ACT OF MERCY

Ex-officer forgives man who shot him

By Richard Meek
The Catholic Commentator

A.J. Johnson vividly remembers a steamy July afternoon in 1979 that would forever change his life and put him on a path to forgiveness that perhaps few can imagine.

Johnson, a Baton Rouge Police Department officer at the time, was waiting in line at Montgomery Ward to pay his bill. Johnson, dressed in his police uniform, was taking his lunch break to tend to the errand.

Suddenly, he felt as if the back of his head “just blew off. I mean, it was as if it had just exploded.”

As he fell to the ground, he asked, “Who did that?” and a lady pointed to an African American male who was escaping across the parking lot with an armful of guns he had just stolen. Johnson, recalling the words of his former football coach who once said, “It’s not a sin to get knocked down but it’s a sin if you don’t get up,” immediately pursued the perpetrator, who shot at Johnson while holding a woman hostage.

During the exchange of gunfire, Johnson shot Lionel “Penitentiary Slim” Wallace in the leg and in the process freed the hostage. Wallace, originally from Baton Rouge, was captured several days later in a rooming house in Detroit, Michigan with the bullet from Johnson still lodged in his leg.

As the chaos settled down, it turned out a bullet from Wallace’s gun had ricocheted off of the back of Johnson’s head and struck a clerk behind the counter at Montgomery Ward. She also survived. The woman who was briefly held hostage escaped without injury.

Amazingly, Johnson, the father of Holy Rosary Church in St. Amant pastor Father Josh Johnson, returned to work the same day, without even visiting a doctor much less the emergency room, and his major simply said “to fill out a report,” which Johnson did before going home, simply another, albeit a bit more exciting, day on the job.

Although the memories remain emblazoned in Johnson’s memory four decades later, there is no bitterness, no anger at the man who shot him in the head for no other reason than a hatred for the uniform Johnson was wearing.

In fact, Wallace told the judge before being sentenced to life in jail without possibility of parole that after seeing Johnson in uniform he would “take him out.”

“I had forgiven him many years ago,” said Johnson, a man of deep religious conviction who has made it his lifelong mission to stress the importance of faith on his seven children.

“The Lord has forgiven me for all of the stuff I have done,” he added. “I’m blessed to have seven kids and one of them is a priest. You can’t be more blessed than that.”

“And the priest is the baby,” Johnson

SEE JOHNSON PAGE 19

Guiding Catholics to dig deeper

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

Catechists serve as directional signs for people who are on the spiritual road seeking heaven, according to clergy, catechetical leaders and professors of theology in the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

The celebration of Catechetical Sunday, which was Sept. 15 and themed “Stay with Us,” was a time to reflect on each person’s role, by virtue of baptism, to hand on the faith and be a witness to the Gospel, according to Dina Dow, director of the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis for the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

Dow noted the word catechesis is rooted in the Greek word for “echo.”

“As catechists we’re echoing back, proclaiming what has been handed down to us from the apostles that was given to them through Jesus Christ,” she said.

The beginnings of a call to become a certified catechist begins simply and grows, through the family which Dow emphasized are the first teachers of faith parish faith formation programs and online and social media supporting church teachings.

Once people grow in their knowledge and love of God, they develop a “missionary heart” to proclaim the Gospel outside of the home setting, said Dow.

The first step to knowing the specific way one is called to catechize is to pray about it, she said.

“Even before we are called into the role of catechist we are called to get on our knees in humble prayer and God will catechize us,” said Dow.

Those wishing to train and become certified catechists and coordinators of religious educators in the
St. Michael’s waffles

For Catholics there are feast days and then there are days to feast (think Thanksgiving, July 4th). However, one feast day offers up a tradition that involves both prayer and ... well, not fasting, and that is the Feast of St. Michael the Archangel, celebrated on Sept. 29.

The feast day is called Michaelmas, or the Mass that celebrates St. Michael, similar to Christmas (Christ’s Mass) and Candlemas (Candle Mass where candles used throughout the year are blessed). The Feast of St. Michael is also known as the Feast of the Archangels and the Feast of Saints Michael, Gabriel and Raphael. According to ncregister.com, the three archangels are referenced as saints because they chose to side with God rather than the devil. There are other angels that sided with God, however the three archangels are named in the Bible.

St. Michael is referenced in three books of the Bible, according to ncregister.com. He is described as “the great prince who has charge of your people” (Dn 12:1) and is depicted in these scriptural passages as doing battle against spiritual forces attacking Israel. The archangel is again mentioned in the book of Jude, fighting the devil over the body of Moses. And in Revelation, St. Michael and his angels battle the devil and cast them from heaven: “The huge dragon, the ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, who deceived the whole world, was thrown down to earth, and its angels were thrown down with it” (Rv 12:9).

All of that fighting must make an archangel hungry, right? So, here comes the feast part: waffles. Yep, from spiritual warfare to waffles, that’s how the Feast of St. Michael’s has evolved.

In France, according to catholicculture.org, street vendors would set up their stands near the cathedral and sell paper-thin sweet wafers called gaufres to worshippers as they left Mass on St. Michael’s Day. The special waffle iron used in France is a gaufrier, but you can make your own American version of St. Michael’s gaufres using a waffle iron.

INGREDIENTS:
2 eggs
1 egg yolk
2/3 cup sugar
1-1/3 cups flour
3/4 cup milk
4 Tbsp. melted butter
1/2 tsp. vanilla
Prep time: 30 minutes

DIRECTIONS:
Blend eggs and sugar. Add flour and milk alternately. Beat hard. Add butter and vanilla. The mixture is thin and should spread evenly on the preheated iron. If gaufres tend to stick, butter both sides of the iron. Serve hot or cold.

Recipe Source: Cooking for Christ by Florence Berger.

Increase our faith

By Dina Dow

(This column serves as an invitation to prepare for Sunday Mass by meditating on the readings ahead of time. Since this publication spans two Sundays, one has two weeks of scriptural mediation as a pathway of encounter as we substantially receive the word of God during Mass. These readings are accessible via the web (for example, USCCB.org) and/or by purchasing a St. Joseph Daily Missal or Sunday Missal, which also include the daily Mass readings, stories of the saints and writings of the church. I personally invite our readers to set aside time to pray with sacred Scripture. St Jerome reminds us, “... Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God, and if the man who does not know Scripture does not know the power and wisdom of God, then ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.”)

Welcome to the season of fall, y’all, as the Louisiana temperatures still testify to summer. As the sun continues to radiate heat, the flame of the Holy Spirit also warms the liturgical season of ordinary time. The 26th and 27th Sunday readings inspire the faithful to take inventory of material and spiritual dependence. The Lord calls for deeper insight into living a righteous life, virtue dependent and rooted in the seeds of faith.

Prophets forewarning

The Old Testament readings are from the books of Amos and Habakkuk, two Minor Prophets with major concerns. (For clarity, the term “minor” refers to the length of the book, that being shorter than the length of the book of a Major Prophet, as with the prophet Isaiah.) Amos warns no time in addressing the disadvantages of living a complacent life. He warns against indulgent material comfort and the circumstances of such existence that leads to exile. It carries a false message of gathering that which is material to provide security and a sense of control. The more I own the better off I am. There is no wrong in living comfortably. Yet, overindulgence leads to sinfulness, as greed and complacency suffocate the heart, omitting charity and motivation.

Even when we faithfully trust in God to provide, there is a strong temptation to rely on material goods to bring us back to our so-called comfort zone. Habakkuk teaches that with faith there is suffering. Yet God, who is always working for us, even if we cannot see it now, offers hope and calls us to trust. If one is open to the voice of God, one will realize he is present. Herein lies the power of the Holy Spirit, an opportunity for prayer and discernment. Psalm 95, “If today you hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” Am I “hearing” the voice of God? What am I surrounding myself with to create a comfort zone? Things of the world, or gifts from God?

Righteous virtue

One may tell us to “live it up,” yet a voice deep within says, “Trust in God.” St. Paul’s letter to Timothy offers words of encouragement to stand firm during times of strife, be devoted to Christ, love, have faith and be patient and gentle. Steadfast righteousness founded in virtue sets one on the path of holiness. God, in his goodness and grace, opens the gates to eternity. Dependence on God is deep-rooted trust in him. We are to “stir into flame” what has been given by the Holy Spirit in baptism and fortified in confirmation that is the power to love, bear hardship and practice self-control in order to proclaim the message of Jesus Christ (2 Tim 1:7-9). Hence the gifts of the Holy Spirit – wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord – help sustain our moral life and dispose us to follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit. (Catechism of the Catholic Church Paragraph 1830)

Reap What is Sown

The Gospel message found in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31) is most familiar. Note, the beggar is named, whereas the rich man remains nameless. The message speaks volumes regarding the mercy shown to those in most need, those on the margins, those who are, for whatever reason, unable to care for themselves. The rich man is comfortable, compliant and content. Lazarus is in despair begging for compassion, only to be stepped over, ignored, but not forgotten. Both die.

Is it surprising the rich man ends up in eternal damnation, whereas Lazarus is comforted in heavenly reality by Abraham, the see Gospel Page 3.

Increase our faith

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By Richard Meek  
The Catholic Commentator  

Recognizing the threat online pornography poses, especially to the young, the Office of Marriage and Family Life of the Diocese of Baton Rouge is taking a proactive approach to educating parents and offering tips on how to control what their children view on the internet.

A task force has been formed to implement a diocesan anti-pornography campaign, which will include the inaugural Safe Haven Sunday, scheduled for March 8, 2020, during Mass on that day, booklets equipping parents with information and strategies for preventing children from getting caught up in pornography will be available in the back of all diocesan churches.

“It is a serious issue because pornography is highly addictive, particularly with children and teenagers whose brains are still in formation,” said Darryl Ducote, director of the Office of Marriage and Family Life. “It actually modifies the brain chemistry because it excites the pleasure centers in the brain and literally changes the complexion of the brain.”

Ducote, who said young people are first exposed to pornography at the average age of 11 years old, said it can be as addictive as drugs. In fact, he said, some mental health professionals are calling pornography the new drug.

A similar program was initially launched by the Archdiocese of New Orleans in 2015 in partnership with the internet mentoring service Covenant Eyes. Ducote said Archbishop Gregory M. Aymond of New Orleans was receiving requests, primarily from schools, seeking advice on how to address the issue of children being exposed to pornography at such an early age. Ducote said the proliferation of electronic devices during the past decade has allowed easy accessibility to pornography not only for young people but adults as well. The archdiocesan Office of Marriage and Family Life contacted Covenant Eyes and together they collaborated on a program that eventually became Safe Sunday, inspired by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ formal statement “Create in Me a Clean Heart; a Personal Response to Pornography.” In the statement, the bishops wrote that the “use of pornography by anyone in the home deprives the home of its role as a safe haven and has negative effects throughout a family’s life and across generations.”

Safe Haven is a weekend set aside by dioceses and parishes to project show the harm of pornography in an appropriate way. Within the context of the Mass, dioceses and parishes are able to provide teaching and resources that will support and protect individuals, marriages and families in a safe haven.

Materials developed for the archdiocese are now being produced nationally, and the Diocese of Lafayette held its first Save Haven Sunday earlier this year.

When Ducote and his staff learned of the three-year program, they met with Amyordon, director of Child Protection for the diocese, as well as Dina Dow, director of the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis. As a team, they requested permission from Bishop Michael G. Duca to implement a similar program in the diocese, which he agreed to, and designated the Second Sunday of Lent in 2020 as the first Safe Haven Sunday.

A link to follow-up videos providing additional guidance to parents will also be included in the booklets. Three different booklets will be available in English and Spanish, will be distributed on three consecutive weekends.

The first booklet is titled “Equipped,” and is designed to help parents keep children from becoming addicted to pornography, which has blossomed into a multi-billion dollar business.

The booklets and videos are also produced by Covenant Eyes, which has established a Catholic department within its organization to assist Catholic parishes throughout the United States in addressing the issue of pornography, Ducote said.

Covenant Eyes has also created a web page for the diocese titled Clean Heart Online that will eventually direct parents to additional resources geared toward parents, ministry leaders and others.

STRIVE, a free 21-day detox program from pornography, is also on the Clean Heart Online website.

He acknowledged that he has received feedback from school officials concerned about students viewing pornography on their electronic devices.

“Kids have smart phones and this stuff pops up all over the place,” Ducote said, adding that certain pleasure centers of the brain can be set off by drugs or alcohol but also visually, including viewing pornography.

“Young brains are still in formation so it overcharges those pleasure centers in the brain,” he added. “(If a young people) consistently do this, it’s like any drug, you start to adapt to the level where you then need greater stimulation to achieve the same effect. “It’s extremely dangerous because the other person becomes an object. They are no longer a person. They are just a means to satisfaction.”

Ducote emphasized that pornography, as some contend, is not a victimless activity. He noted that many of the people, especially the women involved in the industry, are victims of human trafficking, enslaved or involved with drugs.

Families are also victims because pornography is destructive to the family structure.

He added that even those watching pornography are in a way victims because they are enslaved by the addiction.

“Some say it’s no big deal but it is a big deal,” Ducote said. “Our goal is to make both parents and children aware of the devastating effects of pornography and provide them with tools to prevent it from taking over their lives.”

## GOSPEL ▼

From page 2

father of faith? The rich man realizes his complacent lifestyle created a lack of charity, which led to his eternal suffering. When alive, it was not that the rich man did not see Lazarus suffering; rather, he chose not to acknowledge Lazarus, and therefore, ignore him. He acted as if Lazarus did not exist. As a result, what the rich man chose in life, he lived in death, including a self-made “chasm” between good and evil, heaven and hell. What were the seeds of his faith?

Mustard seeds

What are the seeds of my faith? What small seeds planted within my heart influence the choices I make in life? Are the roots of faith sprouting from the seeds of the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes, which steer my actions into Christ-like love? Are the roots of faith sprouting from seeds of the Word of God in the Bible to guide my choices? Are the roots of faith sprouting from the seeds of grace received in the sacraments of baptism, Holy Communion, confirmation, reconciliation, holy orders, matrimony and/or anointing of the sick? Are the roots of faith sprouting from the seeds of a life filled with prayer? Am I acting on this faith? “O Lord, increase our faith” (Lk 17:5).
VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Sentencing someone to life in prison without the possibility of parole is “not the solution to problems, but a problem to solve,” Pope Francis told Italian prison guards, prison chaplains and officials from the Ministry of Justice.

“If you close hope in a cell, there is no future for society,” the pope told thousands of guards, chaplains, volunteers and their family members Sept. 14 during an audience in St. Peter’s Square.

Among those present were two detainees who are serving life sentences, but are engaged in a formal process of recognizing the gravity of their crimes, making amends as far as possible and preparing to apply for parole.

While protecting its citizens, the pope said, every society also must seek ways to rehabilitate those who have committed crimes and find ways to help them make positive contributions to society.

Making someone pay for the “errors of the past” cannot mean “canceling their hope for a future,” he said. In fact, everyone has “the right to hope.”

Saying he wanted to address all inmates, Pope Francis said he had one word for them: “courage.”

Have courage “because you are in God’s heart, you are precious in his eyes and, even if you feel lost and unworthy, don’t lose heart,” the pope said. “You who are detainees are important to God who wants to accomplish marvels in you.”

Even behind bars, he said, “never let yourselves be imprisoned in the dark cell of a heart without hope; don’t give in to resignation. God is bigger than every problem and he is waiting for you in order to love you.”

“Put yourselves before the crucifix, under the gaze of Jesus, before him with simplicity and sincerity,” the pope told prisoners. “There, with the humble courage of one who doesn’t lie to him – or herself, peace will be reborn, and trust in being loved and the strength to go on will flourish.”

Pope Francis was not speaking only figuratively. During the audience, he blessed the “cross of mercy” made by detainees in the Paliano prison, which the pope visited in 2017. The tall crucifix is decorated with “biblical scenes of liberation, ransom and redemption” and will be taken on pilgrimage to prisons throughout Italy.

Speaking to prison police, prison guards and prison staff, Pope Francis publicly thanked them for their work, which is often hidden and poorly paid.

“I know that it isn’t easy,” the pope said, “but when, in addition to watching over security, you are a presence close to those who have fallen into the web of evil, you become builders of the future, you lay the foundations for a coexistence that is more respectful and, therefore, for a society that is safer.”

If a prison sentence has the ultimate aim of preparing detainees to return to society and contribute to their community as upstanding citizens, Pope Francis said, then the guards who spend the most time with them must be models of treating others with dignity and respect.

“I thank you for not only being vigilant, but especially for safeguarding the people entrusted to you so that in recognizing the wrong they did, they will accept avenues of rebirth for the good of all,” the pope told the guards.

“You are called to be bridges between the prison and civil society,” he told the guards. By “exercising a correct compassion, you can overcome the mutual fears and the drama of indifference” that separate the inmates and wider society.

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**Diocese of Baton Rouge High School Open Houses**

Information: www.csobr.org

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<td>St. Joseph’s Academy</td>
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<td>Open to 6th – 8th grade girls and their parents</td>
<td>sjabr.org</td>
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<td>St. Michael High</td>
<td>Wednesday, October 23, 2019 4:30 – 7 p.m.</td>
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<td>Open to 6th – 8th graders and their parents</td>
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<td>Open to 7th and 8th graders and their parents</td>
<td>cristoreybr.org</td>
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<td>stafalcons.org</td>
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<tr>
<td>Catholic High</td>
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<td>Open to 6th – 8th grade boys and their parents</td>
<td>catholichigh.org</td>
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<td>Ascension Catholic High</td>
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<td>Joe LeBlanc, High School Hope Crochet, Elementary</td>
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<td>catholicpc.com</td>
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**THE FUTURE**

EMBRACING ▪ ENCOURAGING ▪ EDUCATING ▪ EVANGELIZING ▪ ENCOMPASSING ▪ EMPOWERING ▪ EMPOWERING
First responders gather to celebrate Blue Mass

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

As hundreds of law enforcement agents, firefighters and paramedics remained on watch on the streets, highways and waterways of Louisiana, many of their colleagues gathered at Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Baton Rouge on Monday, Sept. 16 to pray for them, their families and to remember those who have died.

A crowd of men and women dressed in uniforms gathered for the annual Blue Mass, which is celebrated for those employed in public safety. The first responders represented departments in the civil parishes of East Baton Rouge, West Baton Rouge, Lafourche, Orleans, Natchitoches and DeSoto, along with the city of Baton Rouge, Louisiana State Police, the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and Acadian Ambulance.

Also among the attendees were Baton Rouge Mayor Sharon Weston Broome and attorney general Jeff Landry. The Mass began with the song “America, the Beautiful,” with a procession of one uniformed person representing each of the agencies in attendance.

Bishop Michael G. Duca celebrated the Mass with concelebrants Father Miles Walsh, Father Jeff Bayhi and Father Matthew Graham.

During his homily, the bishop prayed for all of those attending as well as their support staff and families.

“This year it is an honor and a privilege to share with you this Blue Mass as we pray for those who serve us in law enforcement: police and sheriffs, firefighters, medical technicians, wildlife and fisheries agents and all of your support staff, especially your support staff, and auxiliaries that make this work possible,” said Bishop Duca.

The bishop also offered a prayer for government leaders “who, in a larger sense, manage our city and state, the attorney general, the mayor and all those who are part of this whole process of law enforcement in establishing our cities as a place of safety and opportunity.”

He added a remembrance for those who died during the past year.

“The loss of anyone in our community affects us and just that much more deeply, considering your commitment to and what your commitment asks of you, and how you share that responsibility together which makes those deaths more meaningful and impactful in your life,” said the bishop.

Bishop Duca told the officers, firefighters and EMS workers that they chose “a vocation to protect and serve” and noted the importance of that term.

“It can be just a job if you want it to be, but I would suspect being in the fields that you are, first responders, people who by nature run towards a difficulty rather than away from it, are called to be the ones that begin the process of healing and restoration when law and order breaks down in our community,” he stated.

The bishop added that the first responders bring hope to the community by believing in the laws that protect society and putting their lives on the line to protect others.

“We have you as a sign of hope in our lives,” said Bishop Duca.

The bishop finished his homily with a prayer asking for the angels of God to protect the first responders and remind them of their “great call as agents of justice and order.” He also prayed that the men and women continued in their vocation with “hope and courage and commitment of service.”

“And, that you not lose hope,” the bishop continued. “And if you do, go to your brothers and sisters and ask them to help you to serve. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness. It is the one thing that makes us most human, draws us into a community and does not allow us to act alone. Together we’re strong. Together we share hope.”

After the Mass, the bishop along with Father Walsh, Father Bayhi and Father Graham blessed the vehicles and motorcycles of the first responders followed by a luncheon reception in the parish hall.

The Blue Mass dates back to Sept. 29, 1934 when the first Mass was held at St. Patrick’s Church in Washington, D.C. The date was chosen to coincide with the Feast of St. Michael the Archangel, the patron saint of police officers and military. The color blue denotes the predominant color of uniforms.

Bishop Michael Duca with assistance from Father Miles Walsh blesses the vehicles used by agents of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries following the Blue Mass held Sept. 16 at Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Baton Rouge. Photo by Bonny Van | The Catholic Commentator
What to say in confession/ Reverence needed in church

Q I have not been to confession in at least 10 years. I want to go, but I have no idea what to say. How am I to remember all of my sins and the number of times that I have committed them? (Columbus, Ohio)

A Don’t worry; the priest is there to help you, and he will try to make things easy. (He will also have heard the confessions of a number of others in your same situation.)

Tell the priest that you haven’t been to the sacrament of penance in many years and worry that you cannot remember the exact number of times you have committed each specific sin. (The priest has the right to lift the penitent’s obligation to do so.)

Tell him that you would like to make this a “general confession,” that you are sorry for any and all sins, including those you don’t remember. He may ask you whether there are any particular serious sins that you do recall, and you will mention those, if any.

The absolution to follow will cover all sins whether mortal or venial. The absolution to follow will cover all sins whether mortal or venial

Q Can we please begin to restore reverence at Mass? I see young women wearing short shorts, men in flip-flops and other inappropriate clothing. Shouldn’t we dress nicely while visiting God in his house?

A The Catholic Church has no universal dress code for attendance at Mass – perhaps necessarily so, given the diverse cultural standards in a worldwide church. The church does say in the Catechism of the Catholic Church that “bodily demeanor (gestures, clothing) ought to convey the respect, solemnity and joy of this moment when Christ becomes our guest” (No. 1387).

Over the last half-century of my priesthood, I have observed a pattern of more casual dress at Mass; no longer the “Sunday best” – with the result that a number of parishes, even dioceses, have chosen to publish more specific guidelines.

Some of the Roman basilicas require that women should not wear sleeveless blouses, men should not wear shorts and women’s skirts should reach below the knees. In 2007, the Archdiocese of Manila in the Philippines asked men to wear collared shirts with sleeves at Mass and provided examples of “improper” attire for women, including miniskirts or skimpy shorts.

As to socializing in church before Mass, some parishes encourage parishioners to greet each other and converse in the vestibule or gathering area, but note that once inside the church proper, a respectful silence should prevail to allow for quiet prayer in preparation for the Eucharist.

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.
Come Lord Jesus! celebrates golden anniversary

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

For the past 50 years, Come Lord Jesus! has walked through people in their personal lives with the Sunday Scriptures. On Aug. 21, Come Lord Jesus! celebrated its golden anniversary as well as its 36-year history in Baton Rouge during a Mass at St. Aloysius Church in Baton Rouge.

CLJ is rooted in prayer, Scripture, Eucharist and Christian community. CLJ members gather in small groups and read and reflect on the upcoming Sunday readings and talk about their faith journeys.

In his homily, Father Conley Bertrand, who created the CLJ program in the Diocese of Lafayette 50 years ago, drew from St. Luke’s Gospel, stating Jesus taught on his way to Jerusalem, “Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough” (Lk 13:24).

“It’s like showing up for a football game and not having practiced and are not in shape because of insufficient exercise,” said Father Bertrand.

He said Christians must exercise discipline and temperance and build their strength through the sacraments and prayer.

Because the spirit and flesh are against each other, Catholics must allow the Holy Spirit to dominate their lives to see the things of heaven, he added.

“It’s supernatural, it’s divine, everything is shared,” Father Bertrand said.

CLJ, which has spread internationally, came to the Diocese of Baton Rouge after Lisette Borné’s sister, Sister Camille Anne, O’Carm, handed Borné a CLJ manual and said she should introduce the program at St. Aloysius School in Baton Rouge. It was an active program at Vermillion Catholic School in Abbeville where Sister Camille taught.

Borné and others members of a moms’ prayer group agreed CLJ would be good for the upcoming eighth-grade class at St. Aloysius. Then-principal Alan Powers gave quick, enthusiastic approval because he was familiar with CLJ.

He said Christians must exercise discipline and temperance and build their strength through the sacraments and prayer.

Borné coordinated the school program and formation of adult groups for 20 years.

Across the diocese, there are 100-120 active CLJ members in 10-12 adult groups. The program also supplements the eighth-grade religion curriculum in six diocesan schools, reaching almost 400 students annually.

Borné said former eighth-grade participants lead their eighth grade children’s groups. Former eighth-graders are also in adult groups.

Deacon David Dawson, now at Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans, had his first stirrings toward a priestly vocation in his eighth-grade CLJ group at St. Aloysius. At a CLJ session, students were asked what they wanted to be when they grew up.

“Priest” came to Deacon Dawson’s mind, but when the class clown joked he wanted to be a priest and the other children laughed, Deacon Dawson kept quiet about his desire so it would not be trampled upon.

“That flower that was growing wanted to be cultivated,” explained Deacon Dawson, who is scheduled to be ordained to the priesthood in 2021. “It took a long time for that seed to really grow.”

He said his life has “turned 360 degrees” and he is excited to be preparing for priestly ministry.

Cindy Ristroph, diocesan co-coordinator of CLJ, and Patience Moreno are among those who started with CLJ through their children. Ristroph was initially terrified when her daughter was in eighth grade at St. Aloysius and facilitated a group of eighth-graders in CLJ.

Of course, God came through, and by the end of the year when we leaders realized what an impact was made in these eighth-graders’ lives – we were simply in awe of what had happened with our ‘yes’ to God,” said Ristroph, who joined an adult CLJ group.

“Without a doubt, Come, Lord Jesus! is a pivotal part of my faith journey. I discovered a hunger for God that I hadn’t even consciously known existed within me. Spending time with Scripture to prepare for each week’s meeting fostered a personal relationship with God that clearly my soul had longed for and was overjoyed to finally being filled,” Ristroph said.

Moreno entered the program as an overwhelmed mother raising four young children.

“I knew I was going to need a lot of help from God and other parents, especially mothers,” Moreno said.

She was in a woman’s Bible study group that transitioned into CLJ.

“The CLJ process taught me how to pray aloud, openly. Over the years I have and continue to be blessed by the wisdom of others in our group. Today, I still look forward to my planned ‘quiet time’ and the grace-filled fellowship with others,” Moreno said.

Mary Carlin, diocesan co-coordinator of CLJ, joined through a friend’s invitation after her mother passed away and she was retiring from her 36-year career with special needs children.

“CLJ has transformed my spiritual life in so many awesome ways. My knowledge of Scripture, previously on a surface level, has changed into a deep experience of understanding the living word with constant application to daily life. In the Eucharist, I am so humbled and so grateful for the gift of the divine presence. In my group, I cherish our prayer time as we express our prayers of petition and gratitude for ourselves and our community.”

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Healing focus of interfaith breakfast

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

Everyone has a story and people need to take time to listen. That was the message of the annual Community Prayer Breakfast hosted by the Interfaith Federation of Great Baton Rouge.

The event, which drew several hundred people including faith leaders, ministry workers, law enforcement officers and community leaders, was held Thursday, Sept. 12 at the Catholic Life Center in Baton Rouge.

Noting that it has been a year of “not so pleasant, heavy on the heart” events, Niloufer Mohamed, president of the Interfaith Federation said it doesn’t have to be large events that warrant attention. She said people facing smaller personal hardships or struggles simply need someone to hear their story.

“We all would love to have someone to listen to us and just have someone listening and just understanding and engaging with us,” said Mohamed. “It takes the loneliness away, just giving that time and making someone feel good, making someone feel important.”

Among those attending was Pastor Gerald Toussaint, from Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church in Opelousas, the third historically black church in St. Landry Civil Parish deliberately destroyed by fire in April. The crime touched the hearts of people around the country and beyond.

“We thank God,” said Toussaint, who took the day off from his job driving a truck to attend the Baton Rouge event. “We had a lot of help from the world, from all 50 states and from 20 countries.”

Over a breakfast of biscuits, sausage, eggs and grits, guests listened to a number of speakers on the theme “Building: Naming Our Story.” Rev. Robin McCullough-Bade, executive director of the Interfaith Federation, kicked off the event saying everyone has a story to tell.

“We have been created to not only to survive but to thrive by the grace of God,” said Rev. McCullough-Bade. “And our story is powerful … and it’s powerful when we let it go. There’s something freeing and healing when we name our story.”

Rev. McCullough-Bade then built an outline for a story for healing: conflict, setting, characters, plot and resolution.

During his presentation on conflict, Rev. Charles deGravelles played a musical tribute called “Confagration Blues” with a slide show of photos from the St. Landry church fires. Several members of the Interfaith Federation visited the church sites during Holy Week.

“I loved it,” said Toussaint, who recorded the tribute on his phone.

Rabbi Jordan Goldson presented the setting of the story by offering a traditional prayer for a new year and then sounded the shofar, a musical instrument made from a ram’s horn.

Bishop Michael G. Duca spoke about the characters in the story and recalled the hopelessness he experienced from two historical events, the assassination of President John Kennedy and the terrorist attacks on 9/11.

He noted disillusionsments in life and factors such as “unexpected betrayals, bias, racism, classism, natural disasters that tear at the foundations of our lives.”

“In those moments, we don’t even have the foundational confidence to rebuild. How do we move forward?” the bishop said. “Of course, as we know, as men and women of faith that there are answers beyond the limits of this world. The way that man or woman can be broken out of that lost place is by someone coming up to them and saying, ‘How are you doing?’”

Thich Dao Quang, Baton Rouge’s only Buddhist monk, presented the plot of a story and about letting go. He noted the quest for “peace and harmony and happiness.”

There was a discussion of resolution, followed by the lighting of candles representing community leaders, first responders and victims. The event wrapped up with the song “Let There Be Peace on Earth.”

“This morning (Sept. 12) was an opportunity to focus on our stories that connect us,” said Baton Rouge Mayor President Sharon Weston Broome.

“To see all the faiths (and) different congregations coming together for the same purpose, it’s very heartwarming,” said East Baton Rouge Civil Parish Sheriff Sid Gautreaux.

“We may look different, we may come from different backgrounds and when we take the time to listen, we realize how much more we have in common,” said Mohamed.
Healing comes when answering God’s knock at the door

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator
Second in a series

A “fiat” to God can open people’s hearts and free them from addictions, Judy Holston testified at a Day of Healing, sponsored by the Office of Charismatic Renewal of Healing on Aug. 10 at Our Lady of Mercy Church in Baton Rouge.

Holston, a member of the inner-healing prayer team of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, shared her own personal and inspiring story of redemption.

She opened by recalling how the trauma of war haunted Holston’s husband, Tommy, a Vietnam veteran.

“He was a broken, tortured soul here on earth. No matter how hard he tried, life seemed to dish out a rough hand,” said Holston. “He was bitter and resentful at times, yet loving and kind at times. It was a roller coaster of ups and downs. Drugs re-entered the picture and life was never the same. He called his times of drug use his ‘insanity.’ ”

The Holstons were married 14 years when Tommy was in the oilfield and took the same drug he had used in Vietnam.

“He left his family. Our children and I were devastated,” Holston said, adding that is when the real roller coaster started.

She said Tommy would get cleaned up and have a great job but something always managed to happen to bring him back to drugs.

“The process of his abandonment of our family and in my devastation, I drew closer to the Mother of Sorrows, the suffering in Christ,” Judy said. “The pain was real, the rejection was overwhelming at times, and I carried it for a long time.”

One day God reminded Judy he already suffered and asked her to move on with joy and peace.

“My position as (Tommy’s) wife was to pray for him, but I could not save him. God made himself real to me and my life journey changed. It has not been the same. He gave me a second chance, a fresh start and a new beginning,” said Judy. She loved her husband with a deeper, agape love.

“That is when I started my crusade of prayers. No matter how many times he hurt me or was cruel in words or actions, I made a determined effort to forgive and I prayed fervently for him and my children, for they had reached the teenage years and were broken themselves,” Judy said.

Judy and Tommy became friends and he talked with her about Vietnam and his problems.

“Yet he noticed a changed in me and my love of the Lord and my love for him, and it scared him,” Judy said. “He kept saying, ‘I am not who you think I am.’ The ’real Tommy’ was searching to be free despite his pain and misery and couldn’t understand God was showing me who God intended him to be.”

He told his buddies the biggest fear was that he would wake up and “Judy’s prayer group would be praying over him.”

“He got confirmation from one of his drug buddies, who said it wasn’t him that was so afraid, it was the demons driving him,” Judy said. “(Tommy) called our prayer group to pray with him.
There is new life in the old rectory at St. Thomas More Church and School in Baton Rouge. Former offices are now filled with cribs, changing tables and nap mats. This is the new Early Learning Center at St. Thomas More School, and staff members are just as excited as parents to see the idea become a reality.

Director Amy Moran had operated the pre-school program at STM while renovations, which took about one year to complete, were underway at the former rectory, located across the street from the school. "When I hired my staff a year ago and told them what was happening, they were so excited, and they kept that excitement for me sometimes," said Moran. "You know, sometimes this project wasn't easy but they kept me excited." With 11 years of early childhood education and classroom experience, Moran knew what was needed to make the center, which offers care for children ages 12 weeks to 2 years old, a success even though she had to work with an already established footprint from the rectory. With support from St. Thomas More pastor Father Michael Alello, Moran said she took "the reins" and was able to design each of the center's six rooms.

Another big challenge was providing quality care and meeting state and federal requirements. Moran said the state requires a ratio of one adult per six infants with a graduated rate of more children per adult as children get older; however, she keeps her infant to adult ratio at 4 to 1. "Child care is one of the most regulated industries anywhere," she said. "So we wanted to make sure we’re not only meeting those regulations but we’re exceeding those regulations. So, we know that we’re doing what the law requires but how can we do it better and how can we incorporate the church into what we’re doing."

St. Thomas More’s Early Learning Center at St. Thomas More Church and School in Baton Rouge.

Such high standards mean high demand for Moran and her staff of 15. Enrollment is currently at 50 and there is a waiting list. Many of the children have siblings at the school. STM principal Brian Moscona has one, Dominic, in the ELC with daughter Maria, 3, in pre-school and oldest son Anthony, 5, in "the big school."

“We have the youngest Catholics in our community being pushed around in buggies during the day and so the older kids run over and get to smile at them and see the future of our school and our parish on a daily basis," said Moscona. "And, I think for families such as ours, to have all of our kids in one place and also to be in a Catholic environment from birth through eighth grade is really a blessing."

"The center gives our parents the opportunity to drop off all their kids in one stop," said Father Alello. "Parents know that their kids are getting the same faith formation and education from their earliest days through eighth grade, so it's exciting for us, it's exciting for our parents and it's such a need."

"It’s always nice to see our schools growing and also reaching out to minister to a whole number of children that we haven’t been able to reach before which is good for the church and also a big help for families," said Bishop Michael G. Duca. "I'm so glad to see this new energy at St. Thomas more." The ELC opened Aug. 12 and Moran said it has been a whirlwind of activity, with an open house and getting settled into a schedule. But now she can sit back and enjoy the fruits of her labor.

On Thursday, Sept. 12, Bishop Duca, Father Alello and Moran cut the ribbon on the center. Afterwards, the bishop blessed the building. Photos by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

Enrollment at the center is currently at 50 and there is a waiting list. Many of the children have siblings at the school. STM principal Brian Moscona has a one-year-old son, Dominic, in the ELC with daughter Maria, 3, in pre-school and oldest son Anthony, 5, in "the big school."
Blue Jays spread wings in beautiful new nest

By Debbie Shelley
The Catholic Commentator

“Go Blue Jays!” roared students of Our Lady of Mercy School in Baton Rouge spurred on by an enthusiastic OLOM pastor Father Cleo Milano during their first glimpse of the new school gym a pep rally on Friday, Sept. 13.

Students’ eyes popped open and they squealed with glee as they walked in the door. Once seated, the rumbling of feet pounding on the bleachers ricocheted around the facility and students pumped their arms in the air and shouted and pointed to their friends.

“It’s going to be a loud gym,” laughed principal Chris Porche. “To see all of our kiddos in here totally enjoying themselves and to see what it (the gym) has come to be is amazing.”

The gym has been 50 years in the making, according to Father Milano.

“From one end of Marquette (Street) to the other we are embraced by the love of God,” Father Milano said.

OLOM parish administrator Randy Arabie agreed.

“It’s a beautiful facility where we can host parish-wide events,” he said. “It’s important to us that it be a Catholic facility as well as an athletic facility.”

OLOM hosted an open house at the gym for the community on Sept. 22.

“I think it’s cool,” fifth grader Davis Wolfe said as his youthful eyes scanned the gym. “I want to make as many baskets as I can. I hope everyone enjoys it when they come see it.”

Samantha O’Brien, a sixth grader, said, “It’s so beautiful, I love the blue jay in the middle of the court.”

Father Cleo Milano, pastor of Our Lady of Mercy Church in Baton Rouge, spurs on the OLOM students to cheer and shout during a pep rally in which the students got their first look at their new gym. Photos by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

OLOM students were overjoyed when their eyes first took in their new gym.
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For girls in grades 6-8 and their parents

HONORING LT. LAMANA – Lt. Michael Scott Lamana, a graduate of St. Aloysius School in Baton Rouge, was remembered during a special 9/11 memorial ceremony on Wednesday, Sept. 11. Lamana was killed in the terrorist attacks while at work in his office at the Pentagon. The flag was flown at the Pentagon on Nov. 1, 2012 for Lt. Lamana and is on permanent display at the school. The flag was flown at half-staff during the event and for the entire day. The ceremony and prayer service was led by Pastor Father Eddie Martin. Lt. Lamana’s father, Mike Lamana, also attended the event. Photo provided by Edie Boudreaux | St. Aloysius School

CLASSROOM DONATION – Redemptorist St. Gerard School in Baton Rouge principal Cheryl Domino, pictured second from left, is joined by teachers on Friday, Aug. 30 to accept a $1,000 donation from Methanex Corporation in Geismar. Photo provided by Mary Miller | Redemptorist St. Gerard School

BLESSING OF THE BIBLES – Personal Bibles for the sixth-grade class Catholic of Pointe Coupee Elementary in New Roads were blessed and ready to be studied as a rite of passage. The Bibles were given to the students during Mass at St. Mary of False River Church in New Roads on Tuesday, Aug. 27. The students will have their Bibles as they continue their years at Catholic of Pointe Coupee. Photo provided by Megan Girlinghouse | Catholic of Pointe Coupee Elementary

“… (Jesus) said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.””

(Mark 10:14)

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Don’t Let Go
OTL Releasing

After his niece (Storm Reid), with whom he shared a close relationship, is murdered, a police detective (David Oyelowo) is startled to receive a series of phone calls from her. Eventually piecing together the fact that she is communicating with him from a different time period — two weeks before her death, he works with her to prevent the fatal crime from ever taking place. Initially intriguing but ultimately illogical, director and co-writer Jacob Estes’ thriller becomes a reunion of the self-dubbed Losers Club (most prominently James McAvoy, Jessica Chastain and Bill Hader), a group who, as children, battled the malevolent force principally embodied then and now by a demonic clown (Bill Skarsgard). Director Andy Muschietti and screenwriter Gary Dauberman, both returning to the posts they held for the first film, have little to show to be in tension with Scriptural values since it suggests that good consequences can sometimes result from wrongdoing, through most of the story characters yearn to make up for past mistakes. A suicide theme, brief physical child abuse, cohabitation, benignly viewed shoplifting, underage narcotics use, drinking and smoking, an implied homosexual relationship, several profanities, numerous rough and crude terms. A-III; R

Bennett’s War
Forrest

Endearing sports drama about a wounded Afghan War vet (Michael Roark) who risks being permanently crippled in order to return to the motorcross track, where his pre-deployment reputation was impressive, and win prize money to save his father’s (Trace Adkins) failing farm. Though his wife (Allison Paige) is initially opposed, fearing the results, he’s supported by the motorcycle mechanic and garage owner (Ali Afshar) who hired him after his stint in the military. With its easy-to-root-for hero, pleasing portrayal of family life and slight religious flourishes, writer-director Alex Ranarivelo’s film is a crowd pleaser, though those not addicted to racing may find the competitive sequences a bit lengthy and the overall pace is somewhat languid. Stylized combat violence, scenes of marital sensuality, a couple of mild oaths, much crude and crass language. A-III; PG-13

It: Chapter Two
Warner Bros./Amazon

Patience-trying follow-up to the 2017 adaptation of horror maestro Stephen King’s novel jumps ahead almost three decades from the late-80s action of the original and unleashes the cyclically returning evil that has long beset the fictional town of Derry, New Hampshire. This becomes the cue for a reunion of the self-dubbed Losers Club (most prominently James McAvoy, Jessica Chastain and Bill Hader), a group who, as children, battled the malevolent force principally embodied then and now by a demonic clown (Bill Skarsgard). Director Andy Muschietti and screenwriter Gary Dauberman, both returning to the posts they held for the first film, have little to show

Living with Loss
A special section of The Catholic Commentator, Living with Loss will present end-of-life topics that can help our readers prepare for their own mortality. Also included in this section will be a list of All Saints’ Day/All Souls’ Day blessings.

Publication date: October 25, 2019
Deadline: Tuesday, October 15

www.diobr.org/tcc
El Encuentro Matrimonial
En Español
Llega A Louisiana

HISTORIA
El Encuentro Matrimonial Mundial nació en 1968 cuando el sacerdote Gabriel Calvo se dio cuenta de la gran importancia que tiene la relación de esposos en el crecimiento de la fe de sus hijos. El Padre Calvo trabajó por muchos años con niños y jóvenes y pudo deducir que muchos de los problemas de comportamiento de estos niños y jóvenes tenían que ver con la relación de esposos que sus padres tenían. Pensando en como ayudar a estos jóvenes el Padre Calvo comenzó a impartir talleres para matrimonios en los que la comunicación entre los esposos era el tema central. En 1997 esta experiencia llegó a los Estados Unidos y fue el Padre Chuck Gallagher el encargado de difundir este movimiento aquí en los Estados Unidos, movimiento que después se difundió a través del mundo. En estos momentos el Encuentro Matrimonial Mundial ha llegado a más de 100 países y hasta la fecha más de 3 millones de parejas y sacerdotes han vivido esta experiencia.

ESTRUCTURA
El Encuentro Matrimonial Mundial está dirigido a todos los niveles (local, diocesano, regional, nacional) por Equipo Eclesial constituido por un sacerdote y por un matrimonio. A nivel mundial el movimiento está coordinado por el Equipo Eclesial Internacional, asistido por los seis Equipos Eclesiales que representan los Secretariados existentes para África, Asia, Europa, Latinoamérica, Norteamérica y Oceania. En los Estados Unidos, El Encuentro Matrimonial Mundial está dirigido a nivel regional, tiene regiones tanto en inglés como en español. La región en español a la cual pertenece el estado de Louisiana es la Región 15, y es desde allí donde se está coordinando todo lo necesario para llevar a cabo el primer Fin de Semana del Encuentro Matrimonial en Baton Rouge los días 8, 9 y 10 de noviembre de 2019.

Si deseas vivir un Fin de Semana del Encuentro Matrimonial puedes llamar o mandar un email a: Gabriel y Arlene Rico (626) 774-4617 – encontrados@hotmail.com

HEALING ▼
From page 9

two weeks before he died. He spent the rest of his life writing letters to his buddies, paying his bills, and saying prayers."

Tommy was raised Baptist, but respected Judy’s Catholic faith.

When Tommy’s minister visited him to “ready to go home,” he told the minister that gifts of blessed prayer cloth and holy water from Lourdes did more for him than any pain medicine.

The weekend before he died, Tommy told Judy that Jesus appeared to him and gave him a key and said when the time was ready to open the door. All that week he positioned his hand as if holding a key.

“The morning he died he said, ‘I have to go, he’s here, I have to go, he is at the door.’ He took his oxygen mask off and laid down and died peacefully,” Judy said.

After a retreat, the Lord brought a song to Judy’s heart that she had not thought about in a while, and she realized the door was Tommy’s heart.

“He had built such a wall around his heart because of the war that the morning he died he had finally opened up his heart and gave the Lord the last thing he held in his heart. The Lord was finally able to set him free,” Judy said. “He lived a broken, tortured life, but minutes before he died, he let Jesus in. I fully believe he died a free child of God and those demons that drove and tortured him lost the soul they thought they had.”

Judy told attendees God wanted to answer their prayers.

“God is wanting to do the same for us. He wants to set captives free. The choice is yours,” Judy said.

She noted in the picture of the Good Shepherd knocking on the door, there is no doorknob on the outside.

“Jesus cannot let himself in. He stands patiently waiting for us to open the door,” Judy said.

MOVIES ▼
From page 14

In the way of human interest since their characters are one-dimensional and even the nature of the friendship they share is unengaging, based as it is on a constant exchange of often raunchy insults. Though they keep the bloodletting within reasonable limits, a subplot romanticizing adulterous activity and a late sequence obliquely endorsing a character’s suicide as an act of courage morally bankrupt the three-hour-long proceedings. Skewed values, much gory violence, occult themes and activity, gruesome images, a flash of rear nudity, one same-sex and an adulterous kiss, about a half-dozen uses of profanity, a few milder oaths, pervasive rough and crude language. O; R

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6 Son of Ner
11 To do this is human, but to forgive is divine
14 Honeybee
15 In danger of falling off
17 Animal park
18 George Burns’ film
19 Printer’s measures
20 Sufy mood
22 Paul’s hometown is found in this modern-day nation
24 Patron saint of Norway
25 Type of art
26 Number of days Jesus spent in the desert
28 Upper division of the brain
32 Utert joy
33 Greatest king of Israel
34 ___. loss for words
35 Cast leader?
36 Humorous
37 Baseball glove
38 Put to good ___
39 Artist’s support
40 He was the most humble man on earth (Num 12:3)
41 Artillery fragments
42 Less common
44 Rovers in Spain
45 Curve
46 Aloit
49 Catholic actor of “The Passion of the Christ”
53 Jailbird
54 “Sing to God, praise the divine name, exalt the ___ of the clouds!” (Ps 68:5)
56 Vinegar (combs)
57 Number of each animal Noah took in the ark
58 Blue
59 Thieves
60 Vine reading
61 Track and field events
62 Locations

DOWN
1 Owing
5 Forfeiture
6 Gusto
7 Fourto (as in a relaxed manner)
10 Unimportant
12 Ot prophet book
13 Decreased
14 Tid of St. Joseph the Worker is on the first of this month
23 Steal from
25 The Evil One
26 “…bone of my bones and ___.” (Gen 2:23)
28 Maple Leaf rival
29 I’ll ___ up a righteous branch for David (Jer 23:5)
30 Speak
32 Heat units (abbr.)
33 Pressed amounts
36 Declare a saint
37 Hampton plotted to kill him (Est 5:9-14)
39 Witty saying
40 Insane persons
42 Jackie’s O
43 Not book
45 Uncovers
46 Paul is the major character of this book
47 “…for a person will reap only what he ___.” (Gal 6:7)
48 Misered, slyly
49 Kind of mail (abbr.)
50 Gusto
51 Rock add-on
52 Forfuten
55 Owning

Solution on page 18
Clergy retreat scheduled

Dear People of God of the Diocese of Baton Rouge,
One of the pillars of our priestly life is growing in our priestly ministry skills and in our self-awareness as called by God to priesthood. Our diocese has a long-standing tradition of offering a Clergy Fall Retreat in October mandatory every other year, as well as the mandatory Annual Priests’ Formation Days in January. The Clergy Fall Retreat is mandatory this year and will be held on October 7-10.

Their temporary absence will affect certain regular pastoral ministries. In particular, the schedule of weekday Masses and possible times for funeral Masses may be impacted and adjusted in your parish to meet a family’s needs. Please be patient and if possible flexible on scheduling of a funeral Mass. Do not bury three Jesuit spiritual directors in my life as a priest. Not that I have buried three Jesuit spiritual directors in my life as a priest. Not that I have buried three Jesuit spiritual directors in my life as a priest. Not that I have buried three Jesuit spiritual directors in my life as a priest. Not that I have buried three Jesuit spiritual directors in my life as a priest.

From the Bishop
Bishop Michael G. Duca

Jesus the firebrand?

I have buried three Jesuit spiritual directors in my life as a priest. Not literally, they each died, leaving me to search for another spiritual director. With Manresa Retreat House in our diocese, I didn’t look far. I had studied four years with the Jesuits at their Gregorian University in Rome. They taught good theology and the spirituality of their founder St. Ignatius of Loyola.

One practice of Ignatian spirituality is to read the Gospel stories and place yourself in the middle of each scene, asking yourself which of the characters would you have been, what would Jesus have said to you, how would you have acted had you been there, what would you have wanted to ask Jesus. The readings in the Mass a few weeks ago for the 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time almost begged us to do this.

Jesus said to his disciples: “I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing! There is a baptism with which I must be baptized, and how great is my anguish until it is accomplished! Do you think that I have come to establish peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. ‘Wait a minute, Lord,’ I would have said. ‘Don’t all always greet people with, ‘Peace be with you?’ And you taught us to turn the other cheek and walk the extra mile, not to respond violently, and to forgive always. You gave us the beatitudes: Blessed are the poor, blessed are the meek and blessed are the peacemakers. Also, you prayed that we all might be one as you and the Father are one. What’s with this division?”

Maybe Jesus would have answered me, “You must have fallen asleep in your Scripture classes. “Didn’t the Jesuits teach you that I am the fulfillment and the culmination of the Old Testament prophets? What happened to Jeremiah in the first reading of that Mass for the 20th Sunday? Jeremiah was sent by God to bring the king and his princes back to faith in God and not their schemes of war. For this, they tried to kill him by throwing him down an abandoned well. And what happened to me? You see it in every Catholic Church and even on the rosary in your pocket. It’s a crucifix. I preached goodness and unity, and they killed me just as they killed the prophets who promised my coming and my cousin, John the Baptist, who announced that I had come. That’s why the second reading from that Sunday, the one from the letter to the Hebrews told you ‘Remember how he endured the opposition of sinners; do not grow despondent or abandon the struggle.’”

Jesus knew the fire he would light would kill him and after him many of his followers. To follow Jesus’ path of true, non violent goodness always invites opposition, division and even violence in return. This has replayed itself century after century since his death and resurrection.

Some have followed the model Jesus gave us very closely. A recent example would be Dr. Martin Luther King. He lit a fire of protest against racial injustice. He insisted it be a peaceful one. From his side it did remain peaceful. But the other side killed him. The problem is that the love and unity Christ offers are at odds with the greed, and lust for wealth and power that the world wants. Jesus’ love is obnoxious to anyone who always wants to be wealthier than others, to be gratified and admired, to be first, who never puts others before himself or herself, who demands that others serve him. Even though we would be content to have a life without trials, God always wants more. God wants us to be united to him through Jesus and through his spirit which he gave us through his death and resurrection. Jesus taught us that if we want to save our lives we must lose them. He is the model, that’s what he did. That’s what he meant when he said he wanted to set the world on fire.

Life will always present us with conflicts. Sometimes we just disagree on how to achieve the same good goals. Then, we can at least agree to disagree and respect each other’s integrity. However, at other times, God’s values taught us in Scripture and especially in the Gospels are in question. The justice and love, generosity and self-sacrifice demanded to serve those less fortunate than ourselves are the dying to self that Jesus modeled for us. When we live like that, we don’t please everyone and have to be prepared to play with the fire that will result. Unjust or cruel people are greatly disturbed by goodness called for, just as good people are disturbed by injustice or cruelty.

Sister Mary M. McGlone CSJ, one of the best current commentators on Scripture, notes that “When prophets speak for God to a sinful people, conflict ensues. That means that if our churches only offer us comfort and peace, we ought to ask if they are centers of Christianity or just spas with uncomfortable chairs.”

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 johnnycarville@gmail.com.

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

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

Ir’s no secret that today we’re witness
ning a massive decline in church
attendance and, seemingly, a parallel
loss of interest in religion. The former
mindset, within which we worried,
sometimes obsessively, about sin,
church-going and heaven and hell no
longer holds sway for millions of people.
As one parent, worried about the reli-
gious state of his children, who can be perceived as simply a
salesman for religion and the churches.
But, despite that, here are some
counsels on faith and religion for today’s
generation.

First: Search honestly. God’s first
concern is not whether you’re going
to church or not, but whether you are stay-
ing honest in your search for truth and
meaning. When the Apostle St. Thomas,
doubts the reality of the resurrection,
Jesus doesn’t scold him, but simply asks
him to stretch out his hand and con-
тинuing searching, trusting that if he searches
honestly he will eventually find the truth.
The same is true for us. All we have to do
is be honest, to not lie, to acknowledge
truth as it meets us. In St. John’s Gospel,
Jesus sets out only one condition to come
to God: Be honest and never refuse to
acknowledge what’s true, no matter how
inconvenient. But the key is to be honest! If we’re
honest we will eventually
find meaning and
that will lead us where
we need to go perhaps
even to a church door
somewhere. But even if it
doesn’t, God will find us.
The mystery of Christ is
bigger than we imagine.
Second: Listen to
what’s deepest inside
you. Soul is a precious
commodity. Make sure
you honor yours. Honor
the voice inside your soul.
Deeper than the many
enticing voices you hear
in world inviting you in every direc-
tion is a voice inside you which, like an
insatiable thirst, reminds you always of
the truth of this prayer from St. Augus-
tine: You have made us for yourself, Lord,
and our hearts are restless until they rest
in you. Stay in touch with that voice. You
will hear it in your restlessness and it
will, in the words of Karl Rahner, teach
you something that’s initially is hard
to bear but eventually sets you free: In the
torment of the insufficiency of everything
attainable, we eventually learn that here
in this life there is no finished symphony.
Third: Beware the crowd! In the Gosp-
els the word “crowd” is almost always
pejorative. For good reason: Crowds
don’t have a mind and the energy of a crowd is often
dangerous. So beware
of what Milan Kundera
calls “the great march,”
namely, the propensity to be led by ideology, group-
think, the latest trend, the
popular person or thing,
the false feeling of being
right because the majority
people feel that way, and
the social pressures coming
from both the right and the
left. Be true to yourself. Be
the lonely prophet who’s not
afraid to be alone on the
outside. Dream. Be ideals-
tic. Protect your soul. Don’t
give it away cheaply.
Fourth: Don’t confuse faith with the
churches but don’t write off the churches
too quickly. When they ask those with-
out religious affiliation today why they
aren’t religious invariably their answer
is: “I just don’t believe it anymore.” But
what’s the “it” which they no longer
believe? What they don’t believe anymore
isn’t in fact the truth about God, faith
and religion, but rather what they’ve
heard about God, faith and religion.
Sort that out and you will find that you
do have faith. Moreover, don’t write off
the churches too quickly. They have real
faults; you’re not wrong about that, but
they’re still the best GPS available to help
you find your way to meaning. They’re a
roadmap drawn up by millions of explor-
ers who have walked the road before you.
You can ignore them, but then be alert to
God’s gentle voice often saying: “Recal-
culating.” God will get you home, but the
churches can help.
Fifth: Don’t forget about the poor.
When you touch the poor, you’re touching
God and, as Jesus says, at the judgment
day we will be judged by how we served
the poor. Give yourself away in some
form of altruism, knowing, as Jesus puts
it, that it’s not those who say Lord, Lord,
who go to heaven but those who serve
others. In your search, you need to get a
letter of reference from the poor.
Sixth: Look among your contempo-
rarities for a patron to inspire you. Jean
Vanier, Henri Nouwen, Thomas Merton,
Dorothy Day, Oscar Romero, Dietrich
Bonhoeffer, Simone Weil, Etty Hillesum
and Dag Hammarskjold, among others –
they’ve all navigated your issues.

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Honoring the Real Presence

The power of “imago Dei” – our belief that each
human bears God’s image – is that our love of God
compels us to love the humans that God has
created. But the opposite also holds true: If
we dismiss each other, we degrade God in
our midst.

Take the ways we talk. Contemporary
discourse is marked by an easy tendency
to demonize the other. I confess I’ve done it
too. We hear the latest news about that polit-
cician we can’t stand, and we angrily decry
them as an idiot, an animal or a monster.

Lately I’ve tried to catch myself, espe-
cially when little ears are listening. “I don’t
hate that person,” I reframe my words for
my kids. “I don’t agree with his politics,
and I think his behavior is wrong, but I still
believe he can be a good person and that
God loves him.”

History proves the evils of dehumaniza-
tion. For my children’s sake and mine, I
have to watch my language.

As I’ve meditated on our collective faith
in the Real Presence, I wonder how we honor each
other’s human presence or don’t. If we can’t behold
the beauty of another person in flesh and blood, how can we
begin to appreciate our God present in flesh and blood?

And when we behold each other an exercise of holy
imagination to see another with God’s eyes how do we
ultimately see ourselves? Self-loathing runs rampant
in our time. Researchers claim that loneliness and
isolation may never have been higher in the history of
human existence.

Do we struggle to see Christ present in the sacra-
ments because we cannot imagine ourselves worthy
to receive God in such an intimate, bodily way, especially
when our culture has twisted our views of intimacy and
bodily?

All these questions make me wonder if coming to
see another as precious whether myself, my child, my
neighbor or a stranger could help me to deepen my faith
in the precious body and blood.

Watch our words. Behold each other. Remember
our worthiness. Is believing in the real presence in
the Eucharist as simple as this?

Surely not. The mysteries of our faith demand a life-
time of prayer and pondering.

But we can each deepen our faith in the Real Pres-
ence and help our children and grandchildren to do the
same – in small ways each day.

After all, what could be smaller than a bite of bread
or a sip of wine? Yet this is our God, truly present to us
in flesh and blood. This is a mystery worthy of our wrest-
lings and a presence worthy of our honor.
Feast of St. Gerard Majella – Bishop Michael G. Duca will celebrate a Mass marking the feast of St. Gerard Majella Sunday, Oct. 6, 10 a.m., at St. Gerard Majella Church, 3354 Plank Road, Baton Rouge. Bishop Duca will install Father Tat Hoang CSsR during the Mass. For more information, call 225-355-2553.

Golden Jubilee Celebration – A Mass of Thanksgiving and vow renewal for Sister Jannelle Sevier, pastoral associate at St. Thomas More Church in Baton Rouge, on her 50th anniversary of religious life with the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur will be celebrated Sunday, Oct. 6, 10 a.m. at STM, 11441 Goodwood Blvd., Baton Rouge. For more information, call 225-275-3940.

Caregivers Presentation – Dana Territo will present “A Caregiver’s Journey” on Tuesday, Oct. 8, 6 – 7:30 p.m., at St. Aloysius Church, 2025 Stuart Ave., Baton Rouge. The program, sponsored by the St. Aloysius Stephen Ministry, will provide tips and strategies to manage the day-to-day tasks of caregiving. For more information, call 225-343-6657.

Displaced Carmelites – The Secular Order of Displaced Carmelites will meet Sunday, Oct. 13, 1:30 p.m., at the Our Lady of Mercy Parish Activity Center in the St. Gabriel Room, 444 Marquette Ave., Baton Rouge. Enrollment forms come at the beginning of the meeting. For details, call Ethlyn White at 225-803-3391 or email robertwhite45@gmail.com.

Third Order of Mary – The St. Agnes Confraternity of the Third Order of Mary will meet Sunday, Oct. 13, 3 p.m., at St. Agnes Church, 749 East Blvd., Baton Rouge. For more information, call Karen Moller at 225-272-5915.

Marriage Encounter Weekend – Married couples seeking to enrich their marriage are invited to a Marriage Encounter Weekend, Friday, Oct. 18 – Sunday, Oct. 20 at the Bishop Robert E. Tracy Center, 1800 S. Acadian Thwy, Baton Rouge. For more information and to register, visit lams-wwme.org or call 1-800-586-5469.

Marian Prayer Service – St. Theresa of Avila Council #2675 will host a Marian Icon Prayer Service and dinner Friday, Oct. 18 at the Columbus Club Hall, 230 S. Irma Blvd., Gonzales. The prayer service will be from 6 – 6:30 p.m., followed by dinner. Tickets must be purchased by Monday, Oct. 18 at $7 from KC council members. Proceeds benefit persecuted and resettled Catholics in Erbil.

The Olde Mill, LLC currently has an opportunity available for a part-time team member in our woodworking mill. Job duties include building beams, mantels and shelves to fill customer orders. Monthly maintenance on machinery and repairs as needed. Working with teammates to complete orders timely and efficiently. Keeping workspace clean and organized. Experience preferred, but not necessary. We will train you to grow with us. Position is hourly $12 to start with a flexible schedule depending on our production needs. Perfect candidates would be motivated, hardworking, and share our passion for woodworking. To learn more about us, visit our website theoldemill.com. Email resume and/or job experience to shawn@ourcodesigns.com.

The Olde Mill LLC currently has an opportunity available for a part-time team member in our front office. Job duties may include making follow-up sales phone calls, follow-up emails, weekly social media posts, mail marketing and other general office tasks. Experience preferred, but not necessary. We will train you to grow with us. Position is hourly to start with a flexible schedule, depending on our needs. Perfect candidates would be motivated, hardworking, and share our passion. To learn more about us, visit our website theoldemill.com. Email resume and/or job experience to shawn@ourcodesigns.com.
JOHNSON ▼
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added, flashing an infectious grin that makes a stranger feel at home.

Johnson and his family did receive quite the shock earlier this year when they learned Wallace was up for parole since the original sentence stipulated he would never be freed. He admitted that a member of the parole board told Johnson that Wallace was likely to be denied parole but his input was still solicited.

"I just thought he would be in there forever and ever," Johnson said.

After careful thought, revealing the tenderness and faith that defines the man, Johnson decided to speak in favor of granting Wallace parole. The decision was one he also discussed with his family, including his wife of more than 30 years, and they all supported their father and husband.

"When his name came up, I said the Lord forgives people for things that they’ve done and forgives me for things I’ve done," said Johnson, "I thought, 'Okay, I’m going to forgive him.' The Lord teaches us to forgive others just as he forgives us, so I had no problem with it."

He said his only concern is that Wallace seizes the opportunity to turn around his life and use his unexpected freedom as an opportunity to do something constructive with his life.

"I hope he doesn’t hurt anybody else," Johnson said. "That was my only reservation. I hope he doesn’t get out and (hurt) someone else. I hope he then I would say if I hadn’t (spoken up for him) this person would not be in that position."

He said he has not personally spoken to Wallace and would unlikely recognize him if they met face to face.

"I was a stranger to him; he was killing (the) uniform," Johnson said.

"He did come from a good family," he quickly added. "I guess every family has one." As he reflects on that day 40 years ago, Johnson glances at the mantle in the house where he and his wife have lived for 33 years, a mantle telling a family history through countless photos, snapshots of a family filled with laughter and an obvious love of each other.

Using the large hands of a former offensive tackle, Johnson gently grabs individual photos, embracing the memories, emotion filling his voice.

Describing each photo, the faith in Johnson’s voice is evident. He understands the frailty of life, and how it can all end so abruptly.

"There is nothing like the Lord," he said. "I’m grateful for the life that I have been able to live, and the life he has given me. I am thankful for my kids.”

"I was just glad the Lord let me live. If he hadn’t Josh would not be here."
AIDING PRIESTS' RETIREMENT – The Mother of Mercy Knights of Columbus Council 4030 from St. George Church in Baton Rouge recently presented a $5,000 check to Glenn Landry, chief financial officer for the Diocese of Baton Rouge, to be used for the Priests' Retirement Fund. Pictured from left are J.F. Accardo, warden of Council 4030; Father Michael Schatzle, former St. George pastor; Landry; Council 4030 Grand Knight Jonathan Barre; and former grand knight Rich Reed. Photo by Richard Meek | The Catholic Commentator

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CATECHETICAL ▼
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parishes and Catholic schools, or to simply to enrich their faith, can do so through programs offered by the diocese and at Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University in Baton Rouge.

“Some people are called to go to the next level. That’s where the Diocese of Baton Rouge supports the process of growing and becoming a certified catechist,” said Dow. “There are basic and intermediate level (Ministry and Theology or MAT) courses, so they can become a more knowledgeable and faithful witness of the word of God.”

The MAT courses are written in house by people with master’s and doctorate degrees in theology and taught by people with a master’s in theology, according to Dow. They are offered all year throughout the diocese onsite as well as online.

Additionally, FranU offers a certificate in Catholic theology and catechesis and undergraduate theology degree, according to Dr. David Whidden, professor of theology.

Whidden said he learned as people explore the intellectual component of their faith, they grow in their love for God and neighbor.

“They instruction has a spiritual impact on their relationship with God and how they minister in their parish and in their lives,” Whidden said.

Exploring the overall question of “Why do we need catechists and catechists?” Father Paul Yi, pastor of St. George Church in Baton Rouge, referred to an encounter between St. Jean Vianney and a boy who helped St. Jean find his new parish in the village of Ars, France.

According to Father Yi, who is also chancellor for the diocese, St. Jean said, “Young man you have shown me the way to Ars; I will show you the way to heaven.”

“Those days you don’t have to stop a person to ask for directions when you’re lost,” Father Yi said. “Turn on Google Maps, and it gives you turn-by-turn directions. As the acquisition and accessibility of data accelerate, however, the road to heaven seems more distant and irrelevant than ever.”

Father Yi said the mysteries of heaven can only be known by the revelation of Christ, and through PSR and the study of Scriptures, theology and lives of the saints people can grasp “what empirical science cannot fathom.”

Many diocesan priests and seminarians have engineering backgrounds, Father Yi said.

“Perhaps these former engineers have come to appreciate that God created a very complex, orderly, systematic universe that in somewhat is knowable yet the true depth of its complexity and creativity can be known only by the love of Christ. It is love of God that redeemed this universe. All of us are in a state of ‘already but not yet.’ We need religious education in all seasons of our lives, not just when we’re kids. We need someone to show us the way of heaven,” Father Yi said.

To find out more about MAT classes and certification requirements, visit evangcatbr.org.

For more information about the certificate in Catholic theology and catechesis certificate and theology degree requirements, look under the Academics tab at frau.edu.

Homelessness is a Nightmare for a Child

Providing shelter to a homeless child can be an uplifting or heartbreaking experience. At St. Vincent de Paul’s Sweet Dreams Shelter, there are happy, laughing children everywhere, but during the initial intake process, we often see frightened children clinging to their parents: the only sure thing left in their lives.

We hear sobs and comments like, “I want to go home.” They are simply too young to understand that home isn’t there anymore.

It’s not just the kids that are afraid. Even adults, especially parents of children like Kay and Cerenity, in the photos, are terrified at the thought of eviction. When you’re barely making ends meet, a car repair, an illness or a lay-off can be catastrophic. Most low-income families have no savings, and one missed paycheck can result in homelessness.

Sweet Dreams of Home

The long-term effects of homelessness can be tragic, particularly for young children. Living on the streets or in a car must feel like a nightmare they can’t wake up from. This can have a devastating impact on their sense of trust, security and safety. Can you imagine how difficult it is for them to understand that they can’t go back home? Since 2001, thousands of women, children and families have stayed at our Sweet Dreams Shelter until their dreams of home could once again become a reality.

In recent years, we have seen an increase in the number of homeless women, children and families that need our help. Our response was to expand our Sweet Dreams Shelter last year from 36 to 82 beds. This has enabled us to assist more people, which is critical, because we are the only shelter in our community that provides services to homeless mothers with male children over the age of 5, fathers with children, and couples with children.

Of course, these expanded services mean that we need your help now, more than ever.

Every year, through our Sweet Dreams effort, we ask people to pray for those we serve. Please save this Sweet Dreams Prayer and make it a regular part of your spiritual life. Pray for the homeless, especially women, children like Kay and Cerenity, and families! See the envelope insert in this issue to see how you can help, or visit us online at www.svdpbr.org.

Sweet Dreams Prayer

Lord God, Giver of Life,
Fill us with your Spirit.
Use our hands to shelter the homeless;
Use our hearts to enable sweet dreams;
Use our voices to end homelessness;
May our actions improve life for others;
And reflect your abundant love.
Through Christ our Lord, A.M.E.N.

Bishop Ott Sweet Dreams Shelter
www.svdpbr.org

Sweet Dreams of Home

Photo by Rich-