Advent: a time of prayer

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

The turkey is but a mere carcass, yams are nowhere to be found and long-lost relatives who drop in on once a year for the annual feast have departed.

Thanksgiving is over, the only evidence being a kitchen of dirty dishes and the silence of treasured memories.

So what’s next? Naturally, for many, Thanksgiving night or Black Friday is the kickoff for the Christmas season, replete with the insanity of all of the holiday trappings.

Often buried in the hustle and bustle is Advent, tucked somewhere behind finding the perfect Christmas gifts and placing the LSU ornament on the carefully selected tree. So where should Advent fit during this four-week sprint?

Dina Dow, director of the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis, said the four weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas is “much more than (getting caught up in the holiday craziness).”

“Advent is a preparatory time; it’s a spiritual time when we prepare our hearts for the birth of the Lord, which is what Christmas is,” Dow said. “You’re getting ready for the ultimate celebration in an outward way.”

Practically, though, how does one eschew the holiday madness and spiritually celebrate Advent? Dow said from a religious view it’s simply a matter of packing necessities into one’s spiritual backpack, discarding whatever weighs one down.

So what might that include? She said it begins with a need to focus on the Holy Family and the Christmas story.

The first thing packed should be attending Sunday Mass, where the entire journey to Christmas will be related through the readings.

“Within that story, we know exactly what we are getting ready for,” she said.

One’s backpack should also include a commitment to attend at least one Mass during the week or even daily Mass for the more ambitious. Participating in what the churches offer during the Advent season (found in the Christmas edition of the Catholic Commentator), including missions, should also find their way into the backpack since they offer a way to be ready for the birth of Christ.

Dow also recommended accessing a number of resources, including those found online or at area Catholic bookstores, which might include reflection booklets. Contained in those booklets are Scripture readings, reflections and a daily challenge.

Students pay tribute to veterans

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

Students at Catholic schools across the Diocese of Baton Rouge honored military men and women for Veterans Day in a variety of ways. Gatherings, receptions and special Masses were held at several schools, including St. Alphonsus School in Greenwell Springs, Holy Family School in Port Allen and St. John Interparochial School in Plaquemine.

At the chapel on the St. John campus, pews were filled with students, family members and military men and women for a Veterans Day Mass. As he welcomed everyone, Father Gregory Daigle, pastor of St. John the Evangelist Church, noted the important work of all military persons.

“Jesus said the peace that we want is the peace that protects our lives, our way of life and our opportunity for deeper communion with one another as a nation and with our God.”

Father Daigle also thanked service men and women for “bringing peace to our world.” He then asked everyone to place their hands on a veteran for a special blessing. Ray Louviere, who served in the Navy in Vietnam, said he was moved to tears when he felt the hands of his granddaughter, grandniece and others placed on him.

“It’s hard to put into words,” Louviere said with a sigh of emotion and tears in his eyes at a reception following the Mass. “I’m very thankful and proud that I did serve.”

Also during the Mass, the senior class sang a patriotic song with students representing President John
Catholic Thanksgiving

The yearly pageantry featuring paper pilgrim hats, bonnets and Indian headdresses allude to the traditional picture of the “first” Thanksgiving gathering in 1621 at Plymouth Rock, Massachusetts of Native Americans and European Puritan pilgrims. But Catholic sources noted there were two thanksgiving events held several decades before that which were deeply rooted in the Catholic faith, through Spain’s cultural influence.

The first event, according to catholicstand.com, was Sept. 8, 1565, upon the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in St. Augustine, Florida. Spanish settlers and Timucuan Indians gathered for a Mass and thanksgiving feast.

A second similar thanksgiving occurred on April 30, 1598 in El Paso, Texas when Don Juan Oñate, a Spanish explorer, conquistador and colonial governor, declared a day of Thanksgiving be commemorated with a Mass, according to Catholic education.org. On this day Oñate formally proclaimed “La Toma,” claiming the land north of the Rio Grande for the king of Spain. The men feasted on duck, goose and fish from the river and actors presented a play.

Even the Plymouth Rock event had Catholic ties as well, through the Pawtuxet Indian Squanto, also called the “Catholic Native American Indian Hero,” who made Thanksgiving possible.

Squanto, also known as Tisquantum, was 10 years old when the English captured him, took him to England and taught him English so he could facilitate trade negotiations with Native Americans who inhabited the coastal village, according to agapebiestudy.com.

When he was in his early 20s Squanto was serving as interpreter on a ship captained by John Smith, who played a vital role in establishing the English Colony at Jamestown, Virginia.

When Smith anchored off the shore near Squanto’s home, Smith allowed him to return to his village. Squanto was captured again a year later while trying to negotiate trade with an English ship. This time he was taken to Spain and put up for sale on a slave market. Some Franciscan friars gathered enough money to purchase Squanto’s freedom and he went back with them to the monastery. He converted to the Catholic faith and learned Spanish.

After his baptism, Squanto returned to his native land in order to evangelize Native Americans. However, upon arriving in his home village in Plymouth, Squanto discovered all its members had died from diseases contracted from white traders.

Living with a nearby Wampanoag tribe for the next couple of years, Squanto learned that a small group of white people had settled in his home village. He was told they probably wouldn’t be there much longer because many had died from the previous harsh winter and the rest were starving.

Seeing the destitute circumstances of the pilgrims himself, Squanto captured some large eels and made stew for them. So hungry that any food before them was considered a sumptuous meal, the pilgrims ate the stew. Squanto then taught them how to plant corn, hunt deer and trap other animals, catch fish and live off the land.

To celebrate their first successful harvest a year later, the pilgrims invited Squanto and the Wampanoag tribe to celebrate with them. The Indians brought the deer meat and wild turkey. The festivities lasted for three days.

And similar festivities will continue this Thanksgiving, with Saints fans hoping to indulge in a dessert of sweet revenge after feasting on Falcon. Just remember that Eschatologist means “thanksgiving” so thank Jesus for his sacrifice on the cross to ensure us a seat at the table of the heavenly banquet.

Thy kingdom come

By Dina Dow

The liturgical year transitions during the next two weekends, as Year C ends and Year A begins. We celebrate The Solemnity of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, king of the universe (Christ the King) followed by The First Sunday of Advent.

A little history lesson

The feast of Christ the King was instituted in 1925 by Pope Pius XI. The papal Encyclical, “Quas Primas,” gives witness to the foundation of Jesus as king. Pope Pius XI also explains the timely importance of the solemnity, one being, because of the “manifold evils in the world were due to the fact that the majority of men had thrust Jesus Christ and his holy law out of their lives” (Parag. 1), contributing to the lack of peace in the world. I recommend reading the encyclical. The providence is an awakening.

The early king

The Books of Samuel chronicle the history of Israel’s leadership transitions from judges to kings. The Israelites demanded a king “to rule, lead in war, and fight their battles” (1 Sam 8:20). The reading from the Second Book of Samuel, Chapter 5, speaks of David, the second king of Israel. He is referred to as a king after God’s own heart (1 Sam 13:14), a man of deep faith and love of God. David was a leader with a shepherd’s heart, one who raised up the lowly, protected the people, ruled over the land and strived to please God. At the same time, through his sinful actions David recognized his need for God’s mercy and was grateful for such grace. He was the one chosen, anointed by God, whereby through his lineage would become the perfect king, who would shepherd, raise the lowly and fight the battle of all battles. His kingdom would reign forever and ever.

Image of God

Who is the king of kings? St. Paul’s letter to the Colossians opens with gratitude to God for making us “fit” to receive the light of Christ who saved us from the darkness of sin due to the fact that the majority of men had thrust Jesus Christ and his holy law out of their lives” (Parag. 1), contributing to the lack of peace in the world. I recommend reading the encyclical. The providence is an awakening.

Thy kingdom come

Father Paul Gros, parochial vicar at St. George Church in Baton Rouge, in a recent homily, posed the question, “Why was Jesus born?” His answer, “To establish his kingdom.” Where is Christ the King’s domain? Where is his kingdom? Paragraph 2816 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church explains, “The Kingdom of God lies ahead of us. It is beyond our daily experience, yet it is near when we know it is come. It is the battlefield of the ultimate battle.”
A birthday like no other for ex-inmate

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

As dozens of men, dressed in warm jackets and knit caps, crowded into the dining room of St. Vincent de Paul on Nov. 14, Gerald Parker, formerly incarcerated at the Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola for 43 years, gently guided a man, dressed in an oversized gray sweatshirt and baggy jeans, to Linda Fjeldsjo, coordinator of Joseph Homes for Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, for an introduction.

“This is David Johnson,” beamed Parker. “He was released today after 44 years and today is his birthday.”

“Oh wow!” said Fjeldsjo. “Let me give you a hug!”

And with that simple gesture, Johnson began to offer hugs to everyone he met. Just hours earlier, he exited the gates of Angola for the first time as a free man.

“I cried,” recalled Johnson of his release.

Beaming with joy, Johnson was overwhelmed by well wishes and greetings from fellow travelers, who remember and mark the date of their own releases.

Johnson was met at the gate by Parker, who also served time at Angola.

“I once again had the blessed privilege of going to Angola on behalf of the Parole Project as a friend of David,” said Parker to the gathering before dinner was served.

“I drove into the prison and immediately after I got to the gate and the warden escorted me in, I was reminded just how good God is. One of the biggest desires of my heart during the 43 years I was in prison was to experience going out with free people instead going into the shake-down room after a visit. But when I drove past the checkpoint I was reminded just how good God is.”

Parker, a former resident of Joseph Homes, also talked about how everyone in the room had something in common: they were all part of a blessed group.

Jeff Lively lived at Joseph Homes for a year and saved enough money to move into a rented home in Plaquemine. Lively was 17 years old in 1983 when he was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole, probation or suspension of sentence. That changed by 2012 when the U.S. Supreme Court banned life-without-parole sentences for juveniles.

Lively now works construction jobs and takes on odd jobs, such as lawn care, whenever he can. He likes to work. And, he likes to visit. That includes his sister Sandra Partin and family friend Ellen Sessions, who joined Lively for the Thanksgiving feast.

“I’m thankful to my Lord and savior Jesus Christ for the people he’s put in my life who helped me since I got out of prison,” said Lively. “Thankful for all the help I got from Joseph Homes, Parole Project, and I’m thankful for the people that passed that law (2012 Supreme Court ruling) that I’ll never have a chance to thank. There’s a lot of good people left behind that I think about daily.”

After a turkey, ham, sweet potatoes, string bean casserole, broccoli casserole, macaroni and cheese and birthday cake were served against a backdrop of small talk and laughter. It was a feast celebrating how far the ex-inmates had all come and where they were today: together and free.

One of the biggest challenges, according to Fjeldsjo, is the ability of the formerly incarcerated to visit their friends who remain behind bars. After three and four decades of living together, the men consider each other family.

“The topic of our last support group meeting was ‘holiday blues,’ ” stated Fjeldsjo. “Sometimes you watch television and read magazines and it seems that’s how everyone’s celebrating the holidays. And I warned them not to fall into that trap because so many of them, their family is up the river at Angola. They have spent so many holidays with them and now they’re alone out here. So … we’re family.”

And, on this chilly November night, with smiles, hand shaking, hugs and laughter, that’s exactly what it looked like – a family gathered around the table.
40 Days for Life deemed a ‘success’

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Around 1,600 people created a culture of life outside Delta Clinic in Baton Rouge, one of three abortion clinics in Louisiana, during the annual 40 Days for Life Campaign, according to Danielle Van Haute, Respect Life coordinator for the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

“We have another great campaign,” said Van Haute, who noted that 14 mothers said they would give life to their babies. “But that is not our ‘success,’” Van Haute said. “That is God moving. And even if we were not aware of any moms who chose life we would still be out there because that is what we are called to do.”

She said the campaign succeeded in gathering the community to fast and pray and increase awareness of the harm of abortion.

“It’s also an opportunity to let people know about all the women’s crisis centers, Catholic Charities (of the Diocese of Baton Rouge) and all of the resources that are available to moms and dads in those situations,” Van Haute said.

The campaign also opened the eyes of people who were unaware abortions are being performed in Baton Rouge.

“It’s always interesting. Inevitably, people will drive by and stop, and two people walked by, and they had no idea it (Delta Clinic) was an abortion facility. We are helping people to realize this is happening right here in our community,” Van Haute said.

The campaign was also a successful ecumenical effort, with more than 45 different participating churches or groups.

“While certainly (doctrinal) differences exist, we can unite in prayer for this common desire that we end abortion,” said Van Haute.

People traveled from other areas, including Lafayette, Houma and Opelousas to join the effort, said Van Haute.

“It’s a beautiful example of the body of Christ at work, because people who don’t have an abortion facility in their area come in to join their prayers with ours,” Van Haute said.

For first-time participants, even if they prayed during a day when Delta was not open, it was a poignant moment to stand in front of the building where abortions are performed, according to Van Haute.

“They felt empowered because they were grateful to be a peaceful presence and to join their prayers and fasting for these women and their boyfriends and husbands and the workers (in the abortion industry).”

“For first-time participants, even if they prayed during a day when Delta was not open, it was a poignant moment to stand in front of the building where abortions are performed, according to Van Haute.

“What we pray for is conversion for everyone, even the workers that they will leave and begin a new life with work that brings health and healing.”

She said it’s interesting to note that for first-time participants, even if they prayed during a day when Delta was not open, it was a poignant moment to stand in front of the building where abortions are performed, according to Van Haute.

She contacted parish coordinators of ministries serving these people and urged them to encourage the people they minister to participate through prayer. Devotional guides were purchased for this.

This was also the first time for inmates at Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola to join 40 Days for Life.

Angola prison chaplain Jay Jackson said 40-50 prayed at the prison’s Our Lady of Guadalupe chapel.

“They felt empowered because they were involved in the work of the diocese. They were very honored to participate,” said Jackson.

Van Haute said she appreciated their enthusiasm.

“It was a gift to have those prayers, because this is an effort undertaken by the body of Christ,” she said.

St. John the Baptist Church in Zachary was one of many churches in the Diocese of Baton Rouge participating in 40 Days for Life. Photo provided by Danielle Van Haute

St. Aloysius Church in Baton Rouge was one of many churches in the Diocese of Baton Rouge participating in 40 Days for Life. Photo provided by Danielle Van Haute
St. Vincent de Paul Society to host Thanksgiving dinners

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul will once again be at the forefront of serving the needy on Thanksgiving Day in the Baton Rouge area, continuing two traditions that have spanned more than three decades.

For the third consecutive year St. Vincent is hosting the Holiday Helpers Thanksgiving Day meal at the Raising Cane River Center. St. Vincent took over managing Holiday Helpers, expected to serve up to 600 meals, three years ago with the caveat that Major Reginald Brown, the longtime coordinator for the event initially began more than 30 years ago, stay on for consulting and assistance.

“We follow his method and plan and build upon it every year,” Michael Acaldo, president and CEO of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, said. “He is fantastic to work with and remains very much involved.”

St. Vincent will also host its annual Thanksgiving dinner at the Bishop Ott Homeless Shelter, serving the area’s homeless and those who are more comfortable in the quaint setting. Acaldo, who is celebrating his 30th Thanksgiving with St. Vincent, said he expects the center to serve from 500 to 600 meals.

The program initially began in 1967.

“It’s been a great thing for the community and has really made a difference,” he said.

Acaldo added both meals are open to the public but said the target audience for the River Center are those who are in need, low income, the elderly and those on fixed income.

“Our focus is if you are going to be at home alone on Thanksgiving and are financially strapped, we would like to see you,” he said. “If you are poor and your poverty is loneliness, we would like to see you too.”

Preparing close to 1,300 dinners is daunting for the St. Vincent staff, but Acaldo said dining room director Denise Terrance, who coordinates both events, “does a fabulous job.”

“Previously it was a ton of work but now (with the addition of the Holiday Helpers meal) multiply that many times over,” Acaldo said.

“Personally, I love this time of year, just thinking of the work we do here, a time for families; it’s rewarding for the staff,” he added, explaining that the time period from Nov. 1-Jan. 15 is “like a fog” because of the holiday season.

Acaldo noted that since two different populations are being served crossovers, people eating at both places, are few although they would not be denied.

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Morality and video games / Canonical marriage but not civil?

Q My son, who is 15, keeps asking for a video game called Grand Theft Auto V. After reading some reviews (gang violence, nudity, extremely coarse language, drug and alcohol abuse), I was not inclined to purchase it for him in good conscience. He’s asked now to spend his own money on the game, but I don’t want to be responsible for contributing to something that appears to be of no value spiritually or otherwise. Could playing mature-rated video games also be a cause of sin, like watching movies with mature content? (Wichita, Kansas)

A Video games could of course be an occasion of sin, just as X-rated movies can be. I’ll leave aside the issue of violence and simply mention that Adam Lanza, the Sandy Hook shooter, was an avid fan of video games. Could that appear to be of no connection? I’m not a patron of video games myself, but I trust the letter-writer’s depiction of this one; in fact, the ESRB (Entertainment Software Rating Board), the industry’s highly regarded “watchdog,” notes that in Grand Theft Auto V “players use pistols, machine guns, sniper rifles and explosives” to kill rival gang members.

It adds that “the game includes depictions of sexual material/activity: implied fellatio and masturbation (and) various sex acts ... that the player’s character procures from a prostitute” with the option for “a topless lap dance in a strip club.” Sadly, Grand Theft Auto V’s publisher boasted that, in the first three years of this game’s existence, they had shipped more than 75 million copies.

Now I ask our readers: Is this the kind of “entertainment” you would want for your 15-year-old son? Our letter-writer acted responsibly in refusing to purchase the video for her son – and she shouldn’t let him buy it with his own money, either.

Q I am a widow going out now with a widower. We love each other and he wants me to marry him. Can we get married in the church, keep our own names and not be married by the law of the state? The reason is this: If we get married under state law, I would lose my deceased husband’s social security and pension, and that would put a financial burden on me. Please advise. (southeastern Indiana)

A Unfortunately, I don’t see a way for you to do this. In the United States, marriage by a member of the clergy is recognized by the state as a valid civil marriage. Prior to the marriage, a civil marriage license must be presented to the officiant, who then signs it following the ceremony and returns it to the municipal jurisdiction where the couple obtained it.

If a priest in the U.S. were to marry a couple in a church ceremony without reporting it as a civil marriage, that would be considered fraudulent. (I could see in a nation, for example, where interracial marriages were prohibited that a priest could on principle marry a couple religiously without reporting it civilly but in the U.S., I don’t think it’s possible.)

Q We had a discussion the other day about some of the difficulties facing priests, and this question came up: Do all priests take a vow of poverty? (Suffolk, Virginia)

A Priests who are members of religious orders (Franciscans, Dominicans, Jesuits, etc.) – take a vow of poverty and own nothing; the houses they live in, the cars they drive, even the clothing they wear belong not to themselves but to the religious order.

Diocesan (sometimes called “secular”) priests do not take this vow. Diocesan priests are ordained for a specific geographic region and usually work in parishes. Diocesan priests are given a salary (usually including room and board) and are expected to pay their own expenses car, clothing, charitable gifts, etc.

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.
A celebration of life

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

As Edie Sanders prepares to descend upon Washington, D.C. with hundreds of youth from the Diocese of Baton Rouge for March for Life in January, she will celebrate the life of the unborn and her mother.

Mom and daughter have bonded even more closely through their mutual commitment to defending life and through the mother's battle with cancer.

Sanders spoke about her journey to March for Life at a Pro-Vita March for Life Pilgrimage Benefit Dinner on Oct. 17 at St. Michael High School in Baton Rouge.

Sanders, a junior at St. Michael, was invited to her first trip to March for Life in the fall of 2018. Although she desired to go, her mother, Rachel, was recovering from breast cancer surgery earlier that summer. Sanders found out about her diagnosis right after final exams, and that summer was a difficult time in her life.

“I didn’t want to go out a lot,” said Sanders, who spent her time caring for her mother.

She participated in Real World Service Camp while her aunt stayed with her mom. But she had to work through the stress of being away from her mother.

“It was, ‘I don’t want to leave you (Mom),’ ” said Sanders, who nevertheless was gently encouraged to go.

When the invitation for March for Life was extended, Sanders said, “I initially thought, ‘Oh my goodness, I want to go,’ but I was scared to ask my parents because they had other things to put money toward.’ ”

Sanders also knew there would likely be unplanned difficulties entailed in the long-distance trip, which the young pilgrims offer up as “prayer and sacrifice.”

But she also heard the friendships born and “miracles” that happen during the pilgrimage make the hardships worth the difficulties. To earn money to attend the trip, Sanders worked in service projects, which included serving tables at last year’s Pro-Vita dinner.

As she cheerfully engaged in conversation with the people at the tables tending to their needs, the attendees learned about her mother’s illness and that she was earning money to go on March for Life. Doing all she could to make the hardships worth the sacrifice.

“My parents (said) ‘We don’t know how she’s going to come out, but we don’t care. She’s going to be our child, and she’s going to be perfect to us,’ ” said Sanders.

She does not know who sponsored her trip but her gratitude feelings in a letter which she read at this year’s Pro-Vita dinner. Someone has again sponsored her for the 2020 march. Sanders expressed her appreciation to the people that make it possible for youth like herself to speak out on behalf of the unborn at the nation’s capital.

“It’s hard to think about how the experience can get better than it already is,” said Sanders.

“In the end we’re real tight, you know everyone. I’m really excited to think about it, because you are on holy ground.”
Catholic teaching offers relief

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

Challenges faced by medical professionals in today’s constantly evolving health care arena are many, but perhaps the most prevalent is burnout, with emotional exhaustion, chronic stress and even a diminished view of personal accomplishment not far behind.

However, one only needs to turn to Catholic social doctrine for the salve to cure what ails modern medicine.

That was the message delivered by Arland Nichols during his opening address at the Converging Roads: Catholic Social Doctrine in Medicine Conference on Nov. 2 at the Tracy Center. The daylong conference, which attracted approximately 80 doctors, nurses, chaplains and other medical professionals, was presented by the Office of Marriage and Family Life of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center, Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University and the St. John Paul II Foundation, located in Houston.

“I want to make sure you have a comprehensive understanding of Catholic social doctrine and perhaps seeing Catholic social doctrine as an antidote,” said Nichols, president and founder of the St. John Paul II Foundation.

“The reality of burnout is very real,” he added. “It is a true challenge to practice medicine today.”

Nichols, who is working on his Ph.D. in bioethics from Regina Apostolorum in Rome, said a disturbing trend of compartmentalization in medicine has resulted in physicians increasingly seen as providers rather than healers. Some doctors have a feeling like they are vending machines.

“Dr. Google walks in my office and I am just supposed to vend out what is requested,” Nichols said of the attitude of many physicians.

He added “Dr. Google” has created what amounts to amateur experts who consistently challenge the opinion of a medical professional because of what was read online. Also contributing to physician burnout are professionals being tethered to electronic medical records, challenges with the Affordable Care Act and reimbursement structures that have heightened the difficulty of doctors getting paid.

“How do we bring the life, the purpose back to medicine?” he asked his colleagues, quickly adding Catholic social doctrine “might have something to say about this reality.”

He broke down the principles of Catholic social doctrine as the dignity of the human person, the common good, the universal destination of goods, solidarity, dignity of work, marriage and family and the role of community and social values and religious liberty.

Regarding the dignity of the person, he fell in line with Catholic teaching in stressing that every human life is sacred and must be respected.

“It is the foundation for the very rights we claim as our own, the right to life, religious liberty, etc.,” he explained. “It cannot be taken away.”

He said by choosing the good, “we become the best of men, the best of women.”

He said the common good is woven throughout Catholic social doctrine and includes the importance of food, housing, the role of work, access to culture, religious liberty and basic health care.

Attaining the common good is admittedly difficult but requires the common effort to seek the good of others “as if their good is our own good,” Nichols said. “The poor are entrusted to each one of us.”

In the medical context, he said solidarity is manifested by seeing the patient not just as a disease and added that the entire medical team is called to the physical, emotional, social and spiritual good of the patient.

“You just don’t Band-Aid the wounds; instead you care for the whole person,” Nichols said.

He pointed out the basis for a Catholic approach is to reject certain interventions that ultimately causes physical or spiritual or social harm.

“As medical professionals, you must first remember that...”

See FMOLU PAGE 19

Arland Nichols addresses his constituents during the opening address of the Converging Roads: Catholic Social Doctrine in Medicine Conference held at the Bishop Tracy Center on Nov. 2. Sponsors of the daylong conference included the Office of Marriage and Family Life of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center, Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University and the St. John Paul Foundation, located in Houston. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

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Emotional journey ends in arms of loving family

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Cathryn B. Stanley’s 20-year search for her biological parents began with sketchy adoption records, DNA technology and a mystery filled with emotional twists and turns.

Through faith and God’s grace, she ended up in the arms of loving blood relatives in the Mississippi River and bayou regions area. Stanley spoke about her journey at a Cross Wise meeting at St. Patrick Church in Baton Rouge on Nov. 13.

Stanley, of St. Amant, was born in 1960 in New Orleans and was about four months old when Clifford and Ida Bonaventure adopted her through Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New Orleans from a local orphanage, St. Vincent’s, which was run by the Sisters of Charity.

“My parents told me I was adopted. I can remember sitting in my dad’s lap and he said ‘You were given up for adoption because your birth mother loved you so much she wanted you to have a good life and she couldn’t give that to you. So she selflessly gave you up for adoption, and we were so blessed to be able to adopt you.’”

The Bonaventures raised Stanley in a loving environment in north Baton Rouge. She attended St. Gerard Elementary School and graduated from Redemptorist High School in 1978. Her father died the following year.

When she was 37, Bonaventure, who was secure in the love she had for her adoptive parents, followed her desire to know her birth parents in order to know about her and her children’s medical history, as well as to know her family roots.

She wrote to Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, which gave her some non-identifying information about her birth parents.

Expecting to receive news about a family history of illnesses, such as cancer, etc., she learned there was history of tragic deaths, such as train, car and bus accidents, etc.

She thought, “I don’t think I want to know anymore. One thing this accomplished was that it made me so thankful for my life with my adoptive parents.”

Determined to push on, Stanley investigated accidents seeking a connection. Not getting anywhere, she focused on genealogy research on her adoptive parents, which gave her “a lot of experience for the future.”

In 2016, Stanley’s oldest son, Jordon Soileau, died from drug addiction.

“I had the peace that surpasses all understanding in knowing that he accepted the Lord,” said Stanley, who has grandchildren through him.

To cope, Stanley resumed her search for her biological family.

She sent out messages to distant cousins whose names had come up through an online ancestry DNA program. A few months later a connection was made with a second biological cousin from Thibodaux, which led her to establish her paternal line of the family.

Finding the link to her maternal family was much more difficult.

“Instead of leading me to my birth mother it led me to mystery involving my grandmother,” Stanley said. “That mystery was like a brick wall.”

She determined that her maternal grandmother had abandoned her husband and two daughters in Indiana and moved.

Like Sister de Lourdes and Sister Florence Kruczek (right), 91, some 30,000 senior Catholic sisters, brothers, and religious order priests have spent their lives doing the Lord’s work.

Most served for little or no pay, and now their religious communities do not have enough retirement savings. Your gift to the Retirement Fund for Religious offers vital support for necessities, such as medications and nursing care. Please be generous.

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Artist brings beauty to St. Joseph through his work

Bruce, a humble man whose passion for his work is as evident as his deep faith.

“(Bruce’s) work is beautiful,” Father McDuffie said. “We knew the (refurbishing) needed to be done so we contacted him. Everything he has done in the church is beautiful.”

Indeed, time had taken its toll on the stations, including one in particular where Jesus had lost his hand.

After consultation on paint colors and other details, the artist went to work, taking two stations home at a time, where he worked on them several hours a day. He said he was able to complete two stations a week until he developed shingles after the 10th Station.

Consequently, it took nearly six weeks and working through a great deal of pain to complete the next two stations, including, the 12th Station, which is the crucifixion.

Bruce said perhaps it was fitting the disease struck him at that time, saying the pain of the shingles paled in comparison in what Jesus was forced to endure.

“I had to remove lots of flecks, peeling chips, and there was a lot of plaster,” he said.

He used a darker stain between the fingers and other crevices, giving the pieces an even more authentic flair.

The final result is breathtaking, as Bruce was able to bring to life each step of Jesus’ final hours.

“They really help people live their faith,” said parishioner Mile Fulmer, who searched eBay to find the stations.

When asked if he takes pride in the fact that people visiting St. Joseph during the next several decades will still be admiring his work, Bruce simply replied, “I’ll be in heaven.”

A great deal of time went into matching the colors, but Bruce was able to bring to life each step of Jesus’ final journey.
Fellowship hall generating excitement at Mount Carmel

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

A newly renovated fellowship hall at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in St. Francisville is generating excitement and several events, according to pastor Father Cary Bani. The 1940s-era structure was in dire need of either an overhaul or a demolition, but because of its proximity to the church and “it still had good bones,” the decision was made to renovate.

“Structurally it was intact,” said Father Bani. “We had just put a new roof on it and we put in a new commercial kitchen about three years ago. It was in pretty good shape except the interior was not very appealing.”

A chopped up floor plan, outdated bathroom facilities and poor acoustics made gatherings, including overflow crowds from the church during Mass, challenging.

“We gathered here but it was antiquated,” stated parishioner Johnette Rettig.

“We started looking at replacing the curtains, then the bathrooms were a mess and it kind of went from there.”

The renovation is part of a master plan for the church’s campus, known as Catholic Hill, which began four years ago. Phase One, according to Father Bani, involved converting the old rectory into an office; constructing a new plaza in front of the church for gathering; a new parking lot; and, converting a house behind the church property into a rectory. Phase Two addressed the fellowship hall.

General contractor Stuart Maginnis, a parishioner at Our Lady of Mount Carmel, has been involved in all of phases of the church’s master plan. He said it took three months to complete this project.

“It’s really turned into a nice facility,” said Maginnis. “I know that every large service for Christmas and Easter, they send video and audio across the way and they have a really nice audio/video system in there now which is going to improve for overflow Mass and everything.”

According to Maginnis, the 3,200-square-foot building was redesigned by enlarging the main space, adding storage and refurbishing two restrooms. New floors, ceiling, draperies, windows and doors were also added along with wood siding on the exterior to match the church.

“We put in a new audio/visual system with a big screen monitor so that we can do presentations and the school of religion kids can have movies and we can maybe even do Super Bowl parties and things like that,” said Father Bani.

He added the parish was able to pay for the renovations from the building fund. Saving funds will begin again as the church looks ahead at Phase Three of the master plan: a new educational building.

The renovation is part of a master plan for the church’s campus, known as Catholic Hill, which began four years ago. Phase One, according to Father Bani, involved converting the old rectory into an office; constructing a new plaza in front of the church for gathering; a new parking lot; and, converting a house behind the church property into a rectory. Phase Two addressed the fellowship hall. Phase Three includes a new education building.

Clockwise, from left:

Bishop Michael Duca, with assistance from Father Cary Bani, pastor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, blessed the new building on Oct. 20.

Bishop Michael Duca, with assistance from Father Cary Bani, pastor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, blessed the new building on Oct. 20.

Bishop Michael Duca, with assistance from Father Cary Bani, pastor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, blessed the new building on Oct. 20.
VETERANS

From page 1

F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr. and other leaders from the 1960s. Another student portrayed an astronaut and the landing on the moon.

Following Mass, students waving flags and banners lined both sides of the sidewalk for the “walk of honor” from the chapel to the school and down the hallway to a reception. Students and faculty clapped and thanked the veterans for their service as the men and women walked by.

“Today (Nov. 13) was amazing for me because it’s my grandpa’s (Joe Guilbeau, WWII veteran) last Veterans Day Mass for me and just to see everybody’s reactions, their poems and essays, it was really amazing to see how much support our school has for our veterans,” said Madison Young, a senior.

“It’s really big in the community,” said St. John principal Cherie Schlatre. “People call to find out when this Mass will be held, and it’s really touching to see the kids see veterans and show their appreciation with the cards and flags. We are glad to show our support for our service men and women.”

Following Mass, students and faculty at St. John Interparochial School in Plaquemine waved flags and banners, lined both sides of the sidewalk from the chapel to the school and down the hallway to a reception. They clapped and thanked the veterans for their service as the men and women walked by. Photos by Bonny Van | The Catholic Commentator

Students and teachers place their hands on Ray Louviere, who served in the Navy in Vietnam, for a special blessing during a Veterans Day Mass at the chapel at St. John Interparochial School in Plaquemine. Louviere said it brought tears to his eyes.

Holy Family School in Port Allen

St. Alphonsus School in Greenwell Springs

St. Alphonsus School in Greenwell Springs

Holy Family School in Port Allen

Holy Family School in Port Allen
SPECIAL EVENT – Members of the drama club at Catholic Elementary of Pointe Coupee in New Roads hosted “The Spooky Poem Showcase,” on Thursday, Oct. 24th in the school library. Drama club members gathered with their families and guests and recited poems, told jokes and sang songs. Pictured, top row from left, are Brooke Andre, Amelia Chauvin, Isabel-la Yates, Olivia Cotten, club sponsor Ashley Chauvin, Olivia LaGrone, Josie Hart and Anna Pinter. Pictured, bottom row, are Sabrina Elliott, Isabella David, Elizabeth Armand, Trayson Smith, Olivia Pourciau and Riley Chapman. Photo provided by Megan Girlinghouse | Catholic Elementary of Pointe Coupee

MULTI-GENERATIONS – Four generations of the Hebert family, all students and former students of Sacred Heart of Jesus School in Baton Rouge, pose in the photo booth during the school’s 90th anniversary celebration. Pictured, front row from left, are second-grader Daniel Campbell and fifth-grader Madelyn Campbell. Pictured back row are Mary Beth Hebert Kling, Class of ’68; Kecia Kling Campbell, Class of ’91; eighth-grader Caroline Campbell; and Kelly Kling, Class of ’65. Mary Beth Hebert Kling’s father, Joseph Hebert, graduated from Sacred Heart of Jesus School in 1935. Photo provided by Lisa Gousse | Sacred Heart of Jesus School

PEP RALLY – St. Jean Vianney School in Baton Rouge held an academic pep rally for students in grades fourth through eighth on Sept. 25. Student progress on Aspire testing was celebrated with prizes and games. Students pictured showed significant improvement in all four test subject areas. Pictured from left are Charlotte Wood, Russel Love, Eva Guidry, Grace Guidry, Adrianna Deselle, Michael McLeod, Aaron Danielson, Vivian Truong and Kaylen Teno. Photo provided by St. Jean Vianney School

PRAYING FOR PEACE– During the month of the rosary, October, fifth-graders at St. George School in Baton Rouge celebrated World Mission Day by leading a school-wide rosary. During the rosary, the school community learned more about the situation of migrants, immigrants and refugees. St. George School prayed for peace and prayed for the people of each continent. Photo provided by Charlene Lauman | St. George School

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Motherless Brooklyn

Warner Bros.

Edward Norton wrote, directed and stars in this adaptation of Jonathan Lethem’s 1999 novel and the result is a top-notch crime drama. Norton plays a private detective in 1950s New York whose Tourette’s syndrome is offset by a phenomenal memory for detail. After his friend, mentor and senior partner (Bruce Willis) is murdered while investigating shady real estate deals, he pursues the case and crosses paths with a Robert Moses-like civil servant (Alec Baldwin), a community activist (Gugu Mbatha-Raw) and a gifted trumpet player (Michael Kenneth Williams). As the movie’s plot twists and turns over a long running time, viewers will appreciate its evocation of film noir atmospherics, its powerful jazz score, the innocence of its central romance and the pro-life sympathy Norton wins for its afflicted but good-hearted protagonist. They will be less impressed by the script’s gritty vocabulary. Stylized violence with occasional gore, semi-medical drug use, frequent profanities, a few milder oaths, pervasive rough and crude language. A-III; R

The Current War: Director’s Cut

100 Studios

Intriguing historical drama recounting the bitter contest between inventor Thomas Edison (Benedict Cumberbatch) and industrialist George Westinghouse (Michael Shannon) as they raced to spread electricity across the United States in the late decades of the 19th century, with Serbian-American tech whiz Nikola Tesla (Nicholas Hoult) supporting first one then the other. Although director Alfonso Gomez-Rejon’s film occasionally drags, overall the high stakes, a sophisticated exploration of moral themes, the colorful period settings and impressive performances, especially from Cumberbatch, make this an appealing retrospective. Probably acceptable for mature teens. Brief gore, a few profanities, several mild oaths, a crass term. A-III; PG-13

Arctic Dogs

Amblin Group

This animated feature, directed and co-written by Aaron Woodley, follows the exploits of a fox (voice of Jeremy Renner) who dreams of joining the top dogs (voices of Michael Madsen, Laurie Holden and Donny Most) who run a high-profit smuggling ring. He crosses paths with a walrus (voice of John C. Reilly) bent on destroying the community and must work with a local engineer (voice of Heidi Klum), on whom he’s always had a crush, to try to save it. Although the values in this action-packed but original film are suitable for everyone, the “be true to yourself” message has had better vehicles. One crass term, a few instances of bathroom humor. A-II; PG

Last Christmas

Universal

Awkward and problematic blend of romantic comedy and drama tells the conversion story of a selfish, thoughtless young woman (Emilia Clarke), a child-hood refugee from ex-Yugoslavia living in London, whose life is transformed after she meets and falls for a mysterious, sensitive stranger (Henry Golding). Her withered heart is soothed by the warmth and kindness of a Christmas angel (Emma Thompson) of the yuletide merchandise store where she works, her war-scarred mother (Emma Thompson) and put-upon dad (Boris Isakovic) as well as her successful attorney sister (Lydia Bright). Their lives intersect as they chased by a future (Mackenzie Davis) to protect a young Mexican woman (Natalie Reyes) who will one day play a vital role in the survival of humanity from the relentless robot (Garbriel Luna) who has been dispatched to murder her. Themes of teamwork, conversion, forgiveness and self-sacrificing dedication are worked into the story, though the real agenda is to dress up the plot with computer-generated effects. Although some of the effects are impressive, the narrative drags. A serviceable diversion for grown-ups between mighty good guys and villains. Parental guidance suggested; some mild oaths, a couple of milder oaths, rear nudity, at least one profanity, a couple of milder oaths, numerous rough and crude terms. A-III; PG-13

Terminator: Dark Fate

Paramount

There’s a feminist cast to this average sci-fi action picture intended as a continuation of the first two films in the franchise that began in 1984. The target (Lena Hamilton) of the original time-traveling Terminator (Arnold Schwarzenegger) unites with an enhanced human from the future (Mackenzie Davis) to protect a young Mexican woman (Natalie Reyes) who will one day play a vital role in the survival of humanity from the relentless robot (Gabriel Luna) who has been dispatched to murder her. Themes of teamwork, conversion, forgiveness and self-sacrificing dedication are worked into the story, though the real agenda is to dress up the plot with computer-generated effects. Although some of the effects are impressive, the narrative drags. A serviceable diversion for grown fans of the genre. Much violence, some of it gory, a few gruesome sights, rear nudity, at least one profanity, a couple of milder oaths, occasional crude and crass language. A-III; R

The Movie Ratings

Motion Picture Association of America classifications:

A-I – General patronage
A-II – Adults and adolescents
A-III – Adults
A-IV – Adults, with reservations
L – Limited adult audience
O – Morally offensive

The Catholic Commentator

November 22, 2019

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from St. Joseph Cathedral

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THE CATHOLIC COMMENTATOR

Next Issue Deadline: NOVEMBER 27
#iGiveCatholic set Dec. 3

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

The Diocese of Baton Rouge will be one of 39 dioceses nationwide participating in #iGiveCatholic, the annual national fundraising day for Catholic organizations.

More than 100 organizations, churches, schools and parishes are scheduled to participate, which is scheduled Dec. 3 from midnight to 11:59 p.m.

One of the organizations participating is St. Joseph Catholic Cemetery in Baton Rouge. The history cemetery is the burial place for some of the city’s earliest citizens, including Spanish and French settlers. The cemetery is facing challenges, including the crumbling of some tombs.

In only its third year in 2018, the diocese $102,272, more than the first two years combined. In 2016, the first year the diocese participated, the total amount of money raised was $47,500, and a year later was $49,675.

The day is called #GivingTuesday, and #iGiveCatholic officials have seen participation grow each year since the event was created and launched by the Archdiocese of New Orleans in 2015. That year, the archdiocese was the only participant, collecting $47,500, and a year later was $49,675.

In 2017, the archdiocese added. The day is called #GivingTuesday, and #iGiveCatholic officials have seen participation grow each year since the event was created and launched by the Archdiocese of New Orleans in 2015. That year, the archdiocese was the only participant, collecting $47,500, and a year later was $49,675.

In 2017, the archdiocese added.

As Catholics, we are taught that we are responsible for all gifts we have been entrusted with, and we are compelled to give back from our gratitude and stewardship of those gifts,” said Cory Howat, president of #iGiveCatholic, who is executive director of the Catholic Community Foundation for the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

“From a personal and ‘cradle Catholic’ perspective, the impact I see this program has on the church, especially in our mission dioceses and most rural parishes and schools, is inspiring,” he added.

Visit https://batonrouge.igivecatholic.org to find a list of participants and to donate.

Catholic News Service contributed to this report.
The synod of bishops voted on Oct. 26 to recommend that Pope Francis allow the ordination of married men to the priesthood who were leaders in their communities in the Amazon.

The vote on the recommendation was 128 for and 41 against (approval rate of 68 percent).

St. Peter and all apostles except St. John were married. In the eastern and orthodox churches, ordination of married men has always been allowed with celibacy being optional. Celibacy became mandatory for priests of the western Church in 1123. During the Reformation, Protestant churches rejected celibacy.

Since celibacy of priests is a church law, not a doctrine, the law can be changed. The question at the synod was not about whether the quality of ministry would be enhanced by married priests, but rather that there were not enough men willing to be celibate to meet the needs of the many far flung villages spread throughout the immense Amazon area. The majority of bishops argued that the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, are essential to the life of a Catholic community. Many villages were able to receive the celebration of the Eucharist only once or twice a year.

A larger majority of 137 for and only 30 against (78 percent for) requested that women be allowed to be ordained to the permanent diaconate. It was noted that in many villages the catechetical leader was a woman. The vote signaled that their ministry should be recognized.

In 2016, Pope Francis formed a commission to study the possibility of women deacons. To date, it has not reached a conclusion. However, Pope Francis told the synod that this commission would definitely continue its work.

Another request, which the pope has in the past spoken in favor of, concerned the form the Mass liturgy would take in the future within Amazon communities. The bishops recommended that both the Eucharist and the other sacraments be celebrated in a way that would respect the culture of the Amazon people. The bishops stated, “We must give an authentically Catholic response to the request of the Amazonian communities to adapt the liturgy by valuing its worldview, traditions, symbols and original rites that include transcendent, community and ecological dimensions.”

Pope Francis agreed, and said that he would give this recommendation to the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship. There could be a problem, since the head of that congregation has in the past expressed his disapproval of indigenous rites.

Ecological concerns received the strongest agreement in the recommendations of the bishops.

They said that “The Amazon today is a wounded and deformed beauty, a place of suffering and violence. Attacks on nature have consequences on the lives of peoples.” Among those attacks were “appropriation and privatization of natural goods such as water itself; predatory hunting and fishing; unsustainable mega-projects (hydroelectric and forest concessions, massive logging, monocultures, roads, waterways, railways and mining and oil projects); pollution caused by the extractive industry and city garbage dumps; and above all, climate change.”

The people of the Amazon have lost not only their lands but, in many instances also their lives. Some were killed and many were forced to migrate to cities where they have been exploited and trafficked.

Syods are called by popes and offer recommendations to them. Their recommendations do not become official church teaching unless made so by the pope. We will have to wait and see how Pope Francis responds. After the the past synods he has called, Pope Francis has written papal exhortations incorporating the recommendations of the bishops.

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.

PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PRAY FOR US

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

Nov. 28:
- Rev. Gerard R. Martin
- Dcn. Ricky P. Oubre
- Br. Edward Violet SM

Nov. 29:
- Rev. Matthew E. McCaughey
- Dcn. Stephen Paul Osario
- Sr. June Engelbrecht OP

Nov. 30:
- Rev. Paul A. McDuffie
- Dcn. Ricky A. Patterson
- Br. James Burns SC

Dec. 1:
- Rev. Roberto Merced OP
- Dcn. Minos J. Ponville Jr.
- Sr. Dianne Fanguy CSJ

Dec. 2:
- Rev. Andrew J. Merrick
- Dcn. Curles F. Reeson Jr.
- Br. William Cawley SC
- Dcn. Alfred J. Ricard Jr.
- Sr. Ileana Fernandez CSJ
- Dcn. Michael A. Miceli
- Dcn. Thomas M. Robinson
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- Dcn. Danny Roussel
- Sr. Dulce Maria Flores HMSS
- Dcn. Nutan S. Minj IMS
- Dcn. Mauricio Salazar
- Br. Ramon Daunis SC
- Rev. Michael J. Moroney
- Dcn. Eliazar Salinas Jr.
- Sr. Janet Franklin CSJ
- Dcn. Mario (Sam) Sammartino
- Br. Alan Drain SC
- Dcn. Joseph M. Scimeca
- Sr. Carol Gonsoulin CSJ
- Dcn. Rudolph W. Stahl
- Br. Carl Evans SC
- Dcn. Michael Thanh Nguyen ICM
- Sr. Joan Hartlaub CSJ

Viewpoint

Recommendations of the Synod on the Amazon

Another Perspective

Father John Carville

They wrote, especially the one entitled, “Final Week of the Synod on the Amazon.” He states “young men took offense at statues of a naked Amazonian pregnant woman, stole the statues on exhibit in a church near the Vatican ... threw them into the river, claiming that they were pagan symbols.” They did not claim they were pagan, they are pagan.

It was one young man who is to be saluted for defending our mother, Holy Mother Church. Everyone seeing the ceremony in the Vatican gardens has a right to be offended. And in Rome, no less, the ground saturated with the blood of martyrs, killed by pagans.

The synod scandalized the faithful and uncharitably exploited the participants. People circled round (sic), knelt, bowed and were not corrected. The First Commandment was broken: I am the Lord your God ... You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath ...; you shall not bow down to them or serve them.”

He threw the statues into the Tiber. Matthew 21:12 states our Lord “entered the temple area, drove out all those engaged in selling and buying there. He overturned the tables of the money changers.”

Money was not exchanged, however a cleansing was needed. The Vatican stated the “woman was a symbol of God’s gift of life for which the baptized natives of the Amazon give thanks.” This statement is false. For even the Holy Father stated that these statues were pachamama, the Incan earth goddess.

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Again, kudos to the young man’s powerful witness for Christ and his church.

Karen Price Walker
Living out a vocation

What does it mean to have a vocation? The term gets batted around both in religious and secular circles and everyone assumes its meaning is clear. Is it? What’s a vocation?

Karl Jung defined it this way: “A vocation is an irrational factor that destines a man to emancipate himself from the herd and from its well-worn paths.” Frederick Buechner, a famed preacher, says: “A vocation is where your deep gladness meets the world’s hunger.”

David Brooks, a renowned journalist, reflecting on vocation in his recent book, “The Second Mountain,” gives us these quotes from Jung and Buechner and then writes: “A vocation is not something you choose. It chooses you. When you sense it as a possibility in your life you also sense that you don’t have a choice but can only ask yourself: What’s my responsibility here? It’s not a matter of what you expect from life but rather what life expects from you.” Moreover, for Brooks, once you have a sense of your vocation it becomes unthinkable to turn away and you realize you would be morally culpable if you did. He quotes William Wordsworth in support of this: “My heart was full; I made no vows, but vows were then made for me; bond unknown to me was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly.”

Brooks suggests that any number of things can help awaken your soul to its vocation: music, drama, art, friendship, being around children, being around beauty, and, paradoxically, being around injustice. To this he adds two further observations: First, that usually we only see and understand all this clearly when we’re older and looking back on life and our choices; and, second, that while the summons to a vocation is a holy thing, something mysterious, the way we actually end up living it out is often messy, confusing and screwed up and generally doesn’t feel very holy at all.

Well, I am older and am looking back on things. Does my vocational story fit these descriptions? Mostly, yes.

A child growing up in the Roman Catholic subculture of the 1950s and early 1960s, I was part of that generation of Catholics within which every Catholic boy or girl was asked to consider, with considerable gravity, the question: “Do I have a vocation?” But back then mostly that meant: “Am I called to be a priest, a religious brother, or a religious sister?”

Marriage and single life were, in fact, also considered vocations, but they took a back seat to what was considered the higher vocation, consecrated religious commitment.

So as a boy growing up in that milieu I did, with all gravity, ask myself that question: “Do I have a vocation to be a priest?” And the answer came to me, not in a flash of insight, or in some generous movement of heart, or in an attraction to a certain way of life. None of these. The answer came to me as a hook in my conscience, as something that was being asked of me, as something I couldn’t morally or religiously turn away from. It came to me as an obligation, a responsibility. And initially I fought against and resisted that answer. This wasn’t what I wanted.

But it was what I felt called to. This was something that was being asked of me beyond my own dreams for my life. It was a call. So at the tender age of 17 I made the decision to enter a religious order, the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, and train to become a priest. I suspect that few councillors or psychologists today would put much trust in such a decision, given my age at the time; but, looking back on it now, more than 50 years later, in hindsight, I believe this is the purest and most unselfish decision I’ve ever made in my life.

And I’ve never looked back. I’ve never seriously considered leaving that commitment, even though every kind of unsettling emotion, obsession, restlessness, depression and self-pity have at times haunted and tormented me. I’ve never regretted the decision. I know this is what I’ve been called to do and I’m happy enough with the way it’s turned out. It’s brought me life and helped me serve others. And given my personal idiosyncrasies, wounds and weaknesses, I doubt I would have found as deep a path into life and community as this vocation afforded me, though that admittedly can be self-serving.

I share my personal story here only because it might be helpful in illustrating the concept of a vocation. But religious life and priesthood are merely one vocation. There are countless others, equally as holy and important. One’s vocation can be to be an artist, a farmer, a writer, a doctor, a parent, a wife, a teacher, a salesman, or countless other things. The vocation chooses you and makes the vows for you and those vows put you at that place in the world where you’re best placed to serve others and to find happiness.

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

Move to meet people with love even around the family table

Religion and politics. The two subjects you’re supposed to avoid in polite conversation.

Except that the holiday season is when faith and family collide. Feasts like Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s bring moments ripe for conversation with relatives – for better or for worse.

What can we do when talking about our beliefs with family feels as dangerous as driving on ice-covered roads?

A 2019 survey found that 49 percent of Americans reported skipping a family gathering because conversations with relatives have become so uncomfortable and divisive. But 70 percent also wish their interactions with family members during the holidays were more meaningful.

When faith is central to our lives, how can we approach family gatherings, office parties or neighborhood potlucks when we know those closest to us may not share our beliefs? Jesus is the perfect place to start.

Remember that he ate dinner with prostitutes and tax collectors. Known sinners. Social outcasts.

But he sought them out, moving out from his comfortable circles of like-minded friends to those who were completely different from him. He sat at table with people whose lives looked nothing like his own. He passed food and shared conversation with those who might not have held any beliefs in common with him.

Yet he still offered them radical welcome, grounded in love. Jesus knew what it felt like to be in the midst of uncomfortable conversations. The Gospels are full of tense moments: Pharisees plotting to trick him, enemies laying traps and unexpected encounters interrupting his plans.

Yet over and over again he moved out to meet people where they were. Not standing at a safe distance, judging or gossiping, but pulling up a chair beside them and seeing them as beloved by God.

There’s no magic formula for navigating holiday gatherings with difficult relatives. But we have the model of mercy in how God himself sat down at the table next to sinful, imperfect humans.

He listened with love. He asked questions. He challenged when necessary, but not before listening and loving and never without mercy.

Imagine how our family parties could change this year if we offer a quick prayer to Jesus for a loving heart and a gentle tongue when we find ourselves seated next to a complicated conversation partner at Thanksgiving or Christmas.

Remember those wise words that often surface when people of faith debate how and whom to help after a disaster: “We don’t help them because they’re Christian; we help them because we’re Christian.”

The same holds true for our holiday conversations.

We don’t show love and mercy to someone simply because they’re Catholic – because their beliefs align nicely with ours or their comments never ruffle any feathers. We show love and mercy because we’re Catholic. We show love and mercy because we’re Christian – because their beliefs align nicely with ours or their comments never ruffle any feathers. We show love and mercy because we’re Catholic.

Mothering Spirit

Laura Fanucci

Does it bother us, as committed Catholics, when family members don’t share our beliefs? Of course. If we have found beauty, truth and goodness in God, we naturally want to share it with others.

But no matter what, Christ calls us to pull up a chair and meet each person with compassion. The God of the Eucharist is waiting to meet us around the holiday table, too.
### Coming Events

**The 177 Project** – St. Joseph Church, 330 W. Pine St., Ponchatoula, will present an evening of music, led by Aly Aleigha, and eucharistic adoration, "The 177 Project," Friday, Dec. 6, 7-9 p.m. Admission is free. For more information, visit josephsonline.com or call 985-386-3749.

**Taize Service** – Rosaryville Spirit Life Center, 39003 Rosaryville Road, Rosaryville, will hold a Taize candlelight serve on Monday, Dec. 2. For more information, visit catholicretreatcenter.org.

**Sounds of Peace Concert** – Kitty Cleveland will present a free concert that will launch her “Sounds of Peace Project for the Poor” project Sunday, Dec. 15, 2 – 4 p.m., at St. Aloysius Church, 2025 Stuart Ave., Baton Rouge. For more information, visit kitty.cleveland.com or call 225-943-6657.

**Morning of Prayer** – Recording artist Lorraine Hess will present a morning of reflection, “Becoming a Woman of Faith: A Heart That’s Been Purified,” Tuesday, Dec. 10, 9 – 11:30 a.m., at Archdiocese of New Orleans Retreat Center, 5500 St. Mary St., Metairie. Cost is $20. To register and for more information, visit neworleansretreats.com or call 504-267-9604.

**Evening of Reflection** – Marcie Buckle, education program consultant at Louisiana Department of Education and member of the Diocese of Baton Rouge Pastoral Planning Task Force, will speak at a Women of the Well evening of reflection Tuesday, Dec. 10 at St. Patrick Church, 12424 Brogdon Lane, Baton Rouge. There will be a social at 6:30 p.m. followed by a program from 7 – 8:30 p.m. To register and for more information, visit womentonewerwell.com.

**St. Alphonsus School**

- **Catechism Classes**
  - The Catechism of the Catholic Church approved by Pope John Paul II on February 22, 1994, will be held on Thursday, Nov. 21 at 6:30 p.m. beginning in the chapel of St. Alphonsus School. The program is for students in kindergarten through sixth grade. Mr. Kelly and Mrs. Davis will be instructors. The $35 fee is due on Monday, Jan. 13. For more information contact Ms. Cao, 985-382-6667.

- **St. Alphonsus School Open House**
  - The Open House for those interested in attending the School which is located at 2719 Wickham St. (near Lakeview High) will be held on Saturday, Dec. 7 from 9-11 a.m. and 1-3 p.m. Parents and children are welcome to visit the school, see the classrooms, meet the teachers, and learn about the curriculum.

- **St. Alphonsus Community School**
  - The office will be closed for the month of December. The St. Alphonsus Community School will reopen on Monday, Jan. 6.

- **St. Alphonsus Vocations Breakfast**
  - The Vocations Team at St. Alphonsus School served eggs, bacon, pancakes and fruit to 70 attendees on Thursday, Nov. 7. Following Mass, the Vocations Team at St. Alphonsus Church served eggs, bacon, pancakes and fruit to 70 seventh and eighth graders. The guest speaker was Father Tat Hoang CSsR, pastor of St. Gerard Majella Church in Baton Rouge. Provided by St. Alphonsus School.
Pastoral against racism is starting conversations, healing, bishops told

BALTIMORE (CNS) – One year after the U.S. bishops approved their pastoral letter against racism, the document is hardly just sitting on a shelf but is the basis for listening sessions in dioceses around the country and is an educational tool for individuals, schools and parishes, the bishops were told Nov. 13.

Bishop Shelton T. Fabre, a native of New Roads and bishop of the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux and chairman of the U.S. bishops’ Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism, described the attention the letter is getting around the country in a presentation on the final day of the bishops’ annual fall meeting in Baltimore.

He reminded the bishops that in the two years since the ad hoc committee was formed, it has been “hard at work as the church works to acknowledge past harms and cultivate racial reconciliation.”

“For this reason, we need to redouble our efforts recognizing that a moral obligation helps both patients and doctors enter into a relationship of trust,” Nichols said.

Citing the unique vocation of Catholic medical professionals, he said they have a greater responsibility to consider the ultimate end, the flourishing of a person in their care and to employ ethical norms.

“You, in a sense because of your Catholic commitment, have a greater responsibility to love every patient, to offer them the very compassion of Christ and to accompany patients in their suffering,”

An encounter with a Catholic professional should be an encounter with the good Samaritan, even better an encounter with Christ himself.”

Dr. John Meinert, an associate professor at FOMUL where he also teaches moral theology and Catholic social thought, said Catholic bioethics and social thought are severely polarized in issues and methodology.

He said those on the progressive side of politics take social thought seriously and spend a considerable amount of time focused on issues such as immigration, racism, poverty, etc., while those who are more traditionalists on abortion, contraception, euthanasia.

“We belong to a church which teaches all of these things,” he said. “I think the contradiction is externally produced by ideology, not from the Gospel itself, which is why we see these tensions so strong in America, which is an extremely polarized society.”

He acknowledged faith can be difficult to integrate into one’s practice but that medical professionals should reflect God and that reflects God's goodness.

“You’ve been baptized; act like it,” he said.
ADVENT ▼
From page 1

Families or individuals should consider reaching out to those who are grieving by inviting them to dinner.

And what holiday season would be complete without Christmas cards? But, Dow added the caveat Christmas cards should have a Nativity scene or other religious symbols and reflect Christ.

Topping out the backpack might include volunteering at a homeless shelter and having an Advent calendar at home.

Holiday decorating can be a bit trickier, Dow said, but stressed it should also reflect Advent. She noted the actual Christmas season begins on Christmas Eve and lasts through Epiphany.

“We have the whole season of Advent to celebrate first,” Dow said. “I would challenge there are a substantial amount of signs and symbols that point toward Christmas, that point toward Christ.”

For example, she decorates her living area in the color purple, including putting a purple tablecloth on the kitchen table. Similar to Lent, the color purple is predominant at churches during Advent.

Placed in the center of Dow’s kitchen table is an Advent wreath, which she called the “greatest (Advent) symbol,” noting it comes with its own set of prayers and meditations.

She recommended lighting the wreath daily while praying, even if it’s just silent prayer. As more candles are lit the wreath is “very bright and you know something is coming.”

“Make an intentional effort to have family friends around the table, light the Advent candle and have a meal without any distractions or hurriedness. The prayers are written for you.”

Decorations should include a Nativity scene but Dow was emphatic in saying the Christ child should not be in place. Same goes for the three Wise Men.

“There is no Christ child because he’s not here yet; (his birth) is something we are anticipating,” she said.

Naturally, her decorations also feature the traditional, such as Santa Claus and snowmen. But they are in a separate room, so as not to take away from Advent.

Her tree even includes “more religious ornaments than anything else.”

She recommended with a smile that topping off the tree include a star or angel and “no football helmets.”

Distractions to be left out of the backpack start with sin, which could range from gossiping about others to much more serious offenses. Dow defined sin as anything that distracts someone from the Lord.

“You see, every day in our journey of life we are packing around sins, even though we may not acknowledge the fact it is sin,” she said, explaining that starting with the Ten Commandments is an effective guide to determine if one’s actions are sinful.

She warned of not allowing distractions such as attending a Saints game or going to a concert to take away from the worship of God, including missing Mass.

“What’s the greater worship at that moment,” she said.

Navigating the busy Advent season can be difficult, she said, especially as parents are scurrying from soccer practice to dance rehearsals. But the simple solution is setting priorities.

“Why would we want to hasten our meditation?” she asked.

“If soccer and dance and other priorities are outside the realm of faith and actually making us hastily say prayers, that is our problem and something needs to be out of our backpack and left behind. If we can take time to schedule practices why can’t we have time to schedule prayer time?”

“Advent is a time to set priorities that are rooted in the faith and family and friends rather than what the world tells us is most important at that second.”

She also encouraged receiving the sacrament of reconciliation and fasting.

“Just like we fast for Lent, why can’t we set new things for Advent?” she said. “That’s the newness of life.”

RACISM ▼
From page 19

The document, titled “Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love—A Pastoral Letter Against Racism,” sold out its first 2,000 copies eight months after it was printed and was recently sent out for a second printing. It is available online in English and Spanish along with study guides at usccb.org/racism.

Bishop Fabre said the ad hoc committee’s most important work has been the listening sessions that began last August. So far there have been 13 sessions around the country, and more are scheduled for next year.

These sessions sprang from the very words of the pastoral letter: “We must create opportunities to hear the painful stories of those whose lives have been affected by racism.”

In these sessions, starting with the first one in St. Louis, the bishop said the committee’s members have heard both the hurt caused by racism and the hope that church and society will root it out.

Some of the participants, he said, have shared experiences they have rarely, if ever, spoken of before.

Diocesan bishops attending these sessions have been linked to the laity in ways that open “new possibilities for further healing.” Bishop Fabre said, adding the bishops’ committee is helping these dioceses with follow-up sessions or other ways to implement the pastoral letter.

All the offices and committees of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops are committed to ending racism, he said.
Advent spiritual events in the Diocese of Baton Rouge

December 1
Best Advent Ever
Holy Ghost Church
610 North Oak St.
Hammond
Sign up online to dynamiccatholic.com/signup to receive daily email to inspire you to slow down and find joy in preparing for Christmas.
Office 985-345-3360

December 2, 9, 16
Advent Vespers
Holy Ghost Church
610 North Oak St.
Hammond
5:50 p.m. Chaplet of Divine Mercy
6 p.m. Vespers
6:30 p.m. soup supper except Dec. 9
Trisha Labbe 985-345-3360 ext. 28

December 2, 9, 23
Monday Night of Advent Reconciliation
St. Jean Vianney Church
1666 S. Harrell’s Ferry Rd.
Baton Rouge
6 p.m.
Office 225-753-7950

December 3 – 4
Penance Service
St. Anthony of Padua & St. Le Van Phung Church
2305 Choctaw Dr.
Baton Rouge
7 – 9 p.m.
Office 225-357-4800

December 4, 11, 18
Reconciliation during Advent
Immaculate Conception Church
865 Hatchell Ln.
Denham Springs
6 – 7:30 p.m.
Office 225-665-5359

Advent Awakenings: Trust in the Lord
Small Christian Communities
Holy Ghost Church
610 North Oak St.
Hammond
All are invited to join small faith groups during Advent.
AJ and Shirley Collura 985-542-1908

The Light is On For You
Our Lady of Mercy Church
445 Marquette Ave.
Baton Rouge
6:30 – 7:30 p.m.
Deacon Richard Grant 225-926-1883

December 5
Advent Reconciliation Service
Holy Rosary Church
44450 Hwy. 429
St. Amant
6:30 p.m.
Office 225-647-5321

December 8
Feast of the Immaculate Conception
St. Margaret Church
30300 Catholic Hall Rd.
Hammond (Albany)
6 p.m.
Lanie Borum 225-567-3573

Advent Reconciliation Service
Holy Ghost Church
610 North Oak St.
Hammond
6 p.m.
Lea Smith 985-345-3360 ext. 21

December 9 – 11
Advent Mission
Holy Rosary Church
44450 Hwy. 429
St. Amant
6:30 p.m.
Sister Miriam James Heidland SOLT will speak on Intimacy with God: Receiving the Heart of the One Who Loves Wenby Enbe 225-647-3696

December 10
Advent Reconciliation
SEE ADVENT PAGE 3B

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CATHOLIC CHARITIES
DIOCESE OF BATON ROUGE
ADVENT ▼
from page 2B

St. Mark Church
42021 Hwy. 621
Gonzales
6:30 p.m.
Cecile Haley 225-647-8461

Advent Evening Prayer with Adoration
St. Jean Vianney Church
16166 S. Harrell’s Ferry Rd.
Baton Rouge
7 – 8 p.m.
Prayer and music in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament
Karen Ullo 225-753-7950

December 11
Advent Parish Penance Service
Holy Family Church
369 N. Jefferson Ave.
Port Allen
6:30 p.m.
Jennifer LeJeune 225-336-4463

December 12
Our Lady of Guadalupe Mass
Holy Ghost Church
610 North Oak St.
Hammond
6 p.m.
Fr. Robert Merced OP
985-345-3360

Advent Mission
St. Alphonsus Liguori Church
14040 Greenwell Springs Rd.
Greenwell Springs
6:30 – 8:30 p.m.
International Catholic evangelist and author Andi Oney will speak on The Visitations of New Life, Mary’s visit to Elizabeth. Refreshment to follow. Oney will have books to sell and sign. Child care is offered upon request.
Olgo Johnson 225-261-4644

December 15 – 17
Parish Mission
St. Margaret Church
30300 Catholic Hall Rd.
Hammond (Albany)
6:45 p.m. Dec. 15
6 p.m. Dec. 16 & 17
Mary E. Herbert 225-567-3573

Cluster Parish Advent Missions
Dec. 15 – St. James Church
6613 Hwy. 18
St. James
Dec. 16 – St. Phillip Church
1175 Hwy. 18
Vacherie
Dec. 17 – Our Lady of Peace Church
13281 Hwy. 18
Vacherie
6:30 – 8 p.m.
Each night will have a different format.
On Dec. 17, the mission will end with a penance service.
Carol Ann Hymel 225-265-3953

December 17
Advent Reflection and Reconciliation
St. Benedict the Moor Church
5479 Hwy. 1
Napoleonville
Following 6 p.m. Mass
Jerilyn Williams 985-513-3470

Advent Penance Service
St. Jean Vianney Church
16166 S. Harrell’s Ferry Rd.
Baton Rouge
7 p.m.
Office 225-753-7950

December 18
Advent Penance Service
Immaculate Conception Church
12364 Hwy. 416
Lakeland
6 p.m.
Office 225-627-5124

Taize Prayer Service: Prayer Around the Creche
Holy Family Church
369 N. Jefferson Ave.
Port Allen
6 – 8 p.m.
Lanie Borum 225-567-3573

Taize Prayer Around the Crib
Holy Rosary Church
44450 Hwy. 429
St. Amant
7 p.m.
Wendy Enloe 225-647-3696

December 21
Living Nativity
Holy Family Church
369 N. Jefferson Ave.
Port Allen
After 4 p.m. Mass
Will be narrated
Jennifer LeJeune 225-336-4463

December 24
Nativity Play by Children during Mass
Holy Ghost Church
600 North Oak St.
Hammond
4 p.m.
All children ages 3 and up are invited to participate in the Nativity play.
Jennifer Blanchard hghchurch.
nativityplay@gmail.com

January 1
Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God Mass
St. Margaret Church
30300 Catholic Hall Rd.
Hammond (Albany)
6 p.m.
Lanie Borum 225-567-3573

Taize Prayer Around the Crib
Holy Rosary Church
44450 Hwy. 429
St. Amant
7 p.m.
Wendy Enloe 225-647-3696

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Baton Rouge
7 p.m.
Office 225-753-7950

December 18
Advent Penance Service
Immaculate Conception Church
12364 Hwy. 416
Lakeland
6 p.m.
Office 225-627-5124

Taize Prayer Service: Prayer Around the Creche
Holy Family Church
369 N. Jefferson Ave.
Port Allen
6 – 8 p.m.
Lanie Borum 225-567-3573

Reconciliation Service
St. Margaret Church
30300 Catholic Hall Rd.
Hammond (Albany)
6 – 8 p.m.
Lanie Borum 225-567-3573

December 19
Reconciliation Service
St. Margaret Church
30300 Catholic Hall Rd.
Hammond (Albany)
6 – 8 p.m.
Lanie Borum 225-567-3573

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

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

**Who do I contact to establish or contribute to a fund?**  
To create a fund or to make a contribution to an existing fund, please send it to the Vocations and Seminarians Department, P. O. Box 2028, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-2028.

For information, call 225-336-8778.

This is only a partial list of all Seminary Scholarship Funds. Visit our website at www.diobr.org/vocations for a complete list of Seminary Scholarship Funds.

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### Scholarship Fund Contributions August thru October

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<td>Deceased Members of KC Council #4030</td>
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<td>Deceased Members of St. Gabriel Ladies Altar Society</td>
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<td>Father Patrick Miller</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Catherine Muench</td>
<td>$1,675.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murphy and Wallace Families</td>
<td>$1,656.42</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monsignor Charles J. Murphy</td>
<td>$20,000.00</td>
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**Italian Stuffed Peppers**

**Mater Dolorosa, Independence**

4 whole green or red peppers  
1 c. rice  
3/4 lb. ground beef, turkey or veal  
1 medium onion, chopped  
1/2 c. marinara sauce  
1 c. ricotta cheese  
1/2 c. mozzarella cheese, grated  
Salt, pepper and garlic powder to taste

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.  
Boil rice in 2 1/2 cups water until water is gone; remove from heat.  
Core the peppers (take the stems and seeds out) and scald them in boiling water for about 5 minutes or until tender.  
Remove the water from heat, but let peppers simmer in the water.  
On high heat, cook the meat in an ungreased, non-stick or well-seasoned skillet (the fat will keep the food from sticking.)  
When the meat is about halfway done, add the chopped onion, and continue cooking until the meat is done and the onion pieces are translucent.  
(Add olive oil if necessary.)  
Lower to medium heat and stir in garlic, cooking just long enough for the garlic to brown, then remove from heat.  
In a large mixing bowl, combine marinara sauce, ricotta cheese and salt.  
Add the rice, followed by the meat mixture, add pepper and extra garlic powder to taste.  
Fill the pepper shells with the mixture and arrange standing up in a casserole dish.  
Top with grated mozzarella cheese.  
Bake at 350 degrees for 20 minutes, or until mozzarella cheese is bubbly and golden brown. Serve immediately.
Social events in the Diocese of Baton Rouge

November 29 – December 1
St. John’s Mini Mistletoe Market
And Breakfast with Santa
St. John the Baptist Church
Gym/Activity Center
4727 McHugh Dr.
Zachary
Nov. 29 – 10 a.m. – 2 p.m
Nov. 30 – 5:30 – 6:30 p.m.
Dec. 1 – 8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Santa will visit with free breakfast and hot chocolate.
Items for sale include wreaths, jewelry, jams, jellies, salsa, handsewn items, Advent calendars and more.
Melissa Daigle 225-654-5885

November 30, December 1, 7, 8, 14, 15, 21, 22
Ornament Sale
Knights of Columbus
St. Joseph Cathedral
401 Main St.
Baton Rouge
Before and after 4 p.m. Masses Saturdays
Before and after 8:30 and 10:30 a.m. Masses on Sundays
$10
Funds for charitable organizations sponsored by KC and church
Tom Acosta 225-933-6517

December 6
Michael McDowell’s Christmas Spectacular
Most Blessed Sacrament Church
15615 Jefferson Hwy.
Baton Rouge
7 – 8:30 p.m.
$20 seating first 6 rows
$15 general admission
Michael McDowell gives a solo piano performance with phenomenal lighting and unforgettable production.
Proceeds will go to Social Responsibility Ministry at MBS.
Office 225-752-6230

December 7
Santa’s Workshop
St. Elizabeth School Home and School Association
St. Elizabeth Community Center
119 Hwy. 403
Paincourtville
8:30 – 11:30 a.m.
$6 admission, under 2 free
8:30 a.m. donuts, muffins, fruit, coffee, hot chocolate
9 a.m. Santa and Mrs. Claus arrive
9:15 a.m. storyline with Mrs. Claus
9:30 a.m. pictures with Santa, picture package available for purchase; crafts, games, cupcake decorating, face painting;
Santa’s Secret Shop everything under $10, free gift wrap
Proceeds for HSA students activities
Abbie Lambert

December 8
Lessons and Carols Christmas Concert
St. Joseph Academy, Catholic High School
Academy Student Center
3015 Broussard
Baton Rouge
5 – 6:30 p.m.
Winter Wonderland
St. Joseph Church
15710 Hwy. 16
French Settlement
10 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Large selection of food for sale; Father Jason’s Christmas Village; craft booths;
activities for children, classic car and truck show; and a light parade at 5:30 p.m.
Office 225-698-3110

December 6
Breakfast with St. Nicholas
Immaculate Conception Church
865 Hatchell Ln.
Denham Springs
$7 or $30 family up to 7
Pancakes and sausage
Proceeds for youth to attend March for Life
Office 225-665-5359 or elamath@ice-msh.org

Breakfast with Santa
St. Mary of False River
105 St. Mary St.
New Roads
8 a.m. – 1 p.m.
$10, will be used for youth functions
Santa will be available for pictures; bring your camera.
Lisa Churtz 225-638-9665 ext. 24

Live Nativity
St. Elizabeth/St. Jules Churches
6951 Hwy. 1
Belle Rose
6 p.m. musical
6 – 8 p.m.
Visitors will experience the Nativity story including characters, animals, beautiful sets and Christmas music.
There will also be games, crafts and refreshments for all.
Darlene Landry 225-573-5212

December 10
St. Thomas Annual Christmas Recital
St. Thomas Aquinas Choir
14520 Voss Drive
Hammond
6 p.m.
John Holley 985-222-8539
SEE SOCIAL PAGE 88

Blessings of the Advent Christmas Season!
Monday Night of Advent Reconciliation
December 2, 9, 23, 2019
6 p.m.
Advent Penance Service
December 17th at 7:00 p.m.
Christmas Eve Vigil Masses
4:00 p.m., 7:00 p.m.
Christmas Day Masses
Midnight, 8:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m.
Keeping Your Loved One Home for the Holidays ...

There’s no better way to spend the holidays than surrounded by family and friends! STAT Home Health and St. Joseph Hospice work with physicians to help keep you or your loved ones at home.

STAT Home Health and St. Joseph Hospice are part of The Carpenter Health Network ... an agile, seamless solution to illness and injury, no matter the prognosis or expected outcome. From the stability of senior care, home health and rehabilitation to curative, life-extending treatment and the comfort and compassion of palliative and hospice care, The Carpenter Health Network is a continuum of care for the families they serve.

For hospice patients with symptoms not well managed at home, The Carpenter House, St. Joseph Hospice’s inpatient care home, serves as a place of peace, offering the confidence of a hospital ... with the comforts of home. Offering private rooms with comfortable dining and relaxing areas for family members, The Carpenter House can become an extension of your home during the holidays.

If you or a family member is in need of assistance this holiday season, call today for information!

STAT Home Health: 225-769-4764 • St. Joseph Hospice: 225-769-4810
And the angel said unto them, “Fear not! For, behold, I bring you tidings of great joy, Which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David A Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, Lying in a manger.”

St. Luke 10-12
Layered Pasta Salad
Mrs. Mike Patanella
Mater Dolorosa, Independence
3 c. medium shell macaroni, cooked, drained
1 large red onion, sliced
10 oz. pkg. frozen peas, thawed, drained
6 oz. pkg. smoked ham, chopped
1/2 c. rice, cooked
1 c. bacon fat
3/4 c. parsley
1 qt. chicken stock
1/2 c. green onions, chopped
1/2 c. parsley
Seasoning-All in a large bowl.
Combine egg, crawfish, onions, butter, cayenne pepper and Seasoning-All in a large bowl. Stir in flour and mix well. Form balls with flour mixture any size you prefer.
Heat oil over medium heat and fry balls until golden brown. Remove and let drain on paper towels.
Combine ketchup, hot sauce and horseradish to make dipping sauce for beignets.
Crawfish Beignets
Ryan Harris
St. Francis Xavier, Baton Rouge
St. Francis Xavier Centennial Cookbook
1 lb. crawfish tails
4 stalks green onions, chopped
1 egg
8 oz. pkg cream cheese
1 can condensed milk
1 angel food cake
1 tub Cool Whip
1 lb. fresh strawberries, dust with sugar, refrigerate overnight
Mix together cream cheese and condensed milk.
Break angel food cake into pieces and place in bottom of rectangular casserole dish or aluminum baking pan. Pour cream cheese mixture over cake pieces. Top with strawberries and layer with cool whip. Keep refrigerated.

Red Bean Gumbo
Ryan Harris
St. Francis Xavier, Baton Rouge
St. Francis Xavier Centennial Cookbook
1 can Blue Runner beans
1 lb. Camellia red beans, soaked
1 c. rice, cooked
1/2 lb. tasso, diced
1/2 lb. smoked sausage
1/2 c. vegetable oil
1/2 c. bacon fat
5 ribs celery, diced
1/2 c. flour
1/2 c. onions, diced
1 c. bell pepper, chopped
1/2 c. garlic, minced
1 qt. chicken stock
1/2 c. green onions, chopped
1/2 c. parsley
Heat oil and bacon fat in large cast iron pot. Whisk in flour and make dark roux.
Stir in onions, bell pepper, celery and garlic and sauté until vegetables have wilted. Add in stock. Stir in sausage and tasso and bring to slow boil.
Add in Camellia beans and reduce to simmer and cook 45 minutes. Add more stock if necessary.
Stir in canned beans, green onions and parsley. Season to taste. Return to a low boil and cook 15 minutes. Serve over cooked rice.
Company’s Coming
Josephine Dubriel
St. Frances Xavier, Baton Rouge
St. Francis Xavier Centennial Cookbook
8B
The Catholic Commentator
Christmas 2019
November 22, 2019

Share Your Blessings This Thanksgiving
In our nation, Thanksgiving originated as a harvest festival, a time of gratitude, and an opportunity to share nature’s bounty with family and friends. On this day, no one went hungry. So much has changed since that first Thanksgiving that our country would now be unrecognizable to those early settlers. One thing that hasn’t changed is the need to share God’s blessings with the less fortunate. On this special holiday, as we gather around tables filled with turkey and dressing, our favorite casseroles, and mouth-watering desserts, most of us will begin the meal with a blessing. In that prayer, we hope you will remember the poor and homeless men, women, and children who will be coming to St. Vincent de Paul for their Thanksgiving meal.

On November 28th, our volunteers will serve turkey with all the trimmings to hundreds of people who, unfortunately, have little to celebrate. Many of them are living in homes where people have to skip meals or eat less to make ends meet. Some of them have no homes. But on this day, they will all have a warm place to go and plenty to eat.

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

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

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

Please use the enclosed envelope to help the needy, or give online at svdpbr.org.