Commentator

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hit bottom on a frigid January night in

Perhaps Chrystella Mangrum finally hit bottom on a frigid January night in 2019, when the mercury was diving as the ebony of another long, dark night began to color Baton Rouge.

With nowhere to go, and temporarily separated from her two sons, Mangrum was roaming the streets, wondering where she would be able to lay her weary head and provide at least a brief respite for her aching body. She then saw a stack of folded boxes piled in the rear of a dollar discount store.

Recognizing possibilities that many others would think as frightful, Mangrum first made a rudimentary mattress from the boxes and then put other boxes on top of her as a cover, although it offered little relief from the arctic blast.

For a brief truce from battling the cold, she would walk to a nearby convenience store and soak in the warmth, before returning to her makeshift bed.

"It got so bad I had to pretend I was getting coffee," she said.

Mangrum’s descent had actually begun several months earlier, when her mother passed away in Bogalusa and not long after Mangrum was evicted from her family home. She and her sons, 6 and 9 at the time, moved to Baton Rouge to live with her brother.

After that arrangement faltered, Mangrum suddenly found herself on the street with her children. They would sleep at the bus station, or in the lobby of a Baton Rouge hospital.

“I was feeling so depressed; I felt hopeless,” said Mangrum, a native of Bogalusa. “We didn’t have nowhere to go.”

One morning, a man that Mangrum said God brought into her life, saw her walking her children to school. It turned out his children attended the same school, and he began to bring them so they would not miss class. He also offered the family temporary shelter.

“I would never had made it,” she said.

During this same time, someone recommended that Mangrum try to get into the Bishop Stanley J. Ott Sweet Dreams Shelter operated by the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, which offers housing to mothers and their children. Initially, space was unavailable, but she was able to make ulterior living arrangements for her children, where they would stay for eight months.

“I was very excited knowing the kids had somewhere to stay,” Mangrum said. “I kind of felt like I had hope but then again I didn’t. The state was about to take the kids.”

In the meantime, she kept returning to Sweet Dreams, and her persistence paid off when on Feb. 1, 2019 she was able to secure a bed.

Almost overnight, a life of despair started over

The Catholic Commentator

Governor’s Mass – Gov. John Bel Edwards, right, sits with his wife Donna during the Louisiana Governor’s Mass celebrated Jan. 13 at St. Joseph Cathedral in Baton Rouge. For complete coverage of the Mass, please turn to page 5. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

Century of educational excellence

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

On a quiet street in Baton Rouge, not far from a busy, elevated section of I-10, St. Francis Xavier School in Baton Rouge stands as a testament to time: past, present and future.

This is the little school “that could” and has for 100 years.

On Jan. 12, St. Francis Xavier Church and School kicked off its year long centennial anniversary with a Mass celebrated by SXF graduate Bishop John H. Richard SSJ, Superior General, the Josephites, the Society of St. John of the Sacred Heart, and a jazz brunch at the Catholic Life Center. The milestone is being marked as an extension of the church’s centennial celebration in 2019, with the same theme, “Through Trials and Tribulations by God’s Grace We Triumph.”

“There have been a number of times when the school almost closed but then the church parishioners and the Holy Family Sisters rallied around and kept the school open,” said pastor Father Ed Chiffriller SSJ.

The school dates to 1881 when the Holy Family Sisters founded St. Mary’s School for Negro Girls at the site of the Main Post Office on Florida Street. According to documents from the Archives Department of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, the sisters were forced to leave because of prejudice.

The Sisters of St. Joseph stepped in and ran the school from 1882 – 1895 and with the financial help of Mother Catherine Drexel of Philadelphia, the Sisters of St. Joseph transferred the property back to the Holy Family Sisters.

The sisters established Holy Family Academy, a co-ed school for grades one through 12 and also cared for boarders and orphans. By 1919, the

SEE MANGRUM PAGE 16
DID YOU KNOW

St. Gabriel

In the biblical story of the Annunciation, the Archangel St. Gabriel told Mary she would be the mother of the long-awaited savior (Lk 1:26-33). St. Gabriel also appeared to Zechariah to announce the birth of John the Baptist (Lk 1:11-20). But the appearance of St. Gabriel in the Bible goes beyond the Gospels. Knowledge of the angel Gabriel is evident in the ancient Jewish tradition as well, and there is a lot of speculation about his role in salvation history.

St. Gabriel first appears by name in the Old Testament book of Daniel when Gabriel interprets a vision for Daniel and goes on to explain several others for him (Dn 8:16). These visions all have to do with mysteries regarding the last days and the Messiah's coming.

While St. Gabriel isn’t always explicitly named, Jewish and Christian traditions speculate he appears in the Bible more than we realize. There are works in Rabbinic (Jewish) literature that identify Gabriel as one of the three angels who visited Abraham (Gn 18) and the angel who destroyed Sodom (Gn 19:1-30).

In early Christian times, one of the church fathers, St. Cyprian, also speculated about the archangel. Cyprian wondered if St. Gabriel was the unnamed angel in the Gospel of Matthew. There, an angel appears to Joseph in all his dreams (Mt 1:20, 2:13, 19), offering him encouragement and instruction, and St. Cyprian believed it might be St. Gabriel.

References to the angel Gabriel appear in many ancient texts outside the Scriptures, and even the Dead Sea Scrolls mention him. There is also a non-scriptural tradition that suggests St. Gabriel might be the one to announce Christ’s second coming with a trumpet blast.

St. Gabriel is a significant figure in Christian tradition and featured in writings both in and outside of Scripture. He is a messenger and servant of God and a principal herald of Jesus’ coming. His name in Hebrew means “God is my strength.”

Archangel St. Gabriel, whose strength is God himself, guide us to carry out God’s holy will.

The liturgical season moves from Christmas to Ordinary Time this weekend, which gives us five weeks until we enter the season of Lent. The upcoming Sunday Mass readings empower us to be a “light to the nations,” as we come to understand the source of, strength for and response to our call from God.

**Call and Mission**

What is my call? What is my mission? These questions cross the mind and inspire the heart. What am I supposed to do in my life?

The prophet Isaiah explains his mission, beginning with the source of such missions as he describes how God formed him in the womb as a servant. Isaiah’s mission is something he was born with, something rooted in his being. Outside sources can certainly serve as influence or inspiration, yet the source of Isaiah’s call is God. Thus, he was so moved to proclaim the message of God in order to restore people’s unity with God. Although an exhausting task to say the least, Isaiah never relinquished. Rather, he firmly committed his “yes, Lord, I have come to do your will” (Ps 40). God promises to provide Isaiah strength to not only “raise up and restore” the people, but also to “make you (Isaiah) a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth” (Is 49:6).

What is God’s mission for us? What is God’s will for me? Each person is individually called to do the will of God through a personal mission, as well as collectively partake in the mission of the church, which “was founded to spread the kingdom of Christ over all the earth for the glory of God the father, to make all partakers in the redemption and salvation, and through them establish the right relationship of the entire world of Christ” (Vatican II, “Decree on the Apostolate of the Lay People,” Nov. 18, 1965). We come to know God’s will over time, through prayer and tireless patience. His call reveals our mission fortified by God’s strength and the directive to be a light to all nations through fearless, abundant joy.

The will of God

St. Paul, in the salutation of his First Letter to the Corinthians, addresses them as, “...to you who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be holy...” (1 Cor 1:2). Our call to holiness is instilled in us from the moment of our baptism. Chapter 5 of the document, Lumen Gentium entitled “The Call to Holiness,” is one of the most prolific documents of the Second Vatican Council.

We read, “As the individual in his own state of life tends to the perfection of love, they also help others grow in holiness.” This is the message of Jesus, “to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:48).

Lumen Gentium says we “are made this way, and thus called to live to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of love.” The greater we model our life in Christ the deeper the perfection of love is for God and our neighbor. This is the will of God, that we grow in deeper holiness each day which requires love, self-sacrifice, commitment, courage and grace.

**Responding to the call**

With all this stated, we have a part to play. This “part” is our unconditional response to answer the call of God and follow his will. We hear in St. John’s Gospel the response of John the Baptist, as he identified Jesus, stating, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn 1:29). It is our privilege as Christians to point to Jesus in our daily life. Whether in direct conversation or action, we have the blessing to identify for others who Jesus is and why it is so necessary to come to know him. How can we help others identify Jesus and his action in their life?

We read in the Gospel of St. Matthew Jesus’ calling of the first disciples: Simon (Peter), Andrew, James and John. Jesus called them forth from their earthly occupation. “He said to them, ‘Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.’ At once they left their nets and followed him” (Mt 4:19-20). Note the words, “At once.” Not later... now. Without hesitation or condition, they dropped everything and followed Jesus. We do know they trusted in Jesus’ invitation, changed their priorities and centered the rest of their lives on following Jesus; coming to know Jesus; being in his presence; becoming what he called them to be... his disciples.

See Gospel Page 16
Homeless murders heartbreaking to SVDP staff

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

As executive director of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, Michael Acaldo directs the agency providing shelter to highest percentage of the homeless population in the Baton Rouge area.

So concern was his first reaction when he learned of the random murder of a homeless couple in Baton Rouge, not far from the St. Vincent campus.

His concern was heightened when a third homeless person was murdered two weeks later and police were able to determine the murders were connected.

“We’ve never seen anything like that,” Acaldo said. “We were concerned for those that we are blessed to serve. Just didn’t make any sense.

“And we immediately felt a sense of urgency to try to get as many people off the street as possible.”

The first murders occurred on the night of Dec. 13, when Christina Fowler and Gregory Corcoran were found shot to death on South 16th street.

Two weeks later, on Dec. 27, the body of Tony Williams was found on North 18th Street. Williams was also shot and later that day police were able to connect the three murders.

“When we saw (the homeless were being targeted) as a staff, first we were heartbroken,” Acaldo said. “(Three) souls lost, because all life is precious.”

Once that connection was confirmed, East Baton Rouge District Attorney Hilliar Moore III and police chief Murphy Paul contacted Acaldo and other homeless service providers to alert the homeless of the potential risk to their safety.

“I think it really got ratcheted up after the police said the murders were connected,” Acaldo said. “They wanted us to be vigilant to get the word out about the crimes and to choose to spend the night out was not safe.

“I don’t think it’s ever safe to be out on the street, especially if you are a woman or a mother with children.”

Acaldo said the agency’s outreach efforts was increased, with staff members encouraging the homeless to spend the night in one of St. Vincent’s shelters.

The agency immediately enacted its disaster plan, expanding its capacity with the addition of cots. He said that if the new 36-bed facility that is scheduled to be completed in February was open, another 72 beds would have been available.

“We had some people staying with us that would have otherwise not been here,” Acaldo said. “What we wanted to do with those staying with us was to relieve that anxiety, relieve that paranoia and encourage them to stay in the shelter.”

A meeting with Moore, Paul, Acaldo and homeless service providers was held at St. Vincent on Dec. 30 when law enforcement officials not only emphasized a continued vigilance to encourage the homeless to seek refuge but also asked anyone with information regarding the murders to contact the police.

Also during that time, the Louisiana Housing Cooperation had authorized the homeless service providers to house homeless people in area motels through Jan. 6.

On Jan 2, Jeremy Anderson was arrested and charged with two counts of first-degree murder and one count of second-degree murder.

Acaldo said Moore and Paul reaching out to homeless providers was significant. He said during the Dec. 30 meeting officials made it clear there was a choice to be made: continue the investigation and not communicate the risk to public safety which might put investigators in a better position to make an arrest or to alert the homeless community of the risk.

“They made a choice of life,” Acaldo said.

He noted that no additional security was added at St. Vincent but police were asked to watch the main campus for anyone who might have been attempting to jump the fence.

“We asked them to do what was necessary to communicate with the individual and get them off of the property and help us get them into our shelter,” Acaldo said, adding that a special cell phone number had been established for police to call if they found someone that wanted shelter.

Because of his close connection to the homeless community, Acaldo said he was personally impacted by the murders. He added the killings show the importance of making the Gospel message come to life for those in need, in a time when homeless numbers are increasing.

“The trend is people are sleeping outside,” he said. “It’s actually been here but it is more visible because the numbers are up.”

He blamed an increase in mental health issues, as well as drug addiction, for the rise.

He said that as recently as five years ago, the percentage of mentally ill among the homeless was about 33-34 percent, but now it’s close to 70 percent.

“And the homeless population in general seem to be older than they were many years ago,” he said.

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By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

On the second day into the New Year, alumni, family and friends of St. Michael the Archangel High in Baton Rouge gathered to remember and to pray for Carley McCord, a member of the Class of 2007.

McCord died just days earlier, on Dec. 28, in a plane crash in Lafayette. The plane was headed to Atlanta for the Peach Bowl featuring LSU.

McCord was 30 years old. Family members of both McCord and her husband, Steve Ensminger Jr., joined the crowd to offer up their prayers during a rosary led by St. Michael High School chaplain Father Ryan Hallford.

“The alumni in her class contacted the school and said they wanted to do something to honor her and so we offered a rosary to help people gather and remember and celebrate her life,” said principal Ellen Lee.

With school still out for the Christmas break, the quiet campus seemed especially somber. In the lobby of the school’s multipurpose building, various media outlets set up cameras and conducted interviews. A video screen on one wall projected McCord doing what she loved, reporting from the sidelines of various sports events. Inside the auditorium, a picture of a smiling McCord on a jumbo screen on stage reminded everyone of why she was so loved by everyone who knew her.

Khloe Page, alumni coordinator for St. Michael, said she first got to know McCord through McCord’s participation in alumni projects. But, their business relationship quickly blossomed into a deep friendship as the two began to take on more events and share ideas on getting alums and the community in support of the high school.

“She was very involved,” said Page. “Anything I would call her for, she would come and do it, no questions asked. She was our Alumni of the Year for 2018. She came back and spoke at career day, she did our class cup, she spoke about everything under the sun to make sure our kids knew that past high school, graduating from this school, that you can go on and do really great things in the community and even nationally.”

McCord was also helping the school expand a multimedia curriculum through video streaming sporting events, according St. Michael advancement director Josh Galasso. Galasso said he was working with McCord to help find funding for the program, and the goal was to eventually have students work with her on the sidelines.

“Carley was one of those alumni who loves her alma mater and wanted to give back,” said Galasso. “She was our emcee for the past three years for the annual auction. She was always at career day to give back and counsel the students on their career choices. She would do anything to help promote her school. She definitely will be missed.”

“She loved the school and would come back and speak to the students about her struggles in her career and her fight to get her dream job in which she did accomplish and so she was very proud of that and willingly shared those insights with our students,” said Lee. “We were so blessed to have her as a part of our community.”

Father Ryan Hallford, chaplain for St. Michael the Archangel High School in Baton Rouge, leads a rosary for Carley McCord on Jan. 2. McCord, a 2007 graduate, died Dec. 28 in a plane crash in Lafayette. She worked as a sports sideline reporter for multiple media outlets. Photo by Bonny Van | The Catholic Commentator

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Louisiana Governor’s Mass celebrated at cathedral

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Citing the leadership skills of King Louis IX of France, Archbishop Greg M. Aymond of the Archdiocese of New Orleans delivered a homily of hope for the future and asked Gov. John Bel Edwards to follow God during the next four years during the Louisiana Governor’s Mass on Jan. 13 at St. Joseph Cathedral in Baton Rouge.

Edwards, who defeated challenger Eddie Rispone in a heated runoff election in November, began his inauguration day by attending Mass at the cathedral, mirroring his inauguration day of four years ago. Following Mass, Edwards headed to State Capitol for ceremonies on a day when the inauguration was largely runner-up to LSU’s national championship encounter with Clemson in New Orleans.

Archbishop Aymond said there are many ways to be formed as a leader, with the first being to use one’s God-given gifts.

He posed the question “who can we look to as a government leader to be model of effective leadership?”

He said King Louis IX’s leadership model is relevant today.

“As we look at history, we see that at his coronation he took an oath to be a father to his people,” the archbishop said. “He wanted to reflect Christ the King of Peace, and he wanted to make sure his reign always embraced compassion.

“His duties as king were rooted in his faith and that showed itself in the way in which he governed.”

Archbishop Aymond said the French king came to mind while reflecting on the Scripture readings Edwards and his wife, Donna, chose for the Mass. The archbishop said it was apparent from the chosen Scriptures that Edwards approaches leadership in the same way as King Louis IX the only French King to be canonized.

“The governor says he is committed in word and action to peace, justice, equality, charity and mercy,” Archbishop Aymond said. “(Edwards) reminds us our actions and words must be a shining light in Louisiana and beyond.

“The governor says he is committed in word and action to peace, justice, equality, charity and mercy.”

He added that Edwards invites all Louisiana residents to join him in using “our lives in words and actions, to reach out to those are very different from us and with whom we have nothing in common.”

“They are our neighbor,” Archbishop Aymond said, adding that “our neighbors” include the hungry, the sick, the injured, the poor, children in need, those hurt by racism, the immigrants and those who are living on the margin of society.

Through the words of the Scripture chosen by Edwards, Archbishop Aymond said “we know through (the governor’s) heart that you will recognize the dignity of every person and to respect them,” the archbishop said.

“You promise to foster unity at a time when our world is divided is a very important example to call us to be one in this state. And you invite us to be a light in a world that is sometimes overcome by darkness.”

Archbishop Aymond acknowledged the challenges awaiting the governor. The archbishop asked God to give Edwards “the patience to listen, the wisdom to act and the humility to allow God to lead him in everything that he does and in every decision he makes.”

Archbishop Gregory M. Aymond of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, left, celebrates the Eucharistic Prayer as Bishop Michael G. Duca, also prays during the Louisiana Governor’s Mass on Jan. 13 at St. Joseph Cathedral in Baton Rouge. Photos by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

Arkansas Vandalum

Archbishop Aymond said every leader has to be a good follower and added he knows Edwards will be a follower of Jesus. He called Edwards a man of peace, justice and unity.

“May you always remember that the hand of God is upon you every day,” Archbishop Aymond said. “Follow him.”

Bishop Michael G. Duca welcomed the congregation and gave his thanks for all citizens in the “great state of Louisiana.”

Archbishop Aymond said

Archbishop Aymond said
Confession once a year?/ Is incense harmful to health?

Q In one of your recent columns, you stated: “Strictly speaking, one is obliged to go to the sacrament of penance only for serious sins although it is certainly a good idea to confess regularly even for lesser sins and imperfections.” The Catechism of the Catholic Church says, however (No. 1457), that all Catholics should go to confession at least once a year. If this is actually a precept of the church, my understanding is that all of the precepts must be obeyed under penalty of mortal sin. Can you explain your position on this and why it differs from the catechism or was it just an oversight? (Indianapolis)

I stand by my recent answer, and it is consistent with Catholic teaching. The section to which you refer (No. 1457) in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, referencing the church’s Code of Canon Law, actually says this: “After having attained the age of discretion, each of the faithful is bound by an obligation faithfully to confess serious sins at least once a year.”

Again, though, I make a plea for much more frequent confession, even for venial sins. The introduction to the church’s rite of penance states: “Frequent and careful celebration of this sacrament is also very useful as a remedy for venial sins. This is not a mere ritual repetition or psychological exercise, but a serious striving to perfect the grace of baptism so that ... his (Christ’s) life may be seen in us ever more clearly.”

Q Since it is now known that incense is medically harmful causing asthma, contact dermatitis and lung cancer why does the church continue to use it? I am severely asthmatic, and a fairly large number of our elderly parishioners are oxygen-dependent. Our pastor will not make concessions, which means that a number of us have no way of attending Mass. (Oregon)

A At least once a year someone submits a question to this column about the potential for health hazards caused by the use of incense in church or at least raises the complaint that it is bothersome to the writer personally. The frequency of the question inclines me to think this issue merits a serious study perhaps outsourced by the church to medical authorities.

Incense, an aromatic substance made from the resin of certain trees, has been used in religious rites as far back as the 15th century B.C. in Egypt. Its use was common in Jewish worship and was carried over into Christian practice, where the smoke of the incense has been viewed as a symbol of the prayers of worshippers rising to heaven.

A U.S. News & World Report article in 2008 made note of a study that linked long-term incense exposure to an increased risk of respiratory cancer, and I uncovered one reference to an Environmental Protection Agency concern about the nexus between incense smoke and lung inflammation.

But I would think more research needs to be done for a link between the occasional use of church incense and medical problems to be established definitively. I do remember a 2014 Catholic News Service story, where the Allentown Diocese in Pennsylvania suggested the use of a certain hypoallergenic incense to prevent worshippers from developing headaches or breathing problems.

All of which leads me to recommend that a pastor be especially solicitous to parishioners’ concerns: Incense is not mandated by the church at any particular Mass, and why make it harder for people to come to church?

FATHER DOYLE is a retired priest in the Diocese of Albany, New York. Questions may be sent to Father Kenneth Doyle at askfatherdoyle@gmail.com and 30 Columbia Circle Dr., Albany, NY 12203.
else you intend to benefit. of these problems for your children, grandchildren, or anyone who can relate to one or more of the results above, you NEED an estate plan to 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; stop worrying about your estate once and for all.

STOP worrying about your estate once and for all!

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

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

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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 because you didn’t have the proper guidance from you;

Your executors have to post an expensive bond to become the executor of your estate and get a judge’s permission to sell all 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:

You lose 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;

STOP worrying about your estate once and for all!
The Catholic Commentator  | January 17, 2020

Archives Department of the Diocese of Baton Rouge

From page 1

ANNIVERSARY ▼

When enrollment was at 85. A year earlier, the school nearly closed. In 2012, with the Louisiana Scholarship Program available for students in college-prep schools, enrollment from the current 140 students doubled to 180.

Students also participate in the D.A.R.E. program and Youth Legislative program. There are three boys' basketball teams, a cheerleader squad and a girls' volleyball team, which was added this year. Students are also involved in student council, Beta Club and community service by helping to maintain the historic cemetery near the school.

The goal, according to Father Chiffriller, is to continue giving enrollment from the current 140 students and to continue improving the academic program, which recently added more computer labs for a total of six and has implemented the STREAM (Science, Technology, Religion, Arts and Mathematics) program.

Agreed is to continue to grow enrollment from the current 140 students and to continue improving the academic program, which recently added more computer labs for a total of six and has implemented the STREAM (Science, Technology, Religion, Arts and Mathematics) program.

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Two years later, St. Francis Xavier School built a new school, one that stands today as a proud monument of perseverance.


SFX students learn about artifacts from Africa, 1987.

Students at St. Francis Xavier School in Baton Rouge work on the summer math program in 1987. This program is provided by the Archives Department of the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

The school opened its doors on Sept. 20, 2000, and high school classes were added, but lack of space forced the closing of the high school department in 2000. Sixteen years later, a high school was built for 200 students, but the state bought the building in 1996 and tore it down to build the I-10 interstate system.

The school has not changed. We still have the atmosphere of loving and caring that atmosphere of loving and caring that the Sisters of Holy Family, joins SFX from 1982 – 1983. She returned in 2000.

Students at St. Francis Xavier School in Baton Rouge.

From page 1
Sister Dulce’s Ministry is delighted to host:

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DNA OF SIN
Jeff will focus not on the “what” but “why” of sin. The DNA of sin is an internal investigation as to why we do what we do.

Saturday, March 7, 2020
Registration: 7 a.m. – 7:45 a.m.
Mass: 8 a.m. Chapel of Divine Providence
Seminar: 9 a.m.– 3 p.m.

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—Sister Dulce Maria

TOP STUDENTS - Catholic of Pointe Coupee School in New Roads announced their 2019-2020 Students of the Year. Pictured, from left, are eighth-grader Anna Jean Eaves, fifth-grader Amelia Chauvin and twelfth-grader Jenna Guidry. Photo provided by Megan Girlinghouse | Catholic of Pointe Coupee
**Motion Picture Association of America ratings:**
- G – General audiences; all ages admitted
- PG – Parental guidance suggested; some material may not be suitable for children
- PG-13 – Parents are strongly cautioned to give special guidance for attendance of children under 13; some material may be inappropriate for young children
- R – Restricted; under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian
- NC-17 – No one under 17 admitted

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**Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker**

_Disney_

Battles both physical and spiritual play out in this ninth, and officially final, installment in the main body of the blockbuster franchise. With the evil First Order rebranding themselves the Final Order as they prepare to launch a vast space fleet capable of crushing all opposition, General Leia (the late Carrie Fisher), commander of the Resistance, dispatches her eldest follower, Rey (Daisy Ridley), to locate the enemy’s secret base. Rey is aided by ex-stormtrooper-turned-Resistance-fighter Finn (John Boyega) and by hotshot pilot Poe (Oscar Isaac). But Kylo Ren (Adam Driver), now the Order’s supreme leader, is convinced that he can draw Rey over to the Dark Side to which he, once the good Ben Solo, long ago surrendered himself. While the status of the saga’s trademark presence remains ambivalent from a Christian perspective, lessons about making moral choices, rejecting temptation and the power of forgiveness and redemption are clear. Although it feels less substantive than the previous chapter, director and co-writer J.J. Abrams’ sci-fi epic certainly has a vital story to tell for discerning situations, it has a vital story to tell for discerning

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**The Irishman**

_Netflix_

The disappearance of union boss Jimmy Hoffa, who vanished without a trace in 1975, has never been solved. But that doesn’t deter director Martin Scorcese from solving the mystery in this epic historical drama, based on the life of union official and erstwhile gangster Frank Sheeran (Robert De Niro). Crime boss Russell Bufalino (Joe Pesci) and erstwhile gangster Frank Sheeran (Robert De Niro). Crime boss Russell Bufalino (Joe Pesci) (Michael Pagan) and Beth (Eliza Scanlen), are presented in the format of a non-linear memory play, with Jo, first shown as an adult writer, recalling the episodes that formed their characters and shaped their life decisions. The main storyline finds feckless Laurie (Timothée Chalamet) longing to marry Jo but ending up with Amy. Moviegoers who already love these characters will get the lush presentation they hope to see. And Gerwig’s occasional alterations prove she’s equally adept at accurate history and subtle moral messaging. Musical themes, including death. A-II; PG

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**Cats**

_Universal_

The smash-hit Andrew Lloyd Webber stage musical, based on T.S. Eliot’s collection of verse, is given the big-screen treatment. The result is, essentially, a big, brash, over-the-top dance party, directed by Tom Hooper. One fateful evening, an abandoned cat (Francesca Hayward) is adopted by a group of felines who have gathered to see what of their ilk will be chosen by their matriarch (Judi Dench) to ascend to a new plane of existence. A new star is born. A-II

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**Bombshell**

_Lionsgate_

The real-life story of the sexual harassment scandal that swamped the Fox News organization in 2016, helping to launch the #MeToo movement, is given a documentary-like treatment by director Jay Roach, with actors portraying actual TV moguls and personalities as well as fictional characters. Roger Ailes (John Lithgow) oversees a corrosive workplace environment and a conservative media empire that seeks, in his words, to “frighten” and “titillate.” He draws an ambitious recruit (Margot Robbie) into his intimate circle, as he deals with the outspokenness of two of his anchors, Megyn Kelly (Charlize Theron) and Gretchen Carlson (Nicole Kidman). When Carlson is fired, she decides to sue Ailes, igniting a media firestorm and incurring the wrath of Ailes’ boss, Rupert Murdoch (Malcolm McDowell). Although the film blurs the line between fiction and reality and contains raw and unsettling dialogue and situations, it has a vital story to tell for discerning adult viewers about respect, integrity and the law. Strong sexual content, including a harassment theme and an offscreen lesbian encounter, pervasive profane and crude language. L; R

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**Little Women**

_Sony_

Elegant, vibrantly emotional adaptation of Louisa May Alcott’s novel from writer-director Greta Gerwig. The familiar March sisters, Jo (Saoirse Ronan), Meg (Emma Watson), Amy (Florence Pugh) and Beth (Eliza Scanlen), are presented in the format of a non-linear memory play, with Jo, first shown as an adult writer, recalling the episodes that formed their characters and shaped their life decisions. The main storyline finds feckless Laurie (Timothée Chalamet) longing to marry Jo but ending up with Amy. Moviegoers who already love these characters will get the lush presentation they hope to see. And Gerwig’s occasional alterations prove she’s equally adept at accurate history and subtle moral messaging. Musical themes, including death. A-II; PG
Pope Francis has given us a new feast day to be celebrated on the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, which will be this year on Jan. 26.

It will be called henceforth “Sunday of the Word of God.” The pope explained his reason for instituting this new feast day in an apostolic letter entitled “APERUIT ILLIS,” words in St. Luke’s Gospel, Chapter 24, Verse 45: “Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.”

Pope Francis’ intent is to call our attention to the importance of sacred Scripture. He says that “the relationship between the risen Lord, the community of believers and sacred Scripture is essential to our identity as Christians.” Without the Scriptures, both Old Testament and New Testament, we cannot understand Jesus’ mission and ours, since we, his Church, continue as his body on Earth.

We see God’s intention for our good throughout the history of his chosen people, the Jews, and then the opening of salvation to all of humanity through the incarnation of God’s Messiah, Jesus, and the spread of his Gospel throughout the world. I had the good fortune of studying in Rome during the Second Vatican Council and remember how the council debated the Constitution on Sacred Scripture and its place in the liturgy of the Mass. Our Mass went from the use of relatively few passages in Scripture repeated again and again to a three-year cycle covering almost all of the Bible. Vatican II emphasized the importance of Scripture in itself as the word of God and as part of the sacrament memorialized in the Mass culminating in Jesus’ presence in the consecrated bread and wine. That presence was promised in the Old Testament and perfectly fulfilled in the New Testament through the gift of God’s own son born to us through his Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Like Mary, like the apostles and first disciples, we need the Spirit of God to guide us to the true meaning of our individual lives. And like Jesus, who is not only our savior but also our model, we find our personal destiny in the word of God contained in the Bible.

After his resurrection, Jesus appeared to his apostles and other disciples. What Jesus said to them shows us the importance of sacred Scripture. In the passage from St. Luke quoted above, Jesus continues in verses 46-49:

“And he said to them, ‘Thus it is written that the Messiah would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father (the Holy Spirit) upon you, but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high’.”

In “APERUIT ILLIS” Pope Francis suggests that on the Sunday of the Word of the Lord those who read throughout the year at Mass be commissioned in their parishes and altar servers and extraordinary ministers of Communion be commissioned with them. Furthermore, he says that Bibles should be made available for all to read, appreciate and pray daily with sacred Scripture, especially through the practice of lectio divina (meditative private reading of sacred Scripture).

Pope Francis reminds us that upon their return from exile in Babylon, the people of Israel assembled in Jerusalem and found themselves gathered “as one” around the sacred Scripture. In the homily: “The homily, in particular, has a distinctive function, for it possesses a quasi-sacramental character” (Evangelii Gaudium, 142).

Helping people to enter more deeply into the word of God through simple and suitable language will allow priests themselves to discover the “beauty of the images used by the Lord to encourage the practice of the good. This is a pastoral opportunity that should not be wasted!”

This is only a short commentary on about half of the letter. The rest continues along the same line and is very beautiful. Pope Francis ends with this: “May the Sunday of the Word of God help his people to grow in religious and intimate familiarity with the sacred Scriptures. For as the sacred author taught of old: “This word is very dear to you: it is in your mouth and in your heart for your observance” (Deut 30:14).”

(The entire letter can be googled under “Pope institutes Sunday of the Word of God.”)

FATHER CARVILLE is a retired priest in the Diocese of Baton Rouge and writes on current topics for The Catholic Commentator. He can be reached at johnny carville@gmail.com.

**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

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

**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.

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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.

The best 10 books that found me in 2019

In Exile
Father Ron Rolheiser

The wisdom of ‘I don’t know’

I once read an interview with a pastor who said that the most important thing a parent can say to a child is often, “I don’t know.”

His words rattled me as a parent. Wasn’t my job to fill my children with knowledge? Wasn’t my role to pass down truth? Didn’t my authority as an adult depend on having answers?

But I decided to try out his advice.

For the next few months, I tried saying, “I don’t know” more often. Rather than trying to come up with all the answers to my kids’ questions, I started admitting when I had no clue.

Whether for facts I forgot (Why is the sky blue?) or ancient, unanswerable problems (Why does God let people suffer?), I discovered that “I don’t know” became the beginning of memorable conversations – rather than closing the door to my kids’ quest for knowledge.

In my experiment of embracing the unknown, I discovered that there are three ways to frame “I don’t know” toward the children (and adults) in our lives.

We can invite them into a shared search for knowledge: “I don’t know, but let’s learn together!”

We can let other people teach us: “I don’t know, but who else could help us figure it out?”

We can wonder together about the unknowable: “I don’t know, but it’s a great question. What do you think?”

As parents, grandparents, teachers or pastors, we can never have all the answers. But we can welcome each question as a holy invitation.

The church tells parents they are the first catechists of their children. But in my work with families in parishes, the vast majority of parents are intimidated – not affirmed – by this prospect.

They don’t think they know enough. They aren’t sure what they believe. They worry about their children asking questions they can’t answer.

Yet the Gospels are full of questions. Jesus’ favorite response to any request or challenge is to ask a question in return. Even the answers he offers are often hidden in parables, beyond simple and satisfying solutions or black-and-white clarity.

Teaching younger generations is not simply the transmission of facts, satisfying the need for certainty. It models that faith is another way of knowing, engaging heart and soul as well as mind and body, drawing us closer to God who understands and embraces our questions.

In an era when we can Google everything, always a click away from instant answers, the chance to rest in unknowing can become an unexpected opportunity. Curiosity, imagination and wonder are holy gifts.

Turns out that maturity is not the accumulation of answers, but the deepening of wisdom – which is humility in the face of all we do not know.

Stand-up comedians rely on a two-word phrase that packs a punch for improvisational comedy. “Yes, and ...” allows the comic to accept whatever crazy premise their partner offered and build on it to advance the scene.

Admitting “I don’t know, but ...” can be just as powerful. It opens the path toward wisdom. It teaches the humility of limitation. It embraces the mystery of unknowing-yet-trusting at the heart of faith.

Children are used to not knowing, as part of their stage in life. But as adults we mistake “I don’t know” for failure or weakness.

Yet unknowing can become the beginning of prayer. The strength found in surrender to God’s wisdom. The vulnerability that leads to deeper relationship with God and each other.

Saying “I don’t know” can become a spiritual practice to embrace in 2020. How might this new year inspire your quest for deeper wisdom and better questions?
**COMING EVENTS**

January 17, 2020

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**St. Charbel Healing Mass** – St. Agnes Church, 749 East Blvd., Baton Rouge, will celebrate a St. Charbel Healing Mass Wednesday, Jan. 22, 6 p.m. For more information, call the St. Agnes Church office at 225-383-4127.

**Men’s Retreat** – Rosaryville Spirit Life Center, 39003 Rosaryville Road, Ponchatoula, will present a men’s Road to Emmaus Retreat Friday, Jan. 24 – Sunday, Jan. 26. For information, call Norm Madere at 504-481-0411, Colin Tulii at 504-494-4511 or Rick Valadie at 504-655-8932.

**Women’s Morning of Reflection** – Court Regina Coeli #2063 of the Catholic Daughters of the Americas will present a free women’s morning of reflection, “Trusting the Guidance of God in Our Lives,” Saturday, Jan. 25 at St. Jude Church, 950 Highland Road. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. and the program is from 9 a.m. – noon. Father Eddie Martin, parochial administrator of St. Ann Church in Napoleonville, St. Philomena Church in Labadieville and Assumption Church in Plattenville, will be the presenter. For more information, call Maria Carrillo at 225-769-5763.

**Paul Zucarelli Presentation** – Author Paul Zucarelli will talk about his near death experience during an evening of witness and praise Sunday, Jan. 26 at St. Aloysius Church, 2025 Stuart Ave., Baton Rouge. A meal will be served in the parish hall after the 5:30 p.m. Mass and the presentation will begin in the church at 7 p.m. For more information, call Mark Christian at 225-343-6657 ext. 28, or email mchristian@stalloysiusparish.com.

**Secular Franciscan Meeting** – The monthly meeting of the Secular Franciscan Order will be held Sunday, Jan. 26, 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 Ruth Powers OFS at rpowers_1@bellsouth.net or call 601-807-4153.


**Program for Separated/ Divorced** – St. John the Evangelist Church, 15208 Hwy. 73, Prairieville, will present a nine-week program for divorced/separated Catholics beginning Thursday, Feb. 6, 6:30–8:30 p.m., in room 108 of the church’s education building. For more information, call Deacon Randy Clement at 225-673-8307 or email deaconrandy@stjohnchurch.org.

**Icon Workshop** – Friends of the LSU Botanic Gardens are hosting a Byzantine icon workshop Sunday, Feb. 9 – Friday, Feb. 14 at the Burden Conference Center, 4560 Essen Lane, Baton Rouge. Instructions will be given to produce an image of St. Helena. Cost is $350. For more information, email dianawells548@gmail.com or call 335-927-8646.

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rclark@biloxidiocese.org

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Evolving door: New Year may bring new opportunities for women at Vatican

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Pope Francis opened 2020 with a strong call to acknowledge the dignity of women, end violence against them and stop the exploitation of women’s bodies.

His homily Jan. 1 was not generic: it referenced prostitution, rape, coerced abortions, pornography and even advertising.

And Pope Francis called for the involvement of women in decision-making processes in civil society, specifically when it comes to promoting peace.

At the Mass on the feast of Mary, Mother of God, he said the church is “woman and mother,” but he did not use the homily to address the roles of women in formal church structures.

However, there are strong indications that some changes will be coming in 2020, and not just because of the New Year’s homily.

The publication of the pope’s plan for the new configuration of the Roman Curia and his apostolic exhortation reflecting on the themes of the Synod of Bishops for the Amazon both are expected early in the year.

The draft document for the Curia reform, “Praedicate Evangelium” (Preach the Gospel), said the office of Vatican Secretary of State must be held by a cardinal. But other than that, it said, the reform “should also involve lay women and men in governing roles of importance and responsibility.”

The draft insisted the church’s hierarchical structure was willed by Christ, but that does not mean only the pope, bishops and other clerics are responsible for the church and its mission in the world.

In fact, it said, in the Roman Curia “the presence and participation of laypeople – women and men – is more essential than ever,” especially the contributions of laypeople living their faith through their family life and in their engagement with the world.

The draft document suggested laywomen and laymen would be particularly appropriate leaders “when dealing with the promotion of the family and respect for life and creation, with the Gospel as the leaven of temporal realities and with discerning the signs of the times.”

While the overall Curia reform project has taken years, Pope Francis already anticipated some changes: the prefect of the Dicastery for Communication is a layman; and the two undersecretaries of the Dicastery for Laity, the Family and Life are laywomen. St. John Paul II in 2004 appointed a woman religious as undersecretary of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, and that practice has continued.

In late October, at the end of the Amazon synod, which repeatedly referred to the leadership of women in faith communities throughout the region, Pope Francis promised to “re-examine” and expand the commission he had appointed to study the diaconate of women.

Phyllis Zagano, a member of the original commission and an expert on the subject from Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York, told Catholic News Service Jan. 7 that she still has not heard anything about a renewed brief for the panel.

Zagano noticed the difference in the way Pope Francis spoke about women in his homily Jan. 1, and she said she wonders if one litmus test for new leaders in the Roman Curia is, “Can you work with women?”

“I think Pope Francis is quite serious about listening to women,” she said. “He will do what he can.”

“Ordained women deacons are historically documented, doctrinally permissible and pastorally necessary,” Zagano said, but many continue to hold the belief that ordination of women to any ministry in the church is impossible because a woman “cannot image Christ.”

In May, Pope Francis appointed six consultants to the general secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, the office that coordinates the gathering. Five of the six were women and they are the first women to serve in that position.

Xaviere Missionary Sister Nathalie Becquart, who was an observer at the 2018 Synod of Bishops on young people, was one of the consultants named. She told CNS the appointment was “a symbolic and effective step toward appointing more women at the Curia, and it reflects Pope Francis’ desire to give more places to women at all levels of the church.”

The schools of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, admit students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at its schools. They do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school administered programs.
transformed into one of hope, into one of allowing herself to dream, carefully permitting thoughts of a future seep into a mind that had previously been dominated by thoughts of survival.

Through the Sweet Dreams staff, she was able to land a job at a fast food restaurant. Then the break she had long been seeking arrived at her doorstep when she was offered an opportunity to work at a mental health facility, an area particularly striking for Mangrum since her sister, whom she was helping take care of before landing on the street, suffers from a mental disorder.

And the clinic was only a short walk from the shelter, a necessary convenience since she was without transportation.

With her career as a medical technician at the clinic beginning to flourish, Mangrum’s focus turned to her children and doing what it would take to find permanent housing, helped her forge a path for a bright future. She read a small Bible daily. During those times of difficulty, she said, “It’s kind of strange how things happen,” she added. “I’m seeing life with a better view. If that had never happened, I wouldn’t be able to experience many of the spiritual things I have experienced. My faith has deepened.”

While on the streets, she said she read a small Bible daily. During those times of difficulty, Mangrum said she believed in God and “he’s showing me that he’s real. He’s showing me a lot of visions, still to this day.”

“He’s leading me,” she said. “This is the strongest my faith has ever been.”

And she will forever be indebted to the Sweet Dreams Shelter staff, who not only gave her an escape from the homeless life but helped her forge a path for a bright future. She understands the shelter was the knot that helped tie family bonds that were temporarily fractured.

“They helped with trying to find housing, helped me to get stable,” Mangrum said. “The main thing was they provided me a place to stay until I got myself together.”

Consider that done.
Holidays are part of the culture of schools, which enjoy new year celebrations twice each year. When students return to school in August, the new academic year begins fresh, filled with expectations of tremendous growth. Then, in January, students and faculty return after Christmas vacation to celebrate a new calendar year filled with energy for learning. Such double opportunity for celebration is truly a blessing!

Catholic Schools Week is part of the new year celebration as schools across the country take time in January to reflect on the gift that Catholic schools are to our families, community, nation and church in Evangelizing Hearts, Educating Minds, Encouraging Talent and Embracing the Future for young people. Such a gift is precious, as evidenced by the skillful talent and countless hours of dedicated work by staff in their ministry. Such a gift is precious, as sacrifices are made by families to provide Catholic education for their children. For the significant, generous and precious gift of Catholic education, we are truly grateful.

As a ministry of the church, Catholic schools welcome families into a nurturing culture that goes far beyond academic excellence; it speaks to the heart of humans, providing a glimpse of our loving God who welcomes us to learn and grow. Clergy, religious and lay ministers who serve in Catholic schools are gifts to Catholic education in our diocese, and we are grateful for not only what they do, but for who they are in modeling Gospel values for students in their care. Catholic schools fulfill their vision of Evangelizing Hearts because of the formation students receive. Consistently, students in the Diocese of Baton Rouge score above the national average on the ACRE test for faith knowledge and log more than 200,000 service hours annually in service to others.

Catholic schools in the diocese are blessed with the gift of talented educators who fill classrooms with learning. With a focus on Educating Minds, educators strive each day to provide rigorous, relevant and engaged learning experiences for students. Standardized testing in grades 3 – 12 reflects above-normal scores, and the Class of 2018 mirrored the high level of accomplishment as previous graduating classes by realizing an average ACT score of 24, which is well-above both state and national averages.

Students in Catholic schools are given the enrichment opportunities through various programs such as music, drama, art, clubs and sports. Focused on Encouraging Talent, all schools in the diocese offer the gift of mentorship through extra and co-curricular activities that expand and extend learning beyond the classroom and into specialty areas. Whether students are developing talent on the field of play or in a STEM robotics lab, they are blessed with generous faculty and volunteers who go above and-beyond to provide experiences that develop the whole child.

Advisory boards at each school site help to fulfill the vision of Embracing the Future, as members work with clergy and school leadership to set direction for development and growth. In addition to the high expectations for the continuous improvement of school programs required by national accreditation, school strategic plans identify focus at each school site for the next three to five years. Likewise, the Diocesan School Board has identified Catholic identity, financial vitality and advancement for growth as focus areas. Through reflection, prayer and action, board members help to ensure the precious gift of Catholic schools continues to be strong in the future.

As we celebrate Catholic Schools Week 2020, we are especially grateful for the support of Bishop Michael G. Duca and for the active involvement of clergy, administrators, faculty, staff, parents, students and all partners in the work of the schools. With God’s blessing and strong stakeholder support, Catholic schools will continue to be gifts to coming generations within the Diocese of Baton Rouge!

Information on Catholic Schools is located at csobr.org

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**From the Superintendent**

Dr. Melanie Palmisano

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Embracing the rich tradition and history of St. John Interparochial School in Plaquemine, as well as a commitment to the school’s mission of providing a nurturing environment where students grow in their faith and values while learning the importance of leadership and service are all qualities Father Greg Daigle has displayed while serving as pastor at St. John the Evangelist Church in Plaquemine.

Because of his dedication to the school and students, Father Daigle has been selected Distinguished Clergy Member for the Diocese of Baton Rouge and will represent the diocese in the National Catholic Education Association 2020 awards. 

“(Father Daigle) presence in the school community and his involvement with students, teachers and stakeholders proves that he is committed to the vision of the goals of our school,” St. John principal Cherrie Schlatre said. “Father Greg is active in our administrative operations and a frequent visitor to our campus. He is a spirit-filled, fun-loving character who has no problem engaging with students with conversation.”

She noted that in a time when some of the younger generation are not necessarily familiar with the clergy, Father Daigle is approachable, and students are comfortable in his presence. Schlatre added that his pastoral care is “truly a gift,” and he shares that often with students and teachers.

She said it is not uncommon for Father Daigle to be on campus to help a student with a personal issue, or offer support with academic or behavioral issues. “In those interactions, his mercy, compassion, concern, faith in God and love for others are evident,” Schlatre said.

Father Daigle attends many school events and athletic contests, regularly celebrates Mass with the students and encourages students to become more involved in the liturgy.

His unique story-telling talent augmented by his Cajun accent, as well as sharing a joke at the beginning of every homily, are what students look forward to and find endearing. “His love for his family, knowledge of the church and love for Christ are evident in his homilies,” Schlatre said.

Father Daigle has introduced several new Masses at the school, including a special Mass for the Exultation of the Cross. He has also harmonized the church and school in various ways, including celebrating the Junior Ring Ceremony and Baccalaureate Mass with the parish.

Father Daigle has also used his tremendous musical talent to encourage St. John students to develop their own individual talents. His vision has resulted in the establishment of a children’s choir and high school choir group.

Under Father Daigle’s leadership, students have had the opportunity to participate in his annual and quite popular Epiphany Concert with the Bill Grimes Orchestra. “While he is always ready to share all his time and talents, his particular talent for music and his willingness to share that gift with us has been a blessing for our school,” Schlatre said, adding that his commitment helped revitalize the school’s music program which had been decimated by budget cuts.

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She said it is not uncommon for Father Daigle to be on campus to help a student with a personal issue, or offer support with academic or behavioral issues. “In those interactions, his mercy, compassion, concern, faith in God and love for others are evident,” Schlatre said.

Father Daigle attends many school events and athletic contests, regularly celebrates Mass with the students and encourages students to become more involved in the liturgy.

His unique story-telling talent augmented by his Cajun accent, as well as sharing a joke at the beginning of every homily, are what students look forward to and find endearing. “His love for his family, love for Christ and love for others are evident in his homilies,” Schlatre said.

Father Daigle has introduced several new Masses at the school, including a special Mass for the Exultation of the Cross. He has also harmonized the church and school in various ways, including celebrating the Junior Ring Ceremony and Baccalaureate Mass with the parish.

Father Daigle has also used his tremendous musical talent to encourage St. John students to develop their own individual talents. His vision has resulted in the establishment of a children’s choir and high school choir group.

Under Father Daigle’s leadership, students have had the opportunity to participate in his annual and quite popular Epiphany Concert with the Bill Grimes Orchestra. “While he is always ready to share all his time and talents, his particular talent for music and his willingness to share that gift with us has been a blessing for our school,” Schlatre said, adding that his commitment helped revitalize the school’s music program which had been decimated by budget cuts. She said in the past five years, the Epiphany concert

SEE PASTOR PAGE 5B

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Distinguished Educator honored

By Debbie Shelly
The Catholic Commentator

Glynis Davis has been selected the Distinguished Educator of the Year for the Diocese of Baton Rouge for using foreign languages and cultural immersion experiences as a springboard to learning and leadership.

Davis, who teaches French at St. Joseph’s Academy in Baton Rouge, has spent her life dedicated to Catholic school education with 44 years of service, 39 at SJA and five years at St. John Interparochial School in Plaquemine.

“Having been in the teaching profession for as long as Glynis has, one might understand a bit of slowing down or a decline in enthusiasm for discovering new teaching strategies. This is not Glynis,” said SJA principal Stacia Andricain. “She absolutely loves the French language and culture and relishes in her daily work to immerse our students in both. She has been teaching French I and II since coming to SJA and delights in witnessing the growth of her students in those years.”

Davis uses multiple teaching methods to meet the needs and learning styles of the students, according to Andricain.

“She makes learning a language exciting, as she ties French language and culture to our own Louisiana heritage,” said Andricain.

The distinguished educator is a champion of students and offers opportunities for learning outside of classroom. Davis has been the moderator of the French I and French III/IV clubs throughout her SJA career. These club meetings provide unique activities to foster club members’ understanding of a French-speaking region. At one meeting, students learned about Belgium, where French fries originated. The students enjoyed homemade la Friterie Belgh (French fries) and special Belgian dipping sauces while listening to Belgian music.

The distinguished educator has also chaperoned immersion trip to France since the 1980s and for the past 15 years has taken the students to Quebec as well.

Davis was also instrumental in SJA adopting the practice of awarding the Seal of Biliteracy to seniors who successfully complete a level four foreign language in high school and learn qualifying scores on the English and reading sections of the ACT. The Seal of Biliteracy provides universities with a method accrediting applicants for attaining high-level skills in multiple languages and allows employers to identify those with global language skills.

“Glynis’ students have earned scholarships to universities in France, have tested out of French college credit hours and become French teachers themselves,” said Andricain.

Davis has deep roots in Catholic education. Her mother taught in a Catholic elementary school and her siblings attended Catholic schools along with her. Both her daughters also attended a Catholic elementary school and graduated from SJA.

For Davis, it is the highest compliment to receive an award from the Catholic school system.

“My first thought when I heard about this honor was wishing my mother could be here to share it with me. She passed away seven years ago, but it feels like yesterday. She was my role model as a teacher and a mother,” said Davis.

The biggest reward for a teacher is, for the most part, delayed, Davis said.

“It may take years to realize the mark you may have made; occasionally, you do see it in the present. When you hear from students from 20 years ago or hear about former students’ accomplishments, it touches the heart. I am as proud of their accomplishments as I am of my own daughters.”
Lee Distinguished Administrator

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

When it comes to Catholic education, Ellen Lee's roots run deep. And what she learned in those formative years, remains with her daily as principal of St. Michael the Archangel High School in Baton Rouge.

“Catholic education focuses on the whole child,” said Lee, selected this year’s Distinguished Administrator for the Diocese of Baton Rouge. “The Catholic faith is integrat-ed throughout the content areas so that students learn to think critically in the light of the Catholic Church’s teaching. As Catholic educators, we understand our vital responsibility of planting and watering the seeds of faith so that our children will grow up to be the people that God calls them to be.”

Lee, born and raised in the Capital City, attended Our Lady of Mercy School and St. Thomas More School, both in Baton Rouge. She graduated from St. Joseph’s Academy in Baton Rouge and earned her undergraduate and graduate degrees in education from LSU.

Lee said there was no question that she would attend Catholic schools growing up. Both of her parents were graduates of Catholic schools.

“My father taught me that there are very few gifts you can give your children that are more valuable than a Catholic education,” she said. “My husband, Steve, and I were able to provide all three of our children with a Catholic elementary and high school education. Both of our daughters, Jessica and Kathleen, are religion teachers in the Diocese of Baton Rouge. Our son, Eric is an attorney in Denver (Colorado).”

Lee has 40 years of experience as an educator. Her first job in administration, as assistant principal at St. Michael, came the same year as Hurricane Katrina, when thousands of displaced students from New Orleans moved to Baton Rouge.

“It was heartwarming to know that so many people who were displaced and came to Baton Rouge had their first priority of getting their children into a Catholic school, some even before they found a place to live,” said Lee.

In 2011, Lee was chosen principal of St. Michael High School, and she strives to continue growing the programs of the school and the faith of the students. According to assistant principal Julie Lecich, Lee provides teachers with professional development to integrate the teaching of the Catholic Church in all content areas.

“Teachers are required to include these teachings where appropriate in their curriculum guides and lesson plans, as they are asked to make a conscious effort to achieve the mission of forming young people as committed disciples of Christ,” said Lecich.

Under Lee’s leadership, the school has developed several programs to help students integrate prayer life into their daily life, including “MP3s,” which stands for music, prayer, praise and pizza nights. The school also makes an annual bus trip to the March for Life in Washington, D.C.

As a teacher and an administrator, I realize that I touch the lives of so many students,” said Lee. “I always want that influence to be a positive one. What an awesome privilege to be some part of their growth and formation.”

As for being selected Distinguished Administrator, Lee said she does not do her job alone.

“I share this recognition with the entire St. Michael community,” she said. “The people in the Warrior family make St. Michael the great school that it is.”

PASTOR ▼

from page 38

has raised more than $100,000, all of which has been funneled back into the music department.

“Father Daigle is a conscientious and zealous shepherd of both the parish and St. John Interparochial School,” Bishop Michael G. Duca wrote in his letter of recommendation to the NCEA.

Father Daigle graduated from St. George School in Baton Rouge in 1973 and Catholic High School in Baton Rouge in 1977. He studied music at Loyola University in New Orleans from 1977-80 and in 1983 graduated from LSU with a bachelor of arts degree in music.

He graduated from Notre Seminary in New Orleans with a master of divinity degree in 1993 and was ordained June 5, 1993 at St. Joseph Cathedral in Baton Rouge.

A classically trained, professional vocalist, Father Daigle has performed opera and in concerts in the United States and Italy.
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Father Jamin David
2018 Distinguished Graduate

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CHS celebrating the past; embracing the future

The 2019-2020 school year marks the 125 anniversary of Catholic High School in Baton Rouge. From its humble beginnings in 1894 in an L-shaped wooden building in downtown Baton Rouge, the school’s legacy has been rooted in a spirit of compassion with a commitment to excellence.

In the summer of 1789, France plunged headlong into a bloody revolution, setting the stage for a decade of war and unrest. It was against this backdrop of instability, Father André Coindre, a young parish priest in Lyon, France, witnessed first-hand the struggle for survival and the breakdown of social institutions. Unemployment was high and there were very few schools. Many children were orphaned, running the streets and often imprisoned – some as young as four to five years of age.

In 1818, feeling called to respond with a spirit of compassion, Father Coindre drafted a prospectus entitled “Pieux Secours,” which outlined his vision for establishing orphanages and schools across the region that would provide young people in need with a loving home, a Christian education and vocational skills. To help fulfill this mission, Father Coindre founded the Brothers of the Sacred Heart in 1821, a community of brothers who were rooted in the same spirit of compassion and trained to work with poor youth through the establishment of Christian-centered schools.

After Father Coindre’s death in 1826, Brother Polycarp was named Brother Superior General. By 1859, the order had grown under his leadership to more than 400 brothers in 70 schools. During this period of growth and success, five missionary Brothers of the Sacred Heart, at the request of Bishop Michael Portier, the first bishop of the Diocese of Mobile, Alabama, arrived in Mobile to expand their charitable and educational work in the United States.

The brothers’ work did not remain limited to Mobile for very long. In 1854 they established St. Stanislaus College in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, and in 1869, St. Aloysius College in New Orleans. Continued expansion resulted in establishment of schools and orphanages in several midwestern states, in the south and southeastern United States, as well as in New York, New England and Canada. Today, the Brothers of the Sacred Heart serve in Mobile; Bay St. Louis; New Orleans; Thibodaux; Houma; Baton Rouge; Klagetoh, Arizona; St. Michael, Arizona; and Mozambique, Africa.

In 1894, expansion continued with four brothers traveling to Baton Rouge to establish St. Vincent’s Academy, a parochial school set up under contract with St. Joseph Church, which at the time was within the Archdiocese of New Orleans. The school was located downtown on what is now Fourth Street, and was named in honor of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, which had made a significant financial contribution toward its establishment. From a humble beginning with 106 students, St. Vincent’s attracted immediate attention for academic excellence and developing outstanding character in its students.

With nearly 300 students, St. Vincent’s had outgrown its L-shaped wood-framed building by the late 1920s. In January of 1929, faculty and students moved into a new, modern brick facility on North and Fourth Street and the school’s name was changed to Catholic High School.

By the early 1940s, lack of classroom space made it necessary to begin turning away applicants. As a result, the brothers started searching for a piece of property to build a new school that would accommodate a larger student body. On June 5, 1946, 36 acres of land were purchased, but lack of funds delayed construction of the new campus for nearly 10 years.

Through the generosity of many friends in Baton Rouge, the Brothers of the Sacred Heart were able to begin construction in 1956. In September 1957, the faculty, along with 450 students, moved from the original property near the State Capitol to the new campus — the present location on Hearthstone Drive. That same year, the school changed ownership from the Archdiocese of New Orleans to the Brothers of the Sacred Heart.

The success of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart’s schools is founded in their educational philosophy and commitment to excellence. The school is committed to preparing students for success in college and career, and fostering a love of learning and a commitment to service. The school offers a rigorous academic curriculum, a variety of extracurricular activities, and a strong focus on character development.

Today, Catholic High School is proud to offer a wide range of academic, athletic and extracurricular opportunities for its students. The school is committed to helping each student reach their full potential, both academically and as a person.

Please refer to our website for a more detailed description of our school’s programs.

For more information call 225-869-5778 www.stpchanel.org

SEE CHS PAGE 8B
Cristo Rey’s first graduation ceremony scheduled in May

Cristo Rey Baton Rouge Franciscan High School is excited to announce the school’s first graduating class is scheduled May 23.

The inaugural class of 42 seniors will receive their diplomas at 3 p.m. in LSU’s Royal Cotillion Ballroom. The Cristo Rey Network’s founder, Father John P. Foley, will be a part of the graduation ceremony.

Cristo Rey Baton Rouge is part of the national Cristo Rey Network of schools. The network is comprised of 37 high schools, located throughout the United States, that provide a quality, Catholic, college preparatory education to young people who live in communities with limited educational options.

In the Cristo Rey learning environment, young people of limited economic means are offered the opportunity to become men and women of faith, purpose and service. This unique educational model combines college preparatory education with a Corporate Work Study Program.

Cristo Rey Baton Rouge opened in August, 2016. Now in its fourth year, the school has grown to include grades 9-12 and serve 174 students. This year, through the work study program, students will earn more than $1.2 million toward their tuition with the support of 53 Corporate Work Study Program partners throughout the greater Baton Rouge area.

School officials are especially grateful for those partners who have supported the seniors during the past four years and have been with Cristo Rey since its inception: Albemarle, All Star Automotive Group, Baton Rouge Clinic AMC, Baton Rouge General, Capital Area Finance Authority, Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System, Kean Miller LLP, Lamar Advertising Co., Louisiana Association of Business and Industry, Neighbors Federal Credit Union, Ochsner Health System, Postlewaite & Netterville and Taylor Porter.

Cristo Rey is now accepting applications for the class of 2024. Please attend one of the two remaining open house dates: Feb. 15 and March 14 or contact director of admissions Erica Walker at ewalker@cristoreybr.org for more information.

As Catholic High School celebrates 125 years of its commitment to the spirit of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart and the charism of Father Coindre, the school also embraces the future and continues to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

In March 2019, CHS launched the next phase in its campus master plan by breaking ground on a new student center. The 32,000-square-foot facility will create a dynamic learning environment where students will dine, socialize and interact with faculty.

The two-story design includes a dining and kitchen area, a seminar room, four classrooms and study rooms, a campus ministry center, a spacious student commons area featuring an outdoor student pavilion, a large conference room, an outdoor terrace and a faculty work center. The facility will be located at the north end of Hearthstone Drive.

The new center will be dedicated in memory of Brother Donnan Berry SC, who served as a teacher at Catholic High School from 1950 to 1952 and later as principal from 1964 to 1974. He returned to CHS in 1980 to establish and direct the CHS development office, a role he held until 1993.

As Catholic High School looks forward to the next 125 years, the school will forever be committed to the spirit of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart and will continue to embrace and be guided by their educational mission and ministry – to teach Gospel values in an environment of academic excellence according to Catholic tradition.
For more than 60 years Our Lady of Mercy School in Baton Rouge has taken pride in providing students with the best in Catholic education.

The school strives to offer the most up to date curriculum, teaching strategies and cutting edge technology. Entering 2020, the goal is no different. Officials are excited to announce expanding educational technology initiatives that will launch in the fall of 2020. These initiatives include a 1:1 iPad program in the middle school and a significant expansion of the number of devices available in Pre-K through fifth grade.

In middle school, each student will be assigned an iPad, and in second through fifth grade, each classroom will have a half-class set of iPads for student use. In the early childhood grades, classrooms will have age-appropriate access to iPads for students to use as they explore and learn to use the technology in a school setting.

The goal of this program is not just to increase the number of devices available to students, but it is also to enhance the curriculum with age-appropriate technology tools as students learn critical thinking skills necessary to become good digital citizens. Officials are striving to integrate meaningful technology use as a tool to transform the curriculum, giving students unique and experiences opportunities.

School officials hope to address growing concerns about students’ exposure to technology.

In an address given by Pope Francis on Sept. 27, 2019, to participants in the seminar “The Common Good in the Digital Age,” he concluded with these words: “A better world is possible thanks to technological progress, if this is accompanied by an ethic inspired by a vision of the common good, an ethic of freedom, responsibility and fraternity, capable of fostering the full development of people in relation to others and to the whole of creation.”

The school hopes to instill in students an appreciation for balance and a critical eye for technology use in their daily lives.

This will be achieved by teaching them how to use technology ethically and responsibly to further their academic and spiritual learning experiences and to expand their creativity and critical thinking skills. School officials are thrilled to be offering this unique learning opportunity for students as teachers prepare them for the ever-changing future they will embark upon once they graduate from Our Lady of Mercy School.

During the course of six days, St. Joseph’s Academy students in Rhonda Baird’s chemistry honors courses enjoyed a unique opportunity to learn about engineering design, cancer and the work of bioengineers in the medical field. The Bioengineering 101 program, taught by LSU chemical engineering assistant professor Adam Melvin, also involved a challenge in which students designed, built and tested model “cancer trappers” and collected data to measure their systems’ effectiveness.

The three classes of 60 total students were divided into small groups of two or three to build their cancer trappers using rice and macaroni to simulate cancer cells and red blood cells. They received a list of supplies they would need to acquire, complete with cost, to build their systems. Plates, bowls, tape and scissors had to be “purchased” within budget.

The students’ systems had to achieve 70 percent purity in separating the rice from the macaroni. The systems were also required to be cost-effective to reproduce. Based on the four metrics of capture efficiency, purity, throughput and cost, the teams went to work on their designs.

Melvin threw in additional design parameters, adding penne pasta to represent immune cells, for example, and increased the volume of the sample. In response, students had to improve their designs or start from scratch.

On the final day of Bioengineering 101, the teams presented their projects to a panel of SJA teachers serving as judges. First period winners were Amelia Lambert and Claire Pourreux; second period winners were Casyyn Smith and Ava Kadi; and fifth period overall winners were Evelyn Carley, Jemma Wood and Anna Miller.

Miller, a sophomore, said that she didn’t consider herself a science enthusiast but found the Bioengineering 101 project far exceeded her expectations.

“It was more about coming together as a team and competing, instead of stressing about the work. It was a great experience.”

St. John Interparochial School

St. Michael the Archangel High School
Catholic school Distinguished Graduates selected

Ascension Catholic
Michael Nizzo’s Catholic education roots are deeply planted in the fertile soil of Ascension Parish.

Nizzo’s grandfather, father and siblings are all graduates of Ascension Catholic High School. Nizzo, who won the Mr. Bulldog Award his senior year in 1997, has been selected Ascension Catholic’s Distinguished Graduate.

“One of the greatest gifts my parents gave to me was the gift of my Catholic education,” said Nizzo, who manages a team of commercial bankers in the Baton Rouge area and is a volunteer coach of the Ascension Catholic middle school track team.

“From a young age, I was able to form a Christian faith from the teachings of my parents, church and teachers,” he added. “Learning with kids who also share this faith gave me a foundation that would shape and serve me as a husband, father and business professional.”

Ascension Catholic principal Sandy Pizzolato said Nizzo believes he has achieved success because God is at the center of his life, followed by his family. Pizzolato said Nizzo believes his greatest accomplishment in life is being a father to his three children.

“He and his wife believe sending their children to Ascension Catholic is the right choice for their family,” Pizzolato said. “The historical Catholic Christian foundation, academic excellence and community makes Ascension Catholic a very special school.

“Michael and (his wife) Christina wanted their children to attend a school with the same traditions, Christian values and faith-based experiences that Michael grew up knowing. He takes great pride in his family and enjoys spending weekends relaxing and fishing with them at the family camp.”

Pizzolato said the family’s long tradition of Catholic education speaks volumes for the traditions carried on by the family. “(Nizzo) is focused on spreading the word about the importance of Catholic education,” she said. “He volunteers his time and marketing skills to help improve our school in our community and to reach out to new families who are interested in enrolling in Ascension Catholic. His beliefs in Ascension Catholic’s success is valuable.”

Nizzo, a member of the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry Emerging Leaders Council, currently manages six banking centers spread throughout East Baton Rouge, Ascension and Livingston parishes. He is a 2017 graduate of the Business Report Leadership Academy.

Catholic High
Through his military service in the Marine Corps and his career as a prosecutor, Brandon Fremin has committed his professional life to protecting and serving the community.

Those values are rooted in the education he received at Catholic High School in Baton Rouge, which selected Fremin as the school’s Distinguished Graduate.

“The value of my Catholic education is immeasurable,” said Fremin, a 1992 graduate of CHS. “I am truly blessed to have had the opportunity to attend Catholic High, an institution nationally recognized for academic excellence but more importantly for the faith-based values it instilled in me and countless young men in our community.”

Catholic High principal Lisa Harvey said Fremin has worked tirelessly to protect the most vulnerable members of the community and defend the nation and state from violent crimes, including terrorism and human trafficking.

“(Fremin) serves our community in critical ways,” Harvey said. “He is a worthy role model and witness for our current and future students.

“In short, we encourage our students to emulate his dedication to a worthwhile cause, his work ethic, his availability to others and his humble and compassionate manner in handling difficult and delicate issues with respect for all.”

She said Catholic High School seeks to honor alumni who serve the community and whose personal character and values promote the mission of the school — to teach Gospel values in an environment of excellence. Harvey said Fremin has been a leader who couples his natural talents with hard work for the good of the entire community, and it is that combination directed toward a clear and worthwhile purpose that is exceptional and that most sets him apart from others.

“Those who know him or who work with him are quick to recognize these special qualities in (Fremin),” she added.

Fremin serves as the U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Louisiana. As the chief federal law enforcement official with the nine civil parishes that compromise the Middle District of Louisiana and a staff of 60 attorneys and support personnel, Harvey acknowledges Fremin’s busy schedule, but said he is always willing to do whatever he can to promote the mission of CHS.

“He readily acknowledges that CHS played a critical role in his personal formation, and he is eager to pay it forward to young people today,” she said. “As a highly successful professional

Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin.
Emily Broussard Walker attended, but her faith and family life played an important role in her upbringing.

“Emily is an advocate for global issues, namely, raising awareness and funding for global hunger and human trafficking through work with Metanoia Manor,” said Judith Roberson, Vice President for Institutional Advancement at Fran U.

Walker was president of Franciscan Student Fellowship while at Fran U, advocating for living out Franciscan values through campus events like “Finding Common Ground,” Agape dinners and family ministry programs.

She was selected Student Organization President of the Year for the Masters of Healthcare Administration Program and received the prestigious St. Francis Student Award for her program. She graduated with a masters in Health Administration in 2019.

A resident of Lafayette, Walker volunteers at Lafayette General Medical Center’s infusion center where she does hospitality services for chemotherapy and other patients receiving IV medical therapy. She is a member of St. Joseph Church in Milton.

Emily exemplifies what a true servant leader is through her commitment to bring others to Christ, is mission-centered and lives out her beliefs through her and her husband’s (newly established) non-profit, Francis Farms, which will sell homemade products,” Roberson said. "Part of the proceeds will go to various Catholic charities around Louisiana that supports the homeless, impoverished, hungry and needy."

“The mission of their (Walker’s) non-profit aligns with those of St. Francis of Assisi, who loved and respected the Earth and its bounty, just as she and her family do. The land that she and her husband will be farming on was given to her by her late father, who is her namesake Francis Wayne farming on was given to her by her late father, who is her namesake Francis Wayne.

In 2017, Walker and her husband began a project called Pangburn’s Bounty, a gardening project to feed the hungry, just as she and her family do. The land that she and her husband will be farming on was given to her by her late father, who is her namesake Francis Wayne.

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STM’s Annual Fund a success

This school year, the administration at St. Thomas More School in Baton Rouge decided to initiate the inaugural STM Annual Fund. By eliminating multiple small asks and focusing efforts on the Annual Fund, STM aims to provide donors with an opportunity to help the school go from great to exceptional without raising tuition through a tax-deductible gift.

This year’s Annual Fund was a resounding success, raising $132,380. Paving the way was STM’s faculty and staff who gave at 100 percent, raising more than $77,000. STM more than doubled the amount of revenue generated in previous years’ fundraisers while substantially reducing the number of fundraising requests made by the school.

All proceeds from this campaign are being used to enhance technology on the STM campus in order to improve the quality of education provided to students. As of the start of the second semester, nearly $75,000 has been expended on significant improvements to the technology infrastructure, resources for middle school and junior high classrooms, including several iPads and Apple TVs, and 27 laptop computers which will enable more effective utilization of classroom interactive boards.

These and additional technology purchases to be made with the remaining proceeds will enhance student learning and engagement, helping them to develop skills as resourceful and responsible users of technology.

Annual Fund Chairpersons Leigh and George Holder said, “We are so gratified by the response of the STM community to our requests for their participation in the Annual Fund. The school will be enhanced by the new technological resources we acquire, and the greatest beneficiaries will be STM students.”

The Holders and other members of the fund’s leadership team made a significant investment of time and effort. Major Donor Chairs Robbie Olivier and Steven Davis; Faculty and Staff Chair Rhea Dill; Grandparents’ Chairpersons Cheryl and Judy McAluso; and School Board Chair Renee Mire.

The STM Men’s Club installed the new technology in classrooms, providing additional savings. Principal Brian Moscone remarked, “The Annual Fund has truly been a team effort. Everyone in the STM community has played a part, by serving on the leadership team, making a gift, big or small, or simply spreading the word about the great work we are doing here.”

Questions about the STM Annual Fund, including how to make a gift, may be directed to Dr. Greg Brandao (greg@stmchurch.org).

GRADS

From page 118

Ryan Barker has twice been selected Executive Director of the Year for the Louisiana Parks and Recreation Association and continues to be a civil leader in the Hammond area, serving on the Greater Hammond Chamber Board of Directors and a board member of the Hammond Rotary Club and United Way.

But perhaps Barker’s most significant accomplishment lies thousands of miles away, helping improve the lives of countless children in Arusha, Tanzania.

Barker, selected the Distinguished Graduate for Holy Ghost School in Hammond, runs a non-profit organization that helps provide education, clean water and recreational sports to the children of Arusha.

“Catholic education embodies so much more than religion,” said Barker, a 1999 graduate of Holy Family, executive director of Chappapeela Sports Park in Hammond and owner of Tanzania Adventure Tours. “It includes a focus on character development and building relationships. This foundation continues to guide me today.”

Holy Ghost principal Donna Wallette said Barker gives his time and financial resources “to help children in our community as well as those in Tanzania.”

Mater Dolorosa

Mary Durnin showed a tremendous amount of diligence in earning her degree and pursuing a...
Paula Talbot Dawson’s sunny attitude and passion for her community makes her the Distinguished Graduate for Most Blessed Sacrament School in Baton Rouge.

Dawson graduated from MBS in 1989. After graduating from Southeastern Louisiana University in 2000, she married her husband Jimmy, and they have two children, Payton and Kensi.

“She works very hard each day to make a difference in our community.”

**Most Blessed Sacrament**

**Paula Talbot Dawson**

Brian Fourroux, a 1979 graduate of Redemptorist High School, opened his business, Brian’s Furniture in Port Allen, two years later. Zeringue noted that Fourroux started off taking orders and making deliveries himself.

“Brian’s work ethic and devotion to Catholic education that was instilled in him from his parents,” said Zeringue.

**Redemptorist St. Gerard**

A longtime educator and coach in the Baton Rouge area public schools, Mark Moreau has deep ties to north Baton Rouge.

He is a 1973 graduate of Redemptorist St. Gerard School and later became a parishioner at St. Gerard Church. Exhibiting a strong commitment to his alma mater, Moreau has been chosen Redemptorist St. Gerard’s Distinguished Graduate.

“My belief in Catholic education is so strong that our children were educated kindergarten through 12th grade, and we continue to support our church.”

**MARK MOREAU**

Moreau was voted Ascension Parish School Teacher of the Year as well as being selected Cox Teacher of the Week. Our Lady of Mercy Men’s Club honored Moreau as the second recipient.
ponent of the club’s Anchor Award given for outstanding service to the parish.

Domino said Moreau is admired by his church congregation and the St. Gerard community that he considers family for connecting to other human beings as he works toward common goals.

“His faith in God, love of family and dedication is superior to most,” she said.

“He redefines what it means to sacrifice for others. His heart is big and that is why we nominated him to represent our school community.”

Sacred Heart of Jesus

Sacred Heart of Jesus School in Baton Rouge reached into its rich history in selecting Louis DeJohn Jr. as its Distinguished Graduate.

A 1962 Sacred Heart alumnus, DeJohn, now retired, had a successful career as owner of Louis Mechanic Contractors.

“The Sisters of St. Joseph and the Brothers of the Sacred Heart molded my faith in God and prepared me for life experiences,” said DeJohn, who has been married to his wife Becky, a 1963 Sacred Heart grad, for 53 years.

Sacred Heart principal Cecilia Methvin called DeJohn a “humble man who does much for his family and his community in a kind and generous manner. Many of our graduates are quietly successful and Louis epitomizes this.”

Methvin said DeJohn and his wife have been hosting gatherings not only for his class but many other graduating classes for more than 50 years.

“As we celebrate our 90th year, we wanted to honor someone who continues to hold steadfast the legacy of Sacred Heart,” she said. “As a husband, father and CEO, he has lived to serve the Lord. He is a model graduate of Sacred Heart in every aspect of his life.”

She also called the DeJohn’s marriage “an example of God’s love on earth, and we are proud to have them both as our graduates.”

DeJohn has been a member of the East Baton Rouge and Louisiana State plumbing boards, chairman of the Plumbers and Steamfitters Local 198 Board of Trustees, was selected by Gov. Kathleen Blanco to serve on Central’s first city council, has chaired Central’s “Cooking in Central” since 2005 and was king of the Krewe de la Centrale Mardi Gras ball.

Honors include the Central Chamber’s Lifetime Achievement Award and Central’s Co-Man of the Year.

“(DeJohn) is an asset to every organization he is affiliated with,” Methvin said. “He continues to be successful but always remembers his roots.”

St. Aloysius

After Brett Murray’s mother passed away from a rare kidney disease, the 2002 graduate of St. Aloysius School in Baton Rouge organized a baseball team named Spirit in the Sky for the Baton Rouge Area Kidney Walk fundraiser.

The team raised $6,000 in its first year and Murray, combining his passion for baseball along with his dedication to the Kidney Foundation, has continued to host a weekend baseball tournament to raise awareness of kidney disease as well as funds.

It’s that type of commitment to helping others that led to Murray being selected the St. Aloysius’ Distinguished Graduate.

“Catholic education is more than a curriculum; it provides personal development for students rooted in Christian values,” Murray said. “My Catholic education challenged me to find a purpose and value in my life.”

St. Aloysius principal Erin Candilora called Murray’s volunteerism and fundraising “notable.” She said his passion of coaching comes from knowing the importance of youth sports and was able to use that passion in raising funds for the National Kidney Foundation.

“(Murray) lives the mission of St. Aloysius School to ‘educate the whole child in the Catholic tradition for a life of meaning and purpose,’” said Candilora.

Murray has been a volunteer baseball coach at St. Aloysius for 12 years and a volunteer coach for flag football for three years.

St. Alphonsus

Chase Ryan Browning helps the students at St. Alphonsus School in Greenwell Springs see that the “sky’s the limit” in pursuing their dreams.

St. Alphonsus School has selected Browning as its Distinguished Graduate.

“I believe Catholic education provides a strong foundation that instills in me...”
“Browning) is a wonderful role model to all he encounters,” said Dr. Cindy Ryals. “As a student, he was an altar server, Boy Scout and became an Eagle Scout. He received the Arrow of Light award and is a member of the Order of the Arrow. He now enjoys his time as an airline transport pilot (the highest certificate an airline pilot can achieve) and captain with Sky West Airlines. St. Alphonsus School is proud to have been a part of the foundation for his successes.”

The distinguished graduate keeps close ties with the St. Alphonsus community and is active in St. Alphonsus Church when not traveling for his job. “He visits the community often and is a wonderful role model for the youth of our school,” said Ryals.

St. Elizabeth

Through the support of Timothy LeBlanc, St. Elizabeth Church and School in Paincourtville and St. Jules Church in Belle Rose meet the educational and spiritual needs of its students and parishioners.

For all his seemingly unseen work, SES has selected LeBlanc its Distinguished Graduate.

LeBlanc, a 1989 SES graduate, said of his time at the school, “Catholic education is vital to educating the entire child; fostering footsteps to grow into adults that walk in the footsteps of Christ.”

SES principal Dr. Kathleen Herpich noted LeBlanc draws from his experience as a pipeline technician to see that the St. Elizabeth and St. Jules communities run smoothly.

“(LeBlanc) is an active member of the Knights of Columbus. He is a member of St. Elizabeth and St. Jules churches by being a marriage mentor, a member of the maintenance committee, chairs a booth at the fair and is an usher,” said SES Principal Dr. Kathleen Herpich. “He is a community softball league board member.

“If you call him you know he will find a way to help. Mr. Tim is a person who helps and does not want recognition. He quietly helps because he wants to. He will gladly stay behind the scenes to ensure the successful running of an event,” said Herpich.

St. Francis Xavier

When things need to be done at St. Francis Xavier School and Church in Baton Rouge, Melonie Judith Stewart is their ‘go to’ person. For her dedication to the church and school, she has been selected the SFX School’s Distinguished Graduate.

Stewart, a fifth-grade teacher at SFX School said, “Catholic education provides you with the foundation to trust in God while you guides through the journey of life.”

“Ms. Stewart has worked in Catholic schools for four years. However, she has supported Catholic ministries in a number of ways,” said SFX principal Paula Johnson. “She is presently an extraordinary minister of the Eucharist at her church. Both of her sons received a Catholic education and are doing well. She volunteers for numerous events in her church and school. She is a supporter of Catholic education.”

Johnson commended Stewart, a 1985 SFX graduate, for working tirelessly to support students and staff.

“(Stewart) has been honored as an outstanding teacher. She never says no. She is always willing to help the school community,” said Johnson.

St. George

Cassie Montagnino Dinecola’s heart for service and extraordinary work ethic exemplify some of the most important Gospel values that St. George School in Baton Rouge strives to instill in its students. Living those Gospel values helped her become the school’s Distinguished Graduate.

Dinecola, a 2000 graduate of St. George, has been a counselor in Baton Rouge since 2012 with a passion for working with people with disabilities and their families, according to Karla Prejean, disciplinarian and seventh-grade social studies teacher at St. George.

“Cassie enjoys helping people to realize and use their strengths to achieve their best lives,” said Prejean. The distinguished graduate is also a clinical professor at LSU School of Social Work.

“Cassie has worked tirelessly in her years since graduating from St. George to serve those with no voice. Her accomplishments have a positive, life-long impact on those she serves,” said Prejean.

Dinecola’s accomplishments include being chosen by the LSU faculty as a LSU baseball guest coach in May, 2019; an economic development assistantship from LSU from 2012-2014; and the Martha Tarver Volunteer Recognition Award from the Baton Rouge Crisis Intervention Center in 2007.

“Dr. Dinecola is truly a leader in the community. Not only does she work with clients with developmental disabilities, she shares her passion with others by working as a clinical professor at LSU School of Social Work. Her passion for service is a direct result of her Catholic education,” said Prejean.

St. Jean Vianney

From a solid Catholic education to a solid future, Dr. Matthew Stephen Berlinger credits his formative years in Catholic schools for leading him into a profession in the medical field, making him the Distinguished Graduate of St. Jean Vianney School in Baton Rouge.

“I believe that I received an exceptional education in the Catholic school environment that fostered moral and ethical reflection,” said Berlinger.

“Matt has always had a smile, a good sense of humor and loved to learn,” said St. Jean Vianney principal Wendy Ross. “This led to his desire to work with diverse people in a compassionate, caring medical facility. One of his program directors said, ‘Matt has it all in the head, but more importantly in the heart.’”

Ross also noted that Berlinger’s commitment “to serve the dear neighbor” sets him apart. Berlinger, a 2004 graduate of St. Jean Vianney, has already been recognized with several awards and honors including the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Society, Aesculapius Society Intern Teaching Award, AOA George Karam Award in Teaching Excellence, Catholic High School Man of the Year and chief resident at LSU Health and Science 2019.

“Matt has always put his best foot forward,” said Ross. “He cares. It’s not just a job or career for him, it is a pursuit to help others with pulmonary care and comfort.”

St. John

Catholic education provided the tools for success, according to Mary Eleanor Hebert. “Ellie is a wonderful role model for all of us. She always put her best foot forward,” said St. John Interparochial School in Plaquemine. “My father and my Catholic education provided...”
Hebert has also volunteered her time and talents to several projects at St. John School. She recently helped with the marketing of St. John School’s Continue the Legacy Capital Campaign.

“St. John provided me with an exceptional base to ground my life, gave me the knowledge needed to succeed at higher academic levels and taught me the importance of servant leadership – all in a safe, happy environment. I don’t think more could be asked of a school,” Hebert said.

**St. Joseph’s Academy**

An active volunteer at her alma mater and in her church community, Stephanie Cargile has been chosen the Distinguished Graduate for St. Joseph’s Academy in Baton Rouge.

Cargile, a public and government affairs manager for ExxonMobil in Baton Rouge, is a 1988 SJA graduate. According to Katie Valenciano, Cargile believes Catholic schools provide students with a unique blend of development, academic excellence and character formation that serve as a life compass throughout one’s life.

Valenciano said Cargile has supported St. Joseph’s as a parent volunteer, member of the Board of Directors and at Career Day events. A parishioner at St. Aloysius Church in Baton Rouge, she is also a longtime volunteer in the classroom and in parish activities and also active in outreach in the north Baton Rouge community.

“(Cargile) was chosen (Distinguished Graduate) because of her success and leadership, both at work and in our community,” Valenciano said. “Although she stays busy with her career, Stephanie continues to be a living example of the Gospel values learned while in Catholic school and exhibits those values through her leadership and community involvement.”

Cargile has won numerous ExxonMobil rewards, as well as the 2018 National Telly Award for advertising campaign collaboration, the Louisiana Chemical Association Most Valuable Player award in 2014 and 2016 and in 2019 won the Baton Rouge Business Report Influential Women in Business Award.

**St. Joseph Ponchatoula**

For Joann Castjohn Fayard, St. Joseph School in Ponchatoula has been a lifelong staple in her life. The 1969 graduate sent her two children to St. Joseph and now three of her grandchildren attend the school, and she continues to be actively involved in multiple programs.

“She has always been an advocate for our school and believes strongly in the value of a Catholic education and the importance of continuing and supporting an active family involvement to contribute to the success of St. Joseph School.”

Fayard regularly attends school events and weekly Masses. She is the coordinator of the school’s Uniform Swap Shop, keeping the uniforms organized and available, and hosts two swap shop days during the school year. She also assists with confetti eggs for the annual spring fair.

Fayard was chosen as the Billing Clerk of the Year three times for the Tangipahoa Parish School System as well as Site Supervisor of the Year. She held multiple positions on the St. Joseph Home and School Association when her children attended SJS. Fayard is also a founding member of the Garden Club for the Rosaryville Retreat Center.

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**Open House**

Saturday, March 21
franu.edu/open-house

**Experience**

FranU’s campus at
franu.edu/experience
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“(Fayard) has a genuine love for our school,” said Rugusa. “She maintains close relationships with her fellow graduates and wants to help in any way she can to ensure that St. Joseph continues to be a productive and faith-filled school.”

“Catholic education not only teaches strong academics, but also teaches students morals and values that allow them to make Christ-like decisions throughout their lives,” said Fayard.

**St. Jude**

When it comes time to call on volunteers, faculty and staff at St. Jude the Apostle School in Baton Rouge know they can count on 1996 graduate David Territo. Now, as a dad with two children at the school, Territo continues to give back to the school that gave so much to him.

“David is a faithful steward to the St. Jude community,” said St. Jude principal Michelle Gardiner. “He can be seen volunteering as a coach, STEM leader and on the fair committee. He passes on to his family the values that were instilled in him as a St. Jude student.”

When St. Jude re-scheduled its parish fair because of inclement weather, Territo and his wife chose to continue their commitment to set up a booth and forge a cruise scheduled for the same date, losing a 500 deposit in the process.

“He said he had made a commitment and would be faithful to his word,” said Gardiner. “This is a great testimony to his character.”

Territo, who works in the healthcare industry, is often seen volunteering with the Home and School Association and the Athletic Association at St. Jude School. He and his family are also members of St. Jude Church.

“Catholic education gives students the ability to grow academically, spiritually, athletically and socially, in a faith-based environment centered around building a relationship with God,” said Territo.

“He has always promoted the school and its programs,” said Gardiner. “He works tirelessly to see that St. Jude will be the same Catholic family environment for his children as it was for him.”

**St. Michael**

As education director for the Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections, Andrea Hebert Buttross puts her education and her faith to work. Providing an education for Louisiana’s incarcerated has become her life’s mission with the number of local jail education programs doubling under her supervision.

“I believe that Catholic education is essential in the moral and spiritual development of a person, which enables people to be well rounded in all aspects of life,” said Buttross, a 2006 graduate of St. Michael the Archangel High School in Baton Rouge and the school’s Distinguished Graduate.

“Andrea embodies each of the charisms, virtues, roles and ministerium that St. Michael High School has distinguished as important pillars by which to live,” said Khloe Page, SMHA alumni coordinator. “She lives the faith by pursuing a life dedicated to God and sharing that with others. She serves like Christ through her various volunteer and leadership efforts by helping women in Louisiana corrections facilities get an education and become valuable members of society one released.”

Page added that Buttross has implemented new ideas and approaches toward rehabilitating female inmates and is willing to listen to others within her office to make sure all Louisiana offenders have a chance to become successful upon release. Buttross is also an active alum, attending multiple events and participating annually in the school’s career day. Buttross is also an active alum, attending multiple events and participating annually in the school’s career day.

Buttross was honored as a Capital Graduate of 2017 and Supervisor of the Quarter for 2013.

“I am indebted to my Catholic education for playing a critical role in fostering my relationship with God and enabling me to see the best in people,” said Buttross.

**St. Peter Chanel**

Learning about God’s love and mercy as a student at St. Peter Chanel School in Paulina motivated Donna Veron Waguespack to pay it forward and teach others, earning her the honor of Distinguished Graduate. Waguespack attended St. Peter Chanel School for eight years, graduating in 1973. She loved her teachers, some of whom were Dominican Sisters, according to principal Paula Poché.

“Donna believed that Catholic education was so important to her that she became a teacher and taught at St. Peter Chanel School for 23 years,” said Poché. “She continued working for St. Peter Chanel School as a religion coordinator, helping with prayer services, retreats and many other religious activities. Her three children are all graduates of St. Peter Chanel School as well.”

After leaving the classroom, Waguespack continued her ministry by serving as Parish School of Religion (PSR) coordinator for St. James Church in St. James.

“She has an unconditional love of Jesus and serving in his ministry,” said Poché. “She works with the youth of the parish to continue the PSR program.”

**St. Theresa Avila**

When it comes to school gatherings, the most important aspect is sight and sound. And that’s what Distinguished Graduate Patrick James Millet provides for his school, St. Theresa of Avila Middle School in Gonzales.

According to principal Christine Musso, Millet has a “giving heart.”

“We have been the recipient of superb audio equipment for school plays, Home and School Association meetings, morning announcements and community events,” said Musso. “He has blessed us with his God-given talents, and we would like to honor him for sharing his talents through service to the school, church and community.”

Millet, who owns an audio/visual company, also supports the arts and a number of local productions. He continues to stay involved with his school through consulting and designing audio equipment for school assemblies, meetings, sports tournaments and plays. He also uses his talent to help provide audio equipment for St. Theresa of Avila Church and other local Catholic churches, according to Musso.

“Pat is the epitome of service as he does good deeds through his work, but does not discuss it, as he feels it is his way of giving back through God’s blessings to him,” said Musso.

“My Catholic education gave me the fundamentals and values necessary to be successful in all aspects of my life,” said Millet, a 1985 graduate of St. Theresa School.

**St. Thomas Aquinas**

Although Carlee White Gonzales of Hammond might be busy running a law office, she still finds time to devote to her family and her community, earning her Distinguished Graduate of St. Thomas Aquinas High School in Hammond.

Gonzales, a 2000 graduate of St. Thomas Aquinas, was elected to the Hammond City Council in 2018 and serves as the council president. She and her husband, Dr. Ryan Gonzales, have one son, Frederick. They are members of St. Albert the Great Chapel and Catholic Student Center in Hammond.

“A Catholic education provides an academic and spiritual foundation with the support of a community of Christian peers and leaders,” said Gonzales.

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“Carlee’s personal accomplishments in our community have been numerous,” said Pat Sanguinetti, principal of St. Thomas Aquinas. “She continually works to improve the city of Hammond and the STA community.”

A graduate of Loyola University New Orleans and Loyola University College of Law, Gonzales served on the St. Thomas Aquinas Alumni Board from 2012 – 2019; she was a member of the Louisiana State Bar Association; she is a graduate of Leadership Tangipahoa 2013; selected Super Lawyers Rising Stars for 2018 and 2019; and named in the Hammond “Daily Star’s” “Top 40 Under 40.”

“Carlee has been a member of the alumni board since 2012, where she has worked on numerous projects and events to better the school,” said Sanguinetti. “She has donated her time and financial resources whenever called upon.”

**St. Thomas More**

St. Thomas More School in Baton Rouge is a family tradition for 1975 graduate Jude Palombo, selected as the school’s Distinguished Graduate. Palombo’s wife, Cindy, is also a graduate of St. Thomas More and all five of their children attended school there.

“My experience as a student of St. Thomas More in the 1970s was influential in my Catholic formation where I had my first Communion, confirmation and met numerous friends which I still have today,” said Palombo.

For Palombo, president and chief executive officer of Omni Specialty Packaging in Baton Rouge, the opportunity to integrate faith formation with his education was important. He noted that Catholic parents should consider Catholic schools as a way to further the Catholic identity of their children.

“With the Catholic school’s close connection with the parish (St. Thomas More Church) at large, children can receive sacraments and begin with their family participating in parish life,” he said. “On a very basic level the daily prayer at the beginning of school is such a spiritual positive thing that any Catholic parent should jump on.”

“Jude serves as a wonderful representative of St. Thomas More School,” said principal Brian Moscona. “His commitment to faith and family as well as his desire to serve others, make him an excellent model of what STM graduates should be.”

“Another important part of Catholic school education is the history of strong, balanced and committed standards of academic excellence,” said Palombo.

Palombo credits Catholic education with “one of the most important things that affect my life and the lives of my family.”

**SHJ students enjoying ‘Playdate with the Principal’**

When Sacred Heart of Jesus School in Baton Rouge principal Cecilia Methvin initiated Playdate with the Principal at the beginning of the 2019-20 school year, her goal was to create a program that would bring her closer to the students. The program has done that and more, as parents, faculty and staff have all embraced this addition to school activities and students eagerly await their turn to spend this special time with Methvin.

Methvin’s most recent playdate found her exploring the campus with kindergartners in pursuit of missing 3-D gingerbread men. Each kindergartner proudly created a unique gingerbread man, complete with hair and clothing, only to discover the gingerbread men were missing upon returning to the classroom on a Monday morning.

Students posted “Lost” notices around campus complete with descriptions and drawings, but no “gingerbread men sightings” were reported. With no success from the “Lost” notices, kindergartners explored the school grounds with the help of Methvin, who was sporting her Playdate with the Principal tee shirt – in pursuit of the elusive gingerbread men. Complete with clues, school maps created by them, and magnifying glasses for “sleuthing,” the students checked hallways, classrooms and the gym, making sure to stop in the classrooms where kindergartners had siblings. Each time they knocked on the door, Methvin would lead them in asking the question, “1-2-3, have you seen our gingerbread men?” Students finally found the elusive gingerbread men in the library, along with a surprise snack of hot chocolate and, of course, gingerbread cookies.

Methvin read “The Legend of the Candy Cane” to conclude the playdate.

“The students loved having a day to just learn and be a child with their principal,” Methvin said. “It is something that they will always remember.”
St. Michael High School adds second engineering class

After a successful first year of Engineering I with an enrollment of 29 students, St. Michael the Archangel High School in Baton Rouge implemented Engineering II: Applications in Computer Science to offer to students for the 2019-2020 school year. The course is focused on engaging students in programming and computational thinking to solve human-centered, technically challenging projects at the intersection of engineering and computer science.

In 2017, St. Michael set out to add an established, rigorous and comprehensive engineering program to its curriculum offerings. After extensive research, the school choose to partner with the University of Texas at Austin and its program, “Engineer Your World.” The program is designed by faculty in the university’s School of Engineering and College of Education and is also in collaboration with NASA engineers and secondary education specialists.

Currently, courses I and II focus on providing real world engineering applications to students while adding the element of service to others.

“All of our projects have a component built into them that focus on helping others in various capacities,” described department head Zach Leger. “Students also get to experience what engineering has to offer and gain invaluable experience in the field.”

Many of the program’s first-year students went on to begin college engineering curriculums at universities like LSU, Southeastern Louisiana University, Mississippi State and Louisiana Tech.

Will Clark, a 2019 St. Michael graduate, won the Encounter Engineering design challenge at LSU, said he was grateful for the course that St. Michael offered.

“Thanks to what I learned, I was able to lead my team of less experienced engineers to create the winning design for Encounter Engineering for (LSU). What was taught, applied to college level engineering,” said Clark.

In December, the Engineering II Honors class finished a motion capture unit which challenged students to develop a system that provided real-time feedback to physical therapy patients who performed rehabilitation exercises.

After analyzing user needs and creating a detailed functional model, students designed and built a basic wearable device that allowed a web camera to capture information about the joints’ range of motion. Students wrote programs that analyzed large quantities of video data, applied an algorithm for calculating changing joint angles, provided real-time user feedback and exported data to a file for future analysis by the patient’s physical therapist.

To culminate the project, students presented their models to a physical and occupational therapist in the Baton Rouge area.

“All of our projects have a component built into them that focus on helping others in various capacities,” described department head Zach Leger. “Students also get to experience what engineering has to offer and gain invaluable experience in the field.”

If you are interested in learning more about the St. Michael’s Engineering Program or partnering with them, please contact zleger@smhsbr.org
The First Lego League (FLL) team at St. George School in Baton Rouge, the Dragon Bytes, received the Core Values Award at the FLL® Qualifier Dec. 5 at Holy Family School in Port Allen.

The Dragon Bytes will move on to the Louisiana State Championship at Jesuit High School in New Orleans in January. This team consists of 19 students: Coy Bruno, Chloe Clement, Beau Legnon, Quinn Luu, Ethan Noel, Rileigh Rinaudo, Gabriel Serrano, Max Schexnaildre, Kenzie Stentiford and Kaiser Stentiford along with their mentors Wendy Bridevaux and Jenny Bruno.

During the course of the competition, judges recognize a team that excels across the Inspiration, Teamwork and Gracious Professionalism categories.

“This team displays extraordinary enthusiasm and spirit, knows they can accomplish more together than they could as individuals, and shows each other and other teams respect at all times,” said Bruno.

The teams also present on core values and are challenged to complete a task in front of the judges.

The students worked for more than three months preparing for competition. The First Lego League competition, City Shaper, included a rigorous challenge to create a project that would look at a building or public space in the community and come up with a solution to improve it. The students created a Modern Monticello by researching the past and how to use the past to create a more eco-friendly home in the future.

The Dragons Bytes also built George II, their tribot (a robot with three feet or wheels), using LEGO MINDSTORMS and programmed George II to complete many missions in the two-and-a-half minutes allotted at competition.

The Dragon Bytes loved the challenges associated with First Lego League completion and look forward to competing in January. The robotics club meets after school but is also offered as an activity class at St. George for sixth, seventh and eighth graders.

Bridevaux and Bruno said they hope the future of robotics at St. George continues to grow and be successful.

SHJ ▼
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Mrs. Methvin join them in the hunt for the gingerbread men,” said kindergarten teacher Amy Pickenheim. “It was so much fun watching her interact with the students and leading the pack through the hallways. It made the experience even more memorable for them.”

First grade teacher Hannah Coleman agrees with Pickenheim. First-graders playdate was pumpkin carving in October and Methvin returned to her roots as a science teacher.

“She turned a common fall activity into an engaging science lesson,” said Coleman, “and the students are still talking about it today.”

Other playdate activities this fall included a picnic lunch and story time with pre-kindergarten and Christmas cookie decorating with third-graders. Other grades will enjoy their playdates during the second semester.

“Sacred Heart is a school that takes tremendous pride in its time-honored traditions,” said Methvin. “I’m thrilled that our Playdate with the Principal aligns with those traditions and I look forward to spending special time with each class for years to come.”