ONE YEAR LATER: Bishop Duca’s reflections

A lot can happen in a year.

A lot can happen in a moment!

Last summer, on June 10, 2018 to be exact, I received a call from the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Christophe Pierre, informing me I had been chosen by Pope Francis to be the next bishop of the Diocese of Baton Rouge. My heart sank as I considered leaving the church I had come to love in Shreveport. I almost did not answer the call.

I had received a similar call sitting in my office at Holy Trinity Seminary in Dallas now more than 11 years ago. It was a different archbishop, but it was the same office and my heart sank again as I was told by the then Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Pietro Sambi, that I had been chosen by our Holy Father, Benedict XVI, as the next bishop of Shreveport.

You might imagine that his next words would have kindly asked: “What do you think about this?,” or “Do you need some time to think about this?,” or “Does this fit into your life plan?” But the next words out of the Papal Nuncio’s mouth were simply, “DO YOU ACCEPT?”

With this simple straightforward question Archbishop Sambi brought the matter into clear focus and asked the only important question. It was the right question, because at that point in my priestly life it was no longer about me, it was about my willingness to accept the will of God in my life.

I must admit that God prepared me for this profound question. Over my years as a priest of the Diocese of Dallas I had already come to the conclusion that I was not in control of my life. My priestly life had not been anything like I expected. I remember talking with my vice-rector at the seminary years before my call to the Episcopacy.

We discussed what would come next in our lives as priests. Surprisingly, we both said in so many words that if we were asked, we would respond, “Bishop, wherever you need me.” We had not given up, but rather learned to give our lives freely to God in our priestly vocations. (By the way, my vice-rector was Father Doug Deshotel at the time, now bishop of Lafayette.)

When I received the call 10 years ago naming me bishop of Shreveport, there was only one important question, “DO YOU ACCEPT?” I immediately said, “YES,” not so much at the time to the Diocese of Shreveport, but to my heart. I had come to another place in my life where I had to say “YES” to God.

From the Bishop

Bishop Michael G. Duca

Emotion, fueled by centuries of oppression but buoyed with the idealism of hope, permeated the nearly 100-year-old walls of Holy Rosary Church in St. Amant on a steamy Saturday morning.

More than 200 people gathered at Holy Rosary on Aug. 17 for “A Day of Reflection: African Americans on the Path to Sainthood.” The day focused on six African Americans whose causes for sainthood are in varying stages.

Currently, there are no African American saints. Speakers spoke on the lives of some candidates, who include Mother Henriette De Lille of New Orleans, Pierre Toussaint of New York, Mary Elizabeth Lange of New Orleans, Venerable Father Tolton of Baltimore, Venerable Father Augustus Tolton of St. Louis, Missouri, Father Josephator of St. Louis, Missouri, and Father Augustus Tolton of St. Louis, Missouri.

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African American candidates celebrated

By Richard Meek

The Catholic Commentator

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Humility & wisdom

By Dina Dow

The liturgical year is deep within Ordinary Time as the 22nd and 23rd Sundays approach. Wisdom literature taken from the Old Testament act as “bookends” which hold up a resonating invitation to humility and wisdom. The former is a foundational virtue while the latter is the fruit of such.

Teaching a child humility

The author of Sirach gives direction about humility. Although the writing directs a child, the parent’s role is to guide the child. It takes humility to teach humility. The more humble one is, the more others will learn what it means to be humble. Recall a time when humility was the lesson of the moment. Did love and mercy inform the moment? Did the reader understand the goodness of humility over the destruction of pride? Did the teacher sense conversion?

The seating arrangement

Jesus’ lesson for us in the Gospel of Luke is simply eye opening. He is invited to an official’s home for a Sabbath meal. This is a big deal. Of course, place cards with inscribed names are something of the future, so invitees are seated themselves. All eyes are on Jesus. Knowing this, he takes the opportunity to share wisdom, his word. He offers a scenario of seating oneself in a place of honor, only to be asked by the host to give up the self-appointed seat for a seemingly more important guest. Meekly, you get up, move elsewhere and enjoy a little “humble pie.” The challenge is to temper our personal greatness with the reality that exists. Is love of me greater than love of thee? Do I recognize the faults within myself, realizing that perhaps I am not to be exalted, but rather a sojourner to Jesus, who shines the light on the perfection of humility, the cross? This humility is learned when we share in his cross.

A prayer for wisdom

King Solomon’s prayer asks for wisdom, as he begins the rule over the kingdom after his father, King David. Solomon realizes that his reign must be seeped in the wisdom that only God provides. He affirms “God’s counsel” must guide human reason since the latter remains burdened with worldliness. God is unburdened. The omnipotent wisdom of God endures. Far be it from Solomon to believe his earthly wisdom surpasses God. With great humility, he seeks wisdom in the power of God to lead the chosen people. Where do I gain wisdom and good counsel? Do I ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom? “…with the humble is wisdom” (Prv 11:2).

With humility and wisdom serves conversion

St. Paul, imprisoned in Rome, writes a letter to Philemon, noting that while he is in prison, he befriended Philemon’s slave, who has now become a Christian. St. Paul asks, as the new Christian returns to Philemon, that he take him back as an equal and brother. St. Paul’s humble confinement does not stop him from bringing others the wisdom of God. He understands the humility of captivity, and sees the slave as one made in the image of God, deserving all the wisdom St. Paul can provide. When has my humility increased my compassion for others? Have I reached out in good measure to share the faith?

Detachment

Finally, Jesus offers these words, “Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple” (Lk 14:27). Our cross is specifically ours to carry. Denying this would diminish the importance of the cross Jesus carried for our salvation. With the cross comes humility, perseverance, mercy, love, surrender, commitment and hope.

Jesus asks his followers to detach from possessions that would hinder this great task. The cross is an act carried by pure humility, total self-sacrifice, absolute endurance and inexhaustible trust in God for the good of the other and the glory of God. What do I need to shed in order to carry my cross? Pride, fear, anger, envy, greed? Am I avoiding a cross by procrastination, denial, rejection, or ignorance?

What happens when I take up my cross? We become like Jesus, as St. Paul writes, “Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus, Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, King Solomon’s prayer asks for wisdom, as he begins the rule over the kingdom after his father, King David. Solomon realizes that his reign must be seeped in the wisdom that only God provides. He affirms “God’s counsel” must guide human reason since the latter...
Cathedral, bishop featured in national TV series

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

St. Joseph Cathedral and the Diocese of Baton Rouge will be featured in a national television series scheduled to air in September 2020 on outlets to be determined.

“The Chair” is the story of the bishops of the United States as seen through the prism of their parish church, which is the local cathedral, said series host Msgr. Kieran Harrington of the Diocese of Brooklyn, New York.

The Diocese of Baton Rouge is one of 40 dioceses in the United States that will be featured, a list that includes the Archdiocese of New Orleans and the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux.

“Here is a church (the Baton Rouge diocese) in the South, a church that is vibrant, has a unique character and speaks to not just Catholicism but Catholicism in the country,” Msgr. Harrington said. “It says here is a diverse place, a community that half the state is white, a large portion African-American, a huge Vietnamese population and a growing Hispanic population. It is a metaphor for what is happening in other parts of the country as well.”

He noted how Baton Rouge was initially a part of the Archdiocese of Cuba and later became a French church. He said that the church is changing again.

“You can see all of that playing itself out,” Msgr. Harrington said. “What does it mean to be Creole? To me that is the impression I see.”

He added that in Louisiana “one can’t help but think of (former Governor) Huey Long. That has an influence on the culture and character of the city and the people in the city.”

Msgr. Harrington, who interviewed Bishop Michael G. Duca in the cathedral’s sanctuary on Aug. 11 for the episode, said the first cathedrals historically became the center of the first parishes in the country. He said the series is a story of the United States, the story of Catholicism in the United States.

“A country that is we understand today is very different than what it was at our founding,” said Msgr. Harrington. “A church that was impacted by American Indians, Spaniards, French, Germans, Irish, by now newcomers, Vietnamese, south and central American. How it adds to the vitality to building up the body of Christ in the United States.

“And specifically it speaks to the shepherds of these congregations, of these churches. And how is that decisions are made, why are decisions made. What is the essence of faith that enables bishops to be shepherds?”

Msgr. Harrington questioned Bishop Duca not only about the bishop’s personal and ministerial background but also about his faith.

“That fundamental question: Who do people say that I am?” Msgr. Harrington said.

He said the apostles were eyewitnesses and their testimony is believable because they were willing to shed their blood.

“Today, who are these modern day witnesses?” Msgr. Harrington said. “They are the bishops primarily. They are the source of unity in the church.”

“If you think about the apostolic models: Fishermen, shepherd. And how does somebody go from being a fisherman to a shepherd.”

He noted that Bishop Duca, a former vocations director in the Diocese of Dallas, was at one point a fisherman. And then he became a shepherd when he was appointed bishop for the Diocese of Shreveport, and 10 years later for the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

“There is a different skill set and how does that play into the life of one man,” Msgr. Harrington said.

The monsignor explained that the series is rooted in the idea the role of the shepherd, or bishop, is misunderstood and has been marred by the problems in the life of the church. He said people often look at the church as having a CEO and branch managers.

“But that is not what the church is,” he said. “These are spiritual relationships. When we try to get back to spiritual roles at play here we can understand those dynamics a little bit better.”

Msgr. Harrington said his hope is to portray the spiritual relationship between the bishop and the people. He said that is why the cathedral in every diocese is so important, and important to the chair.

He noted the bishop is not a king but a shepherd.

“Yet, when you talk about the roles of preaching, teaching, sanctifying and governing, how do you negotiate all of these different roles?” Msgr. Harrington said.

He noted the role of brother-friend involving the bishop and clergy members is complex.

“How do you negotiate that, being friends with someone you have to manage, have governance over?” he said. “It’s a challenge to understand the whole new situations (when a bishop is appointed to a new diocese or archdiocese) and the lens by which decisions are made.

There are corporate considerations but (the bishop asks himself) ‘How do I make decisions from the consideration of stewardship but also at the time for the spiritual good of somebody? Those are sometimes different realities and trying to negotiate that is (difficult).’

He said the cathedral will be featured through video images throughout and will include its history, architecture and beauty.

“It is nice to have an objective professional group of journalists and media specialists come and show off our cathedral,” St. Joseph pastor Father Paul Counce. “We are here every day. But it’s our home, we are comfortable here. It’s always nice to have it looked at by a fresh set of eyes.”

Father Counce said that being pastor of a church that will be featured nationally is a “source of additional pride.”

Msgr. Harrington said the series is being filmed through NET TV and discussions are being held with several platforms concerning its eventual airing. He envisions perhaps a two-part overall series followed by the airing of episodes featuring individual dioceses.
**Diocese of Baton Rouge Seminary Scholarship Funds**

**What is a Seminary Scholarship fund?**
A seminary scholarship fund is an invested sum of money, the interest of which is used in perpetuity to help fund the education of men studying for the priesthood.

**How does someone establish a fund?**
It is simple. A fund may be established and named for anyone you choose – Friend, family, bishop, priest, religious, etc. Anyone can name or establish a fund.

### Scholarship Fund Contributions May thru July

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<th>Who do I contact to establish or contribute to a fund?</th>
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<td>To create a fund or to make a contribution to an existing fund, please send it to the Vocations and Seminarians Department, P. O. Box 2028, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-2028. For information, call 225-336-8778.</td>
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<th>This is only a partial list of all Seminary Scholarship Funds.</th>
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<td>Visit our website at <a href="http://www.diobr.org/vocations">www.diobr.org/vocations</a> for a complete list of Seminary Scholarship Funds.</td>
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### Additional Scholarship Funds

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<th>In Honor of: Seminarian Mathew Dunn</th>
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### ‘Spiritual tourism’ destroys church

**VATICAN CITY (CNS) –** Christians who focus more on being superficially close to the church rather than care for their fellow brothers and sisters are like tourists who wander around aimlessly, Pope Francis said.

People "who are always passing by but never enter the church" in a fully communal way of sharing and caring engage in a sort of "spiritual tourism that makes them believe they are Christians but instead are only tourists of catacombs," he said Aug. 21 during his weekly general audience.

"A life based only on profiting and taking advantage of situations to the detriment of others inevitably causes inner death," he said. "And how many people say they are close to the church, friends of priests and bishops yet only seek their own interests. These are the hypocrisies that destroy the church."

During the audience, Clelia Manfellotti, a 10-year-old girl from Naples diagnosed with autism, walked up the steps to where the pope was sitting.

The pope told his security detail to "let her be. God speaks" through children, prompting the crowd to erupt in applause. While greeting the Italian-speaking pilgrims at the end of the audience, Pope Francis reflected on the young girl who is "a victim of an illness and doesn't know what she is doing."

"I ask one thing, but everyone should respond in their heart: 'Did I pray for her; looking at her, did I pray so that the Lord would heal her, would protect her? Did I pray for her parents and for family?' When we see any person suffering, we must always pray. This situation helps us to ask this question: 'Did I pray for this person that I have seen, (this person) that is suffering?'" he asked.

In his catechesis, the pope continued his series of talks on the Acts of the Apostles, reflecting on the sharing of goods among the first Christian communities.
Social media and its impact on children uncertain

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

Removing the children from the world of virtual reality and returning them to the real world was the goal of a social media information workshop at St. Jude the Apostle Church and school in Baton Rouge on Sunday, Aug. 18. Attendance at the event was mandatory for parents of children enrolled in school or the Parish School of Religion because, as St. Jude pastor Father Trey Nelson said, “We would not ask their presence if we didn’t think this was an important issue.”

“It’s what’s going on in the family,” said Father Nelson. “You know if a parent is sitting there on the sofa every night, on their phone checking Facebook or whatever it is they do, and it’s not bedtime yet - they could be interacting with their children in some way but they’re doing that instead. First of all, what does that do to that relationship, and secondly, what is the example that it’s setting?”

Father Nelson said the idea for the workshop came up after a discussion with other parents about the popular video game “Fortnite.” The discussion, he said, “kind of mushroomed into a bigger topic,” including screen time effects on academics, behavior and social interaction.

“How does it affect interaction between (children) and their parents and vice versa? And so I was very excited to do (a workshop),” explained Father Nelson. “And then the school board really wanted to do it, and I made a statement that I think this may be something that we need to ask parents to come to, not invite but ask.”

Dr. Erin Dugan, associate dean of academic affairs in the Department of Clinical Rehabilitation and Counseling at the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center in New Orleans, informed the parents there is a limited amount of research on the impact of social media. She said that social media is defined as “any type of screen that we put before ourselves no matter how old we are.”

She said social media also has many advantages, “so it’s a take it in moderation approach.”

Dugan told the audience that parents’ jobs are to nurture, engage, challenge and provide.

Dugan said that social media gives immediate satisfaction and responses to the user, through “likes” or comments but “many children don’t know how to comment or how it can be misconstrued.”

Citing classic psychological theories on cognitive and social development, Dugan said children “don’t reason cognitively until the age of 12.”

“The classic studies are there, and they’ve been used for years and years and so being able to have parents understand some of these major theorists’ studies and how kids are developing is crucial in understanding who their children are, prior to putting something extraneous such as social media or screens in front of them first and foremost,” said Dugan.

The benefits of social media, according to Dugan, include opening communication channels, finding support groups and other helpful information such as medical or educational. She said the negative impacts are superficial friendships; it’s a tool for predators, criminals and terrorists; takes away from family time; and increases social anxiety. She said the best activity to combat screen time for all ages is playtime.

“Huge amounts! It’s what’s going to help support kids, their skills, the resources that they’ll need for survival for professional careers in their life,” explained Dugan, who admitted to setting aside her own “play” or down time from devices.

Steve Barrios, a teacher at St. Joseph’s Academy in Baton Rouge, said parents need to be aware of what kids are exposed to, especially with the speed of technology.

“They (students) don’t understand the concept of public and permanent, that whatever you post is public and it’s permanent. There’s no way you can get rid of it,” said Barrios. “And it seems like every six months a new type of social media pops up. I mean last year it was TicToc. I had no idea what that was. I had to have my students explain it to me.”

“There are so many types of social media, even more than there were just a few years ago, so knowing more and having knowledge of what they have access to is important,” said Lexlee Overton, a mother of three.

“We recognize that social media and technology is a part of our everyday life, it is not going to go away,” said St. Jude principal Michelle Gardner. “So as parents being the primary educator of their child, it’s very important that we educate them and give them as much information as we can in our partnership with them.”

Join Pearson’s Travel World and Kathleen Levy, from Insight Vacations
September 10, 2019
2:00 p.m.
Featuring our 2020 departures
• Wonders of the American West
• Best of Ireland & Scotland
• Sicily in Depth
• Scenic Iceland & the Northern Lights

*Limited Seating…Please RSVP

Its Time To Book Alaska For 2020!
Celeste Pevahouse from Princess Cruise Lines
September 11, 2019
2:00 p.m.
• Alaska 2020 Cruise Show
Land and Sea

Show Booking Incentives:
– Reduced Deposit
– Coupon Savings Booklet
– 3 for Free Promotions on Select Sailings

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For more information call Tootie.

Pearson’s Travel World
7949 Jefferson Hwy., Baton Rouge • 225-926-3752
New Catholic needs annulment?/Chalice and health risks

Q A neighbor of ours, age 66, just completed the RICIA program to become a Catholic. She has been told that she cannot receive Communion or be confirmed until she secures an annulment. She was not married in a Catholic church and has been divorced for over a decade. She states that she has “no intention of getting married again.” Does she really need an annulment? (Columbus, Ohio)

A No. If she has no intention of marrying again, there is no need for her to have an annulment before she is received into the Catholic Church and able to share in the sacraments. If the time ever came, however, when she wanted to enter into a new marriage, she would first have to have that earlier marriage examined by the church. Some Catholics think mistakenly that when two non-Catholics marry, that marriage doesn’t “count” with the Catholic Church. That is untrue. So whether the first marriage of the woman in question was to a Catholic or to a non-Catholic, that marriage would still have to be declared null for her to enter a new marriage with the church’s blessing.

Q I’ve been wondering about this for a long time. Why, at holy Communion, do we have to drink from the same chalice that everyone else has used? It seems to me to be a very unsanitary practice, with all the germs and diseases that are around. So my family and I do not partake of the precious blood of Jesus at Mass. Why can’t Catholics offer Communion in individual disposable cups, as some of the Protestant churches do? (Sherwood, Arkansas)

A Over the years, the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has several times answered inquiries regarding the risk of disease transmission from a common cup. As the American Journal of Infection Control has explained (October 1998), there is no need to partake of the common cup.

Q Some Catholics think mistakenly that when two non-Catholics marry, that marriage doesn’t “count” with the Catholic Church. That is untrue. So whether the first marriage of the woman in question was to a Catholic or to a non-Catholic, that marriage would still have to be declared null for her to enter a new marriage with the church’s blessing.

Q Yes, if the church has blessed the marriage, then it is valid. So there is no point in seeking an annulment. (Baton Rouge, Louisiana)

A A marriage in which a Catholic woman has been divorced and remarried is a null marriage. There would be no blessing of the marriage if it had not been valid. The woman has to be annulled. If she had been married to a non-Catholic, that marriage would still have to be declared null for her to enter a new marriage with the church’s blessing.

Q There is currently in the U.S. an issue of serious concern to those who follow the teachings of Jesus, but I have not heard a word about it from the pulpit or in my Catholic newspaper. It is the racism being displayed by those in authority in our government.

Q I was heartbroken to watch an 11-year-old Mexican girl sobbing as she begged our president to let her have her father back. Isn’t it morally wrong and a serious sin to support racism? I believe that Jesus would be addressing this issue strongly if he were on earth today. Where are those religious representatives who were given the responsibility to carry on his work? I feel that by their silence, they are condoning these atrocities. (Somerset, New Jersey)

A The Catholic bishops of our country have been forthright and outspoken on the issue of immigration, with particular reference to the current crisis on our southern border. In August 2019, the bishops’ conference was openly critical of an “interim final rule” issued by the Trump administration.

Bishop Joe S. Vasquez of Austin, Texas, who is chair of the bishops’ migration committee, wrote: “The rule would turn our back on the vast majority of asylum seekers, requiring them to apply for protection in almost any other country through which they transit, leaving access to U.S. asylum exceptionally rare. Not only do we believe that this rule is unlawful, but it also jeopardizes the safety of vulnerable individuals and families fleeing persecution and threats family unity.”

A Year earlier, Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo, as president of the bishops’ conference, denounced the administration’s policy that had led to children being held in government shelters while their parents were being sent to federal prisons.

Q Families are the foundational element of our society,” he said, “and they must be able to stay together. While protecting our borders is important, we must be able to stay together. While protecting our borders is important, we

Q A neighbor of ours, age 66, just completed the RICIA program to become a Catholic. She has been told that she cannot receive Communion or be confirmed until she secures an annulment. She was not married in a Catholic church and has been divorced for over a decade. She states that she has “no intention of getting married again.” Does she really need an annulment? (Columbus, Ohio)

Q Some Catholics think mistakenly that when two non-Catholics marry, that marriage doesn’t “count” with the Catholic Church. That is untrue. So whether the first marriage of the woman in question was to a Catholic or to a non-Catholic, that marriage would still have to be declared null for her to enter a new marriage with the church’s blessing.

Q I’ve been wondering about this for a long time. Why, at holy Communion, do we have to drink from the same chalice that everyone else has used? It seems to me to be a very unsanitary practice, with all the germs and diseases that are around. So my family and I do not partake of the precious blood of Jesus at Mass. Why can’t Catholics offer Communion in individual disposable cups, as some of the Protestant churches do? (Sherwood, Arkansas)

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Q There is currently in the U.S. an issue of serious concern to those who follow the teachings of Jesus, but I have not heard a word about it from the pulpit or in my Catholic newspaper. It is the racism being displayed by those in authority in our government.

Q I was heartbroken to watch an 11-year-old Mexican girl sobbing as she begged our president to let her have her father back. Isn’t it morally wrong and a serious sin to support racism? I believe that Jesus would be addressing this issue strongly if he were on earth today. Where are those religious representatives who were given the responsibility to carry on his work? I feel that by their silence, they are condoning these atrocities. (Somerset, New Jersey)

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Messages of hope from church encourage young adults

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator
(Second in a series)

For the Catholic Church, learning to communicate with millennials can be as frustrating as learning a new language. But young Catholics assured church leaders that consistent effort and honest, timeless messages of hope, acceptance and support do not need translation, can be understood and keep them engaged.

The church can begin its outreach by explaining its traditions and history to young Catholics and trust they are interested, millennials and post-millennials say.

Trey Parker, a sophomore at Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University in Baton Rouge, said he enjoys Mass and looking at it through the perspective of its Jewish roots.

“I see how it (the Mass) is the fulfillment of the Old Testament. It’s not just a loaf of bread, that’s God up there on the altar,” said Parker.

He believes the church does a good job in reaching out to young Catholics. Although he believes the church is important, he added it does not do enough in helping youth cultivate their faith so they have the tools to make wise decisions.

Having “gotten from youth group to youth group” in his teens, Parker said he discovered he had to do most of his faith formation on his own and share it because it wasn’t going to be handed down to him.

He said in his experiences in various church parishes a personal encounter with Jesus and the intellectual component of the faith was not emphasized enough.

“I participated in a lot of parish functions, and I don’t think they are pushing young people,” Parker said. “I don’t feel that as a young person I can push any barriers to know ‘Yeah, it’s possible for me to be a saint … that it’s possible to reach the height of holiness.’”

He added, “The youth are burning … they are burning … they are seeking purpose, they are seeking fulfillment … One of the saddest things is that the church does offer (the way) to the fulfillment of the human person, but it isn’t effectively communicated to the youth and that’s why a lot of people leave the church seeking that fulfillment.”

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He acknowledged it can be hard to consistently meet with young people because of their obligations outside of the church, but he encouraged the church to still extend the invitation.

He further recommended the church be more transparent on its past transgressions, such as clergy abuse cases.

“We live in the information age and there is still a mysterious cloud that looms over our church concerning those issues. This is a large reason why many young people are inactive or have departed from the church,” Jones said.

Young Catholics confirmed they hear the church’s variety of messages directed to them, but what they seek most is a humble, heartfelt appeal, “We need you.”

Tian and Allison Pham, parents of young children and parishioners of St. Aloysius Church in Baton Rouge, said the church makes great strides in reaching out to young Catholics through Bible studies, activities geared toward young Catholics with similar interests and concentrating on the specific needs they raise or are important to them. But they urged the church to strengthen its efforts to reach young adult Catholics, especially after they graduate from high school.

“We do feel like there is an involvement gap in parish community life for young Catholics between college and when they start families,” said Jones.

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By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

The Virgin Mary is the new church, born without original sin, full of grace and assumed into heaven body and soul. She is also to be viewed as the mother of all.

Welcoming Mary into one’s heart was the message Father Mark Beard delivered during a pair of stirring keynote addresses at the 19th annual Men of the Cross Men’s Conference on Aug. 10 at Holy Rosary Church in St. Amant.

The theme of the conference, which attracted nearly 170 men on a sun-drenched and quite warm Saturday, was Reaching Jesus through Mary.

Father Beard, pastor of St. Helena Church in Amite, and Holy Rosary pastor Father Joshua Johnson each spoke about the Virgin Mary, the importance of praying the rosary and how trips to Medjugorje have made a difference in each of their lives.

Father Beard, who attended Catholic schools but admittedly “knew nothing of our faith,” said Medjugorje made him thirst to learn more of not only what lic schools but admittedly “knew noth -

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of the (10 Commandments). I don’t want of the Holy Rosary walls. “You break one of the (10 Commandments). I don’t want to hear about the duck blind, the Saints were playing. (Don’t say), ‘Father I found Disney World but I could not find church.”

“I went to several churches (of different faiths); I did it all,” Father Beard said. “I wanted somebody to tell me the truth. What Medjugorje did for me was put me on a mission to do the right thing the right way. It taught so many things I never thought possible."

He emphatically stated that Mary was born without original sin, recalling the words of the angel Gabriel, who said to Mary, “Hail full of grace.”

“From the very beginning she was full of grace, therefore she did not have original sin,” Father Beard said. “If you do not have original sin, you could not have died. She could not have had relations with Joseph because Joseph had original sin. ‘That means the child (Jesus) would have had original sin.”

After visiting Medjugorje Father Beard said he was filled with grace and started going to confession, which he said there is no greater gift in the church outside of the Eucharist.

“Let me tell you something, my brothers in Christ; don’t miss a Mass,” he said, the passion in his speech reverberating off of the Holy Rosary walls. “You break one of the (10 Commandments). I don’t want to hear about the duck blind, the Saints were playing. (Don’t say), ‘Father I found Disney World but I could not find church.”

“You were either in the building or you’re not in the building,” he added. “It is important to me that you go to confession and move on so that you can receive him. Stay close to him, for every day you fail further away from him, the more things will get in your way.”

Father Johnson, who said he always found peace with something he was struggling with or holding onto on each of his three visits to Medjugorje, said one of the Blessed Mother’s consistent messages is to come back to Jesus through the rosary.

“She does not say come back to my son Jesus Christ by trying away yoga meditation, and she does not say come back to Christ by using new age spirituality,” Father Johnson said. “She says ‘Come back to my son Jesus Christ through the rosary, over and over and over.”

Father Johnson pointed out that one of the commandments is to honor your mother and father, and Mary is our mother.

“So what should we be doing? Praying the rosary,” he said.

Father Johnson encouraged those gathered to pray to the Blessed Mother to help each person to see Christ in the same way she saw him, to see him through her eyes, to hear him speak through her ears.

He added that adoration must lead to the imitation of Christ.

“If I can spend time with Jesus through the rosary, then I will begin to speak, act and think like Jesus,” Father Johnson said.

“In this season of my life, am I thinking like Christ throughout the day? Or not?” he asked as he challenged the men. “In this season of my life, am I speaking the words of Christ or am I not? Am I acting in union with Christ in work, at home, in my neighborhood, with my friends or not?

“If I’m not, then there is something that is off, and what’s off is my prayer life.”

He said prayer suppresses vices and stressed that if one’s prayer life is off, then that person will likely be indulging in bad habits.

“If you are not men of prayer, you will not be virtuous men, you will not be holy men, you will be men who are negative, cheat, steal, lie, curse, gossip, brood,” he said.

He said people must be focused on Christ more than anything else and the rosary is a means to that end.

“I think the conference is very important because it gives you someone else that you can lean on in times of need as opposed to where you are not surrounding yourself with other men of Christ,” Cody Melancon, a parishioner at St. John the Evangelist Church in Prairieville, said.

“A very large part (of the conference) is relatable. It’s absolutely a sign of encouragement to see 170 other men here. You know you are not alone.”

Melancon said he found Father Beard’s story about wondering through a spiritual desert before finding his faith at Medjugorje inspiring.

“Doesn’t that remind each of us of our own individual past and how we’re seeking to build our faith and also to realize who we are?” he said.

Van Browning, a member of Most Blessed Sacrament Church in Baton Rouge, said he enjoyed Father Johnson stressing the important of the Eucharist. Browning acknowledged that in the absence of prayer, a person will return to doing things “you are not proud of.”

“Prayer is important and needs to be a part of your daily life,” he said.

Father Beard offered encouragement to the men, saying salvation can be achieved by following what he called the “seven signs” (sacraments). He said a person gets on the interstate to heaven at baptism, confirmation is one stop along the spiritual highway. He said marriage is in one lane, but single life in another and the ordained life in another.

He said there are other stops along the way, including confession, but they are all built on the Eucharist.

“How hard can it be” he asked. “All you have to do is follow the seven signs. Can you get there another way? Why would you? The church is the truth.”

Father Beard also stressed families to pray together, saying “it makes all of the difference in the world.”

He said if a family or married couple is not praying together “we will be doing your annullment.”

The day included Mass and a period of eucharistic adoration.
By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

After a countdown of 3-2-1, Bishop Michael G. Duca cut the ribbon on the new 32,000-square-foot multipurpose building at St. Michael the Archangel High School in Baton Rouge on Monday, Aug. 19, delighting a parking lot audience filled with students, faculty, staff and supporters.

From bands to basketball, theater to tournaments, Mass to mass gatherings the new facility can handle it all.

“It’s very exciting; it’s the largest project we’ve undertaken in the last 14 years,” said principal Ellen Lee. “We’ll have a permanent stage area which we’ve never had before for our drama productions and school liturgies and, of course, the secondary location for physical education and athletics is just going to be wonderful.”

St. Michael High School, built in 1984, had an early student population of more than 100 students. During the years, the number has mushroomed to 575 students. Add in extracurricular activities such as drama club, an award-winning, nationally-recognized band; boys’ and girls’ sports; plus liturgy and school officials said the campus definitely needed more space under roof.

“It’s going to allow us to do basketball practices simultaneously,” said Josh Galasso, SMHS advancement director. “In previous years, students weren’t getting off the court until nine o’clock (at night), so this is allowing us to hold practices at the same time, allowing them to get home at a reasonable time and study.”

SMHS basketball player Abby Button knows all too well the challenges of sharing one court. The student council president said she is excited about getting to use the facility in her final year at St. Michael. New locker rooms are connected to roomy new bathrooms for boys and girls, and there are large new offices for athletic and physical education staff.

“It’s so neat to have the resources that we have now, like a new gym and all of the new rooms and the facility,” Button said, grinning. “It’s so fresh, like starting off the year with something new.”

Band director Dr. Kevin Andry said he was able to sit down with the architect several years ago and present his “wish list” for the space. The new band room features acoustic sound-proofing; state-of-the-art sound systems so students can hear playbacks of their performance; two smaller practice rooms; an office for the band director; and, a large storage room with a permanent stage for liturgy, theater productions and band concerts.

St. Michael dedicates new multipurpose building

Catholic schools superintendent Dr. Melanie Palmisano looks on as Bishop Michael G. Duca blesses the new multipurpose building at St. Michael High School on Aug. 19. Photos by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

Left: The new multipurpose building is 32,000-square-feet and contains a permanent stage for liturgy, theater productions and band concerts.
Lower Left: The new band room has acoustic soundproofing, state-of-the art sound systems and two smaller practice rooms.
ABOVE: Archbishop Gregory M. Aymond, from the Archdiocese of New Orleans, and Bishop Michael G. Duca, from the Diocese of Baton Rouge, along with clergy and representatives of other faiths join in an ecumenical interfaith memorial service Thursday, Aug. 22, for Blanco. 

As archbishop of New Orleans, Aymond recalled the importance of faith in her life and said she was returning to the cathedral, which served as her church parish while she was governor.

“She never gave into desolation but rather renewed her spirit through her great trust in God’s providence to make up for what was lacking in power and ease others,” said the archbishop.

“She welcomed Kathleen home again, grateful for her service and her strength which gave hope to the people of our state at all those times when hope was needed the most.”

“Raymond Blanc’s, the governor’s favorite son, was there with the children Karson, Kyle, Kaylee, Nicole, Raymond Junior, and Pillar. Archdiocese of New Orleans Bishop Michael Duca, mother, Narcisse Freeman Blanc, and members of her family were present to join in on the visitation for her service which was held in the cathedral. Three of the children msgs were given to the former governor’s family. mosely.
Giffin answers the call to ministry

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Connecting young Catholics with their faith, their peers and the wider community through intentional prayer, accountability and support will be the focus of West Giffin, the new associate director of youth and young adult ministry for the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

Giffin previously served as youth program coordinator for the Youth and Young Adult ministry program.

“West has played a significant role in the renewal of our diocesan resources through key events, retreats, missions, workshops and presentations for our youth, young adults, parents and those who serve throughout the diocese,” said Dina Dow, director of the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis of the Diocese of Baton Rouge. “His experience as a youth minister, together with his passion for the Gospel message, compliments the essential mission of the church’s ministry in forming intentional disciples. We are blessed to have West in this role.”

Giffin, who was raised in the Shenandoah area of Baton Rouge, graduated from LSU in 2012 with a bachelor’s degree in administration.

“I really had a fun job in college,” said Giffin. “I worked for (former) coach Les Miles quite a bit as one of his student workers. It was very eye opening.”

Giffin had several game-day responsibilities, which “didn’t leave much time for tailgating.”

From there, Giffin went on to serve a six-month internship with the New Orleans Saints corporate sponsorship department.

Through his experiences in athletic administration, Giffin said he learned a lot about what it takes to plan an event.

“I was completely blown away with the amount of manpower (staff and volunteers), effort, time and resources to make one football game operate,” said Giffin.

“It was a very educational experience how to operate at a professional and fast pace,” added Giffin, who said he learned how to roll with the punches.

After graduating, Giffin entered the working world and volunteered in different ministries. In 2014 he learned about the need to create a youth ministry at Most Blessed Sacrament Church in Baton Rouge and was part of a volunteer team establishing a youth ministry program at MBS.

He initially worked part-time as the youth ministry director and part-time assistant athletics director for MBS School. He later became full-time director of youth ministry.

Giffin said his call to youth ministry began in the summer of his eighth-grade year at St. George Church in Baton Rouge. He attended youth conferences, retreats and other events.

Alongside that, as a youth he enjoyed camping and going hiking.

“When those kind of events developed in me a certain level of openness to God in the beauty and serenity of nature,” said Giffin.

“Even before I served at Most Blessed Sacrament I was called to come back and to share,” said Giffin. “That developed a passion of what I do in serving in youth ministry.”

His service at MBS inspired him to serve at the diocesan level. He said his call to deepen his involvement in youth ministry also deepened his call to continue his education. He is pursuing a master’s degree in pastoral leadership at Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans. He likewise encourages youth to have a lifelong love of learning about their faith.

Giffin finds that the youth he has been working with are intuitive, perceptive and intelligent.

“I’ve seen them rise to the occasion any time they get that opportunity,” said Giffin.

He noted during the flood of 2016 youth responded to the call to gut houses and other types of volunteer relief efforts.

Giffin said he accepts the transition to associate director with excitement and humility.

“I know very well that ministry is not performed inside a vacuum, and I am so overjoyed to be working alongside the many rock stars who serve our youth at our many parishes and schools,” Giffin said.

He emphasized the call to bring the encounter of love and truth of Jesus to young people is as important now as it has ever been.

“Now is the time for us as the church to accept that challenge and strive towards bringing our young people into the fullness of grace that Christ desires for them through our action and example,” Giffin.

His goal is to provide as much support as he can to the youth ministers, educators and catechists to equip them with the tools and encouragement they need to fulfill their own personal calls.

Giffin and wife, Lauren, have a son, Mason, 16 months old. Being a father has crystalized Giffin’s view of the type of youth ministry that he would like his son to be involved in one day that would encourage, support and challenge him to live to his fullest potential.

“The world I would like to see for Mason is one that, first, is a place where inclusive relationships are developed with other people in a positive community and, second, a place where he can have an encounter and become a disciple of Christ,” said Giffin.
BACK TO SCHOOL – Trina Dang, Breanna Perry and Cameron Daigle, students at St. Michael the Archangel High School in Baton Rouge, get together for lunch break on the first day of school. Photo provided by Kaye Self | St. Michael High School

NEW SCHOOL YEAR – Fifth-grader Liza Fagan arrives for the new school year at Holy Ghost School in Hammond. Photo provided by Cindy Wagner | Holy Ghost School


GIFT OF MUSIC – David Brackenridge and his daughters, Vicky Travis and Laura Denehy donated a piano to St. Jean Vianney School in Baton Rouge. The piano belonged to their wife and mother, Anna Mary Brackenridge. Pictured, from left, are Denehy (holding the family pet, Lincoln), Travis, Brackenridge, Wendy Ross, principal of SJV, and Regin Cates, SJV music teacher. Photo provided by Abby Bourgeois | St. Jean Vianney School

Your Catholic Wedding 2019

A Guide to the Sacrament of Marriage in the Diocese of Baton Rouge

Be a part of The Catholic Commentator’s Wedding Section in the September 13 issue.

The Catholic Commentator will publish a complete wedding guide filled with information for those planning for the Sacrament of Marriage in the Diocese of Baton Rouge. If a couple wishes to marry in the Catholic Church, there are guidelines that must be followed and preparation programs the couple must attend. Some 40,000 copies will be distributed including those to be placed in Wedding Packets at each church.

Deadline for advertising is September 4.

For information, call Wanda Koch at 225-387-0983 or email wkoch@diobr.org.

THE CATHOLIC COMMENTATOR
**The Farewell**

*K2*

Cultural difference lead to family tension as a young Chinese American aspiring writer (rapper Awkwafina) learns that her much-loved grandmother (Zhao Shuzhen) has been diagnosed with terminal cancer and that her parents (Tzi Ma and Diana Lin), along with her other relatives, intend to keep the dying woman in the dark about her condition, a decision with which she vehemently disagrees. As the clan gathers in the city of Changchun, ostensibly for the hastily arranged wedding of the protagonist’s cousin (Chen Han), but in reality to have a last visit with the matriarch, writer-director Lulu Wang, novoing writer-director Lulu Wang, but in reality to have a last visit with the matriarch, writer-director Lulu Wang, but in reality to have a last visit with the matriarch, writer-director Lulu Wang, but in reality to have a last visit with the matriarch, writer-director Lulu Wang, but in reality to have a last visit with the matriarch, writer-director Lulu Wang, but in reality to have a last visit with the matriarch, writer-director Lulu Wang,....

**Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark**

Classic horror motifs are given fresh life in this fun chiller, set in 1968 Pennsylvania, about a teenage aspiring writer (Zoe Colletti) who, together with her two best pals (Gabriel Rush and Austin Zajur) and a stranger (Michael Garza) the trio have just befriended, pay a Halloween-night visit to a haunted house from which she purloins a tome that turns out to be capable of unleashing mayhem. As the scribe and the out-of-townie fall for each other, each character is imperiled in turn when a story about him or her is magically added to the stolen volume. In adapting a series of books by Alvin Schwartz, screenwriters and brothers Dan and Kevin Hageman throw in the ghost of a troubled girl from the turn of the last century for good measure. Director Andres Ovredal presides over a spirited, often funny collection of eerie urban legends come to life. Brief moments of harsh but bloodless violence, sexual references, a scatological theme, a few uses of profanity, a handful of milder oaths, occasional crude language. A-III; PG-13

**The Anger Birds Movie 2**

*Sony*

The filmmakers behind this animated follow-up to the 2016 original create not one but two romantic subplots, teach a heartwarming moral lesson about cooperation even when you don’t like someone else, throw in a slew of ‘90s references to entertain the grown-ups and mix an air of unholiness, deeply classical silliness with the seemingly inevitable (in children’s fare) potty jokes. The flightless birds (voices of, Peter Dinklage, Josh Gad and Danny McBride) and grass green pigs (their leader voiced by Bill Hader) of the popular app must band together to stave off a threat from icy Eagle Island (its instigator voiced by Leslie Jones). The youngest audience members won’t understand all the jokes. But director Thurot Van Orman and screenwriter Peter Ackerman, eager to please, have seen to it that something inevitably comes along that they will. The result is in a comedy virtually the whole household can enjoy. Intense action sequences, fleeting scatological humor. A-II; PG

**The Kitchen**

*Warner Bros.*

Morally muddled tale, set in New York City’s Hell’s Kitchen neighborhood, circa 1978, of three mob wives (Melissa McCarthy, Tiffany Haddish and Elisabeth Moss) who, after their husbands are imprisoned, successfully supplant the gang leader (Myk Watford) who promised but failed to take care of them in their spouses’ absence. With the help of a hardened killer (Domhnall Gleeson), their protection racket becomes so profitable that they are invited into an alliance with a Brooklyn-based mafia family (headed by Bill Camp). Though well-acted, writer-director Andrea Berloff’s gritty drama, adapted from a series of comic books by Ollie Masters and Ming Doyle, presents criminal mayhem as the vehicle by which its main characters emancipate themselves from male oppression. It also romanticizes adultery. Misguided values, much gory violence, including murderous vengeance, semi-graphic adulterous sexual activity, blasphemous dialogue, pervasive rough and crude language. O; R

**Good Boys**

*Universal*

Three youthful actors (Jacob Tremblay, Brady Noon and Keith L. Williams) are shamefully exploited as the script of this supposed comedy has them interacting with sex toys, online pornography and drugs. While the underlying implication throughout director and co-writer Gene Stupnitsky’s immoral film is, paradoxicaly, that the tween characters are far more naïve about sexuality than they would like to admit, the point can only be made at the expense of the core cast’s innocence. The fact that no one protected them from taking on such wildly age-inappropriate material is bewildering. Strong sexual content involving children, a narcotics theme, several uses of profanity, pervasive rough and crude language. O; R

**47 Meters Down: Uncaged**

*Entertainment Studios*

Jumpy follow-up to the 2017 original in which a quartet of American teen girls living in Mexico (Corinne Foxx, Sistine Stallone, Sophia Nellisse and Brianna Tju) goes scuba diving in the submerged, shark-infested ruins of a Mayan city where they become trapped and are forced to fight for their lives. Returning director and co-writer Johannes Roberts ramps up the gore but also explores themes of altruism, cooperation and family unity on the way to a coincidental ending that strains credulity. Not for the faint of heart. Graphic, bloody shark attacks, gruesome images, a few obscene gestures, a couple of crass words. A-III; PG-13

**11.**

To the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:5-11).

**GOSPEL ▼**

From page 2

he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:5-11).
BLANCO ▼

From page 10

Edwards, the second speaker to offer a reflection, called the former governor “someone I was fortunate enough to know, to know well, to call a mentor and a friend.” Before his election, the governor said Blanco invited his family to Lafayette and met with each of his children to discuss how the state’s top office would affect them. He noted that she also spoke about the “need to focus on the least fortunate and most vulnerable in this beautiful state she so proudly served and of this state she so dearly loved,” Edwards stated. “So let’s honor her by doing that.”

“God, we are grateful for the long life of our sister, Kathleen Babineaux Blanco, now caught up in your immense love. We thank you for her witness in service: she who was strong in faith, discerning in proclamation, courageous in witness and persistent in good deeds,” said Rev. Robin McCullough Bade in the closing prayer.

State troopers then removed the state flag from the casket and presented it to Coach Raymond Blanco. The Southern University Gospel Choir sang the closing song, “Amazing Grace,” as clergy and family members followed the coffin out of the church.

A police escort awaited the hearse and the family for the journey to the state capital for public viewing. Prayer services were held Friday, Aug. 23, at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist in Lafayette with a Mass of Christian Burial at the church on Saturday.

Kathleen Babineaux Blanco served in the Louisiana House of Representatives from 1984 – 1988; the Louisiana Public Service Commission from 1988 – 1996; she was lieutenant governor from 1996-2004; and, governor from 2004 – 2008. She was 76 years old.
because I knew nothing about it then, but rather to the mysterious will of God.

So on that Saturday afternoon in June last year, I was again asked by a different archbishop to accept the will of God. The will of God this time was for me to become the bishop of Baton Rouge. As much as I loved the Diocese of Shreveport, there was only one right answer: “YES, I accept.” The same decision that brought me to Shreveport 11 years ago would now take me to Baton Rouge.

Of course, and I should not be surprised by this, this unexpected change in my life has proven to be a wonderful blessing. I have been received with hospitality and been blessed with the joy of finding a vibrant church with so many dynamic members, lay, clergy and religious, who are actively and creatively proclaiming the Gospel.

I am encouraged by our clergy’s presence on social media with compelling content and presence. The breadth of media presence we have with our television channel, Catholic Life TV; our newspaper, The Catholic Commentator; our lay inspired Catholic Radio on the dial at 1380 AM. I still cannot get used to the excitement I feel when I see the Commentator in the grocery stores available to all or tune in to our presence on the radio, TV and the web.

When people ask me what is the major difference between Shreveport and Baton Rouge I say simply, MORE.

A larger diocese like Baton Rouge has the same joys and challenges but there are simply MORE joys and MORE challenges. While on vacation this summer I had some time to consider how much more has happened in just one year. A lot can happen in a year.

First, there are the challenges of moving. Setting up a house, unpacking (still doing this), getting used to traffic again and learning my way around, finding a new set of doctors and the biggest of all to begin again the journey of a bishop to get to know his people, to know his Church.

For me the best way to know the church is first know the priests. So I committed myself to first of all have a meeting with all 71 of our priests working in the diocese. I did not realize the commitment I was making until I discovered that to complete this task I would be busy most days for most of three months so all the priests could visit with me for an hour.

It was the best decision I made because in the conversations with my priests I learned about the diocese. Of course during this time I was also beginning my first confirmations, coming up to speed on the finances, trying to visit religious communities.

Also during my first months we were engaged in the difficult and painful work of preparing a complete accounting of priests who had credible accusations of abuse of a minor. This was underlying every day of my first months here.

During this time I was blessed to discover what a wonderful staff Bishop Muench left in place for me at the Catholic Life Center and the good foundation he left that allowed us to prepare this difficult list and be able to publish it before the end of January. While this work of healing, discovery and prevention continues it was a milestone that I was able to face with the support of our staff and the prayers and encouragement of you, the parishioners of the diocese.

After Christmas came the daunting task of confirmations, graduations, personnel changes for the priests and end of the year meetings of the many boards on which I sit. I was also able to complete the Dialogue on Race series to better understand racial tension in the diocese and to deepen my understanding of the cultural richness and deep faith our Black Catholics bring to our Catholic family.

As I look over this past year I realize how many supporting hands go into the work of our diocese. The hands that extend the Charity of Jesus through our Catholic Charities, St. Vincent de Paul Society, local food banks and clothing closets and through your individual hands that reach out to those within arms length of you in your neighborhoods and work. The work of our schools and religious education classes that continue to form our children in the faith.

The many lay ministries and associations that allow us to support one another in living our faith. We are blessed with a dynamic Catholic hospital, a growing Catholic university that provides the Theological Education part of our Permanent Diaconate Formation Program, three retreat centers in Baton Rouge, Maryville and Manresa, an array of religious communities that provide ministry and education in all parts of our diocese and an impressive cohort of seminarians preparing to answer our need for priests in the future.

Of course, as I get to know the diocese better I can see that there are challenges as well. These are coming into focus as I get to know you the people of the diocese and the dynamics of life here in this part of South Louisiana. These will be the focus of a future article in this newspaper in the near future.

I end this first year renewed and excited about the future. We do have important challenges to face but I am not dismayed because I see all the talent, zeal, creativity and most of all faith that we need to meet any challenge. Let us begin the next year of our journey together with “Hope in the Lord.”

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**PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PRAY FOR US**

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

**Sept. 5**  
Rev. Alexander J. Sheldon  
Dcn. Robert J. Kusch  
Br. James Burns SC

**Sept. 6**  
Rev. Philip F. Spazio  
Dcn. Ronald D. LeGrange  
Sr. Tuyet Anh Pham ICM

**Sept. 7**  
Rev. Robert F. Stine  
Dcn. Albert Levy III  
Br. William Cawley SC

**Sept. 8**  
Rev. Martin N. Thanh ICM  
Dcn. James A. Little  
Sr. Theresa Pitruzzello CSJ

**Sept. 9**  
Rev. Frank M. Uter  
Dcn. Robert McDonner  
Br. Ramon Duanis SC  
Rev. John the Baptist Do Minh Vu ICM  
Sr. Christine Pologa CSJ

**Sept. 10**  
Rev. Joseph H. Vu  
Dcn. Larry J. Melancon  
Br. Alan Drain SC

**Sept. 11**  
Rev. Miles D. Walsh  
Dcn. Timothy Messenger Sr.  
Sr. Penny Prophit FMOL

**Sept. 12**  
Rev. Ju Hyung (Paul) Yi  
Dcn. Francis M. Minor  
Br. Clement Furo CSiR

**Sept. 13**  
Rev. Gerard F. Young  
Dcn. Gary Mooney  
Sr. Anne Michelle Ramagos CSJ

**Sept. 14**  
Sr. Alexandrine Rasoanirina SOM

**Sept. 15**  
Bishop Robert E. Tracy  
Dcn. James J. Morrissey  
Br. Harold Harris SC

**Sept. 16**  
Bishop Stanley J. Ott  
Dcn. Jodi A. Moscona  
Sr. Alexandra Rasosanirina

**Sept. 17**  
Most Rev. Michael G. Duca  
Dcn. Leon Roy Murphy Jr.  
Br. Ronald Hingle SC

**Sept. 18**  
Most Rev. Robert W. Muench  
Dcn. Donald J. Musso  
Sr. Geraldine Riendeau CSJ
The Governance of Power

For Kathleen Babineaux Blanco
December 15, 1942 – August 18, 2019

Power is a woman who looks directly into the camera, says a defining moment in her life is the loss of a son. Power is a woman who always writes her own script. Power is a woman who takes a 15 year turn to raise children, Carmen, then Monique, Nicole, Ray, Pilar, and beloved Ben. Power is a woman who cares about the health of others first. Power is a woman who teaches, and then teaches teachers. She teaches them to build their schools first from the inside. Power is a woman who fails in love with the one Blanco she knows she’ll spend the rest of her life with, and does. Power is a woman fearless of foreign tongues and places and peoples. Power is a woman never hedging when it comes to her God, how she will walk with Him and talk to Him and rest in Him. Power is a woman who can say “I am a powerful woman, and I don’t say that because I was governor.” She says, “I’m not powerful because I wield power, then or now, but because I claim personal power and I claim that power to define my personal happiness.” She says this to students at the beginning of a new phase in their lives, a last phase in hers. She says, “I suggest you give yourself that gift too. All power comes from big-heartedness, and a plan, from hope and faith. She’s saying, "give yourselves that gift too.”

Darrell Bourque, appointed poet laureate of Louisiana from 2007 to 2011, wrote and recited “The Governance of Power” at the memorial service Aug. 22 for former Governor Kathleen Blanco at St. Joseph Cathedral in Baton Rouge.

My interview with Mr. Fred Rogers

Fred Rogers was a good friend for many years. He entertained and educated children for more than a generation, and died on Feb. 27, 2003.

When he came to New York we often had dinner together. It’s my privilege to introduce him to you again today. Children still love him and parents trust him.

The theme song of his TV Show, “Mr. Rogers’s Neighborhood,” contained the words, “Won’t you be my neighbor?” When I did my TV show with him I began with this question:

JC: Why did you choose that opening?
FR: When I hear words like those, I think the person speaking them cares about me. And I want them to know that I care about them and all children. I want them to feel that each one of them is special.

JC: How do you select the themes for your show?
FR: Many ideas come from the mail we receive. Who would have thought years ago that we would one day do a whole show on divorce? But children need to know that it is not their fault when their parents separate. Little children tend to think that the world revolves around them. And so consequently anything that happens to them must be because of them, as though the divorce was their fault. They think that it must be “something I did.” If a child spills the milk at breakfast and it leads to loud talking between the parents, the child thinks he or she was at fault for causing the breakup. We try to get through to them that divorce is something that only has to do with adults, not children.

JC: Your new book was entitled “You are Special.” Tell us a little about it.
FR: I’ve collected lots of quotes over the last 40 years, and they all describe how I feel about the person I am with at the moment. It is one of the most glorious things you can do in life; make the person you are with feel special. Evil in the world would want us to feel as awful as we could about who we are. But Jesus wants us to look at ourselves, and our neighbor, and see the best. How wonderful it would be if we all became an advocate in life rather than an accuser.

JC: I like that. You presume there is an evil power in the world, and you know how to deal with it. You never put on a false front. Fred, is there anything else you try to do for the children?
FR: I think we have to provide them with heroes, like teachers who really believe they have a mission, and that the only reason they are in the classroom are to help the children. I bring on community leaders who see a local gang as nothing more than a cluster of kids trying to make it through life. I bring on policemen and firemen who take care of all of us. Heroes are important in life, because we all need to look up to people. Many of the people we have on our show are unsung heroes.

JC: Thank you Fred Rogers for this delightful interview.
COMING EVENTS

August 30, 2019

The Catholic Commentator

Spiritual Direction Information Meeting – The Archdiocese of New Orleans Spirituality Center will hold a spiritual direction internship information meeting Thursday, Sept. 5, noon – 2 p.m. or 6 p.m. – 8 p.m., in Room 105 of the Bishop Robert E. Tracy Center, 1800 S. Acadian Thwy., Baton Rouge. Register by calling 504-861-3454.

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 985-232-3963.

St. Isidore Fall Fest – St. Isidore Church, 5567 Thomas Road, Baton Rouge, will host its Fall Festival with a golf tournament on Saturday, Sept. 7 and Food Festival on Sunday, Sept. 8. For more information, call 225-775-8850.

Third Order of Mary – The St. Agnes Confraternity of the Third Order of Mary will meet Sunday, Sept. 8, 3 p.m., at St. Agnes Church, 749 East Blvd., Baton Rouge. For more information, call Karen Moller at 225-272-5919.

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 pagfairchild.org or call 225-803-3391 or email robertwhite456@att.net.

Pro-life Mass – A monthly pro-life Mass will be celebrated Tuesday, Sept. 10, 5:30 p.m., at St. Agnes Church, 749 East Blvd., Baton Rouge. For more information, call 225-583-4127.

Interfaith 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 balcony of the Catholic Life Center, 1800 S. Acadian Thwy. Cost is $20. Tickets are available at the Interfaith Federation office at 3112 Convention St., Baton Rouge. The federation will also host a “Peace Network” meeting Saturday, Sept. 7, 9 – 4:30 p.m., at St. Paul Lutheran Church, 2021 Tara Blvd., Baton Rouge. For more information, email info@ifebgr.com, visit ifebgr.com or call 225-267-5600.

Centering Prayer Retreat – Susan Komis will present a centering prayer retreat, “The Dark Night of the Soul: Night of Sense, Night of Spirit,” Friday, Sept. 13 – Wednesday, Sept. 18, at Rosaryville Spirit Life Center 39003 Rosaryville Road, Ponchatoula. For more information, visit catholicretreatcenter.org or call 225-294-5039.

Bake Sale – Catholic Daughters Court Regina #2063 of St. Jude Church in Baton Rouge will have a gift and bake sale on Saturday, Sept. 14, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. and Sunday, Sept. 15 after all Masses in the St. Jude Parish Hall, 9150 Highland Road. For more information, call 225-766-2431.

Charismatic Mass – Bishop Michael G. Duca will celebrate a charismatic Mass, sponsored by Magnificat, Marian Servant of the Eucharist and Catholic Charismatic Renewal of Baton Rouge, Saturday, Sept. 21, 10 a.m., at St. Joseph Cathedral, Fourth and Main streets, Baton Rouge. Praise and worship will begin at 9:30 a.m. To RSVP, email brmagnificat@yahoo.com.

St. Elizabeth Harvest Festival – St. Elizabeth Church, 119 Hvy. 493, Paincourtville, will host its Harvest Festival on Sunday, Sept. 22, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. For more information, call 225-479-6566.

Prayer Concert – Lorraine Jess will present a free prayer concert Tuesday, Sept. 24, 7 – 8:30 p.m., at the Archdiocese of New Orleans Retreat Center Chapel, 5500 St. Mary St., Metairie. For more information, call 1-866-937-9170 or visit neworleansretreats.org.

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BUILDING ▼

From page 9

garage door for students to easily load and unload instruments for off-campus rehearsals and performances.

Another highlight of the design is the close proximity of the band room to the stage. In the past, Andry said students had to haul equipment from the band room to the gym, located across campus, sometimes causing damage to the instruments during transit.

“I can speak for my students and my ‘band parents’ by saying that we are truly excited to be moving into a state-of-the-art high school band room,” Andry stated. “For years, we’ve rehearsed in a space that had ceilings that were too low, with less-than-adequate acoustics and sound systems. We had outgrown the old space and were in dire need for a new facility that would have adequate acoustics, ample storage space and practice rooms. Now, my band room is about 30 feet away from the stage where we will hold our concerts, and we won’t have the burden of placing tarps down on a gym floor every time we want to have a concert or perform at school liturgies.”

Friday before the ribbon cutting ceremony, the entire student body got a first-look at the $7.2 million addition, many of them feeling like they were a permanent part of the school, with their names indelibly written within the spaces. During construction in May, faculty, staff and students signed the interior frame and walls of the new building.

“Students gathered during their lunch periods to sign their name or write their favorite Bible verse on the walls so that they could forever be a part of the multipurpose building and the history at St. Michael High School,” explained Galasso.

Three months later, students were once again gathered, this time for the blessing of the multipurpose building by Bishop Duca who asked God “for his hand to watch over this building and all the students here.”

“We ask your blessing on this new addition to the campus as a new resource to fulfill this mission of St. Michael High School,” Bishop Duca said. “We ask that those you entrust with the education of our children within these walls may teach our students how to join the discoveries of human wisdom with the truth of the Gospel, that they will be able to keep the true faith and to live it in their lives as warriors for Christ, with this education and lively faith, we pray that they will become the salt of the earth, our faith-filled leaders for the church and for the community in the future.”

In May, St. Michael students signed the interior walls of the new building during construction. Photo provided by Kaye Self | St. Michael High School
Holy Rosary pastor Father Joshua Johnson, the lone African American priest in the Diocese of Baton Rouge, challenged the attendees regarding their own dedication to their spiritual lives. He said people will have various reasons for not having Christ accompanying them on their spiritual journeys. He said some people will push it off until they have kids or wait until they’re retired.

“In my retired, I’m going to play bingo,” Father Johnson said as a trickle of laughter could be heard. “So why do we push it off?” Father Johnson asked. “The common reason is we don’t see ourselves represented in the church. If I don’t see myself in the artwork, the stained glass, maybe it’s not for me.”

He said it’s the same rule for saints.

“Maybe (that’s the reason) we don’t feel we can be saints,” Father Johnson said. “We don’t see us in the church. It’s changing today. It’s a new day.”

Father Tony Ricard of the Archdiocese of New Orleans immediately commanded the attention of the gathering when he began his presentation on Mother Henriette De Lille by entering from the back of the church singing “Oh Freedom,” which was a post-Civil War African American freedom song and was often associated with the Civil Rights Movement. Father Ricard weaved humor into his dynamic presentation as he discussed some of the darkest times the country has faced.

He told of times when slave masters attempted to control how African Americans were allowed to pray.

“When you think you can control God’s ear, you must think you’re God,” Father Ricard said. He recalled how slaves would go out into the woods to pray at night. To ensure not being caught, the slaves would post a “listener,” whose job was to walk around the mansion throughout the night so as to be able to warn others if necessary.

“They would pray like never before,” Father Ricard said, adding they were celebrating good music, good preaching and faith.

“They had to shout, they had to sing,” he added, tying it in to the upbeat and rousing music heard even today in many predominantly African American churches.

“No man, woman has the power to tell you how to talk to God,” he said.

Relating Henriette De Lille’s life to today, Father Ricard said one only has to look at her life and then ask themselves will people be talking about them in a similar way after they are gone.

“Will we be on that same journey of faith, not worried whether or not outside of my tomb will have ‘St.’ but will (people) feel the power of God’s love?” he said. “(Will people) say ‘I know for a fact, without a shadow of a doubt, that this was a servant of God.’

“Henriette is on that journey of faith. We truly believe that one day God is going to bless our church by having this woman of faith listed among the saints.”

Bishop Michael G. Duca, who spoke briefly, said he could not help being drawn into the mystery of God’s love by seeing the beautiful faces of the candidates for sainthood at the altar.

“And it reminds us, when saints look like us, they are part of the American culture, walking the same path, they are part of our family.”

“It is my privilege to be a part of this today,” said Bishop Duca, who recently celebrated his one-year anniversary as the diocese’s shepherd. “I am just beginning to understand the vitality and questions and challenges of the African American community here. I’m listening and trying hard to meet the needs and hopefully grow us together as one diocese.”

Bishop Perry detailed the life of Father Tolton, and how his path to becoming the country’s first African American priest can be traced from his roots along the shores of the Mississippi River in Missouri, through Rome and back to Chicago.

Bishop Perry noted how there was fierce renunciation of the Catholic Church from the Protestant community for defying the laws that the major religious institutions of the United States could not promote or accept Black people.

“Was Tolton really a priest or a fake priest?” Bishop Perry asked.

Even Father Tolton’s clergy colleagues organized against him, and when white people began attending his Mass at his parish in Quincy, Illinois the bishop at the time told him to minister to black people only, and “leave the white people alone.”

Father Tolton eventually moved to Chicago, where he was welcomed by the archbishop at the time. Father Tolton helped establish St. Monica, the first African American church in the area. The congregation rapidly blossomed from 50 to more than 600.

Bishop Perry also spoke on how society has placed values on certain colors, and that black and brown have been “attributed to everything that is evil.”

“Isn’t that interesting?” he asked. “How do you speak to your children or grandchildren when they ask? ‘We’re all equal.’

“We are in an unprecedented time,” Bishop said of the six African American candidates for sainthood. “It will be a celebratory event when that happens. Hopefully, each will be canonized in our lifetime.”

Father Johnson said that as each of the candidates are canonized, churches and schools will be named after them and they will be depicted art work and stained glass windows.

“We’ll see canonized saints that look like us,” he said. “That will inspire us to say ‘me too.’”

He said saints are found in “our interior life” and that African Americans are being asked not to “settle for mediocrity.”

Also delivering presentations were Dr. Ansel Augustine, a faculty member of the Institute for Black Catholic Studies at Xavier University in New Orleans; Gather A. Gerard Jordan of Paolo, Pennsylvania; Al Carter, a New Orleans native who is currently an administrator at the National Center for Creative Arts; and Sister Laura Mercier SSF, who has been a member of the Holy Family community, which was founded by Henriette Delille, for 53 years.

The day included eucharistic adoration, discussion groups, meditation time and a closing Mass.