gmail.com.
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**Holy Sepulchre order celebrates Queen of Palestine Mass**

**By Debbie Shelley**
The Catholic Commentator

Members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem prayed for the protection of Catholic Christians in the Holy Land during a Mass celebrated by Bishop Michael G. Duca on Oct. 30, the feast day of Our Lady Queen of Palestine, at Our Lady of Mercy Church in Baton Rouge.

Our Lady Queen of Palestine is the patroness of the order, which is among the ancient chivalric orders dating to the crusades and chosen to “guard the most sacred spot in the Holy City of Jerusalem and Christendom, the tomb of Christ,” according to Hank Heroman, president of the Baton Rouge section of the Southeastern Lieutenancy of the United States.

Knights and ladies of the order support the church and Catholic religion in the Holy Land and promote the preservation and propagation of the faith there, Heroman said. They support churches, orphanages, universities, schools and clinics.

To better understand their undertaking, members are strongly encouraged to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and walk in the footsteps of Jesus and see “what Christians are up against.”

Heroman was moved by a visit to the Holy Family Hospital in Bethlehem, which is operated by the French Daughters of Charity, only 1,500 steps from the birthplace of Christ, the Church of the Nativity.

In the hospital there are two special units. One is the only neonatal intensive care unit in Palestine, where 90 percent of at-risk births are delivered. Another special unit is for orphans.

When Heroman visited the facility, there were newborn children and about 60 children who were up to age 5 1/2 years old.

“What was touching was that during the entire time we were there the children did not argue, they did not fight over toys and there were very few toys. They were so well behaved,” said Heroman.

He noted that the Daughters of Charity are able to care for the children up to age 5 1/2, and then they have to be placed with local families, where many live as second-class family members, are last at the table, first for the work assignments, and are generally considered second class members of society.

“Many of them do not receive an education, so they have a very austere life ahead of them,” Heroman said.

He also visited a senior citizen facility in East Jerusalem where many older citizens go because their children have migrated out to search for a better life. He said there was a security wall near the front door.

In order to get residents in and out of the facilities, local residents have to be hired to bring them up steep steps to the road where a vehicle will then to their destination.

“Just take a trip to the Holy Land and God will show you the things you need to see,” said Heroman.

With these things in mind, the knights and ladies offer their support and come together in prayer, with the Our Lady Queen of Palestine Mass a special opportunity to keep their mission in mind and fellowship with each other.

**See EQUESTRIAN PAGE 19**

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**ALL PEOPLE, NOT JUST WEALTHY ONES, NEED A LEGAL ESTATE PLAN!**

You work hard, day after day, to provide for yourself and those you love. Nothing is more discouraging than to see your hard-earned assets lost or your loved ones taken advantage of simply because you didn’t take the time today to put your legal estate plan in place! The failure to properly plan your estate can have devastating results, like:

• The wrong people raise your children if you die before your children reach the age of majority or you have special needs children;

• 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 child is surprised he has to split his inheritance with his ex-wife when he gets divorced;

• Succession makes you unknowingly reveal your private financial information to nosey neighbors and identity thieves;

• You lose it all when you have to pay long term care costs if you experience catastrophic illness;

• Your loved ones have to make difficult medical decisions for you – like the removal of life support systems – with no previous guidance from you;

• Your child needs to sue you and pays for expensive litigation to get legal authority to take care of you when you cannot take care of yourself;

• Your executor must pay considerable attorney fees, court costs and death taxes you’d prefer be directed to your loved ones;

• Someone has to post an expensive bond to become the executor of your estate and get a judge’s permission to sell all of your assets and pay all your debts 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 legal traps that could blow your nest egg and 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, grandchildren, or anyone else you intend to benefit.


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**IMPORTANT GUIDELINES FOR OUR WORKSHOPS:**

Because seating at these workshops is limited, and we want to be able to accommodate you comfortably, interested persons must register by calling our office or registering online as soon as possible. First come, first served! Our workshops are open to FIRST-TIME ATTENDEES ONLY and current Poche’ Law Firm clients. The workshops are geared towards people who intend to put a legal estate plan in place in the near future. Please bring your calendar to your workshop should you decide to start your legal estate planning immediately! Finally, if married, both spouses must attend the workshop unless a spouse is homebound and cannot travel. Thank you for your attention to these important guidelines for our workshops.

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**Baton Rouge**

Tuesday November 19th
Poche Estate Planning Law Office
4960 Bluebonnet Blvd., Ste. C
10:00am – 12:00pm
Lunch After Event!

Wednesday November 20th
Jubans Restaurant
3739 Perkins Rd
11:00am – 1:00pm
Lunch After Event!

Thursday November 21st
Beausoleil Restaurant
7731 Jefferson Hwy
11:30am – 1:30pm
Lunch After Event!

**Prairieville/Gonzales**

Tuesday November 19th
Sno’s Restaurant
13131 Airline Hwy
6:00pm – 8:00pm
Dinner After Event!

**Baton Rouge**

Wednesday November 20th
Gino’s
4542 Bennington Ave
6:00pm – 8:00pm
Dinner After Event!

**Mandeville**

Thursday November 21st
Poche Estate Planning Office
2315 Florida St., Bldg. 200
10:00am – 12:00pm
Lunch After Event!

**Madisonville/Covington**

Thursday November 21st
Keith Young’s Steakhouse
165 LA 21
6:00pm – 8:00pm
Dinner After Event!

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Laura Poché
Author & Estate Planning Attorney

**Attend A Free Workshop And Discover How To:**

• Avoid Costs, Delays and Stress of a Louisiana Succession;

• Avoid losing your family home and life savings to nursing home costs and sitter fees;

• Create a simple legal estate plan for your family in only 6-7 weeks;

• Determine whether you need a Will, a Trust, or both;

• Keep nosey neighbors, identity thieves and the government out of your estate settlement;

• Start the five-year look-back period for nursing homes;

• Keep nosey neighbors, identity thieves and the government out of your estate settlement;

• Determine whether you need a Will, a Trust, or both;

• Keep nosey neighbors, identity thieves and the government out of your estate settlement;

• Start the five-year look-back period for nursing homes;

• Determine whether you need a Will, a Trust, or both;

• Keep nosey neighbors, identity thieves and the government out of your estate settlement;

• Start the five-year look-back period for nursing homes;
All Saints Day

A crowd of about 250 people attended an outdoor Mass on All Saints’ Day at Resthaven Cemetery. Father Michael Miceli, pastor of St. Patrick Church in Baton Rouge; with concelebrant Father Yi, pastor of St. George Church in Baton Rouge; Deacon Don Musso, Most Blessed Sacrament Church in Baton Rouge; and, Deacon Brent Duplessis, St. Jean Vianney Church in Baton Rouge.

Father Paul Yi, pastor of St. George Church in Baton Rouge, blesses graves of loved ones of Glenn Jarreau at Resthaven Cemetery in Baton Rouge on Friday, Nov. 1.

A crowd of about 250 people attended an outdoor Mass on All Saints’ Day at Resthaven Cemetery. Father Michael Miceli, pastor of St. Patrick Church in Baton Rouge; with concelebrant Father Yi, pastor of St. George Church in Baton Rouge; Deacon Don Musso, Most Blessed Sacrament Church in Baton Rouge; and, Deacon Brent Duplessis, St. Jean Vianney Church in Baton Rouge.

Deacon Ricky Dubre, deacon assistant at Our Lady of Peace Church and St. Philip Church in Vacherie, and St. James Church in St. James blesses the graves at historic St. James Cemetery in St. James on Nov. 3. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

Father John Vu, parochial vicar at Our Lady of Peace Church and St. Philip Church in Vacherie, and St. James Church in St. James, blesses the graves at St. James Cemetery on a sun-splashed November afternoon.

With the Mississippi River levee serving as an appropriate sentry, Father Matthew McCaughey, pastor at Our Lady of Peace Church and St. Philip Church in Vacherie, and St. James Church in St. James, blesses the graves at St. James Cemetery while parishioners look on. The annual blessing drew many people not only from the St. James area but throughout south Louisiana. Photos by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

Deacon Ricky Oubre, deacon assistant at Our Lady of Peace Church and St. Philip Church in Vacherie, and St. James Church in St. James blesses the graves at historic St. James Cemetery in St. James on Nov. 3. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

People stood by the graves of loved ones at Resthaven Cemetery as they waited for the priests or deacons to bless the graves. Photo by Bonny Van | The Catholic Commentator

Dawn Thomas puts the final touches on the flowers at the grave of her mother at St. James Cemetery. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

Dr. Josephine Allen, a native of St. James and a doctor in Baton Rouge, prays while Father Matthew McCaughey, pastor at Our Lady of Peace Church and St. Philip Church in Vacherie, and St. James Church in St. James blesses the graves of her grandparents at St. James Cemetery on Nov. 3. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

Following the Mass at Resthaven Cemetery, Camille Bell places a carnation on the grave site of her mother.

The Mass at Resthaven Cemetery was celebrated by Father Michael Miceli, pastor of St. Patrick Church in Baton Rouge; with concelebrant Father Yi, pastor of St. George Church in Baton Rouge; Deacon Don Musso, Most Blessed Sacrament Church in Baton Rouge; and, Deacon Brent Duplessis, St. Jean Vianney Church in Baton Rouge. Photo by Bonny Van | The Catholic Commentator

Photos by Bonny Van | The Catholic Commentator
Challenge of robotics attracting young girls

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

Dressed in uniforms and socks – no shoes in case the floor mats get dirty – students in fifth through eighth grade at St. Jude the Apostle School in Baton Rouge hustle from floor mats laid out in the hallway to computers in a nearby classroom. What looks like playtime is actually serious work with the kids studying, learning, building, coding, experimenting and problem solving. This is robotics and St. Jude boasts a robust program.

“There’s two regions, the north Louisiana region and south Louisiana,” explained volunteer St. Jude robotics advisor Katy Ulrich. “In south Louisiana (St. Jude has) more teams than any other school. I have seven middle school teams competing and three from the elementary school competing.”

In total, there are 38 students from St. Jude participating in robotics, according to Ulrich, but the biggest surprise to her is the number of girls. One team from elementary school consists of six girls, double the number of a typical team. Ulrich said the girls worked so well together “that I’ve kept them together.”

“I really like the experience and all the fun things that we get to learn,” said fifth-grader Paige Ulrich, Ulrich’s daughter. “I really like how we can use STEM. Every time we program we get to learn new things, like trial and error.”

“It’s almost 50/50 (boys to girls ratio) which is unique in STEM because you tend to find robotics is more dominated by boys,” explained Katy Ulrich, who is also a computer science teacher at Lee High School in Baton Rouge. “There are many more boys in engineering and computer science and the studies show we tend to lose girls in middle school. So that’s one of the things I wanted to do was to bring robotics and coding into middle schools to get girls interested.”

Why the need for interest? Because that’s where the jobs are, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. “Employment of computer and information research scientists is projected to grow 16 percent from 2018 to 2028, much faster than the average for all occupations,” according to bls.gov. Despite the high job demand, males continue to dominate the field, states computerscience.org. That’s led some colleges to recruit female students for computer science programs, “however, efforts to attract women to tech-related careers need to begin in elementary school,” the website contends.

That’s exactly what Ulrich is trying to do.

“I’m trying to generate an interest and hopefully create a passion that takes them into high school and beyond,” Ulrich said. “I like how we get to work in math, especially because I want to be an electrical or civil engineer when I grow up,” said fifth-grader Janie Giardina. “It’s fun, and we get to work with our friends.”

Ulrich said boys and girls love the competition and working to solve problems if the robots don’t perform as expected. She noted that problem solving is a “key skill” for students throughout their education and throughout life.

She added that robotics promotes “higher order thinking,” with students “breaking things down into smaller problems in order to solve the larger problem.”

“I think it’s really good life skills that they can use in anything they go into, plus the fact that everything is now related to technology,” Ulrich noted. “They will go into jobs that are not yet created and so they may be the next person that brings that creation into society.”

St. Jude robotics advisor Katy Ulrich said robotics helps students learn problem solving while using other skills involving STEM (science, technology, engineering and math). “Studies show we tend to lose girls in computer science in middle school,” said Ulrich, whose goal is to help keep that interest going.
40th ANNIVERSARY – Students at Most Blessed Sacrament School in Baton Rouge carry banners during the Mass of Corpus Christi on Sept. 26 to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the school. The banners date to the beginning of the school. Photo by Bonny Van | The Catholic Commentator

STRIKE UP THE BAND! – Band students from St. Jean Vianney School in Baton Rouge represented their school at the St. Michael the Archangel High School in Baton Rouge middle school night on Sept. 20, 2019. Pictured, front row from left, are Russell Love, Quinn Windham, Carson Suadi, Irelyn Watkins, Addison Watkins and Lilly Redmond. Pictured, back row, are Justin Thornhill, Brodie Beckman, Michael McLeod, Dr. Kevin Andry, Harley Duncan, Tabitha Woods, Abby Flynn, Callie Suadi, Caroline Vallery, Nicholas Valesquez and Collin Didier. Photo provided by St. Jean Vianney School

FIRE SAFETY – Students at Holy Ghost School in Hammond learned about fire safety during the month of October. Firefighters with the Hammond Fire Department taught the students safety tips and let them explore the fire truck. Pictured, from left, are Brodie Gomez, Hunter Uzee and Malik Bonck. Photo provided by Cindy Wager | Holy Ghost School

OPEN HOUSE
Thursday, November 14, 2019 | 4:30-7:00
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Black and Blue

Screen Gems

Director Deon Taylor’s action thriller succeeds better in maintaining suspense about the fate of its protagonist than in commenting on current social issues, as Peter A. Dowling’s script clearly aspires to do. An African American rookie in the New Orleans Police Department (Naomie Harris) accidentally witnesses the murder of a drug dealer, a crime that implicates some of her fellow officers (including James Moses Black and Frank Grillo) in an already unfolding scandal. As she becomes a fugitive, with the bad cops in pursuit, she discovers how much moral compass while Gibson’s character provides a strong moral compass while Gibson’s character undergoes something of a conversion. Considerable violence with some gore, including gunplay and a harsh beating, about a dozen uses of profanity, a few milder oaths, a couple of rough terms, much crude and crass language. A-III; R

Harriet

Focus

Long-overdue but flawed drama chronicles the exploits of the most famous conductor on the Underground Railroad, Maryland-born Harriet Tubman (Cynthia Erivo). When her owner (Mike Marunde) dies suddenly and his (Joe Alwyn) threats to sell her South, she successfully escapes. Connecting with other abolitionists (including Leslie Odom Jr. and Janelle Monae), she takes numerous trips back across the Pennsylvania border hoping to liberate her family and others. Director and co-writer Kasi Lemmons’ film uses occult rather than Catholic. Though writer-director Justin Dec’s film is quite clearly aimed with precision at teens, the amount of vulgar talk included in the dialogue precludes its endorsement for them. An occult theme, some gore, brief physical violence, a few profanities, frequent crude language. A-III; PG-13

Zombieland: Double Tap

Sony Pictures

Follow-up to the 2009 horror-comedy combination charts the further adventures of the original’s central quartet Jesse Eisenberg’s amiable nebbish, Woody Harrelson’s macho gunman, Emma Stone’s commitment-averse loner and her fancy-free sibling, played by Abigail Breslin as they continue to fight for survival in a post-apocalyptic world overrun by flesh-eating zombies. When Breslin’s character and her new hippie boyfriend (Avan Jogia) suddenly depart on a trip to Elvis Presley’s Graceland, the remaining trio, fearing for her safety, embarks on a quest to catch up with her. They’re joined by a ditzy blonde (Zoey Deutch) and eventually aided by a tough-as-nails hotel owner (Rosario Dawson), the former a complicating factor in Eisenberg’s strained romance with Stone, the latter a perfect match for Harrelson. Though the moral trend in returning director Ruben Fleischer’s film is toward marriage and loyalty among pals, casual sex is winked at along the way, as is pot smoking, while the script is littered toward marriage and loyalty among pals, casual sex is winked at along the way, as is pot smoking, while the script is littered with crudity and displays a subtle disdain for faith. Throw in the gleefully gruesome mowing down of the undead inherited from the kickoff, and the whole proves beyond endorsement. Pervasive gory violence, an implicit anti-Christian theme, nonmarital sexual activity and cohabitation, drug use, several profanities and milder oaths, relentless rough and crude language, an obscene gesture. O; R

Countdown

STX

Occasionally effective horror story about a haunted phone app that tells victims exactly when they’ll die. A plucky nurse (Elizabeth Lail) becomes the chief opponent of the demon (Dirk Rogers) behind it all, defending her younger sister (Taitha Bateman) with the help of a quirky priest (P.J. Byrne) whose methods are occult rather than Catholic. Though writer-director Justin Dec’s film is quite clearly aimed with precision at teens, the amount of vulgar talk included in the dialogue precludes its endorsement for them. An occult theme, some gore, brief physical violence, a few profanities, frequent crude language. A-III; PG-13

The Divine Plan

Nexus Media

This feature-length documentary examines the partnership between St. John Paul II and President Ronald Reagan that took shape after both survived assassination attempts and asks whether their collaboration in ending the Cold War and bringing about the fall of Soviet communism was accidental or providential. Filmmaker Robert Orlando showcases interviews with church insiders, political authors and government officials and, although the poorly handled visual aspect of his film detracts from the fascinating information with which it’s filled, this is still a wonderful addition to the history of relations between the United States and the Catholic Church. Mature themes, some potentially disturbing historical images. A-II; Not rated by the Motion Picture Association of America.

Lucy in the Sky

Fox Searchlight

Loosely based on a real-life love triangle involving astronauts, this drama attempts to portray how the experience of outer space has a way of altering earthbound judgments. Natalie Portman plays a robotics specialist who, bored of her affectionate but dull husband (Dan Stevens), embarks on an affair with a colleague (Jon Hamm). When her deft organizational skills decay into obsessive behavior, he diverts his amorous attentions to another spacewoman (Zazie Beetz) with drastic results for the psyche of his abandoned mistress. The plot lacks a cogent explanation for how lengthy stays in orbit corrode personalities other than by creating tremendous emotions that can’t be replicated later. And the protagonist’s romantic dilemma is the stuff of many a Lifetime movie. Though her iron will is attractive, her bad decisions remain difficult to understand. A couple of scenes of implied adulterous activity, fleeting rough and crass language. A-III; R

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 accompany parent or adult guardian
NC-17 – No one under 17 admitted

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

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THE CATHOLIC COMMENTATOR
SERVING THE DIOCESE OF BATON ROUGE SINCE 1963
great love for Jesus and a purity that is unique in our age,” said Father Maher, who first met Sister Trône when he was serving as parochial vicar at St. George and who would later serve as her spiritual director at St. Michael. “These were the clearest indicators that her vocation may well be a genuine one.”

Father Brad Doyle was a lay teacher at St. Michael at that time and also took notice of Sister Trône’s deeply rooted faith.

“Having Sister Trône in class as a sophomore was a joy,” said Father Doyle, currently parochial vicar at St. Margaret Queen of Scotland Church in Albany. “It was my first and only year teaching and was such a comfort to realize that there were young people who desired to follow God with all of their heart and were willing to make sacrifices if he was calling them to.”

He recalls one particular day when he was practicing with the choir before Mass and Sister Trône was sitting away from the group working on something else. A bit perturbed, he asked her what she was doing. “She sheepishly lifted her head and said, ‘Oh sorry Mr. Doyle, I’m sewing my postulant’s habit for when I enter the convent,’” Father Doyle said.

“Needless to say that was the only response that could get her out of trouble,” Father Doyle joked. “I let her sew and now we have a beautiful nun praying for us all.”

Sister Trône, a 2012 St. Michael graduate, said she embraced Father Doyle’s encouragement because living one’s faith in high school can often be difficult and might even be questioned by elders.

“I think something (adults) don’t see is that there are a lot of manifestations of vocations at an early age, because at an early age you are able to see and hear God’s voice better because it’s not (clouted) by sin,” she said.

Sister Trône’s call is specific, falling in line with the mission of the 13-member Brooklyn community, which is to pray and sacrifice for priests. Each of the order’s 14 monasteries around the world pray for a specific devotion.

She said praying for priests is important because they “are the link to so many souls. If I can pray for priests, I can save way more souls.”

Also, the priest is “such an important person because he represents Jesus to us.”

Because of that, she said the devotion of sister Trône’s deeply with all of their heart and was such “It was my first and only year teaching and was such a comfort to realize that there were young people who desired to follow God with all of their heart and were willing to make sacrifices if he was calling them to.”

She said the community enjoys two hours of recreation daily, which is important because it is a break from the silence. She also communicates with her family, which includes a younger brother, every couple of weeks via Skype.

Where others might only see challenges, Sister Trône said she finds inspiration through the monastic life. She said that in everything she does, she is only “trying to love Jesus.”

“There is an intent in everything that we do. In silence we are able to hear the voice of God better, get to know ourselves better, what we need to work on and what God is asking of us individually.”

Although happy in her monastic life, Sister Trône said she “would not mind” if God calls her to an apostolic life, which would be serving outside of the monastery.

“Ultimately, the most important thing to do is the will of God because that is the only way we are going to be happy,” she said.

For now, Sister Trône has found a joy she first witnessed in the faces of consecrated virgins so many years ago.

**PRAYER FOR SEMINARIANS**

*Lord, bless those preparing for the priesthood in the Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge. May their hearts overflow with love and generosity, as they grow in wisdom and faith. May their example inspire others to hear and answer your call. May their community enjoy two hours of recreation daily, which is important because it is a break from the silence. They also communicate with their family, which includes a younger brother, every couple of weeks via Skype.

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Final week of the Synod on the Amazon

Much happened as the Synod on the Amazon rushed to its conclusion in the meeting hall of the Vatican. The final week began on Sunday, Oct. 20, with 42 of the bishops from the Amazon area who were participating and would be voting on the following Saturday, going to the Catacomb of St. Domitilla to renew a pact made by 40 of their predecessors at the Second Vatican Council in 1965 calling for a poor church. They promised to live “a happily sober lifestyle” in opposition to an “avalanche of consumerism.” They pledged themselves to a lifestyle that was “simple and in solidarity with those who have little or nothing.” The new pact includes a call to defend the Amazon rainforest in the face of climate change and the depletion of the area’s natural resources. It reminds us we are not the owner of “Mother Earth, but rather the sons and daughters” and we are called to be her caretakers. The pact also pledges the bishops to preserve the “lands, cultures, languages, stories, identities and spiritualities” of the native people. They also promise to “proclaim the liberating novelty of the Gospel of Jesus in welcoming the other and the one who is different.”

About eight years ago, I went on a mission trip to the Ecuadorian Amazon with Family Missions Company in Abbeville. We hiked for about two miles to a little village in the jungle rainforest. The life of the native people was indeed simple. We had rat jambalaya for lunch. The people in the rainforest don’t always wear a lot of clothes. This helped me understand what happened in Rome on Oct. 23. Two young men took offense at some statues of a naked Amazonian pregnant woman and stole the statues which were on exhibit in a church near the Vatican. They took them to a bridge over the Tiber River and threw them into the river, claiming that they were pagan symbols.

The statues first appeared in the press two weeks prior, when Pope Francis invited some of the native Amazonians who were arriving for the Synod to a prayer service in the Vatican gardens. His guests came in their native dress, somewhat similar to that worn by Native Americans in our country for their tribal celebrations. The men had feathered head pieces and the women wore beaded dresses. They carried a canoe filled with celebration instruments and a statue of the pregnant woman. The pope prayed along with the people who were Catholic, and a boy helped plant a tree to memorialize the occasion and the feast of the day, that of St. Francis of Assisi. The next day, Catholic traditionalists called the statue a pagan idol and criticized the men for having feathers in their hair. The following Sunday, in his homily to pilgrims in St. Peter’s square, Pope Francis said that it pained him to see such negativity toward fellow Catholics who came from a different culture. He added that men with feathers on their heads at a liturgical celebration were no less appropriate than Vatican curial members who wore three-cornered birettas on their heads in church. The official press secretary for the Vatican explained to the press that, for Amazonian Catholics, the pregnant woman was a symbol of God’s gift of life for which the baptized natives of the Amazon give thanks.

A frequently debated topic so far in the Synod has been the ordination to the priesthood of “proven men” (“viri probati” in Latin), many of whom would be married. There also has been open discussion of ordination of women to the diaconate. A group called Women’s Ordination Worldwide (WOW) has been in Rome during the Synod asking that Pope Francis approve women’s ordination to the diaconate. Pope Francis established a committee to study the topic in 2016. This study so far has been inconclusive. WOW is also promoting women’s ordination to the priesthood, a request which the pope has previously said the Church cannot approve. On Tuesday, Oct. 22, WOW’s spokeswoman, Miriam Duignan, argued that “without women there would be no church in the Amazon Region.” In many villages throughout the Amazon the leading catechist is a woman. She further added that the church should stop quibbling about how men and women are different. “They are not different when it comes to allowing women to do the work,” she said.

The week ended with voting on a much-amended working document or white paper. The 85 voting members, all bishops, voted on each paragraph of the 33-page document amended in the discussions of the three-week synod. There were 33 women and a larger number of laymen and priests from the Amazon area who contributed to the discussions but cast no votes.

A paragraph passed if it received two thirds or 120 yes votes from the 181 present for the voting. Each proposal will have to be accepted by Pope Francis before it becomes magisterial teaching or practice. All the paragraphs in the document received enough votes to pass. The paragraph calling for Pope Francis to approve priestly ordination of “tested married men” passed by the smallest margin, 128-41. The next closest margin was the proposal to ordain women as deacons. It passed 137-30.

Pope Francis attended this final session of the synod and promised to restart his commission on women deacons and to add new members to its ranks. “I am going to take up the challenge that you have put forward, that women be heard,” he told synod members. With regard to the ordination of married men, the final text of the synod document makes numerous references to the importance of the Eucharist in Catholic life and cites a 2003 encyclical of St. John Paul II stating: “The church draws her life from the Eucharist.” The synod then concludes that “there is a right of the community to the celebration (of the Mass).”

At the opening of the synod document, the bishops express “a keen awareness of the dramatic situation of destruction affecting the Amazon,” both in the loss of land for indigenous people and the ruin of the biome itself. They call for international solidarity in recognizing the role the Amazon plays in the global effort to limit climate change, which is the greatest threat to life in the region itself and throughout the globe. They “denounce the violation of human rights and extractivist destruction.” Human beings are created in the image and likeness of God. “Therefore, the defense and promotion of human rights is not merely a political duty or a social task, but also and above all a requirement of faith.”

Acknowledging the criticism of the synod and its proposals to meet the cultural and ecological problems of the people of the Amazon, Pope Francis answered those he called “elite Catholics.” “They think they are with God,” he said, “but are not brave enough to understand humanity.”

Another Perspective
Father John Carville

Mission Statement
The mission of The Catholic Commentator is to provide news, information and commentary to the people of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, Catholics and their neighbors alike. In doing so, The Catholic Commentator strives to further the wider mission of the Church: to evangelize, to communicate, to educate and to give the Catholic viewpoint on important issues of the present day.

PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PRAY FOR US
Please pray for the priests, deacons and religious women and men in the Baton Rouge Diocese.


Nov. 16 Rev. J. Joel LaBauve Dcn. Robert McDonner Br. Clifford King SC


The Catholic Commentator

VIEWPOINT

November 8, 2019

The frustrating struggle for humility

It’s hard to be humble, not because we don’t have more than enough deficiencies to merit humility, but rather because there’s crafty mechanism inside of us that normally doesn’t let us go to the place of humility. Simply put, as we try to be self-effacing, humble and non-hypocritical, variably we take pride in that and then, feeling smug about it, we become judgmental of others.

Jesus gave us a wonderful parable on this but mostly we miss its lesson. We’re all familiar with the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. Jesus tells the story of two men standing before God in prayer. The first man, a devout Pharisee, is a man who took the pursuit of virtue seriously and he thanks God that he’s devout and moral and also thanks God that he’s not as amoral as the Publican who is in the temple with him. The second man, a Publican, recognizes (honestly and without any rationalization) that he is amoral, that he is a sinner, and, within that deficiency, humbly asks God to forgive him for his weaknesses. We know how Jesus assessed the two men. The Pharisee didn’t really pray while the Publican did. Moreover the parable highlights the internal blindness of the Pharisee in a way that’s impossible not to see. Everyone hearing this story cannot but see his lack of humility.

What’s challenging however is to examine our own reaction to the story. We instantly see the difference between false pride and genuine humility. We see how arrogant it is for the Pharisee to say: “Thank God, I am not like that man!” But then, I would venture to guess that 98 percent of us hearing that story spontaneously nurse this feeling: “Thank God, I’m not like that Pharisee!” And, in doing that, we are him! Exactly like him, we’re brimming over with our own sense of virtue and, because of that, begin judging others. Our prayer is in fact usually the opposite of the Publican’s prayer. We are not praying out of our own sinfulness, but rather praying: “Thank you, God, that I’m not as blind to self and as judgmental as so many other people are!” It’s hard to be the Publican. Our very virtue and humility invariably coil back upon themselves and make us proud and judgmental.

What’s the answer? How do we break the vicious circle? There’s only one way and the Publican shows us that way. How? He prays out of his own sinfulness, for real. He’s a sinner and he honestly admits it. For our part, when we speak of ourselves as sinners mostly we don’t really mean it! We admit that we have our weaknesses and that sometimes we do sin, but then, like the Pharisee, we’re immediately thankful that we don’t have the weaknesses and sins of others. Mostly we think this way: “Admittedly, I have my faults, but at least I’m not as ignorant and self-serving as that colleague of mine!” “For all of my shortcomings, I still thank God that I’m not as narcissistic as my boss!” “I may not have much religious faith, but at least I’m not as hypocritical as so many of those church people!” “I may be a bit of a mess, but thank God I don’t have Jack’s faults!” Pride is forever sneaking around our defenses and keeping genuine humility at bay.

But there’s one instance when it can’t do that and that is when we are genuinely acknowledging our own sinfulness. When we are truly standing inside of our own sinfulness, like the Publican, then we judge no one not even our own selves. As a Roman Catholic priest who has been hearing confessions for some 47 years, I can say without hesitation that people are at their very best when they are honestly confessing their own shortcomings. When we are genuinely standing inside the recognition of our own sin, we judge no one. In that space we never think: “Thank God, I don’t have Jack’s faults!” We know that our own sufficiency. Our prayer then becomes honest and, according to Jesus, it’s then that it’s heard in Heaven.

And it’s precisely our sinfulness that we must existentially recognize and stand within. Our other weaknesses, our congenital and personal inadequacies, can be helpful in making us humble, but, since we aren’t personally or morally responsible for them, recognizing them doesn’t do the same thing for us as does recognizing our own sinfulness. We aren’t responsible for physical or psychological DNA. We aren’t responsible for our ethnicity or color. We aren’t responsible for the kind of family, neighborhood and culture we were raised in. And we aren’t responsible for what happened to us in the playpen and on the playground when we were little. Yet all of these deeply impact both our weaknesses and our strengths. But since we aren’t responsible for these, ultimately we don’t have to be humble about them.

But we do have to be humble about our own sin.

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

Keeping sight of what’s real

What do Greek philosophy and Bose headphones have in common? Quite a bit if you have seen the most recent ad for Bose head-phones. It shows a crowded car of screen-staring subway riders fixated on their phones. A typical scene for most commuters, but Bose headphones promise a way out of the trance, or so it seems.

A lone female commuter emerges from the dark, screen-saturated tunnel and ascends via escalator into the light of day with only her Bose headphones on. She is awe struck by butterflies while she listens to the weather report and schedules meetings with the aid of her digital assistant without having to look down at a screen. The tagline announces “Go screenless. ... It’s beautiful up here.”

The ad’s conceit is an awful lot like Plato’s alleyway of the cave. In Plato’s “The Republic,” Socrates describes a dark cave where humans are chained to the wall while looking upon shadowy figures that are being projected from behind them. The figures are real people and objects that parade in front of a fire that casts shadows on the wall in front of the prisoners.

The point of the allegory of the cave is to illustrate how limited our human senses can be in grasping reality. It is actually the light of the sun outside the cave (a metaphor for philosophical thought) that helps us see reality in its fullness and not in shadows. The subway riders looking at their phones are the cave’s prisoners. The sole commuter who is able to look up and see the sunlight (rather than the shadows on screen) becomes the enlightened one.

But this is marketing, not philosophy, so there’s obviously more to the story. Bose headphones are hardly tools for enlightened philosophical reflection; they are just another media product competing for our scarce attention.

St. John of the Cross said that there is little room for God in an occupied heart. Amid our many mediated preoccupations, our mental and spiritual interior is a crowded and noisy place, not unlike the claus-ous subway car. And yet, despite all of this activity and stimulation, or perhaps because of it, there can be a disconnect with reality: a spiritual blindness and deafness.

Our senses are essential for apprehending and experiencing the reality of grace. Our Lord’s healing of the blind and deaf was a sign that pointed to a higher reality. Physical blindness in the Bible is a metaphor for a spiritual blindness that Jesus heals by making God’s work visible.

When someone loses a leg, they need a prosthetic device to assist with walking. What has been lost or broken inside of us that we need so many prosthetic devices like screens and headphones to help us keep up? What kind of progress renders us blind and deaf to the world around us?

ROBINSON is director of communications and Catho-lic media studies at the University of Notre Dame McGrath Institute for Church Life.
Seasons of Grief Presentation – Sister June Engelbrecht OP will present a day of poetry, reflection and prayer, “The Seasons of Grief,” Tuesday, Nov. 5, 9 a.m. – 2 p.m., at Rosaryville Spirit Life Center, 99003 Rossaryville Road, Ponchatoula. Cost is $35. For more information, visit cathericlifetreatment.org or call 225-294-5039.

Hunger Walk – The Interfaith Federation of Greater Baton Rouge is sponsoring Hunger Walk Sunday, Nov. 10 at the Catholic Life Center, 1800 S. Acadian Thwy., Baton Rouge. Registration and activities begin at 1:30 p.m. and the walk begin at 2:30 p.m. The two-mile walk will be from the Catholic Life Center to Catholic High School and back. For more information, to register and donate visit ghungerwalk.org.

Discalced Carmelites – The Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites will meet Sunday, Nov. 10, 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 white456@att.net.

Evening of Healing – Alan Ames will present his conversion story during an evening of healing Monday, Nov. 11, 7 p.m., at St. Joseph Church, 15710 Hwy. 16, French Settlement. St. Joseph pastor Father Jason Palmer and Ames’ conversa-
tion story exposition of Blessed Sacrament and healing service and benediction. For more information, call 225-698-3110.

Cross Wise Ministries – Cathryn Bonaventure Stanley will speak at her search for her biological parents with DNA testing and faith at the meeting of Cross Wise Ministries Wednesday, Nov. 13, 10 a.m. – noon, at the St. Patrick Church Family Center, 12444 Brogdon Lane, Baton Rouge. For more information, call 225-753-5750.

St. Agnes Masses – St. Agnes Church, 749 East Blvd., Baton Rouge, will host the following special Masses: Pro-Life Mass, St. Charbel Healing Mass, Tuesday, Nov. 12, 9 a.m. – 2:30 p.m., at the Archdiocese of New Orleans Retreat Center, 5500 St. Mary St., Metairie. Cost is $35, which includes lunch and refreshments. For more information and to register, visit retreats.arch-no.org or call 504-887-1420.

Day of Prayer – Darryl Ducote, director of the Office of Marriage and Family Life of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, and Decon Paul Ceasar, former executive director of the Archdiocese of New Orleans Retreat Center, will present a day of prayer, “A Look at Life Through the Lens of Gratitude,” Tuesday, Nov. 12, 9 a.m. – 2:30 p.m., at the Archdiocese of New Orleans Retreat Center, 5500 St. Mary St., Metairie. Cost is $35, which includes lunch and refreshments. For more information and to register, visit retreats.arch-no.org or call 504-887-1420.

St. Aloysius Fair – St. Aloysius Church, 2025 Stuart Ave., Baton Rouge, will host a fair Friday, Nov. 15 – Sunday, Nov. 17. For information, visit staloysius.org, facebook.com/stalbfair, or atstaloysiusUNdrained@gmail.com.

Born to Run – Woman’s New Life Clinic will host its fundraiser, “Born to Run,” Saturday, Nov. 16, at North Boulevard Town Square. Registration begins at 7:30 a.m. and there will be a 1 mile fun run/walk at 8:30 a.m. and a 5k run/walk at 9 a.m. To register and for more information, visit runsignup.com/Race/LA/BatonRouge/BTRBR2019 or call 225-663-6470.

Engaged Couples Retreat – A “Called to Love” engagement retreat will be held Friday, Nov. 22 – Sunday, Nov. 24 at the Bishop Robert E. Tracy Center, 1800 S. Acadian Thwy., Baton Rouge. Registration must be completed by Thursday, Nov. 14 by visiting miidior.org. For more information call Mila Gernon at 225-242-0323 or email mgernon@diobr.org.

Secular Franciscans – The monthly meeting of the Secular Franciscan Order will be held Sunday, Nov. 24, in the Chapel of St. Francis of Assisi at Maryville Convent, 4200 Essen Lane, Baton Rouge, beginning at 1 p.m. with the recitation of the Franciscan Crown. For further information, email Patsy T. Burgess OFS at phthibodeauxofs@gmail.com or call 225-907-8248.

For placing your classified ad, call 225-387-0983. All classified ads are prepaid. Credit cards are now accepted.

Anyone with knowledge of the whereabouts of Richard Philip Falcon is asked to contact the Diocesan Tribunal at 225-336-8755.

Anyone with knowledge of the whereabouts of Chauncey Ladeaux McCoy is asked to contact the Diocesan Tribunal at 225-336-8755.

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the deceit of false prophets. be not afraid and be prepared to face adversity. When in the hands of such persecution, Jesus will “give you a wisdom in speaking that all your adversaries will be powerless to resist or refute...but not a hair on your head will be destroyed...perseverance will secure your lives” (Lk 21:15-19).

The end of the age is a gradual reality. As missionary disciples of Jesus, we are commissioned to evangelize, to bear witness of the truth of hope in salvation and eternal life through Jesus Christ.

Our missions vary yet intersect in the communion of saints and the community of believers, where the oneness of the church (people of God) walk together, united in the mystical body of Christ. We live, pray, worship, learn, teach, serve and live as one body. We also experience universally as one body. As one is persecuted, all are persecuted. As one rejoices, all rejoice. Now more than ever we call upon the Holy Spirit for strength to persevere as confident, joyful witnesses of faith in God.

St. John Paul II reiterated on Sunday, Oct. 22, 1978 in St. Peter’s Square that, “so often today man does not know what is within him, in the depths of his mind and heart. So often, he is uncertain about the meaning of his life on this earth. He is assailed by doubt, a doubt that turns into despair. We ask you therefore, we beg you with humility and trust, let Christ speak to man. He alone has words of life, yes, of eternal life. Precisely today, the whole Church… is praying, meditating and acting in order that Christ’s words of life may reach all people and be received by them as a message of hope, salvation, and total liberation.”

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

FELLOWSHIP HALL BLESSING – Bishop Michael G. Duca blesses the newly renovated Fellowship Hall at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in St. Francisville on Sunday, Nov. 3. The building, located next to the church, underwent a massive three-month overhaul that included new flooring, walls, windows, doors, lighting, sound and renovations to the bathrooms. The hall also has a commercial kitchen and will be used for church gatherings, receptions and other events. Photo by Bonny Van | The Catholic Commentator
SAINTS ▼
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with her son, she is also grateful for the many years and loving presence of her parents, Milton and Mary Broussard, who are buried next to each other in St. Gabriel Cemetery in St. Gabriel.

Acosta grew up with 11 siblings in a home that she said was filled with love. She remembers her father, who died in 2006, working the farm he grew up on in Sunshine, running cattle, growing a garden and picking pecans.

Athletics was also a big part of Acosta’s family life. Milton Broussard, an alumnus of Catholic High School in Baton Rouge, coached at several Catholic and public schools, including Catholic High, St. John High School in Plaquemine and Redemptorist High School in Baton Rouge.

While coaching at Redemptorist during the 1960s and 1990s, the Wolves football team won two state championships. He was voted into Redemptorist’s Athletic Hall of Fame in 2002.

The couple settled in North Baton Rouge. Mary Broussard, a Redemptorist graduate, was raised in North Rouge. Mary Broussard, a Redemptorist graduate, was raised in North Rouge. She died in 2018.

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The Broussards had friendly competitions, including a “daddy’s rice dressing vs. mother’s cornbread dressing” during the holidays.

Acosta finds peace as she makes graveside visits to her son and parents. At her father’s grave some people will leave pecans and footballs, and she finds memorabilia left on her mother and son’s graves as well. On children’s graves, also, there may be toys.

“It’s comforting to see other people remembering them too,” said Acosta.

There’s also a lot of history lessons and glimpse of the deceased’s personality when looking at the headstones. “You learn a lot about life through a cemetery,” said Acosta.

When Jean Rodriguez visits the gravesite of her husband, Danny, who died in a hunting accident in December 1993 in West Feliciana Parish and is buried in Mt. Carmel Cemetery in St. Francisville, she is flooded with memories of a war hero and loving husband and father.

Danny Rodriguez, an Army Veteran and recipient of the Purple Heart, Bronze Star and other awards, proposed to Jean in April of 1968. He was drafted for the Vietnam War in June of that year and the couple married in November at St. Joseph Church in Marksville, where Jean had been baptized and received her first Communion and confirmation.

Preparing for the wedding was a whirlwind affair, said Rodriguez. “My mother made the wedding dress, the bridesmaids dresses and flower girl dress,” said Rodriguez.

The couple’s beautiful wedding belied the dangers Danny faced only a few days later when he left for Vietnam.

Danny’s platoon was involved in numerous intense battles in which some of his comrades died. Danny was injured by shrapnel three different times, with the last incident blinding him in his left eye. He was discharged in 1976 and went through rehabilitation in San Antonio, Texas.

Once he returned home, the Rodriguez’ had three children and he devoted himself to his family.

Danny deeply respected military veterans and their families because he knew from experience the deep sacrifices they made, according to Jean.

“He gave himself wholeheartedly to whatever he was called to do,” said Jean.

On November 28th, our volunteers will serve turkey with all the trimmings to hundreds of people who, unfortunately, have little to celebrate.

Many of them are living in homes where people have to skip meals or eat less to make ends meet. Some of them have no homes. But on this day, they will all have a warm place to go and plenty to eat.

This year, our volunteers will be serving up a Thanksgiving meal at our Dining Room and will continue the Holiday Helpers’ tradition at the Raising Cane’s River Center. We will come together to ensure everyone in our community has a place to turn to on Thanksgiving Day, as well as every day of the year.

Sometimes, we are overwhelmed by the number of people who turn to St. Vincent de Paul for the nourishment they need. But these people are not numbers – they are real people in desperate need. We see their faces; we hear their stories. They are struggling to survive and must rely on the kindness of others to help them through this difficult time in their lives.

In our nation, Thanksgiving originated as a harvest festival, a time of gratitude, and an opportunity to share nature’s bounty with family and friends. On this day, no one went hungry. So much has changed since that first Thanksgiving that our country would now be unrecognizable to those early settlers. One thing that hasn’t changed is the need to share God’s blessings with the less fortunate. On this special holiday, as we gather around tables filled with turkey and dressing, our community kitchen that is open every day of the year, providing a hot meal.

During the upcoming holiday season, there are many people who are wondering where their next meal is coming from. St. Vincent de Paul is the only community kitchen that is open every day of the year, providing a hot lunch and a brown bag supper daily. This year, we will serve over 270,000 meals. The lines at our dining room are long, and we can only meet the need with the help of generous people like you.